LIMITS TO STRATEGIC HRM: THE CASE OF MAURITIUS[1]

ABSTRACT

Taking as its starting point the impressive evidence for the strategic human resource management (SHRM) model's effect on organizational performance, and for the relationship between public staff management and economic growth, the article offers the civil service of Mauritius as a case study of SHRM's relevance to developing countries. It finds that SHRM is not practised in Mauritius, nor is it feasible in the near future, because it is not widely known, because there is no strategic management framework, because staff management is highly centralized and because political will to make radical changes in staff management is lacking. The case study does not support claims that SHRM and its associated practices have a universal validity, or that public staff management is a 'magic bullet' that delivers economic growth. Improvements to staff management in Mauritius, and possibly other developing countries, will require a creative and piecemeal adaptation of Anglophone 'good practice' that respects political, economic and social realities.

Keywords

Strategic HRM, international HRM, employee selection, performance management, Mauritius

---

INTRODUCTION

Readers of *IJHRM* will scarcely need reminding that the emergence of the strategic human resource management (SHRM) model from the mingled ashes of the old disciplines of industrial relations and personnel management has been one of the most significant management developments of the last twenty years. Many will also be aware of the recent evidence of a strong relationship between HR practice and organizational performance, a relationship that David Guest has called '*the* dominant research issue in the field' (Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Delery and Doty, 1996; Guest, 1997: 263; Huselid, 1995; Patterson *et al.*, 1997; Tsui *et al.*, 1997). HR practitioners and scholars, a somewhat downtrodden sub-profession only 15 years ago, have acquired a sudden self-confidence, reflected in a leading scholar's claim that the favoured HR practices have a universal validity (Pfeffer, 1998).

Yet an important limitation of the HR literature is that it talks mainly about the Anglophone industrialized countries, and Western Europe to a lesser extent (Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1994). SHRM is arguably a Western, private sector solution to the Western, private sector problem of how to maximize organizational performance in an atmosphere of intense competition: that rationale is explicit in seminal HRM texts like Fombrun *et al.* (1984). Certainly the number of studies of HRM in developing countries is increasing, and notably in *IJHRM* (see for example Ding *et al.*, 2000; Kamoche, 1992; Ramaswamy and Schiphorst, 2000; and Wood and Els, 2000). There are also several more general studies of management in developing countries, such as those on Africa, some of which specifically discuss HRM (Blunt and Jones, 1992; Brown, 1989; Kiggundu, 1989; Leonard, 1988). But there are still few systematic studies of the viability of current 'best practice' models in those countries. Studies on Africa, for example, tend to take management models, including SHRM, at face value, discussing how they are to be applied in an African environment rather than whether or not they are fundamentally viable.[i] A passage

from Kiggundu (1989: 157), which Blunt and Jones (1992: 68) cite with approval, is representative. Readers will note its assumption that strategic integration, arguably the essence of SHRM (see below) is not only viable, but a practical priority for African organizations.

'In strategic human resource management, all programmes, project and activities relating to the HRM function such as selection, assessment and performance appraisal, reward and control systems, and training and development must be designed, implemented and evaluated in the context of the organisation's mission, business strategy, goals and objectives. In this regard, human resource management becomes an important consideration in the process of overall formulation and implementation of strategic plans' (see also Kamoche, 1992, particularly pp 502-504 and 518-519).

Thus we think there is a need for a study that constructively questions, rather than assumes, the fundamental viability of SHRM. 'Strategic fit' between an organization and its environment is at heart of the strategic model. But what is the 'strategic fit' between the SHRM model itself and particular environments in which it is applied? This gives us our first research question: given the chronic economic problems that many developing countries face, *does – or could - the SHRM model have the same dramatic effect that it seems to have had in the Anglophone world*?

A second limitation of the HR literature is that it is mostly confined to the Anglophone private sector. The public sector, however, has a large presence in the formal economy of most developing countries (Schiavo-Campo *et al.*, 1997). Here too we have evidence of a relationship between HR practice and performance, in the form of a recent sociological study which reviewed developing country governments' use of two elements of Weber's (1968) classic model of bureaucracy: 'meritocratic' appointment practices (measured by the importance of exams in recruiting civil servants); and rewarding, predictable career progression (measured by the likelihood of promotion, the value of salaries and the prestige of civil service employment). The

3

study uncovered a significant positive relationship between those practices and national economic growth (Evans and Rauch, 1999[ii]; Rauch and Evans, 2000). Clearly the dependent variable in this study, national economic growth, is not the same as organizational performance, but the authors plausibly argue that these Weberian elements are also evidence of a healthy civil service. This gives us our second research question: *has staff management in the civil service contributed to economic growth?*

THE STRATEGIC HRM MODEL: STRATEGIC INTEGRATION, LINE MANAGER OWNERSHIP, EMPLOYEE SELECTION AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The SHRM model, which by now is extensively documented on both sides of the Atlantic (seminal texts include Beer *et al.*, 1985; Fombrun *et al.*, 1984; and Guest, 1989), is our theoretical framework. Despite its current competitors, notably the so-called 'resource-based view' (Kamoche, 1996) and the 'best practice' approach (Pfeffer, 1998), we have made a judgement that it remains the dominant normative model, given the powerful theoretical and empirical support which it has obtained, which we detail below. Given limitations of space, we have chosen to analyse selected features of the SHRM model in detail, rather than to attempt a comprehensive but inevitably superficial analysis of the model as a whole.

While some writers reject the idea of a monolithic model, preferring to distinguish, for instance, between 'hard' and 'soft' HRM (Storey, 1995) or 'lean' and 'team' production (Appelbaum and Batt, 1994), there are several features on which most writers agree. Probably chief among them is the notion of strategic integration: 'All definitions of human resource management agree on one point: that there must be a link between a firm's strategy and … the human resource' (Purcell, 1995: 63). Strategic integration refers to aligning staff management systems with organizations' overall strategic objectives (*vertical* integration) and with each other (*horizontal* integration) (Anthony *et al.*, 1993; Becker and Gerhart, 1996; Fombrun *et al.*, 1984; Guest, 1989;

Wright and McMahan, 1992). While strategic integration has emerged from the normative HR literature, there is some empirical support for the implication that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts (Huselid, 1995; Macduffie, 1995). Indeed Becker and Gerhart (1996) suggest in their review of the performance debate that it is what they call the 'strategic architecture' rather than individual HR practices that has a universal validity.

Strategic integration implicitly changes the HR specialist's relationship with line managers. The specialist is supposed to design the HR systems that will align with strategic objectives, while the manager is supposed to carry them out. Guest (1989: 51) observes that almost all writers say that HR must be managed by line managers: 'HRM,' he says, 'Is too important to be left to the personnel managers.' Thus at the strategic level we concentrate on the twin questions of 'strategic integration' and 'line manager ownership' of HR.

We have not confined ourselves to the strategic level, but have also focused on two HR activities, employee selection and performance management and appraisal. We have chosen them because:

1. We have good evidence for their effect on organizational performance. The evidence for employee selection is particularly robust and of very long standing (Schmidt and Hunter, 1977). The evidence for performance management, although oblique – it concerns the effect of objective setting and feedback on performance, both central features of performance management (Walters, 1995) - is also robust.

2. Both are relevant to Evans and Rauch's research. Employee selection is one of the two Weberian elements on which they focus, and performance management is implicit in their second element, predictable career progression.

3. We know from previous studies that there are substantial national differences in the practice of performance management (Milliman *et al.*, 1998). Objections from Japan are well known.

Companies there prefer to see the team as the unit of production rather than the individual as performance management tends to do (Love *et al.*, 1994). In Europe, Denmark stands out as a country whose democratic workplace relations have held performance management at bay (Brewster and Hegewisch, 1994).

Thus our study operationalizes the SHRM model through two elements: strategic integration and line manager ownership, and focuses additionally on the key HR activities of employee selection and performance management.

RESEARCH SETTING: POLITICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC INFLUENCES ON HR IN THE MAURITIAN CIVIL SERVICE

Our case study provides a developing country, public sector perspective on the applicability of SHRM, and on the relationship between public staff management and economic growth. We believe that Mauritius is a very suitable site for such a study. It is conventionally grouped with the developing countries of sub-Saharan Africa, , but its status as a middle-income, recently industrialized economy also links it with the newly industrialized countries of Asia, with some of which its Chinese and Indian communities have astutely exploited ancestral ties to promote trading relationships (The Economist, 1995). While the official language is English, French is more widely spoken. African and Asian, Anglophone and Francophone, developing but with a growing export-orientated industrial sector, Mauritius is highly exposed to global influences.

A distinctive feature of public as opposed to private management is its sensitivity to influences from the wider environment. The strategic objectives of government by definition derive from the political process (Stewart and Ranson, 1988), and politics in any democracy is obviously intertwined with social forces. While companies respond to the trading environment in their sector of the economy, governments are affected by the national economy as a whole, through

6

the power they wield over key macroeconomic levers, notably interest rates, but equally through their vulnerability to changes in the tax receipts they obtain from individual and corporate taxpayers. Thus to make sense of how staff are managed in a government like that of Mauritius, we need first to review some of those political, economic and social influences.

Politics: coalition, not revolution

Politics in Mauritius is characterized by a commitment to parliamentary democracy and a tendency to coalition government. Like many former British colonies, Mauritius has a constitution which established a Westminster-style multiparty democracy at the time of independence. Although there are major ethnic fissures in Mauritian society (see below), ethnic groups have ultimately identified their interests with the continuation of multi-party, parliamentary government: 'the interplay of communalism and class in politics led to coalition and cohabitation rather than coup or revolution' (Dubey, 1997: 219). The National Assembly comprises 62 elected representatives and up to eight 'best losers', appointed to ensure adequate representation for all ethnic groups. The current coalition government won all but six of the contested seats in the September 2000 general election. The main coalition partners are the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM), a radical party founded in 1969 in the afterglow of the 'Paris spring' of 1968 by an alliance of intellectuals and trade unionists, and the smaller Mouvement Socialiste Mauricien (MSM), which broke away from the MMM in 1983. The MSM leader, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, was prime minister at the time of writing, but under the terms of a pre-election pact was to hand over to his charismatic deputy prime minister, the MMM leader Paul Bérenger, for the second half of the five year mandate. If this occurs as planned, it will be the first time that a non-Hindu has become prime minister, a prospect that has excited much comment. The outgoing coalition was headed by the Mauritius Labour Party (MLP), a moderate socialist party founded in 1936 which led the campaign for independence during the 1960s.

We shall review whether the political dispensation facilitates good human resource management, something it most certainly does not do in many developing countries: McCourt (2001c), for instance, has noted the tendency for newly elected governments in the post-Communist wave of democratization to place their supporters in public jobs at the expense of the previous incumbents. In line with this, Minogue (1976) has suggested that political parties in Mauritius are to some extent patronage machines, and that jobs in the civil service are the raw material of patronage.

Society: the salience of ethnic identity

The comments excited by the scheduled accession of a non-Hindu to the premiership are a clue to the importance of ethnicity in Mauritius. 'The inhabitants of Mauritius have made a success of multiculturalism,' says one sanguine account (The Courier, 1998: 14). But with highly differentiated and mostly endogamous population groups (Hindu, Muslim, Sino-Mauritian, White, or 'Francos', and the 'general population', or Creoles) speaking fifteen languages between them, 'the very construction of the social person is based on ethnicity' (Eriksen, 1998: 15). Minogue (1992: 646) has gone so far as to assert that 'Mauritian politics (is) … overwhelmingly the politics of ethnic competition'. As recently as 1999, some parts of the island were convulsed by riots that had a strong ethnic dimension (The Economist, 1999). It is not surprising that nepotism is assumed to be widespread in the labour market, including in the civil service (the preferred euphemism is 'Mauritian specificities'). A former minister insisted to us that 'Opportunities in the private sector … are not within the reach of certain segments of Mauritian society. Therefore the government had … to provide employment opportunities, otherwise there would have been social chaos.' Those opportunities have not been evenly spread, however: Creoles are apt to remark bitterly, 'Tu pu malbar' ('everything is kept for the Indians') (Eriksen, 1998: 177).

But nepotism doesn't have it all its own way, so to speak. 'Principles for recruitment to the labour market are no longer unambiguously ethnic' (Eriksen, 1998: 177), and there is a national ideology in which 'communalism' is a cardinal sin. This is in keeping with the gradual shift from what anthropologists call an ascriptive to an achievement orientation that tends to accompany the growth of an industrial economy such as that of Mauritius (Linton, 1936). Thus we shall examine how ethnicity impinges on staff management in the civil service.

Economy: 'Managing success'

Mauritius is classified by the World Bank as an upper-middle-income country, with a per capita GDP of $7051 in 1998 and annual average GDP growth of 5.3% between 1994 and 1998. Overall unemployment was 6.0% in 1996, low enough for employers to import workers from China and elsewhere to work in textiles and construction (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1999). Like many African countries, Mauritius got into severe balance of payments trouble in the late 1970s, following a catastrophic drop in the price of sugar, the single crop on which the island's plantation economy then depended. Unlike many of those countries, however, Mauritius made a success of its IMF-assisted structural adjustment policies in the 1980s (World Bank, 1989). Economic progress has been facilitated by a series of reforms, notably the establishment of the pioneering island-wide Export Processing Zone, established in the early 1970s to exempt investors from government taxes and labour legislation. The reforms led to the growth of a substantial clothing and textiles export industry, with more than 200 foreign manufacturers present by 1994 (Heenan, 1994) and exports worth $1.2bn in 1999, up 11% on 1998 figures (De Giorgio, 2000). With tourism quite well established and an incipient financial services sector (Ashurst, 1998), the days of the plantation economy are well and truly over.

Despite continuing problems, such as increasing competition in textiles from other developing countries whose production costs are even lower than those of Mauritius, there is a basis in reality for the claim that Mauritius has Africa's most successful economy (The Economist, 1996). The island's current prosperity theoretically provides the crucial space for Government to introduce new approaches to HR on its own terms if it chooses, rather than being forced into the sort of IMF-dictated cost-cutting staff retrenchment programme that so many African countries have had to endure in recent years (McCourt, 2001c).[iii] It also leads us to expect, following Evans and Rauch, and contradicting our discussion of the political and social context, that staff management will be 'meritocratic', not subject to political patronage or nepotism.

The civil service itself

Researchers examining HRM in a developing country government are have relatively good published sources to draw on. In this section we review the somewhat contradictory picture we gain of HRM in the Mauritian civil service from such sources.

Certainly, in terms of our second research question, the civil service is an important actor in the formal economy: in 1997, the public sector employed just under 12% of the active labour force (Economist Intelligence Unit, 1999). Government recognizes that the civil service has an important role to play in building the economy. Addressing the senior civil service in 1996, the then prime minister said that

> 'If we are to attract and keep foreign investment, the lifeblood of the economy, we must have an efficient bureaucracy, which is not there to resist and hinder – but to assist and facilitate.' (quoted in Pay Research Bureau, 1998: 20)

The prime minister would have been preaching to the converted, according to a number of writers who give the civil service much of the credit for the island's economic success. 'Widespread political agreement created a stable atmosphere for the growth and functioning of a capable public service … the state was only able to implement export-linked industrialisation because it had some significant degree of autonomy and bureaucratic capability,' says Meisenhelder (1997: 283 and 296). Dilating on Meisenhelder's theme, Carroll and Carroll (1997) find a dynamic and innovative bureaucracy that has avoided the classic bureaucratic dysfunctions. Echoing Evans and Rauch, they point to an emphasis on merit in recruitment and promotion, something they attribute to the constitutional entrenchment of the PSC. 'Promotion and recruitment at the most senior level are based on merit, not seniority as in West Germany nor cronyism as in Italy', making the civil service, according to Carroll and Joypaul, a model for other countries, developing and developed alike (1993: 432).

But not everyone sees it that way. An early analysis quoted with approval a report from the colonial period that had described the civil service as 'lagging behind the stages reached in constitutional, economic and cultural development', and found that 'Mauritius exemplified the classic faults of bureaucracy, and nowhere more so than in the tendency to avoid the difficult business of administrative reform … (which) is vital and urgent' (Minogue, 1976: 162, 164 and 166). In the key economic area, Gulhati and Nallari (1990: 36) note 'many weak areas' in core economic ministries, and are uncertain what role the bureaucracy has actually played in policy decisions.

So what is the reality? Let us now turn to the findings of our field research.

METHODOLOGY

It was against the above political, economic and social background that we did our research. We used a case study methodology for three reasons. First, it is especially appropriate to research

on government, since in the nature of things each country has only one government to study, precluding the quantitative, multi-firm study that is the staple of the SHRM/performance literature (Yin, 1994). Second, Becker and Gerhart's review of that literature calls for "deeper, qualitative research to complement the large-scale, multiple firm studies that are available" (1996: 796), a call that Guest (1997) has echoed. Third, the single-case study approach is appropriate when the case represents a critical example for testing a theory or model (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The case-study data came from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data gathering in 1999 and 2000 took the form of interviews and a focus group meeting. Secondary data comprised government reports and other documents, and a small academic literature on Mauritius.

Our main primary data-gathering method was interviews with key stakeholders (Burgoyne, 1994). A semi-structured format (Lee, 1999) was used, based on the themes outlined in the previous section (strategic integration, line manager ownership, employee selection and performance management). Interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted from sixty to ninety minutes. The two authors conducted the interviews jointly, except for interviews with one permanent secretary and a development agency official, which the second-named author conducted alone.

A non-probability sampling approach was used. Eleven officials were selected for interview, identified by one of the authors, who is familiar with the structure of the Mauritian civil service, as having a key responsibility for staffing decisions. Although the officials went up to the most senior level in the civil service, we achieved a 100% response rate. In the event, fourteen officials participated in the interviews, as three officials were accompanied by a subordinate. The following officials were interviewed: a former cabinet minister, who as an elected official

represented the political level in government, and who has had a role in setting HR policy; the heads of statutory agencies responsible respectively for recruitment (the Public Service Commission, or PSC), pay determination (the Pay Research Bureau, PRB) and training (the Mauritius Institute for Public Administration and Management, MIPAM); permanent secretaries heading three of the line departments where most civil servants work, namely Health, Economic Development, and Civil Service Affairs; senior officials in the central departments responsible for civil service staffing and the payroll; and senior officials in the Management Audit Bureau within the Finance ministry. We also interviewed a senior official whose responsibility cuts across departments. In addition, in order to give the point of view of important stakeholders outside government, we held interviews with an official of the Federation of Civil Service Unions, one of the two main trade unions representing civil servants, and an official of an international development agency active in Mauritius.

The focus group (Morgan, 1997) brought together a mixed race and gender group of junior civil servants, randomly sampled from a large population of civil servants from a range of government ministries attending courses at the University of Mauritius. Its purpose was to get the point of view of junior staff, complementing the views of our otherwise very senior informants. The semi-structured format based on identified themes was again used.

Interviews and the focus group meeting were taped and subsequently transcribed. A content analysis was carried out in which interview transcripts, our own interview notes and government reports and other documents were coded using the themes previously identified.

FINDINGS

The SHRM model: strategic integration and line manager ownership

In this section we deal in turn with the three elements of the SHRM model on which we focused: strategic integration, in both its vertical and horizontal aspects, and line manager ownership.

Vertical integration. As things stand, integration is, very simply, not practised. Minogue's analysis holds true, a quarter of a century after it was written: despite government's strategic intentions (Ministry of Economic Development, 1997) the civil service, in the unanimous opinion of our informants, remains essentially unstrategic and unreformed. Here are two representative comments: 'The reform unit is there. But the question is: What is it doing?'; 'They don't have any action plan.' The setting up of the Burrenchobhay committee, the first comprehensive attempt at reform, came only after 28 years of independence in 1996. It reported two years later, although it was to be another two years before its report was published. As in Aesop's fable, the mountain laboured and brought forth a mouse, a nugatory addition to the island's 'history of forgotten reports' (Titmuss & Abel-Smith, 1968). The report's advocacy of such measures as mission statements, TQM and citizens' charters is in line with reform elsewhere, but lacks operational detail. One senior official called it 'superficial – and worth throwing in the dustbin.' Even one of the committee's own members told us that 'The report considers mainly the immediate problems. It does not really try to bring radical changes'. The approach to reform had been 'piecemeal rather than strategic', and another official report admitted that 'There is need for a more integrated and holistic approach towards reforms' (Pay Research Bureau, 1998: 25). In this strategic vacuum, inevitably 'personnel managers in the service are more involved in applying the rules' than in taking a strategic view, according to a very senior official.

In the absence of comprehensive reform, central government seemed to be hoping that individual ministries would fill up the strategic vacuum: 'In every ministry you always have a few good civil servants … (who) bring about changes in their area of responsibility, which is called "pocket development" … Our hope is that we will be able to multiply these pockets.'[iv] Certainly the global language of strategy has reached a few of the ministries, if not the centre of

government: one of them has adopted the slogan 'Initiate, innovate, interact' as its mission statement. But such statements have been little more than pious declarations. They were not fleshed out into strategic objectives, and strategic thrust was dissipated in a host of worthwhile but piecemeal initiatives. One of the more dynamic permanent secretaries listed his ministry's initiatives: quality circles, names on all the doors, weekly meetings of Heads of Section and potted plants.

At the time of writing, the recently elected MMM/MSM government had added the phrase 'and Administrative Reforms' to the title of the Ministry for Civil Service Affairs. The new minister, significantly the MMM Party's president, was attending relevant meetings personally and had appointed a public service reform advisor from the Commonwealth Secretariat. Taskforces had been set up on various issues, including performance management. But it was too early to say if there would be substantial results, or if it would turn out to be another false dawn.

What is true of strategy in general is equally true of HR strategy. Asked what had been the main HR initiatives of the last ten years, a central official with a major HR responsibility asked rhetorically, 'Well, have there been any?' After some prodding he listed three decidedly unstrategic items: the rationalization of 'schemes of service' (essentially job descriptions), the recognition that senior managers should have managerial capacity, and the provision that posts left vacant for two years could be abolished. From the point of view of the junior staff who attended our focus group meeting, there is simply 'no policy of HRM in the civil service', an opinion echoed by another senior respondent, who saw the civil service as being 'addicted to rules and regulations', having 'no sense of direction' because it was 'not fully aware of the vision for the country'.

'Horizontal integration' is no more practised than the vertical variety. 'This is how our hands are tied as regards the management of people,' a permanent secretary lamented. 'We have no say in

the determination of salaries. It's determined by somebody else, the PRB. Recruitment, promotion, and discipline are done by the PSC. For training, we have to go to MIPAM. So, human resource management is frag-men-ted (his emphasis)'. An example came when the PRB carried out the worthwhile exercise of asking jobholders to rewrite their own job descriptions as the basis for grading decisions. There was no hint that this might carry over to training for the jobholders or later on to the recruitment of their replacements.

Line manager ownership. It follows from the above that line ministries, let alone line managers, have little role to play in staff management, even in the minutest particulars ('walking allowance' paid to forest guards, set centrally at Rs75 per month in 2000). Several officials listed the predictable effects: 'The actual centralized system favours "passing the buck"', said a central official on whose desk certain bucks are liable to fetch up. From a permanent secretary's point of view, 'You want people to behave as managers, but you're not giving them the opportunity … I have to bear with people like (x), (y), (z) and others. They are chosen *elsewhere* … People are even removed from my organization without my knowledge!' Another permanent secretary echoed this, saying: 'You are at the mercy of the Minister of Civil Service Affairs. We should be able to hire ourselves, not take from other ministries.' Moreover, officials were alive to the advantages of line manager ownership: 'Once you determine pay levels, it should be left to the ministry to recruit. If I do the selection decision myself, I know that I will be stuck with a bad decision for life', as one permanent secretary pointed out.

HR activities: employee selection and performance management

Employee selection. Where employee selection is concerned, it is true that the remit of the responsible agency, the PSC, is specified in the national constitution (Articles 88 and 89), just as Carroll and Carroll point out. But this in itself is merely the norm in British-influenced administrations as far apart as Swaziland and Nepal (McCourt, 2001a and c). What is more

significant is the way the PSC goes about its business, for which it is roundly criticized even in the mostly anodyne Burrenchobhay report. Noting that it has been the subject of much internal and external criticism which has tarnished its image, the report finds an absolute lack of transparency in the recruitment and training of officers, an overcentralization of power, decisions not subject to scrutiny except by the Supreme Court, an absence of clear criteria for decision-making and of proper communication channels with ministries, delays in recruitment and in disciplinary cases, and a wide belief that undeserved favours have been granted to some public officers. It is easy to understand why a union official told us that 'After each exercise of the PSC, the curve of confidence slopes downwards'.

Nor does the PSC's constitutional status ensure its independence. As a commissioner pointed out, 'The cycle of appointments (of commissioners) is fundamental. There is no continuity across changes of governments.' Appointment of commissioners invariably follows general elections and as a trade union official put it, 'You must dance to the music of the one who appoints you'. Complaints of abuses abound: police officers drawn disproportionately from the new prime minister's constituency; candidates suddenly appointed after the formal appointment procedure had ended; ministers engineering the appointment of permanent secretaries from their own ethnic communities. All this, said one informant, 'breeds a culture of suspicion', one where staff relations were characterized by 'méfiance' (distrust) rather than 'confiance' (trust). While in the absence of transparency (even a PSC official was prepared to admit that there is 'no transparency in selection or recruitment'), it is impossible to verify the numerous complaints against the agency, they are taken seriously in the Burrenchobhay report.

For initial recruitment, suitably qualified candidates sit a test of general knowledge, so there is an 'examination' in Evans and Rauch's sense. Shortlisted candidates attend an interview conducted by two commissioners and an adviser, issuing in a consensus decision based on personality,

fluency in English, experience relevant to the job and additional qualifications. Again all this is very similar to the practice of the PSC's counterparts in other former British colonies, both rich and poor, and largely continues pre-independence practice. There is no professional selection expertise in the PSC, there is no evidence about whether this selection approach actually manages to identify able staff, and there appear to have been no innovations in employee selection in recent years, even though 'these people are literally ruling over the destiny of the civil service'.

Performance management. The picture is no different when we turn to performance management. Like many former British colonies, Mauritius continues to use the old British system of annual 'confidential reports', written by 'supervising officers' and not shown to or discussed with the supervisees. No one defends them: 'In the final analysis (they) boil down to an annual ritual of stocktaking' (Pay Research Bureau, 1998: 37). As long ago as 1987 a new performance appraisal system, including a procedure for linking pay to performance, was piloted but not implemented ('In 1987 … I started performance appraisal. In 1997 it still hadn't been accepted'). This was despite the fact that a modified system was actually piloted in 1994. The Burrenchobhay report recommends yet another system, characteristically omitting any operational detail, and at the time of writing no date had been set for implementing it. A central official who had had a leading role in introducing appraisal attributed its failure to the fact that 'Different communities are sensitive – 'Mauritian specificity'.'

In the absence of any such system, promotion from grade to grade remains effectively automatic, based on seniority rather than merit (Government of Mauritius, 2000: 141), a practice that one senior official described as 'the scourge of the Mauritius civil service'. It is so firmly entrenched that the PSC actually requires a written explanation if a ministry recommends the promotion of an officer over the head of a more senior colleague. As so often, the question of

nepotism is relevant: according to one informant, the requirement is intended to discourage ethnic discrimination.

It follows that pay is not linked to performance: indeed, the attempt to make the link is one reason why earlier attempts to introduce performance appraisal failed. A union official commented on PRP: 'Mauritius isn't ready. Now we are coming to election time. Politicians will interfere.' The same official we interviewed viewed the existing system as a 'mal nécessaire', given the prevailing 'culture of suspicion'. Pay awards emerge from tripartite negotiations based on the recommendations of the PRB. The system is 'inherently inflationary' as a Ministry of Finance official put it: significantly, one of the new government's first actions was to refuse to implement the outgoing administration's pay award (Mauritius News, 2000).

We should note that some 'pocket development' has taken place, with at least two ministries experimenting with appraisal, and with some success: 'In our department it has really worked. We used it to improve work performance. We designed our own form.' But in the absence of central direction they were swimming against the tide: staff in two ministries complained that lack of commitment from senior management had prevented appraisal from getting past the pilot stage.

DISCUSSION: STRATEGIC HRM AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The civil service and economic growth: 'A heavy-handed bureaucracy'

We shall deal with our second research question - whether staff management has had the dramatic effect on economic growth that Evans and Rauch have claimed for it elsewhere - first, as our answer is clear. At both the strategic level and the level of HR activities there is evidence of stagnation rather than strategic reform in staff management. Despite worthwhile

departmental initiatives such as those we noted, Mauritius is far from being a meritocracy in Evans and Rauch's sense. Overall, in fact, it is difficult not to agree with the government's own summing up: 'A pervasive and heavy-handed bureaucracy still rules and it is a miracle, no less, that in these circumstances, industrial development did take place at all' (Ministry of Economic Development and Regional Co-operation, 1997: 1.11; see also Government of Mauritius, 2000: 132). This corroborates Minogue's (1976) analysis, although it contradicts the adulatory accounts that we quoted earlier. The answer to our second question, in short, is that economic growth in Mauritius has occurred in the teeth of the public bureaucracy, not because of it.

The SHRM model: 'frag-men-tation'

Our first question was whether the SHRM model has had – or could have - the same dramatic effect on organizational performance in a developing country that it seems to have had in the Anglophone world. Our answer is necessarily somewhat involved. Let us recall what we found. At the strategic level, there is little overall strategy with which HR could be integrated, precluding vertical integration, and that the heads of ministries who are the senior line managers have virtually no control over their staff, precluding horizontal integration. At the activity level, we found that the agency responsible for employee selection, the PSC, has lost the confidence of both senior officials and staff representatives, while the professional conduct of selection itself merely continues pre-independence practice. Pre-independence practice also subsists in performance management, where attempts at reform going as far back as 1987 have failed to get off the ground. Thus we conclude that neither SHRM nor good practice in key HR activities is practised.

The applicability of strategic HRM in Mauritius

Thus the SHRM model has not had the dramatic effect in Mauritius that has been claimed for it in the Anglophone world. However, an advocate of SHRM might still argue that one can hardly

dismiss a model that has not actually been attempted. Granted that Mauritius clearly does not practise SHRM at present, are SHRM and HR 'good practice' nevertheless feasible? We suggest that in order for SHRM and HR to be feasible, the following conditions, which we discuss in turn, would need to be met.

- Familiarity with HR models
- A strategic framework for managing the civil service
- Devolution of staff management
- 'Political will' to introduce the above changes

Familiarity with HR models. The first, rather banal point is that SHRM and HR 'good practice' have to be known before they can be adopted (Pil and MacDuffie, 1996; Terpstra and Rozell, 1997); and they are not widely known in Mauritius, especially not in the government. Only one out of all our informants had any familiarity with the SHRM model. An important consequence is that it reduces room to manoeuvre by yoking government to the single, inflexible model of staff management with which it is familiar. For example, the model of performance management that was unsuccessfully attempted in 1987 included a performance-related pay element which, for reasons we shall discuss, was never likely to be accepted in Mauritius, whereas it is possible that an alternative model that did not include performance-related pay would have taken root (Cleveland *et al.*, 1989; Long, 1986). The University of Mauritius now offers a Master's programme in HRM with a sizeable intake of civil servants, so familiarity is likely to increase in the medium term.

A strategic framework. The problem of familiarity with SHRM applies equally to the larger strategic management model of which SHRM is a sub-set. Strategic management is not widely practised in the public sector anywhere, with New Zealand and the UK being perhaps the only

administrations that have introduced it on any wide scale. McCourt (2001b) sets out a

formidable set of obstacles which helps to explain why this is so. They include the necessity of

restructuring government to make strategic management feasible, and the difficulty of

maintaining a strategy over any significant period in a political environment.

Devolution of staff management. Devolution, the third of our four conditions, is necessary because

at present responsibility for HR is 'frag-men-ted', as one of our informants forcefully put it,

shared among several different agencies: the PSC for employee selection, MIPAM for training

and development and so on. This responsibility would need to be delegated to line ministries to

make horizontal integration feasible. But devolution in government is no easy matter:

fundamental structural reform would be needed and, in the case of the PSC, would require a

constitutional amendment. All of this would require substantial commitment of political

resources.

Two further factors militate against devolution. The first is the clientelistic nature of politics in

Mauritius. We noted Minogue's (1976) suggestion that political parties in Mauritius use the civil

service for patronage purposes, and we saw that our informants referred on numerous occasions

to jobs being awarded to political supporters. They also referred to the opacity of the PSC's

decisions, which in their eyes throws up a smokescreen behind which patrons operate with

impunity. Clearly it would be harder to operate like this if introducing SHRM meant taking

control over jobs away from the politicians. As one informant told us, 'It is not in the interests of

politicians to change, even though they criticize while in opposition.' We noted the crucial fact

that the government had effectively destroyed the independence of the PSC by changing the

cycle of appointment of its commissioners.

The second factor is nepotism. We saw earlier that nepotism is assumed to be widespread in the

civil service: 'In Mauritius you have specificities, you have the caste system,' said one informant;

'This is a small country where everybody knows everybody,' said another. There is a pervasive fear that individual managers will abuse their discretion to favour members of their own ethnic group, and examples of abuse up to the highest levels are freely quoted. The fear is naturally acute in relation to pay, and it is the main reason why performance management, containing a performance-related pay element, has failed to take off. A trade union official was explicit on this point. Alluding to the ubiquitous 'Mauritian specificities', he said that 'Appraisal should not be linked to rewards … We need to take into account the specificities.' The very same informants who criticized the PSC's propensity to patronage also defended its existence as a bulwark against nepotism. They believed that despite the PSC's manifest imperfections, as the single point for making many staffing decisions it still contained nepotistic and clientelistic pressures better than devolved decision-making in a large number of ministries would do. It was, as a trade union official put it, 'the lesser of two evils'.

The third factor is the capacity of lower levels to operate the functions that are delegated. 'Delegation rebounds on us. We delegated appointment of nursing officers. They (i.e. the Ministry of Health) were submerged with thousands of applications. At ministry level people are not properly trained. They don't have the knowledge. We see hundreds of mistakes.'

The arguments for and against devolution are in fact quite finely balanced. We noted Eriksen's (1998) analysis that the ethnicity factor, while certainly ubiquitous, is in decline. At the time of our interviews, the head of the Civil Service was a non-Hindu for the first time (a former minister said that such an appointment would have been 'inconceivable in the past'); and, as we have seen, a non-Hindu is scheduled to become prime minister. Thus we heard both arguments for and arguments against devolution. Most tellingly, of the two most senior commissioners of the PSC in Mauritius, one was in favour of devolution and the other opposed to it.

Political will. Political will is in many ways an unsatisfactory concept (McCourt, 2001a

summarizes the debate over its use). In the light of the above discussion, however, one can

understand why a former minister, nursing burnt fingers, reached this gloomy conclusion: 'I

would say, without any hesitation whatever, that there is *no* political will, really, to change the

civil service.' To the factors we have already listed we should add the influence of economic

prosperity. Writing in 1991, and noting that a coalition government headed by Sir Anerood

Jugnauth had managed to stay in power for most of the 1980s, Bowman (1991: 88) observed that

'It is the economic miracle of the 1980s that has enabled the Alliance to weather an endless

succession of intra- and interparty feuds and remain comfortably in control of the government.'

It seems likely that just as prosperity has allowed government to stave off political challenges, so

it has enabled it to hold at bay the need to reform the civil service. Radical decisions in other

areas, such as the establishment of the Export Processing Zone, which we have discussed, are

not reflected in civil service management. Despite paying lip service, the government appears

not to see it as strategic, and has not given it priority. As one tactful official put it: 'The PM

(prime minister) has not realized the necessity to get the issue to be discussed at cabinet level.'

The feasibility of SHRM in the Mauritian civil service

Thus as things stand, SHRM is not feasible, and may not even be desirable, in the government of

Mauritius. It is not feasible because it fails to meet any of the conditions that we have just

discussed: it is not widely known; the necessary strategic framework is absent; it would require

a profound devolution of managerial authority; and there is no evidence that the government

has the political will to drive through the necessary changes. It may also not be desirable

because, while the evidence is not clear-cut, it is possible to argue that devolving staff

management to ministries, an essential element of SHRM, will increase nepotism. One may look

forward to a longer term in which younger civil servants who are familiar with the strategic

model rise into positions of influence, and clientelistic and nepotistic pressures in the wider society continue to decline. But while continuing to support civil servants in learning about SHRM is obviously worthwhile, this longer term – and we emphasize the point - is beyond the range of practical policymaking. Thus the answer to our second research question is this: SHRM is not practised, nor is it feasible within the parameters of practical policymaking.

Prospects for HR in the Mauritian civil service

We have now answered our two research questions, but as writers with a practical concern for the quality of staff management in public organizations, we feel an obligation to discuss what approach to HR might be feasible. While full-blown SHRM is not feasible at the moment, that is not to say that some groundwork cannot be done. Even while the government continues to manage its staff centrally, it can create the conditions for SHRM by investing in the training of junior civil servants, thus creating a 'critical mass' capable of taking a strategic approach. It might also be possible to experiment with staffing devolution in selected ministries as nepotistic pressures in society at large continue to decline, in line with Eriksen's (1998) analysis. Even the union official who, like many of his counterparts in other countries had a preference for central bargaining, could see the case for some devolution: 'Certain powers should be delegated to (ministries) to do away with redtapeism.' Such an incremental approach ('We have to move step by step', as one central official put it) fits the caution expressed by one of our informants, who was alluding to the wider political context when he said that the government should 'Be cautious about reforms. If you want to perform in a democratic way … we have to be cautious and we can't go at the speed of the private sector. Others are willing to have a military regime, but … here there is hope for the civil service.'

In the short term, moreover, it follows from our analysis that improving the conduct of HR activities such as employee selection and performance management should be feasible within

the existing structure of government, as it falls foul only of the 'familiarity' condition that we discussed above, and becoming familiar with a range of professional models should be within government's reach in a country so highly exposed to global influences. We saw, however, that it is important to choose an appropriate approach. Performance management has failed to get off the ground largely because it has come to be associated with performance-related pay, with all the risks of nepotism that PRP entails. Models of performance management that stress assessment or development rather than pay (Randell, 1994) may be more appropriate.

To sum up, the appropriate strategy for the government to pursue seems to be a modulated one: creating the conditions for SHRM by training civil servants and experimenting with devolution, and making piecemeal improvements by selecting from a wider range of approaches to individual HR activities such as employee selection and performance management.

THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR HRM IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

What implications does our study have for HRM in other developing countries? We must first acknowledge its limitations. The case study methodology that we have used limits the generalizability of our findings to other countries and settings.[v] But we can suggest some tentative implications. The first is that our study shows how a single detailed case study, ironically of the very kind that Becker and Gerhart and Guest had called for, can qualify the findings of even robust correlational studies like those of Huselid and Evans and Rauch. What appears promising in a cross-sectional study is apt to break down when we address particular cases. It would be unwise for developing country governments to extrapolate from the findings of such studies to their own situations.

A second implication is to do with the application of the SHRM model. We have suggested here that applying it in Mauritius would require, among other things, a substantial devolution of staff management and a strategic framework for managing the civil service. There is some evidence that those things are missing in other developing country governments too: where devolution is concerned, Mauritius shares its centralized Cabinet system of government, with other Commonwealth countries (see for instance Commonwealth Secretariat, 1995 and 1997). Where a strategic framework is concerned, we noted earlier that such a framework for managing the affairs of government is a rarity in developing countries. Thus the SHRM model may not be the right one for many developing countries at present.

On the other hand, that does not lessen the need that any practical person must feel for alternatives to the indefensible *status quo* in public staff management, both in Mauritius and in other developing countries (Taylor, 1992). Perhaps the modulated approach for which our article argues in the case of Mauritius is appropriate in other developing countries too. Such a modulated model would need to permit the creative, piecemeal adaptation that we have argued for in relation to performance management in Mauritius. But a glance at any standard HR textbook (Schuler, 1995; Torrington and Hall, 1998) will show how far the HR scholarly and practitioner community is from realizing these conditions, a deficiency which the efforts of Blunt and Popoola (1985) and Kamoche (1997) have only partly remedied. It would be an exaggeration to say that SHRM, the main focus of our article, is merely an elegant distraction from the staffing problems like nepotism that preoccupy many developing country governments. We suggested earlier that SHRM is a Western, private sector solution to the Western, private sector problem of how to maximize organizational performance in an atmosphere of intense competition: this is explicit in seminal HRM texts like Fombrun *et al.* (1984). The priority for developing country governments is to respond appropriately to the distinctive challenges that they face, in staff management just as in other areas of governance. The priority for HR scholars and practitioners is to bring forward models that will help

governments to respect the political, economic and social realities within which governments operate. There must be a 'strategic fit', not only between the HRM policies of individual organizations and their environments, but between theoretical HRM models and the wider national and sectoral environments in which they are deployed.

REFERENCES

Anthony, W, Perrewé, P and Kacmar, K (1993) *Strategic human resource management,* Fort Worth, Tx: Dryden.

Appelbaum, E and Batt, R (1994) *The new American workplace: Transforming work systems in the United States.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell.

Ashurst, M (1998) 'An African success story', *Banker*, 148, pp 870: 47-50.

Becker, B and Gerhart, B (1996) 'The impact of human resource management on organizational performance', *Academy of Management Journal*, 39, pp 779-801.

Beer, M *et al.* (1985) *Human resource management: A general manager's perspective*, New York: Free Press.

Blunt, P and Jones, M (1992) *Managing organisations in Africa,* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Blunt, P and Popoola, O (1985) *Personnel Management in Africa,* London: Longman.

Bowman, L (1991) *Mauritius: Democracy and development in the Indian Ocean*, Boulder, Co: Westview.

Brewster, C and Hegewisch, A (1994) *Policy and Practice in European Human Resource Management: The Price Waterhouse Cranfield Survey,* London: Routledge.

Brown, D (1989) 'Bureaucracy as an issue in Third World management: An African case study', *Public Administration and Development*, 9, pp 369-380.

Burgoyne, J (1994) 'Stakeholder analysis', in C Cassell and G Syman (eds) *Qualitative methods in organizational research*, London: Sage, pp 187-207.

Carroll, B and T (1997) 'State and ethnicity in Botswana and Mauritius: A democratic route to development? *Journal of Development Studies*, 33, pp 464-86.

Carroll, B and Joypaul, S (1993) 'The Mauritian senior public since independence: Some lessons for developing and developed nations', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 59, pp 423-40.

Cleveland, J, Murphy, K and Williams, R (1989) 'Multiple uses of performance appraisal: Prevalence and correlates', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 74, pp 130-135.

Commonwealth Secretariat (1997) *Current good practices and new developments in public service management: The Public Service of Zimbabwe,* London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Commonwealth Secretariat (1995) *Current good practices and new developments in public service management: The Public Service of Trinidad and Tobago,* London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

The Courier (1998) 'An eclectic society', *The Courier*, 170, pp 14-17.

De Giorgio, E (2000) 'Mauritius: A role model for Africa', *African Business*, 254, pp 31-32.

Delery, J and Doty, D (1996) 'Modes of theorizing in strategic human resource management: Tests of universalistic, contingency and configurational performance predictions', *Academy of Management Journal*, 39, pp 802-35.

Ding, D, Goodall, K and Warner, M (2000) 'The end of the 'iron rice-bowl': Whither Chinese human resource management?', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11, pp 217-36.

Dubey, A (1997) *Government and politics in Mauritius,* Delhi: Kalinga.

The Economist (1999) 'Reggae rage in Mauritius', *The Economist*, February 27, 43.

The Economist (1996) 'A half-African success story', *The Economist*, December 14, 45.

The Economist (1995) 'Good havens', *The Economist*, September 30, 122.

Economist Intelligence Unit (1999) *Country profile: Mauritius, Seychelles,* London: Economist Intelligence Unit.

Eisenhardt, M (1989) 'Building theories from case study research', *Academy of Management Review*, 14, pp 532-50.

Eriksen, T (1998) *Common denominators: Ethnicity, nation-building and compromise in Mauritius,* Oxford: Berg.

Evans, P and Rauch, J (1999) 'Bureaucracy and growth: A cross-national analysis of the effects of "Weberian" state structures on economic growth', *American Sociological Review*, 64, pp 748-65.

Fombrun, C, Tichy, N and Devanna, M (1984) *Strategic human resource management*, New York: Wiley.

Government of Mauritius (2000) *Reform of the civil service: Report of the standing committee on civil service reform,* Port-Louis: Government of Mauritius.

Guest, D (1997) 'Human resource management and performance: A review and research agenda', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 8, pp 263-76.

Guest, D (1989) 'Personnel and HRM: Can you tell the difference?', *Personnel Management,* 21, 1, pp 48-51.

Gulhati, R and Nallari, R (1990) *Successful stabilization and recovery in Mauritius,* Washington DC: World Bank.

Heenan, D (1994) 'Postcards from the edge', *Journal of Business Strategy*, 15, 5, pp 14-16.

Huselid, M (1995) 'The impact of human resource management practices on turnover, productivity and corporate financial performance', *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, pp 635-70.

Kamoche, K (1997) 'Competence-creation in the African public sector', *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, 10, pp 268-279.

Kamoche, K (1996) 'Strategic human resource management within a resource-capability view of the firm', *Journal of Management Studies*, 33, pp 213-33.

Kamoche, K (1992) 'Human resource management: An assessment of the Kenyan case', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 3, pp 497-521.

Kiggundu, M (1989) *Managing organizations in developing countries*, Hartford, Ct: Kumarian.

Lee, T (1999) *Using qualitative methods in organizational research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Leonard, D (1988) 'The secrets of African managerial success', *IDS Bulletin*, 19, 4, pp 35-41.

Linton, R (1936) *The study of man*, New York: Appleton-Century.

Long, P (1986) *Performance appraisal revisited*, London: Institute of Personnel Management.

Love, K, Bishop R, Heinisch D, and Montei, M (1994) 'Selection across two cultures: Adapting the selection of American assemblers to meet Japanese job performance demands', *Personnel Psychology*, 47, pp 837-846.

Macduffie, J (1995) 'Human resource bundles and manufacturing performance: Organizational logic and flexible production systems in the world auto industry', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 48, pp 197-221.

Mauritius News (2000) 'Election 2000 – Mauritius', *Mauritius News*, February 2000.

McCourt, W (2001a) *Commitment to civil service reform in Swaziland*, Manchester: Institute for Development Policy and Management, University of Manchester, Public Policy and Management Working Paper No 17.

McCourt, W (2001b) 'Moving the public management debate forward: A contingency approach', In McCourt, W and M Minogue (eds) *The internationalization of public management: Reinventing the Third World state*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp 220-53.

McCourt, W (2001c) 'Towards a strategic model of employment reform: Explaining and remedying experience to date', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 12, pp 56-75.

Meisenhelder, T (1997) 'The developmental state in Mauritius', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 35, pp 279-97.

Milliman, J, Nason S, Gallagher E, Huo P, Von Glinow, M and K Lowe (1998) The impact of national culture on human resource management practices: The case of performance appraisal In S Prasad (Ed) *Advances in international comparative management*, Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press, pp 157-83.

Ministry of Economic Development and Regional Co-operation (1997) *Vision 2020: The national long-term perspective study*, Port-Louis: Ministry of Economic Development and Regional Co-operation.

Minogue, M (1992) 'Mauritius: Economic miracle or developmental illusion?', *Journal of International Development*, 4, pp 643-7.

Minogue, M (1976) 'Public Administration in Mauritius' , *Journal of Administration Overseas*, 15,3, pp 160-66.

Morgan, D (1997) *Focus groups as qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Patterson, M, West M, Lawthorn, R and Nickell, S (1997) *The impact of people management practices on business performance,* London: Institute of Personnel and Development, Issues in People Management, No 22.

Pay Research Bureau, Mauritius (1998) *Review of Pay and Grading Structures and Conditions of Service in the Public Sector*, Vol 1, Port Louis: Government of Mauritius.

Pfeffer, J (1998) *The human equation: Building profits by putting people first,* Boston, Mass: Harvard Business School.

Pil, F and MacDuffie, J (1996) 'The adoption of high-involvement work practices', *Industrial Relations*, 35, pp 423-55.

Purcell, J (1995) 'Corporate strategy and its link with human resource management strategy' in J Storey (Ed) *Human resource management: A critical text,* London: Thomson, pp 63-86.

Randell, G (1994) 'Employee appraisal', in K Sisson (Ed) *Personnel management: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice in Britain*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp 221-252.

Ramaswamy, E and Schiphorst, F (2000) 'Human resource management, trade unions and empowerment: Two cases from India', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11, pp 664-80.

Rauch, J and Evans, P (2000) 'Bureaucratic structure and bureaucratic performance in less developed countries', *Journal of Public Economics*, 75, pp 49-71.

Schiavo-Campo, S, de Tommaso, G and Mukherjee, A (1997) *An international statistical survey of government employment and wages,* Washington, DC: World Bank, Policy Research Working Paper No 1806.

Schmidt, F and Hunter, J (1977) 'Development of a general solution to the problem of validity generalization', *Journal of Applied Psychology* 62, pp 529-40.

Schuler, R (1995) *Managing human resources,* Minneapolis: West.

Sparrow, P and Hiltrop, J (1994) *European human resource management in transition,* London: Prentice-Hall.

Stewart, J and Ranson, S (1988) 'Management in the public domain', *Public Money and Management*, 8, 1 & 2, pp 13-20.

Storey, J (1995) 'Human resource management: Still marching on, or marching out?', in J Storey (Ed) *Human resource management: A critical text,* London: Thomson, 3-32.

Taylor, H (1992) Public sector personnel management in three African countries: Current problems and possibilities, *Public Administration and Development*, 12, pp 193-207.

Terpstra, D and Rozell, E (1997) 'Why some potentially effective staffing practices are seldom used', *Public Personnel Management*, 26, pp 483-95.

Titmuss, R and Abel-Smith, B (1968) *Social Policies and Population Growth in Mauritius,* London: Frank Cass.

Torrington, D and L Hall (1998) *Human resource management*, London: Prentice-Hall.

Transparency International (2001) *The 2001 Corruption Perceptions Index,* http://www.transparency.org/documents/cpi/2001/cpi2001.html, accessed July 4 2001.

Tsui, A, Pearce, J, Porter, L and Tripoli, A (1997) 'Alternative approaches to the employee-organization relationship: Does investment in employees pay off?', *Academy of Management Journal*, 40, pp 1089-1121.

Walters, M (Ed) (1995) *The performance management handbook.* London: Institute of Personnel and Development.

Weber, M (1968) *Economy and society: An outline of interpretive sociology,* Berkeley: University of California.

Wood, G and Els, C (2000) 'The making and remaking of HRM: The practice of managing people in the Eastern Cape province, South Africa', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 11, pp 112-25.

World Bank (1989) *Mauritius: Managing success,* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Wright, P and McMahan, G (1992) 'Theoretical perspectives for strategic human resource management', *Journal of Management*, 18, pp 295-320.

Yin, R (1994) *Case study research: design and methods,* London: Sage.

---

[i] Brown (1989) is an exception, but only a partial one.

[ii] Mauritius, unluckily, is not included in Evans and Rauch's 35-country data set.

[iii] Mauritian officials indicated that the IMF and the World Bank periodically offer the government the same medicine, which the government politely declines to swallow.

[iv] This quotation and all unattributed quotations after this point are from our interview transcripts and notes.

[v] At the time of writing, the first-named author was carrying out a replication study on the civil service of Morocco, a second African country which has been relatively prosperous over the last twenty years and which, unlike Mauritius, is included in Evans and Rauch's dataset.