



NEW FORMS OF OWNERSHIP AND HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTICES IN VIETNAM

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In 1986, the government of Vietnam commenced the move from a centrally planned system to a market-oriented economy with a multisectoral economic structure and a multiownership system. This process, known as Doi Moi, has had a major effect on the economic and social fabric of Vietnam. Although the body of research on this topic has grown, few studies have explored the effect of these economic changes on the internal operations of enterprises. In particular, little is known about the relationship between these new forms of ownership and how enterprises structure their human resource management. This article seeks to explore this relationship through detailed case studies of 32 enterprises covering the range of ownership types. The findings reveal a diversity of human resource management practices, but certain practices are now more prevalent in particular types of enterprises; human resource management remains the overall exception. The article concludes by considering the theoretical and practical implications of these results for economies undergoing transition. © 2008 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

Introduction

Human resource management is an important subject that has attracted growing attention from practitioners and policymakers in Asian countries. Under the process of globalization, the trend toward greater marketization and increasing competition

has forced all the economic players to adopt strategies to improve their competitiveness, and HRM has been seen and used as one of the important ways to achieve that competitive advantage. The changes resulting from globalization are well illustrated in Vietnam, as that country moves from a traditional socialist economy to a hybrid one in which private and public

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ownership coexist. 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. In turn, these differences may affect the form of management of an enterprise's workforce (HR practices). One relatively new kind of HR practice is HRM.

We analyze the pattern of human resource practices among enterprises with different ownership systems and address three key questions. First, does ownership type predict the prevalence of HRM practices? Second, what factors influence ownership forms to adopt different dimensions of HRM? Third, what are the implications of these patterns of HR practice for theory and application under the processes of globalization, increasing market competition, and economic reform and transition?

In answering these questions, the article is structured as follows. The next section reviews key literature related to traditional personnel management (PM) and HRM as well as other research on the relationship between ownership and the adoption of HRM. It also provides a

brief history of the changes taking place in Vietnam, focusing particularly on the changing ownership of Vietnamese industry. The third section outlines the methods adopted in this study, which relies on case studies of 32 enterprises with various forms of ownership. In the fourth section, these data are deployed to analyze the scale of HR practices as well as the factors influencing the adoption of HRM dimensions among the case study enterprises. We conclude the article by exploring the implications of the findings for theory and practice in terms of economic reform at the social level and the adoption of new management systems at the enterprise level under conditions of globalization and economic transition.

HRM and Economic Transition in Vietnam

The literature about transition and HRM can be divided into three themes. The first concerns the development of people management theory and HRM dimensions. This literature identifies the transformation of people management from a traditional model to the new model of HRM and leads to the first research question about the adoption of specific HRM dimensions. The second theme explores the factors that influence HR functions in different political, social, and economic environments; it is dominated by two approaches labeled "strategic choice" and "political economy." This literature leads to a framework through which to tackle the second research question about the factors that influence enterprises with different ownership to adopt specific dimensions of HRM. The third theme examines the influence of ownership on HR practices. General concerns related to enterprise ownership and HR practices, as well as particular case analysis of transitional economies such as China and Vietnam, provide a basis for our empirical analysis.

People Management Practices

Dulebohn, Ferris, and Stodd (1995) divide the development of people management practices into 11 stages, from the preindustrial era of the fifteenth century to current American labor-management practices. They categorize these practices according to workplace, technological, and structural changes marked by important historical events such as the industrial revolution, the establishment of factory systems, the development of scientific management into industrial relations (IR), personnel management, and the emergence of contemporary HRM.

A more detailed analysis of human resource dimensions by Storey (1992) identifies three stages of people-management transformation: the traditional stage, the PM stage, and the HRM stage. These stages are distinguished by eight dimensions (see Table I). As Storey (1995) claims, HRM is an approach to employment management that

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TABLE I The Dimensions of Different Human Resource Practices

Dimension	Socialist Traditional	PM	HRM
1. Employment status	Lifetime employment	Unlimited and fixed-term contract	Fixed-term contract, casual labor
2. Job allocation	Government plan	Internal centralization	Line manager
3. Wage determination	Management decision	Collective bargaining	Individual bargaining
4. Wage relations	Government wages scale	Team performance	Individual performance
5. Training and development	External institution	Internal controlled access to courses	Internal ongoing plan
6. Recruitment and staffing	External institutions	Internal centralization	Internal decentralization (line manager)
7. Union	Government agent, decision making	Collective bargaining, resolving conflict	De-emphasis, unitarist
8. Labor-management relationship	Harmony, low power distance	Institutionalization, high power distance	Cooperative culture

Source: Adapted from Storey (1992).

seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce using an integrated array of cultural, structural, and personal techniques. Storey's (1992) research on the transformation of people management from PM to HRM in the United Kingdom provides a model through which others can compare patterns of global HR practices in light of cultural and structural conditions and personnel techniques. One example is the research conducted by Rowley and Benson (2002) on convergence and divergence in Asian HR practices.

We replace the traditional model of HR practice developed for North American and Western European enterprises with the concept of a socialist traditional model. Based on pre-reform conditions, socialist traditional HR practice is defined in terms of external control of the enterprise, lifetime employment and uniformity between industries within the public ownership system (e.g., state-owned enterprises). Storey's model of PM and HRM is used to identify changes in

people management since *Doi Moi* in relation to multiownership systems. In PM, more internal organizational control exists, workers enjoy extended job security, and collective bargaining at the local level determines many of the employment conditions. HRM represents a unitarist approach in which line managers maintain strong control over people management, employment is contingent, and rewards are performance-based. The dimensional approach is a useful concept that enables us to see the transformation of people management at an enterprise level and identify whether the enterprise has adopted any of the new HR practices.

Strategic Choice Approach vs. Political Economy Approach

In the past two decades, research has focused on the specific circumstances of individual countries and their impact on HR practices at the enterprise level. Two major approaches dominate the debate about the factors that

influence HR functions in different political, social, and economic environments—the strategic choice approach and the political economy approach (Martin & Bamber, 2005; Warner, 2000).

Strategic choice became part of the vocabulary of many comparative studies of HR practices in the 1980s (Martin & Bamber, 2005). The focus of strategic choice is on organizational business strategies in which the line between HR practice and business strategies is the major concern (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Martin & Bamber, 2005). This approach emphasizes the role of management

initiative (Kochan, Katz, & McKersie, 1986) and the integration of HR practices and business strategies (Guest, 1989; Storey & Sisson, 1993). It favors increased management autonomy, a rejection of collective bargaining, and a reduced union role in employment relations (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Quinn, & Walton, 1984; Dowling & Welch, 2004).

In contrast, the political economy approach focuses on the integration of a “system of production, the role of government, the broader social and economic environment, and employment relations institutions at the enter-

prise, industry, national, and international levels” (Martin & Bamber, 2005, p. 381).

The international political economy has changed dramatically in the last few decades, and HR systems have adjusted accordingly. In general, there are three main trends: the intensification of international competition, widespread deregulation across industrialized countries, and the collapse of communism that boosted the confidence of neo-liberal ideologues (Martin & Bamber, 2005). Murray, Levesque, and Vallee (2000) claim that this approach involves analyzing the interaction between interest groups and institutions. This interaction influences the manner in which nations integrate into the international political economy and ultimately determines the impact of globalization in each country and region, with their

HR systems being influenced accordingly (Van Ruysseveldt, 1995). This debate directed us toward investigating the factors that influence enterprises with different ownership forms to adopt specific dimensions of HRM.

Vietnam, Economic Reform, and Enterprise Ownership

Since independence, the economic history of Vietnam can be divided into several phases: pre-1975, 1975–86, and 1986 to the present (Zhu, 2003). Before 1975, the country was divided. Two economic systems were operating and were distinguished by ideology: a socialist central planning system in the north and a capitalist market economy in the south (Nguyen, 1987). The 1975–86 period of adjustment after unification saw the development of a national economic approach under a socialist planning system. Economic reform was initiated by the government in 1986, inaugurating a period of gradual change in Vietnam—“the slow transition.”

Under the pre-reform system, which lasted until 1985, state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and other collective cooperatives were the only economic sectors operating legally in Vietnam. Private ownership was considered the enemy of socialism. SOEs operated mainly in industries considered critical to the national economy, and their activities followed a plan preset by the central government. The command economy in Vietnam also was associated with a distinctive system of labor regulation that encompassed particular forms of labor allocation, employment status, wage and nonwage benefits, and management-labor relations. Key characteristics included job allocation based on a quota system set up by the Labor Bureau, permanent employment status, a nationally standardized wage system and welfare benefits, and party and management control at the workplace and over trade unions (Zhu & Fahey, 2000).

In 1986, Vietnam began its economic reform process, *Doi Moi*. The main aim of *Doi Moi* was to move from a centrally planned economic system to a market-oriented one

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with a multisectoral economic structure and a multiownership system (Fforde & De Vylder, 1996). The adoption of changes to Vietnam's economic system accompanies, and is in part a response to, globalization. HRM and PM systems have been introduced to replace the socialist traditional form of HR practice during the economic reform process in order to ensure that competitive advantage can be gained through enterprise-level management reforms (Collins, 2005a).

Vietnam's current economy can be categorized as a transitional economy (Zhu, 2005). One of the important transformation phenomena is the changing of the ownership system from one of predominantly SOEs to a new system with multiple ownership including SOEs, multinational companies (MNCs; wholly owned foreign-invested companies), joint ventures (JVs; between foreign investors and local SOEs), and privately owned enterprises (POEs). These changes in business ownership have been accompanied by a move from a socialist system to a hybrid structure with a mix of public and private ownership. Research on the likely influence of ownership on the adoption of HR practices in the new Vietnam may be divided into three categories.

The first category concerns the influence of ownership structure on HR practices. Weinstein and Obloj (2002) claim that companies with a lot of experience in a market economy will have more developed and sophisticated HR practices than will companies previously in a centrally planned economy. Institutional theory predicts that enterprises—social entities seeking approval for their performance—may use HR dimensions to help them gain legitimacy and acceptance in order to facilitate survival (Jackson & Schuler, 1999). Therefore, the external origins of foreign-invested enterprises, including both MNCs and JVs, may create demands for legitimacy that differ from those of local enterprises, demands that in turn induce different HR practices. On the other hand, resource dependence theory claims that the possession of resources affects the distribution of power in enterprises and that HR practices may be used to reflect the nature of this power distribution (Jackson &

Schuler, 1999). Hence, the more types of stakeholders there are in enterprises, the more they may use HRM to reflect their complicated power distribution. In other words, ownership other than SOEs may make efficiency a more compelling goal for management to achieve (Quang & Thang, 2004; Thang & Quang, 2005a).

The second category of research includes case studies of other transitional economies. Some of these examples, particularly those focusing on China, provide an understanding of ownership changes and adoption of HRM. Benson and Zhu's (1999) research on the transformation of HR practices in SOEs in China identifies three models of transition: (1) a minimalist approach, in which enterprises have made little attempt to adopt new HR practices; (2) a transitional stage between the old and the new forms of people management; and (3) an attempt to adopt the HRM paradigm.

The liberalization of the economy and the introduction of foreign investment have created the opportunity for Chinese domestic enterprises to adopt some of the "new" HR practices. SOEs that are involved in JVs or contracting arrangements with foreign companies are more likely than other SOEs to have adopted HRM. Therefore, globalization, business-oriented beliefs, and a stronger customer-oriented strategy are crucial elements for enterprises to engage in HRM (Benson & Zhu, 1999). In addition, Ding, Goodall, and Warner's (2000) research on China shows that MNCs and JVs have a positive impact on changes in HR practices. They not only introduce updated management systems and practices into their business operation, but they also influence other domestic enterprises in changing traditional people-management practices.

The third category of research includes earlier studies on HRM in Vietnam and its relationship with changing enterprise ownership. Some of the relevant research projects on Vietnam include Kamoche (2001), Zhu

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(2002, 2005), Quang and Thang (2004), and Thang and Quang (2005a, 2005b). Kamoche's (2001) research explores the business environment and the reform process and their implications for skill formation and the development of managerial expertise. It examines some specific HR practices in four enterprises in Hanoi, two SOEs, and two MNCs. This research shows that SOEs have fairly conservative policies, with no formal HR practices except for traditional welfare paternalism. MNCs were found to be striving to introduce Western practices into traditional management systems (Kamoche, 2001).

Zhu's (2002) work examines a number of enterprises with different ownership in Ho Chi Minh (HCM) City, which has a more market-oriented economic environment than Hanoi. Three key variables—ownership, size, and market orientation—were used to test the transformation of HR practices in Vietnam. This research finds that there are differences in HR practices between different ownership forms: JVs and MNCs normally make greater use of advanced technology and international standards of HRM than do local enterprises. However, there is a tendency for localization of MNCs' behavior among the cases. In addition, the SOEs that have been reformed and equitized as joint stock companies (JSCs) are more likely than other SOEs to have transformed their

HR practices from the socialist traditional model to more formalized HR practices. The adoption of HRM not only is related to ownership, but is also associated with sector (high-tech vs. labor-intensive), size (large vs. small), and market orientation (export vs. domestic orientation). Generally speaking, high-tech, large, and export-oriented enterprises adopt more HRM dimensions.

Based on these findings, Zhu (2005) classifies employment strategies into *numerical flexibility* and *functional flexibility* in order to illustrate the recent changes in people management, in particular since the

Asian Financial Crisis. These data indicate that labor flexibility strategies were not fully adopted by the case study companies. Political, cultural, legal, and economic factors make labor flexibility in Vietnam different from that in other countries (Zhu, 2005). For instance, companies are not able to adjust the number of permanent employees due to legal constraints. In addition, Vietnamese cultural traditions that place great emphasis on enterprise and personal commitment and harmonious working environments prevent the full deployment of functional flexibility (Zhu, 2005).

Thang and Quang's (2005a, 2005b) research examines forms of HR practice: the functions of HR departments, recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, and compensation. Overall, foreign-invested enterprises have somewhat more developed HR practices than do SOEs, which is consistent with the argument made by institutional theorists about social entities seeking approval for enterprise performance and using HRM to gain legitimacy (Jackson & Schuler, 1999). In addition, local private companies are often less receptive to adopting HRM than SOEs. The transformation of SOEs into equitized companies has brought no significant changes in this regard, a finding that is inconsistent with the resource dependence approach that suggests enterprises use HRM to reflect complicated power distributions (Quang & Thang, 2004; Thang & Quang, 2005a, 2005b). This theoretical perspective also is inconsistent with Zhu's (2005) research.

This literature offers some consensus about the evolution of HRM in transitional economies, but also points to key differences between transitional and other economies. We aim to contribute to this literature by redefining the variable of comparison—namely, whether enterprises adopt socialist traditional, PM, and HRM dimensions. In addition, by comparing enterprises in two major industrial locations—Hanoi and HCM City—the influence of the different histories of enterprise form also may be considered. Thus, we are able to identify current HR practices in enterprises with different ownerships,

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the factors influencing enterprises to adopt certain dimensions of HRM, and the implications of these changes for HRM theory and practice.

Methodology and Case Studies

The key aim of the research is to explore how different ownership systems affect the adoption of HRM. Given that manufacturing is the sector in which the full variety of ownership

is present, we focus on this industry. This industry also employs a large number of workers and represents a majority of businesses in Vietnam. Thirty-two manufacturing enterprises were selected from the Vietnam Industrial Directory (*Nien Giam Cong Nghiep Viet Nam*) based on five criteria: type of ownership, enterprise location, product market, labor intensity, and size of the enterprise (see Table II). To obtain a representative sample, we chose two enterprises in each of the four

TABLE II Case Study Enterprises

City				SOE	JV	POE	MNC
Hanoi	Export Product Market	High Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise	S1		P1	
			Small Enterprise		J1		M1
		Low Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise		J2		M2
			Small Enterprise	S2		P2	
	Domestic Product Market	High Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise		J3	P3	M3
			Small Enterprise	S3			
		Low Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise	S4			
			Small Enterprise		J4	P4	M4
Ho Chi Minh City	Export Product Market	High Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise		J5	P5	
			Small Enterprise	S5			M5
		Low Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise	S6			M6
			Small Enterprise		J6	P6	
	Domestic Product Market	High Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise	S7		P7	M7
			Small Enterprise		J7		
		Low Labor-Intensive	Large Enterprise		J8		
			Small Enterprise	S8		P8	M8

ownership categories (SOEs, POEs, JVs, and MNCs) at each of the two locations—16 enterprises in total.

Vietnam was divided into northern and southern regions until unification in 1975. Even today, each region has different levels of economic development and distinct cultures (Fforde & De Vylder, 1996; Zhu, 2003). As the research sought to investigate whether historical context has influenced the economic reform process as a whole, particularly at an enterprise level, we decided to survey enterprises

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from both regions. Hanoi and the surrounding areas in the north and HCM City and its environs in the south were chosen for this study because they are Vietnam's two main business and commercial centers, representing different aspects of Vietnam's historical economic development and reform.

Hanoi is the area in which the largest and oldest SOEs are located. Unlike other areas of Vietnam, most SOEs in Hanoi are still strongly plan-oriented because they are in close proximity to the central government and influenced by central government policies (Collins, 2005b). Even SOEs that have formed JV partnerships have a slower rate of change than elsewhere in Vietnam. In recent times, some MNCs have begun to operate in Hanoi, most of them newcomers from other Asian economies, such as Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, and

Japan. Unlike SOEs, POEs in Hanoi are generally small and have a short history of operation as private businesses. The turning point for the development of the private sector in the Hanoi area was the introduction of the Enterprise Law in 1999. This law has had a substantial impact on the private sector by encouraging the establishment of new enterprises as well as privatization of SOEs and collective cooperatives.

In fact, HCM City has a longer history of market economy and private ownership than Hanoi. Since *Doi Moi* in particular, HCM City

has been used as an area for experiments on reform policies, including the introduction of new HR practices. HCM City and its surrounding areas form the biggest industrial zone in Vietnam and contribute 60% of national revenue. SOEs in this region are younger than in Hanoi because most of them were established after 1975. But JVs, MNCs, and POEs have been operating here longer than in Hanoi. For instance, wholly owned foreign-invested enterprises (i.e., MNCs) have been established since the Vietnam Foreign Investment Law was promulgated in 1987. Substantial foreign direct investment (FDI) came into this region during the mid-1990s. In recent years, although the trends in development are similar in the north and south, distinctions still remain between these two regions in terms of the level of development, the openness of economic policy, and the introduction of modern management systems.

Two categories of people were selected for interviews in each enterprise. The first category was managerial staff (members of the management board, HR or line managers) or trade union leaders. The second category was workers, including a workers' representative (in nonunionized enterprises), a senior worker, and a female worker. Semistructured interviews were conducted with six people in each organization. In total, 192 persons were interviewed from the 32 enterprises. The interview questions were based on the eight dimensions of people management by selecting variables from traditional PM and HRM models. The answers were given by the interviewees, including managers, union leaders, workers, and their representatives; the information provided by managers and workers was cross-checked after the interviews in each enterprise. Interviews with management were structured with a list of questions. The main themes of these questions concerned the background of the enterprise, organizational structure, business operations, HR practices, and views on management change. The interviews were conducted at the enterprises and lasted for about 1.5 hours. Interviews with workers took place outside the business sites, because interviewees were not allowed to take time off for interviews and they would not

feel comfortable talking about problems in front of their managers. A list of questions was prepared, but respondents could introduce new issues, which were included in the interview record.

Results

Table III reveals that not all dimensions of the HRM model were adopted in the case study enterprises. Generally speaking, there were mixed adoptions among the socialist traditional, PM, and HRM models: some enterprises had multiple adoptions of several key dimensions across the three models. These hybrids particularly were prevalent in the areas of employment status, job allocation, wage relations, and labor-management relations. This discovery indicates that the adoption among these models is not clear-cut. Overlapping and seemingly inconsistent forms of management practices are present.

In terms of the total number of adoptions, the PM model is most common, with 117 adoptions, followed by the HRM model with 104, and the socialist traditional model with 94. The general trend of practices among the sample enterprises is moving toward (or remaining with) a PM model orientation, although with some adoption of HRM and socialist traditional dimensions.

The different dimensions of the three models have been adopted with varying frequency. The most commonly adopted

dimensions of the socialist traditional model include wage determination through management decision (29 enterprises), unions as a government agent (21), and labor-management relations through harmony and low power distance (24). In contrast, the PM model is most reflected in the dimensions of employment status of unlimited and fixed-term contract (24), job allocation through internal centralization (24), wage relations based on team performance (21), and recruitment and staffing through internal centralization (22). The adoption of the HRM model is, however, relatively concentrated in the dimensions of training and development through an internal ongoing plan (20) and a de-emphasis of unions and the unitarist IR system (16).

The effects of ownership and location on the adoption of different HR practices are summarized in Tables IV and V. These raw data indicate that ownership has an effect on the HR practices of organizations. SOEs tend to follow more traditional practices; privately owned organizations and joint ventures are more closely associated with the PM model, and MNCs have a higher frequency of adoption of HRM than do other ownership forms. Likewise, in terms of ownership, organizations in HCM City appear to have a higher rate of adoption of HRM than do firms in Hanoi, which, conversely, are more oriented toward socialist traditional and PM practices.

TABLE III Human Resource Practices in Case Study Enterprises

	Socialist Traditional Model	PM Model	HRM Model
1. Employment status	8	24	14
2. Job allocation	0	24	15
3. Wage determination	29	2	5
4. Wage relations	12	21	13
5. Training and development	0	11	20
6. Recruitment and staffing	0	22	13
7. Unions	21	7	16
8. Labor-management relations	24	6	8
Total no. of adoption	94	117	104

T A B L E I V Type of Ownership and Human Resource Practices

Case Dimension	SOE								POE								JV								MNC							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Traditional																																
1. lifetime employment	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
2. government plan	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
3. management decision	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
4. government wages scale	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
5. external institutions	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
6. government plan	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
7. government agent, decision making	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
8. harmony, low power distance	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Total	4	0							2	3						1	8							1	3							
PM																																
1. unlimited and fixed-term contract	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
2. internal centralization	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
3. collective bargaining	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
4. team performance	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
5. internal controlled access to courses	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
6. internal centralization	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
7. collective bargaining, resolving conflict	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
8. institutionalization, high power distance	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
Total	2	3							3	9					3	1							2	4								
HRM																																
1. fixed-term contract, casual labor	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
2. line manager	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
3. individual bargaining	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
4. individual performance	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
5. internal ongoing plan	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
6. internal decentralization (line manager)	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
7. de-emphasis, unitarist	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
8. cooperative culture	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•		
Total	1	5							1	9					2	9							3	7								

Note:

- 1. Employment status
- 2. Job allocation
- 3. Wage determination
- 4. Wage relations
- 5. Training and development
- 6. Recruitment and staffing
- 7. Unions
- 8. Labor-management relations

T A B L E V Location and Human Resource Practices

Dimension	Hanoi								Ho Chi Minh City																							
	S1	S2	S3	S4	J1	J2	J3	J4	P1	P2	P3	P4	m1	m2	m3	m4	S5	S6	S7	S8	J5	J6	J7	J8	P5	P6	P7	P8	m5	m6	m7	M8
1. lifetime employment	•	•	•	•													•	•	•	•												
2. government plan																	•	•	•	•												
3. management decision	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
4. government wages scale	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
5. external institutions																	•	•	•	•												
6. government plan																	•	•	•	•												
7. government agent, decision making	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
8. harmony, low power distance	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Total						4	3																5	0								
1. unlimited and fixed-term contract																																
2. internal centralization	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
3. collective bargaining	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•					•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
4. team performance																																
5. internal controlled access to courses																																
6. internal centralization																																
7. collective bargaining, resolving conflict	•																															
8. institutionalization, high power distance																																
Total						6	7																	4		9						
1. fixed-term contract, casual labor																																
2. line manager																																
3. individual bargaining																																
4. individual performance																																
5. internal ongoing plan																																
6. internal decentralization (line manager)																																
7. de-emphasis, unitarist																																
8. cooperative culture																																
Total																								4		1						

Note:

1. Employment status
2. Job allocation
3. Wage determination
4. Wage relations
5. Training and development
6. Recruitment and staffing
7. Unions
8. Labor-management relations

To explore further the impact of factors on the adoption of types of HR practices, the data presented in Tables IV and V were subjected to more rigorous analysis. Each firm is given three scores: *T*, the number of dimensions on which the firm is identified as following socialist traditional practices; *P*, the number on which it is identified as following the PM model; and *H*, the number of dimensions on which it follows the HRM model. There is no evidence that the nature of the market (export or domestic), the intensity of labor use (high or low), or the size of the enterprise (large or small) affect the scores of organizations on these variables. Ownership strongly predicts all three scores; location predicts *P* and *H*; and there is some evidence of an interaction between ownership and location in predicting *P*. The details are presented in Tables VI, VII, and VIII. The statistical tests confirm what Table IV indicates, that SOEs have the highest frequency of adopting socialist traditional practices and MNCs the lowest; POEs and, to a lesser extent, JVs are the most likely to adopt dimensions of the PM model; and MNCs and, to a lesser extent, JVs, are the most likely to adopt dimensions of the HRM model. In terms of location, enterprises from Hanoi are more likely to adopt dimensions of the PM model and less likely to adopt dimensions of the HR model than firms from HCM City.

The adoption of the individual dimensions of the three HRM models is demonstrated in Tables IV and V. The first conclusion from these data is that some of the dimensions of the traditional model of people management are no longer practiced by any of the enterprises in the sample: government plan in job allocation (dimension 2), recruitment and staffing (dimension 6), and external institutions for training and development (dimension 5).

The second conclusion is that ownership exerts a strong influence over the forms of people management adopted by firms in Vietnam. Ownership predicts:

1. Which firms use some of the dimensions of the traditional model: lifetime employment (all and only SOEs); the government wage scale for wage determination (all SOEs and some POEs); unions as government agents (all SOEs, some POEs and JVs); and harmonious labor-management relations (all SOEs, most POEs, some JVs and MNCs);
2. Which firms use some of the dimensions of the PM model: team performance wage relations (all POEs, most JVs, some SOEs and MNCs); internally controlled access to training (most POEs, a few others); unions for conflict resolution (some JVs, a few POEs); institutionalized labor-management relations (some MNCs, a few JVs); and
3. Which firms use some of the dimensions of the HRM model: fixed-term contracts (most MNCs and POEs); individual performance wage relations (most SOEs, JVs, and MNCs); internally planned training (most SOEs, JVs, and MNCs); de-emphasis on unions (MNCs; some POEs and JVs); and cooperative culture of labor-management relations (some JVs and MNCs).

The third conclusion that can be drawn from these data is that location exerts influence over the adoption of these dimensions of people management, but its influence is weaker than that of ownership. In brief, location:

1. Has no influence over the adoption of traditional dimensions of people management;
2. Does predict the adoption of some dimensions of the PM model: centralized job allocation and institutionalized labor-management relations (both more common in Hanoi than in HCM City); and
3. Also predicts the adoption of some dimensions of the HRM model: fixed-term contracts and decentralized recruitment (both more common in HCM City than in Hanoi).

Discussion and Conclusion

The analysis has illustrated the patterns of HR practice among enterprises with different ownership systems. In terms of the first research question concerning the prevalence

TABLE VI Predicting the Adoption of Human Resource Practices**(A) Multivariate model**

Effect	Pillai's Trace	F	Degrees of freedom		Signif-Sig.	Observed Power
			Hypothesis	Error		
Intercept	0.98	294.52	3	22	0.00	1.00
Org	1.12	4.76	9	72	0.00	1.00
Loc	0.37	4.28	3	22	0.02	0.88
Org * Loc	0.54	1.75	9	72	0.09	0.84

(B) Individual variables

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Significance	Partial Eta Squared
Organization	<i>T</i> ^a	54.34	3	18.12	13.69	0.00	0.63
Location		2.53	1	2.53	1.91	0.18	0.07
Org*Loc		5.59	3	1.87	1.41	0.26	0.15
Error		31.75	24	1.32			
Total		94.22	31				
Organization	<i>P</i> ^b	20.59	3	6.87	18.12	0.01	0.41
Location		9.03	1	9.03	7.29	0.01	0.23
Org*Loc		13.84	3	4.62	3.72	0.03	0.32
Error		29.75	24	1.24			
Total		73.22	31				
Organization	<i>H</i> ^c	28.50	3	9.50	4.85	0.01	0.38
Location		18.00	1	18.00	9.19	0.01	0.28
Org*Loc		6.50	3	2.17	1.11	0.37	0.12
Error		47.00	24	1.96			
Total		100.00	31				

Notes: *T* is defined as number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as socialist traditional; *P* is number of dimensions in which firms are identified as personnel management; and *H* is the number of dimensions in which firms are identified as human resource management.

Calculations from multivariate log-linear analysis of variance. Tests of the assumptions of the multivariate model: (i) *T* and *H* are not normal, but non-normality is associated with skewness rather than outliers, and *F* is robust to such distributions; *P* is normal. (ii) The dependent variables and covariates are not nonlinearly associated. (iii) The Box test does not reject the assumption that covariances are homogeneous across the cells of the design. The test has sufficient power by conventional standards (0.8).

For the analysis of the individual variables: the error variances of *T* and *P* are not homogeneous across the cells of the design. Inspection of Table IV reveals that this occurs because SOEs (org = 1) have zero variance within *T* and POEs (org = 2) have low variance in *P*. In view of the significance of the multivariate model and the strength of the effect of ownership, this deviation should not be critical. In the model for *T*, the observed power for the effects of location and organization*location < 0.8; in the model for *H*, the observed power for the effect of organization*location < 0.8. Low power means that the model may not reject a false null hypothesis (of no effect)—that is, may be conservative in rejecting the null hypothesis.

^a*R* Squared = .663 (Adjusted *R* Squared = .565)

^b*R* Squared = .594 (Adjusted *R* Squared = .475)

^c*R* Squared = .530 (Adjusted *R* Squared = .393)

0.00 indicates $p < 0.005$; 0.01 indicates $0.005 < p < 0.05$; 0.07 indicates $0.05 < p < 0.10$.

TABLE VII Estimated Marginal Means for Human Resource Practices: Ownership

Dependent Variable	Ownership Category	Mean Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
<i>T</i>	SOE	5.00	0.41	4.16	5.84
	Private	2.50	0.41	1.66	3.34
	JV	2.38	0.41	1.54	3.21
	MNC	1.50	0.41	0.66	2.34
<i>P</i>	SOE	2.88	0.39	2.06	3.69
	Private	4.88	0.39	4.06	5.69
	JV	3.88	0.39	3.06	4.69
	MNC	3.00	0.39	2.19	3.81
<i>H</i>	SOE	2.38	0.49	1.35	3.40
	Private	2.38	0.49	1.35	3.40
	JV	3.63	0.49	2.60	4.65
	MNC	4.63	0.49	3.60	5.65

Notes: Mean score is the score of each type of ownership on the human resource practices, socialist traditional (*T*), personnel management (*P*) and human resource management (*H*), as predicted from the models identified in Table VI.

T is defined as the number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as socialist traditional; *P* is the number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as personnel management; and *H* is number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as human resource management.

TABLE VIII Estimated Marginal Means for Human Resource Practices: Location

Dependent Variable	Location	Mean Score	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower	Upper
<i>T</i>	Hanoi	2.56	0.29	1.97	3.16
	Ho Chi Minh	3.13	0.29	2.53	3.72
<i>P</i>	Hanoi	4.19	0.28	3.61	4.76
	Ho Chi Minh	3.13	0.28	2.55	3.70
<i>H</i>	Hanoi	2.50	0.35	1.78	3.22
	Ho Chi Minh	4.00	0.35	3.28	4.72

Notes: Mean score is the score of each type of ownership on the human resource practices, socialist traditional (*T*), personnel management (*P*) and human resource management (*H*), as predicted from the models identified in Table VI.

T is defined as the number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as socialist traditional; *P* is the number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as personnel management; and *H* is number of dimensions on which a firm is identified as human resource management.

of changes in HR practices within enterprises of different ownership, the study demonstrates that a combination of all three models of human resource practice—namely, socialist traditional, PM, and HRM—exist in practice, but with slightly more orientation

toward PM and, to a lesser extent, HRM. The adoption of the various HR dimensions has occurred differently among these case study enterprises, and there is no clear-cut adoption of one particular model of HR practice. Generally speaking, enterprises with foreign

capital involvement, such as MNCs and JVs, display more HRM dimensions than do other types of ownership.

These data also demonstrate that the new HRM model has been adopted at the same time as elements of socialist traditional and PM models among the newly established enterprises (MNCs, JVs, and POEs). The literature's claim, that economic reform allows foreign firms to influence local firms, is partially correct, but the evidence shows a mutual influence between foreign firms and locals. Learning from locals, adopting some local practices, and following local rules and norms are important and necessary for foreign-invested enterprises to survive in an unfamiliar business environment.

The second research question concerned the factors that influence enterprises with different ownership to adopt specific dimensions of HR practice. Generally speaking, the government's policy of economic reform has been the fundamental influence on these changes. The central theme of the economic reform policy is to transform the government-controlled planning system toward a market-oriented economic system. Since the commencement of *Doi Moi*, enterprise managers have gained some degree of managerial autonomy, and many of the decisions that were made by the government are now made by management. Therefore, both the external competitive market environment and the internal managerial autonomy and management decision-making processes have led to the introduction of new management systems, including HRM, in order to improve productivity and efficiency.

The findings demonstrate that some general factors influence these changes across various forms of ownership. The evidence shows that all case study enterprises have adopted some HRM practices, though variations do exist between the sample enterprises. For instance, some key HRM practices such as performance pay system, ongoing training and development, and internal decentralization of recruitment and staffing toward line managers were adopted by many MNCs and JVs, as well as by some SOEs and POEs.

Nevertheless, due to the existing political system and regulations, out-of-date management knowledge, and customs and practices, many aspects of people management remain within the traditional and PM paradigms. For example, lifetime employment, wages related to government wage scales, and unions' involvement as government agents still remain strong within the SOE system. Moreover, as discussed above, these government policies and regulations also influence POEs, JVs, and MNCs to some degree. In addition, some old management practices and historical legacies continue to influence areas such as management decision-making process and labor-management relations.

Based on the results of the case study analysis, the picture is clear—the mainstream of people-management systems in Vietnam still remains within the PM paradigm. This case is true both in terms of the number of enterprises as well as the number of adoptions of the various dimensions. This finding may reflect the reality of the current transformational stage. The centrally planned system was abandoned two decades ago, but this process is gradual and the market system has not been fully established. The poor enforcement of law and regulations has, however,

led to an unstable and erratic business environment. The remaining internal controls, centralization and the need to develop external personal relationships and political associations with state agents, are important influences on business operations in the middle of transformation. The PM model also fits with the Vietnamese national and organizational cultural environments that emphasize organizational hierarchy and collectivism.

The firms that deviate from this general norm are, on the one hand, organizations with foreign capital (which are more likely than others to have adopted HRM) and the remaining SOEs (which are more likely than the others to have retained socialist traditional practices). Thus, ownership form is the critical

Based on the results of the case study analysis, the picture is clear—the mainstream of people-management systems in Vietnam still remains within the PM paradigm.

variable that influences the adoption of different HR practices. Nevertheless, location has its effects too: firms in HCM City are more likely to have adopted HRM and firms in Hanoi to have adopted PM practices. The different economic histories before unification and, to some extent, their separate treatment since have their effect on HR practices within organizations. By contrast, size of enterprise, location of market, and labor intensity have no discernible independent effect on HR practices.

Regarding the third research question, this study has implications for both HRM theory and management practice under the challenges of globalization, market competition, and economic reform and transition.

... ownership form is the critical variable that influences the adoption of different HR practices.

First, one contribution toward the development of people management theory is that no matter whether theories are based on approaches that identify different stages of people management (Dulebohn et al., 1995) or on approaches that identify stages and dimensions (Storey, 1992), no clear-cut difference exists between various stages or models of dimensions during transformation and development. Combination and overlap among different people-management models do exist in practice, in particular among enterprises operating in a transitional economic environment like Vietnam.

Second, the development of people management is a process of integrating a number of key factors, including political and economic changes and enterprise management reform. A combination of the political economy and the strategic choice approach can be used to analyze people management reform under economic transition and globalization, and these two approaches should be inclusive rather than exclusive.

Third, this study has implications for management in enterprises with different ownership systems. For instance, the study indicates that MNCs have more developed HRM practices than do other ownership forms. This result is consistent with the argument made

by institutional theorists about enterprises using HRM practices to gain legitimacy and acceptance, since foreign-invested enterprises differ from local enterprises in their external origins in relation to the business environment (Jackson & Schuler, 1999). In contrast, the fact that JVs' performance exhibits more PM orientation is inconsistent with the argument made by resource dependence theory about HRM practices being used to reflect the distribution of power, with HRM practices reflecting the more complicated power distribution typical of organizations with a variety of stakeholders (Jackson & Schuler, 1999). JVs are joint ventures mainly between foreign investors and local SOEs, and many management practices are a combination of practices from both foreign investors and local SOEs through negotiation and compromise. Therefore, a more complicated power distribution does not necessarily lead to more HRM-oriented practices. In other words, resource dependence theory not only should consider the multiple types of stakeholders, but also should attend to the components that decide the power distribution.

Fourth, by comparing the results of this study with previous research on ownership and HRM practices in the transitional economies of China and Vietnam, the trend of people management may be identified. Some common characteristics appear in both China and Vietnam. For instance, the main consistent findings are that MNCs have more advanced HRM practices than other ownership forms and they influence the adoption of HRM dimensions among local enterprises through market competition. In addition, there are different stages of management development as well as adoption of HRM dimensions among local enterprises in Vietnam, a finding that is consistent with the research of Benson and Zhu (1999) on China.

However, this study adds new knowledge to previous research on both China and Vietnam. POEs have more PM and HRM dimensions than SOEs, which have more traditional dimensions. This result differs from Thang and Quang's (2005a) research showing that local private companies often are less receptive to HRM practices than are SOEs. This re-

sult may reflect the fact that changes in POEs were much quicker than in SOEs, and POEs have moved forward in recent years. The explanation for this difference may lie in the knowledge and experience of owners or managers of POEs since *Doi Moi*. Many of them were managers of SOEs before the privatization of SOEs started in the late 1990s. Under the current pressure of market competition, those private owners or managers have to adopt more flexible management systems, and HRM assists these changes. In addition, location has some impact on the adoption of different managerial practices, but these effects are less significant than ownership. Generally speaking, the findings indicate that enterprises from Hanoi are more likely to adopt dimensions of the PM model and less likely to adopt dimensions of the HRM model than firms from HCM City.

The implications of this research for policymakers are also significant. The Vietnamese government's purposes in economic reform in general and people-management reform in particular are twofold. On one hand, the government sees economic reform as a means to improved economic growth and living standards; on the other hand, 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. In fact, the party-state in Vietnam has a tremendous influence in terms of policy/regulations as well as economic resources, and still retains its control over key political and economic affairs. The transformation at the "super-structural" level has been rather slow compared with enterprise-level changes. Therefore, interaction between enterprises and party-state, through negotiation and compromise, will determine the path of transformation. Such interaction also influences the outcome of the mix of management practices between traditional, PM, and HRM models.

Finally, we draw attention to areas that require further research. The relatively small sample size and the focus on two regions mean that generalizations from this study are limited. To advance this research, we suggest a larger, longitudinal survey of enterprises throughout the country, including all major industrial sectors. This larger sample would allow for more accurate predictions to be made concerning the change process and the way globalization and the state influence economic transformation within society, as well as the adoption of new management practices, including HRM, at the enterprise level.

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