Human Resource Development Management & Training as Antecedents for Strategy Integration

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This study develops a model by establishing the relationship of strategy integration with human resource development management, training, leadership and organization structure. The study was conducted by a structured survey questionnaire on 402 managers of manufacturing organizations in India, employed in both private and public sector firms. The data was analyzed using SPSS 20 and AMOS 18 for structural equation modeling.The results of the study indicated that the exogenous variables were human resource development management and training. The intervening variables were leadership and organization structure. The endogenous variable was strategy integration.

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Introduction

In emerging economies, markets can expand in many directions as opportunities are abound. Emerging economy firms while planning for their strategic aspects are bestowed with the choice of setting foot towards multiple directions. This is because growth can be expected in products serving the big fat bottom of the pyramid or the substantial nova rich at the highest end of the market. The market at the top or the bottom can be supported by the products manufactured by firms and the services served by firms. In emerging economies it has been widely understood that firms that are in manufacturing sector are of pivotal importance. The high growth registered by China and the impetus of the Indian Government towards manufacturing sector are testimonies to this thinking.

Manufacturing firms can benefit from cost leadership as well as innovations in products and services in emerging economies. The presence of wide market choices provide manu-

facturing firms and their competitors varied options for following distinct strategic paths. The entry of a firm in the wrong segment of the market might lead to poor return on investment to resources committed (Isobe, Makino & Montgomery, 2000). In manufacturing industries as compared to services sector there has been higher level of investments and also a greater gestation period, therefore, commitments made are often costly (Watson & Everett, 1999). In some cases a wrong move might be a competitive strategy disaster for the entire firm (Grant, 1991). Any competitive strategy commitments for a manufacturing firm required considerable investment in the manufacturing processes. A delta shift in strategy required change in the manufacturing strategy. In emerging markets because of rapid technology changes it has become important that firms respond quickly to the market through products. Timeliness of product launches and availability of products in the market is vital. Thus, the firm level manufacturing process should be flexible enough to accommodate required market end product production and product mix demands.

Any competitive strategy commitments for a manufacturing firm required considerable investment in the manufacturing processes.

It is imperative for firms to strike the right strategy from the beginning. Strategy literature advocated that if a firm takes a wrong strategic path it has to learn fast and make quick course correction. Redefinition and recombination of organizational resources and capabilities in the modern day strategic decision making in emerging markets is of existential importance. Strategy integration is the concept of nurturing and responding to dynamic market needs through the continuous alignment of firm level manufacturing capabilities and capacities. In emerging markets where rewards are often uncertain and non-linear, strategy integration takes centre stage.

Strategy integration as a theoretical concept has been viewed in literature as a consequent construct (Swink, Narasimham & Kim, 2005; Burgelman & Doz, 2013). Literature indicated that those cases in which the organization structure supports coordination, cooperation and informality, promote flexibility for matching business strategy with manufacturing strategy (Tsai, 2002). Organizations where leadership has a knowledge driven focus and work cohesively with subordinates to attain organizational goals(Singh, 2008) are better poised to cater to the changing business and manufacturing strategy of the firm. The concept of training and human resource development management helps employees to enlarge and enrich their skill base (Kirkpatrick, 1998; Khandelwal, 2005). This prepares the employees to become multifunctional so that they align themselves with the different manufacturing strategy process roles as demanded by the market dynamics time to time (Swink, Narasimham & Kim, 2005; Hayes & Pisano, 1994). This study is an attempt to examine the antecedents like human resource development management (HRDM), training, leadership, organiza-

tion structure (OS), and influence strategy integration (SI).

Strategy Integration (SI)

Strategy integration in the context of manufacturing organizations has been conceptualized by the work of Swink, Narasimham and Kim (2005). Researchers proposed that, to implement the concept of strategy integration in manufacturing organizations, the firm shall have a well networked integration mechanism within the organization. This will bring different skill sets of employees and departments to focus and attain organizational goals and address the dynamic external environment. SI is practiced when firms manufacturing strategy is in synchronous to its corporate strategy (Wheel Wright, 1984). The strategic manufacturing goal of firms if well-defined implied that the presence of SI gets reinforced and the firm would be able to stretch and leverage its existing base of capabilities (McGrath, 2013; Wheel Wright, 1984). The work of Rosenzweiga, Rothb and Dean Jr (2003) indicated that in the consumer products segment coordination with supply chain partners helps in the betterment of firm level performance. Sen, Pokharel & YuLei, (2004) argued that in catering to various parts and facets of the global markets (where the context of emergingmarkets can be extended) firms should reorient its supply chain to better integrate with market thus practicing SI.SI also entailed that the firm's manufacturing goals were clear and well communicated to all employees of a firm (Griffin, & Hauser, 1992; Swink, Narasimham & Kim, 2005). Finally, the presence of SI also became better attuned when the manufacturing strategy of a firm was frequently reviewed and revised (Hayes & Pisano, 1994). The effect of emerging market volume growth and segment expansions compounded with the rapid change in technology has a bearing on SI. Market dynamics and uncertainty lead to frequent revision of business strategy, which in turn effect the configuration of manufacturing strategy. If one took cognizance of this market-business-manufacturing strategy dynamic equation then one could ascertain the importance of SI. It can be argued that the practice of SI made the alignment of manufacturing strategy to business strategy and ultimately to the market. Literature is abound with researchers advocating that for effective and meaningful SI, internal organizational fit and consistency is pivotal and can be justified at the first baby step towards a broader integration with all value creating stakeholders (Stevens, 1989; Handfieldand Nichols, 1999:Swinket al., 2002).The work of Swink, Narasimham and Kim (2005) indicated that organizational level variables constitute SI.

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Training (TR)

Training has been a vital function for an organization (Kirkpatrick, 1998;

Khandelwal, 2005). Training is imparted for specific duration to employees across all organizational hierarchies and functions (Khandelwal, 2005). In emerging economies, especially in Indian manufacturing sector, major part of production is because of the contribution of part-time contract workers (Mishra, 2012). The concept of training in organizations as explained by Booth(1991) indicated that provision of training is not just restricted to the full time employees, but even for those who are part-time. Researchers indicated that training should not be seen in terms of hours of training but rather as quality of inputs given to the employees (McColl-Kennedy& White, 1997; Laird, Holton & Naquin, 2003). Further, training of employees should attempt to impart a quality consciousness amongst employees (Cappelli et al., 1997; Picchio & Van Ours, 2013). Quality consciousness in employees helped in developing and producing quality products and services in firms (Kalleberg & Moody,1994; Doz& Prahalad, 2013; Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2013). This would help firms to attain competitive advantage (Barney, 1986). Quality consciousness stands for not just basic training but rather training encompassing advanced forms so as to effect the employees at a cognitive level (Jacobs, 2003). In competitive market environments like in the emerging economies the culture of training should be driven right from the top management (Jackson & Schuler, 1995). Quality consciousness should become the culture of the organization for manufacturing firms (Kaynak, 2003). Further, to impart training, all the adequate resources should be mobilized and placed at the disposal by concerned managers for the benefit of the trainees (Kunene, 2005).

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Where quality training is imparted in sufficient quantity, employees would be well aware of the manufacturing capabilities required for production augmentation, productivity improvement and aligning these with the overall organizational strategic objective (Cappelli et al, 1997; Picchio & Van Ours, 2013; Griffin & Hauser, 1992; Swink, Narasimham & Kim, 2005). Training which are technical on domain knowledge would help managers in exerting their own capabilities at an individual level and in departments beyond an individual level (Rajadhyaksha, 2005). The commitment of top management and the availability of trained organizational human resources helped in the communication, clear definition and aligning of manufacturing strategy with corporate strategy (Griffin& Hauser, 1992; Swink, Narasimham &Kim, 2005; Hayes & Pisano, 1994).

H1: There will be significant positive relationship between training and strategy integration

Human Resource Development Management (HRDM)

In emerging economies firms compete for talent and human resources, not only at intra-firm, inter-firm and intra in-

dustry levels but also at the inter-industry levels (Ready, Hill & Conger,2008). Human resource development management (HRDM) has been a key construct to help firms not only develop and nurture talent but also retain talent (Byham, Smith & Paese, 2002, Ready& Conger, 2007). The practice of HRDM indicated that rewards to employees encourage them to develop new skill set (Solkhe& Chaudhary, 2011). A good, robust and healthy HRDM system rewarded individuals in organizations not based on seniority but on merit (Solkhe & Chaudhary, 2011).The construct of Human Resource Development Management (HRDM) is multidimensional. The practice of HRDM encouraged individuals to acquire new skills continuously (Znidarsic, 2012; Ulrich, 1998; Antonacopoulou, 2006). Rewards to employees were provided on merit not on the basis of years of experience (Kehoe & Wright, 2013; Bairi, Manohar & Kundu, 2011). Further, employees were rewarded for the quality of work. Employees also actively participated in suggesting improvement on production related issues (MacDuffie, 1995). Suggestions from employees were predefined in quantum and timely in nature (Solkhe & Chaudhary, 2011). Organizations practicing employees' participation prefer to encourage team based rewards (Levine, 1990). HRDM also talks about a firm sharing its performance and financial data with employees (Solkhe& Chaudhary, 2011).

Employees in dynamic organizations were encouraged to actively make suggestions for increased production efficiency and effectiveness. Employees were also encouraged to provide timely feedback and advice to higher authorities (MacDuffie, 1995; Levine, 1990). This also implied that in such organizations' manufacturing strategy was frequently re-evaluated and modified based upon received suggestions (McGrath, 2013; Wheel Wright, 1984). The practice of sharing of profits and information of an organization with employees helped in motivating them towards leveraging their capabilities and align it with organizational strategy (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004).

H2: There will be significant positive relationship between HRDM and SI.

Leadership (LD)

The concept of leadership in the context of the present study has been taken from the work of Escrig-Tena and BouLLusar (2005). Leadership behavior has been characterized by the novelty of knowledge as well as the incremental additions to the current base of knowledge amongst the employees in an organization (Yang, Huang & Hsu, 2014). Individuals who demonstrated leadership behavior worked towards the mobilization of their work teams for attainment of goals (Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2002). Leaders are adept at helping others to agree on common organizational goals (Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2002). These leaders further aided their peers and subordinates to create consensus amongst the employees such that they understand the broader objective of change initiatives in organizations and voluntarily accept the proposed firm

change propositions (Gill, 2002; Hall& Hord, 2006).

The practice of leadership entailed that the individual acquired valuable knowledge for the firm (Yang, Huang & Hsu, 2014). This would help in leveraging the existing capabilities of the firm (McGrath, 2013; Wheel Wright, 1984). Individuals practicing leadership would also be skilled in synchronizing organization wide goals with individual objectives (Zaccaro, Rittman& Marks, 2002). Further, such individuals would also be interested to develop consensus amongst their peers, superiors and subordinates (Gill, 2002; Hall& Hord, 2006). This attitude of commandership helped the managers to communicate the firm manufacturing strategies with all employees. This also helped in revising it continuously (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004).

H3: There will be significant positive relationship between leadership and SI

Organization Structure (OS)

Organization structure as conceptualized in this study was based upon Brockman and Morgan (2003). The practice of OS stands for the presence of the coordination between different employees across departments in an organization on cooperative informal relationships (Brass, 1984). In the context of immediate work environment on the job behavior of employees was defined more by individual's personality and less by the pure mechanical needs of the job (Barrick& Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). The focus of OS was towards completion of organizational actions and less on adhering to organizational formalities (Greve, 2013). It further enhanced open communication between different departments (Worley& Doolen, 2006).

The work of Brockman and Morgan (2003) indicated that OS has been seen as an initiative amongst employees towards development of informal relationships and cooperation (Pescosolido, 2001; Oh, Chung & Labianca, 2004). This informality and cooperation made communication between the manufacturing and other departments easier (Worley & Doolen, 2006). This helped in the clear definition of goals and manufacturing objectives of a firm (Griffin & Hauser, 1992; Swink, Narasimham & Kim, 2005). The desired OS also helped individual employees to decide on their job involvement by their own interest and capability rather than the mere requirement of the job (Lauver& Kristof-Brown, 2001; Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990). This helped in leveraging firm's existing capabilities (McGrath, 2013; Wheel Wright, 1984). OS also meant disregarding formal procedures and this helped in firm managers to go out of the way to align the manufacturing goals of a firm with the strategic ones (Pescosolido, 2001; Oh, Chung & Labianca, 2004).

H4: There will be significant positive relationship between OS and SI

HRDM, Leadership & OS

Leadership and OS are mediating variables in this study as human resource development management and training

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prepare employees of the organization to become leaders which in turn provides inputs on strategy integration. Similarly, training and HRDM play a vital role in making organization structure flexible and agile to give direction towards strategy integration. In the context of firms where employees were encouraged to acquire new skills and contribute towards suggestions for production improvement and related matters performed relatively better (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986;Podsakoff et al., 2000). Employees in such organizations would naturally themselves acquire new knowledge and enhance the repository of firm knowledge (Youndt, Snell, Dean& Lepak, 1996). Such organizations would also spread empowerment and voice amongst its employees. In such firms, departments and cross functional teams in an atmosphere of coordination and cooperation would thrive (Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2002). In such an atmosphere the individuals would define and shape the way organizational activities have to be managed (Graetz, 2000). In organizations where employees are rewarded for their timely suggestions and merit, employees would be mobilized towards attainment of organization goals (Gill, 2002; Hall & Hord, 2006; Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2002). Such individuals would also demonstrate an increased readiness to accept organizational change initiatives for attaining organization gains (Gill, 2002). The rewarding of teams rather than individuals would also reinforce the propensity of individuals to work for organizational excellence and be change leaders rather than just being followers (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004). This practice of HRDM also makes organizations work towards focusing more on attaining organizational objectives even with informality than only by restrictive organizational formalities and inaction (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Marlow, Taylor & Thompson, 2010).

H5: There will be significant positive relationship between HRDM and leadership

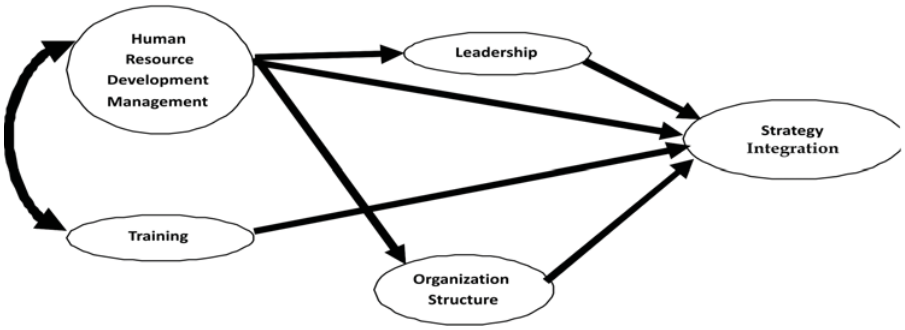
The sharing of organizational level financial data and benefits with employees makes each and every employee believe that they matter not just as a human hand but as a leader mind (Hussain & Hoque, 2002). This also helped individuals to adopt informal structure and leader roles for the better future of their firm (Pescosolido, 2001; Oh, Chung& Labianca, 2004).

H6: There will be significant positive relationship between HRDM and OS

Research Methodology

In this study five variables were measured by the use of a close-ended structured questionnaire. The scale responses were captured with a seven point Likert scale. The variables were measured by different standard questionnaires. HRDM was measured using the Choi and Eboch (1998) scale. The scale had 9 items. The

Fig.1 Antecedents of Strategy Integration



training scale was taken from the work of Kaynak (2003). It had 8 items. The leadership scale consisted of four items and was developed by the work of Escrig-Tena and Bou-LLusar (2005). The scale of organization structure was based on the work of Brockman and Morgan (2003).The scale originally had 8 items which was modified based on the current research requirement. The modified scale had 3 items. The strategy integration scale was developed by Swink, Narasimham and Kim, (2005) and had 5 items.

The data was collected from 402 managers with the help of the structured questionnaire administered in person. The respondents were Indian managers working in different private and public manufacturing organizations in India. There were 211 respondent managers from the private sector and the rest were from public sector. The data was collected during June – November, 2013. The average work experience of the respondents was 52 months.

Analysis & Results

AMOS 18 was used for data analysis using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Causal relationships between the five variables namely; HRDM, TR, LD, OS and SI (Table 1) were ascertained by SEM for path analysis and model fit (Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999; and Byrne, 2001).

Table 2 indicates the model fit values for the study.

The fit indices were calculated based on maximum likelihood estimation algo-

Table 1 Reliability Indices of Factors of HRDM, TR, LD & OS with SI

Variable	Number of items	Chronbach α
HRDM	9	0.692
Training	8	0.802
Leadership	4	0.635
Organization Structure	3	0.388
Strategy Integration	5	0.645

Table 2 Values of Fitness of Model

	Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Probability Level	GFI	AGFI	PGFI	NFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA	CMIN/DF
Default model	2.382	2	.304	0.998	0.985	0.133	0.99	0.997	0.999	0.020	1.191
Independence model				0.362	0.559	0.373	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.396	

GFI- Goodness of Fit Index, AGFI, Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index, PGFI- Parsimonious Goodness of Fit Index, TLI- Trucker Luis Index, NFI, Normed Fit Index, CFI- Comparative Fit Index, RMSEA- Root Mean Square Error of Approximation

rithm. The parameters indicating model fit of the variables HRDM, TR, LD, OS with SI have the following values. The chi-square value was 2.328 (p = .304; df = 2). The goodness of fit of the SI model was calculated by GFI which was 0.998, AGFI value was 0.985, PGFI value was 0.133, the NFI value was 0.990, the TLI value was 0.997, the CFI value was 0.999, the RMSEA value was .020 and CMIN/DF value was 1.191. All these values indicated that the model was a good fit. The relationship and path value between variables HRDM, TR, LD, OS and SI is as in Table 3.

Table 3 Relationship and Path values between variables – HRDM, TR, LD, and OS with SI

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	β
HRDM	LD	0.235**
TR	LD	0.402**
HRDM	OS	0.291**
LD	SI	0.496**
TR	SI	0.101**
HRDM	SI	0.116**
OS	SI	0.138**

p≤0.01, HRDM, TR, LD, and OS with SI

There is significant positive relationship (â= 0.235) between HRD and LD, between TR and LD (â= 0.402), between HRD and OS (â= 0.291) between LD and SI (â= 0.496), between TR and SI (â= 0.101), between HRD and SI (â= 0.116) and between OS and SI (â = 0.138).

Discussion

Human resource development management helped in the development of leadership in organizations, robust organizational structure and in better integration of strategy (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986; Becker & Gerhart, 1996). The practice of HRDM encouraged individuals to be proactive, creative and to be team players. Employees who adhere to such practices were constantly motivated to acquire new skills to create value and organizational knowledge (Graetz, 2000). Organizations where HRDM prevailed, individuals were more open to accept change and help other members to co-create, co-learn and co-exist to achieve organizational objectives and change initiatives (Dionne, Yammarino,

Atwater & Spangler, 2004). HRDM required firm performance data and benefits to be shared with employees. This made employees alembic towards superior organizational performance (Gill, 2002; Hall& Hord, 2006; Zaccaro, Rittman& Marks, 2002). In a nut shell, HRDM helped in the development of leadership.

The practice of HRDM encouraged individuals to be proactive, creative and to be team players.

Since HRDM emphasized team based performance and timely feedback on employee actions it impinged on to organization structure with enhanced coordination and informal relationship based cooperation (Pescosolido, 2001; Oh, Chung& Labianca, 2004; Hussain & Hoque, 2002). Organizational structure had positive influence because individual job fit was given priority in HRDM (Hussain & Hoque, 2002). OS also enriched because informality in procedures was given space if it was valuable for the organization (Pescosolido, 2001; Oh, Chung& Labianca, 2004).

Strategy integration was enhanced by HRDM as it helped in defining jobs according to employees skills (as also a part of suitable organization structure) to leverage extant organizational capabilities (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004). Employees' skill development helped enhance manufacturing capabilities as use of technology was dependent upon the employees who were involved in applying the technology. The practice of HRDM encouraged individuals to acquire new skill sets and to learn continuously. This helped firms to constantly redefine and reset their manufacturing strategy (McGrath, 2013; Wheel Wright, 1984).

Training entailed activities involving technical and vocational skill development. This helped in strategy integration because the manufacturing capabilities of the organization were enhanced (Dionne, Yammarino, Atwater & Spangler, 2004). Quality related training was also provided to hourly contract employees, on-roll supervisors and managers. In this process not only basic and advanced training but also the concept of total quality was philosophically disseminated across the organization. This helped it to define strategic manufacturing goals and objectives but also align the manufacturing goals with strategic objectives (Cappelli et. al, 1997; Picchio & Van Ours, 2013; Griffin & Hauser, 1992; Swink, Narasimham & Kim, 2005). Training in this context was understood as the top managements' belief and commitment for employees' development and their commitment of organizational resources for the same. Hence, strategic planning has to be carried out based on the capabilities available or trained in the near future. This helped organizations to achieve strategic manufacturing plans and excellence (Griffin & Hauser, 1992; Swink, Narasimham &Kim, 2005; Hayes & Pisano, 1994).

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OS consisted of informal, well-coordinated cooperation amongst employees and departments while working (Pescosolido, 2001; Oh, Chung & Labianca, 2004). OS also emphasized on person-job-fit (Caldwell & O'Reilly, 1990; Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001). This helped organizations to provide right opportunities to employees which assisted them in utilization of capabilities and secure manufacturing excellence.

The concept of leadership was about integration and mobilization of individuals at different levels in organization. It also indicated the need for arriving at the best set of objectives and realization of the most important projects (Zaccaro, Rittman & Marks, 2002). Leadership thus helped in comprehending clear communication of manufacturing strategies across all departments (Dionne et al, 2004). This helped in also synchronizing manufacturing strategies with organizational strategies. Development of leadership also made individual employees more flexible which in turn helped them accept the redefinition and resetting of manufacturing strategies (Dionne et al, 2004). This led to better realization of organizational strategies.

Conclusion & Implications

This study was on the construct of strategy integration of manufacturing firms with the antecedent variables of human resource development management, training, leadership and organization structure. It was figured out from this research that human resource development when amalgamated with training helped in strategy integration. Human resource development management was built-up around the notion of team work, creativity, production improvement, continuous feedback and performance based reward system. In India, where multinational companies like United Technologies, Nokia, Deary Corporation, Volkswagen and Hyundai had set manufacturing units, human resource development was required. In the modern era of manufacturing the notion of top down control, organizational structure has been contested. The research findings of this paper have also indicated the same. It was indicated that the presence of HRDM led to the sprouting of productive informality, healthy person job fit and harmonious coordination amongst team members.

The impact of practice of human resource management was also felt in leadership development. In the era of lean and flexible manufacturing it has been advocated that firms should develop employees who could embrace change and be change agents and not just followers. Further, employees were expected to self develop and co-create leadership amongst other team members so that the work units coherently performed better.

Strategy integration in manufacturing firms has been more about aligning manufacturing strategy with business strategy.

Strategy integration in manufacturing firms has been more about aligning manufacturing strategy with business

strategy. In the era of dynamic market realities, manufacturing strategy often lags to the marketing strategy which acts as a lead variable. Manufacturing strategy thus gets frequently revised which has to be communicated to all employees. Informal organizational structure and leadership orientation thus helped in strategy integration. Implementation of the latest technologies in manufacturing entailed imparting of training to employees at basic and advanced skill levels. Also thought leadership on manufacturing excellence was required to be implanted in the minds of the employees. Thus, training made an impact on strategy integration.

This research was a theoretical contribution in the understanding of strategy integration (ex-post variable) with the exante variables of HRDM, training, leadership and organization structure. The study was set in the emerging economy of India. In future, studies could be undertaken in other emerging and developed economies to unfold the dependency of strategy integration on the mentioned independent variables. This is one of the first studies which considered strategy integration with the internal organizational variables.

For practicing managers in manufacturing the lesson is that for better strategy integration HRDM should be practiced along with leadership development and organizational structure. Training on the latest manufacturing technology should be provided complemented with perspective building for better strategy integration.

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