The triangle of HRM practices

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The triangle of HRM practices

Summary:
The pursuant of a unique bundle of HRM practices is hailed to promote organisational success in today's competitive market (Lu et al., 2015). Although the word ‘success’ might not escape the challenge of a clear definition, understanding and linking espoused, enacted and perceived HRM practices are crucial parts of the unique bundle of HRM practices (Khilji and Wang, 2006). Espoused HRM practices are meant to mean what is said to be done in terms of human resource activities, enacted HRM practices denote what is actually done in terms of human resource activities and perceived HRM practices refer to what is actually perceived of HRM practices by stakeholders of an organisation, in particular employees. This developmental paper aims to develop a model, the triangle of HRM practices, which links espoused, enacted and perceived HRM practices together.

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Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this paper is to link espoused, enacted, and perceived HRM practices. The suggested link is the outcome of a review of the existing literature. It calls upon future research to test the link empirically. The paper highlights consistency and inconsistency among HRM practices (espoused, enacted and perceived) in general and what brings the consistency and inconsistency about. It comprehends the extent enacted HRM practices be an exact translation of espoused HRM practices and probe the extent the translation impact perceived HRM practices in organisations.

**Problem statement** – Research confirms that the commitment of employees to their organisations is linked to their perception of espoused and enacted HRM practices (Meyer and Smith, 2000). It is noted that espoused and enacted HRM practices, in turn, highlight the commitment of organisations to employees and contribute in employee commitment to their organisations (Khilji and Wang, 2006). However, a suggested link among espoused, enacted, and perceived HRM practices is yet to drawn and tested.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The paper is based on a thorough literature search concerning the espoused, enacted and perceived HRM practices. It considers the existing theoretical knowledge from the literature and conducts a critical review of the literature and then it offers a model, the triangle of HRM practices, which links the HRM practices. To ponder espoused and enacted HRM practices, the author conducts a thorough insight into the theory of practice (Argyris and Schon, 1974) and theory-in-use (Argyris and Schon, 1978). As for the perceived HRM practices, the author benefits from *SERVQUAL: A Multiple-item Scale for Measuring Consumer Perceptions of Service Quality* (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988).

**Findings** – Positive perception of HRM practices is found to be linked to management responsiveness to employees' improvement suggestions (Alfes et al., 2013). In fact, this makes sense as it builds a link between perceived HRM practices and espoused and enacted HRM practices (Gollan, Kalfa, and Xu, 2014). If management, who is responsible in setting out espoused and enacted HRM practices, is responsive to employees' improvement suggestions to HRM practices, the practices are expected to be positively perceived by the employees. This denotes that there is a link between perceived HRM practices and espoused HRM practices on one hand and enacted HRM practices on the other hand. The link is not always considered by management as it depends on whether management is responsive or not to employees' suggestions to improving HRM practices.

**Originality/value** – The paper would prove invaluable to the researchers studying HRM practices and the practitioners, management, wanting to a positive perception of their HRM practices.

**Keywords** – HRM, HRM practices, espoused HRM practices, enacted HRM practices, perceived HRM practices, HRM bundle

**Paper type** – Conceptual paper (final version)
1. Introduction
HRM practices can form value adding, unique and rare, sustainable and irreplaceable, not replicable practices (Barney, 1991; Bhasin, 2010). Reference to resource based view of HRM, HRM practices are essential in the management of human resources of an organisation (Wright and McMahan, 1992). Although it is believed that HRM was originally voiced management (Guest, 1999), it is not necessary to neglect employee perception (perceived HRM practices) in the formulation and enactment of HRM practices (espoused and enacted) (Gollan, Kalfa, and Xu, 2014).

HRM practices are defined to mean a set of activities that intend to add value to an organisation by managing its people-related aspects (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). They can accommodate different activities (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). For example, in some organisations, HRM practices comprise the development of practices related to leadership, learning, change, commitment and transformation (Argyris, 2000). While in other organisations, they deal with "resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward management, employee relations and administration." (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p. 10) and practices such as "Installing proper organizational values, employee empowerment systems, continuous improvement programs, and setting up a consistent organizational structure, as well as installing effective management information systems are essential." (Sahoo et al., 2007, p. 461) Further, the HRM practices that contribute directly to organisational performance are employee motivation, recruitment, performance management and appraisal, compensation and reward systems (Islam, 2013). In addition, it is important to note that organisations can change organisation culture through various HRM practices, to name sum, such as "...recruitment, selection, induction programs, training and rewards..." (Zibarras and Coan, 2015, p. 15)

It is confirmed that "...implemented HRM may be substantially different from intended HRM; consistent implementation increases employee satisfaction with HRM, which is positively related to organizational performance." (Khilji and Wang, 2006, p. 1117) Accordingly, inconsistency among HRM practices (espoused, enacted and perceived) adversely impact an organisation.

“For instance, a manager might have tried to increase productivity by increasing the piece rate, but with little success. Here the real problem may be the low morale and motivation of employees who feel they are not being recognised as valuable contributors to the system and get no “praise” for the good work that they do. The low productivity may merely be a symptom of the deep-rooted morale and motivation problem.” (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010, p. 85)

2. The triangle of HRM practices
2.1 HRM and HRM practices
Human resource management (HRM) usually attracts a rather general and broad definition (Mullins, 2005). One definition is that HRM accommodates decisions and practices that affect people-related aspects and elements of an organisation (Fisher, Schoenfeldt and Shaw, 2003). This definition can safely be extended to include the relationship of people with their organisations (Beer et al., 1984). Another definition states that HRM is an umbrella to cover all aspects of employing and managing people of an organisation (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014).

HR as a function has existed as early as employee and employer relations, in any form, existed (Cohen, 2015). Accordingly, this function is not expected to disappear anytime soon
in the future as long as employees and employers work in organizations. HRM is believed to promote organisational success if its practices provide a balanced engagement of all stakeholders of an organisation (Marchington, 2015). The stakeholders of an organisation can be internal (employee and employer) and external (customer, investor, and community) (Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015).

On the other hand, HRM practices are defined as a set of activities that intend to add value to an organisation by managing people-related aspects (Boxall and Purcell, 2011) or "the activities carried out in implementing HR policies and programmes." (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, p. 10) However, these definitions do not specify the HRM practices: Whether they are in terms of espoused, enacted or perceived. The latter definition seems to be more in terms of enacted HRM practices than HRM practices in general.

It is acknowledged that HRM practices stand by the HRM system of an organisation (Tiwari and Saxena, 2012). Some of these practices need to be closely aligned to organisational strategy; however, as Schuler (1992) comments that, not all HRM practices are directly linked to organisational strategy. In another word, the HRM system, inclusive of HRM practices, need to be in harmony with organisation strategy (Belanger, Edwards and Wright, 1999; Fombrun, Tichy and Devanna, 1984) and HRM practices should support the organisation strategy (Corporate Research Forum, 2013).

2.2 Need for the triangle
The sustainability of an organisation is believed to heavily depend on meeting the needs of employees and organisations side by side (Cleveland, Byrne, and Canavagh, 2015). There is a growing interest in researching the perception of employees towards HRM practices (Alfes et al., 2013). Some scholars in a recently published article confirm that it is crucial to understand how employees give meaning to HRM practices (Van de Voode and Beijer, 2014).

One reason for the triangle is that perceived HRM practices are positively linked to employees satisfaction with job and loyalty to an organisation (Al-Refaie, 2015) and they are indirectly related to organisational change (Islam, 2013). It is confirmed by research that employees of an organisation are more engaged if they positively perceive HRM practices of their organisations (Alfes et al., 2013). Research acknowledges that when perceived HRM practices is positive, employees enhance their behaviour towards their organisation (Alfes et al., 2013; Cleveland, Byrne, and Canavagh, 2015).

There is some evidence that cognitive engagement of employees of an organisation is understood to be rooted from employees’ perception on their work and the context their work is located in an organisation (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015). Employees with a positive perception of HRM practices are more committed to their organisation and their job (Alfes et al., 2013). Consequently, emotional engagement is activated when employees are cognitively engaged to an organisation and it results in sharing their knowledge and abilities with the organisation and behaving positively towards their organisation (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015).

So, the perception of employees towards (espoused and enacted) HRM practices become reality and reflect in their behaviour towards their organisations (Chebat, 2002). In other
words, the attitudes of employees of an organisation towards an activity and how much control they perceive to have over that activity set the intention of the sort of behaviour they intend to do next (Ajzen, 1991). To rephrase it, the perception of employees of how much control they have account for the variation in their behaviour. Their perception of espoused and enacted HRM practices and how much control they perceive they have on them shape and reshape their perception on the HRM practices as positive or negative and, in turn, these practices set the direction of the sort of behaviour they tend to do (Ajzen, 1991; Chebat, 2002; Khilji and Wang, 2006). Thus, research encourages management to invest in HRM practices in order to improve the experience of employees with the practices (Al-Refaie, 2015).

The HRM practices (espoused, enacted and perceived) reflect the various factors attached to a business context of an organisation such as social, technological, economic, political, environmental, and demographic factors (Ulrich and Dulebohn, 2015). Unique espoused and enacted HRM practices that promote intended employee behaviour towards organisational goals are becoming trendy (Lu et al., 2015).

Although there is an understanding that espoused HRM practices attract various enacted HRM practices and, in turn, enacted HRM practices shape perceived HRM practices, there is evidence that espoused and enacted HRM practices are usually established to meet certain HRM needs of an organisation and they might impact other existing HRM practices positively or negatively (Gollan, Kalfa, and Xu, 2014). For instance, HRM practices such as working in teams and upward communication positively impact HRM practices such as job satisfaction (Brown et al., 2008).

Khilji and Wang (2006, p. 1117) confirm that "The findings, arrived at with the help of 195 interviews, 508 questionnaire responses and several company documents, support our expectation: implemented HRM may be substantially different from intended HRM; consistent implementation increases employee satisfaction with HRM, which is positively related to organizational performance." Accordingly, espoused HRM practices might be enacted in ways that are not intended in the espoused HRM practices (Argyris, 2000).

2.3 Definitions

HRM is understood to promote employee commitment (Edgar and Geare, 2005) and HRM practices (espoused and enacted) should improve employee commitment before they fulfil any other objectives (Edgar and Geare, 2005). Although there is a belief that HRM practices can be sourced out to external parties of an organisation (Schawbel, 2012), the key problem with this belief is that scholars still strive to measure HRM practices and 'how to measure' is yet to be agreed upon in a consensus (Delaney and Huselid, 1996). The review of the literature does not seem to publish recent information on the status of this agreement. In other words, locating two studies to measure HRM practices in the same way is still a challenge in the literature (Delaney and Huselid, 1996). Instead of measuring HRM practices, this study categories HRM practices into three: espoused HRM practices, enacted HRM practices, and perceived HRM practices.
2.3.1 Espoused HRM practices
Espouse means to "Adopt or support (a cause, belief, or way of life)" (Oxford University Press, 2015b). Some scholars label espoused HRM practices as intended HRM practices which include HRM practices an organisation espouses in its strategic HRM intent (Alfes, Shantz, and Truss, 2012).

Espoused HRM practices represent HRM behaviours or activities that an organisation state in words or in writing that they would do or are going to do repetitively or in a certain situation. In other words, espoused HRM practices accommodate people-related guidelines, policies, programmes and practices that support HRM issues and dealings in an organisation (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014). For instance, they may include hiring talented and skilled workers, improving and enhancing worker productivity, or reducing health care costs (Schuler, 1992).

To sum up, people-related guidelines, policies, programmes, practices, rules, regulations, and instructions are examples of espoused HRM practices as long as they state what to be enacted as HRM practices. Espoused HRM practices attract enacted HRM practices and each espoused HRM practice might be translated into one or more than one enacted HRM practices.

2.3.2 Enacted HRM practices
Enact means to "Put into practice (an idea or suggestion)" (Oxford University Press, 2015a). Enacted HRM practices represent HRM behaviours and activities that are carried out to operationalise espoused HRM practices.

Research reports that it does not matter the number of translations an espoused HRM practice attracts (Edgar and Geare, 2005). What is important in translating espoused HRM practices to enacted HRM practices is the way of implementation. The enactment of HRM practices determine perceived HRM practices or employees' perception of espoused and enacted HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2005).

2.3.3 Perceived HRM practices
Perceived HRM practices come from perceptual understanding of employees that might be different from one employee to another to espoused and enacted HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2005). The feedback of employees to improve espoused HRM practices and tweak enacted HRM practices is very crucial (Khilji and Wang, 2006). It might indicate the strength and weakness of HRM practices in an organisation (Edgar and Geare, 2005).

Perceive means to "Become aware of (something) by the use of one of the senses, especially that of sight" (Oxford University Press, 2015c) or to "Interpret or regard (someone or something) in a particular way" (Oxford University Press, 2015c). In other words, perception is defined as a process that helps the perceiver to give meaning to the perceived using the sensors (Robbins and Judge, 2013).

Perceived HRM practices express how employees become aware of espoused and enacted HRM practices and cover the ways employees interpret, view and regard the espoused and enacted HRM practices (Cleveland, Byrne, and Cavanagh, 2015). Employees do not perceive the same HRM practice in the same ways (Kondalkar, 2007). The ways they view and interpret an HRM practice might attract different perceptions for the same practice. This is
especially true for HRM practices that affect employees (Sim and Rogers, 2008). Perceived HRM practices are particularly important when it comes to espoused and enacted HRM practices such as but are not limited to staffing, safety, ethics, employee relations, compensation, benefits, global issues and technology (Cleveland, Byrne, and Cavanagh, 2015).

Because employees perceive HRM practices differently and these perceptions can be positive, negative or neutral (Marescaux, De Winne and Sels, 2013), the question is that how this inconsistency in perception can be minimised and turned into a positive perception of HRM practices. In fact, disagreement among employees is rather expected in terms of how they perceive HRM practices i.e. employees who are exposed to the positive side of HRM practices might perceive them positively while other employees due to being exposed to the negative side of the same practices might perceive them negatively (Kondalkar, 2007).

2.4 The making of the triangle
A new expectation attract various practices that, in turn, attract different perceptions from employees (Zohar and Hofmann, 2012). Enacted HRM practices are the off spring of espoused HRM practices (Argyris and Schon, 1974). Accordingly, in an ideal state, espoused HRM practices are translated to various enacted HRM practices in order they are implemented (Argyris and Schon, 1974). At the same time, feedback from enacted HRM practices feed back into the espoused HRM practices, especially when gaps appear in the espoused HRM practices or new areas emerge to cover (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Espoused and enacted HRM practices](image)

It is likely that an exact translation of espoused HRM practices into enacted HRM practices is very significant in the way the practices are intended to be perceived. In other words, there should be an alignment between enacted and espoused HRM practices in order the practices lend themselves to the intended perceived HRM practices (Zohar, 2002).

Thus, a good HRM practice is the one that serves the employees of an organisation (Cleveland, Byrne, and Cavanagh, 2015). And positive perception of HRM practices (perceived HRM practices) is found to be linked to management responsiveness to employees' improvement suggestions (Brown et al., 2008). In fact this understanding builds a link between perceived HRM practices and espoused and enacted HRM practices. If management, who is responsible in setting out espoused and enacted HRM practices, is responsive to employees' improvement suggestions to these practices, the practices are going to be positively perceived by employees.

Further, enacted HRM practices shape and reshape perception of employees i.e. perceived HRM practices (Tiwari and Saxena, 2012). When espoused HRM practices are translated into enacted HRM practices, two important points come to existence: The first one is whether enacted HRM practices are an actual translation of espoused HRM practices and, second, the translators might be unaware of any inconsistency or discrepancy in their translation (Argyris and Schon, 1974).
At an individual level, taking action and reflecting on it is part of being a competent human being (Argyris and Schon, 1974). Competent human beings enact a certain behaviour based on a mental model or models that reflect how the surrounding world works (Argyris and Schon, 1978). Management translate espoused HRM practices into enacted HRM practices and communicate the message of the practices via enacted HRM practices to employees (Gilbert, De Winne and Sels, 2011). The employee then perceive HRM practices that is communicated to them depending on various factors (Hartog, Boselie and Paauwe, 2004). Accordingly, in the same ideal state, stakeholders of an organisation, particularly employees, have their interpretation and reservation towards espoused and enacted HRM practices (Cleveland, Byrne, and Cavanagh, 2015).

![Diagram](Espoused HRM practices <-> Perceived HRM practices, Enacted HRM practices <-> Perceived HRM practices)

*Figure 2: Espoused, enacted and perceived HRM practices*

One might ask why perceived HRM practices are important in the first place. One reason might be the one that says the perception of employees of HRM practices are important because they give clues to how much these practices have achieved their intended enacted HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2005). Another important reason is to avoid legal issues and revenge. Employees who perceive that they are not listened to when they expressed their perception with regard of HRM practices, might take legal action as last resort (Cleveland, Byrne, and Cavanagh, 2015). Research highlights that organisations have to study their HRM practices in terms of the benefits these practices offer employees of the organisations (Herrbach et al., 2009).

A likely explanation of the relationship is that there need to be an exact, appropriate and up-to-date translation of espoused HRM practices to enacted HRM practices. The formulation and the translation have to be considerate to employee's perception. Although this alignment is not straightforward (Zohar and Hofmann, 2012), employees tend to perceive enacted HRM practices more than espoused HRM practices (Zohar, 2002).
It is encouraged that espoused HRM practices of an organisation are communicated to employees clearly (Zibarras and Coan, 2015). Now, if the practices are put together, the outcome can look like Figure 3:

Some scholars label espoused HRM practices as intended HRM practices which include HRM practices an organisation espouse in its strategic HRM intent (Alfes, Shantz, and Truss, 2012). As a rule of thumb, management translates espoused or intended HRM practices into enacted HRM practices and communicate the practices to employees (Gilbert, De Winne and Sels, 2011). The employees, then, perceive HRM practices depending on various factors (Hartog, Boselie and Paauwe, 2004). External and internal factors of an organisation impact HRM practices (Tiwari and Saxena, 2012). The external factors can be categorised to societal, industry and organisational factors (Boxall and Purcell, 2011). Incorporating the external factors to the triangle produces Figure 4:
By the same token, internal factors impact the relationship among the practices. The internal factors take different forms, notably, such as "... management ideologies, competencies, personalities and power struggles ..." (Boxall and Purcell, 2011, p. 202) and factors such as past experience, values, expectations (Hartog et al., 2004) contribute to employees’ perception of HRM practices. So, including the internal factors in the triangle, produces Figure 5:

![Figure 5: Internal factors in the triangle](image)

To simplify, in an ideal state, espoused HRM practices attract enacted HRM practices and espoused and enacted HRM practices, both, attract perception of employees i.e. perceived HRM practices. The nature of the relationship might take different forms depending on how the relationship is viewed. The feedback from enacted HRM practices contribute to further improvement of espoused HRM practices. In the same ideal state, perceived HRM practices feed to further improve espoused and enacted HRM practices. The relationship among the practices is impacted by internal and external factors of an organisation. The simplification of the triangle is depicted in Figure 6:
3. Discussion
It seems that most of the problems and obstacles in organisations are people-related and it is logical to state that they can be solved only by people (Dombrowski, Mielke and Schulze, 2011). That is to say people need to revisit espoused, enacted and perceived HRM practices. Despite this, the perception of employees of espoused HRM practices in an organisation, and due to different ways of enacting these practices, is selective towards the HRM practices (Zohar and Hofmann, 2012).

If employees are expected to contribute towards an organisation, they have to perceive that their work is rewarding (Hines et al., 2011). That is to say that HRM practices have to set a win-win formula in the organisation. To make HRM practices (espoused and enacted) meet their targets, these practices have to be positively perceived by employee. The literature prescribes at least two prerequisites to bring positive perceived HRM practices about: employee participation in and employee influence on the espoused and enacted HRM practices (Brown et al., 2008).

It is worth noting that espoused HRM practices are expected to be inconsistent with enacted HRM practices (Argyris and Schon, 1978). Besides, it is advocated that perceived HRM practices of people of espoused HRM practices might be changed while their perception of enacted HRM practices are left untouched (Argyris and Schon, 1978). One way to minimise inconsistency is to involve affected employees in the formulation and enactment of HRM practices (Dombrowski and Mielke, 2013; Dombrowski, Mielke and Schulze, 2011). As a result, employee involvement is highly encouraged and has become trendy in recent management thinking under various labels such as high involvement management (Wood et al., 2014). However, one criticism, here, is that employee involvement from the perspective of management is different from employee involvement from the employee perspective (Brown et al., 2008). Besides, well established espoused and enacted HRM practices might
not always produce the perceived HRM practices that are intended to be produced (Brown et al., 2008).

Unless the link between espoused, enacted and perceived HRM practices are built, organisations need to make this link work in order to make their HRM practices effective (Pinto, da Silva Ramos and Nunes, 2015). It is thought that open communication serves the consistency among HRM practices (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2014). Management can communicate the possible benefits of HRM practices to employees to put them at ease (Van De Voorde and Beijer, 2014). Thus, open communication serves the link among the HRM practices and plays a significant role in shaping and reshaping HRM practices (Holland, Cooper and Hecker, 2015).

It is suggested that a bottom-up strategy might lessen the gap among the HRM practices. That is to say the key employees who are responsible in implementing HRM practices are to be encouraged to formulate or get involved in the formulation of the practices (Manville et al., 2012). In other words, the enactors of HRM practices are to be given a chance to articulate or get involved in the articulation of espoused HRM practices. One rationale might be that the key enactors are exposed to employees who might be affected by the enacted HRM practices (Manville et al., 2012) and they are in a better position to decipher the perception of employees, the perceived HRM practices, and feed back into the espoused and enacted HRM practices.

Moreover, engaged employees feel supported from their organisations and have positive relationship with their line manager (Alfes et al., 2013). A suggestion to accommodate this kind of situation is to produce HRM practices that embrace the need of all members of an organisation (Hennekam and Herrbach, 2015). Research encourages organisations to consistently enact HRM practices in order these practices be perceived positively by employees (Alfes et al., 2013). Accordingly, if an organisation formulates espoused HRM practices in ways that generate supportive feeling for employees and enacts these HRM practices in ways that builds positive relationship with employees, in return, they turn their employees to more engaged ones by promoting consistency among their HRM practices.

It is believed that management are able to engineer the perception of employees to a positive perception towards HRM practices if they are able to produce a reciprocal climate within the organisation through espoused and enacted HRM practices (Alfes et al., 2013). One way to do that is to accept employees influence to improve HRM practices (Brown et al., 2008). Another way is to make sure that employees are understood the intended HRM practices, the way these practices are intended to be understood (Sanders and Yan, 2015). For instance, enacted HRM practices that increase training opportunities for employees closely contribute to the retaining of employees (Herrbach et al., 2009). This is because employees put their experience of HRM practices in the context of the practices (Alfes et al., 2013).

Study acknowledges that when perceived HRM practices is positive, employees enhance their behaviour towards their organisation (Alfes et al., 2013). This means that a positive perception of employees is highly relevant and valuable in formulation of espoused HRM practices and enactment of these practices. It also means that if employees’ perception of the practices are not positive, a proper implementation of the practices will be challenged. A suggestion for management is to survey perceived HRM practices regularly in order to collect longitudinal data to understand if any amendment needs to be incorporated into espoused and
enacted HRM practices or if the practices require to be tweaked in anyways (Edgar and Geare, 2005).

4. Limitations
The relationship between espoused and enacted is special in terms of internal consistency (Argyris and Schon, 1974). How much ‘special’ and what details the word ‘special’ entails remain qualitative: HRM practices might internally be inconsistent or self-contradictory (Argyris and Schon, 1974).

Although implementing HRM practices is part of the HRM system of an organisation, the implementation of the practices might depend on the size of an organisation. It is noted that the size of an organisation might indicate the utilisation of HRM practices to support strategical needs of the organisation (Zibarras and Coan, 2015). One reason to justify the previous statement is that big organisations have plenty of resources to impact their environment (Ronnenberg, Graham and Mahmoodi, 2011). Besides, it is reported that different business needs do not necessarily require the same set of HRM practices (Sparrow and Otaye-Ebede, 2014). To clarify, even if the gap between espoused and enacted HRM practices are minimum and the practices are perceived in a positive way, the "HRM practices needed to be engineered and packed differently to support . . ." (Sparrow and Otaye-Ebede, 2014, p. 2893) different business needs of different organisations.

Moreover, there is some evidence to suggest that employees learn of consistencies and inconsistencies among espoused and enacted HRM practices from various observations in several occasions (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). They adjust their perceptions as the inconsistency increases or decreases (Zohar and Hofmann, 2012). Consequently, their perceptions of HRM practices are not of a static state. For instance, a recent approach that widens the gap between employees and their managers is to remunerate managers many times, for instance hundreds of times more, that what they pay employees (Cleveland, Byrne, and Cavanagh, 2015). This kind of HRM practice is less likely to prove relevant to the suggested triangle in which employees are believed to be assets of an organisation.

Although the produced triangle needs to be tested empirically in future research, one major weakness of the model is that espoused HRM practices might not attract intended (i.e. exact) translation of enacted HRM practices in the real world. That is, partly, due to hidden personal agendas, biased and limited interpretations and political games (Lynch, 2006) of and among the players who do the translation. The translation might take the form of a rhetoric than a reality (Legge, 2005). Sometimes, required changes that are feedback from perceived HRM practices might only change the espoused HRM practices without any real change to the enacted HRM practices (Argyris and Schon, 1974).

Another weakness is that management in espousing and enacting HRM practices might fail to read and comprehend employees' expectations of HRM practices (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1988). Well established espoused and enacted HRM practices might not always produce the intended perceived HRM practices (Brown et al., 2008). To avoid any unpleasant or negative perceived HRM practices, managers tend to suppress it by the use of indirect threat in the form of ‘beat one and frighten another’ approach (Argyris and Schon, 1974).

Some scholars summarise the factors that affect HRM practices to contextual, firm-specific and situational factors (Stone and Deadrick, 2015). Perhaps factors such as situational demands might also call for a discrepancy between espoused HRM practices and enacted
HRM practices and the discrepancy might shape and reshape employee’s perception (Zohar and Hofmann, 2012). Also, the size of an organisation which matters in HRM practices (Sahoo et al., 2007) might limit the applicability of the triangle. This might be because bigger organisations have more formalised and standardised HRM practices and a hierarchy in place.

5. Conclusion
Research supports the triangle of HRM practices by confirming that "... HRM practices need to be viewed synergistically..." (Alfes, Shantz and Truss, 2012, p. 411). Why the triangle of HRM practices focuses on HRM practices? As for the triangle, it might fulfill various needs of the field of HRM in the short and long run. For instance, "... the assumptions underlying those traditional HR processes may not be effectively with the new service of knowledge organizations." (Stone and Deadrick, 2015, p. 140) In other words, the traditional espoused and enacted HRM practices might require to be revisited in order to be applicable to new contexts. This is particularly correct if organizations "... encourage innovation, autonomy, continuous improvement, and participation in decision making." (Stone and Deadrick, 2015, p. 140) Why HRM practices? This is mainly because HRM embraces a "... cluster of work and employment practices ..." (Boxall and Purcell, 2011, p. 201) that are usually in place in organisations to manage human resources.

Research, also, acknowledges that espoused and enacted HRM practices should be evaluated based on perceived HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2005). Espoused and enacted HRM practices might merely represent numbers of HRM practices that have been introduced in a workplace when they are disconnected from their perceived HRM practices (Edgar and Geare, 2005). The link among the HRM practices can be of a continuous nature that calls for a correct balance among the practices (Singh and Singh, 2015) i.e. they feed one another continuously and attract incremental changes and amendments.

Lastly, organisations need to work to engineer employees’ perceptions towards HRM practices (espoused and enacted) in order employees perceive these practices as distinctive, consistent, and consensual (Sanders and Yang, 2015). This results in higher behavioural commitment from employees (Alagaraja and Shuck, 2015) towards strategic direction of their organisations. The triangle of HRM practices is believed to come very handy in this pursuant.

6. References


