Statement of Research Philosophy

Researchers are life-long learners. My curiosity about the research domains in the Human Resource Management (HRM) field led my way to the doctoral program at the University of Toronto, where my professors and fellow students furthered my understanding of the field, helped me establish my goals as a researcher, equipped me with various research tools, and opened a door for me to the scientific research world. Since I graduated from my graduate program and joined UMD in Fall 2010, I have further developed my philosophy of research with more thoughts gained through involvement in various scholarly activities as well as dialogues with my colleagues. In this statement of research philosophy, I will address my research philosophy from three aspects: the motivation behind my passion for HRM research, my research beliefs, and my pursuits on conducting high quality research.

Motivation behind My Passion for Research

What drives the enthusiasm that I feel for research? Why have I gained enormous excitement and pleasure from conducting scientific research? My passion for research is rooted in the research questions that I am enthusiastic about as well as my belief that there are still theoretically important and practice-relevant questions that have not been fully addressed in the field. My work has implications for the “real-world” of individuals, businesses, and the society.

My research interests focus on Human Resource Management and Employment Relationship in the context of globalization, and in particular, issues on strategic HRM, compensation, negotiation, and diversity at the workplace. An important goal of my research is to contribute to the knowledge set of HRM as well as to provide suggestions to organizations on how to design and implement ethical and effective HRM practices to gain competitive and sustainable advantages.

Seeking answers to important, interesting and practice-relevant research questions for advancing the field of Human Resource Management is the driver behind my passion for research. My research aims at contributing to the field with both theoretical implications and practical applications. For example, one of my research streams is on gender pay discrimination in China. As China rises as an economic powerhouse and an increasingly influential global player, coping with the rise of China has emerged as a key challenge to Western countries including the United States. Many scholars and practitioners in human resources and labor relations field have realized the importance of understanding the composition of Chinese human resources as well as the distinct features of Chinese labor market. My research projects give full depiction of gender discrimination in the different forms of the compensation that involves base pay, incentive pay, and benefits and have made unprecedented findings that demonstrate the co-existence of glass ceiling and sticky floor in Chinese labor market. Such findings provide insights to
international organizations on how to design effective human resource management policies that can attract, motivate and retain talent in a global market.

My Research Beliefs

I believe that scientific research has to be conducted in a rigorous manner, which requires great patience, effort and skills. To ensure the investigation is rigorous and the findings are trustworthy, I try to apply appropriate research tools that fit the nature of the research questions. In particular, I tried to ensure the transparency of the data collection process, the validity and reliability of the measures being used, the soundness of the methodological techniques, the clarity of research report, and the relevance to academic and practical improvements.

I believe researchers should have an analytical while systematic mind, with which they would be able to see big pictures as well as address the details because research is a type of work that requires both strategic thinking and attention to detail. Researchers should be big picture thinkers who need to have systematic and comprehensive knowledge of the field, come up with new ideas, theories and projects that would advance the field, and outline what needs to be done. Researchers should be detail thinkers as well, who need to pay careful attention to detail throughout the research lifecycle (i.e. literature review, data collection, methodology selection, data analysis and communication of findings, etc.).

I believe researchers should keep an open-mind. Interdisciplinary collaboration is not only a great way to expand our knowledge of a certain research question but also inspires us to ask more interesting and important questions. I have worked with scholars in the fields of strategic management, communication, economics, and healthcare management in various research projects. Such interdisciplinary collaborations have enriched my research experience and helped me develop a more holistic view of HRM issues.

I believe researchers should adopt a critical thinking mindset. We should be open to each other’s ideas but at the same time constructively challenge each other to move the field forward. I appreciate the suggestions, challenges, and criticisms that my coauthors, my colleagues as well as other scholars whom I might not know in person (e.g. reviewers, editors, etc.) bring to me. I value the opportunities to make a finer contribution to the field. On the other hand, I read the literature and view others’ work from a critical perspective. I give critical while constructive suggestions and comments at research workshops and conferences as well as when acting as a reviewer for other researchers’ journal/conference submissions.

I believe conducting scientific research is not only important to advance the academic field of HRM but also imperative to support the practices of all the stakeholders in the employment relationship that include but not limited to businesses, employees, employee associations, and governments. For all the research projects that I have worked on, I always ask a series of “so what” questions throughout the projects. Why is it an interesting research question? Who would be interested in reading this piece of work? What are the implications of the findings? Does the
work have the potential to influence the way people think or behave and the policies that businesses or governments make? Only with relatively strong and positive answers to these questions, I can be assured that the research questions are relevant to practice and I am doing some meaningful work that can possibly have an impact in the real world.

**My Pursuits on Conducting High Quality Research**

In my pursuits of high quality research, I emphasize the following two things.

*Courage and Humility* Intellectual courage and humility, as Robert and Wood (2007) argued, are two important intellectual virtues of scholars. Intellectual courage refers to the willingness to address ideas and viewpoints that might contradict to our own beliefs. Intellectual humility is defined as “having a consciousness of the limits of one’s knowledge.” I believe that researchers need to have the courage to present unpopular ideas and research findings that may not conform to mainstream findings, and on the other hand, be humble and willing to engage others in research discussions.

*Life-long Learning* Researchers are life-long learners. This is the very beauty of this profession that attracted me to become part of it. I always seek opportunities to learn new research insights (ideas, literature, new methodological techniques, others’ research activities, etc.) by attending conferences, workshops and seminars as well as through conversations with scholars in and outside the school. I have also learned new methodologies and updated my knowledge through reading new books/journal articles and attending web seminars (e.g. Structural Equation Modeling, Process Analysis, etc.). Such effort allowed me to adopt the most appropriate methods when conducting rigorous scientific research.

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