

THE MICHIGAN MODEL AND THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

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Abstract

In the process of making ever newer experiments, it is possible to understand a person more in-depth every day, and to show his real possibilities. Man in the management discipline has always been in the centre of interest, and the planes of analysis or approach to issues have changed.

Each company, regardless of the type of activity performed, uses the concept of human resources, covering all abilities, knowledge, experience, qualifications and broadly understood competences with this notion. Due to man's position in today's world, it is worth considering this position and the value of human capital as key factors in the human resource management strategy. The aim of this manuscript is to present the essence and importance of the Michigan Model as one of the models used in the HRM strategy.

Keywords: human resource management (HRM), management strategy, Michigan model, innovative management, human capital.

1. Human capital as a company value

As a concept, human capital has appeared in economic theory quite recently, in the second half of the 20th century. The Nobel laureate, Theodor Schultz, was the first to use this definition in 1961. He described human capital as a complex definition. In his opinion, all human abilities are innate or acquired. Upon birth, every human being already has certain special sets of genes that determine his innate abilities. Any traits of the acquired quality of the population that are valuable and can be enriched through appropriate investment will be considered human capital¹.

Whereas, M. Bartnicki believes that human capital consists of people who are permanently connected with a specific company and its mission. These people have cooperation skills, creativity, qualifications as well as motivation, competence and intellectual dexterity².

In Poland, and also in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the development of the human capital concept began after the collapse of the communist system, i.e. from the turn of the 1980s and

¹ T.W. Schulz, *Investing in People: The Economics of Population Quality*, University of California, Berkeley 1981, p. 21, w: J. Fitz-Enz, *Profitability of investments in human capital*, Economic Publishing House – Dom Wydawniczy ABC, Kraków 2001, p. 9.

² M. Bartnicki, *Measurement of intellectual capital*, "Economic and Company Organization" 2000, No. 11, p. 12.

1990s³. According to J. Grodzicki, human capital is represented by the whole of human values that are the effect of its process of environmental adaptation and own traits, and the process of education in the educational system, as well as human capital as the values resulting from the sum of expenditure on educating individuals, which together make up the educational potential of society⁴.

In his management theories on human capital, G. Becker introduced a division into general and specific human capital. According to Becker, this division is necessary to properly manage the human capital of a given organization. General capital is the knowledge of a process that is commonly used in various enterprises, for example. Specific human capital will be the knowledge of a process that is used only in a given company⁵.

A. Sajkiewicz believes that: "Human capital is people that are permanently connected with a company and its mission, characterized by cooperation skills, creative attitudes and qualifications. They are the company's engine and heart without which its further development becomes impossible"⁶.

Human resources are one of the most important elements of any organization and require constant investments. In this case, investment means sending employees to various types of training. It also means providing them with good working conditions and building friendly relationships in teams. Effective employee motivation with the help of a remuneration system provides great opportunities to improve the performed work. Thus, the company's income has a chance to increase and make a given organization more competitive in its environment. Human resources are every company's most important factor. Employees' skills and knowledge will contribute to increasing the company's profits. Investments in human capital offer wide development opportunities in every company. On the other hand, if a company does not invest in employees, the quality of their work will often be very low, leading to zero development.

In many organizations, it is increasingly recognized that process improvement is possible through a high level of employees' awareness. A similar situation occurs in the case of their involvement in performed work and a sense of responsibility for the company's future. To achieve this level, it is necessary to develop knowledge individually while using one's own experience in solving problems and acquiring skills to work in a team⁷.

³ B. Czerniachowicz, S. Marek, *Selected problems of human capital development*, Publishing House of the University of Szczecin, Szczecin 2014, p. 25.

⁴ J. Grodzicki, *The role of human capital in global economy development*, Publishing House of the University of Gdańsk, Gdańsk 2013, p. 50.

⁵ G. Łukaszewicz, *Human capital of an organization. Measurement and reporting*, PWN, Warszawa 2009, p. 19.

⁶ A. Sajkiewicz, *Man - creator of enterprise value*, in: *Company value management*, ed. A. Herman, A. Szablewski, Poltext, Warszawa 1999, p. 66.

⁷ A. Örtenblad, *On differences between organizational learning and learning organization*, „The Learning Organization” vol. 8, No. 3, 2011, p. 125.

Requirements for managers concern situations in which they are obliged to delegate such qualifications to employees so that they could perform entrusted tasks with certain, strictly defined freedom, and improve them⁸.

2. Strategy in human resource management

The human resource management term is often used interchangeably with the personnel or human resources management terms. This results from the fact that the meaning of these concepts is unknown. Human resource management focuses on the documentation aspect and the analysis of formal requirements for the company's internal stakeholders. Whereas, personnel management is a concept focused on the employee, his competences and needs. The attention is focused on a person in the workplace. On the other hand, the area of interest in human resource management focuses not only on internal stakeholders (company employees) but is extended to include a group of external stakeholders. An important aspect is creating relationships between the company's stakeholders. Meaningful in this employee management process is also a very important element, which is to minimize the number of people that are necessary for the company's proper functioning, thus maintaining the most effective results⁹.

The first use of the term human resources appeared in American literature. It happened around the 1980s of the 20th century. At that time, it was translated as a certain type of activity that leads to carrying out specific personnel functions. Any changes that were visible in the company's internal development processes contributed to the expansion of the essence and position of employees. Over time, there have been changes concerning a person's appropriate place and meaning in the entire structure of the organization. More attention was paid to making the people recruited for the company not only an element of costs incurred by the company, but also a link that is necessary for the company's proper functioning, because they generate profits¹⁰.

Innovation in human resource management can be defined as some kind of idea, policy, program, practice or systems related to human resource management functions, provided that they are new to the adapting organization¹¹.

An innovative approach to the issues of human resource management means that the classic concept, which focused its attention on the performance of functions related to acquisition, development and motivation of employees, is no longer applied. The concept of knowledge management has become the motivator for a new and different view of human resource management. According to authors dealing

⁸ M. Urbaniak, *Directions for quality management improvement*, Publishing House of the University of Łódź, Łódź 2010, p. 78.

⁹ W. Harasim, *Human resources and human capital management*, "Research Journals of the Higher School of Promotion in Warsaw", 2013, No. 3, p. 9.

¹⁰ A. Poczowski, *Human resource management*, Polskie wydawnictwo Ekonomiczne Warszawa 2008, p. 22.

¹¹ E.E. Kossek, *The acceptance of human resource innovation by multiple constituencies*, „Personnel Psychology” 1989, 42, pp. 263–281.

with the literature on the subject, knowledge management is nothing more than a process that makes a company richer through the use of intellectual or knowledge-based assets¹². A different author, D.J. Skryme believes that knowledge management is a type of management that is systematic and well-defined, and plays a significant role for the entire organization and all processes that relate to organizing, creating, and implementing intended plans, and striving to achieve the goals set by the organization¹³.

B. Dale and C. Cooper distinguished six main elements that are necessary to achieve the highest possible results in the field of human resource management, which supports the organization in achieving goals, which are the knowledge management initiative. The first element is the support for the knowledge management initiative from the company's management board. The second one concerns the creation of an appropriate organizational culture in the company. Another one relates to planning processes, as well as arranging and creating the entire structure of the organization. The next one puts emphasis on educating and enabling employees to participate in training, improving their competences. The fifth factor aims to apply measurements that allow producing certain results. The last task is to motivate, which will involve employees in the activities of the entire organization¹⁴. This approach is aimed at obtaining support from managers and it is very important at every stage of the company's operation, because all decisions coming from top management have a huge effect on all members of the entire company. Strategic decisions that are made at the highest management level are essential for the company's success. The managerial staff that will notice the relationships that appear between knowledge management and human resource management will undoubtedly emphasize the value of knowledge, the strength of the human factor, and the importance of managing these factors. Any signs of support for knowledge management initiatives from operational managers are not tantamount with the fact that only people holding managerial positions should be involved in the company's activities. They are those who should be characterized by attitudes that should be promoted within the entire organization¹⁵.

Following the theories advocated by A. Smith, the only resource that can contribute to establishing and running a business is undoubtedly the human factor. The literature on the subject indicates the use of interchangeable nomenclature applied to people employed in the company. They are referred to as human resources or human capital. These terms basically have the same meaning, which is why S. Domański combined them into one. According to Domański, the human factor in the company means a certain amount of knowledge and skills that can be constantly expanded. It is also a kind of indicator

¹² W.R. Bukovitz, R.L. Williams, *The Knowledge Management Fieldbook*, Financial Times – Prentice Hall, Pearsons Education Ltd., London, 1999, p. 2.

¹³ D.J. Skryme, *Knowledge Creation. Creating the Collaborative Enterprise*, Butterworth – Heinemann, Oxford 1999, p. 39.

¹⁴ B. Dale, C. Cooper, *Total Quality and Human Resources: An Executive Guide*, Blackwell, Oxford 1992, pp. 83-84.

¹⁵ I. Nonaka, H. Takeuchi, *Creating knowledge in an organization. How Japanese companies make innovation processes dynamic*, Poltext, Warszawa 2000, p. 16.

that determines the level of creativity and production possibilities of both an individual and the whole group. The human factor is therefore part of a person, and so it is its permanent element¹⁶.

Further to the above considerations, there is a clear difference in relation to physical capital. The former cannot change the owner. The most important feature that distinguishes human resources is that they are constantly developing, expanding and multiplying their value, while others are depreciated. Human capital as a concept clearly emphasizes the employee's role in the entire process of the company's operation.

Every person employed in a company has certain knowledge and skills that undoubtedly influence its development. The possessed skills are used with the participation of other material and natural resources that the company has. Therefore, human capital is an invaluable element in any organization, regardless of its size and type of activity. All resources available in the company interpenetrate, leading to its proper functioning. This is possible only if the physical, natural and human capitals are at the appropriate level. If the company has only two of the three resources, there is a great probability that it will not function properly.

Another negative effect of too few investments in the area of human resources is the company's limited development opportunities. Nowadays, the situation on the market is dynamically changing, and companies that do not adapt to the market become distant from the competition and, as a result, lose the level of market share. Investments in financial, physical and natural capitals do not have such a significant effect on the company's development as investments in human resources. It is the employees who have the greatest impact on positive changes in the company, because the creation of new products, improvement of the existing ones and corrections in the production process stem from ingenuity and involvement of the human factor. These aspects show if the company has development potential or not. The company should perceive the employee as an asset, because through its work, the employee generates part of the income, which translates into profit in the future. However, it must be remembered that a man without appropriate technical background does not use his full potential. Therefore, investing only in human capital and its development may not bring the expected results.

A situation in which a company incurs expenditures leading to investments in human resources will ultimately result in added value, and bring benefits to the organization. Taking into account not only economic profits, an important factor that has a positive effect on the future of each company is to provide an appropriate number of competent people whose knowledge, experience and skills will translate not only into proper functioning but also into increased profits. In addition to these very important factors, it is extremely important that colleagues get along with each other and create a good team. Thus, it will be possible to place each employee in a suitable place, in accordance with their knowledge and qualifications. With this approach to human resource management, it is much easier to manage a team of people who are full of willingness and energy to act. Working with such people

¹⁶ S. Domański, *Human capital and economic growth*, PWN, Warszawa 2007, p. 19.

becomes much more enjoyable and the effects are much more spectacular. Properly selected employees, as well as a well-matched motivation system, will always bring greater benefits in the form of increased profits. What is more, another benefit that results from a carefully selected team of employees is competitiveness, undoubtedly. Innovation as well as modern techniques used in production processes contribute to the fact that a given company becomes more competitive on the market. Investments made in properly matched staff accelerate better results, at the same time giving much greater opportunities for the development of the entire company.

A strategic approach to human resource management is nothing more than the only possible solution to a comprehensive approach to the general topic of human resource management in the company. Traditionally, human resource management is based on assigning employees' data to a given company. Therefore, this resource will be shaped within its framework. However, the aim of such activities will be to minimize the fluctuation level, which can be achieved with the help of motivators, such as material elements or, as part of internal motivation, a proposal of career paths. Such practices make the company's employees loyal. Whereas, if you look at the current conditions of economic development, human capital becomes a moving element, and more and more dynamic and mobile in relation to the transition from one company to another.

Each company tries to acquire employees from the external market who are good at multi-tasking and their competences are at a very high level. Therefore, it is necessary to take steps that will effectively limit employees' movements from one company to another. To do so, the undertaken activities must be based on well-defined strategies that capture the demand for people with specific abilities. The next step will be to take actions to match the right people to the activities they will be doing. Strategic human resource management is defined in the literature as perceiving human resources in the context of a potential source of competitive advantage over others. Analysing the concept of strategic human resources management, it can be seen that there is a relationship that refers to people as those who are assets and the main capital of the company, and therefore human capital, the influence of the entire environment and competitiveness on the labour market. These are also broadly understood activities, causing long-term effects as well as all connections related to the creation of the company's strategy, its structure and organizational culture. It is also necessary to include in this scope activities that allow predicting certain effects of the undertaken decisions¹⁷.

The growing interest in strategic management has had a significant effect on the development of human resource management. The reason for such a situation was that the importance of the approach to employees was clearly emphasized. The employees were slowly treated not as units supporting production and profit growth but as a resource that influences the entire organization through their efforts and commitment.

¹⁷ T. Listwan, *Human Resources Management*, C. H. Beck, Warszawa 2016, pp. 37-38.

Whereas, according to M. Armstrong and F. Taylor, strategic human resource management is a system of thinking that is based on theoretical concepts that provide the basis of knowledge for making strategic choices, setting priorities and formulating guidelines for making general or specific strategies for human resource management¹⁸. It is also defined as "formulating and implementing organizational policies and practices that support the development of competences and behaviours necessary to achieve set goals"¹⁹.

The concept of strategic human resource management presented by M. Armstrong and F. Taylor assumes that people employed in an organization are key assets that require a certain level of investment. Without investments in human capital, there is no way that it will bring benefits in the future. Another assumption is that the results of work of properly selected staff have a significant impact on getting a competitive advantage. The authors of the concept also claim that it is necessary to adjust the strategic human resource management so that it is fully integrated with the company's strategy. However, as for managers, they should use such personnel practices that are adapted to each employed person and, more importantly, acceptable to this person. The last assumption refers to a belief that when performing their tasks, managers should actively participate in training sessions to perfect their competences in the range of motivation and arousing employees' commitment and attachment to a given organization in a way so that the formed bond would be an obstacle when looking for a different company²⁰.

Strategic human resource management aims to indicate directions and methods of using human resources to achieve the company's goals. It is also a kind of method to build the company's value. The concept of strategic human resources management found a more or less complete picture in models of the personnel function and their structures. The most famous models include the Michigan model, the Harvard model and the Schuler model. All three come from the USA.

3. Human Resource Management Schools

Referring to the beginnings of human resource management, and analysing the literature on the subject, it is clear that there are several model approaches to it. These models differ from each other but also have common elements. Among many, two concepts that have been developed by two business schools are the most relevant to management. It was Michigan Business School and Harvard Business School.

The work carried out on the Michigan model by researchers from the University of Michigan focused on strategic goals presented by the company as well as on demands for the most appropriate adjustment of HRM activities, structure, organization and strategy. The most important in this model is the business strategy, and therefore largely the economy. According to the authors, the HRM strategy should adapt to it. To properly manage human resources, it is necessary to treat them the right way. Therefore they

¹⁸ M. Armstrong, S. Taylor, *Human Resource Management*, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2016, p. 16.

¹⁹ G. Dessler, *Framework for Human Resource Management*, A, no. 5, Florida International University, p. 80.

²⁰ M. Armstrong, S. Taylor, *Human Resource Management...*, p. 36.

should be obtained at the lowest cost possible. They should be used sparingly, but at the same time money should not be saved on their development while making full use of their competences, knowledge and skills. In other words, the above considerations can be shortened by narrowing them down to a cycle of four elements. It is selection, control and assessment of performance, reward for the obtained results and investment in the development of the most valuable units²¹.

The created Michigan and Harvard models inspired subsequent researchers to reflect on the subject of human resource management. Finally, the next theoretical models of HRM are quite diverse. Elements that are directly related to the afore-mentioned two models distinguish between a soft and a hard approach to HRM. The hard approach relates directly to the Michigan school, presenting a calculation, rational and economic approach focused on an effective use of employees' knowledge. It focuses on measuring labour costs as well as appropriate quantitative and qualitative matching and selection of staff, which is necessary for the company's proper functioning. Whereas, the soft approach is anchored in the concepts of interpersonal relations. In this case, the focus is on the importance of communication, motivation and leadership. In this approach, intellectual capital is considered to be an important factor that helps to achieve goals set by the company. It also promotes the potential and commitment of all employees involved in creating and achieving the company's strategic goals. In the soft approach, the implementation of personnel functions involves combining the needs of each person with activities in the field of HRM²².

To be able to talk about implementation and application of the Michigan model, the personnel strategy as well as the organizational structure must relate to the general strategy, thus constituting a tool for its implementation. They have to be coherent internally, measurable and predictable. Whereas, the company must be focused on achieving not only profits, but most of all the intended and set goals, which may be the desire for a specific position on the market, competitiveness or survival²³.

In the entire strategic management process, two phases have been distinguished. Planning and implementation. Taking into account the Michigan model, it is about implementation, i.e. implementation and adaptation. The strategic approach to this model, in a broader sense, covers four key functions that were briefly mentioned earlier. Due to the fact that they are of key importance, it is necessary to present them in a broader sense. These functions include selection of employees, assessment of their work results, motivation systems and their development.

In the case of selecting employees, this function relates to the manner of conducting recruitment processes, which should be specified in the company's personnel policy. When preparing to carry out the recruitment process, attention should be paid to identification of individual characteristics of a potential candidate, which must be adapted to the type of work performed. A precise definition of the

²¹ C.J. Fombrun, N.M. Tichy, M.A. Devanna „*Strategic Human Resource Management*”, John Willey & Sons Inc., New York 1984.

²² Ch. Mabey, S. Graeme, J. Storey, *Human Resource Management 2e: A Strategic Introduction*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford 2007, p. 85.

²³ A. Kaleta, *Strategy implementation*, PWE, Warszawa 2013. p. 47.

required qualifications in the job offer and, in the next step, selection of a matching candidate will allow avoiding additional costs that would be necessary if the candidate would have to be sent to training related to improving qualifications and employee development. The appropriate selection of employees is extremely important and affects their future work results. These effects are helpful when assessing employees and, what is very important, have a huge impact on the overall level of the company's development and increase of its profits.

The assessment of the employees' work results is helpful in determining the organization's strategy for the years to come. The frequency of the assessment depends on the nature of the work performed by the employed persons, as well as on the conditions prevailing in a given company. Although, it may be time-consuming when the company employs a larger number of people, the employee's assessment, which is carried out systematically, has the greatest value. The periodic employee assessment allows filling potential competency gaps or rewarding them for their work.

Motivation systems are a necessary function in every company. It is a system of interrelated instruments of influence on employees, the aim of which is to increase the efficiency of work. Also, the system integrates individual goals with the general goals of the entire organization. Motivation systems are to encourage employees to undertake many activities that are beneficial for the company. In other words, the purpose of creating employee motivation systems is to be successful both for the organization and for employees.

Employee development is inseparable from the end result of achieving goals for the entire company, and relates directly to employee assessment. It may consist in directing them to various types of training, courses, participation in workshops or setting a path for their development. The effects of employee development will undoubtedly have an influence on the effects of the entire company. An employee who sees that the employer wants to invest in him and train him will have a much greater self-esteem and will feel more appreciated. Thus, the work performed will translate into much better results.

As can be seen from the above considerations, the Michigan model intensively integrates human resources management with the company's strategy as well as with the structure existing in the organization. All management functions distinguished in this model are of equal importance at every management level, i.e. at the strategic, tactical and operational levels²⁴. It also focuses on skilful shaping of subsequent areas of the entire cycle, which is to lead to effective exerting of influence on specific employee behaviours, which thus contribute to increasing individual effectiveness as well as efficiency of the entire organization²⁵. In the Michigan model, there is an exchange of data from the environment to the organization, as well as a mission and strategy related to the organizational structure, which is one-way in nature. All elements that occur in the resource management process are closely related, thus

²⁴ C. Zajac, *Human Resource Management*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Bankowej, Poznań 2007, p. 34.

²⁵ H. Król, A. Ludwicyński (ed.), *Human Resource Management. Creating human capital of the organization*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2006, p. 51.

creating a certain cycle of human resources, in which the priority is, as already mentioned, the employees' attitudes aimed at achieving the assumed work results²⁶.

It is necessary to strive for the best possible integration of strategy and organizational structure, as well as human resource management, which are influenced by political, economic and cultural aspects.

4. Conclusions

Strategic human resource management aims to indicate directions and methods of using human resources to achieve the company's goals. It is also a kind of method to build the company's value. Human resource management is subject to constant changes that are imposed by the market and the organization in which personnel activities are undertaken. Further to the above considerations, there is a conviction that strategic human resource management should become a standard, and that integration into the company's global operation strategy will become an essential element to enhance the value of each company.

The aim of this manuscript is to present the essence and importance of the Michigan Model as one of the models used in the HRM strategy.

To be able to talk about implementation and application of the Michigan model, the personnel strategy as well as the organizational structure must relate to the general strategy, thus constituting a tool for its implementation. They have to be coherent internally, measurable and predictable.

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²⁶ J. Nowicka-Mieszala, *Strategic human capital management as a method of building enterprise value*, Scientific Papers of the Humanitas University. Management 2014, No. 1, pp. 93-95.

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