EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT AND SELF-GOVERNMENT: CURRENT TRENDS

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Abstract

In the eyes of the expert community, there dominates a traditional approach in the domain of the Human Resource (HR) management in the territorial self-administration to its management which is mostly based on the activity of the administrative personnel. Our paper investigates whether these opinions were identical with the existing method of personnel management in the context of the territorial self-administration consisting of municipalities and higher territorial units.
The main goal of our study was to identify quality of personnel departments and personnel work in terms of synergy of four new roles of these departments in investigated territorial self-administration subjects. The methodological basis was mixed roles model presented by Ulrich (2009). Research results have proven that so far quality of personnel departments in investigated Offices is on an insufficient level in the context of new trends. The role of personnel expert dominates while other roles, which present a certain shifting in perception of the Human Resource Management, are significantly supressed in these Offices. An active approach of personnel officers in management of the Office as a whole lacks whereby such approach creates value and brings results in the form of satisfied employees and clients.

Keywords: self-government, territorial self-administration, effective management, Human Resource Management

JEL Classifications: J24, M50

Introduction

At present, Human Resources (HR) are the most important asset of each organisation. However, they are often taken for granted by many managers and in this sense underrated in a certain way in matters of investments into their development. The academic community, but also a variety of empirical researches, confirm that the Human Resource Management belongs unquestionably to strategic activities because it is exactly people, their knowledge, skills and extent, in which they give this potential of theirs for the benefit of organisation that decide on its success.

Public administration is a field, which used to be connected in the field of the Human Resource Management with certain formal and strictly laid down principles; and for long years this management field existed in perception of personnel agenda or administration. Public administration reforms on the one hand, but also increasing demands of citizens as clients for rendered services, pose higher requirements on management of public administration organisations also in the field of the Human Resource Management (Strielkowski et al., 2017). These requirements follow from the need of changed view and perception of employees, approach to them and change of way of thinking; and thus represent a significant qualitative change in the management method.

By mentioned reasons we decided to deal with the topic of the Human Resource Management in conditions of the territorial self-administration in Slovakia. Our intent was to assess quality of Human Resource Management Departments in the context of application of new personnel trends within the framework of the territorial self-administration, to find strengths and to name problems with outlining the way of their solution.

Theoretical Principals

The Human Resource Management is a concept that has been used only for several years and social and political development of the society points to qualitative changes in this understanding. Many authors deal with the topic of Human Resource Management in terms of its development, shifting in perception and new trends. Of Slovak authors, we will mention Joniaková, Blštáková (2013) dealing with trends in remuneration and readiness of Slovak organisations for management of new generation of employees. Some authors such as Antalová (2011), Kachaňáková (2011) deal with the field of company culture and its relations and interactions with the Human Resource Management. Juhászová and Kollár (2013), Čajka (2011, 2012) warn that current significant demographic decrease could easily affect employment policy. Kováčová (2009) emphasizes the importance of a participatory aspect in a democratic society, which is a guarantee of the development of local self-government. Jankurová (2014a, 2014b) suggests on the need of interpersonal and social competences development of managers in the context of effective management and also points to demand of continous education in this field (2014c) Košta (2011) investigates trends in the Human Resource Management in the view of current problems of the labour market. Majtán (2009), Suntingerová (2010) deal with creativity in the Human Resource Management. Of the Czech authors, Lubasová (2001), Adamcová (2014), Dvořáková (2007, 2012), Hroník (2007), Koubek (2004, 2007) deal with the mentioned topic. A group of authors Pomahač and Vidláková (2002), Wright and Němec (2003), Heger (2005), Hendrych (2003) focus on the personnel field in public administration. Veber (2009) and Stýblo (2008) analyse the Human Resource Management in the context of managerial function and a new view of this function. Partial trends are described by Franková (2011) and Hospodářová (2008) dealing with creativity and creative management. Horváthová (2011) describes talent management. Kouřim (2014) analyses relation of organisational culture and organisational values.

Foreign authors complete wide representation of Slovak and Czech experts in the Human Resource Management. Notable authors are Armstrong (2007), Foot and Hook (2005), Ulrich (2009), Kazanský (2009), Werner and Desimone (2011). Capelli (2000), Church et al. (2016), Tatoglu et al. (2016), Cascio and Boudreau (2016), Morris et al. (2016), or Tafti et al. (2017) deal with talent management and Hartz (2003) investigates especially the so-called „job revolution" trend. The research of Schein (1993), but also of Snell and Bohlander (2012), is dedicated to organisational culture and leadership in relation to the Human Resource Management. Job satisfaction and migration are also an interesting aspects of Human

Resource Management (Strielkowski and Čábelková, 2015; Čábelková et al., 2015; Hashim et al., 2016; Bilan et al., 2017).

All above-mentioned authors analyse the subject topic and offer their opinions on management of human resources and changes constantly arising in this important managerial function. The mentioned changes substantially influence methods, tools and ways, in which this function is carried out in practice. They proceed from trends in the world of work and from changes of all-society social and demographic environment.

The analysis of quality of individual personnel departments must be based on a definite complex tool pointing to partial processes to the New, but primarily to the need of unity of all mentioned partial aspects. It is so-called mixed roles model that includes four important roles, namely strategic management of human resources, management of organisation infrastructure, management of transformation and change, management of employees´ contribution (Ulrich, 2009, p. 45). These matters of facts are particularly important in the public sector where the Human Resource Management has certain specifics and just the mixed roles model is able to cover them fully.

Research Methodology

There is a prevailing opinion that, in the Human Resource Management in the territorial self-administration, the traditional approach to their management dominates, which is mostly based on administrative personnel activity. We were investigating within the performed research if opinions of wide expert community were identical with the existing method of personnel management in the context of the territorial self-administration consisting of municipalities and higher territorial units (VÚC).

47 subjects created a research sample for needs of our research on the topic of personnel trends in the territorial self-administration. Those were five self-governing regions and 42 cities. Subjects were selected based on satisfaction of pre-selected criteria of classification in the territorial self-administration as well as based on their willingness to disclose information on the investigated topic. We obtained primary data by means of a structured questionnaire that was sent by email communication to respondents – heads of personnel departments, or employees in charge. In some cases we were enabled to supplement answers by controlled interviews with personnel managers. The return on questionnaires made 75%. In case of self-governing regions, they were sent to all eight subjects. Only five higher territorial units answered. In case of the municipal level, we selected cities with number of population over 10,000 for research. The reason was the fact that, in our opinion, in smaller subjects of municipal self-administration, the personnel activity is aimed mainly at traditional personnel administration; and data on new trends in the Human Resource Management, which would reflect a higher degree of their quality, would not be relevant. In case of cities, questionnaires were sent to 55 cities. We received them returned and filled-in in case of 42 cities.

The main goal of the performed research was to identify quality of personnel departments and personnel work in terms of synergy of four new roles of these departments in investigated subjects of the territorial self-administration. At the same time we were interested, which one of roles is dominant and on the contrary which one the most suppressed. The theoretical basis of the concept of our research is the above-mentioned model of mixed roles of Human Resource Management Departments, which, in our opinion, is an efficient and flexible tool of determination for purposes of assessment of the role of personnel department and its quality in the context of new challenges and trends. The model was compiled by Ulrich, namely in such manner that different roles are ascertained in an organisation, which can be performed by personnel department and personnel work; and their quality is assessed, or given points by the

scale in range from 1 to 5 where 1 is low evaluation and 5 is high evaluation. Individual roles are divided into four groups. (Ulrich, 2009). We used and adjusted the model for needs of our research. The following Table No. 1 was a component part of the questionnaire that was sent to respondents. We presented ten basic fields in the questionnaire, in whose framework four questions, or statements were defined. Questions are numbered with numbers from 1 to 40 and each one is classified in one of four roles (Table No. 2) according to its characteristic. We use a uniform name for department naming – Human Resource Management Department, even though, this activity is indicated by a different name in each Office.

Table 1: Basic field of the mixed roles model

I. Does the Human Resource Management Department assist in:
   1. performing the task of the entire Office,
   2. improving efficiency of operations,
   3. taking care of personal needs of employees,
   4. adapting to changes.
	VI. The Human Resource Management Department in the Office devotes the most time to:
	   21. strategic matters,
	   22. operative matters,
	   23. problems with employees, listening to them and solving them,
	   24. support of changes in behaviour in order to increase quality of the Office.

II. Does the Human Resource Management Department participate in:
   5. the process of definition of the Office strategies,
   6. creating and providing for processes in the field of personnel work,
   7. improving commitment and involvement of employees,
   8. creating change of organisational culture for the purpose of renewal.
	VII. The Human Resource Management Department is an active participant in:
	   25. Office planning,
	   26. creating and providing for personnel work processes,
	   27. responding to employees´ problems,
	   28. renewal or change of the Office.

III. Does the Human Resource Management Department provide for:
   9. interconnection of personnel strategies with the strategy of the Office as a whole,
   10. effective arrangement of processes in the personnel work,
   11. harmonisation of the personnel policy with personal needs of employees,
   12. increase of the Office´s ability to implement changes.
	VIII. The goal of the Human Resource Management Department is:
	   29. interconnection and conformity of all strategies of the Office,
	   30. monitoring of administrative processes,
	   31. offer to help employees in satisfying family and personal needs,
	   32. formation of employees´ behaviour in the interest of organisational change.

IV. What is your opinion on efficiency of the Human Resource Management Department? Is it efficient then if it is able to:
   13. assist in strategy implementation,
   14. provide for efficient functioning of personnel processes,
   15. help employees in satisfying their needs,
   16. assist the Office to foresee future problems and to adapt to them.
	IX. The Human Resource Management Department creates processes and programs that:
	   33. interconnect personnel strategy with fulfilment of the Office strategy,
	   34. process documents and agreements efficiently,
	   35. care about personal needs of employees,
	   36. assist the Office in its transformation.

V. Do you consider or perceive the Human Resource Management Department as:
   17. strategic partner in managing the Office,
   18. expert for personnel administration,
   19. advocate of employees,
   20. partner in implementation of changes.
	X. Does credibility of the Human Resource Management Department originate from:
	   37. assistance in fulfilment of strategic goals of the Office,
	   38. increasing productivity,
	   39. help to employees in satisfying their needs,
	   40. efforts to implement a change.

Source: Prepared pursuant to Human Resource Champions. (Ulrich, 2009, p. 70).

Table 2: Points table of the model for determination of personnel department quality

Strategic partner		Personnel administration		Employee´s advocate		Change agent	
Question	Points	Question	Points	Question	Points	Question	Points
1		2		3		4	
5		6		7		8	
9		10		11		12	
13		14		15		16	
17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24	
25		26		27		28	
29		30		31		32	
33		34		35		36	
37		38		39		40	
Total		Total		Total		Total	

Source: Prepared pursuant to Human Resource Champions. (Ulrich, 2009, p. 70).

A respondent indicated at his/her own discretion a number of points to each question, or statement from 1 to 5 within the meaning of the above-mentioned evaluation scale. Thus, the result was 47 filled-in tables. We summarised the count of points. Their summary created for us a certain profile of quality of personnel department as a whole in each Office. However, the points table provides two kinds of information. On the one hand, the possibility to assess quality and level of the Human Resource Management Department in organisation as a whole and, on the other hand, also perception of quality of services of the personnel department at each of four roles. If we wanted to compare it with managing of organisation, similarity is in analysis of its portfolio where a different strategy of development is defined for each kind. It is like that also in case of roles of personnel department. Their evaluation and analysis make it possible for the department to develop each of them for the purpose of quality enhancement because the model is based on the fact that each of mentioned roles is equally important for the organisation.

Results and discussion

We will describe in further text individual fields and results as they were given by representatives of personnel departments in individual Offices split to higher territorial units and cities.

Table 3: Research results by individual roles

Role	Point Average	
Strategic partner	Higher territorial units	18.2
	Cities	15.5
	Total	16.9
Personnel administration	Higher territorial units	47.2
	Cities	47.0
	Total	47.1
Employees´ advocate	Higher territorial units	23.4
	Cities	26.8
	Total	25.1
Change agent	Higher territorial units	13.0
	Cities	12.6
	Total	12.8

Source: Own compilation.

Because of the limited scope of the paper, we indicate only summary average points for each role, not for all questions within each of them (see Table 3 above).

Obtained data provided us a picture on quality of Human Resource Management Departments in individual Offices. At the same time, they provided us level of individual roles in each Office, but also in total for cities or higher territorial units and for research sample altogether. The lower the number, the lower is quality of personnel work, or one of the roles. If each Office rated all statements with 5 points (hence as highly significant), then the result would be 50 points within each role and 200 points for the entire Office. The author of the mentioned model presents that the total number of points exceeding number 160 can be considered as high and indicative of high quality of services rendered by the Human Resource Management Department to the Office. The total number of points amounting to less than 90 shows that personnel department activities are perceived as low-quality and irrelevant.

Our investigated sample reached the total score of 101.9 points. The reached count of points refers rather to lower quality of personnel departments, which is held on a higher level only by the role of personnel administration that achieved the total score of 47.1 points, which is excellent in regard to the maximum possible number of 50 points. Even though, it is the traditional personnel role, it is not possible not to develop it. On the contrary, the task of personnel officers is to propose and apply efficient personnel processes, methods and tools in order to efficiently perform all basic functions of the Human Resource Management, which are recruitment and selection of employees, education, valuation, remuneration and suchlike. Even if this role uses to be suppressed by many experts in the personnel management theory by reasons of shifting to strategic management, partnership and other shifts mentioned also in our paper, we believe that its successful performance keeps adding a value to the organisation. Almost the same point evaluation was ascertained from the view of higher territorial units and cities; and we did not notice any significant differences in perception of this role on the part of both types of territorial self-administration subjects.

The role of fighter, or advocate of employees placed second in the point evaluation. On average, it was rated count of points 25.1 of the total possible number of points 50 whereas personnel departments of cities assigned higher significance to this role. We believe that a reason for this difference may be organisational culture, which is less formal in smaller Offices, helps employees feel a component part of the organisation and have also respect and trustworthiness in the personnel department itself. The contribution of employees increases if they have a feeling that there is free exchange of opinions in the Office; when they are persuaded that community or region officials and representatives bear their interests in mind; and when they feel to have a really strong and worthwhile relation with the Office. Even though, personnel officers have no direct responsibility for the contribution and commitment of employees because it is mostly on line managers, they can assist managers in this duty and create all conditions for provision of employees´ contribution on a high level.

In most organisations, and that not only in the public sector, we see indistinctive or, more aptly, inactive work of the Human Resource Management Department in the strategic management of these organisations. This trend was confirmed in investigated Offices whereas much more expressively in cities compared to higher territorial units. The strategic role of personnel department is not dominant in cities, which means that personnel officers are not perceived as strategic partners. Consequences may show themselves in the process of implementation of the Office strategy when personnel procedures assist in performing its objectives. However, it is questionable if this declaration to be the strategic partner is not only formal in higher territorial units either. Many Offices write or have elaborated more strategies than they need, or how many they actually follow. Voluminous documents are elaborated, but they always contain so many thoughts and ideas that in the final end they get lost and are not

implemented. We found also in our sample of Offices that personnel officers did not see themselves in the role of active strategic partner, but only of specific intermediary of the Office strategy into personnel programs. They answered completely vaguely the question if credibility of the Human Resource Management Department originates from assistance in performance of the Office strategic goals, thus their attitude towards significance of their department is completely in a different field. Probably in personnel administration.

Change agent and personnel department present no advantageous connection in the investigated sample of territorial self-administration Offices. A change represents certain transformation, thus modification of culture in the Office; and personnel officers should be involved in management of these changes. They should assist to recognize and implement processes leading to a change. Higher territorial units, but also cities, presented a very low significance of this role. Personnel officers do not take it for important to assist the Office to foresee future problems and to adapt to them. They do not feel to be a partner in implementation of changes of the Office; and have no interest to be an active participant of renewal or change of the Office either. Of course, they do not consider it important that their credibility follows exactly from the efforts to implement a change.

Conclusions

Oveall, one can say that Human Resource Management is an important component part of the overall management of Offices. In addition to personnel officers, also line managers participate therein who should create together new ways of thinking in the sense of orientation at client – citizen. Therefore, also all activities in the field of Human Resources should be strictly predefined according to needs and criteria of clients and those not only external, but also internal ones, accordingly own employees. Quality of personnel departments in investigated Offices is for now on insufficient level in the context of new trends. The role of personnel expert dominates while other roles, which mean a certain shifting in understanding of the Human Resource Management, are markedly suppressed in these Offices. In management of the Office as a whole, an active approach of personnel officers is lacking, which creates value and brings results in the form of satisfied employees and clients. Within the meaning of new trends, personnel officers must orientate themselves more to merits of their work than thereto how to do their work better. In our opinion personnel departments in Higher Territorial Units and in cities are stricken by certain myths preventing them to be professionals in their field in the sense of above-mentioned tendencies. In order to overcome these myths, they should be more proactive, show initiative. They should act more and not only be a department that reacts within the context of problems and carries out orders.

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