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THE SPECIFICITIES OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT

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Received: 5 March 2021 Revised: 20 March 2021 Accepted: 31 March 2021 Abstract: Paper focuses on analysis of the human resource management in project management – from the perspective of the organisation and the individual. Firstly, paper will explore the theoretical perspective of the human resource management concept as it is applied to project-oriented organisations. Different approaches to project management will be reviewed (traditional and agile approach) and their implications to human resource management. Next, focus will be on the elements of human resource management such as competence development, career development, but also organisational culture and internal communication. Focus will also be on individuals – employees, on their competences and motivation as important factors of the successful achievement of the project goals. Questionnaire research will examine the way in which specific project environment impacts human resource management and motivation of employees in civil society organisations. Concluding remarks provide theoretical conclusions and recommendations for the improvement of human resource management practices in project management.

Keywords: Human resources, motivation, projects, project management.

1. INTRODUCTION

An American businesswoman Mary Kay Ash said: "A company is only as good as the people it keeps." Employees are the most important and the most expensive resource of a company. They benefit greatly to its profits and competitiveness and their talents, knowledge and motivation determine value and growth of a company.

Human resource management (HRM) is a strategic approach to managing the most valuable resources of an organisation – its employees that work in it and individually and collectively contribute to achieving its goals. The purpose of HRM is to ensure that

organisation can achieve success through people (Armstrong, 2009).

Project-oriented companies – those in which most of their processes and activities are conducted in a form of a project (Lindkvist, 2004) – are somewhat different than regular companies in regard to how they manage their humane resources. They have certain specific features such as temporary nature of project and dynamism that create specific challenges for HRM from both organisational and individual perspective, thus resulting in specific policies and practices needed in these types of organisations (Huemann, et al., 2007).

Aim of this paper is to contribute to current research related to HRM in project

37

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management, having in mind most of extant literature primarily focuses on HRM in large stable organisations, while other organisational types such as project-oriented organisations are discussed less in literature.

This paper examines the extant literature related to project management, general management and HRM in order to answer the question how do different approaches to project management (traditional and agile approach) influence HRM practices and how different HRM practices influence do employee development and employee retention in project-oriented organisations, i.e. achieving organisational success. It examines organisational aspects of HRM in project-oriented organisations. individual aspects of HRM as both are organisational important for success. Additionally, this paper presents results of a questionnaire research aiming to examine, by analysing HRM practices and employee motivation, how specific project environment in civil society organisations influence employees, their development and employee retention in such organisations. Paper also offers recommendations for HRM in project management.

2. APPROACHES TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON HRM IN PROJECT-ORIENTED ORGANISATIONS

Traditional approach to project management, also called "the waterfall model" (Haas, 2007). dominates from its beginnings in the 1950s until today. Main idea behind traditional approach is the attitude that projects are simple, predictable and linear with clearly defined boundaries which facilitates detailed planning and following that plan without much changes (Andersen, 2006). Strengths of this approach is that it determines all the steps required for project implementation at the beginning and it allows the client to have information about the size, costs and time requirements of the project in advance. Additionally, traditional approach emphasizes that one of its main advantages is that the same methods and techniques can be used to all projects uniformly, regardless of their size and characteristics (Spundak, 2014).

Today, increasing number of authors believe this is actually one of major disadvantages of the traditional approach and state that "one size do not fit all" (Aguanno, 2004; Chin, 2004; Shenhar, & Dvir, 2007). Another disadvantage is the assumption that projects are isolated from their environments (Cicmil, et al., 2009) because in reality project activities seldom follow their predetermined schedule.

Agile approach was developed to overcome disadvantages of the traditional approach in view of the fact that change is the reality of modern business and project environment. Main characteristic of the agile approach is adaptability (DeCarlo, 2004) as opposed to the predictability which was main characteristic of the traditional approach. Assumption of the agile approach is that change is inevitable and that it's often impossible to create a complete project plan at the beginning (Andersen, 2006). By focusing on execution rather than planning and adaptability, agile approach seeks to respond to change and create project value (Highsmith, 2004).

Differences in project management approaches also imply differences in HRM. In traditional approach, role of the project manager and project team are clearly defined and have clear boundaries. Project manager's role is more to control the project progress and outcomes by following status reports and having regular meetings with project team which is why this approach includes extensive documentation. Consequence of highly defined roles and responsibilities of project team members is that team members work individually to complete their own tasks which leaves little opportunity for learning and growth through collaboration (Sengupta, et al., 2014).

In contrast to that, in agile approach, impact of the human factor and communication between team members are emphasized (Boehm, 2002) and rather than focusing on just completing their separate tasks, project team members focus on delivery of results that are the product of the work of the entire team (Sengupta, et al., 2014). They work together, preferably from the same room as one integrated team, rather than as individuals within a team (Haas, 2007). Because of the strong influence of human factor, it is recommended that project team

members are highly qualified (Cockburn, & Highsmith, 2001). In agile approach, project manager has more of a facilitating role and is someone who steers the team toward the achievement of project goals, as opposed as someone who only gives instructions to the team members. In agile approach responsibility for the project success rests on the entire team, not only on the project manager (Sengupta, et al., 2014).

3. HRM IN PROJECT-ORIENTED ORGANISATIONS – ORGANISATIONAL ASPECT

Project-oriented organisations have specific characteristics such as temporary nature of work, dynamic environment, role demands and particular project organisational culture, which can create challenges in terms of retaining people and achieving high performance. HRM project-oriented practices specific for organisations such as assignment to projects and dispersion after projects have finished can be particularly challenging in terms of employee retainment. The role of HRM in project-oriented organisations is to overcome these challenges (Huemann, et al., 2004).

For example, when assigning personnel to projects, selection decisions should be based on assessment of benefits for the organisation but also for the employee (Jones, & DeFillipi, 1996). For achieving high performance, it is ideal if the goals of the organisations and employee are aligned. On the other hand, time of personnel dispersion after a project is finished is a time when key workers are likely to leave, especially if they are left with a long waiting period before assigning them to another project. If another project is not immediately available, other engagement such as personal development training or some other temporary assignment can help in retaining valuable personnel (Huemann, et al., 2004).

Human capital is considered to be a key factor of why some companies are more successful than others (Acedo, et al., 2006). The reason for this is that human capital is unevenly distributed between companies and there isn't much of it, especially when it comes to talented managers and individuals. Companies that have valuable human resources that others can

not easily acquire or model, will be more successful than their competitors (Barney, 1991). This is also the reason why managers invest in programmes that enhance and retain human capital, especially one that is company-specific (Crook, et al., 2011).

There are certain HRM practices that impact development of workers so they can become the source of competitive advantage for companies (Guthrie, 2001). High-involvement HR systems is composed of various connected HRM practices such as selection, training, development, retainment and motivation of workers (Delery, 1998), that are implemented in such a way as to improve competences and specific skills of employees (Bae, & Lawler, 2000), High-involvement HR systems also include compensation mechanisms based on result-oriented and development-oriented performance review and rewards based on performance, which influences worker motivation and dedication, i.e. enhancing company-specific human capital (Batt, 2002).

It is widely recognised that organisational culture has a deep impact on project performance (Brown, 2008). It is an expression of organisation's personality, it is the way things are done in an organisation (Jacques, 1951). It is rooted in people and drives their behaviour (Stare, 2011). Behaviour of project managers and top managers, their manner of communication with clients and employees, have deep influence on organisational culture, because managers communicate values, beliefs. assumptions and priorities organisation that employees feel they have to follow (Suda, 2007). There are multiple types of organisational culture and for success of organisations and projects, cooperative culture is especially important and is based on trust, communication, teamwork and cooperation (Kerzner, & Saladis, 2009).

Communication represents a foundation of interpersonal relationships in all aspects of human life. "It is not possible not to communicate" is an axiom that confirms that communication is our link to the world and even if we don't speak, we communicate with our body language, gestures, body pose, attitudes. That is why effective communication is considered to be of key importance for

project success (Tushman, 1979) and is also one of the most important individual competences for those considering careers in project management. In most of the professional environments that foster support and are oriented toward connecting people it is easy to build trust and encourage synergy which leads to better, more precise communication. This in turn make project team members feel valued and motivated to achieve high team performance (Verma, 1996).

The concept of sustainability had become a mantra of the 21st century (Dyllick, & Hockerts, 2002). Sustainable HRM is related to practices and that achievement of organisational goals in a way that resources can be sustained so that the company can fulfil their future needs (Wagner, 2013). What should be sustained are individual skills, capabilities and work systems, relationship between employers and employees (Ehnert, 2014). The impact of the business on people outside the organisation is considered, 'green values' are integrated within the organisations and 'green practices' at the workplace are implemented (Ehnert, et al., 2020). Additionally, goals that contribute to common good and solving the global issues, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, social inequality and poverty, are adopted (Ehnert, et al., 2020).

4. HRM IN PROJECT-ORIENTED ORGANISATIONS – INDIVIDUAL ASPECT

In order for HRM to be effective and to lead to high performance, it is essential to have a competent and motivated individual. But who is that individual that delivers high performance? What are his or hers personality traits, what knowledge and skills he or she needs to have, what are their personal motivators for working in project management? And is it possible to develop an individual so their performance can be improved?

Competences are closely related to capability which represents internal characteristics and qualities of individuals that can be improved. In contrast to human capital which represents total performance of all the employees within a company, competences are related to the 40

individual's performance (Noerchoidah, 2015). Competences can be developed through several different approaches such as: selfdevelopment, peer-development, education and training, coaching and mentoring and simulation (IPMA, 2015). Various organisations for project management such as International Project Management Association (IPMA) and Project Management Institute (PMI), certify competences in different ways but each have levels of certification that certain amount of combined requires knowledge, skills and experience and involve an official exam and a proven experience of working in project management.

When it comes to competences and learning, it is useful to mention the "Neuro-logical levels model of learning and change", or Dilts model, developed by Robert Dilts. Dilts model allows us to understand the different levels at which we experience the world around us: environment, behaviour, capabilities, values and beliefs, identity and purpose. These levels are organised within a pyramid with environment as the bottom level and the purpose as the top level. According to Dilts, the function of each level is to organise and manage the level below. If the change happens on one of the higher levels it will automatically produce change on lower levels as well. So if there is a change regarding our identity, values or beliefs it will automatically drive change to our capabilities and behaviours and be more sustainable (Dilts, 1990).

When it comes to employee development, HRM practices that are usually discussed in literature are mostly related to the lower neurological levels, such as level of environment (organisational culture), behaviour (performance review, feedback) capabilities (training, mentoring). Although important, change on these levels are not sufficiently sustainable. In order for change to be sustainable, they have to happen on higher levels (identity, values and beliefs). This is why many companies today support and encourage employees in the process of personal development by providing trainings or coaching (e.g. British Gas, Virgin, Diners Club, American Express, Fiat, BMW all use NLP or neuro-linguistic programming) in order to develop their employees.

Competences of a project manager are one of the most important factors of project success (Standish Group, 2001). The role of a project manager is complex and the position requires competences in area of leadership, communication, team management, decisionmaking strategic planning and others. Having in mind the complexity of the role of a project manager which is temporary in nature and often followed by an intense work pressure, many project managers leave this position in order to pursue other managerial positions (Ricciardi, 2001).

In order to overcome these problems, in recent years, project management rapidly went through a process of professionalization through standardising body of knowledge and certification (Morris, et al., 2006) which makes career models one of the important parts of the professionalization process. The purpose of career models is to provide link between personal career goals of an individual and objective qualification requirements of the company (Walker, 1976). Career models represent an HRM practice which can contribute to motivation and development of personnel competences in a direction that fits the requirements of the company as well as the wish of the individual about the development of their own career.

When it comes to leadership and people as key resource of an organisation, Collins, author of the management book "Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't" argues that having the right people at the right positions within a company is an essential foundation for high performance and success. He explains that when we have the right people in the company, we don't need to worry about motivating them or about getting them in line. Right people do not need to be dealt with or waken up. They are self-motivated and with their internal need to give their best and be part of the team that creates something exquisite.

Motivation represents internal driver within a person that causes that person to dedicate additional effort willingly and voluntarily in a specific goal-oriented way (Verma, 1996). Most project participants want job satisfaction, a sense of achievement, success and

development as well as financial compensation and other rewards that will allow them to live as they want (Locke, 1976). Project managers must understand motivation processes in people and find ways to motivate project team members on the individual level and team level. In order to achieve that, they must create organisational culture and project environment that encourages motivation (Verma, 1996) and for that to happen, they must get to know their employees and be in constant contact with them, because their circumstances, interests and motivation factors change in time. The success of a company is based on competent and motivated individuals (Hellreigel, et al., 1979) and the only way to retain them is for project managers and top managers to provide that the personal goals of the employees and organisational goals are in most part aligned (Verma, 1996).

5. RESEARCH ON HRM IN CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS RELYING ON PROJECTS AS THE PRIMARY METHOD FOR MANAGING WORK

5.1 Research methodology

The objective of this research was to examine the way in which specific project environment influences HRM by analysing HRM practices and employee motivation in project-oriented civil society organisations; the final output being creating recommendations for HRM in civil society organisations (CSOs) that are managing projects.

For collecting data, a questionnaire was used and was distributed via google form with predetermined questions divided in three groups:

- 1. Questions related to the respondent's profile (gender, academic qualifications, length of work and job position)
- 2. Questions related to the employee motivation, organisational culture, manager's leadership style, internal communication
- Questions related to the HRM
 practices within the organisation and
 the influence of the approach to project
 management and sustainability of the
 organisation on HRM.

Request for participation in the research was sent to 84 e-mail addresses of persons working or volunteering in 36 CSOs in Serbia. The participants were asked to fill in the questionnaire anonymously. The research was conducted between August 15th and September 10th, 2020.

Response rate was 74% which means that 62 persons responded to the request by the given deadline, out of 84. The gender split was 60% female and 40% male. More than two thirds of respondents (69%) finished faculty (bachelor or master studies), 18% finished high school while 5% had doctoral degree.

In terms of length of working or volunteering in the organisation, majority of respondents worked more than 10 years (38%), while 31% stated they work less than 3 years in the organisation. Smallest percentage was of respondents who worked 3-5 years within the organisation (13%).

47% of respondents stated that they work at the position of manager or coordinator, 27% were directors, 11% were volunteers, while the rest of respondents worked at positions of assistants, team members or other.

5.2 Results

CSOs in Serbia can be regarded as projectoriented organisations having in mind activities in these organisations are most often implemented through projects. It can be said that traditional approach to project management is more suitable for the most CSOs because projects that they implement are granted by donors and usually based on open calls for projects to which organisations apply with detailed project applications that have predetermined goals, expected activities and budgets. After the project is granted, there can be little change to its original design.

Research found that knowledge about agile project management in CSOs is limited. Only half of the respondents know what agile project management is. However, 39% of those (all of them being at the position of managers and directors) state that some of the projects are

implemented by following certain principles of agile project management.

About half of the respondents thought that there is a clear hierarchy in their organisation and that employees have clear roles and responsibilities and do not "walk between roles", which suggest traditional approach. On the other hand, almost 80% of respondents stated that members of their project team work together, often from the same room, and often meeting face to face and exchanging information and ideas on how to implement project activities. Also, two thirds of respondents state that in their organisation project manager is someone who supports the team and facilitates achievement of project goals, rather than someone who only controls the work. These are all principles of agile project management. Most CSOs are focused on creating teams composed of motivated individuals and creating environment that supports high performance.

Sustainability of organisations is related to the conservation, regeneration and development of environmental, economic and social resources of an organisation (internal influence), but also to the contribution toward solving global sustainability challenges (external influence). The purpose of CSOs is to contribute to public interest and solving problems at the local, national or international levels and respondent work in CSOs whose missions are to contribute to environmental protection, animal welfare, rural development, good governance and rule of law, decentralisation, development of democratic culture, etc. For that we can say that the external aspect of sustainability is strong.

On the other hand, internal aspect of sustainability of CSOs is limited. According to CSO Sustainability Index report for Serbia for 2018, total sustainability of CSOs had worsened, especially when it comes to legal framework, advocacy, service provision infrastructure and public perception. Sustainability of human resources was week. Only small number of larger CSOs have functioning internal structures and paid personnel, while many smaller CSOs do not have enough human resources (CSO Sustainability Index report for Serbia, 2018). This could be the reason why 40% of respondents stated that roles and

responsibilities are not clear in their organisations while 21% was not sure. For CSOs with limited human resources it is essential that their project personnel do not have fixed and clearly defined roles and instead 'walk' between different roles.

In spite of these results, it can be said in terms of sustainable HRM that CSOs in Serbia apply certain practices directed toward taking care of their employees and considering them as longterm investments. For example, over 80% of respondents believes that CSOs in which they work or volunteer take good care of their employees and three thirds of respondents state that CSOs take care about employee development by providing opportunities for trainings, courses and other forms of personal development. Three thirds of respondents also stated that CSOs in which they work allow employees to change working hours or to take a day off if necessary. Additionally, 60% of responders stated that they don't fear their job safety, while one fourth of respondents were not sure and 16% are concerned about their job safety. This result may be due to the fact that organisations finance their work through projects which depend on donors' will and that such working conditions mean some degree of uncertainty regarding the workplace.

HRM practices deeply affect motivation of employees to work and learn and thus also their performance. This research aimed to ascertain what internal drivers that motivate employees and volunteers in CSOs to work are. It was found that the top three motivators for employees in CSOs are:

- 1. Visible positive influence of my activities on the community/nature/animals
- 2. Supportive and friendly environment
- Possibilities for learning and career development

Research also examined various motivation factors and how high they influence employee motivation for working in their organisation. Factors that were examined were organisational culture, communication, management style, clarity of instructions and procedures, acknowledgment, salary, etc.

The research found that cooperative organisational culture that is based on trust, communication, teamwork and cooperation represents an important motivation factor for employees and volunteers in CSOs. Almost all respondents (98%)sated that open communication among team members and with supervisors as well as supportive and friendly environment have high or very high influence on their motivation.

It is clear that project leaders shape project culture and that cooperative culture requires effective manager support. Although supportive managers are not among top three motivation factors that respondents chose as most important for their work in organisations, majority of respondents (89%) agreed that supportive and enthusiastic managers is a motivation factor with high or very high influence on their motivation.

Project managers are responsible for creating environment in which team members will feel motivated. This is influenced also by HRM practices that can encourage and sustain motivation. Respondents agree that following practices have high or very high influence on their motivation:

- Visible positive influence of ones work on external environment (95%)
- Possibilities for learning and career development (trainings, courses, feedback...) (94%)
- Clarity of instructions and work procedures, as well as the expected results (82%)
- Acknowledgment for the good and quality work (76%)
- More autonomy in implementing tasks (less manager's supervision) (76%)

Question of salary as a motivation factor is an interesting one. It is said that salary based on skills as well as the relationship between performance and compensation where higher performance leads to higher compensation is very important for high-involvement HR systems and can lead to higher motivation of employees for learning, development and improving performance (Huang, 2011). On the other hand, Jim Collins in his management book "Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don't" suggests

that value of the salary, benefits and other forms of compensation, although important, are not key drivers of high performance in a companies that made the leap from 'good to great'. Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory suggests that money is a hygiene factor and is not a long-term motivator.

57% of respondents that work in CSOs stated that salary has high or very high influence on their motivation, while 29% stated that salary has only moderate influence. Salary has little or no influence on 14% of respondents. Data suggest that although salary is not a key motivator for work in CSOs, it does represent an important factor which at least has to be adequate so it may not be a factor of demotivation of employees. Data also suggest that salary is more important to managers than to directors. From the 37 respondents that stated that salary has high or very high influence on their motivation, 22 were project managers or coordinators, while 5 of them were directors. It is opposite for 18 respondents who stated that salary has moderate influence on their motivation. From those, only 4 were project managers or coordinators, while 8 were directors.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

HRM is of strategic importance for projectoriented organisations. Projects are implemented by people and purpose of HRM is to ensure that organisation can achieve high performance through people.

In order for HRM to be effective and lead to high performance, we need a competent and motivated individual. That invest in development organisations employee competences through training, mentorship, peer to peer learning, feedback and other processes and establish appropriate compensation systems. In order to retain a competent individual in the organisation and to ensure that the investment in him or her continues bearing fruits, organisations aim to create a cooperative organisation culture and project environment that encourages and sustains employee motivation. Project manager has a key role in all these processes and his aim should be to direct and lead the project team toward making high performance. In order to succeed, project manager should get to know their team members, understand what their values and beliefs are, what motivates and drives them. This is needed so that the manager can create appropriate organisational culture which encourages productivity and employee motivation and ensure that the personal goal of individuals are in most part aligned with organisational goals. In that way, project managers and top management of the organisation can jointly ensure that "right people are on the right places" and that competent and motivated individuals are project-oriented retained, so that the organisation continues to achieve high performance and success.

The results of our research have shown that the motivation of employees in the CSOs in Serbia is highly influenced by the impacts of their work on the communities and nature, but also depend on supportive and encouraging internal environment created by project managers that include supportive team, open communication between team members and supervisors and acknowledgement for good work. Although traditional approach to project management is dominant in CSOs, some agile principles that are related to HRM are used, such as cooperative working environment, face to face meetings, team working from the same room, managers that lead instead of only controlling the work processes, etc. HRM practices used in CSOs such as allowing their employees to change working hours or take a day off if needed and providing opportunities for training and development lead to conclusion that CSOs are dedicated to take care of their employees and think about improving sustainability of human resources.

Based on the literature and research findings, main recommendations regarding directions for improvement of HRM in CSOs as a model for project-oriented organisations have been identified:

. When selecting employees and/or when assigning them to projects, special attention should be given to the selection of people that have certain competences, motivation for the topic project deals with and for achieving high performance. People also should be selected based on their

- ability to fit into the existing organisational culture.
- Supportive environment for open communication and cooperation between team members should be created. Following principles of agile project management such as working from the same room and favouring communication face to face rather than other methods, and also giving a level of autonomy with less managerial supervision and support to motivated individuals, could be helpful to achieve this, since these kinds of environments encourage employee motivation.
- 3. Job satisfaction is a feeling that individual have when the job is in harmony with his needs and values. Project managers should get to know their team members well and to be in constant communication with them so they can understand their motivation processes and ensure that team members are always familiar with organisational goals and that their personal goals are for the most part aligned with organisational goals.
- 4. Cooperative organisational culture should be created that is based on trust, effective communication, teamwork and cooperation and fosters friendly work collective, supportive manager, clear procedures and expectations, level of autonomy when conducting tasks, flexible working hours, opportunities for learning and personal development and visible effect of own activities on external environment.
- Opportunities for development of competences should be provided in terms of both technical knowledge and leadership and communication skills. It is equally important to provide opportunities for personal development through training and/or coaching.

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