

The Role of Human Resources in Performance Management of SMEs: The Case of Republic of Macedonia

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Abstract

In enterprises, humans are identified as the main source which provides competitive advantage, whereas human resource management (HRM) should play the leading role as "locomotive" for small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in order to reduce the challenges and problems they face. HRM functions, practices and procedures nowadays are very important and their role is continuously increasing if we consider an economy which relies ever more on knowledge. In this way, necessarily arises the need for careful management in the allocation and use of this labor force, not only in fulfilling the vacancy, but it is even more important to achieve and ensure increased efficiency of its use in the production process of goods and services that guarantee the growth of welfare or the level of living standard of society members.

SMEs are characterized with a high heterogeneity that is expressed in several aspects, such as: the size of the company, the simple structure, low level of specialization and formalization, high level of centralization on decision making (the owner is also the manager of the enterprise) etc. Thus SMEs apply and develop policies and procedures in the scope of HRM unlike large enterprises, taking into consideration their size and structure. But, the common thing for both forms of business organization is that they have to apply and develop basic functions of HRM in order to be effective and efficient in usage of human resources and successful in market competition.

Apart from the theoretical analysis of the issues mentioned above, the doctoral thesis is further supported by the empirical analysis, in which 150 small and medium enterprises in the Republic of Macedonia are surveyed.

Keywords: Human resource management, effectiveness, small and medium-size enterprises, remuneration, training, performance.

1. Introduction

Human resource management constitutes an important area in achieving strategic goals for the country's European integration. Such a perception, in an imperative way raises the

necessity of managing or effective use of them. In addition, human resources currently constitute one of the main sources of production, which will enable the growth of firm performance, respectively increasing the efficiency of human resources usage. What is difficult for such an enterprise is creating challenges in the field of management in general.

Meanwhile, the transition period places the country vis-a-vis several challenges, imposes the conducted investments in human capital, increasing the efficiency of human resources, a thing that requires professional training, namely increasing the educational level of the workforce, which today is considered as the integral source to guarantee the success of the enterprise. Therefore, considering both theoretical and practical aspect, the effective management of human resources is of primary importance for any enterprise that aims to be profitable in the market. Market in Macedonia is characterized by the domination of small and medium size businesses and also the existence of relatively small labor force in number. The transition period from the beginning, even today does not manage adequately the labor force. The most synthetic indicator of this situation is the high rate of unemployment, where official numbers show that the unemployment rate reaches 35 percent that is relatively the highest in the region.

2. The role of Human Resources Department

The human resources department still is fairly new to organizations, businesses and state institutions in Macedonia. In most cases, it is focused on recruiting, selection, hiring, recognition and being in line with the labor code in the country.

Today, however, new tools and methods for analyzing data enable HR to define the link between “people practices” and performance more effectively.

Business priorities should also become HR priorities. If external experts result in less productive and without much enthusiastic performance than promoted experts from inside the company then HR department concludes that promoting specialists among existing employees within the the company will save it millions, therefore the company starts working to make this a reality. To summarize on this principle, business executives determine what would be the success for their business and ensure proper context for HR to analyze the situation and provide appropriate recommendations (Gardner et al., 2011).

New ideas need new solutions provided by HR. These ideas often face new challenges that require solutions which are not provided before or, are quite complicated to pass from theory into action. HR analysts attain to have success when they work together with business leaders in order to reach the roots of the problem and to foster innovative ways of solution. Take under review the best practices within the company using interviews and other assessment tools, analyze and bring principles that stand behind these successful practices and apply these principles in other business sectors (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1961).

Modify and make it “climb” in the context of your business. When a company experiences success in HR practices it can build a source of profit growth by integrating them into ongoing business and HR practices. As an example we can state that some companies have already made usual the presence of HR in business evaluation to identify priorities in the analysis of these businesses. This practice helps top management executives in reaching solutions to HR related problems and to make action plan since they detect it (Holton and Trott, 1996).

3. The role of Human Resources Professional

For small and medium size enterprises for which are impossible to have a special department of human resources management, a specific role can play professional or human resource specialist. Human resource professional necessarily should be a person who possesses strong will. What exactly he should do for the company to compete in the market? Ironically, today, more than ever, the company needs the presence of such a professional. Why? Because, in today's market companies compete not only by increasing production, but also by increasing services and quick responding to the demand of the territory. The company should be fast, flexible, focused and friendly. One such company can be possible through the creation of organizational culture, which highlights the above stated qualities and the best of its employees.

Today, a modern human resource professional should have the knowledge necessary for the organization. Professional knowledge and skills of human resource professional assist the organization in creating a culture of performance, which influences the competitive advantage of the company - human resources. It is impossible to ensure quality service, quick response to changes in market demand and encouraging progress with a completely unmotivated workforce. Human resource professional's role precisely consists the following: help top-managers to identify management practices that are consistent with human nature in order to achieve their best. Also enables harmonization of individual goals with the goals of the organization.

4. The role of compensation in business organizations

An efficient compensation procedure is in the function of both the company and employees and creates more satisfactory situation possible to win on both sides. The most critical element of compensation is that it is never at the level “enough”. In decision-making for compensation procedures both employee and the company in which he works are considered and the key point is to find the right and satisfactory balance. We can often hear sentences that dissatisfied customer shares his experience with at least 10 other persons, while dissatisfied employee talks about this experience with all the people he knows. This aspect requires special attention from managers.

In today's labor markets, employers develop competitive strategies not only in terms of attracting the most qualified employees, but also to establish their brand in the market.

Competition for the so-called “employer brand” becomes even stronger in the comparability with critical factors such as job profile and compensation packages. Employer brand is the image that employees and the organization's stakeholders perceive for the work environment as a whole. Current trends of this concept are associated with organizational culture that combines a sense of belonging to the company as well as encouraging employees to share organization's goals. As consumer loyalty building strategies, companies are also competing toward employee loyalty through efforts to create/improve or consolidate the employer brand. What turns an employer into a brand? Referring Barrow's studies, there are four elements that work to create the employer brand: The first element is employee compensation package that includes responsibilities at work, financial compensation, balance policies between social life and work, the role of employees in the organization and professional development. Another factor is the culture and environment of the organization where working conditions, size of the organization and the approach are included. Integrity also is ranked as a critical element on creating employer brand. Values that are communicated to employees at the beginning should be allocated. It is noticed that the absence or violation of this form of integrity has resulted in high levels of dissatisfaction. The last and most important is the management performance, which plays a vital role in the process of building the brand (Barrow, 2007).

A satisfactory compensation package creates satisfied employees and certainly simplifies the creation of a brand for employers. For instance companies with a strong employer brand image such as Google work less in terms of brand creation, as they focus on the way of living this experience offered by this brand. “People-Service-Profit is the head philosophy of FedEx with which it demonstrates what comes first. Bill Marriott of Marriott Hotels doesn't get tired repeating his belief: "Take care of colleagues and employees, they will take care of hotel clients and customers will come back to us!". Organizations like these clearly reflect high level of confidence at their management (Vijayakumar and Parvin, 2010).

Years 2009-2010 are recognized by all of us as years of economic challenges and uncertainty. These challenges along with the opportunities offered by the markets have frightened planning managers for compensation packages on exceeding the budget. Several research reports show that 2009 recorded the largest reduction in the growth rate of wages and financial compensation. Results of these studies showed that the average growth of financial compensation packages was about 1.9-2.2% in all industries and categories of employees. Year 2010 was nominated as the year of compensation increase to a new level the so called "new average rate", which will widely be considered as eligible (<http://www.ini.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Files/Rates/2010RatesByBusTypeClassCode.pdf>).

Some issues that should be considered regarding the compensation for this period are the following (<http://www.ini.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Files/Rates/2010RatesByBusTypeClassCode.pdf>):

Wages increase budgets of the organizations: Humans present cost for all organizations (Salaries, other benefits, retirements, flows, etc.). In current economic and market conditions it is noticed that organizations are obliged to use a variety of strategies to control costs in order

to effectively manage their capital expenditures. Some industries such as: automobile, transport, retail, construction and real estate agencies have taken more drastic measures.

Other tendencies: Due to limited capital, business organizations have begun broadly to expand the model of performance-based payment, which differentiates employees according to a unique and individual growth. This successfully implemented method serves especially for phases that come across economic fluctuations in the market and helps us not to lose skilled employees. On the other hand, performance-based reward helps us control costs for employees with low performances that really hinder the planned success of the organization. Referring to the same study above, high performance employees received an average compensation of 3.4% while poor performers are rewarded with 1.7%.

Planning consequences of the compensation packages based on performance: Nobody knows when the compensation packages might be changed again, or when an increasing rate will be accepted simply as normal. Due to this, employers may consider the preparation of different scenarios that include strategy, finance and the need for special talents. This plan combined with expectations, market situations and other factors will assist senior management in decision-making.

Future challenges: Employee compensation is a challenge for all companies. Whether you seek adaptation to the market and valuation of employees then you should try to pay more than the market. At the same time you should save a part of the investment as compensation for those employees who exceed expected levels of the results, to thank and reward for this additional contribution.

While companies often refuse to pay some modest salary increase, before taking this decision they should take into account the opportunity costs of losing a qualified employee, where the recruitment of a new employee, necessary training according to job requirements, loss of productivity, loss of expertise, administrative costs, dissatisfied actors, are just some of these costs. According to a study by Hay Group replacement of a worker costs the company six salaries for an ordinary employee to 18 salaries for a professional (<http://www.haygroup.com/ww/services/index.aspx?id=116>).

The first tendency of global companies operating in the country is to reduce the costs of human resources, using staff selection and aiming efficiency in the required number of employees and gradual replacement of foreign staff, which is very costly versus attractive compensation packages of qualified local staff. However, this remains a difficult question to answer, the impact it might have on the labor market in Macedonia.

5. Performance Management and Evaluation

In this issue is described the nature, purposes, characteristics, problems and principles of performance management. Also, differences between performance appraisal and its management are reviewed, referring to the views of an intern focus group.

Work performance management can be defined as a systematic process of improving company's performance through a better labor organization with individuals and work groups. It is a way by which companies, labor groups and individuals achieve higher results at work by understanding and managing them within a clear purposes platform of standards and competencies.

Processes that work performance management includes require a comprehensive understanding on what the company should achieve. These processes also require commitment and motivation of employees in order to reach short and long-term objectives. Performance management is implemented and managed by line managers. Following, we will give some other definitions for performance management such as:

- ✓ Performance management implies transformation of individuals into skillful employees, committed to achieving common objectives within a company, which supports and encourages these achievements (Lockett, 1992).
- ✓ To manage performance, means to manage the business (Lockett, 1992).
- ✓ Performance Management is the process of "managing and supporting workers who are committed to meet the needs of the company" (Walters, 2009).
- ✓ Performance management is a strategic and comprehensive tool, which brings achievement to companies, improves employee's outcomes and develops the skills of working groups or individuals (Armstrong, 2009).

The main purpose of performance management is fostering high culture on work, so that individuals and special working groups take responsibilities to improve business processes, as well as develop skills and contributions of everyone within the clearly defined platform by the governing group. The main purpose of this management is to perform the actions necessary to achieve the objectives.

The purpose of this management is to increase the contribution at work in order to reach and exceed targets, at the same time it aims to ensure maximum efficiency of each individual, a factor that would serve him and the company. Following are some of the goals of performance management in several companies (IRS Employment Trends, 2003):

- ✓ Authorisation, motivation and remuneration of employees to do their best.
- ✓ Concentration of employees in proper activities and necessary guidance to implement them successfully. Approximation of every employee goals with company goals.
- ✓ Active administration and development of work performance against the responsibilities and objectives taken.
- ✓ Liaison of performance with the results achieved by the company's medium-term strategies and customer service.
- ✓ Approximation of individual goals with plans of the working group, department and company. Presentation of objectives with clearly defined goals, using numerical methods or other methods. Monitoring performance and continuous determination of tasks.
- ✓ Everyone is aware of what it needs to be achieved and the expected standards. At the same time knowing how these standards help in the company's achievements, they

regularly receive accurate feedback; receive training and motivation to work as better as they can, in order to achieve their goals.

- ✓ Systematic intervention of leaders in performance planning approximates individual liabilities with their goals and activities.

- ✓ The process and the way how managers manage their employees' performance, affects the company in achieving higher results.

- ✓ Increasing the performance of each employee and labor groups, always focusing on their objectives.

- ✓

6. Performance evaluation methods

Performance evaluation has its origins in the early 20th century and the father of this theory is Frederick Taylor. He has designed an evaluation analysis process for a job position or certain number of jobs, to verify the efficiency of labor methods, in usage of equipment and machinery and employees. Taylor's discovery was used to improve and perfectionate the performance. Certainly, at that time this practice was spread across the industrial world. One argues that "... it is a basic human tendency to make a decision for his work, and also for the person himself evaluation is both universal and inevitable" (Armstrong, 2009, p.14).

Many methods/performance assessment techniques have been identified; we will note those ones that mostly are used worldwide (Armstrong, 2009, p.14):

- 1 – *Reprimand/Blame degree (is considered as a traditional performance evaluation)*

- 2 – *Essay Method*

- 3 – *Management by objectives (MBO)*

In the following paragraphs we will give some explanations for performance evaluation methods which actually take part in the first group, respectively the reprimand/blame degree (Koli and Lllaci, 2005):

Assessment carried out by the manager: in this form performance evaluation can be defined similar to a formal interactive structure between subordinates and supervisors that usually is applied once a year in the form of periodic interview, where the work performance of subordinate is examined and discussed, having an aim to identify weaknesses, strengths and opportunities for improvement and skills development.

Evaluation by the manager and self-evaluation: This type of assessment is similar to the first, with a difference that the employee is assigned to self-evaluate in some form, before he/she meet with the manager to discuss his/her performance.

360^o Assessment is a tool, a human resource management mechanism that assesses individual performance, based on feedback from everyone who has connection and contact with it, such as: the supervisor, employees, colleagues, partners, subordinates and the public in general.

Below we will give explanations regarding the performance evaluation methods which take part in the second group, respectively essay method (Armstrong, 2009):

Self evaluation. This method is based on the idea that the employee is much familiarized with his work, he is dedicated and his involvement in work is essential. Employee evaluates himself based on certain criteria, usually with formal structure surveillance and suggesting improvements. This certainly helps to clarify and better understand the purpose it aims to achieve by identifying weaknesses during the working process.

Assessment by the manager. In this assessment, the assessor prepares an announcement about the employees who will be included in this assessment. This statement usually concentrates on specific descriptions, performance difficulties in working position. It suggests courses and ongoing training to improve various problems at work. This statement is drafted either by the assessor or by supervisor-subordinate cooperation.

Below we will give explanations regarding the performance evaluation methods which take part in the third group, respectively management by objectives (http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMM_94.htm).

The phrase “management by objectives” for the first time is used by Drucker in 1954, but later McGregor set it up into a system (Koli and Llaci, 2005). It is a method of performance evaluation that shifted the evaluation schemes focus into the so-called element “results”, i.e. it is oriented and based on the results. Unlike other above stated methods, MBO increases the employee's role, emphasizing its active role in the evaluation process, in order to achieve a commitment degree to the realization of objectives. Management by objectives is a process where a set of managers together define the long-term goals, the main responsibilities of each individual in terms of the results expected by him, use these as a guide to the operation of the unit or institution and assess the contribution of each member.

7. Research methods

In order to measure the above stated objectives, specific research methods have been utilized. The paper focuses on a theoretical and descriptive analysis, comparative and synthetic methods for the purpose of identifying and analyzing the factors that determine the need for changes in human resource management. Moreover, the paper uses the following methods: the method of induction and deduction, surveys through interviews and questionnaires, and comparative methods to illustrate the above mentioned analysis.

The paper will be based on the results of the survey conducted in human resources in all regions of Macedonia. The survey includes 150 SMEs that operate in the whole territory of Macedonia.

Methods that are used for data processing include crosstabulation of variables. By using the statistical program SPSS, crosstabulation allows gathering information of the relationship of

multiple variables. In addition, a regression analysis is conducted, allowing the identification of relationships between variables. A correlation method will be used to determine how and to what extent the two variables are related in a linear fashion. Also, in the framework of statistical techniques will be used Anova test to distinguish between different groups within the population, as well as T-test, which is the same anova test, but there are only differences in the method of calculation.

8. Analysis of Research Results

The survey included 150 SMEs and was conducted during the period 15 May to 22 July 2011 by utilizing a team of colleagues, friends and students of the Faculty of Business and Economics within the South East European University. The research was carried out using the technique of direct contact with respondents, by mail and email. Direct interviews polled 96% of companies, while 3% (5 companies) of the respondents were contacted via postal mail and only 1% (2 companies) via email.

H1. There is a relationship between training and performance of employees in the enterprise.

Table 1 – Training and performance

Correlation

		Training and human resource development	Increase the ability of employees
Training and human resource development	Correlation Person	1	.645**
	Sig. (2-pieces)		.000
	N	149	148
Increase the ability of employees	Correlation Person	.645**	1
	Sig. (2-pieces)	.000	
	N	148	148

** . The correlation is important in the level of 0.01 (2-parts).

As we can see from the table above the correlation is 0.645, which indicates a strong correlation considering that it ranges from 0-1, and it is close to 0. The p-value below is .000 and it is linked to the previous result that shows that the p-value is less than 0.05 or 0.01. Due to the reason that the value of p is less than the value of alpha the model statistically can be

considered as significant. This means that we can accept the hypothesis that there exists a strong correlation.

Correlation in this case will be in this form: $r(148) = 0.645, p < .05$

Table 2 - Training and performance

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.645 ^a	.416	.412	.342

a. Predictors: (Constant), Is there a training and development system of HR in your enterprise?

In the second column we see a strong linear correlation of 0.645 positive. The next column presents the result of the R² effect, (R²: 41%); i.e the dependency percentage of the variance on increasing employees skills in the enterprise over the existence of a system of training and human resource development is 41%. (this effect is very strong).

Table 3 Training and performance

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.140	1	12.140	103.965	.000 ^a
	Residual	17.049	146	.117		
	Total	29.189	147			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Is there a training and development system of HR in your enterprise?

b. Dependent Variable: Is there an increase in the abilities that you ask from your employers during the last two years?

To see the regression effect we will use the ANOVA, where F will be significant if its value will be 0.05 and not 0.01. In order to forecast whether the skills of employees have been improved, as companies train their employees, regression analysis have statistical significance because **$F(1,146) = 103.96, p = .000$** . In the following table we will see the coefficients that are linked to the regression, which means that for every increase in the number of trainings in the enterprise, we will have an increase in expected skills by employees.

Table 4- Training and performance

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.458	.084		5.426	.000
	Does the training and development system exist in your company's HR?	.595	.058	.645	10.196	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Is there an improvement in skills you have asked from your employees during the last two years?

In the table above we present the results of a regression by which we want to assess the impact of the training system over the performance of employees. According to the above stated table these two variables are positively correlated. The more enterprises are training their employees the bigger are chances employee's skills to be improved. T test shows a significant coefficient. We can see that the t-value associated with the system of human resource training is important at the same level of F (this will happen if you have only one variable 1 x variable). **The equation for the regression will be: $\hat{Y} = 0.458 * .595X$.**

H2. There exists a difference in job description between SMEs and big enterprises.

Table 5- The size of the enterprise and job description

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.470 ^a	.221	.216	.424

a. Predictors: (Constant), number of employees

In the second column (R) we see a strong linear correlation of 0.470 positive. The next column presents the result of the R² effect, (R²: 21%); i.e the dependency percentage of the variance on job description over the size of the enterprise according to the number of employees is 21%. (this effect is strong).

Table 6- The size of the enterprise and the job description.

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	7.475	1	7.475	41.659	.000 ^a
	Residual	26.377	147	.179		
	Total	33.852	148			

a. Predictors: (Constant), number of employees

b. Dependent Variable: Do you make a job description for each position in your company?

To see the regression effect we will use the ANOVA, where F will be significant if its value will be 0.05 and not 0.01. From the regression analysis, in order to see whether there is a difference in job description between SMEs and large enterprises, it can be concluded that there is a statistical significance because **$F(1,148) = 41.659, p = .000$** . In the following table we will see the coefficients that are linked to the regression, which means that for every increase in the number of employees (company size) within the enterprise, we will have an increase in the number of enterprises that make job description for each position in the company.

During the researches conducted in order to see the relationship between the employee performance increase and effectiveness of the enterprise, the results show that, on average in the past five years only 8% of companies which have had improved skills of their employees have had reduction in their effectiveness, compared to 20% (average of five years) of companies which have not had improved the skills of their employees, have marked reduction in effectiveness. Regarding the increase of effectiveness, the results have shown that on average 93% of enterprises which have had an increase in employees' performance, have noticed an increase in efficiency, compared to only 7% of enterprises, which have not had an increase in performance, but have noticed an increase in their effectiveness. From the analysis of the results we can conclude that H1 – hypothesis is acceptable, there is a strong positive correlation between the performance and effectiveness in the enterprise.

H3. Employees' performance (skills) enhancement increases effectiveness in the enterprise

Table 7 – Employee performance and enterprise effectiveness

	2010		2009		2008		2007		2006	
	Is there an improvement in skills you have asked from your employees during the last two years?									
Effectiveness	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Decrease	85,2 %	14,8 %	85,0 %	15,0 %	71,4 %	28,6 %	80,0 %	20,0 %	100,0 %	,0%
	17,0 %	40,0 %	13,0 %	30,0 %	3,8%	20,0 %	3,2%	10,0 %	3,3%	,0%
Constant	95,7 %	4,3%	93,7 %	6,3%	95,2 %	4,8%	95,2 %	4,8%	94,1%	5,9%
	33,3 %	20,0 %	45,0 %	40,0 %	45,4 %	30,0 %	32,0 %	20,0 %	39,7%	30,0 %
Increase	94,4 %	5,6%	94,8 %	5,2%	93,0 %	7,0%	92,0 %	8,0%	90,8%	9,2%
	49,6 %	40,0 %	42,0 %	30,0 %	50,8 %	50,0 %	64,8 %	70,0 %	57,0%	70,0 %

9. Conclusions

1. In order to see whether there is a link between the training and development of human resources with employee performance, data analyses have been done through the method of correlation. According to the data above, we can conclude that for every increase in enterprise training will have an increase in expected skills by employers.
2. Regarding the size of the enterprise and job description, according to survey data we conclude that there is a positive correlation. Furthermore by increasing the number of employees (size of the enterprise) in enterprises, also grows and the number of companies that make job descriptions for each position in the enterprise.
3. When analyzing the data on empirical research carried out in the enterprise, it is concluded that there is a link between the growth performance and effectiveness of the company employees. By analyzing the results we can conclude that there is a strong positive relationship between performance and efficiency of the enterprise.

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