

THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND PRACTICES

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Abstract: *Human resource is undoubtedly the most valuable "asset" of any organization. Human resource management must be in the attention of any organization concerned with performance by cultivating human capital available. Culture is influencing the ways of attracting, selecting and developing human resources.*

Key words: *human resources management, culture, personnel recruitment and selection*

INTRODUCTION

Human resource management is "is a subset of the study of management that focuses on how to attract, hire, train, motivate and maintain employees" [5]. The primary objective of human resources management is the attraction and development of human capital. Over time, the Western industrialized cultures have developed a number of successful practices in human resource management. The question that arises is: how will these practices operate under a completely different cultural environment? To answer this question, the role of culture in determining the effectiveness of human resource management practices needed to be identified.

Research in managerial behavior addressing the influence of culture on the human resources management practices have emerged as an argued response to the mechanical adoption of human resources management solutions developed in a different society or culture [11]. HR practices that have been successful in Western industrialized societies can fail in other cultures not necessarily due to the mismatch, but because of the takeover without analyzing the culture adequacy of the country or organization where it is supposed to apply. To illustrate, in Western cultures is considered to be suitable giving feedback during the results performance assessment reporting, even in a conflictual way, something considered inappropriate in non-Western cultures, where the preservation of the reputation and image of the person is considered more important than learning from the performance evaluation report. Also, job autonomy, a non-financial reward valued in Western cultures, may not be required in other cultures, where satisfying the basic needs (possibly due to the low level of economic development) is paramount.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this paper the authors used literature review and comparative analysis of different cultures investigated contextual situations.

RESEARCH RESULTS

1.The influence of culture on the recruitment and selection of personnel decisions

Research in recent decades have highlighted the ways in which culture influences the process of recruitment and selection of human resources: the purpose of recruitment, the methods used in recruitment and selection, the criteria used in recruitment and selection practices, the perceived equity and the matching of chosen methods to recruit and select staff [1].

Recruitment is "the process of generating a community of suitable candidates for vacant posts" [3]. It is a process that must follow an appropriate analysis of posts and judicious planning. The objectives of the recruitment and selection activities do not necessarily have a universal character. Thus, India and Eastern Europe, organizations tend to recruit more staff than necessary to counter poverty and unemployment [14; 9]. Asian companies adopt long-term employment, as an expression of the focus on values such as benevolence and paternalism. In former socialist countries, it was one of the state's obligations to provide secure jobs for life; in such cultures, organizations are expected to satisfy the social needs.

Culture is influencing the methods used to recruit future employees too. If organizations want to attract highly qualified people, they will use recruitment channels as widely as possible (online recruitment services, labor fairs, printed media) which are specific to performance oriented cultures with high individualism [2].

Instead, the organizations that want to maintain harmony prefer to use social networks and informal interpersonal verbal communication to announce the existence of a vacancy, and these methods can be found in collectivist cultures, which avoid high uncertainty [1]. Some South Korean managers from the top of the hierarchical pyramid are conducting visits to universities where they have graduated from, and are asking their former teachers to recommend highly trained candidates [8].

Table 1.

Recruitment and selection criteria in different cultures

Country	Recruitment and selection criteria	External recruitment vs promotion
USA	Matching skills with technical work expertise	External recruitment at all levels, limited opportunities for promotion
Great Britain	WOM communication (word-of-mouth); application forms; interviews	External recruitment for lower positions and internal / external recruitment for management positions; limited opportunities for promotion
Sweden	A wide scale of sophisticated techniques	External recruitment at all levels; internal / external recruitment for management positions
Japan	Personal interview; matching skills with personal potential to make things better	External recruitment at all levels; internal labor market includes new graduates; internal career routes
Germany	Personal interview; application forms; references; expertise and experience; aptitude test	External recruitment for lower positions
Holland	Personal interview; application forms; references; expertise and experience; aptitude test	External recruitment of apprentices (beginners) and for the management trainees; internal career routes

Source: Koen, Carla - *Comparative International Management*, McGraw-Hill, 2005, p.223

Culture exerts an influence on specific criteria used in recruitment and selection. In the US, the most widely used selection criteria are education, work experience, personality traits and cognitive abilities, while in Japan favorable opinions of team members are counting in relation to the candidate, as well as the right temperament and personality. Islamic Arab countries take account of consent, positive interpersonal relationships and trust, in India it counts the allegiance of the same group as the manager, and in Latin America, positive attitudes towards family life [1].

Selection methods differ from one culture to another. In some European countries (Italy, France, Sweden, Portugal), cognitive skills testing has a negative connotation, being perceived as an invasion of the right to control their own careers. References and recommendations, however, are used in most countries, though the motivations are

different. In the US, the UK and Australia, the recommendations are used as a final check of the candidates.

A study by Marina [12] shows that in Romania the four main criteria for recruiting employees are the qualities, skills and abilities of individual candidates, their training and studies, professional knowledge and experience. Recruitment is based on practical skills held by candidates, giving priority to external sources.

2. The nature of work, performance and culture

Work analysis was defined by Cole (1997), in [4] as "activity or process by which the jobs are being studied in an organization in order to identify their specific elements, ie the employee's job duties, his responsibilities regarding the created products". When entering the organization, employees should know the criteria on which their performance is to be appreciated in the positions they will occupy.

Culture influences the way to define the positions, which is the cornerstone of their analysis and evaluation. Designing a job is a direct representation of the working environment and has influence with immediate effect on our perception of the situation as having the effect of facilitating or stopping the opportunity for success, for experimentation of well-being and self-worth [6]. National cultural values, internalized through socialization process, serve as a criterion for evaluating the influence of a job design experimentation on wellbeing and self-worth; as a result, in different cultures we encounter different ways to design the posts [7]. The author argues that the influence of culture on designing a job can be demonstrated by comparative analysis of the main models that have appeared in three different cultures: the job enrichment model in the US, the socio-technical group autonomy model in Northern Europe and the quality circles model in Japan.

In cultures with a high index of individualism, the jobs are so defined as to emphasize their unique characteristics, while in collectivistic cultures in defining positions emphasis is laid on activities that foster interaction between group members. In cultures with high power distance, jobs are defined more broadly, so that supervisors may require subordinates the execution of a variety of tasks, some not included in the job description. Culture exerts an influence on the design and work program [13]. For example, work in shifts and contractual arrangements were linked to strong uncertainty avoidance, pronounced collectivism and long distance power. Flexible work arrangements are characteristic of cultures with low power distance.

At the international level, performance evaluation has a certain specificity determined by the cultural context in which firms operate [12]. Performance evaluation aims to identify individual differences and employees can be held accountable for their work. Chiang and Birtch (2010) found that uncertainty avoidance and collectivism within the group were negatively associated with the use of formal performance evaluation; In such cultures, the main purpose of performance evaluation is to provide feedback to employees to facilitate their development. [1] In individualistic cultures, the performance criteria shall be objective, observable and measurable, while collectivist cultures the main purpose of performance evaluation is to justify compensation and promotion decisions.

Customizing the analysis for various countries reveals interesting aspects. Thus, in Germany, the most used system of performance evaluation is management by objectives, while French employees do not like fixing specific targets. In Russia, managers are experiencing difficulties using the management by objectives because of the collectivist culture, and in China is given little importance to the work performance evaluation [12]. A study conducted by the same author states that in Romania, performance evaluation is an

activity that poses problems, because feedback is perceived at a personal level. The assessment of the performance lies directly to the director of department head.

CONCLUSIONS

Employees represent the the most valuable resource for enterprises, so that the concern for attracting, maintaining and promoting staff should be a constant concern for management. Human resource management activities and practices are strongly determined from a cultural standpoint. The mere acquisition of another culture specific recruitment, selection, and performance evaluation methods or techniques may fail. The challenge is also present in multinational companies, in which employees from different backgrounds can activate..

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