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## **DOCTORAL THESIS**

### **Summary**

# **Means of Improving the Management of Human Resources in Enterprises from the Textile Manufacture Industry**

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## **1. Introduction**

Human resource management must face new challenges, given that organizational change is a new and complex activity of the human resource function. A firm survives on the market as long as through the results of its activity, it responds adequately both to the external and internal customers, such as employees, which in the opinion of specialists is a critical resource.

The research made for the development of this thesis is based on the belief that economic activity is not only focused on obtaining and maximizing profits, but it is a complex and dynamic process, which involves most varied resources, including efforts or employees' creativity. We live in a knowledge based society, which is becoming an increasingly vital resource for success in business. From this perspective, employees often become its most important asset, as carriers of knowledge. Treating employees as simple inputs or seeing them only as a source generating costs is the sure way to failure.

Human resource management is an important tool in ensuring competitive advantage. It provides strategic approach to managing labor relations in order to use employee skills, a critical aspect in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage, which requires a specific set of policies, programs and integrated working practices.

Human resource management emphasizes the idea that people make the difference, only they have the ability to generate value, that human knowledge and skills are strategic resources to be managed competently. Another feature of human resource management is linked to the concept of integration that involves a set of policies, programs and practices, expressed in a coherent way and integrated into the organizational strategy, in order to maximize employees' contributions to achieving organizational goals. Schultz, an economist who won the Nobel Prize in 1979, claims that economic development depends on the application of knowledge, calling this economic aspect 'human capital', by taking into account all human abilities, whether innate or acquired.

Human resource management covers a range of knowledge and a set of policies and practices that modulates and regulates the nature of work relations. Human resource management practices are an investment in human capital, given its role in ensuring competitive advantage which explains the investment efforts successful firms have in education, training, and skills

development when they are not transferable. They are designed to reduce the gap between the potential and real performance of employees, as specialists explain.

Our research included the most important functions, policies, programs and key human resource management practices designed to achieve the objectives of the organization and of the employees. These are: planning, staffing, training and staff development; motivating (design and management of reward systems), HR practices of recruitment, selection, involvement in work and training, performance evaluation and payroll, managing and monitoring security workplace, health and welfare policies to retain competent workforce.

## **2. Research objectives and hypothesis**

Starting from the truth that human resource is the main value of the company and it ensures market competitiveness; the research approach initiated and developed in the doctoral thesis has as main objective: "the development of an analytical model for identifying best practices and ways of improving human resource management, and their implementation in textile clothing industry companies in Romania".

To achieve the general objective we proposed a series of specific objectives that can be summarized as:

- developing a model of evaluation and performance audit for human resource activities and processes, in order to identify measures to improve human resource management in enterprises in textile clothing industry;
- highlighting the potential benefits of improving human resource activities, processes and human resource management, using a survey (poll) within companies from the textile industry in Romania;
- identifying specific ways and best practices in operationalization of activities and processes, from the human resource field, namely for improving human resource management within companies from the textile industry;
- highlighting the most appropriate ways by which company management can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of human resource use, taking into account the characteristics and particularities of planning, organizing and operationalizing of human resource activities and processes;

- effective and efficient organization and coordination of information flows as a result of amplification of HR activities and processes through the use of information technology in managing information flows;

- outsourcing activities and HR business processes from companies from the textile industry in Romania by developing partnerships with vendors specializing in this field, in order to better exploit the opportunities offered by the market, through developing planning and collaboration practices with them.

The research is based on the following hypothesis:

*General Hypothesis:* models for analysis and evaluation of human resource management in enterprises from textile clothing industry must be adapted according to the complexity of the process, the features and particularities of the specific activities, the characteristics of the companies that apply and manage these processes, and to the characteristics of the human resources.

- *Hypothesis 1:* Development and implementation of human resource management strategies, determine the effectiveness and efficiency operationalization of HR activities and processes.

- *Hypothesis 2:* The impact of employee involvement in HR activities and processes is stronger when they are more complex.

- *Hypothesis 3:* Companies that develop effective and efficient communication programs have a higher level of employee involvement in work, compared to those with ineffective systems (inadequate) communication.

- *Hypothesis 4:* Companies that demonstrate fairness towards employees have the ability to motivate, recognize and reward superior performance, have a clear strategy in human resources and achieve superior performance.

- *Hypothesis 5:* Strategies, policies and actions related to human resources are related to obtaining better performance both at the organizational level and at the level of each employee.

### **3. Research Methodology**

In our research we used both qualitative methods, namely interviews and case studies, and quantitative methods based on the survey, where the questionnaire was the main used instrument.

The questionnaire aims at analyzing the activities and processes within the HR function and identifying best practices and ways to improve human resource management, based on information provided by the respondents. The objective of the study is to emphasize both best practices in human resource field and complex issues faced by companies in the textile industry, regarding planning, organization, command and control of activities and processes in the human resource field.

The first part of the questionnaire refers to factors determining the overall performance of human resource management by formulating 17 questions (where the answer is Yes or No), and the second part contains a set of factors considered important in assessing activities and processes of the human resource management. To assess the 99 identified factors (of 134 proposed by us) on the basis of pre-testing with experts in business and consulting firms, we used a Likert scale for testing agreement from 1 to 5 (where: 1 - Strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – undecided, 4 – agree, 5 - strongly agree, or 1 not at all important and 5 - very important).

The questionnaire highlights the key factors regarding human resource performance that give companies a competitive advantage. Questions and answers from the questionnaire were addressed to managers, professionals in human resource field and other functional areas (marketing, production etc.) and employees (workers).

The survey was followed by interviews with managers and professionals in human resources especially from the investigated companies and consulting firms. Therefore, we were able to obtain detailed information about the issues covered by the questionnaire (Appendix 1) from 16 persons of which 11 are human resource managers, 3 consultants in HR issues and 2 are HR specialist. The issues referred within the interviews are mostly focused on problems faced by enterprises in textile industry in ensuring effective and efficient human resource management and identifying best practices and ways to improve it. Information focused on: HR strategies and policies, operationalization of human resource activities and processes, organizational communication as a support in staff involvement, motivation systems, hiring practices,

performance measurement, staff evaluation (employees and managers); information systems in human resource field and at organizational level, quality management system characteristics in human resource field, work ergonomics, social responsibility.

Information obtained by data processing and interpretation of the results were used to develop solutions and recommendations for the development of the strategic dimension of human resource management and of measures to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of HR activities and processes. We also aimed to identify best practices in the field, taking into account both the practices developed by practitioners, through literature study, and those accepted and used by practitioners from the investigated companies and other studies in field. Of course, the best practices were used as standards in the analysis, namely in planning, organizing, coordinating, training and human resource management subsystem control.

We have to mention that we managed to obtain important information from the companies surveyed, consisting in a representative sample, given their concern for the development and implementation of best practices, for improving human resource management in clothing manufacture.

The study aims to find the most effective ways to analyze and identify best practices in human resource management in enterprises from the textile industry, in order to improve it.

For this purpose we have identified a sample of 12 companies in the textile industry, of which 4 are SMEs, from which we included in the study a total of 160 persons, including 52 managers and 108 employees in departments of human resources and other functional departments, of production or other auxiliary activities and serving.

Of the 160 questionnaires sent 95 were received, of which 12 were not valid, resulting 83 valid questionnaires, which were the basis for the analysis. Among those who responded are 42 managers and specialists. These are joined by a number of 41 workers. Of the 32 managers, 19 are working in human resources, 10 are top managers and three working in other functional departments (activities of procurement and materials management, production and software management).

Regarding the people receiving questionnaires, 16 were involved in broader discussions on the topic promoted by us, people who participated in the interview. We did not make a selection of the persons investigated according to age, but we considered to attract persons

especially among managers with experience in human resource management from textile enterprises.

Questionnaires were analyzed in order to be able to select only those valid. Consequently, we obtained a response rate of 51.87%. The 83 valid questionnaires were numbered and introduced in the data processing program. Graphs were generated using the Excel program. For data analysis and interpretation we calculated the relative frequencies for the entire sample and for some questions we calculated the average score (the arithmetic average of grades ticked by respondents weighted with frequencies obtained for each grade, from 1 to 5). We believe that the study has a high relevance given the very good response rate and the homogeneity of the chosen sample of enterprises.

Of the companies surveyed, only 3 were interested in a broader discussion-based collaboration, enabling detailed analysis of issues raised in the questionnaire, that will lead to identifying and implementing ways of improving the human resource management, since the financial economic crisis caused a reduction in labor costs on one hand, and on the other hand reducing or even eliminating staff training and development expenditures in the textile industry, with adverse consequences on the effectiveness and efficiency of the company, on its competitiveness, in the assurance of skilled and motivated workforce, influencing the economic results of the enterprises.

#### **4. A model of human resource management audit. Case study on identifying best practices and ways to improve human resource management in enterprises from textile industry**

Strategic and operational objectives concerning the human resources within the organization cannot be established without the development of a model for the analysis of human resource management, or in other words, the design and development of an audit model to highlight not only the strengths of the organization but rather the weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

The empirical study has started in 2010 and was completed in 2013. In the first phase of the study we completed the questionnaire after a pre-testing based on specialists' opinion, then we distributed questionnaires both personally and by e-mail and we collected the data.



In the second stage we did the data processing, followed by analysis and interpretation of results, conclusions, recommendations and proposals aimed at improving the management of human resources in enterprises in the textile industry by identifying best practices and develop ways to improve the activities and processes within the human resource field, to increase their effectiveness and efficiency.

Based on the mission and business objectives, and taking into account the purpose of our research to identify best practices in human resources, within textile industry, for our study we aimed to identify a large number of critical variables based on quantitative and qualitative information, which were grouped into the following categories: general management, human resources quality assurance (quality management), technology, human resource planning, recruitment, selection, staff integration, motivation, evaluation, involvement in work, staff development; protection of employees, health and safety at work.

Through the audit model we intend to analyze the activities and processes within the HR function and identify best practices and ways to improve human resource management, based on information provided by enterprises or by managers, human resource specialists and by workers in production of functional activities. In order to audit the human resources, within enterprises of textile clothing, that highlight operational performance, we studied an extensive literature, reports and analysis that aim performance in the field, we also organized a survey based on a questionnaire and interviews including not only operational activities and processes in human resource management, but also matters affecting the functional area considered critical to the success of any organization.

The most important factors that were included in the study to design the questionnaire and interviews relate to the main challenges of human resource management, such as:

- changes occurring in the labor market within the textile industry, marked by high turnover of labor;
- strategies, policies and practices in human resource field;
- increased costs of financial resources allocated for training and education.

Analysis of HR activities and processes, both in terms of the strategic dimension and their operationalization was performed using a model of human resource management audit, in order to identify best practices and ways to improve the human resource management, on the sample of firms investigated in the textile manufacture industry.

For the analysis we used the human resource management questionnaire. The first part contains the factors determining the overall performance of human resource management, taking into account the strategic dimension. The factors considered in the second part, representative for the performance evaluation activities and processes, were grouped into the following categories: personnel management, quality management, technology, human resource planning, recruitment, selection, integration staff, motivation, assessment, work engagement, training and development, environmental protection, health and safety at work.

## **5. Developing a model of internal HR audit. Case Study at S.C. TRIMAR**

In this research we aimed to achieve an internal audit of human resources, namely a management audit that meets the need of evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of the operationalization of specific activities and processes and of the organizational performance within the HR function (staff).

The fact that we tried to develop a model of internal HR audit, is argued by the fact that more and more experts believe that organizational and financial assessments based on performance measures proved to be insufficient. Carton and Hofer (2006) believe that performance measurement systems have the disadvantage that they are results oriented, and they often confuse the determinants of performance with performance measurement.

Best practices identified by the audit model (Cap.6.2) can be used as performance standards; they ensure the effectiveness of the design and implementation of HR strategies and policies. As Bogan and Englis (1996) show, they can be warning signals and effective support for managers when making business changes. As many specialists say, both in theory and in practice, they are present at the management level and at the level of each function, in our case the HR function (personnel). Even though they often provide generic solutions, they can be easily implemented and evaluated. The audit activity in this area by identifying strengths, weaknesses and the ways (solutions) of improvement represents an analysis for the diagnosis and assessment of the organizational functional HR system.

## **6. Conclusions regarding the human resource management in enterprises in the textile industry in Romania**

Experimental research based on a model of human resource audit aims to identify best practices and complex issues faced by enterprises in the textile industry, to find the most appropriate ways of improving the management of human resources.

The analysis reveals the concern at the management level of the analyzed enterprises to ensure performance in human resource management.

Based on the general objective and the specific objectives of the experimental research, were formulated a series of proposals to improve the management of human resources and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of specific activities. These can be summarized as follows:

- Developing effective and efficient communication programs to achieve a higher level of employee involvement in work, is important in order to ensure the competitive advantage;
- Strengthening specific values of organizational culture that stimulates behavior is needed;
- Creating a guide of best practices in human resource management that ensure both the effectiveness and efficiency in developing human resource strategies and policies and the operationalization of activities specific to this functional area, are important premises for improving human resource management;
- Managers must be concerned not only for the development of HR strategies and policies but also to constantly update them, in order to keep up with changes of the factors determining the overall performance of the human resource management and the factors determining the performance of specific activities and processes;
- Improving information system is needed, enabling the collection, transmission and archiving of data, flows and indicators system specific to the human resource field, in order to facilitate the implementation of strategies, policies and best practices for achieving the organizational goals and the HR objectives;
- Providing training and continuous improvement of the management and execution team is needed, for achieving strategic and operational objectives at the organizational level and at the level of the HR function;

- Clearly define the objectives of human resource management, covering the entire range of issues related to the system, structure, mission, people, reward system, personnel evaluation, involvement and employees integration;
- Outsourcing the human resource activities based on solid analysis, which provide good functionality to the organizational structure, coordinating the outsourced activities with the providers specialized in the field, and obtaining the expected benefits by developing sustainable partnerships with them;
- Effective implementation of social responsibility system based on professionally trained staff, good information, responsible social practices, effective policies to ensure health and safety at work, fair payment system, fairness of employment practices, adequate working conditions, transparency of decision making, environment issues, strengthening participatory management principles;
- Increased attention to managerial ethics is needed, given its role in increasing the company's capacity to respond to social problems in the enterprise;
- Regular assessment of employees' job satisfaction is needed, given its importance in promoting good relations between managers and employees, between employees, to strengthen team spirit and stimulate work performance;
- Regular completion (annually) of a human resource internal audit is needed, to highlight weaknesses in the management and operationalization of HR activities and processes, identifying ways for improvement based on best practices and improving strategic and operational processes of human resource management;
- Defining processes to evaluate and update the company's strategy and policy in the human resource field, based on an adequate strategic analysis;
- Strengthening leadership in the human resource field.

## **7. Theoretical and practical contributions**

The thesis approaches a human resources specific topic, the study of human resource management in clothing manufacture (textile industry). The research is based on the following objectives:

A. Bibliographical study, on human resource management, namely its role in ensuring the quality of human resources and the impact of HR strategies and policies on organizational performance;

- determination based on literature study and studies in the field of the main characteristics of the activities and processes of human resource management;
- literature study on the role of human resource management in ensuring competitive advantage and the impact of HR strategies, specific activities and processes on the performance of the textile enterprises.

B. The development of theoretical models for the analysis of HR activities and processes for designing and implementing human resources strategies and policies including the strategic analysis of HR function, oriented on quality assurance and obtaining superior performance.

C. The empirical study on the analysis of enterprises in textile industry, in terms of developing and implementing HR strategies and policies, oriented towards performance and finding the most appropriate ways to improve human resource management, follows:

- the analysis of the evolution and complexity of human resource management in textile enterprises in Romania;
- finding solutions to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of HR activities and processes, identify best practices that will provide a guide for both enterprises in the textile industry, and those of knitting industry.

## **7.1 Theoretical research**

It is based on an important bibliographic study that includes titles of books and articles, many of which are from foreign literature, plus those in electronic format from international databases that can be accessed on the internet. The references contain information regarding management, strategic management, knowledge management, human resource management, business ethics, organizational behavior, microeconomics, change management, sociology etc.

The experimental studies mentioned in the paper are both from foreign literature and from Romania, but in the textile industry, few meaningful studies were found. It can also be said that we cannot speak of a coherent human resources strategy, at national level in the textile

industry, which aims to promote and support the Romanian companies on national and international markets, where competition is increasingly intense.

Theoretical research in human resource aims to explain why successful companies managed to implement effective and efficient strategies and policies in human resource field through the application of appropriate evaluation and analysis models of specific activities and processes and identifying best practices in the field.

Theoretical research includes a study of the literature. The main goal was not only finding relevant information on human resources management, but also developing some analysis models. For this we used a rich bibliography relevant to the investigation, which allowed us to define the theoretical foundations of human resource management, taking into account the complexity of HR activities and processes in textile industrial enterprises.

The scientific approach was based on the analysis of the operational performance of human resource processes and activities and of the behavior dimension of the organization as part of the human resource strategy, which together with the marketing and production strategy are part of the company's strategic plan. We intend also to consider how useful such information is for managers for developing policies and practices in human resource management. We also highlighted the role and importance of the motivation and communication in achieving superior performance, taking into account the characteristics of the company and of the human resource.

## **7.2 Empirical research**

The empirical research is based on the following:

- results of studies on the identification of human resource management process variables and their analysis;
- model analysis on a representative sample of enterprises in the textile industry in Romania, based on a questionnaire and interview that aim to assess the human resource activities and processes, whether they use methods, techniques and tools for assessment and analysis of human resources management;
- a case study of representative companies in the textile industry, concerning operationalization of HR processes, employee performance evaluation, recruitment, selection and evaluation of personnel etc.

The purpose of the experimental research was to identify the characteristics and variables that determine the effectiveness and efficiency of activities and processes specific to the human resource management, which have a significant impact on performance in operationalization of the HR function (personnel).

Through this research we tried to raise awareness among managers and employees in textile clothing industry enterprises in Romania to identify and study best practices in human resources and apply them in order to gain competitive advantage.

The main practical contributions, of our research can be summarized as follows:

- determining the relative stage design, organization and operationalization of activities and processes from the human resources field, of strategies and policies implemented by the textile industry companies in Romania;
- identifying variables and characteristics of the planning process, organization and control of human resources, i.e. their management, which determines the effectiveness of strategies, policies and practices in human resources;
- identifying best practices and ways to improve the management of human resources and benefits derived from their implementation.

### **7.3 Personal contributions**

The main personal contributions of our study can be summarized as follows:

- defining specific concepts of human resource management based on literature study and their analysis for creating an adequate framework for the empirical research;
- developing of an audit model for evaluating and strategic analysis of human resources and the way in which the human resource strategy, policies and practices contribute to the achievement of individual objectives and targets;
- determining the specific ways in which organizational culture values determine the behavior of employees, work involvement and interaction, in order to increase the performance of human resources;
- conducting a management audit in order to assess the management of human resources, the effectiveness and efficiency of its performance;

- analyzing the situation of human resources in the textile clothing industry enterprises in Romania, and assessing the opportunity of development and implementation of human resources strategies, and the main barriers to effective and efficient management of human resources, having as starting point a representative sample of industrial enterprises of clothing manufacture;

- identifying ways to improve the programs of action for operationalization of HR activities and processes in enterprises of clothing manufacture.

We need to emphasize that the research was conducted following a code of best practices and the transmission of research results to the companies that were analyzed took place. We also need to highlight that the research results, the competence and experience of author, provides the premises of a rigorous analysis of the outlined problems.

Also, we can invoke fairness in presenting the views of managers and specialists from the industrial enterprises that were subject to analysis, given the practical results, the experience and responsibilities of the author in the field of textile industry.



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