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THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PERSONNEL PROCESSES IN POLAND AND SLOVAKIA*

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Abstract. The year 1989 in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is associated with the transformation of the economy and the gradual transition from a centrally planned to a market economy. The basis of the transformation process was the privatization of small, medium but also large state-owned enterprises, the formation of a business environment, the application of a liberal approach to the implementation of reforms. More than 30 years have passed since the beginning of the transformation and this is the reason for evaluating the level of human resources management in selected companies. The aim of the paper is to identify new approaches to human resource management and to compare the processes of personnel work in Poland and Slovakia. We conducted the survey in the years 2017 to 2020 using the method of sociological questioning. We obtained the opinions of respondents from 811 companies. In our research, we assume that human resources are the driving force behind the development and performance of companies. Descriptive statistics was used to characterize the sampling unit. To verify the formulated hypothesis the Mann-Whitney test was used. The results of the findings are applied in the evaluation of the processes with the highest positive impact on performance. According to the results, there is a statistically significant difference in the implementation of more than 50% of personnel processes in companies in Poland and in Slovakia, and also there are differences in over 50% of tools used in personnel processes in companies in Poland and in Slovakia.

Keywords: Human Resource Management; personnel processes; Poland; Slovakia; companies

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1. Introduction

A characteristic feature of the countries of the so-called Eastern Bloc after World War II was a centrally controlled economy. The fulfilment of centrally set indicators and plans was monitored by directive based on administrative decisions. Uniform prices, state ownership of companies, plans adopted for a five-year period brought economic growth in the first post-war years. The continuation of the established directive model of economic management gradually began to manifest itself in the inefficiency of the use of production resources, in the inflexibility and non-innovation of the directive decisions taken. The binding nature of the five-year plans had a negative impact on the estimation of consumer needs, resulting in a shortage of some products and a surplus of others. The advantage of the central economy was social equality, while freedom of enterprise and expression was forbidden. Emphasis was placed on the use of technical and production resources, while the position of employees in the work process was not given sufficient attention. Few employers realized the importance of human for the development of business and society.

After the disintegration of centrally managed economies in Europe, individual countries were gradually moving towards the introduction of a market economy. Economic reform is linked to democratic change and enabled companies to manage their own development democratically. In the work with human resources, the centrally managed personnel policy was restructured in order to emphasize the importance and significance of employing a quality workforce for the company. The problem in introducing changes in personnel work was the insufficient readiness of managers and the lack of experience with the work of people in a market economy. Relatively well-developed personnel work procedures have been maintained in large companies. After their purification from political and ideological goals, they formed the basis for the creation of new techniques and a system of human resource management. The positive experience of human resources managers abroad was also an inspiration for the introduction of new practices in working with people. Open access to information, changes in legislation, increasing mobility abroad, higher expectations and awareness of employees were reflected in the practical implementation of personnel work.

Changes in human resource management processes from 1989 to the present have led us to examine the importance of managing human resources in companies in Slovakia and Poland. The reason for choosing the Polish partner is the fact that it is a country that has the sixth-largest economy in the EU and has a long had a reputation as a business-friendly country with largely sound macroeconomic policies (Poland Economy, 2020). Among the transition countries, it has the largest economy measured by GDP. It is the only EU country to avoid a recession during the financial crisis from 2008 to 2009. As a result of the Corona-19 pandemic, it slid into recession for the first time with a fall in GDP of 8.9% in the second quarter of 2020 (CIA, 2020). Poland and Slovakia are among the countries supporting continuation and further development of Visegrad cooperation. In foreign policy at EU and NATO, Poland acts as an active partner, offering its own solutions and in many respects playing the role of advocate for the interests of other Eastern and Central European countries. Poland is an important trading partner of Slovakia and mutual imports and exports between countries have an increasing tendency.

Through a survey organized in selected companies in Poland and Slovakia, we gain the knowledge about personnel work in analysed countries. The aim of the paper is to compare the processes of personnel work in Poland and Slovakia. On the basis of research results it is possible to determine differences and similarities both in the implementation of personnel processes, but also in tools used in these processes in analysed countries. This paper is organised as follows. Section 2 presents Human Resource Management in Poland and Slovakia. Section 3 shows the methodology and characteristics of the sample. Section 4 illustrates the main results. Section 5 provides the discussion of the findings, and last Section reflects the conclusions.

2. Human Resource Management in Poland and in Slovakia

After 1989, personnel work in Slovakia underwent significant changes brought about by the transformation of the economy and the democratization of society. The three countries of the Eastern bloc, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary, with regard to the level of economy and society, had the greatest integration potential. In 1991, the main state officials signed the Visegrad Declaration on mutual cooperation, thus establishing a group called V3. The activities of the three countries were also reflected in the signing of bilateral European Association Agreements with the European Community in 1991. In 1992, they established the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) with the aim joining the European political, economic, security and legal system and consolidating democracy and the free market. Following a mutual agreement between the main political representatives of Slovakia and the Czech Republic, Czechoslovakia was divided in 1993. The Slovak Republic was accepted by its neighbours and the international community as an independent republic, and co-operation of the Eastern bloc countries has been under way within 2003. The OECD has offered Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia assistance in transforming their economies into market economies so that they can integrate into OECD countries. In 2004, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and the Slovak Republic became members of the EU. Much of CEFTA's foreign trade is with the EU. Nevertheless, the transformation is not only associated with the creation of a business environment, with the formation of new legal and institutional mechanisms, but also a change in thinking and behaviour of people in the role of employees, managers and owners and thus a new generation of managers and other employees able to work in the market environment and multinational companies were formed (Lincényi, Mindár, 2021). Finally, thanks to the implemented reforms, Slovakia gained the trust of foreign investors. Significant foreign capital is entering the emerging business environment of the Slovak economy. Experience with market economy management, new forms of work organization were used not only by multinational but also by local companies.

Simultaneously with the inflow of new foreign investments, holders of know-how are also coming to Slovakia, who also influence personnel work in multinational companies. The competitiveness of the environment is growing. Employers are placing increasing emphasis on the selection, stabilization, training and development of employees with development potential. Managers and staff must fully comply with the requirements of the positions and are hired only if they pass all rigorous examinations. By no means do companies compromise on anyone or lower standards (Guo, 2016).

On the other hand, a loyal factor of staff turnover as a criterion for an effective human resources policy is a deterrent to employee turnover and a prerequisite for the successful operation of the company (Semenovna Morozova et al., 2016). In general, it can be said that individual human resource management activities have started to be produced more efficiently to meet the needs of companies and employees themselves. The trend towards a holistic approach to working with people in the work process is observable. This new direction of personnel work expresses the importance of man, the human workforce as the most important factor of production. At the same time, this creates pressure on the job market, because better personnel work offers more lucrative jobs, which represents a competitive efficiency for the company. As a result of the mentioned changes, certain new trends and tendencies also began to appear in personnel work in Slovakia, which fundamentally change the usual way of performing individual personnel activities. The importance of human resources and their management in the company is declared. The validation of the above axiom was the subject of research at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, which has been carried out since 1997. Repeated research revealed the most common problems of managers with the implementation of personnel work. According to them, there is a lack of qualified job seekers and employees willing and able to work. The opening up of the labour market has not eliminated the problem of a shortage of skilled labour in the required structure – despite the high unemployment

rate, employers are announcing the problem of a shortage of candidates for many jobs. Insufficient work discipline and communication, declining reliability and responsibility, dissatisfaction with remuneration, increasing demands of employees are reflected in reduced employee performance and increased turnover. Instead of conceptual issues of personal work, managers have to solve every day work problems. Despite the declared importance of human resources for gaining success and competitive advantages in the market, personnel work in the conditions of Slovakia does not receive the declared attention. Managers and business owners focus on material, technical and financial security and underestimate the care for the acquisition, development and use of employee potential. They do not realize that the best and most successful business distinguishes the level of personal work from others. Employees are looking for companies that have a good reputation and are financially stable (Vetráková et al, 2017).

In Poland, as in Slovakia, in 1989 the economy changed radically. In 1989/1990 started-up of the market mechanism in the Polish economy and caused changes in the labor market, too. A competitive labor market was created. Employers began to follow the economic calculation and employ employees optimal from the point of view of the company's interests. In effect of market mechanisms in the Polish economy was great decline in job offers and increase in dismissed people. The changes in the Polish labor market were influenced by the directions of economic reforms introduced at the beginning of the 1990s. The directions of these reforms were: creating the foundations of the market mechanism and liberalization of the economy, withdrawal of the government from regulating wages and employment in enterprises, shaping minimum wages, changes in income taxation, building a system of information about the labor market, job placement, social protection of the unemployed and the privatization process that was expected to have a positive impact on resource allocation, including work (Sztanderska, 1993).

The first decade of changes did not have a positive effect on the Polish labor market. The ways to change this situation was seen in privatization, restructuring and Poland's accession to the European Union. With Poland's accession to the EU, in 2004, new challenges appeared in the labor market related to the increase in productivity and the economy's ability to create new jobs. The Polish labor market has become part of the European labor market with free movement of workers (Wiśniewski, Dolny 2008).

After Poland's accession to the EU, in the period 2004–2010, there are two specific periods from the point of view of the situation on the Polish labor market. In the years 2004-2007 high economic growth resulted in positive changes as well as an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment. In turn, from 2008 to 2010, when the economic situation worsened, problems appeared on the Polish labor market. Their main measure was the decline in the employment rate (Pasierbiak, 2012).

The following years of development of the Polish economy showed other growing problems on the labor market, too. Market research and analyzes conducted in Poland in 2010-2015 indicated that the main problems were: competency mismatch, the situation of women on the labor market, the situation of young people on the labor market, extending the duration of professional career and the problem of lifelong learning (Górniak, 2015).

Summing up, it can be said that the Polish labor market has changed significantly over the last thirty years. First of all, unemployment has fallen and salaries have increased during this time. However, changes in the labor market were not positive only in this period. The rapidly growing unemployment was the greatest pain on the Polish labor market in the first years of transformation. Since 1990 unemployment was growing year by year. The apparent stabilization took place only in 1995. However, the number of unemployed continued to increase in the following years, until 2004. Since 2004, unemployment in Poland has been dropping to below 10% in 2008. Unfortunately, the economic crisis has led to a renewed trend in rising unemployment. The highest level of unemployment was recorded in 2014 but since then it has been constantly falling. In the analysis of the Polish

labor market important information are data of increasing average and minimum wages since 1995, too. From 2015 to 2019, the Polish labor market changed even more. Stable economic growth translated into a very good condition of the labor market. The unemployment rate is very low. Poles' salaries are also growing. The actions taken by the government are improving the situation of the underpaid (GUS, 1990-2020, 2006, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2019).

The transformations of the last decade on the Polish labor market also affect aspects related to human resource management. From the point of view of this study, practices in the field of human resource management used in Polish companies should be presented. The main issues that should be taken into consideration in contemporary human resource management in an organization are: an influence of new technologies in HR supporting, a decrease in unemployment, new and numerous highly specialized positions, constantly growing number of job offers. The Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends research from 2019 conducted in Poland may be a signpost for future directions of changes in the field of HRM in Polish companies. Activities in the field of HRM should focus on: intensifying alternative forms of employment, designing positions and professional careers of employees, developing talents, the ability to combine experience and innovation, more frequent implementation of teamwork, implementation of various employee learning paths, and developing the new technologies in HR processes (Deloitte, 2019).

Despite many similar features between the two countries, it is clear that there are significant differences in the implementation of personnel processes. Based on these differences, 2 research hypotheses were formulated as follows:

H1: We assume that there is a statistically significant difference in the performing of more than 50% of personnel processes in companies in Poland and Slovakia

H2: We assume that there are differences in more than 50% of the tools used in personnel processes in companies in Poland and Slovakia.

3. Methodology

Data collection about HRM in companies in Poland and in Slovakia was carried out by the method of sociological questioning using online and print questionnaires. The questionnaire contained 24 questions focused on HRM processes, including problems and proposals for measures to change and trends in the development of personnel work. We obtained the data in person or online from human resources departments and persons responsible for personnel work in companies. The aim of the study was to compare the processes of personnel work in Poland and Slovakia. First partial aim was to determine in which areas are located divergences in the implementation of personnel processes in companies in both countries. Second partial aim was to analyse the usage of tools in personnel processes in Poland and Slovakia. In this regard it was crucial to define similarities and differences of application of these tools.

The survey was conducted from October 2019 to April 2020 in Poland. The base of Data Smart company constituted the sampling frame of the organisations in Poland. The first invitations to participate in the survey were sent to 4000 companies in Poland. Due to a low return of completed questionnaires additional invitations were sent to 376 companies. In total, the invitations were sent to 8000 companies in Poland, out of which 430 (7,34%) agreed to participate in the study and submitted correctly completed questionnaires. The number of incomplete or incorrect questionnaires is 51. The survey was conducted from October 2017 to August 2019 in Slovakia. The invitations to participate in the survey were sent to 4000 companies in Slovakia, out of which 381 (9,53%) agreed to participate in the study and submitted correctly completed questionnaires.

The number of incomplete or incorrect questionnaires is 72. The breakdown of the surveyed enterprises by size and sector is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The characteristics of the research group

	Poland		Slovakia	
	No.	%	No.	%
Size				
< 10	100	23,26	87	22,83
1– 49	113	26,28	110	28,87
50 – 249	93	21,63	120	31,50
250 >	124	28,84	64	16,80
Sector				
Private sector, including non-profit organisations	326	75,81	336	88,19
Public sector, including state institutions	104	24,19	45	11,81
Total	430	100	381	100

Source: Own calculations based on conducted research.

Table 2 illustrates the size and sector distribution among the sample group in numbers and in percentages. According to the presented data, the low degree of differentiation in respondent replies can be observed when comparing size of enterprises in Poland. The group of respondents is more varied if we take into consideration the sector.

We used the Mann-Whitney U test to process the obtained data needed to verify the hypotheses. The Mann-Whitney U test can be used to answer the questions concerning the difference between groups. This test has the great advantage of possibly being used for small samples of subjects. In the field of behavioural sciences, the Mann-Whitney U test is one of the most commonly used non-parametric statistical tests (Kasuya, 2001). Its null hypothesis (H0) assumes that the two groups come from the same population. In other words, it assumes that the two independent groups are homogeneous and have the same distribution. The alternative hypothesis (H1) against which the null hypothesis is tested assumes that the first group data distribution differs from the second group data distribution. The Mann-Whitney test is based on the comparison of each observation from the first group with each observation from the second group (Nachar, 2008). We performed testing at a level of significance of 95%.

4. Results

The Mann-Whitney U test was used for personnel processes to assess the statistical significance of the difference between the implementation of processes in the Poland and the Slovak Republic. Table 3 shows the Mann-Whitney U test values, critical values and p-values comparing the implementation of each process in Poland and Slovakia. The last 2 columns show the percentage of the implementation of each HRM process in each country.

Table 3. The difference in the performance of HRM processes

Performed processes	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	PL	SK
Developing strategies, policies, and other plans	71520.500	-3.637	0.000*	62.56%	49.87%
Employee number and structure planning	77512.500	-1.648	0.099	66.28%	71.65%
Job analysis	78751.500	-1.111	0.266	59.77%	55.91%
Selection of employees	63341.500	-7.879	0.000*	68.14%	90.81%
Employee recruitment and adaptation	72306.000	-4.197	0.000*	74.88%	86.61%
Training and further education	71340.000	-4.283	0.000*	69.77%	82.68%
Talent management	73484.500	-3.458	0.001*	28.14%	17.85%
Job evaluation (payroll system creation)	64912.500	-5.906	0.000*	56.98%	36.22%
Employee welfare	64014.000	-6.651	0.000*	57.67%	79.53%
Employee evaluation	72445.000	-3.693	0.000*	67.44%	79.00%
Release of employees (termination of employment)	79668.500	-0.780	0.435	54.19%	51.44%
Personnel controlling	69852.500	-4.426	0.000*	26.74%	41.47%
Personnel administration	58231.000	-8.501	0.000*	49.30%	78.22%

* Statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own processing based on conducted research.

The calculated critical values and p-values show that there are 3 HRM processes, the implementation of which did not confirm a statistically significant difference between companies in Poland and Slovakia. These processes are employee number and structure planning, job analysis and release of employees. In all other processes, we identified statistically significant differences.

Table 4 shows the Mann-Whitney U test values, critical values and p-values comparing the implementation of tools in Poland and Slovakia. The last 2 columns show the percentage of the implementation of each tool in each country.

Table 4. Tools used in personal processes in companies in Poland and Slovakia

Tools	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	PL	SK
Recruitment tools					
Print	66660.500	-6.292	0.000*	14.19%	32.81%
1. Electronic	78487.000	-1.219	0.223	59.07%	63.25%
2. Labour Office	72435.500	-3.971	0.000*	16.51%	28.08%
3. Database	75464.500	-2.697	0.007*	18.37%	26.25%
4. Direct	77861.000	-1.458	0.145	39.07%	34.12%
5. Friends	70257.500	-4.046	0.000*	45.35%	59.58%
6. Agency	78677.000	-1.392	0.164	22.33%	18.37%
7. Intermediaries	73612.000	-5.230	0.000*	13.02%	2.89%
8. Open door days	79093.000	-2.016	0.044*	7.91%	4.46%
Selection tools					
1. Documentation	76052.500	-2.762	0.006*	87.21%	80.05%
2. IQ test	75418.500	-3.426	0.001*	8.60%	16.54%
3. Skills test	79380.500	-0.963	0.336	28.14%	31.23%
4. Personality test	77895.000	-2.013	0.044*	11.63%	16.54%
5. Expertise tests	56202.000	-11.605	0.000*	3.26%	34.65%
6. Structured interview	79157.000	-0.969	0.333	40.47%	43.83%
7. Unstructured interview	68742.000	-4.689	0.000*	31.16%	47.24%
8. AC	81550.500	-0.256	0.798	6.74%	6.30%
9. Other	80415.500	-2.356	0.018*	2.09%	0.26%

Adaptation tools					
1. Job rotation	76890.500	-2.039	0.041*	21.16%	27.30%
2. Programs	77626.500	-1.856	0.064	22.56%	17.32%
3. Projects	77049.500	-2.179	0.029*	21.16%	15.22%
4. Tutoring	71779.000	-3.534	0.000*	39.07%	51.44%
5. Water	79711.000	-1.084	0.278	15.81%	13.12%
6. Examples	69148.000	-5.499	0.000*	13.02%	28.61%
7. Other	80932.500	-1.308	0.191	1.16%	2.36%
8. Not planning	69399.500	-5.332	0.000*	28.14%	12.86%
Learning and development tools					
1. Lectures	72992.500	-3.111	0.002*	50.00%	60.89%
2. Video	75509.000	-3.295	0.001*	16.74%	8.92%
3. E-learning	68273.000	-5.269	0.000*	35.81%	19.16%
4. Instructing	78852.000	-1.062	0.288	52.56%	48.82%
5. Role plays	80829.000	-0.880	0.379	4.19%	5.51%
6. Coaching	73807.000	-3.185	0.001*	21.86%	31.76%
7. Self-education	81407.500	-0.176	0.860	52.33%	51.71%
8. Model	67531.500	-6.457	0.000*	10.00%	27.56%
9. Other	78105.000	-4.260	0.000*	4.65%	0.00%
Controlling tools					
1. Operative	73796.000	-3.052	0.002*	26.05%	35.96%
2. Strategic	74410.000	-2.825	0.005*	34.88%	25.72%
3. No	73284.000	-3.015	0.003*	39.07%	49.61%

* Statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own processing based on conducted research.

The analysis of the data shows that in total, among all tools used in personal processes taken into account in the research, statistically significant differences between companies in Poland and Slovakia were noted for 67% of tools. 100% of statistically significant differences occurring between companies in Poland and Slovakia were observed for tools concerning personnel controlling.

Electronic advertisement was considered the best recruitment technique, both in Polish and Slovakian companies: 59.1% and 63%, respectively, whereas friends, acquaintances: 45.4% and 59.6%, respectively. In turn, open door days (7.9%) and intermediaries (2.9%) were considered the least beneficial recruitment techniques by Polish and Slovakian companies, respectively.

For selection methods, Polish companies mostly used selection according to the applicant's documentation (CV, questionnaire, references) (87.2%) and the structured interview (40.5%), while testing expertise (3.3%) was used least often. Slovakian companies, when it comes to the outlined selection methods, applied selection according to the applicant's documentation (CV, questionnaire, references) (80.1%) and the structured interview (47.2%), while testing expertise (6.3%) was used least often.

Tutoring and guidance (39.1%) was named as the most frequently used tool by Polish companies at the stage of employee adaptation. As many as 28.1% of companies did not plan to apply any new tools allowing the employee to adapt to the new work place or a new post. Whereas three tools were used to a similar degree, that is: planned work programs (22.6%), job rotation and special tasks/projects, each 21.2%. Illustrative examples (13%) proved the least popular. A situation in the field of using tools for employee adaptation looked slightly different in Slovakian companies. Now, as in the case of Polish companies, the tool used most frequently was tutoring and guidance (51.4%) - it needs to be noticed that this tool is much more popular among companies in Slovakia than in Poland. Illustrative examples (28.6%) came second - least appreciated by Polish respondents. Slovak companies least frequently pointed to the tool called: "throw into the water, where the deepest" (13.1%). A

similar percentage of Slovakian and Polish companies did not plan to use any tools allowing the employee to adapt in the new work place (12.9%).

The methods of employee training most often used in Polish companies included instructing 52.6%, self-education (52.3%) and course/lecture (50%), while role playing (4.2%) was used the least often, similar to Slovakian companies (5.5%). Course/lecture (60.9%) and self-education (51.7%) were put into operation the most in Slovakia, which is similar to companies in Poland.

For personnel controlling, as many as 39.1% of Polish companies and 49.6% Slovakian companies did not apply any methods. Among companies in Poland which used tools of personnel controlling, the strategic controlling (surveys, audits) (34.9%) was most popular, opposite to Slovakian companies, who pointed to operative controlling (indicators) (36%) more often.

Table 5 shows the Mann-Whitney U test values, critical values and p-values comparing the implementation of strategy and personnel work responsibility in Poland and Slovakia.

Table 5. Personnel work responsibility and formalised strategy in companies in Poland and Slovakia

Personnel work responsibility					
	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	PL	SK
Owner	79767.000	-0.832	0.405	26.51%	29.13%
HR	64605.000	-6.007	0.000*	58.14%	37.01%
Line manager	77971.500	-4.035	0.000*	0.70%	5.51%
Top manager	73132.500	-4.896	0.000*	5.81%	16.54%
Economist	62094.000	-8.970	0.000.	6.51%	30.71%
Other	78690.000	-4.151	0.000*	0.00%	3.94%
Formalised strategy					
Yes	66221.500	-5.459	0.000*	55.12%	35.96%

* Statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Own processing based on conducted research.

Among the Polish companies, the HR department (58%) was most often pointed as a unit responsible for personnel processes, as was the case among Slovakian companies, though the percentage was lower (37%). The owner came second in Poland (26.5%), whereas the wage (economic) department (30.7%) ranked second in Slovakia. The research shows that about every second investigated organization from has a formalized strategy for human resources management. For Slovakian companies, only 36% of respondents have such a strategy in place.

5. Discussion

Human resources today are crucial for effective functioning of every organization which brings measurable effects. According to R.W. Griffin: “Human resources management used to be classed under secondary tasks in many organizations, but its significance has grown within the last two decades. This results from the growing complexity of the legal matter, from recognizing that human resources are a means to improve efficiency and from realising the costs associated with their inadequate management” (Griffin, 2013). It is visible in the evolution of the attitude towards HRM (also in organizations) from administering, to managing personnel, to human resources management, to strategic HRM/HCM, to strategic international HRM (Kaufman, 2014; Mura et. al, 2019; Obedgiu, 2017; Lucas, Grant, 2018).

Therefore, it may be assumed that contemporary human resources management plays a strategic role. Which is why HRM practices should be considered in the context of strategic human resources management. The resource-based view has provided a basis to its development (Beer et.al, 1984; Boxall, 1996, Lepak, Snell 2002, Boxall, Purcell, 2016). The conviction about the fundamental role of the organization's internal resources as competition factors has substantiated a statement that people have strategic importance to the success of the organization which creates the possibility of gaining and maintaining competitive leverage. It is because they have resources features attributed to those of a strategic nature, which is why they should be: rare, valuable, difficult to imitate and without substitutes (Listwan, 2010). Individual processes occurring in the framework of HRM should also be examined in this context (Tracey, 2014). More and more organizations are inclined towards HRM in the strategic approach (Marka, Bax, 2002; Cheng, Cooper, 2003; Becker, Huselid, 2006; Storey et.al, 2019; Ahammad et.al, 2020; Portela, 2020; Laužikas, Miliūtė, 2020; Knezović et.al, 2020).

Results obtained in the research point out the existence of differences both in the implementation of personal processes in companies in Poland and Slovakia, but also in tools used in these processes.

Implementation of individual processes, HRM elements, has been addressed in a number of studies, those concerning the aspects of the organization at the level of individual countries (Pološki, Vokić, 2004; Mazurkiewicz, 2010; Liang et.al, 2010; Li et.al, 2011; Pingle, 2014; Cooke et.al, 2019; Jarecki et.al, 2020), and those concerning international comparisons made between them (Budhwar et.al, 2017; Chen et.al, 2018; Ayentimi et.al, 2018; Łobos et.al, 2020). However, there has been no research that would compare, in the scope presented in this paper, the implementation of the HRM process and the tools used as part of them in companies in Poland and Slovakia. This study fills this gap.

The research falls under the positivist (functional) mainstream. It has substantial dominant presence in the area of HRM (Samul, 2016). Reasons for this may be sought in emphasizing values applied in investigating (neo)positivist methods which mainly involve examining the cause-and-effect relationships, the use of statistical tests and linear thinking (Brewster 1999; McKenna et.al, 2008). Research on HRM in the positivist mainstream is usually conducted from the perspective of the institutional theory or resource-based view, mainly in the area of strategic human resources management (cf. research by: Becker, Huselid, 2006). HRM-related research is also undertaken in the interpretative mainstream and also, though relatively rarely, in the post-modern and critical angle (Mesjasz, 2003; McKenna et.al, 2008; Sułkowski, 2009).

When taking up a discussion in the framework of research on the functioning HRM in organizations in Poland and Slovakia, and when adopting the research hypothesis as a starting point, it needs to be concluded, that:

Hypothesis - H1: “We assume that there is a statistically significant difference in the performing of more than 50% of personnel processes in companies in Poland and Slovakia” - was verified positively.

The analysis shows statistically significant differences between companies in Poland and in Slovakia were observed in 10 out of 13 HRM processes identified in the research (i.e. 77%). The analysis of data included in Table 3 shows that the greatest differences (taking the % of implementation of HRM processes as a starting point) occur for the processes concerning: personnel administration, selection of employees, employee welfare - implementation % higher in Slovakian companies, job evaluation (payroll system creation) - where the % of implementation is higher in Polish companies.

Hypothesis - H2: “We assume that there are differences in more than 50% of the tools used in personnel processes in companies in Poland and Slovakia” - was verified positively.

When adopting the analysis done at the beginning of the discussion, presented state of affairs points to the needs to put a lot of effort by Polish and Slovakian organizations to direct their activity undertaken under human resources towards their strategic management (cf. Marka, Bax, 2002; Knezović et.al, 2020).

Conclusions

Efficient human resources management today requires the understanding of all issues relating to the operation of the company and to the adaptation of personnel strategy and policy to the needs of the organization. The process carried out as part of HRM and the relevant tools used alike take an important place.

The aim of the paper was to compare the processes of personnel work in Poland and Slovakia. First partial aim was to determine in which areas are located divergences in the implementation of personnel processes in companies in both countries. Second partial aim was to analyse the usage of tools in personnel processes in Poland and Slovakia. On the basis of research results it was possible to determine differences and similarities both in the implementation of personal processes, but also in tools used in these processes in analysed countries. It was possible by means of a critical analysis of the subject-matter as well as inference on the basis of analysis based on the data obtained from the research addressing the operation of HRM in companies in Poland and in Slovakia.

The research hypotheses were verified as positive in the course of the analysis. Therefore, it is true that there is a statistically significant difference in the implementation of more than 50% of personnel processes in companies in Poland and in Slovakia, and also that there are differences in over 50% of tools used in personnel processes in companies in Poland and in Slovakia. We would also like to mention the limitations of the study. The research process in Poland was hindered by the epidemiological situation. After March 2020 companies faced a lot of unforeseen problems which negatively influenced the motivation to participate in the study. Despite these limitations, research results can be a solid basis for further studies. The recommendation would be to conduct complementary, qualitative research to analyse in details current problems and barriers that companies face in HRM.

When wrapping up the reflections presented in this study, it may be concluded that:

- after 1989, the approach to the personnel policy in organizations has undergone significant changes both in Poland and in Slovakia and there has been a shift towards the model of strategic human resources management,
- despite the fact that strategic HRM is today the most desired approach to human resources in the organization, only 36% among the investigated entities in Slovakia and 55% in Poland had a formalized strategy for human resources management,
- there are significant differences in the implementation of personnel processes in companies in Poland and in Slovakia and in the tools used by them in these processes, i.e.
 - for processes in Polish companies, greater emphasis was placed on employee recruitment and adaptation (74.9%) and training and further education (69.8%), and lesser emphasis was placed on personnel controlling (26.7%), whereas in Slovakian companies the greatest degree of implementation was seen in the selection of employees (90,8%), employee recruitment and adaptation (86,6%), and the least in talent management (17.9%);
 - for tools, the greatest differences were seen in the field of: personnel controlling and selection.

Based on the findings, it would be appropriate for companies in both countries to invest more effort into formulating a formal HRM strategies. Likewise, it would be beneficial for companies to implement processes that are associated with strategic HRM, such as job analysis, personnel planning, personnel controlling, talent management. Their underestimation can cause various problems in personnel work in long-term. Although, this assumption requires further in-depth investigation and will be the subject of future research.

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