

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT CREATIVITY IN COMPANIES OPERATING IN INTERCULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. The article deals with opinions of HR managers about support and development of creativity. In this article, we deal with the definition of creativity based on the study of relevant domestic and foreign literature and we present partial findings of a questionnaire survey of this issue. The survey was conducted as a part of the project of Scientific Grant Agency of the Education Ministry of the Slovak Republic, grant VEGA No 1/0235/14 Formation of organizational culture and management system of enterprises with international presence in intercultural environment. We have used questionnaire survey to examine this issue among HR managers and the results show that Slovak managers support development of employees' creativity and they also develop their own creativity; however these results also show that they have reserves in the using of methods of creative problem solving.

Key words: creativity, manager, intercultural environment, company operating in intercultural environment, methods of creative problem solving.

Introduction

In this period of globalization and big competitiveness on the domestic and international market HRM in each organization (small or large, profit or non-profit, operating in domestic or intercultural environment) has to be able to provide for its organization people who are able to solve problems creatively. "Innovativeness plays a central role in the knowledge-based economy; it is practically omnipresent and concerns all areas. Innovativeness becomes a philosophy of the future...An organization that encourages innovativeness creates preconditions for new procedures and solutions...This requires some creativity of human potential in an organization, implementation of new, progressive methods and techniques of personnel development" (Lesáková et al.

2008: 16-17). Creative thinking and behaviour should belong to the qualification criteria for each manager. Managers often present creativity as a common part of their managerial work which gives a space for self-fulfilment, but they pay less attention to creating an environment for their employees. However, it is very important for the organization to develop creativity of all employees, not only managers. Managers are supposed to use their knowledge for the development their own creativity, qualification and self-motivation, as well as for the development of suitable environment to develop creativity and engagement of employees in creative problem solving systems. The aim of the article is to determine whether managers in Slovak companies operating in an intercultural environment support the development of creativity of employees and at the same time whether they develop their own creativity.

“Organizations operate within national settings and are subject to the same cultural forces that act upon every other aspect of life” (Martin, Fellenz 2010: 501). In Slovakia there are approximately 2300 multinational corporations nowadays. “Culture reflects learned behaviour that is transmitted from one member of society to another (Griffin, Pustay 2005: 85). According to Šajgalíková (2012: 12): “They are not rationally based belief systems, rather they are relatively implicit sets of taken-for-granted beliefs, values and norms.” Benčíková (2012: 16) defines intercultural as “a term created with the purpose to point out to the existing phenomena, communication and cooperation and explains problems across different cultures.” The term intercultural “refers to the diversity of separate nations” (Sadri, Flammia 2011: 8). Cultural differences can be managed from several perspectives. For example Hofstede’s perspective, Trompenaars’s perspective and acculturation – entering a new culture (Martin, Fellenz 2010).

1. Theoretical framework of creativity

Nowadays scientists agree that the creative is supposed to be new on the one hand and useful for discipline on the other hand. It was first defined in this way by Moriss Stein (1953). This definition was the base also for Teresa M. Amabile, professor of business of administration at Harvard University: “A product or response will be judged as creative to the extent that it is both a novel and appropriate, useful, correct or valuable response to the task at hand and the task is heuristic rather than algorithmic” (Amabile 1996: 35). Oldham and Cummings defined creative performance as “products, ideas, or procedures that satisfy two conditions: they are novel or original and they are potentially relevant for, or useful to, an organization.”

Creativity is a complex phenomenon. Therefore, scientists put their attention to individual aspects of creativity rather than a general definition, which includes all aspects. “Heene (1980) culminates the work of Gowan, Freeman, Butcher, Christie, Hallman and Mooney in a valuable structure of creativity which consists of the following: the creative product, the creative process, the

creative personality and the role of the environment with regard to the changes for creative development” (Slabbert 1994: 60). In recent years these four aspects have been extended. “The enterprise of the study of creativity can thus be categorized in terms of process, products, personality and places. Simonton (1990) offered another perspective following the alliterative scheme by describing creativity as persuasion. Runco (2008) recently suggested that this might be further organized into hierarchy that starts with theories of creative performances versus creative potentials” (Kozbelt et al. 2010: 25). Runco adds: “A critical assumption is that everyone has creative potential. Creativity is not only characteristic of eminent geniuses nor even only of productive professionals” (Runco 2003: 321).

According to Amabile “individuals are intrinsically motivated when they seek enjoyment, interest, satisfaction, self-expression, or personal challenge in the work (Amabile 1997: 21). Runco (2014) summarized that enhancement is best viewed as fulfilment of potential. Some people have more potential than others, but everyone has potential and educational or enhancement efforts, if done right, can fulfil the individual’s potential for original and creative expression. According to Armstrong (2011): “This includes the use of policies that focus on role flexibility – giving people the chance to develop their roles by making better and extended use of their talents.” Northouse (2014) stated that educators who study group dynamics and the roles individuals play in effective groups often say “people do what they do best”. Bersin (2015: 154, Deloitte Review): „Nothing makes a person feel better about work than being able to be highly successful.”

Environmental stimulants to creativity are: freedom, good project management, sufficient resources, encouragement, various organizational characteristic (corporate climate), recognition, sufficient time, challenge and pressure (Amabile 1996: 231-232). Moreover, she discovered also influences that have direct impact on intrinsic motivation. These are: autonomy/sense of control, importance/urgency in the work, optimal challenge, task matches to interests, mechanism for considering new ideas, high – level encouragement toward innovation, immediate supervisor encouragement and emphasis on intrinsic motivators (Amabile 1996: 120).

“Each of the three major theories of organizational creativity – the componential theory of Amabile (1988, 1997), the interactionist theory of Woodman et al. (1993), and the multiple social domains theory of Ford (1996) – includes the work environment as an influence to creativity” (Amabile 2004: 6). Amabile created the componential theory of creativity: “In the componential theory, the influences on creativity include three within-individual components: domain-relevant skills, creativity relevant processes, and task motivation. The component outside the individual is the surrounding environment – in particu-

lar, the social environment” (Amabile 2012: 2). Woodman et al. (1993: 294-295) summarized all factors that influenced people in organizations: “The creative behaviour of organizational participants is a complex person-situation interaction influenced by events of the past as well as salient aspects of the current situation. Within the person, both cognitive and noncognitive aspects of the mind are related to creative behaviour. In sum, individual creativity is a function of antecedent conditions, cognitive style and ability, personality factors and contextual influences”. According to Ford: “Within each level, one can conceive of interactions across domains (e.g., between different groups, organizations, disciplines, and markets). However interactions also can occur across these levels (e.g., organizational capabilities and market opportunities, group processes and disciplinary representation” (Ford 1996: 1125).

Suntingerová (2010: 156-157) divided creative techniques as follows: heuristics which includes brainstorming, synectics which is based on analogy, morphologic that is for instance using morphologic tables and finally lateral thinking including also mind maps. According to Runco (2014) methods of creative problem solving include: synectics, creative problem solving itself, lateral thinking; bed, bath and the bus; dreaming and imagery; and brainstorming. Seková (in Lesáková et al. 2009: 54-59) mentioned these techniques: brainstorming, mind maps, Osborn’s checklist, SCAMPER, and Six thinking hats.

The aspects of creativity, namely intrinsic motivation or potential can be seen in the concept of employee engagement. Employee engagement is a new management concept. According to Armstrong the motivation element is intrinsic. The concept of engagement was defined by Gallup (2009). Gallup (2006) examined 23,910 business units and compared top quartile and bottom quartile financial performance with engagement scores. They found that: Those with engagement scores in bottom quartile averaged 31-51 per cent more employee turnover, 51 per cent more inventory shrinkage, and 62 per cent more accidents. Those with engagement scores in the top quartile averaged 12 per cent higher customer advocacy, and 12 per cent higher profitability (Armstrong 2012: 202). Bersin (Deloitte Review 2015: 151, 156) added that: “a key engagement driver is need for continuous and ongoing recognition. As soft as it seems, saying “thank you” is an extraordinary tool to building an engaged team”.

2. The aim, material, methods and survey results

The article deals with opinions of HR managers about support and development of creativity in Slovak companies operating in intercultural environment. We focus on these aspects of creativity: creative personality with its intrinsic motivation, creative potential, creative environment and methods of creative problem solving. We also examine the new concept of HRM called employee engagement.

As companies operating in an intercultural environment we consider multi-

national corporations, companies with foreign direct investments, and companies which employ people of different nationalities. “A multinational corporation is defined as a number of affiliated business establishments that function as productive enterprises in different countries simultaneously” (Kokavcová 2013: 74). According to Encyclopaedia Britannica foreign direct investment is “investment in an enterprise that is resident in a country other than that of the foreign direct investor.” As companies operating in a domestic environment we consider companies whose suppliers and customers are from different nationalities and companies which do business only in the domestic market and who have Slovak suppliers and customers.

To investigate the issue we have used a questionnaire survey among companies in the Slovak Republic. We have sent the questionnaire to HR managers of these companies. The aim of the survey was to find out whether managers in Slovak companies operating in an intercultural environment support the development of the employees’ creativity as well as their own creativity. We have used Trend top 200 as the basis. The Trend magazine annually publishes a list of 200 Slovak companies ranked by sales in the previous year. We have focused our attention on Trend top 200 in the year 2014. Because 200 companies were not a sufficient number for our research, we sent our questionnaire also to companies which are associated in HRcomm. HRcomm is a Slovak association for management and development of human resources and its aim is to connect HR community and create a space for sharing practical experience. Finally, we sent the questionnaire to 229 HR managers via email. 26 questionnaires were answered. Then we processed the 26 questionnaires through Excel and SPSS. We used the following methods: the questionnaire survey, analysis and comparison. Later on, in evaluating opinions of HR managers, we used descriptive statistics.

3. Results and discussion

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions. We wanted to examine these areas: firstly aspects of creativity used in the companies, secondly support and development of creativity, thirdly factors influencing creativity in companies, fourthly methods of creative problem solving, fifthly employee engagement and finally the development of manager’s own creativity. The questionnaire was responded by 26 companies – 12 large, 5 medium-sized, 8 small, and 1 micro company. Most of the companies were from automotive industry, either big plants producing cars or suppliers of components (5 out of 26 companies). The second big group was from the industry trade/services (4 companies). Industries power engineering (power engineering/services), IT services and consultancy had each three companies. We divided the companies into companies which operate in an intercultural environment and companies that we consider as domestic. Consequently, this sorting created two groups of companies; the first group includes 19 companies and the second group includes 7 companies.

Table 1. Type of company

Type of company	Frequency	Percentage
Multinational corporation	11	42.3%
Foreign direct investments	8	30.8%
Employees (different nationalities)	0	0%
Total	19	73.1%
Suppliers (different nationalities)	1	3.8%
Customers (different nationalities)	4	15.4%
Neither	2	7.7%
Total	7	26.9%

Source: own survey.

Firstly, we examined different aspects of creativity. According to the respondents the attention is put to potential in their companies. These answers stated 57.7% respondents. The most considerable difference between intercultural and domestic companies is in product and environment. The aspect of product is important in 31.6% intercultural companies however only in 14.3% domestic companies. Similarly, emphasis is put on the aspect of environment in 47.4% intercultural companies and only in 28.6% domestic companies. Other aspects have almost the same significance in intercultural and domestic companies.

Secondly, we investigated support and development of creativity. Most of the respondents (92%) stated that they support and develop creativity through potential (strongly agree or agree). There exist difference between domestic companies and intercultural companies, because 100% HR managers from domestic companies stated that they support development of creativity through potential and only 90% intercultural HR managers stated the same. Moreover, the biggest difference was when we compared support and development of creativity through intrinsic motivation in intercultural and domestic companies. 82% of HR managers of intercultural companies, who responded in our survey, said that they support creativity through intrinsic motivation; however only 40% of HR managers in domestic companies. “People are most creative when they feel motivated primarily by the interest, enjoyment, satisfaction, and the challenge of work itself – and not by extrinsic motivators.” (Amabile 2012: 3) In domestic companies according the results of our survey is attention put not to intrinsic motivation. The reasons might be various. Probably, HR managers in domestic companies do not know the importance of intrinsic motivation for development of creativity. They probably rather put attention to extrinsic motivators.

Thirdly, we focused on the work environment and influences that are used to support creativity. There were included influences that support creativity in general (first 6 influences), as well as influences that have, according Amabile, direct impact on intrinsic motivation (last 8 influences). Most of the respond-

ents have chosen “recognition” (17 respondents) of the influences that support creativity in general. Influences that support development of intrinsic motivation were the most often marked autonomy/sense of control (10 respondents) and immediate supervisor encouragement (9 respondents). Especially these three influences are used in intercultural environment more than in domestic: good project management, considering new ideas and innovation encouragement. On the other hand in domestic companies are more widely used influences sufficient time, autonomy and recognition.

Fourthly, we examined the using of methods of creative problem solving in companies.

As we have expected, mostly used creative technique in companies is brainstorming. It was chosen by 92.3% HR managers. Brainstorming is one of the primary creative problem solving methods, but it does not lead to deeper development of creativity. The fact is that even we have asked professionals in HRM, they were not familiar with many of the methods. Creative problem solving methods are applied in both intercultural and domestic companies. However, these techniques are more common in intercultural companies except morphological methods.

We also asked respondents if the concept of employee engagement is used in their company. More than a half of the respondents (62%) stated that they are using the concept. It is a new concept in management and if it is really used, it will bring many advantages to company. According to the respondents 57.9 % intercultural companies use the concept and 71.4% domestic companies.

Finally, we also investigated managers own development of creativity. Surprisingly, all respondents said that they support development of their own creativity. Therefore, it would be inevitable in the future research to ask respondents about concrete forms of developing their own creativity. Moreover, we suppose that for results to be as objective as possible we need to ask that question in the future research not only HR managers, but all managers in companies and also employees themselves.

Conclusions

The aim of the survey was to investigate the opinions of HR managers about support and development of creativity. The results of the questionnaire survey showed that Slovak managers support development of creativity; however these results also show that they have reserves in the using and knowing of methods of creative problem solving. According to our survey, there exist differences between companies operating in intercultural environment and domestic companies in support and development of creativity. Therefore we assume that HR managers should educate in methods of support and development of creativity. When it comes to development of creativity, our survey seems to be more positive as we expected. To obtain as objective answers as possible it will be nec-

essary in the future ask not only HR managers, but all managers in companies and we put attention to employees' opinions, too. We assume that this is the way how we can investigate the real situation in companies.

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