

# SELECTED CURRENT TRENDS IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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## Abstract

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The article focuses on selected current trends in human resource management in health service providers in the Czech Republic. Its goal was the mapping and evaluation of these trends in selected health service providers by staff management experts (HR managers) in the Czech Republic. The contribution presents a view of some of the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted in selected health service providers in the Czech Republic. These researches were conducted in 2016 from a sample of 47 respondents (HR managers of selected health service providers in the Czech Republic), and the results were analyzed. One research hypothesis and one research question have been formulated. The verification or rejection of the null research hypothesis was done through the statistical method of the Pearson's Chi-square test. The research results show differing levels of awareness and differentiations – primarily by owner, size as measured in number of beds and geographical segmentation of each health services provider among individual selected trends in human resource management in health service providers in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: diversity management, employer brand, e-recruitment, health service providers, human resource management, knowledge management, work-life balance

## INTRODUCTION

Organizational capital, human capital and physical capital resources are the three main categories of resources that provide a corporation (healthcare) organization with a sustained competitive advantage. Loss of any resource may result in severe consequences for any (healthcare) organization or corporation. Healthcare organizations or corporations invest a lot of effort and money in creating and maintaining these resources so they can enjoy a competitive advantage over others in the dynamic business environment (Kashyap and Rangnekar, 2016).

Human resource management is a comprehensive and coherent approach to the employment and development of people or employees. Human resource management can be regarded as a philosophy about how employees or people should be managed; it is underpinned by a number

of theories relating to the behaviour of people and corporations, organizations, hospitals, clinics etc. (Armstrong and Taylor, 2014).

According to Cugin, Ng and Lee (2016), there is increasing evidence that human resource management practices adopted by corporations/ organizations can have a significant impact on firm performance and effective human resource practices can positively contribute to corporations, organizations, hospitals, clinics etc.

Regarding this, Kumar and Ganesan (2012) say that effective utilization of human resources is one of the most important factor for the efficient and profitable functioning of any organization or hospital, clinic et cetera.

### Human resources management in healthcare

The role of human resource management is that of a partnership between the human resources

department and management, regardless of the organizational type. Most human resources departments have similar responsibilities. The human resources and management partnership is unique in the hospital (healthcare organization) because many hospitals have a dual administrative structure of clinical managers and health services managers who supervise two distinct groups of employees with different responsibilities and different training needs. For example, clinical managers have training or experience in a specific clinical area and, accordingly, have more specific responsibilities than do generalists or health services managers. For example, directors of physical therapy are experienced physical therapists, nurse managers have nursing degrees, but most health service managers have a bachelor's degree or master's degree in health services (Niles, 2013).

Regarding this, Fleming Fallon, Jr. and McConnell (2014) impart that the typical human resources department in the hospital (healthcare organization) has grown from a single-person operation into a multifaceted, complex organization.

According to Niles (2013), healthcare workers are the human resources of a hospital (healthcare organization) and its most valuable asset. To be successful, a hospital must make healthcare workers' productivity a major goal. The level of productivity can vary depending on the skill levels the employees demonstrate in their jobs and the satisfaction levels of the employees with the hospital (healthcare organization) as well as their jobs. To develop a high-performance and effective workforce, the hospital should use human resource management input in the following organizational areas: (1) establishment of a legal and ethical management system, (2) job design and job analysis, (3) recruitment and selection, (4) healthcare career opportunities, (5) distribution of employee benefits, (6) employee stimulation and employee motivation, (7) negotiations with organized labor, (8) employee terminations, (9) determination of emerging and future trends in health care and (10) strategic planning.

Regarding this, Shantz, Alfes and Arevshatian (2016) claim that due to increasing cost pressures and the necessity to ensure effective and high quality patient care while maintaining a safe environment for patients and employees, interest in the capacity for human resource management trends and practices to make a difference has piqued the attention of human resource professionals in health service providers.

Human resources for health workforce planning deals with questions, including the following: (1) how do we determine the number of healthcare workers needed in a particular geographic area? Workforce planning in healthcare is the assessment of needs for human resources (healthcare workers). Workforce planning fits in with overall health systems planning and human resources development and management, (2) what factors

help us best to anticipate future supply and need for various types of healthcare workers? (3) what methods are used to project future workforce needs? What are the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches, and how might they be most effectively applied? (Fried and Fottler, 2008)

### **Selected current trends in human resource management in health service providers (in hospitals, in healthcare organizations)**

As in other fields of human activity, the area of modern human resource management keeps changing and developing. Its position and role are substantially affected by new trends, methods, principles and terms emerging in the Czech Republic as well as abroad. Content research of scientific literature identified the following selected current modern trends: (1) employer brand/branding, (2) global workplace, (3) diversity management, (4) new technology and information system in human resource management, (5) e-Recruitment, (6) care of employees/healthcare workers, (7) Work-life balance, (8) HR outsourcing.

The above mentioned selected modern trends in human resource management were subject to subsequent primary research.

#### ***Employer brand/branding***

Employer brand/branding is an activity where principles of marketing, in particular the science of branding, are applied to human resources activities in relation to current and potential employees – healthcare workers. Whereas product branding considers how a product is represented to customers and corporate branding considers how an organization is represented to a variety of external audiences, employer branding considers current and potential employees as branding targets (Edwards, 2009).

Martin (2009) shed some light on the role of leadership in building a positive corporate image and employer brand/branding. Martin (2009) also said that employees understood the true identity of the corporation/organization through the actions and behaviour of their managers or leaders.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) assert that an employer brand/branding suggests differentiation of an organization's characteristics as an employer from those of its competitors; the employment brand highlights the unique aspects of the organization's employment offerings or environment.

#### ***Global workplace***

Today's corporations/organizations operate in a global environment. A number of challenges are behind this reality for most multinational corporations/organizations. One of them is that of managing a global workplace with significant cultural, social, ethical and infrastructural differences from one employee to another (Lorenzo, Esqueda and Larson, 2010).

In the context of the primary research, the selected modern trend was analysed from the viewpoint of employment of foreign employees by the selected healthcare service provider et cetera. The studied human resources can be characterized as having a geographic or cultural employee mix.

#### ***Diversity management***

Diversity management is part of the broader set of transformations of the workplace in the new economy. Corporations/organizations today actively incorporate diversity as part of their organizational agenda (Sung-Yul Park, 2013).

According to Urbancová, Čermáková and Vostrovská (2016), diversity is a phenomenon which is increasingly manifesting itself in the globalized society. Therefore, it is observable in various areas of human activity, and thus also in the labor market, corporations/organizations and work teams. Race, sex, religion, age, education, nationality and ethnicity, creed and disabilities are among the parameters of diversity.

#### ***New technology and information system in human resource management***

New technology and technological advances have not only changed how corporations/organizations are structured and how work is performed but have also begun to change the tasks of HR managers.

Computers are used to perform many of the functions for which employees were once responsible. A typical human resources information system for employee record keeping maintains basic data, such as each employee's name, age, sex, marital status, address, educational background, salary, job title, date of hire and date of termination. The system can give a variety of reports, such as lists of newly hired employees, terminated employees, employees on a leave of absence, employees classified by job type or educational level, or employees grouped by job performance level and so on (Pynes and Lombardi, 2012).

#### ***Online recruitment, e-Recruitment***

According to Kuppusamy and Ganesan (2016), the recruitment process is essential for a corporation's/organization's success. An effective recruitment assists in attracting talented and quality human resources. Recruitment consists of activities and practices of a corporation/organization where potential employees are identified and attracted to apply for jobs.

Online recruitment or e-Recruitment is growing at a fast pace. E-Recruitment is widely used by individuals and organizations as the main mode for recruitment. Its growth is attributed to the advancement in Internet technology (Kuppusamy and Ganesan, 2016).

Regarding this, Kaur (2015) says that e-Recruitment is the latest trend in the current competitive globalized era.

For example, from the perspective of job seekers, over 52 million Americans use online job searches (Jansen, Jansen and Spink, 2005).

#### ***Care of employees/healthcare workers***

Modern philosophy of strategic management of human resources perceives (or should perceive) every employee as an individuality with particular skills, knowledge and talents which may provide – among other things – competitive advantage to the company/organisation. That is why the corporate management should take care of its employees in all areas and aspects and perceive them as part of their competitive edge. In the context of employee care, one can speak about improvement of working and other conditions and work and out-of-work activities. In addition to standard care, the employees can be provided, for example, advisory service, disease prevention, healthcare packages etc., as an assumption of long-term high performance, good health, positive motivation, high-level loyalty and satisfaction and of course low fluctuation of employees.

#### ***Work-life balance***

According to Hilbrecht, Shaw, Johnson and Andrey (2013), the work-life balance concept has been employed to interrogate and explain the ways in which individuals negotiate the time they spend at work and at home. This has been interpreted by researchers as an appropriate division of time and attention between work and other areas of life.

Regarding this, Bell, Rajendran and Theiler (2012) claim that balancing work and family demands is a struggle that almost all employees deal with on a daily basis, consequently incurring high levels of job-related stress.

#### ***HR outsourcing***

Outsourcing can be characterized as the purchase from external vendors of a value-creating activity that either was, or could have been, performed in-house (Gilley and Rasheed, 2000).

According to Klaas, McClendon and Gainey (2001), HR outsourcing can take many forms, ranging from routine payroll administration to training program delivery to HR planning. While some HR outsourcing may involve routine administrative tasks, other functions may involve the design of HR systems that are likely to have a fundamental influence on organization culture and performance.

Regarding this, Berber and Slavić (2016) impart that outsourcing the human resource activities to another corporation/organization will not only reduce the costs of the corporation, but will also increase the possibilities for investment in the core elements of the business.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present article deals with modern human resource management by selected healthcare service providers in the Czech Republic. A study of secondary information sources and their subsequent content analysis defined eight current modern trends primarily focused on human resource management. The purpose of the present article was the introduction of these trends, their mapping to selected healthcare providers in the Czech Republic and their evaluation by a HR specialist.

For the purpose of following the defined objective, primary and secondary information sources were used and analysed. The baseline secondary data were obtained both from professional monographs and by analysis of research literature available in electronic databases (especially including articles presented by the Web of Science and Scopus databases). Secondary data were processed and conclusions were drawn by selected scientific methods of analysis, synthesis, induction and deduction.

Primary information was obtained by quantitative and qualitative marketing research. Some of the results are presented in this article. Quantitative research was implemented through an anonymous questionnaire inquiry in 2016. The questionnaires were available in the printed as well as electronic format and distributed among HR specialists of the selected healthcare service providers. The presentation of the questionnaire was based on a sample of seven respondents. The basic research cohort (the sampling frame) was represented by 188 healthcare service providers in the Czech Republic, according to a list of healthcare providers in the Czech Republic. But, the rate of return was twenty five percent. Four of the returned questionnaires were excluded for the reason of incompleteness of data and information provided. The total final number of analysed questionnaires (the final sample) was 47 and the questionnaires were filled out by human resource management specialists employed by the selected healthcare service providers. The answers provided in the questionnaires were used for the research question/assumption testing. The verification of the proposed hypothesis was performed by the Pearson's statistical method of Chi-square test. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part focused on specification, implementation and applicability of the selected modern trends in human resource management through the eyes of the addressed respondents and included 24 questions (three per each of the selected trends). The second part included identification questions and other complementary questions and research-related information. The second part included twelve questions.

For the purpose of a deeper analysis and subsequent interpretation of the collected

information, qualitative research was implemented with selected HR specialists. This second part of the research took the form of twelve semi-structured interviews (face-to-face interviews). The semi-structured interviews were focused on different research topics. This contribution presents only one part of qualitative research (semi-structured interviews). This part of research was focused on the evaluation of the selected modern trends in human resource management perceived by the addressed HR specialists working with the selected healthcare service providers in the Czech Republic. The face-to-face interviews are more accurate, clearer, but also more demanding for HR specialists' time. For this reason, twelve semi-structured interviews were conducted. The HR specialists were selected by simple random selection.

The results of both research parts were used for answering the formulated research question.

## RESULTS

Based on the theoretical framework outlined in previous chapters, the following research hypothesis (H1) and research question (RQ1) have been formulated:

H1: There is a statistically significant relation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number of wards category) and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.

RQ1: How is applicability of the selected modern trends in human resource management perceived by the addressed HR specialists working with the selected healthcare service providers in the Czech Republic?

The primary source of information was represented by questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews.

The research involved instruments such as the tools of descriptive statistics (averages and percentages). The hypothesis was tested (verified) individually for each criterion using the statistical method of the Pearson's Chi-square test of independence on the research hypothesis. The evaluation was carried out with the help of the SPSS Statistics program. The SPSS Statistics program was an important tool for the data analysis due to its possibilities in data processing using pivot tables, which are the methods of comparison and deduction in the data analysis.

The structure of the selected healthcare service providers according to the number of wards is shown in the table below (Tab. I).

The table (Tab. I) presents the structure of the selected healthcare service providers according to the number of wards.

The qualitative research included 12 employees of selected healthcare service providers in the Czech Republic that are active and responsible for the area of human resources.

I: *The structure of the selected healthcare service providers according to the number of wards.*

Number of wards (beds)	The absolute frequency	The relative frequency
0–99	17	36.17%
100–199	8	17.02%
200–299	4	8.51%
300–399	6	12.77%
400–499	2	4.26%
500–599	2	4.26%
600–699	1	2.12%
700–799	0	0.00%
800–899	0	0.00%
900–999	3	6.38%
1000+	4	8.51%
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.00</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

Source: Authors, own source

The research hypothesis 1 (H1): There is a statistically significant relation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number of wards category) and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.

H0: There is no correlation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number of wards category) and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.

HA: There is correlation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number of wards category) and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.

In other words, there is no statistically significant relation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number of wards category) and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.

The table (Tab. II) shows data that characterize the research hypothesis (H1).

The research hypothesis (H1) was divided into parts defined by the studied selected modern trend in human resource management. The results of its validity verification show that the p-value of the Pearson's Chi-square test of independence

is higher for each of the selected modern trend than the specified limit value of 0,05. Thus, the H0 hypothesis is not rejected on the significance level of 5%.

In this case, it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant relation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number of wards category) and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.

The research question 1 (RQ1): How is applicability of the selected modern trends in human resource management perceived by the addressed HR specialists working with the selected healthcare service providers in the Czech Republic?

The structure of the addressed HR specialists working in the selected healthcare service providers is shown in the table below (Tab. III). The research team addressed twelve selected HR specialists.

Most of the addressed HR specialists agreed in saying that the present time was characterised by the online environment and continuous development of new IT technologies; hence they very positively perceived and assessed development and use of social media and networks. The social networks mostly used by the addressed respondents included Facebook and LinkedIn. In addition to that, all of them obviously actively used their web

II: *The verification of the research hypothesis by means of the Pearson's Chi-square test.*

<b>H1: There is a statistically significant relation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider and application of the selected modern trend in the area of human resource management.</b>							
Selected current trends in HRM	Chi-square	df	p-value	Selected current trends in HRM	Chi-square	df	p-value
<b>Employer brand</b>	6.039	8	0.511	<b>e-Recruitment</b>	4.420	8	0.466
<b>Global workplace</b>	4.355	8	0.372	<b>Care of employees</b>	3.027	8	0.399
<b>Diversity management</b>	4.983	8	0.448	<b>Work-life balance</b>	6.004	8	0.532
<b>New technology</b>	5.009	8	0.483	<b>HR outsourcing</b>	7.412	8	0.498

Source: Authors, own processing at SPSS Statistics program (2017)

III: *The structure of the addressed HR specialists working in the selected healthcare service providers.*

Number of wards (beds)	The absolute frequency	The relative frequency
0–99	4	33.33 %
100–199	2	16.67 %
200–299	1	8.33 %
300–399	1	8.33 %
400–499	0	0.00 %
500–599	1	8.33 %
600–699	0	0.00 %
700–799	0	0.00 %
800–899	0	0.00 %
900–999	1	8.33 %
1000+	2	16.67 %
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.00</b>	<b>100.00 %</b>

Source: Authors, own source

sites, some issuing their own magazine or actively contributing to job procurement portals (jobs.cz or prace.cz). The HR information system was computerised in the case of all respondents, which was also seen as a positive. This advantage inter alia obviously reflected in shift planning, attendance, wage accounting et cetera.

As the addressed respondents agreed that the job market offered insufficient numbers of qualified employees willing to work in the field and that the wages for the work were rather low, in the context of the modern trend of global work environment many of the employed doctors and paramedics were from Slovakia, Poland or the Ukraine.

Diversity management was understood by the addressed respondents as something that goes without saying. The reason was that the work team consisted of younger and relatively inexperienced employees who were learning from the senior and more experienced colleagues. According to the addressed respondents, the gender, age, sexual orientation, religion and other characteristics did not play any role in the case of employees.

Employee care was oriented towards preventive healthcare packages, vaccination for employees or cash contributions to purchases in pharmacies or

payments for rehab procedures. Some employers had partnership contracts executed with travel bureaus and provided not only to their employees but also to their families: these options covered rest and relaxation (such as lease of an ice rink, a gym, etc.). Most employers also took care of the quality and balanced nutrition of their employees (selection from several meals, including one meatless, one dietary and one diabetic).

Work-life balance was also assessed as a positive by the addressed respondents. The employers offered various types of part-time jobs or a nursery with extended working hours, according to the respondents. During the holiday season, the employers apparently organised camps close to the city for school children.

Outsourcing was used not only in the HR area – for example for provision of educational events and programmes – but also for cleaning works, washing, security guards etc.

Generally speaking, the addressed respondents mentioned some common problems they faced in their work, including lack of qualified personnel, overloading of the existing personnel, increasing overtime work and burn-out syndrome.

## CONCLUSION

The current concept on building competitive advantage is increasingly associated with a source-based approach to enterprise resources and capabilities, which are considered the key factors for sustainability and a lasting competitive advantage (Kuralová and Margarisová, 2016).

Regarding this, Rastgoo (2016) says that human resources are assets of a corporation/organization. The fundamentals of every organization are the human resources and there is no doubt to its importance.

Within the HR work is necessary not only to care for the employee and employer branding, but also tracking the current modern trends in the Czech Republic but also abroad. A study of secondary information sources (professional monographs, articles presented by Web of Science and Scopus databases) and their subsequent content analysis defined eight current modern trends primarily focused on human resource management. These trends are up-to-date and can contribute to increasing competitiveness, performance, awareness, and employee and patient satisfaction.

On the basis of the results presented in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that there was proved no relation between the size of the selected healthcare service provider (according to the number

of wards category) in the Czech Republic and application of the selected modern trend (employer brand/branding, global workplace, diversity management, new technology and information system in human resource management, e-Recruitment, care of employees/healthcare workers, Work-life balance, HR outsourcing) in the area of human resource management. This fact might have been caused by the limited scope of the research, though. The limit consisted in the fact that the secured research sample of large healthcare service providers was too small. This limit may be used as a call or inspiration for further research and the results obtained by our survey can by no means be generalised at this stage.

The explored selected modern trends in the area of human resource management were proved to be used by the selected healthcare service providers. Areas for improvement, according to our research, mainly included the area of qualified human resources on the job market and the related overtime load by the present employees. Addressing the lack of qualified staff is obviously not the sole responsibility of the healthcare service provider alone, but of the job market as a whole. The addressed HR specialists positively assessed e-Recruitment and employee care, which was not limited to the employees' health condition but also other areas and activities.

Regarding this, Vnoučková (2016) in part according to the results of the quantitative research focused on education, development and care of employees in Czech corporations. Fully 66.5% of surveyed corporations include some type of education or training as a part of work.

The concept of work-life balance was also seen as a positive by the respondents and they reported its frequent and varied applications.

According to Karkoulian, Srour and Sinan (2016), a low level of work-life balance can negatively influence employees and corporations. Organizations should work on ensuring that all employees enjoy healthy levels of work-life balance and should control levels through the implementation of suitable training programs, lectures or workshops.

The addressed HR specialists further supported the diversity of human resources, which was seen as effective not only for the healthcare service providers but also for the employees themselves. The process of information, knowledge and experience sharing was said to be implemented mainly by the built work teams.

Campbell and Mínguez-Vera (2008) suggest that board member diversity helps with marketplace understanding via a better match with employees and potential customers, patients, clients and so on. On the basis of the results presented in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that most of the addressed HR specialists agreed in saying that the present time was characterised by the online environment and continuous development of new IT technologies; hence they very positively perceived and assessed development and use of social media and networks. The social networks mostly used by the addressed respondents included LinkedIn and Facebook. The HR information system was computerised in the case of all respondents, which was also seen as a positive. As the addressed respondents agreed that the job market offered insufficient numbers of qualified employees willing to work in the field and that the wages for the work were rather low, in the context of the modern trend of global work environment many of the employed doctors and paramedics were from Slovakia, Poland or the Ukraine. Diversity management was understood by the addressed respondents as something that goes without saying. According to the addressed respondents, the gender, age, sexual orientation, religion and other characteristics did not play any role in the case of employees. Employee care was oriented towards preventive healthcare packages, vaccination for employees or cash contributions to purchases in pharmacies or payments for rehab procedures. Most employers also took care of the quality and balanced nutrition of their employees. Generally speaking, the addressed respondents mentioned some common problems they faced in their work, including lack of qualified personnel, overloading of the existing personnel, increasing overtime work and burn-out syndrome.

The selected tested modern current trends in human resource management in health service providers in the Czech Republic thus appeared as well chosen and seem to invite further potential research.

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