

THE DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES WITHIN THE EMPLOYMENT AND THE ECONOMY OF LEBANON

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims at presenting, from a theoretical perspective, the development of human resources, regarded as a means of evolution for the employment and the economy in Lebanon. The method used for investigation was documentary analysis and the findings present a broader perspective of human resources and the Lebanese labor market. The characteristics of the Lebanese labor market are not sufficiently diversified to include a wide range of skills. The two big employers in Lebanon are the banks, which have a very specific corporate culture that is not suitable for everyone, and the Food and Beverage sector, which is highly oriented towards commercial and promotional skills. On the economic side, Lebanon has a strong banking sector, benefiting from international aid. Its educational side is high, the number of graduates increases over the years, but the lack of job offer in the market is considerable. The public and private Lebanese universities produce every year a number of graduates that the local market is unable to absorb. SMEs, which represent the majority of businesses in Lebanon, are family-owned and attach a very little importance to the human resources department. In general, human resources departments are not involved in the company's decisions and strategy, but simply at an operational level. In addition, there are gaps at the legislative and regulatory levels. Inequality is also remarkable in the demand for employment between men and women. Women lack support at the corporate level to reach higher positions and be able to participate in decision-making as managers, but this is less easy than with men.

KEYWORDS: *Human Resources, Labor Market, Technology & Innovation.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The economic market is a system of exchange, production and development of its agents. The so-called "intermediate" agents must progressively improve the market organization. "The generalization of a market economy involves a gradual improvement of the markets organization whose" intermediaries "are the agents" (Menger, 1871). Recognizing that it is a system that depends on others, the market economy is thus defined by individual insecurity and collective instability. Instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, it is social relations that are embedded in the economic system (Polanyi & MacIver, 1944). Moreover, the market economy is complementary with its state. Contrary to what is often thought, these crises are not technically market crises, but rather the symptoms of failures of national and supranational state institutions (Fudenberg & Tirole, 2013) who defines it as a "savior" facing market failures. Despite its diversity and its support of the State, its success does not come from its positive results and its competition but from its distribution of wealth to all, from its creation and its continuity to full employment. The flaws of the economic society in which we live is its failure to ensure full employment and its arbitrary distribution is unjust wealth and income (Keynes, 1927). Innovation, know-how and technological development create recruitment difficulties for companies that appear multifaceted

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and has different function in its activities, the size of the company or the nature of their activities (production of goods or services) (Ichniowski et al., 1997; Tamkin, 2004).

In the current context, organizations rely on a wide range of resources (human, financial, material and informational) for maintaining and developing in the markets on which they operate. Human resources management within a company influences its performance and ability to maintain and grow on the market on which it operates. The contribution of human resources to creating and maintaining competitive advantage for a company and implicitly achieving superior performance over its competitors has been highlighted in resource-based theory (Barney, 1991).

The modern approach to human resources, increasingly manifested in today's businesses, considers the human resources of an organization to be a strategic resource for it, with a decisive role in implementing the strategy. Specialists appreciate that performance differentials between different companies can be explained by the ability of their staff to effectively execute their chosen strategy (Becker et al., 2001).

In the modern approach to human resources, various studies have identified and defined a new concept that of high-performance working practices. These high-performance practices have been regarded as a group of individuals, but interconnected, human resource management practices that allow a company to recruit, select, develop, motivate, and maintain its employees (Way, 2002).

In addition, some specialists have identified and debated the systemic effect of these practices. This effect indicates the positive influence of certain groups of resource management practices on company performance (Boxall & Macky, 2007).

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The present research is developed on a brief literature review on human resource management and labor market issues and on an analysis of the Lebanese labor market, by taking into account several statements of officials in the domain and the analysis of statistical data in this field. The objectives of the proposed research are:

- (1) To identify the internal and external factors that influence human resources and labor market changes;
- (2) To diagnose the position of Lebanon in the labor market;
- (3) To propose solutions for the Lebanese public and private organizations to recover the gap for lost time regarding market innovation.

The generated results are useful for decisions-makers both at both macro-levels, namely the state, and micro-level, namely organizations, in developing proper strategies in correlation to the labor market demand.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The human resources function covers all the responsibilities and activities of planning, organizing, directing and controlling human resources in the service of work organizations. This function would enable the company to achieve the desired level and quality of production needed, at the lowest possible cost. A set of elements of organizational design carried by a strategic intention, produced and managed by the center or the pivot of a collective organized, and which aims at integrating the tools and the actors in a coherent way, and in respect of certain management rules (De Vaujany, 2006).

Various studies in the literature, which have approached human resource management practices, have signaled the existence of differences, from one country to another and even from one company to another within the same country. These differences are, according to the researchers, generated by a number of both external and internal factors. As far as the external factors are concerned, they manifest themselves as pressures faced by a particular organization and cannot be controlled and

transformed into a favorable short-term direction (Kane & Palmer, 1995; Tiwari & Saxena, 2012). The illustration of the external factors is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. External factors influencing human resource management

Source: Created by author, based on literature review

Economic change - An example of this is the globalization process has led to an increase in the international dimension of human resource management practices. In the spirit of Satow and Wang (1994), there has been a shift from traditional aspects such as staff selection and remuneration to more complex concepts such as globalization and international competition. Obviously, this reorientation has led to an increase in the complexity and diversity of these practices. Globalization, this complex process, has prompted the expansion of the operations of certain companies in countries other than home countries. Multinational companies have faced, in this context, a number of challenges related to human resource practices. In certain situations, certain practices could have been transferred from the countries of origin without modification, in others it was necessary to modify them in order to adapt to the local context. In other cases, certain practices could not be transferred, due to the context (especially the cultural one) totally different, in which case it was necessary to adopt local practices.

Technological changes - Their influence on the field is explained by the increasing degree of interaction between technology and human resource management practices. Technology has changed the way activities are performed, the roles and the specific interactions within different fields of activity (DeFillippi, 2002). The evolution of technology, in addition to the competitive advantages offered, has determined and determined a change in the context in which human resource management practices are conceived and implemented (Garavan et al., 2008).

National culture - The literature brings together numerous studies that have analyzed the influence of culture on human resource management practices. According to the results of these studies, the influence of this factor can explain, to a great extent, the companies' preference for certain practices, in accordance with the cultural specificity of the respective country. The cultural factor, in combination with other categories of factors, such as the institutional one, explains the degree of diversification of these practices within a particular country or sector of activity.

Characteristics of the business sector - A company's membership in a particular industry involves the development of specific activity processes, which is reflected in different set of practices related to human resources.

Legislative regulations - There is a direct impact of regulations and specific legislation on these practices (Kane & Palmer, 1995). There are specific regulations in each country that give rise to a specific conception of human resource management practices. Also, the presence and activity of trade union organizations exerts a direct influence on human resource management practices. An example of this is the regulation they manage to impose on a sector of activity or even on a national economy.

The competition - Human resources are considered as an important source of the competitive advantage of a company (Kane & Palmer, 1995; Poole & Jenkins, 1996). As such, the development of effective practices is a useful tool for companies in an attempt to undo the advantage of their competitors or to obtain and maintain such an advantage.

Internal factors are those that are associated with the existence and functioning of the organization. Their influence can be controlled and directed towards improving these specific practices and improving the level of performance achieved at the level of the organization and its staff (Okpara & Wynn, 2008). According to the literature, the internal factors that influence human resource management are the ones presented in Figure 2.

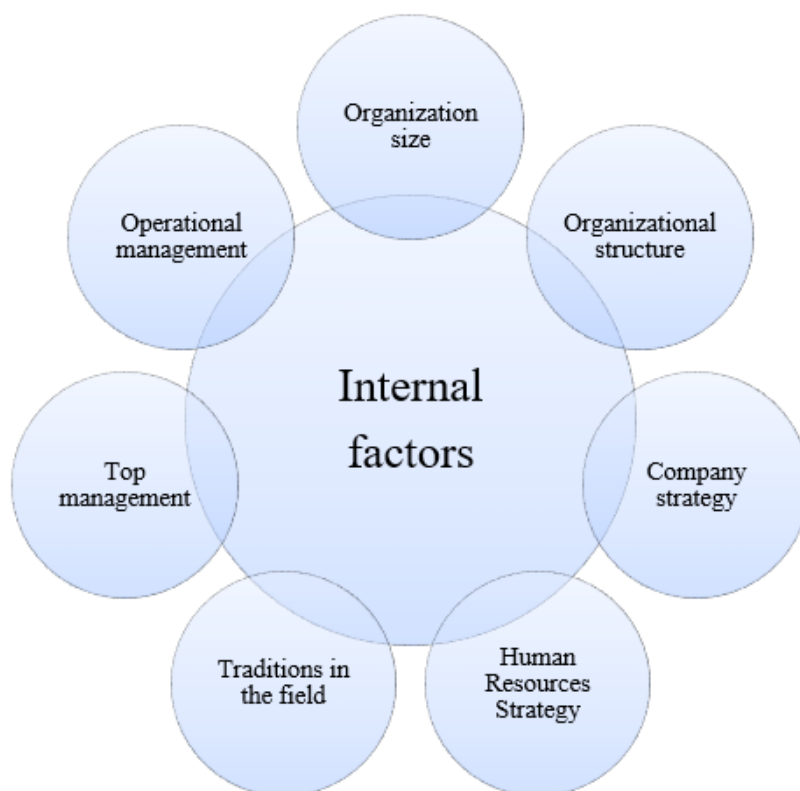


Figure 2. Internal factors influencing human resource management

Source: Created by author based on literature review

The size of the organization - Studies have shown that in the case of small firms there are many situations where no formalized practices of human resource management are used (McPherson, 2008). At the same time, for large firms, there is a tendency to diversify these practices, in line with the number of existing hierarchical levels.

The organizational structure - The existence of structural differences between companies influences how specific human resource practices are conceived and implemented at their level

(Hudson et al., 2001). The influence of these differences is manifested through ways of designing and implementing strategies at the firm level.

Company strategy - By designing and applying appropriate strategies, companies seek to achieve and strengthen various competitive advantages. The strategy of a company is more efficient in conditions where there is a permanent concern for its correlation with the practices of human resources management (Milkovich & Boudreau, 1991; Schuler, 1992). Thus, the conditions for the successful application of the chosen strategy are ensured, the human resources being the ones that can make a difference in favor of the company.

Human Resources Strategy - The existence of a profile strategy within the company reflects a modern approach. This strongly influences the intensity and diversity of these practices (Garavan et al., 2008). In general, these practices are dimensioned at the level of a company, in line with the strategy's provisions.

Traditions in the field - Tradition tends to generate resistance to potential changes in most organizations (Pardo & Fuentes, 2003). Resistance tends to be stronger in the conditions where changes are bigger. As such, it is necessary to know and analyze these traditions, which may favor or inhibit the development of specialized practices.

Top management - The influence of top management is widely accepted in the literature, but there is a lot of debate about its involvement in establishing these practices. Profile studies have debated the specific roles of human resources managers in companies. A clarification of the roles assumed and exercised by these managers can more precisely delimit the influence of top management in the development of this field.

Operational management - The involvement of managers at this level in the design and implementation of these practices is appreciated by some researchers as the key to success at an organization level. Some authors believe that, given that these managers are responsible for generating value at the company level, it is normal for these practices to be in their sphere of responsibility and responsibility.

The contextual approach can be viewed both from the perspective of the organization and from the perspective of the external environment. Certain authors appreciate that human resource management within an organization is influenced by the context in which it is located (Paauwe & Boselie, 2003). In this approach, studies conducted in the case of French companies have indicated that the evolution of some categories of factors such as changing management models, cultural changes, the evolution of trade union organizations have led to a change in human resource management practices. For example, French unions no longer adopt a diametrically opposed position, becoming partners in social dialogue with company management. Unions have experienced a decrease in the number of members, which has weakened their negotiating power. The change of values at the level of the French society generated a change of management models at the level of the companies, such as the development of the organizations, the enrichment of the positions, the use of the quality circles, the total quality management (Peretti, 2006), which implied an evolution of the specific practices.

The way in which human resources management is approached in each country and the explanation for the differences between practices associated with the field has often made the subject of cultural approach, especially in the European space. Different authors have identified in groups of countries with certain characteristics related to human resources (Tregaskis & Brewster, 2006). The cultural perspective has been used to explain the differences in practices between certain countries.

The approach is particularly useful for multinational companies, partly explaining some differences in existing practices between the country of origin and those in which the company operates. Here, Hofstede's studies (2001), which led to the establishment and consolidation of the cultural dimensions of a society, with obvious implications for managerial practices on human resources within companies in the respective countries, can be mentioned here.

Starting from the resource-based approach outlined above, the view has been made that the company's personnel and specific human resource practices can be considered as the source of a potential competitive advantage of the organization. The correlation of this opinion with the accentuated preoccupations of the strategic management specialists within the organizations led to the shaping of the concept of strategic approach in the field of human resources within the specialized literature. Considering the above-mentioned point, we believe that resource-based theory can explain, in a comprehensive manner, the evolution of human resource management practices, their relationship with company strategy, and the emergence and consolidation of a strategic approach to this field. Regarding the definition of this strategic approach, we find in the literature many points of view. We consider that one of the most complete of these is that formulated by Wright and McMahan (1992) who appreciated that Strategic Human Resource Management involves a planned model of human resource activities aimed at achieving the objectives organizational. This point of view highlights the link between the human resources practices and the company strategy, as well as the correlation of the different practices through a planned model.

Organizations should have the ability to adapt and make use of the new capabilities available (Gîrneală, 2014). In the context of the strategic approach, people are considered to be the most important resource of an organization, its true strategic resource. This appreciation is based on the recognition that a company's employees play an important role both in the implementation of its strategy and in the functioning of the management system (Potcovaru & Gîrneală, 2015). Implementation of the strategy is considered even more important than its choice. The difference in performance between different companies is given by their staff's ability to effectively execute the chosen strategy (Becker et al., 2001). From a strategic perspective, different specialists analyzed human resource practices, trying to delineate those practices specific to the traditional approach to those associated with the new guidelines within the field. This was not an easy task, with many points of view on these issues.

A useful example in this direction is that presented by Huselid et al., (1997), who pointed out the differences between traditional practices and those associated with the strategic approach. Thus, in the first category, with a wide recognition and acceptance within the organizations, these specialists included activities such as recruitment, selection, staff training, performance appraisal, remuneration management. The second category included a range of lesser-known and widespread practices in companies, such as the development of a reward system that supports the strategic contribution of the field, as well as other activities related to the development of team work, insurance labor flexibility, career management and talent management, activities designed to support the successful implementation of the company strategy.

In this context, a number of practices such as station autonomy, staff training, performance correlation with promotions, individual salary increases, employee profit participation, employee participation in the company, communication at its level, but increasing the level of informing the staff (Gîrneală & Potcovaru, 2015). Strategic guidance in human resources management, although seen as a necessity by many specialists, is in many cases invalidated by the concrete reality of companies. Certain studies have concluded that the strategic role of human resources specialists is not clearly highlighted, but rather a desirable situation within companies.

For example, a Spanish company study has demonstrated such a situation in the human resources field, being identified as having a higher level of importance in other roles, such as those of an administrative expert, change agent or employee representative, to the detriment of the strategic partner (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2003). The above-mentioned aspects highlight a possible contradiction between the theoretical approach and the economic reality regarding the strategic orientation in human resource management. Such a complex situation has been explained by some authors (Peretti, 2006), because the strategic importance given to human resources management is a

relatively recent date orientation within the organizations. As such, a careful and in-depth analysis of its evolution is needed to establish the existence of a concordance between theory and practice.

4. THE LABOR MARKET IN LEBANON

Lebanon, a developing country, has a high rate of population growth, attractive in industry, renewable energies and tourism sector. It is rich in agriculture according to its Mediterranean position, wines, tourism, and petroleum not yet used. On the economic side, Lebanon has a strong banking sector, benefits from international aid (eg. World Bank). But despite its positive values, Lebanon is still "behind" in terms of development, market innovation. Important investment is needed in infrastructure and logistics, in new technologies and information systems to take an active part in the four major transformations that will take place over the next decades: renewable energies and clean technologies, life sciences, AI, robotics, Blockchain, FinTech and nanotechnologies.

Its educational side is high, the number of graduates increased over the years but the lack of job offer in the market is considerable. The Lebanese, public and private universities produce every year a number of graduates that the local market is unable to absorb. Lebanon suffers from the absence of a national policy, and has a low productive market in relation to the needs of its population. However, SMEs are very present. SME provides at least 70% of national production (Mr. Mohamad Choucaire, Chairman of the Federation of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture in Lebanon). On the educational side, "all graduates are obviously not qualified the same. Graduates of the American University (private) find more easily positions higher and better paid than those of the Lebanese University (public).

On the touristic side, the tourism sector plays an important role, tourism comprises 200,000 of jobs, 13.7% of the active population. Less than 20% of employees in the sector would have a level equal to or higher than the baccalaureate, but almost all of those would have a university degree: more than half of them would be graduates in management, a big quarter in hotel studies, and 5% would hold an engineering degree (Abdul-Reda Abourjeili Suzanne (dir.), 2003, *Al- ta'lim al-'ālī wa suq al-'amal fī Lubnān*).

On the industrial side, many gaps have been identified as the almost total absence of professionals and companies of boards of directors of higher education or advisory, the weak participation of professional bodies in decisions concerning the modernization of programs and new specializations, the development of methods and the definition of the content of teaching, a notable but partial participation of professionals and experts in teaching, conferences, colloquia and seminars-- the main objective of this participation is not to present their practical experience to the students, but only to compensate for the inadequacies of the teaching staff; the scarcity of the participation of enterprises and professional in the funding of research programs carried out by higher education institutions, and are almost in total absence to joint research programs.

From the point of view of human resources, the gaps are also present. The lack of skills, experience and the non-importance of the Lebanese labor market characteristics is not sufficiently diversified to include a wide range of skills. SMEs, which represent the majority of businesses in Lebanon, are family-owned and attach a very little importance to this department. In general, human resources departments are not involved in the company's decisions and strategy, but simply at an operational level (Mr. Khaled Tayara, Quantum Group Human Resources Director). In addition, there are gaps at the legislative and regulatory levels. The Labor Code, which dates back to 1946 and has not yet been reformed, is now incompatible with the realities of the market.

Inequality is also remarkable in the demand for employment between men and women. Women lack support at the corporate level to reach higher positions and be able to participate in decision-making as managers, but this is less easy than with men.

In addition, the disabled, have a hidden talent and power of master ahead of the economic activity, but are unfortunately refused by the majority of companies. Many employers consider that they are unable to work or be effective at work (Doha Yahfoufi, disability counselor at the Lebanese Physical Handicapped Union (LPHU)) despite article 74 of law 220 which notes "any company with employees over 30 should hire people with disabilities, otherwise they must pay to the Ministry of Labor, in the year, an amount equivalent to twice the minimum wage (450 dollars) for each disabled person not employed". This seems "preferable for the company, since the disabled people are described as expensive for their well-being to be within the company.

Young graduates are mostly rejected by companies because of no-experience, non-response to business expectations or simply no place in the market. It is getting harder and harder for a young graduate to find a job, because in this gloomy situation, companies are now only recruiting to make replacements, and if they recruit, they will always choose a candidate with a little more than experience, (Tania Eid, Director of Careers Recruitment Agency). According to the Miles report, while it produces an average of 23,000 young graduates per year, the country created only 3,400 jobs per year between 2004 and 2007. Largely insufficient, this job creation also mainly concerns sectors with low productivity. The real estate and tourism sectors are structurally the mainstays of the Lebanese economy, and most of them employ a low-skilled workforce. In addition, the Lebanese economy is mainly composed of SMEs, which does not allow the creation of skilled jobs en masse (Wissam Haraké the economist at the WB).

5. MAIN RESEARCH FINDINGS

Lebanon needs to evolve, to create employment, and in order to do so, the country needs financial means, innovation and learning the know-how, to adapt to the transformations of the society, and the development of technology. Deploying effective strategies to ensure the continuity and quality of public services, thus having financial support and the creation of a state, would translate into in the long term by lowering costs and promoting innovation. Finally, dealing with SMEs would enable the state to provide itself locally and contribute to the development of the Lebanese economy.

In finances level it is necessary to use correctly the aid from The World Bank, for example concerning the program "New entrants to work" which offers to the selected candidates a complete formation around the labor market, a paid internship of six months in a private company, with a salary and registration to the Social Security (Haneen el-Sayed, the project coordinator at the WB).

Human resources must be developed, through their change of employment strategy. They must always be up to date with innovation, technology, know-how, knowledge of the market, needs of the company and the employees. The needs of companies and the market are constantly changing, and the mission of human resources managers is to identify those needs and develop the skills of employees accordingly.

The use of the recruitment software which is a computer application that makes it possible to manage on-line job offers as well as the applications received for the positions to be filled within the company. Enhancing the employer image, this program integrates innovative tools to attract the best talent while optimizing all recruitment processes.

Moreover, there must be an education development, concerning the programs of universities, the very high price of studies, the need for quotas for certain faculties. A collaboration between the education and the market requirement, the virtual absence of internships in companies or specific contracts for students does not encourage them to experiment with business life while they are studying, and this greatly hinders the trust between employers and employees since neither of them knows what to expect. A closer collaboration between employers and educational institutions, not only to offer internships to students, but also to train them in job search techniques, would be very

beneficial, for example there is one doctor per 300 citizens in Lebanon, which is four times the number recommended by the World Health Organization to 1 doctor for 1200-1300 citizens (global-stats.com - Statistics and map, 2018)

Communication work, from companies as well as from the state or any other actor involved in this change, must help restore confidence to young people who feel too often neglected. There are many small structures in Lebanon, but they are poorly represented by lack of organization. The National Employment Office should be in charge for the creation of a national database aimed primarily at identifying people in job search and businesses looking for employees.

Moreover, the fight against discrimination of woman and handicap must therefore also be one of the priorities for reducing unemployment in Lebanon. Lebanese women need a supportive environment that allows them to participate, alongside men, in decision-making at the local economic and social level. The handicapped must be treated as normal persons. When they apply for a job, companies must not close their eyes because of their disability, but give them a chance to work, they are one of the powers for the economy who needs to grow up.

Banks should provide encouragement for startup creation and growth. Startup are usually innovative and offers new services in the market. More incubators and accelerators need to be created in the coming years to support the growth and development of SMEs and startups. Incubators contribute to the diversification of the economy, the commercialization of new technologies, job creation and economic growth.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The labor market, focuses on the age of its workers. Innovation, technology, changing the way of employment, makes the work of the oldest finding difficulties to get adapt resulting in a limitation of supply and training compared to young people. Older workers have a lack of time to become familiar with technological change, or difficulties in understanding computer terminology and finding their way in manual users. In addition, the state orders old workers to retire according of their age, so even experienced ones that offer positive acts for the market, will be forced to abandon it. In addition, there is also a negative disproportion of older workers compared to other groups of age, for example when the labor market is concentrated on older people to leave their jobs resulting from the wave of entering youth people in the market.

The markets tend to be concentrated in a short-term market. Innovation only creates new technologies that replace old ones, which leads to erase some jobs and therefore poses long-term problems, generating creative destruction. On the other hand, innovation provides the arrival of IT, creates new jobs, such as programmers, computer scientists. Companies and the labor market tend to base themselves on the radical mutation of work and to look for competent workers to this innovation and therefore to seek compensation which are at the present moment difficult to find. This puts at stake the productivity of the countries. The higher the productivity a country has, the highest comparative advantage is. Several factors are related to the difficulties, such as the demographic deficit, the dynamics of the labor market, the desynchronization training / employment. Concerning the offer of employment, there is a situation of lack of skills and experience of the workers currently on the market more than the offer can be rejected by the applicants because of the condition of work, the salary offered and the work schedule.

Lebanon is calling for job creation, innovation, developing law articles, collaborate with other countries to reinforce the know-how, technology. The collaboration of all sectors and all Lebanese resident and non-resident must be a daily challenge. The creation of a state must be in a hurry to help the economic situation growth in a faster way.

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