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Comparison of HRM practices between Chinese and Czech companies[☆]



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Abstract Both China and the Czech Republic have embarked on the transition from centrally planned economy to market-based economy since the early 1990s. Human resource management (HRM) played a very important role in the success of companies' economic transformation, and its role has been increasing since the period of stabilization and development of the market economy in both countries. Authors from both countries have been cooperating on the mutual comparative study on HRM practices in these two countries since the year 2009 until now and found out certain differences that were partially introduced in the doctoral thesis by Jun Li in 2011 after processing data from the first period of data collection. This paper briefly highlights some of the most obvious differences confirmed by the following mutual research. The areas where the HRM practices of both countries were compared more carefully are recruitment and selection process, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation.

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Materials and methods

Data for this study were collected using the questionnaire designed by Czech and Chinese co-researchers. The questionnaire was divided into several sections referring to various aspects of HR management according to the

typical HR functions classification. The questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot study, and then adjusted according to the feedback from several companies. It was translated into Czech language and Chinese language by professionals. The survey was carried out in two periods both in the Czech Republic and China in respective, in the first period from July 2009 to January 2010 and in the second period from September 2014 till March 2015 among 110 Chinese companies and 60 Czech companies. Most of the correspondents were directors and managers of companies, some of them directly responsible for HR department, some of them HR managers. The source and quality of correspondents ensured the reliability and originality of data acquired.

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Considering the type of variables in the questionnaire, and the aims of this study, a series of statistical methods was adopted in a systemic way. From basic description analysis, cross-tab, variance analysis to higher level cluster analysis to investigate the data further. The software SPSS 13.0 was used for statistical analysis. Description analysis (frequency, cross-table analysis) of specific selection, compensation and performance appraisal practices in companies allowed for a clear picture of HRM difference and similarities between Czech and China companies.

Introduction

Within organizations, human resource management plays an irreplaceable role. HR department is the accelerator of organization change and HR managers must keep on training themselves in the latest approaches of HRM to meet the demands of dynamically changing environment. HRM is essential to keep and motivate human resources in order to increase competitive advantage of organizations (Koubek, 2009).

This study belongs to the domain of comparative human resource management. Comparative HRM explores the extent to which HRM differs between various countries or regions, what the antecedents of these differences, and explore the importance of such factors as culture ownership structure, labour markets, union and role of state as aspects of this subject rather than as external influences upon it (Brewster et al., 2007).

The practical contribution of this paper is to provide an understanding of HRM practices in manufacturing companies both in the Czech Republic and in China. Both countries are underscored by a rising economic heterogeneity and a rapidly changing socio-cultural context, challenged by waves of restructuring, privatization, increasing foreign investments and an emerging individualism. The main goal of the mutual research was to compare HRM practices in the two countries, to find out differences and to explain and learn from them. The areas where the HRM practices of both countries were compared more carefully are recruitment and selection process, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation.

In the area of recruitment of selection, it was found so far that particular selection methods are used more or less frequently in different societies in relation to the cultural values of that country, e.g. high uncertainty avoidance culture used more test types, more interviews (Cranet, 2005).

Different cultures approach 66 employee selection process differently. Some countries consider rather skills, knowledge and talent, some prefer consideration of age, gender and personal relationships. In the area of training and development, Koen (2005) points that philosophy on training should be linked back to more general notions of desirable work relationship incorporating views on job classification. Performance management has developed over the past two decades as a strategic, integrated process which incorporates goal-setting, performance appraisal and development into a unified and coherent framework with the specific aim of aligning individual performance goals with the organization's wider objectives (Dessler, 2007). Performance appraisal (PA) as the core of performance management is

viewed as serving a number of functions: documentation, development, administrative purpose (reward and promotion) and subordinate expression (Mulliman et al., 2002).

In the area of performance management, evidence showed that performance appraisal is perceived differently across cultures. For instance, values should influence the development of criteria for job success, the methods used to measure employee performance and to provide employees with feedback. It was suggested that collectivist societies are more likely to use informal, subjective appraisal, the concept of performance appraisal sits uncomfortably with character assessment. Cultural variations in the area encompass both how people should be appraised and by whom (Stone and Stone, 2002).

Recruitment and selection

Czech and Chinese companies differ in their recruitment sources. 21.67% Czech companies recruit mostly internally, much higher than China, on the other end, 48.62% Chinese companies recruit mostly externally, much higher than Czech. Why Czech companies prefer internal recruitment and Chinese companies prefer external? It is probably influenced by labour market, from the consideration of morale and commitment, the mobility willingness of employee, and from the impact of national culture value.

The most commonly used selection methods in both countries are one-to-one interviews, application forms and references. The method of assessment centre, psychometric tests and interview panel are rarely used. The general situation is similar in Czech and Chinese companies.

Examining into the preference, there still exist differences. For instance, in Czech companies, the one-to-one interviews dominate with 70%, while in China it is "only" 50%. Reference is more often used in Czech selection practices. This difference is interpreted by culture difference on uncertainty avoidance. Psychometric test is the least used method in China, in the Czech Republic, assessment centre and interview panel are the least used methods. This proved the marked national difference on the frequency of a certain selection method.

Training and development

Training and development are considered the most important HR functions for the era of knowledge-based economy. International evidences show that in the vast bulk of organizations, in almost every nation covered, there is a written policy for training and development, more common than written policies on any other aspects excepting pay and benefits.

The importance of training and development

From our survey, it was shown that both Czech and Chinese companies give high mark to the importance of vocational education and training. It reflects the reality that China is eager to learn so as to adapt to the new market economy and any ambitious employer regards training as an investment

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