



Interdisciplinarity: Chance for Development of Human Resources Management

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Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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Review Article

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ABSTRACT

New concepts of organization development are not always useful in practice [1]. Moreover, they rarely refer to the achievements of other sciences. There are many reasons for that, for example, debasing other specialisations by showing their allegedly non-scientific qualities or negative character features of scientists. This is what contributes to the fact that human development is "fading away" faster.

The author of this article attempts to demonstrate examples from a given specialisation of how to use experiences of other sciences to maintain the development of human resources management as a scientific discipline and one of empirical sciences. In the author's opinion, such a view, although somewhat revolutionary, follows Kuhn's philosophy of science. The *revolutionary character* of our views is about restoring the knowledge accumulation rule.

Keywords: Personnel management; human resources management (HRM); historical science; psychohistory; quantitative method.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Assuming Spengler (1918) was right in his observations criticizing the Enlightenment theory of linear development concerning the whole humanity and all signs of human activities [2], one should attempt to find ways to optimise the length of development path. This seems to be particularly significant for further development of science. Currently, science is divided into various areas. However, discrepancies between them do not create a barrier which would make it impossible to make further attempts to unify. Trying to use experiences and achievements of other sciences is important for both formal and empirical sciences. The range of interests, especially in the case of empirical sciences, is focused on human beings, i.e. development of pedagogy and creating management science. Economics as a science is also included in the subgroup of empirical sciences. Therefore, its further development may depend on the efficacy of attempts to use the achievements of other disciplines focused on human activities and the influence of human products.

2. HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND HISTORY

In literature, personnel management is usually defined as “a group of activities which are aimed at acquiring, organizing and motivating people indispensable to meet the goals of a company. These people focus on activities which create the management style and organizational atmosphere, promote joint efforts, cooperation and trust between all employees, ensure the company fulfils its legal obligations towards employees and implements the principles of corporate social responsibility in their living and working conditions” [3]. On the other hand, HRM is defined as “managing the social potential of an organization through the means of carefully-planned and well-aimed personnel system elements, and adjusting them to one another and to the organization’s strategy” [4]. It can also be “a strategic, cohesive and comprehensive view of the problems related to managing and developing human resources in a company’s structures. Importantly, every aspect of this process is a significant element of managing an organization as a whole” [5]. However, HRM has recently absorbed personnel management [6]. Therefore, it is currently basically impossible to distinguish them from one another in a precise way [7].

Nevertheless, both HRM and the earlier personnel management are focused on human beings and their place in an organization, both from the functional and resultative point of view. Such a form of anthropocentrism in management studies is almost exclusively characteristic to those management subdisciplines. The rules of conducting scientific research, which are aimed at gathering and systemising general knowledge about the world and defining the laws it is governed by [8], indicate there is a necessity to carry out scientific research not only in the area of current interests, but also in other fields of science, especially in such specializations, which, similarly to HRM, are mainly focused on human beings as the originators of all activities in different elements of reality.

Doubtlessly, such sciences are: axiology and the study of happiness understood as permanent satisfaction/pleasure, sociology of labour, psychology, and historical studies [9]. This last specialization is mainly focused on getting to know the authentic past related to physical, psychological and social activities of human beings, which is irrevocable, but not completely. What is left from the past are various objects, language, traditions and customs [8]. The research process [8,10,11] in the study of history is focused on explaining historical facts. During the process, events are not only localised in the past in a given time (historical period) and space, but also the place and role of historical events in social life is defined [8]. This allows us to observe that history, although in its basics focused on ex post events, as an independent, established scientific specialization, notices that the past does not completely go by and historical events have influenced and may influence present social life and the functioning of social products. This fundamental assumption of historical studies creates a basis for attempts to find areas which could further support development of science, including anthropocentric management science subdiscipline, i.e. HRM. Literature provides evidence that the postulate claiming history should be necessarily used in activities aimed at developing science is not a new one. History has created us. Hence, the dream of becoming independent from it is a dream about self-annihilation [12]. As a science, history does not create real objects it is trying to study, but it defines what we have done and accomplished ourselves [13].

Historical studies are used in economics [14] as well. For many years, research on economics

has been partially based on data resulting from studies of historians, especially those focused on history of economy (Fig. 1).

History as an independent, established scientific discipline, comprising of numerous research areas (Fig. 1), has made it possible to create many of the economic doctrines because it is historical knowledge that has been used by, among others, A. Smith and K. Marx to create new, fundamental socio-economic doctrines [15].

At the same time, many people of science [8], also economists, claim history is not a science because it does not have generalizing qualities. History as a science was already criticised by some neo-positivists and analytic philosophy supporters [16]. They thought a discipline is not scientific if it does not make any form of evaluation [16]. A later critical view of history stemmed from support of Popper's approach [17] to criticism of a fatalistic and finalistic [18] vision of human history, shared by some historical researchers, and also from the fact that analysis of historical events can be subjective [19], since in historical studies we discover the perceived value through the eyes of the person perceiving it.

On the other hand, the modern critical approach to historical sciences usually stems from the fact that some researchers support a false notion that there are no differences between the subject of interest of historical and other humanistic studies, especially sociology [8]. This approach is also connected to the observed and established controversy concerning philosophical interpretation of time and space [20]. Such criticism is unfounded, as we can observe indivisibility of time and space [21], while the study of history is free from subjectivity [22], has some generalising characteristics [8], and its area of interest, although close to the area of interest of sociologists, differs from it greatly,

especially in terms of the approach to the study of historical events and their chronology. Moreover, it should be underlined that currently, the study of history is not characterised by fatalism and finalism which enables us to take advantage of history in current social science such as HRM. One of the areas of historical research confirming the modern methodological approach is, for example, psychohistory.

Psychohistory is an area of historical studies that developed mainly in the USA on the basis of psychoanalysis and psychology. According to T. Pawelec, [23] psychohistory was treated as an "interdisciplinary field of study", which is a new quality with special reference to psychoanalysis and historiography as constituents of history. In his opinion, current psychohistory is not one of the subdisciplines of historical studies, but a new, general theoretical-methodological perspective on the studies of the past. Psychohistory does not deal with penetration of the past in order to illustrate psychoanalytic patterns, although it does analyse the psychological dimension of a historical process. However, it is an area in humanistic studies made "uniform" in its theoretical assumptions and research practices, which on the basis of historical methodology, in particular criticism of historical sources, deals with discovering the authentic essence and motives of human activities that appeared in the history, or a larger human collectivity. Thus, psychohistory allows for constructing sets of authentic, consistent behaviours observed in the past, which is irrevocable, but not completely, because it is visible in behaviour of people, in particular personnel.

There is a varying degree of prevalence of the elements identified with psychohistorical methods that belong to sets of reactions to outside stimuli and draw from a set of established values [24]. This stems from, among

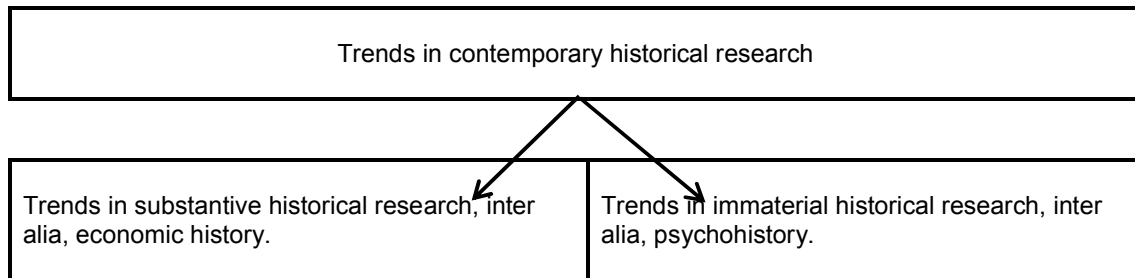


Fig. 1. Contemporary trends in historical research

Source: own study

others, the fact that value implementation may have a stereotypical, derivative or creative character [25]. The stereotypical value implementation happens when employing values in one's behaviour is based on imitation: when one does not recognise one's authentic needs, but follows the needs of others sanctioned in a given collectivity. Creative value implementation is based on a person's individualism and it is the opposite of derivative implementation. In practice, we usually deal with a mixed system of value implementation, i.e. a human being implements some values creatively and some derivatively, whereas other elements of the world of values, which exist only in the immaterial part of anthroposphere [25], are updated.

Therefore, identifying values which are the source of reaction to a stimulus with methods used by psychohistorians, defining the frequency of certain behaviours typical for different generations and indicating the main social groups implementing the identified values and mechanisms of intergenerational value transfer can be an important guideline for an efficient and effective execution of plans, in particular those which concern acquiring, organising and motivating human resources in a corporation. In practice, this may also contribute to popularising the idea of scientific unity among scientists studying personnel management, which would make it impossible to treat knowledge superficially and as a consumer good [26,15].

In order to approach science in such a universal way, for example, with the scientific achievements of psychohistory in personnel

management, it is necessary to practically use optimal methods [27] in the process of defining the occurrence of certain behaviours [28]. This will make it possible to abandon the paradox of inadequate generality and perception. In spite of common opinion, quantitative methods are used in historical studies, just as they are in personnel management [29,30]. Hence, there is a set of methods which can be directly used in such a study, or new research methods can be created on the basis of experiences to date. The methods that could be used in historical studies are, for instance, the res model [30,31] or the authorial method of multiaxiomatic indirect proof by contradiction [32]. When the method was being created, the aim was to identify and objectively demonstrate the variation in the assessment of how values observed in the past and present are implemented.

Some consistent behaviours observed in the earlier stage of the research were linked in qualitatively cohesive groups in order to find their relation to another category, such as effectiveness. As a result of this research stage, it has been proven that psychohistorical analysis of the society inhabiting the so-called Polish lands allows us to distinguish qualitatively varied sets of consistent behaviours [32].

The observed consistent reactions to environmental stimuli (Table 1), which draw from a set of implemented values, were allocated in cohesive groups: honesty/ dishonesty, loyalty/disloyalty, innovation/reluctance towards innovation, lawfulness/ unlawfulness and dutifulness/negligence (Table 2).

Table 1. Sets of consistent behaviours which reflect attitudes stimulating and slowing down economic processes

Class A: behaviours reflecting attitudes that stimulate economic development	Class B: behaviours reflecting attitudes that slow economic development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conscientiousness and availability - Legalism - Calculated search for a partner or contractor - Activities aimed at achieving financial stabilisation and independence before setting up a family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stealing from the employer - Ambiguous behaviours - Resorting to forbidden behaviours - Looking for opportunities to benefit from other people's possessions - Passive approach to new trends - Promoting anti-market ideas - Using widespread and common patterns of economic behaviours - Alcohol abuse - Collectivism - Working in haste, which results in inferior quality - Promoting superstitions and elements of ancient spiritual culture - Avoiding work

Source: Balewski B., (2006)

Table 2. Groups of attitudes

	Honesty	Dishonesty	
Honesty and	Stealing from the employer Ambiguous behaviours Resorting to forbidden behaviours	Stealing from the employer and Ambiguous behaviours and Resorting to forbidden behaviours and	Honesty
	Looking for opportunities to benefit from other people's possessions	Looking for opportunities to benefit from other people's possessions and	
Loyalty		Disloyalty	
Loyalty and	Ambiguous behaviours Stealing from the employer	Ambiguous behaviours and Stealing from the employer and	Honesty
Innovation		Reluctance towards innovation	
Innovation and	Passive approach to new trends Promoting anti-market ideas Using widespread and common patterns of economic behaviours	Passive approach to new trends Promoting anti-market ideas Using widespread and common patterns of economic behaviours	And innovation
Lawfulness		Unlawfulness	
Observing the law and	Stealing from the employer Resorting to forbidden behaviours Individual interpretation of law	Stealing from the employer Resorting to forbidden behaviours Individual interpretation of law	And observing the law
Dutifulness		Negligence	
Conscientiousness, availability and	Working in haste, which results in inferior quality Avoiding work	Working in haste, which results in inferior quality, Avoiding work,	Conscientiousness and availability

Source: Balewski B., (2006)

Allocation to groups allowed us to construct our own questionnaires, which utilised elements of similar scientific achievements to date [33]. Questionnaires of multiaxiomatic indirect proof by contradiction method are based on the logical rule of proof by contradiction, as they are used to study and assess behaviours. Behaviour can be assessed in various ways depending on whether the evaluation is based on one's own vision or the opinion of others. In such cases, the logic of proof by contradiction allows us to minimise or even avoid some distortions stemming from a vision of ourselves that is difficult to objectify or often an unobjectified opinion enforced by others. Introducing proof by contradiction to the research has "freed" its results from the halo effect and Horn effect. When we analysed information gathered with such a tool, we used psychohistorical research methods and gained insight into the current prevalence of consistent behaviours. Study results were assigned values (weight system) demonstrating the relation of elements of a given set to another category, with the use of convergence and multiple correlation indicators.

3. CONCLUSION

The analyses to date clearly demonstrate events are irrevocable but not completely because consistent behaviours observed in the past also appear today [32].

All of this generates a prospect for further analyses aimed at searching opportunities for development of HRM studies in the achievements of other anthropocentric disciplines and research fields. This, in turn, owing to a critical reflection, will allow for going beyond the concept of science (including HRM) as a commodity or consumer good of a new production type, without separating oneself from the present [26]. Thus, it will make it possible to make knowledge and cognition closer to entrepreneurs, who relentlessly search for the means to economise their business activities, find there a place for a human being and strengthen the role of personnel organization. From historical studies we get to know the attitudes noticeable currently and in the past. We get to know the durability of their bases, what allows optimal adjustment of HRM tools aimed at shaping them in order to achieve the highest level of efficiency of its operations and at the same time ensuring a distinguished place for each of its employee, including all of those who prefer discovered in the past and ongoing today anti-economical consistent behaviours.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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