

## The Models Exploring the “Black Box” between HRM and Organizational Performance

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*Rapid environmental change, globalization, competition to provide innovative services and products have become the standard frame for organizations. In order to compete effectively, firms have to improve their performance (Chang, Huang, 2005). Because performance stands out as one major organizational goal, many of human resource management (HRM) research efforts have been directed to understand the HRM-Performance linkage (Gardner, Moynihan, Park, Wright, 2001).*

*Much of empirical research on the added value of HRM demonstrate evidence that HRM does matter (Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995;), however contrary approach also exists: evidence for HRM-Performance link should be treated with caution (Wall, Wood, 2005).*

*By supporting the HRM-Performance link it is not clear why this link exists. In order to provide a convincing explanation of HRM-Performance link, according Guest (1997), it is necessary to improve theoretical and analytical frameworks in three key areas: the nature of HRM, the nature of performance and the linkage between HRM and performance.*

*The paper provides an insight into HRM drawing a conclusion that there is no single agreed or fixed list of human resource (HR) practices which are used to define human resource management.*

*To better disclose performance, the paper looks into four levels of performance outcomes which makes HRM-Performance link more evident.*

*Assuming that there is a little understanding of the mechanisms through which HRM influence performance, the paper defines the “black box” problem.*

*The paper provides an overview of a number of conceptual models (Becker, Huselid, Pickus, Spratt, 1997; Guest, 1997; Purcel, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton, Swart 2003; Wright, Nishii, 2006) that attempt to depict the processes through which HR practices ultimately impact organization financial performance. Assuming that the similarity among all of these models is that they all have their basis in a linear causal process, the paper looks into two additional aspects: first, the number of boxes in the “black box”; second, the content of each box.*

*Finally the comparison and summing-up of four models is presented in this paper. This brings to conclusion that the identification of the specific mechanisms that mediate between HRM practices and organizational performance should be considered as a central issue in HRM literature.*

Keywords: “black box“, human resource management, organizational performance, human resource practices, HRM-Performance link.

### Introduction

The desire of human resource practitioners to demonstrate the value of what they do for the organization has a long history. In 1954 Drucker highlighted that “personnel” managers are worried about “their inability to prove that they are making a contribution to the enterprise” (Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, Allen, 2004).

In response to repeated criticisms that HR does not add value to organizations, the past decade has produced numerous contributions which claim to reveal that HR practices are positively related to performance (Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995). Despite the substantial empirical evidence researchers in the field of HRM-Performance link still require theory about HRM (what do we mean by it), theory about performance (what kind of performance) and theory about how they are linked (Paauwe, 2009). In response to the theory about HRM-Performance link, the questions **how** and **why** the linkage operates should be answered.

While in 1996 Becker and Gerhart posed the deceptively simple question “How do human resource decisions influence organizational performance?”, however in scholarly publications is acknowledged that till now extant work fails to address or explore the processes whereby HR practices may impact on performance (Harney, Jordan, 2008).

It remains true that little is known about the mechanisms by which HR practices translate into competitive success. Due to the lack of understanding on mediating variables and their effect on HRM-Performance linkage the existing gap in explaining this link is referred to the “black box“ (Boselie, Dietz, Boon, 2005). The efforts to open the “black box“ are related to Wright and Gardner (2003) question: how many boxes should be taken into account when studying the HRM-Performance linkage (Paauwe, Boselie, 2005). There is no agreement concerning the answer to the previous question. However a number of conceptual models (Becker, Huselid, Pickus, Spratt, 1997; Guest, 1997; Purcell, Kinnie, Hutchinson, Rayton, Swart, 2003; Wright, Nishii, 2006) indicating the causal pathway between HR practices and firm performance are present in scientific literature. The main purpose of these models is to reveal the logic of HRM-Performance linkage pointing mediating variables and their impact.

The content of the “black box” is one of the unanswered issues in the HRM-Performance field. Therefore, this paper examines the different models of the “black box” revealing the mediating variables, which are crucial for better linkage understanding. The variety of the applied models confirms the problematic nature of HRM-Performance link.

The **aim** of the paper is to explore the “black box” by identifying mediating variables in the HRM-Performance linkage.

**Research object** is the content of the “black box”.

**Research method.** The paper is built on the analysis and synthesis of scientific literature on human resource management and performance linkage.

### The approach to HRM and performance linkage

Organizations have increasingly recognised the potential for the people to be a source of competitive

advantage (Pfeffer, 1994). Creating competitive advantage through human resources requires careful attention to human resource management (Wright, Gardner, Moynihan, 2003; Kazlauskaitė, Buciuniene, 2008). Based on these the discussion in academic context and empirical research is aimed at providing evidence on the role of HRM in generating added value.

The first systematic empirical studies of HRM-Performance link were published in 1994 (Arthur, 1994) and 1995 (MacDuffie, 1995; Huselid, 1995). Although the bulk of literature seem to accept that HRM practices has a significant impact on organizational performance, it should be taken into consideration that there are two different approaches in scientific literature (Edgar, Geare, 2009; Paauwe, 2009):

1. the conviction concerning link;
2. the doubt about link or even denial.

As it is seen from Table 1, different approaches are supported by “research on research“ or single research.

Table 1

Approaches to HRM-Performance link

Approach	Author	The number of analyzed studies	Conclusions
Conviction concerning link	MacDuffie (1995)	–	„Bundles“ of HR practices are related to productivity and quality (auto assembly plants)
	Delery, Doty (1996)	–	There is a significant relationships between HR practices and accounting profits (a sample of banks)
	Guthrie (2001)	–	HR practices are related to turnover and profitability
	Paauwe, Richardson (1997)	more than 30	It is substantiated and corroborated the relationship first, between a range of HR practices and important HRM outcomes, such as satisfaction, motivation, turnover, absenteeism and commitment, and second, between these outcomes and more general performance outcomes at the organizational level, like productivity, quality, customer satisfaction, sales, profit and market value
	Combs, Liu, Hall, Ketchen (2006)	92	An increase of one standard deviation in the use of high-performance work practices (HPWP) is associated with a 4.6 percent increase in return on assets, and with a 4.4 percentage point decrease in turnover. This fact allows to state that „HPWPs’ impact on organizational performance is not only statistically significant, but managerially relevant“ (Combs <i>et al.</i> , 2006)
	Boselie <i>et al.</i> (2005)	104	Much (though by no means all) of the empirical HRM research in its ‘systems’ form has been found to matter (in a positive sense) for organizational performance
Doubt about link or even denial	Wall, Wood (2005)	25	It is premature to assume that HRM initiatives will inevitably result in performance gain
	Guest, Michie, Conway, Sheehan (2003)	-	Using stricter tests there is little or no association between HRM and performance
	Wright, Gardner (2003)	–	After the reflection on the available evidence a conclusion sounds that HR practices are at least weakly related to firm performance

After reviewing the scientific literature, it looks that there is little doubt that in the past 15 years some progress has been made in the analysis of the link between HRM and performance. On balance, however, progress has been modest but summarizing can be said that in latter period the evidence has mounted that HR practices are at least weakly related to organizational performance (Paauwe, 2009).

In 1997 Guest argued that there is a need for theory on HRM, theory on performance, and theory on how the two are linked (Guest, 1997). Eight years later Boselie *et al.* (2005) observed only modest progress on those three fundamental issues: from one side, there is a deficiency in

the literature regarding alternative theories; on the other hand, Strategic contingency theory, AMO theory (three components framework: Abilities, Motivation, Opportunity to participate) and the resource-based view appear to be the most popular theories, but in most cases it is not clear how these theories link HRM and performance. Based on above mentioned three fundamental issues the HRM-Performance linkage will be later exploring.

### Nature of human resource management

HRM researchers have devoted significant efforts toward demonstrating that the ways people are managed,

especially through HR practices, have strong linkage with performance (Delery, Doty, 1996; Huselid, 1995; Pundziene, Alonderiene, Buoziute, 2007; Buoziute-Rafanaviciene, Pundziene, Turauskas, 2009). However it has to be noted that there appears to be no consensus on the nature of HRM (Paaue, Boselie, 2005): there is no single agreed, or fixed list of HR practices or systems of practices that are used to define or measure human resource management. One of the key discussions within HRM is the distinction between the so-called best practice (Pfeffer, 1994) and the best fit (Wood, 1999) approaches. Another discussion, according to Lepak and Snell (2002), is related to HRM differentiation towards specific employee groups. The third argument concerns a clear distinction between intended HR practices (those designed on a strategic level), actual HR practices (those implemented by the line manager) and perceived HR practices (those perceived by the employees) (Wright, Nishii, 2006).

Boselie *et al.* (2005) present one more issue within HRM: even the same concepts are in use, the underlying meaning of the HR practices can be totally different.

Thus, the question what HR practices and its number is still open. Boselie *et al.* (2005) identify 26 different practices that are used in different 104 studies, of which the top four, in order of popularity, are training and development, contingent pay and reward schemes, performance management (including appraisal), and careful recruitment and selection.

These four practices can be seen to reflect the main objectives of the majority of strategic HRM programmes, namely, to identify and recruit strong performers, provide them with the skills and confidence to work effectively, monitor their progress towards the required performance targets, and reward staff well for meeting or exceeding them (Batt, 2002; Paaue, Boselie, 2005). On the other hand, this is a combination of practices that broadly corresponds to so-called High Performance Work systems and which also, more or less, parallel some of the key practices commonly associated with AMO theory (Paaue, 2009). Based on this assumption it is possible to admit a certain commonality around how HRM is operationalized when exploring the HRM-Performance link.

### Nature of performance

Dyer and Reeves (1995) posited four levels of outcomes (Boselie, van der Wiele, 2002; Paaue, Boselie 2005): **HR related outcomes** (affective, cognitive and behaviour); **organizational outcomes** (productivity, quality, efficiencies); **financial outcomes** (profit, sales); **market based outcomes** (market value)

This categorisation of outcomes has a significant importance exploring HRM-Performance link. The relevance lies in two aspects (Wright *et al.*, 2003):

1. some outcomes, such as HR outcomes, are more proximal to HR practices than others;
2. the impact that HR practices have on more distal outcomes are through the impact on more proximal outcomes.

To truly demonstrate the impact of HR practices on profitability, it is essentially to see how they impact proximal outcomes and more distal outcomes (see Figure 1).

Based on the overview by Boselie *et al.* (2005) Paaue (2009) conclude that financial measures are represented in half of all articles (104) included in their analysis. Actually, this is quite problematic, as already noted by Guest (1997), the distance between some of the performance indicators (e.g. profits, market value) and HR interventions is simply too large and potentially subject to other business interventions (e.g. research and development activities). These findings again highlight the sequence of performance outcomes and the distance between HR practices and a kind of outcomes. Moreover, emphasize the relevance of processes through which HRM-Performance link operates.

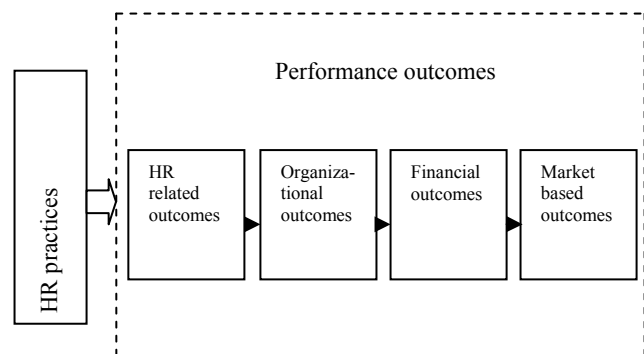


Figure 1. HRM impact on Performance logic

Source: developed by the authors

### The concept of the “black box”

The most crucial part of issues relating to the HRM-Performance debate is the linkage between the two (Paaue, Boselie, 2005). Empirical research investigating the relationship between HR practices and organizational performance confirm the importance of human resources, their management and their influence on organizational value. However two different approaches exist (Chand, Katou, 2007): some authors state that there is a “direct” relationship between HR practices and organizational performance (Schuler, Jackson, 1999), others stress an “indirect” relationship between HRM practices and organizational performance (Ferris *et al.*, 1998; Edwards, Wright, 2001). In relation to the first research path, three major perspectives emerge from the existing literature: universalistic, contingency and configuration (Katou, Budhwar, 2007). In relation to the second research path, the general consensus developed among researchers is that HR practices do not lead directly to business performance (Katou, Budhwar, 2007) and it has long been recognised that mechanisms of HRM-Performance link and intermediate outcomes are central to a more complete understanding of how HRM drives firm performance (Becker, Gerhart, 1996).

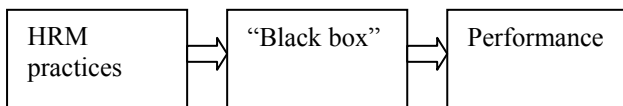
Based on the second approach different authors describe existing issues using very similar statements (see Table 2).

Table 2

**Propositions to the “black box” concept**

<i>Author</i>	<i>Statements</i>
Becker, Gerhart, 1996	There is a lack of understanding about the process ( <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> ) through which HRM creates organisational value and increases performance
Huselid, Becker, 1996	Properly designed and deployed HRM represents a significant economic asset for an organization. It does not, however, provide direct evidence of <i>how</i> such a system creates that value. To date there is very little research that “peels back the onion” and describes the processes through which HRM influence the principal intermediate variables that ultimately affect organization performance
Delery, 1998	There is a little understanding of the mechanisms through which HRM practices influence effectiveness
Purcell <i>et al.</i> , 2003	Many previous studies have examined the link between HRM practices and performance and shown there to be a positive relationship, but none has explained the nature of this connection – <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> HRM practices impact on performance
Wright <i>et al.</i> , 2003	Much of the research has demonstrated statistically significant relationships between HR practices and firm profitability. While these studies have been useful for demonstrating the potential value created through HR practices, they have revealed very little regarding <i>the processes through which</i> this value is created
Boselie <i>et al.</i> , 2005	Between the input (i.e. some form of HRM intervention) and output (i.e. some indicator of performance) – moderated possibly by intervening variables – lies <i>what</i> HRM does to improve performance, <i>how</i> and <i>why</i> , but scant attention is paid to examining the “linking mechanisms” and the “mediating effects of key variables” in this relationship
Lytras, Ordonez de Pablos (2008)	There is a gap explaining <i>how</i> HRM contributes to the creation of a sustained competitive advantage
Theriuo, Chatzoglou (2009)	Despite the quantity and variety of empirical studies, examining the impact of different HRM practices on organizational performance, little attention has focused on <i>the concept or understanding of the mechanisms</i> through which HRM practices influence performance. There appears to be only a limited amount of research attempting to explore <i>how</i> HRM practices essentially work and, hence, to pinpoint the <i>processes through which</i> these practices can lead to competitive advantage

The statements presented in Table 2 illustrate the “black box” problem and foreground that the conceptual development of the mediating mechanisms through which HRM has an impact on performance is still not evident (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** The “black box” of organization

*Source: developed by the authors*

According to Purcell *et al.* (2003), the “black box” refers to the often unclear processes that occur when inputs are converted into useful output. The “black box” is also described as “gap” (Lytras, Ordonez de Pablos, 2008), “largely unexplained facet” (Edgar, Geare, 2009) or “remaining void” (Harney, Jordan, 2008) in terms of explaining the processes and mechanisms by which the HRM-Performance impact operates.

It is noteworthy that the concept the “black box” is not accidental: we know little of what happens at this stage and hence its contents remain somewhat mysterious (Boselie *et al.*, 2005). According to Fleetwood and Hesketh (2008), in the “black box” inputs are translated into outputs, with no explanation of what goes on in between. Due to this reason Becker and Huselid (2006) maintain that complexities and nuances highlight the requirement to consider in more depth the relationship and exact mechanisms shaping the link between HRM and performance.

In the scientific literature quite a big number of theoretical models, explaining the mechanisms through which HRM-Performance relationship works, is presented. All these models are designed for opening the “black box” and reflect the order of Becker *et al.* (2001) that

“Ultimately, you must have a persuasive story about what’s in the black box. You must be able to throw back the cover of that box and reveal a plausible process of value creation from HRM to firm performance”. However, there is an ongoing debate over the mediating variables and its number. This means that till now there exists no answer to the Wright and Gardner (2003) question – how many boxes should be taken into account when studying the HRM-Performance linkage. The answer to this question is important as, according to Becker and Huselid (2006), “a clearer articulation of the ‘black box’ between HRM and firm performance” is the most pressing theoretical and empirical challenge in the Strategic HRM literature.

**The “black box” content**

As discussed earlier in the paper, there is no consensus in the scientific literature as to content of the “black box”.

As Boselie *et al.* (2005) state, their analysis of 104 articles confirms the impression that the ‘linking mechanisms’ between HRM and performance and the mediating effects of key variables are largely disregarded.

According to Edgar and Geare (2009), in the literature there exist some work on the “black box”, with some models having been developed which attempt to map the relationships, including intermediary ones, in the HRM-Performance chain. These models, so called “causal pathways”, depict the complex manner in which HRM creates firm value as a series of intervening or linked constructs (Guthrie, Datta, Wright, 2004). After reviewing the literature, it looks that models of Becker *et al.* (1997); Guest (1997); Purcell *et al.* (2003); Wright and Nishii (2006) are more frequently used in theoretical and empirical researches.

All mentioned models are based on Dyer and Reeves’ (1995) categorisation of outcomes emphasizing that in

order to understand how HR practices affect profitability, it is necessary to see what impact they have on proximal outcomes (e.g. HR outcomes) that have an impact on more distal outcomes (e.g. organisational outcomes) and consequently have an impact on the most distal outcomes (e.g. profits) (Wright *et al.*, 2003). These models is our interest here.

**Guest (1997) model.** According to Guest (1997), the expectancy theory of motivation provides one possible basis for developing a more coherent rationale about HRM-Performance link. The theory proposes that performance at individual level depends on high motivation, possession of the necessary skills and abilities and an appropriate role and understanding of that role. This conclusion is a motive to choose such HRM practices that encourage skills, motivation and an appropriate role structure. Only these HRM practices impact HRM outcomes. These factors influence behaviour outcomes, which translate into performance outcomes, which result in financial outcomes (see Figure 3 )

*HRM strategy (differentiation, focus, cost) → HRM practices (selection, training, appraisal, rewards, job design, involment, status and security) → HRM outcomes (commitment, quality, flexibility) → Behaviuor outcomes (effort/motivation, cooperation, involvement, organizational citizenship) → Performance outcomes (high: productivity, quality, innovation; low: absence, turnover, conflict, customer complaints) → Financial outcomes (profits, ROI)*

**Figure 3.** HRM-Performance link model of Guest

*Source: Guest (1997)*

**Becker *et al.* (1997) model.** According to Wright and Gardner (2000), this model is one of the specific ones at that date (see Figure 4).

In essence, this model suggests that business strategies drive the design of the HR system. HRM practices directly impact employee skills, employee motivation and work design which consequently influence employee's creativity, productivity and discretionary behaviour. These variables, in turn, result in operational performance, which relates to profitability and growth, ultimately determining firm market value (Gardner *et al.*, 2001).

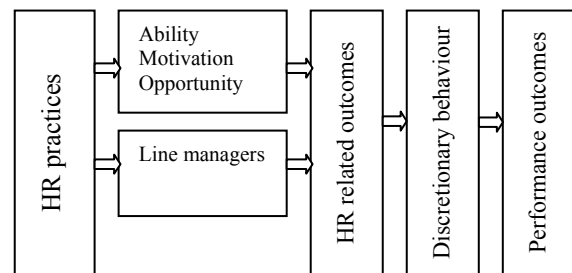
*Business and Strategic Initiatives → Design of HRM System → Employee skills, Employee motivation, Job design and Work structures → Creativity, Productivity, Discretionary Effort → Improved Operating Performance → Profits and Growth → Market Value*

**Figure 4.** HRM-Performance link model of Becker *et al.*

*Source: Becker et al. (1997)*

**The People-Performance framework** (Purcell *et al.*, 2003). This framework, as Harney and Jordan (2008) state, is built on two assumptions central to “unlocking the black box” of HRM-Performance linkage: 1) the framework advances the concept of discretionary behaviour by suggesting that virtually all employees have the capacity to engage in discretionary behaviour; 2) the critical role of

line managers because they have discretion in the way that they apply HRM and the way they behave towards employees (see Figure 5).



**Figure 5.** The People and Performance model

*Source: Purcell et al. (2003)*

The people-performance model also focus on employees' abilities (they can do the job because they possess the necessary skills), motivations (they will do the job because they want to and are given adequate incentives to do so) and opportunities to participate (the work environment provides the necessary support and avenues for expression) (Boselie, 2010).

**Wright and Nishii (2006) model.** Wright and Nishii (2006) examined some of the mediating processes that might occur in HRM-Performance relationship by examining the relationship at multiple levels of analysis. They present the model that includes intended HR practices, actual HR practices, perceived HR practices, employee reactions and performance (see Figure 6).

*Intended HR practices → Actual HR practices → Perceived HR practices → Employee reactions (affective, cognitive, behaviour) → Organization performance*

**Figure 6.** HRM-Performance link model

*Source: Wright, Nishi (2006)*

According to the model, the actual HR practices exist objectively and must be perceived and interpreted subjectively by each employee (Wright, Nishi, 2006). Hereby, the perceived HRM practices and employee reactions are two individual level variables that are central to causal pathways and core to the “black box” opening. Referring to Wright and Haggerty (2005), considerable variance at individual level can occur due to two reasons: variation in the actual HR practices and variation in the schemas individuals employ in perceiving and interpreting HR-related information. Based on the perceived HR practices, employees will react in some way, which impact organizational performance.

The comparison of the models is provided in Table 3.

Table 3

## Comparison of the “black box” models

Author	HR practices	Mediating variables	HR-related outcomes	More distal outcomes
Becker <i>et al.</i> (1997)	Not specified	Employee skills, Motivation, Job design, Work structures	Creativity, Productivity, Discretionary effort	Improved Operating Performance Profits and Growth Market Value
Guest (1997)	Selection, Training, Appraisal, Rewards, Job design, Involvement, Status and Security	Employee skills, Abilities, an appropriate Role and understanding of that Role	Commitment, Quality, Flexibility Effort/motivation, Cooperation, Involvement, Organizational citizenship	Performance outcomes (productivity, quality, innovation; absence, turnover, conflict, customer complaints) Financial outcomes (profits, ROI)
Purcell <i>et al.</i> (2003)	Job security, Career opportunity, Performance appraisal, Training and Development; Recruitment/Selection, Pay satisfaction, Work-life balance, Job challenge/Job autonomy, Teamworking, Involvement, Communication	AMO framework: Abilities, Motivation, Opportunity to participate	Organizational commitment Motivation Job satisfaction	Performance outcomes
Wright, Nishii (2006)	Intended/Actual/Perceived HR practices	Line managers	Employee reactions (affective, cognitive, behaviour)	Organization performance

As a consequence of the comparison, three main findings could be drawn: first, although the accurate assessment of HRM-Performance link requires reliable and valid assessment of HR practices (Gardner *et al.*, 2001), but as seen from Table 3, different models comprise various HR practices. Second, employee abilities, motivation and opportunity to participate (AMO) and role of the line manager to “bring policies to life“ (Purcell *et al.*, 2003) are two crucial variables through which HR practices influence HR-related outcomes. Third, HR-related outcomes impact more distal performance outcomes: only when HR-related outcomes are achieved it is possible to expect higher performance.

### The quantity of boxes and the content of each box in the “black box”

The similarity among all of these models is that they all have their basis in a **linear causal process**. In this case two additional aspects should be evaluated: first, the number of boxes in the “black box“; second, the content of each box.

While analyzing **the quantity of boxes** the main challenge is deciding on the appropriate number of mediating variables between the primary independent and dependent variables (Wright, Gardner, 2000).

The earliest models simply proposed that a fit between HR practices and firm strategy resulted in a generic outcome titled “firm performance”. As it was mentioned, Becker *et al.* (1997) model added two layers of complexity with the inclusion of employee skills, employee motivation and breaking employee behaviours into productivity, creativity, and discretionary effort. Purcell *et al.* (2003) stressed the role of line managers, in a similar way Wright and Nishii (2006) distinguished between intended and actual HR practices. From such perspective the list of boxes should not be considered definitive or complete, whereas another authors could theorize even more specific linear causal models by including more and more “boxes” between HRM practices and organization outcomes.

In essence, the question of how many boxes need to be included before the model is complete has yet to be settled, although Hope-Hailey, Farndale and Truss (2005) are persuaded that the primary issue in the development of conceptual model is which variables should be included in making step from HRM to organization performance. However it is worthwhile to highlight that, according Wright and Gardner (2000), that consensus exists concerning one issue: any theoretical or empirical effort should at least specify some mediating variable(s), but not how many.

While analyzing **the content of each box** the main challenge is choosing a level of specificity within each box. It is not enough to maintain that a “operating performance” box has great value. Such proposition will bring some confusion, because if one is to explore this relationship empirically, on which aspect(s) of operational performance should one focus? To response to the above question is not simple, since numerous measures of operational performance exist such as customer satisfaction, customer retention, sales revenues, quality defects, etc. As Wright and Gardner (2000) state, this leads to a multiplicative effect in determining the process of the model, at the same time the relationships among each of the sub-boxes should be described. It should be taken into consideration that this creates a serious problem for understanding the phenomena as the complexity becomes virtually unmanageable.

In summary regarding the **quantity and content** of each box, it is worthwhile to state that putting too many boxes in the model will not open the “black box” and putting too much items in the boxes will not make the model more insightful.

### Conclusions

1. Many of human resource management research efforts have been directed to understand the HRM-Performance linkage, because performance stands out as one major organizational goal. While evidence mounts that HR practices are at least weakly related to firm

performance, researchers in the field of HRM-Performance link still require the theory about HRM, the theory about performance and the theory about how they are linked.

2. There appears to be no consensus on the nature of HRM: there is no single agreed, or fixed list of HR practices or systems of practices that are used to define or measure human resource management. Concerning performance, four types are defined.

3. One of the first issues that must be settled in the effort to understand how HR practices impact performance

is to theorize the means through which this link occurs. Although some theoretical models have attempted to depict the processes, the mechanisms remains still unclear.

4. Despite varying models of “black box“, the similarity among all is that they all have their basis in a linear causal process. Hereby putting too many boxes in the model will not "open the black box", and putting too much items in the boxes will not make the model more insightful.

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„Juodosios dėžės“ modeliai žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų sąsajoje

Santrauka

Greiti pokyčiai, globalizacija, konkuravimas inovatyviomis paslaugomis ir prekėmis atspindi šiuolaikinių organizacijų veiklos aplinką (Chang ir Huang, 2005), kurioje organizacijos pasiekimai tampa pagrindiniu veiklos tikslu. Žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo specialistų noras pademonstruoti savo



veiklos reikšmingumą visos organizacijos pasiekimų kontekste turi galias tradicijas. Wright ir kt. (2004) pažymi, jog jau 1954 m. Drucker teigė, kad personalo vadybininkai yra susirūpinę, kad nesugeba įrodyti savąjį įnašą organizacijos veikloje. Kaip atsakas į užsitęsusių kritiką, devintame XX a. dešimtmetyje pastebimas tyrimų, bandančių pademonstruoti žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo, realizuojamo taikant konkrečias praktikas, įtaką organizacijos veiklos rezultatams, pagausėjimas (Arthur, 1994; Huselid, 1995; Delery ir Doty, 1996).

Mokslinėje literatūroje akcentuojama, kad empiriniai tyrimai, nagrinėję skirtingų žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikų poveikį organizacijos veiklos rezultatams, mažai dėmesio skiria mechanizmo, kuriuo praktikos veikia organizacijos veiklą, koncepcijai ir supratimui (Paauwe, 2009). Kadangi stinga suvokimo apie tarpines dimensijas ir jų daromą poveikį, tai spraga aiškinant, kokią žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikos daro įtaką organizacijos veiklos rezultatams, pavadinta „juodąja dėže“ (Boselie ir kt., 2005). Pažymėtina, jog vadybos literatūroje ir praktikoje vienareikšmis atsakymas į klausimą dėl „juodosios dėžės“ turinio nepateikiamas, o modelių, bandančių atverti „juodąją dėžę“, įvairovė patvirtina egzistuojančią problemą.

**Straipsnio tikslas** – išnagrinėti „juodosios dėžės“ turinio modelius žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų sąsajų aspektu.

**Tyrimo metodas** – mokslinės literatūros analizė ir sintezė.

Kadangi pagrindinis žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo uždavinys yra maksimaliai padidinti organizacijos veiklos rezultatus, tai natūralu, jog mokslinėje plotmėje norima atskleisti ryšį tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų. Siekiant pateikti žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo vaidmens, kuriant pridėtinę vertę įrodymus, prioritetas teikiamas empiriniams tyrimams, iš kurių pirmieji publikuoti 1994 m. (Arthur, 1994) ir 1995 m. (MacDuffie, 1995; Huselid, 1995). Nors dauguma tyrėjų sutinka, jog žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymas daro įtaką organizacijos veiklos rezultatams, tačiau mokslinėje literatūroje išskiriami du vienas kitam prieštaraujantys požiūriai (Edgar ir Geare, 2009; Paauwe, 2009): 1) įsitikinimas dėl ryšio tarp konstruktų egzistavimo; 2) abejonė dėl ryšio arba visiškai jo neigimas. Tačiau nepaisant nuomonių skirtingumo, apibendrinant galima konstatuoti, jog pastaruoju laikotarpiu padaugėjo įrodymų, kad žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymas yra bent jau silpnai susijęs su organizacijos veiklos rezultatais.

Pasak Guest (1997), analizuojant ryšį, būtini trys esminiai dalykai: teorinis požiūris į žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymą, teorinis požiūris į organizacijos veiklos rezultatus ir teorinis požiūris į sąsajas tarp dviejų konstrukčių.

**Žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo pobūdis.** Mokslinėje literatūroje nėra konsensuso dėl praktikų, kurios turėtų būti tiriamos, siekiant atskleisti žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų sąsajas. Diskusijos vyksta keliais aspektais: dėl „geriausios praktikos“ (Pfeffer, 1994) ir „geriausio atitikimo“ (Wood, 1999) modelių egzistavimo, dėl praktikų diferenciacijos skirtingoms žmogiškųjų išteklių grupėms (Lepak ir Snell, 2002), dėl skirtumų tarp numatytų, realizuotų ir darbuotojų suvoktų praktikų (Whight ir Nishi, 2006).

Boselie ir kt. (2005) identifikavo 26 žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikas, naudotas 104 moksliniuose straipsniuose, tačiau pagal populiarumą skyrė keturias: mokymas ir ugdymas; su darbo rezultatais susijęs darbo apmokėjimas ir apdovanojimo sistemos; darbo atlikimo valdymas (įskaitant darbuotojų vertinimą); verbavimas ir atranka. Šios keturios praktikos, pasak Batt (2002), atspindi pagrindinius daugumos strateginių žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo programų tikslus, būtent: 1) identifikuoti ir pasamdyti tinkamus darbuotojus; 2) suteikti darbuotojams žinių ir pasitikėjimo, būtino efektyviam darbui; 3) tikrinti ir kontroliuoti darbuotojų progresą, siekiant nustatytą darbo tikslų; 4) atlyginti darbuotojams už pasiektus ir viršytus tikslus. Akcentuotina, jog išvardytas praktikų savybes atitinkančios praktikos literatūroje įvardijamos kaip „aukšto darbo atlikimo sistemos“ („*high performance work systems*“) ir yra kartu susijusios su AMO (gebėjimų, motyvacijos ir galimybės dalyvauti) struktūra. Todėl galima teigti, jog formuojasi tam tikras sutarimas dėl žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikų išgryninimo sąryšio su organizacijos veiklos rezultatais kontekste.

**Organizacijos veiklos rezultatų pobūdis.** Dyer ir Reeves (1995) skiria keturias organizacijos veiklos rezultatų grupes (Boselie ir van der Wiele, 2002; Pauwe ir Boselie 2005): *žmogiškųjų išteklių rezultatai, organizaciniai rezultatai, finansiniai rezultatai, rinkos rezultatai*. Ši klasifikacija reikšminga žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų sąryšio kontekste. Svarbūs du aspektai (Wright ir kt., 2003): 1) priežastinė rezultatų seka; 2) nuotolis tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikų ir atskirų rezultatų grupių.

**Sąsajos tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų: „Juodosios dėžės“ samprata.** Theriuo ir Chatzoglou (2009) pabrėžia, jog, nepaisant ryšio tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikų ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų tyrimų kiekio ir įvairovės, mažai dėmesio skiriama *mechanizmo, kaip žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikos veikia organizacijos veiklos rezultatus*, koncepcijai ir suvokimui. Šis teiginys atspindi „juodosios dėžės“ problemą, kadangi, pasak Purcell ir kt. (2003), „juodąja dėže“ vadinami dažnai neaiškūs procesai, kurie vyksta, kai žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikos yra konvertuojamos į organizacijos veiklos rezultatus. „Juodoji dėžė“ taip pat apibūdinama kaip „spraga“ (Lytras ir Ordenez de Pablos, 2008), „plačiai neišaiškintas aspektas“ (Edgar ir Geare, 2009) ar „tuštuma“ (Harney ir Jordan, 2008), aiškinant procesus ir mechanizmus, kuriais ryšys funkcionuoja.

Tačiau mokslinėse diskusijose nesutariama dėl tarpinių dimensijų ir jų skaičiaus, vadinasi iki šiol nėra vieningo atsakymo į Wright ir Gardner (2003) iškeltą klausimą – kiek „dėžių“ turi būti įvertinta analizuojant ryšį tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikų ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų.

**Sąsajos tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų: „Juodosios dėžės“ turinio modeliai.** Stinga konsensuso dėl „juodosios dėžės“ turinio: skirtingi autoriai pateikia skirtingus modelius, dar kitaip vadinamus „priežastiniai takeliai“ („*causal pathways*“), išskaidant „juodąją dėžę“ į nevienodą tarpinių dimensijų skaičių. Dažniausiai sutinkami Guest (1997); Becker ir kt. (1997); Purcell ir kt. (2003); Wright ir Nishii (2006) modeliai. Akcentuotina, jog visi jie remiasi Dyer ir Reeves (1995) pateiktu organizacijos veiklos rezultatų klasifikavimu, konstatuojant, jog (Wright ir kt., 2003): 1) tam tikri rezultatai, tokie kaip žmogiškųjų išteklių rezultatai, yra labiau nei kiti susiję su žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikomis; 2) žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikos, veikdamos artimesnius rezultatus, daro įtaką tolimesniems rezultatams.

Straipsnyje analizuojami atskiri modeliai, pateikiamas analizės apibendrinimas. Pažymėtina, jog visų aptartų modelių bendras bruožas yra jų struktūros pagrindas - **linijinis priežastinis procesas**. Šiuo atveju vienu iš pagrindinių iššūkių tampa tarpinių dimensijų skaičiaus nustatymas, kitu atveju - būtinybė kiekvienoje „dėžėje“ identifikuoti ir apibūdinti „subdėžes“ bei vidinius santykius tarp jų. Tačiau nereikia pamiršti, jog naujų „dėžių“ ir „subdėžių“ įtraukimas į „juodąją dėžę“ sukuria rimtas problemas, norint suprasti ryšio tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų fenomeną, kadangi sudėtingumas ir painumas tampa sunkiai valdomi.

Formuluojama išvada, jog ryšys tarp žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų egzistuoja, nors nėra vieningos nuomonės dėl žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikų, kurios, siekiant atskleisti tą ryšį, turėtų būti tiriamos. Taip pat pažymėtina, jog stinga suvokimo apie procesą (kaip ir kodėl), kuriam vykstant žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymas sukuria organizacines vertybes ir pagerina veiklos rezultatus. Literatūroje pateikiamas ne vienas modelis, aiškinantis procesus, kaip žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymo praktikos daro įtaką organizacijos veiklos rezultatams, tačiau pasigendama detalaus konceptualaus modelio bei jo pagrindimo ir išaiškinimo.

Raktažodžiai: „juodoji dėžė“, *žmogiškųjų išteklių valdymas, organizacijos veiklos rezultatai, žmogiškųjų išteklių praktikos, žmogiškųjų išteklių ir organizacijos veiklos rezultatų ryšys*.

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