

## Pro-Entrepreneurial Human Resource Management in Non-Profit Organizations

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The aim of the paper is to examine the human resources management (HRM) in not-profit organisations in view of entrepreneurship theory and to identify some problems which could be crucial for future research and development of pro-entrepreneurial HRM practices in non-profit organizations. It was suggested that some solutions from business ventures can be implemented in non-profit organisations, but specific traits of them (as engagement of volunteers and their motivation and expectations) have to be taken into account. The pro-entrepreneurial HRM in non-profit organisations was analysed in relevance to different types of people's involvement (employees, volunteers, members, social entrepreneurs) and selected HRM functions (job description, recruitment, training and rewarding).

**Keywords:** entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial management, non-profit organisation, human resource, social entrepreneurship.

## Proprzedsiębiorcze zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w organizacjach niekomercyjnych

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Celem opracowania jest analiza zarządzania zasobami ludzkimi (ZSL) w organizacjach niekomercyjnych w świetle teorii przedsiębiorczości oraz określenie problemów, które mogą być istotne dla przyszłych badań i rozwoju proprzedsiębiorczego ZSL w tych organizacjach. Zaproponowano wykorzystanie części rozwiązań z przedsiębiorstw komercyjnych, jednak przy uwzględnieniu specyficznych organizacji niekomercyjnych (takich jak zaangażowanie wolontariuszy czy ich motywacje i oczekiwania). Proprzedsiębiorcze ZSL w organizacjach niekomercyjnych zostało poddane analizie z uwzględnieniem form zaangażowania (pracownicy, wolontariusze, członkowie, przedsiębiorcy społeczni) i wybranych funkcji ZSL (opis zadań, rekrutacja, szkolenie i nagradzanie).

**Słowa kluczowe:** przedsiębiorczość, zarządzanie przedsiębiorcze, organizacje niekomercyjne, zasoby ludzkie, przedsiębiorczość społeczna.

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## 1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is perceived as one of the desired traits of organisations. It enables exploiting opportunities which occur in the market. It is determined by pro-activeness, risk-taking and innovativeness, which are dependent on skills and attitudes of people involved in organisations. To develop entrepreneurial traits of organisations, human resource management (HRM) has to be utilized. There are numerous examples of involving employees in entrepreneurial processes in business ventures.

The strengthening of entrepreneurial attitude is a challenge also in non-profit organisations (NPO). They play an important role in the society and compensate for certain market failures. They have a significant share in national economy in many countries. Their effects on economic growth are not only direct, but occur also through other variables that directly promote economic growth, such as entrepreneurship, activity and human capital, and through the improvement of education (Bahmani, Galindo and Mendez, 2012). NPOs experience new societal needs which they are expected to respond to. They face the limitation of public subsidies and they have to ensure by themselves the necessary resources, including funding. It requires them to look actively for new opportunities. Many non-profit organisations share their market with for-profit ventures and sometimes compete with them. They implement some solutions from business organisations to improve their effectiveness and efficiency. One of them is entrepreneurial approach to opportunities and social needs around them. Similarly to their business counterparts, non-profits have to focus on their human resources to be able to do so. This tendency is visible especially in social entrepreneurship, which combines business tools with social goals.

The aim of the paper is to examine the human resources management in not-profit organisations in view of entrepreneurship theory and to identify some characteristic which could be crucial for future research and development of pro-entrepreneurial HRM practices in non-profit organisations.

The paper is a conceptual one and is based on the literature review. The structure of the paper is as follows. Firstly, the theory of organisational entrepreneurship will be investigated. Secondly, the HRM practices which support entrepreneurship in business ventures will be identified. Then, non-profit organisations will be characterised, with focus on their human resources. Afterwards, pro-entrepreneurial HRM in non-profit organisations will be analysed in terms of types of people's involvement and selected HRM functions. Finally, the areas of future research and theory development will be proposed.

## 2. Organisational Entrepreneurship

Organisations operating in changing environment need to be entrepreneurial. Entrepreneurship has been identified with ownership, risk-taking, innovativeness. Nowadays, entrepreneurship is defined as pursuing opportunities (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990, p. 23). Casson (1982) defined opportunities as “those situations in which new goods, services, raw materials, and organizing methods can be introduced and sold at greater than their cost of production” (Shane and Venkatraman, 2000, p. 220).

In the organisational context, entrepreneurship is identified with creating new ventures (Gartner, 1989, p. 47), but refers also to “formal or informal activities aimed at creating new business in established companies through product and process innovations and market developments”, which are called corporate entrepreneurship (Zahra, 1991, p. 261, quoted in: Morris and Kuratko, 2002, p. 31). Corporate entrepreneurship includes all forms of entrepreneurial thinking and acting in large established enterprises (Volkmann, Tokarski and Grünhagen, 2010, p. 5).

Entrepreneurship is the trait which occurs with varying intensity. We can measure the level of entrepreneurship in organisations. One concept enabling measurement is entrepreneurial orientation (EO). It is based on Millers’ understanding of an entrepreneurial firm as one “that engages in product-market innovation, undertakes somewhat risky ventures, and is first to come up with ‘proactive’ innovations, beating competitors to the punch” (Miller, 1983, p. 771). On Covin and Slevin’s scale to measure the EO, three dimensions are included: risk-taking, innovativeness, and pro-activeness (Covin and Slevin, 1989, p. 75), and Lumpkin and Dees (1996, p. 137) augmented it by adding two more dimensions: autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. An example of five-dimensional scale was also proposed by Hughes and Morgan (2007, pp. 657–658).

Organisations strive to reinforce their entrepreneurial behaviours. But Morris and Kuratko (2002, p. 249) point out that too high a level of entrepreneurship (e.g. too great risk exposure or diversion of resources) could be dysfunctional for the organisation.

## 3. Entrepreneurship and Employees

The level of entrepreneurship of organisations is determined, among others, by skills, attitudes and finally behaviours of people engaged in organisations. McMullen and Shepherd (2006) describe entrepreneurial behaviour as “a set of entrepreneurial actions by which individuals make judgmental decisions under uncertainty” (Kuratko, 2010, p. 146). Schuler has suggested that “the following employee characteristics are associated with successful entrepreneurial efforts: creative and innovative behaviour, risk-taking, a long-term orientation, a focus on results, flexibility to change,

cooperation, independent behaviour, tolerance of ambiguity, and a preference for assuming responsibility” (Morris and Kuratko, 2002, p. 239). Prandelli, Pasquini and Verona (2016, p. 287) investigated how the entrepreneur’s ability to take the perspective of the user in a market and prior knowledge of the market enhances opportunity identification.

Human resources are especially important in the early stage of organisation development. Davidsson and Honig (2003, p. 301) perceive social capital as a robust predictor for nascent entrepreneurs, as well as for advancing through the start-up process. They have found that being a member of a business network (which is an aspect of social capital) had a statistically significant positive effect on outcomes like first sale or showing a profit. Zhang, Edgar, Geare, and O’Kane (2016) have identified significant effects of the interaction between entrepreneurial orientation and capability-based HRM on innovation ambidexterity, through which they contribute together to the firm performance.

One of the key issues related to people in organisations is motivation. Stevenson and Jarillo noted that an individual’s motivations are decisive for the emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour. They stated: “By definition, nobody will pursue an opportunity if he/she does not want to, and we have seen argued that the very exceptional nature of pursuing opportunities without adequate resources makes it very difficult for top management to ‘force’ that pursuit through the typical managerial mechanisms by prespecifying task goals” (Stevenson and Jarillo, 1990, p. 24). Glinka and Gudkova (2011, p. 228) point at weaknesses of HRM (e.g. recruitment, assessment and compensation) as a possible restraint on organisational entrepreneurship.

A special role in strengthening entrepreneurial attitude of an organisation is played by managers. Morris and Kuratko suggest that “managers have to identify desired levels of entrepreneurship and then determine the corresponding levels of particular HRM practices necessary to achieve the entrepreneurship performance goal” (Morris and Kuratko, 2002, p. 249). The managers’ responsibilities, considering entrepreneurship of the organisation, depend on the level of management. At the senior level, managers strive to identify effective means through which new businesses can be created or existing ones reconfigured. Middle-level managers are focused on the need for this group to propose and interpret entrepreneurial opportunities that might create new business for the firm or increase the firm’s competitiveness in current business domains. Finally, first-level managers work with their people to fashion the entrepreneurial behaviours through which the firm’s core competencies can be used daily to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities (Kuratko, 2010, p. 145). The managers influence entrepreneurial behaviours of subordinates in many ways, including their emotions. For example, Brundin, Patzelt and Shepherd (2008) have found that the employees’ willingness to act entrepreneurially decreased when

managers displayed frustration, worry, or bewilderment about an entrepreneurial project.

The entrepreneurial behaviours are influenced by a variety of organisational solutions, including policies and practices related to HRM, both at the strategic and operational level. At the strategic level of HRM, the main aim is to link HR functions with the entrepreneurial strategy, or at least, with entrepreneurial aspects of the strategy, and to accomplish entrepreneurial behaviours of the organisation and its employees and members. Dhliwayo (2010, p. 146) proposed that entrepreneurial strategies focus on how people can be innovative and creative, and on building responsibilities and trust.

There are numerous activities included under HRM at the operational level. According to Morris and Kuratko (2002, p. 238), the key elements of the HRM system to create an entrepreneurial work environment are: job planning and design, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, compensation and rewards and training and development. In an entrepreneurial organisation, the HRM should ensure hiring entrepreneurial people, rewarding entrepreneurial behaviours and developing entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. All HRM activities have to be consistent with each other, as well as with structures and cultures of organisations. For example, as pointed out by Rwigema and Venter, to retain innovative employees “room should be given to intrapreneurs to experiment and innovate, and to unleash their creative potential to the large gains for the corporate parent” (Dhliwayo, 2010, p. 144). Morris and Jones have noted that the level of entrepreneurship is higher in companies in which training programmes were more group than individually oriented and in which compensation/reward practices emphasised job security over high pay (Morris and Kuratko, 2002, p. 248). Chmielecki (2013, p. 112) suggests that “the most important factors concerning the entrepreneurial behaviours within the organization is financial inducements and the possibility of advancement and development of previously acquired skills”.

To conclude the above, the organisational entrepreneurship is determined by HRM practices, and it is proposed to develop practices which support entrepreneurial behaviours within organisations. Such a pro-entrepreneurial HRM is to focus on exposing entrepreneurial aspects (pro-activeness, risk-taking, innovativeness) in HRM functions and practices. Some traits of entrepreneurial behaviours of employees as well as organisational solutions related to employees’ entrepreneurial behaviours are reflected in scales measuring entrepreneurial orientation of organisations.

On the scale proposed by Hughes and Morgan (2007, pp. 657–658), some items relate directly to employees’ behaviours. They are connected with employees’ autonomy (acting and thinking without interference, the way of performing jobs, freedom and independence to decide on their own how to go about doing their work, freedom to communicate without interference, authority and responsibility to act alone, and access to all vital

information) and risk-taking (encouraging employees to take calculated risks with new ideas and perception of the term 'risk taker'). Some other items refer to the dominant approach to problems and organisational solutions (e.g. exploration and experimentation for opportunities, introducing improvements and innovations, creativity in methods of operation, seeking out new ways to do things, taking the initiative in every situation, identifying opportunities and needs, initiating actions to which other organisations respond, and bold or aggressive approach when competing).

Covin and Slevin (1989, p. 86) focus in their scale on questions related to people at the top management level. They included items such as: "the top managers of my firm favor a strong emphasis on R&D, technological leadership, and innovations", "the top managers of my firm have a strong proclivity for high-risk projects (with chances of very high returns)", and "the top managers of my firm believe that owing to the nature of the environment, bold, wide-ranging acts are necessary to achieve the firm's objectives".

Hornsby, Kuratko, and Montagno proposed the Corporate Entrepreneurship Assessment Instrument (CEAI). It is a measure scale for big companies, focused on 5 areas: management support for corporate entrepreneurship, work discretion, rewards/reinforcements, time availability and organisational boundaries. There are items related directly to employees, including managers. They refer to senior managers' support to innovators, encouraging employees to take calculated risk, giving them free time to develop their good ideas, encouraging them to talk to employees from other departments about ideas for new projects, employees' responsibility and freedom to decide about their jobs, autonomy and self-control, variety of work methods, managers' support to remove obstacles and roadblocks, rewards and their dependency on achievements, and time for getting tasks done (Morris and Kuratko, 2002, p. 249).

The above items reflect some HRM activities associated with organisational entrepreneurship in business ventures. Together with emerging economisation of non-profit organisations, it is desirable to identify HRM elements which are essential for the latter ones.

#### **4. Non-Profit Organisations and Human Resources**

In this paper, we will focus on non-profit organisations operating independently of the government (non-governmental organisations). They are comprised in the so-called "third sector", albeit nowadays borders between traditional sectors are not so clear as they used to be in the past. Non-profit organisations are different from their counterparts in public and private sectors in that there is no profit maximisation and no bottom line against which performance can be measured (Marshall, 2011, p. 184). A specific type are social enterprises, which operate as for-profit ventures but use their

profits for achieving social purposes. Some of them strive to satisfy social needs directly through their operations, and for example deliver employment opportunities to their beneficiaries. In that case, the employees are their beneficiaries (or clients, in business terms). Such a situation is much more demanding than treating employees as customers, according to the concept of internal marketing.

The practices related to human resources in non-profit organisations are a subject of numerous surveys and publications. Barros and Nunes (2008, p. 1564) analysed the contribution of human and social capital to the earnings of NPO managers. They found that NPO managers who are well educated and capable, conscientious and effective in their work are more highly rewarded than those who do not fulfil these criteria. They pointed out that experience plays a positive role in the definition of earnings, and social ties play a major role in the earnings function. Many NPOs operate as non-governmental organisations (NGO). Kafel (2014) explored the professionalization of NGOs, and he noted that many hard-working NGO managers have insufficient time to examine the needs of beneficiaries, to prepare development strategies, to devise long-term plans, to measure operational effectiveness, and to evaluate work performance. Panzer and Huppertz (2013, p. 229) discussed objectives for talent management in NPOs and how the organisation's goals and its talent management are linked. They perceive talent management as a component of the organisation's strategy. In the late 80s, Drucker described non-profit organisations as management leaders. He wrote: "In two areas, strategy and the effectiveness of the board, they are practicing what most American businesses only preach. And in the most crucial area – the motivation and productivity of knowledge workers – they are truly pioneers, working out the policies and practices that business will have to learn tomorrow." (Drucker, 1989, p. 88).

One specific trait of non-profit organisations is engagement of volunteers. Ferreira, T. Proença and J.F. Proença (2012, p. 37) have found that HRM practices, namely recruitment, training, reward and recognition, can influence volunteers' satisfaction and attitudes. They show that training is the HRM practice that gets the highest results. Aisbett and Hoye (2015, p. 364) have stated that volunteers' satisfaction can be attributed more to the informal support (or lack thereof) provided by their supervisor than the formal procedures implemented by the organisation. They conclude that for some volunteers the supervisor may embody the organisation; the support provided by the supervisor on the day of an event can become more important than support provided by the organisation prior to the event. They have found that a poor team leader's performance in providing the requisite support may therefore impact a volunteer's satisfaction more than any failings (or otherwise) of the overall HRM system. Wicker and Breuer (2011, p. 198) have found that the main part of voluntary work came from a few volunteers and suggest that the decreasing number of

central volunteers was compensated for by paid staff and other forms of employment.

Some research focuses on entrepreneurial aspects of activity of NPOs. Hong and Cho (2012, p. 245) have found that risk-taking appears to have no positive influence on the social performance, and innovativeness appears to have positive influence on the social performance in social enterprises. Ruvio, Rosenblatt and Hertz-Lazarowitz (2010, p. 144) explore the role that the entrepreneurial leadership vision plays in the entrepreneurial process of non-profit and for-profit ventures. They have found that in NPOs the vision was associated with a wide-range strategy as well as the ventures' performance and growth.

## **5. Enhancing Entrepreneurship of Non-Profit Organisations Through HRM**

In turbulent and competitive environment, where new societal needs appear and private donations and public funding are often not sufficient to meet these needs, non-profit organisations have to be entrepreneurial. They need to identify correctly social needs, to find the way of satisfying them (sometimes by implementing innovative solutions), to create new structures, to compete and to cooperate to obtain required resources, and sometimes to run a business to gain them. In the area of human resources, they have to attract talented employees, but also volunteers. And they have to manage them so that they will get satisfied and engaged, even if they do not get financial compensation for their efforts. This relates also to board members and team leaders, who usually serve for free on the voluntary basis, although they take responsibility for the organisation.

The task of pro-entrepreneurial human resource management in non-profit organisations is to enhance entrepreneurial behaviours through HRM policies and practices. Some experiences from business ventures could be implemented, but the specific characteristics of NPOs have to be taken into consideration. Two dimensions will be included in the following analysis: characteristics of people's involvement and HRM functions.

Taking into account the role, responsibility and legal status of the engagement, 4 categories of people's involvement in NPOs and social enterprises may be specified and HRM actions (in terms of organisational entrepreneurship) should be calibrated to them. The first group consists of social entrepreneurs. Many of them are founders and leaders of organisations, but some of them come from outside and want to act entrepreneurially in existing organisations (like "social intrapreneurs"). They are able to create entrepreneurial conditions for themselves and for other people involved in NPOs. The second group are members and volunteers. Some of them are high-qualified specialists, strongly motivated to share their competences. Some of them have potential to act entrepreneurially, although they were not



prepared and indented for that when they got involved. It is recommended to develop their entrepreneurial skills and create conditions enhancing their entrepreneurial behaviours. The third group are NPO employees. Most of the pro-entrepreneurial HRM practices from business ventures apply also to NPO employees. It is recommended to create conditions enabling them to act entrepreneurially. Some of employees are responsible for facilitating the work of volunteers, including creating conditions to promote their entrepreneurial skills and attitudes. The last group are employees of social enterprises, who are at the same time beneficiaries of the organisations (for example in social enterprises offering employment opportunities to disadvantaged individuals and groups). In some cases, they are encouraged and supported to act as social entrepreneurs who found social cooperatives which they are involved in. The borders between groups identified above are indistinct and some people could be classified into two groups (e.g. social entrepreneurs employed as CEOs of NPOs). Representatives of the above groups can be involved at different levels of the organisational hierarchy and engaged in achieving different tasks, including top management and occasional simple actions.

One of the key elements of HRM, in terms of entrepreneurial behaviours in NPOs, is motivation. The motivation to act entrepreneurially in NPOs was a subject of a few surveys. Miller, Grimes, McMullen and Vogus (2012, p. 633) examined compassion and prosocial motivation and built a model of three mechanisms (integrative thinking, prosocial cost-benefit analysis, and commitment to alleviating others' suffering) that transform compassion into social entrepreneurship. Braga, Proenca and Ferreira explored the motivations that lead individuals to create, develop and maintain a project of social entrepreneurship, what people want to achieve with the project, the initial expectations, the support they seek to obtain, the obstacles faced and what happened differently from expectations (2014, p. 11). Most of the people get involved in NPOs because they want to help the others, and are driven by non-financial expectations. Some of them are strongly self-motivated and intent on solving the problem they noticed. They are ready to dedicate their time and share their skills, talents, and contacts. NPOs' task is to create the environment which will support them in their entrepreneurial activity. It should be reflected in job descriptions, where autonomy is given to people involved in NPOs, as well as freedom to decide about societal needs they want to satisfy. It is also important to offer a space for their creativity. Those element (creativity and autonomy, which are among key dimensions of entrepreneurship) strengthen motivation of people involved in NPOs.

Some organisations recruit people, including volunteers, for particular projects and positions. But some of them offer a space for those who want to initiate new projects. A special challenge is to attract "social entrepreneurs" who are ready, in terms of their skills and attitudes, to act entrepreneurially.

rially. In their case, it is important to offer them autonomy and time to implement their ideas, and to offer them access to organisations' resources. One specific task is identifying volunteers' competences and using them in such a way that will make them satisfied (by doing what they like and can best, and seeing the impact of their work on the organisation's performance and social problems they wanted to solve). The individuals involved in NPOs should be rewarded for entrepreneurial behaviours and successful implementation of entrepreneurial behaviours in the activity aimed at solving social problem. In the area of training, NPOs should focus on skills which are required to act entrepreneurially. These training opportunities, as well as the opportunity to practice, are also a way in which NPOs may motivate people.

The pro-entrepreneurial HRM may be analysed from the perspective of attributes of entrepreneurship. In this context, some specific actions in the frame of each HRM function may be suggested for development of organisational entrepreneurship in NPOs. For example, in the field of specifying job requirements or trainings, social awareness of employees should be included, as well as the ability to cooperate instead of competing when striving to solve societal problems. Cooperation is one of the entrepreneurial traits specific to NPOs. They cooperate with other organisations to accomplish their social tasks, even with organisations which focus on the same group of beneficiaries. They cooperate to increase the total societal impact rather than compete for a higher market share. At the personal level, cooperation is one of the ways people meet their individual social needs. NPOs are the place where cooperation skills and attitudes are developed.

HRM influences entrepreneurial behaviours of organisations, albeit it is not the only factor determining organisational entrepreneurship. HRM practices interact with other organisational variables, including the structure, technology, control system and the stage of organisational life cycle (Morris, Kuratko, 2002, p. 250). All of them require configuration in the way reinforcing people to act entrepreneurially to achieve organisational aims and satisfy societal needs.

## **6. Conclusions**

Non-profit organisations are becoming similar to their for-profit counterparts. Some of them use forms and tools specific to business ventures. The similarities are relevant also to human resources and entrepreneurial dimensions. NPOs need to be entrepreneurial and their members are expected to behave entrepreneurially. For this reason, it is important to recognise how to stimulate entrepreneurial behaviours of members and employees. Some of these behaviours are pointed out in the concept of entrepreneurial orientation, which relates to business organisations; however, others are specific to NPOs.

One of the key fields in developing entrepreneurial behaviours is human resource management. Some solutions in that area can be implemented directly from business ventures, but also others have to be utilized, which results from specific traits of non-profit organisations (as engagement of volunteers and their motivation and expectations) as well as characteristics of entrepreneurship in these organisations (such as the role of inter-organisational cooperation when solving social problems). Thus, the pro-entrepreneurial HRM in non-profit organisations include different types of people's involvement (employees, volunteers, members, social entrepreneurs) and focus on some functions (job description, recruitment, training and rewarding) to stimulate creativeness and pro-activeness as well as cooperation and social awareness.

This paper does not provide the explanation how to manage human resources to reinforce entrepreneurial behaviours in non-profit organisations. Some related problems were suggested that require further studies and surveys. The question of how pro-entrepreneurial HRM supports effectiveness of NPOs should be clarified and confronted with relevant research on for-profit organisations. Practitioners may expect the indications how to use HRM towards different groups of participants in different types of NPOs to benefit from entrepreneurial behaviours within their organisations. The new fields of future explorations are becoming visible as well. They include linkages with strategy, organisational culture, leadership, knowledge management or employees' participation. The pro-entrepreneurial HRM in the frame of social entrepreneurship seems to be an emerging field of future research.

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