
**THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTICES TO
ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT
RESEARCH IN DIFFERENT COMPANIES IN RIBEIRÃO PRETO AND
REGION**

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Abstract

The current organizational context is characterized by rapid deep and constant changes, due to the influence of globalization of the economy, technological change, the diversity of the work force and the intensification of competition among the companies. To survive in such environment, it is necessary for the companies to have a management system that permit the administration of the tangible and intangible assets. That reflects directly on the human resources (HR) area actions, since it has been increasingly pointed out as one of the essential functions for the development and implementation of strategic responses to the mentioned pressures. This fact has been increasing the visibility of HR in the organizations, as well as well as its area of operation, consequently becoming a strategic business partner. This article aims to highlight the strategic today's role of HR, identifying its practices — through its major subsystems — and linking such practices to possible contributions to the Management of Organizational Performance. Based on the results of a quantitative study (conducted in companies of different segments in Ribeirão Preto and region) it was noted that most of the participating companies recognize HR as strategic and believe that HR practices adopted by them through its main subsystems: Allowance; Application, Maintenance and HR Development, can contribute to support and add value to the management of organizational performance.

Key words: People Management. Management of Organizational Performance. HR practices. Human Resources. HR Subsystems.

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MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE
RESEARCH IN COMPANIES OF DIFFERENT SEGMENTS IN RIBEIRÃO
PRETO AND REGION**

1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations are influenced by constant and intense changes in the political, economic, social and market aspects and therefore have experienced strong pressures. This context motivates the growth of products and services transformation, because it makes the competitive differentials deteriorate rapidly, beside that, it causes companies to be flexible to environmental demands and are forced to implement essential changes in their patterns of organization and management. These changes aim to support their action strategies, seek for improvements in economic and financial results and maximize their differentials (HERNANCES; CRUZ, HAWK, 2000), thus creating a sustainable competitive advantage. According to the theory of Albuquerque; Queiroz (2009), obtaining such benefit implicate on the need to join less marketable resources and develop intangible resources, with the goal of creating skills that are peculiar to each company, so that they are not so quickly assimilated by competitors. Complementing the idea of Albuquerque; Queiroz (2009), Brandão (2001, p. 9), cites:

Proposals for obtaining competitive advantage, despite differences in semantic order, seem to follow in the same direction: strategic management of human resources (TAYLOR, BEECHLER and NAPIER, 1996), competency management (PRAHALAD and HAMEL, 1990; HEENE and SANCHEZ, 1997); accumulation of knowledge (ARRÈGLE, 1995; WRIGHT, and VAN BOUTY, 1995) and management of intellectual capital (STEWART, 1998).

Brandão (2001, p. 9) also emphasizes people as a decisive resource to organizational success, that is, the search for such competitiveness, "companies have a need to count with highly capable professionals and able to cope with the market threats and opportunities."

The emphasis on people causes changes in various organizational processes exercising influence upon people, implicating the need to change their behavior – especially with regard to the competence and flexibility (DAVEL; VERGARA, 2001, COUTINHO; FERRAZ, 1995, BAUMANN et al., 1996, apud SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006) – and its internal environment as a whole, in which is included the Human Resource Management (CASTELLS, 1999; HAMMER; CHAMPY, 1994, HAMEL, PRAHALAD, 1997, apud SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006).

Therefore, it is necessary to establish that the personnel administration, based on the execution of tasks (Personnel Department), present significant differences in relation to the activity of Human Resource Management, which is linked to the development of major subsystems – namely: Provision (HR planning, recruitment, selection and integration of people); HR Application (analysis and descriptions of jobs, career management and performance evaluation); HR Maintenance (salary and benefits policy) and HR Development (HR Training and Development) (CHIAVENATO, 2004) – and is therefore more suited to the new internal and external organizational environment (LEGGE, 1995, ULRICH, 1998, apud SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006). Thus, the ideal is to find ways to manage and invest in human capital, enabling the alignment of the potential of this process with organizational goals (DAVEL; VERGARA, 2001, apud SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006).

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According to the review of Ferris, Hochwarter, Buckley, Harrell Cook and Frink (1999 apud OLIVEIRA, A. J, 2011, p. 652) Human Resource Management has evolved significantly from a "maintenance function, with little financial impact, to a source of sustainable competitive advantage of organizations." Under the same perspective, Becker and Huselid (1998 apud OLIVEIRA, A. J, 2011) argue that the evolution of Human Resource Management, to the strategic level, comes from the recognition that a workforce that is skilled, motivated and aligned with the needs the organization can provide, an asset that adds value to organizational processes in consonance with their goals and consequently that meets the requirements of the current market.

Ante the described context is noted that the market has given greater importance to intellectual capital and knowledge management, that is, the people who make up this organization and how they can contribute to building a chain of values in the enterprises. To follow this trend, a new management model – where the agent responsible is the HR — has been increasingly practiced by organizations in which intangible assets, more qualitative issues and values are valued and considered relevant when it comes to business strategy , (TORRES, 2007).

The constant changes in the environment — internal and external — of the companies have therefore redefined the role of HR. For Ulrich (2000, apud ALBUQUERQUE, LEITE, 2009) work in the field of HR and/or Human Resource Management means not only moving beyond the operational work to the strategic, but accept responsibility for achieving results and, at the same time, accept the necessary commitments to achieve them.

However, according Bosquetti et al. (2009), despite the existence of many advocates of focus change on the role of HR — emphasizing its strategic role for the success of the organization — there are few studies on how the integration process of people management strategy occurs with organizational strategy and how the practices performed by HR are perceived and evaluated.

From this perspective, this article aims to highlight the strategic role of HR and how the contribution of their practices — and alignment of its major subsystems — may be associated with Organizational Performance Management. Therefore, it was performed an exploratory research with quantitative approach in companies of different segments in Ribeirão Preto and region.

The specific objectives of the study are: to emphasize the strategic role of HR in the studied organizations; identify HR practices carried out in the companies studied; (through its major subsystems); demonstrate the possible associations of such HR practices to Management of Organizational Performance; propose possible improvements, in order to enhance the competitive advantages of participating companies; foster new studies related to the topic and thus help to establish HR as a strategic partner of the companies.

2. Theoretical Foundation

2.1. The Strategic Role of HR

In order to better discuss the importance of HR in organizations, it is necessary to rethink first, the historical path and the main basic concepts for the analysis of changes occurred (TORRES, 2007). An important point to mention is that despite treatment of HR as a strategic agent have appeared in the literature in the early 80s, there are peculiarities in the Brazilian context, as pointed out by several authors (LACOMBE; TONELLI, 2001). Such

peculiarities were related to prevailing macroeconomic conditions, which did not evidence the necessity of the changes advocated, making the implementation of HR as a strategic approach to be initiated in Brazil, with years of delay (ALBUQUERQUE, 1987; DUTRA, 1993; FISHER, 1998 LACOMBE apud; TONELLI, 2001).

Today's role of HR has been influenced by countless schools and management approaches over the years. But only since 1990 new paths to be explored appeared, in order to promote relevant changes in attitudes, essential to understanding the issues involving people's lives in organizational environments at that time. (ALBUQUERQUE, LEITE, 2009).

Although yet to be found — and still are — HR professionals acting as Personnel Department, that is, directed to functions of payroll, legal issues and rigid postures supported by numerous bureaucratic controls, the HR professional, of the 1990s to the present day, has encompassed a broader view. Proposing to a cultural transformation and seeking to join a Model of Commitment of people with organizational objectives (ALBUQUERQUE, LEITE, 2009).

Following the same line of reasoning regarding adherence to that model, Lacombe (2006) argues that the involvement of HR professionals in the strategy elaboration, the process of communicating the strategy, the role of the leadership of line managers in strategy implementation and culture management enable the commitment of those involved and provide better organizational results.

According to Ulrich (2000, apud ALBUQUERQUE, LEITE, 2009, p. 9) creating competitive organizations is in the way "people are treated, the professionals are controlled and work of an organization is coordinated." Therefore, it is suggested that competitiveness is due to the enhancement and redefinition of HR that — in order to architect and integrate organizational capabilities and develop their practices — enables the creation of values and generation of results.

Still for Ulrich (2000, apud ALBUQUERQUE, LEITE, 2009, p. 12) the HR professional, aiming to add value, can be defined in four roles: [...] First, the administration of HR strategies and second, the administration of the company's infrastructure, thirdly, the administration of employee contribution and fourth, the management of transformation and change [...]. "This definition makes up the profile of the HR professional expected nowadays in organizations and consistent with the idea of Torres (2007, p. 7) when he says: "The strategic model of Human Resources management has been currently the role sought by organizations." This model can be characterized by the appreciation of the strategic objectives of the organization and interpretation of human beings as a source of potentials (strategic resource), able to cope in a sustainable manner, the challenges of the contemporary company environment (BOSQUETTI et al., 2009).

For this it is necessary that HR policies take as basic premises:

[...] the appreciation of human talents, attracting and retaining high-potential people and qualification for the job, creation of favorable conditions for individual motivation and mobilization of the groups around organizational goals; possibility of professional development in the company; offering incentives tied to results obtained by the team and adaptation of integrated human resource to the company's reality and to the context of action (ALBURQUERQUE, 2009, apud BOSQUETTI et al., 2009, p. 51).

From this quote, it is possible to suggest that HR professionals are able to play the role of strategic partners and add value to the organization, provided that doing so they understand the workings of the business, also, being able to adjust HR policies and practices

of major subsystems, to changes in the business context (BECKER, HUSELID; ULRICH, 2001, apud BOSQUETTI et al. 2009). Corroborating with the view of the authors, Torres (2007) states that the HR professional must be prepared to align the human skills to business strategies, but for that, it is necessary to capacitate managers with the aim that they are the stimulators and multipliers of this process. Also cites:

The mightiest initiative of HR managers (BECKER; HUSELID; ULRICH, 2001, p. 18-19) to ensure their strategic contribution is the development of a measurement system that demonstrates convincingly the impact of HR on the performance of the company (TORRES, 2007, p. 26).

Yet from the perspective of the above quote, Barbosa; Ferraz; Avila (2004, apud BOSQUETTI et al., 2009) consider that the legitimacy of HR practices in the decision making/strategic sphere imposes to the professionals of that area, the great challenge of proving their effectiveness with measurable results for the organization

Studies of Fleury, Fleury (2004, apud BOSQUETTI et al., 2009) emphasize that currently, HR practices, go far beyond its subsystems. Causing it to care more with the objective of attracting, retaining, evaluating and developing the skills needed, seeking not only the results of the area, but the achievement of organizational goals.

Ratifying the arguments espoused so far, it is worth mentioning how Ken Carrig, CEO of SYSCO Corporation¹, described the future role of HR (CASCIO; BOUDREAU, 2010, p. 42):

When I look at the future of HR, it is facing to where we can add value to the organization and our customers. We need the human resources function to see beyond the business in which it operates, seeing the clients we serve. And in doing so, it cannot focus only on cost and productivity of employees; it must start questioning what it takes to add value to that customer. [...] With good HR practices, there is much to add.

Corroborating and complementing the above description it is valid to add quote from BOSQUETTI et al. (2009, p. 52): "when the participation of HR professionals in strategy formation, there is a general understanding that this is the new role of HR."

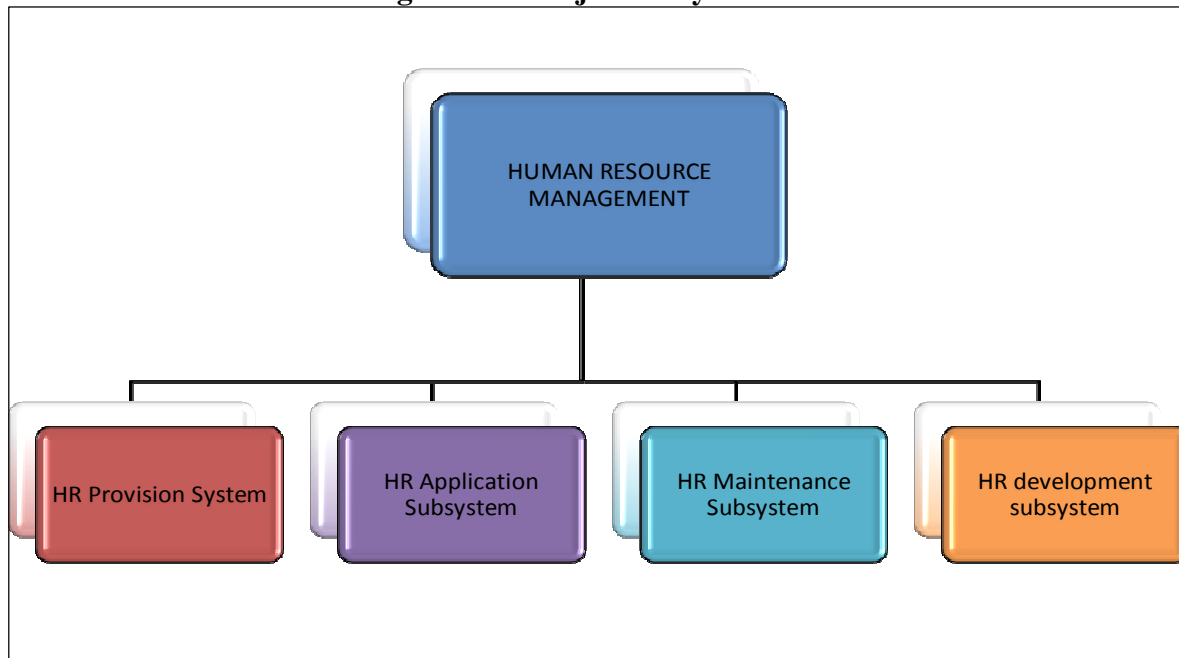
2.2. HR practices: main subsystems

Chiavenato (2004) argues that intellectual capital can be considered an intangible asset, whose traditional accounting procedures have difficulties in measuring. This capital — which people hold — represents a competitive advantage for organizations, which should therefore worry about select, train, evaluate and develop their employees, in order to prepare them, so that they are able to face changes and innovations imposed by the context. Thus, it will become possible to effectively add value and maintain competitive in such a competitive market. From this perspective, HR practices — aligned to the main subsystems — "constitute the inexhaustible source of these values and human talent capable of forming the brain and central nervous system of the company [...]" (CHIAVENATO, 2004, p. 12).

¹ Society for Human Resource Management Foundation (2004). HR alignment: The link to business results (DVD). Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management Foundation (BOUDREAU, CASCIO, 2010).

It is necessary to emphasize that, before talking about HR practices through its major subsystems it must be understood that they are interrelated and form a larger system, called HR Management, according to what is demonstrated in the figure below:

Figure 1 — Major Subsystems HR



Source: Compiled by author adapted from Chiavenato (2004, p. 13)

In order to detail the Figure 1, adapted from Chiavenato (2004), it is confirmed that the major subsystems consist of HR Provision (planning, recruitment, selection and integration of people); HR Application (job analysis and descriptions, career management and performance evaluation); HR Maintenance (compensation policy and benefits) and HR Development (Training and Development of HR). In short, they relate to "attracting, evaluating, retaining, and developing talent" and can become tools to enable the expansion of the organization's results. For that to occur, they must be "articulated and balanced" between them, and be "integrated and tuned" to organizational goals and strategies. This way, it is possible to correlate them to performance management, in order to achieve sustainable growth of the organization (CHIAVENATO, 2004, p. 13).

There are many relevant theories that define and/or describe the major subsystems of HR. However, in this chapter, they will not be detailed. yet, they will be associated with the management of organizational performance, since this is one of the goals of this article.

a) HR Provision Subsystem constitutes the "front door" of people in organizations (CHIAVENATO, 2004, p.17), because it has as main practices, HR planning (control of staff rotation and absenteeism rates, linked to conducting Ceasing Interview), recruitment, selection and integration of people. Its practice is therefore responsible for sizing the number of people will be necessary for the organization (ZACARELLI; TEIXEIRA, 2008), by seeking new employees in the market, selecting them according to the desired profile and integrate them into the new environment, seeking engagement thereof. In short, this subsystem allows the candidate to establish an "affective commitment" with the organization, wishing to remain affiliated to it in order to accomplish their personal goals (MOWDAY,

STEERS, PORTER, 1979, apud ZACARELLI; TEIXEIRA, 2008, p. 129). Thus, the practice of HR Provision subsystem will directly influence the performance of the organization, by selecting the right person for the right job, (CHIAVENATO, 2004), it will reach efficiency and also decrease the costs with frequent and/or future hires, terminations, integration and initial training (ZACARELLI; TEIXEIRA, 2008).

b) HR Application Subsystem covers the topics of job analysis and descriptions, career management and performance evaluation. In short, these practices permit to improve the perception of the employee as to their role within the structure, a better understanding that he or she is responsible for their development in conjunction with the organization, better understanding of the objectives of their work and its importance to the overall results of the organization. The topics covered in this subsystem, if well applied, from effective practices, comprise also the basis for the remuneration policy, considered the main responsible for the maintenance of human assets in the company (WOOD JR.; PICARELLI FILHO, 2009). Moreover, "entrust constructively management and employee in terms of attitude and behavior" (NASSIF, 2008, p. 303), aimed at ensuring and promoting people's commitment to achieving the goals of the organization (BIANCHI; QUISHIDA, 2009) .

c) HR Maintenance Subsystem consists of practices related to wages and benefits policy. According to Flannery, Hofrichter; Platten, (1997 apud HANASHIRO, 2008, p. 175) "The wage is one of the most effective tools we have currently to motivate a company in a changing process." The importance of the benefits, according to Wood Jr.; Picarelli Filho (2009, p.82), "on the impact on the company's image in the community," since some companies stand out by offering their employees' exceptional advantages", aimed at attracting and retaining of people. Moreover, "the benefits have a direct impact on the quality of life of employees, influencing their current and future security and on their living conditions" (WOOD JR.; PICARELLI FILHO, 2009, p. 83), which will certainly, influence on their individual performance and, from a macro view, the performance of the organization as a whole.

d) HR Training and Development Subsystem is related to training practices, education and skills development of the members of the organizations in order to continuously obtain improvement of the professionals and consequently of the organization (LEITE et al., 2009). From the training and development practices, also called T&D, it is possible to obtain greater focus on skills of employees; enable professional growth thereof, because of the improvement in organizational environment and increased self—esteem, facilitate the development of training programs, in addition to promoting improvement "of psychosocial work conditions" (MARCONDES, 2008, p. 263). In short, these practices can be described from the perspective of Paiva (2000, apud MARCONDES, 2008, p. 262) when he states that the training aims at "the acquisition and improvement of knowledge and skills to perform certain tasks in the short term while development has as its purpose the improvement of people's potential for superior performance in the future. Complementing, Leite et al. (2009) can associate this subsystem to reaching the organization's objectives and improved organizational performance management, stating that the training and development of people, make them follow processes, become autonomous, take risks, use personal power, develop the ability to work with flexibility and creativity.

2.3. Management of Organizational Performance

The current context of organizations is characterized by rapid and continuous adoption of different and new information, besides influences from the external market that

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cause constant changes and directly interfere in the business (TELÓ, 2001) and, especially, in the organization's performance. Such interference brings, according to Drucker (1999), quite significant effects on organizations such as decentralization, outsourcing, reduction of hierarchical levels, acting in distant geographical points, very different work ties, among others. The listed effects require of the organizations the need to question the traditional structures and create new structures to deal with this turbulent market (TELÓ, 2001).

According to Jensen and Sage (2000, apud TELÓ, 2001) studies on organizational performance have been evolving continuously and awakening the vital concern in defining indicators to assess/measure organizational performance, since the performance management translates strategy and makes explicit its suitability, or otherwise, facing the external and internal context of the organization. According to Kaplan and Norton (1997, apud SILVA, 2010, p. 50) "if performance is not being measured, it is not being managed." These authors add, also, that if the organization seeks to "survive and prosper in the Knowledge Age, it must use a performance management system aligned with its strategy" (SILVA 2010, p. 50).

According to Teló (2001) traditional actions that aim at measuring performance, such as "investment return and productivity/person, focused on control and originated from the widespread financial function" (TELÓ, 2001 p. 25), may give some clue related to the current performance and growth of the company. However, such measures do not show evidence of results coming from the improvements, innovations and investments to the organizational development. Thus, such traditional actions do not allow for a proper accounting of intangible assets and fail to adequately prioritize projects for innovative products and processes, the training of employees and improving customer satisfaction, among others, which would contribute to the continuous performance.

In face of that described, it is necessary to generate a set of indicators — including those measured in HR — that go beyond traditional forms of performance measure and prioritize those that point to development trends and results of the organization (KAPLAN; NORTON, 1997, apud SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006). For this, you must bring together several organizational performance vectors aligned to organizational strategy. In order to follow this trend it is necessary to carry out the Performance Management, that is, perform further studies, in which more refined metrics used are capable to promote effective improvements in the transformation of its strategy and concrete initiatives (TELÓ, 2001).

Based on the studies of Sink and Tuttle (1993, apud SILVA, 2010), performance management can be considered an open system, since the organization is constantly adapting to changes in the environment to which it is inserted. Management is therefore designed to "stimulate control and performance of long-term goals in order to make the organization compete, survive and grow" (SILVA, 2010, p. 48). However, for that you need to respect the values and principles of the organization and consider conducting continuous feedback as essential to the evaluation of the measurement process by which it is possible to verify whether the organization is achieving the realization of its vision, referring to what is desired to become (SILVA, 2010).

In short the management of organizational performance — provided that it is aligned with the practices of People Management — has become essential for companies wishing to survive in the current market, because that way, they will be able to create competitive advantage and build sustainable measures (SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006). To Muritiba; S. N. (2009), in the described context, HR or People Management professionals, has increasingly been identified as essential to the process of development and implementation of strategies able to create competitive advantages and overcome the pressures of the market,

October 01-02nd, 2012

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consistent with the skills and competencies that the organization needs to develop value-creating activities (intangible assets) (SILVA, 2010).

According to Kaplan, Norton, Becker et al., (2001 apud LACOMBE, 2006), the process of evaluation and measurement of HR practices can promote greater transparency, better communication of strategy and better alignment between policies and management practices. Such a system of assessment/measurement promotes an effort to simplify and translate the strategy into operational terms, in addition to converting strategy into a continuous process.

Aiming to associate the Performance Management theories proposed by Kaplan and Norton (1997, apud SILVA; BASQUES; FACCO, 2006) and complement them by the theories of Becker, Huselid and Ulrich (2001), one can affirm the importance of understanding the process of value creation, which leads to HR practices or people management to add value to the company. This understanding generates the logical understanding that the HR area, developing practices from major subsystems (provision, implementation, maintenance and development of HR) (MURITIBA, SN, 2009, CHIAVENATO, 2004), has assumed a key role in organizations. It is necessary to attract and hire the right people, train them, motivate them, keep them and instruct them properly, as well as, keep continuous the learning process. The organizational culture being influenced by this process and therefore being geared to the learning and growth motivates people to criticize and question the context. Such motivation generates a continuous flow of ideas and suggestions, which leads to the improvement of internal processes. These, in turn, cause the enhancement of products and services, and make it possible to increase customer satisfaction, making them loyal and, moreover, increase the performance of the company in the market. What, therefore, reflects directly on financial results, such as profit, income and investment return (ARVESON, 1999, apud Hernandez; CRUZ, FALCÃO, 2000). This way, it is possible to relate HR practices to Organizational Performance Management, determining chances of success in the future (SILVA, 2010).

3. Methodology

The use of books and scientific articles to compose the bibliographical analysis made possible a more comprehensive range of phenomena already studied. What contributed to the completion of data analysis in a supported way (GIL, 2010).

The study was based on an exploratory research that for Godoy (2008, p. 360), aims to provide greater "familiarity of the researcher with a particular phenomenon seeking to make it more explicit and gather information needed to examine the different aspects involved in it [...] ", enabling researchers to construct significant hypotheses for future research development. The approach chosen was quantitative, in which, for Lakatos (2010, apud FURLAN, 2010, p. 32), "the researchers avail themselves of broad samples and numerical information, using statistical models to explain the data." For this, a data collection was performed, using a structured questionnaire as an instrument consisting of 34 (thirty four) questions (with 7 (seven) open questions and 27 (twenty seven) closed questions). For the questionnaire creation content (the subject investigated) and form (structure and appearance of the instrument) (GODOY, 2008) were considered. The main HR subsystems – provision, application, maintenance and development of HR — and topics to which they relate, based on what suggests the theory of Chiavenato (2004), constituted the content. The form was characterized by the tool offered in Google Docs, which allows respondents to access the

survey through a link. As the questionnaires are being answered, the tool automatically generates graphs that facilitate the monitoring of responses and further analysis.

To carry out the research contacts were made via telephone — with companies located in the city of Ribeirão Preto and cities in its region — aimed at explaining the information about the research, collect additional information and solve possible doubts of the participants. The link² of the questioner and also a file containing the same form – as option of a more comfortable and possible choosing for the respondent — were sent by e-mail. 43 (forty three) companies were contacted – from November/2011 to January/2012 – and the choice of the sample was by convenience, that is, from professional contacts of the author of the research. However, only 20 (twenty) of the contacted companies responded to the questioner. Four of the respondents were disregarded, because they presented answers that could distort the data of this study. Therefore the answers provided by 16 (sixteen) companies were analyzed.

With reference to the data, techniques of descriptive statistics were applied, which allowed the investigation of HR practices carried out in the companies studied, besides showing the perception of respondents about the association of such practices to the strategies and to management of organizational performance. Thus, it was possible to also emphasize the strategic role of HR in organizations.

4. Analysis of results

Before analyzing the results it is necessary to qualify the sample survey participant, according to data available in the chart below.

²<<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?formkey=dE5WWHVxY3NZZ0FucXgwV1g1ZkRjcEE6MQ>>

Chart 1 — Data about the sample

Company	Time of existence	Performance Area (segment)	Number of employees (2011)	City
1	13 years	Metallurgy	86	Sertãozinho
2	25 years	Distribution and Retail of Photographic Materials	260	Porto Ferreira
3	35 years	Civil Construction	80	Ribeirão Preto
4	11 years	Distribution packaging, disposables and cleaning products - Retail and Wholesale	35	Ribeirão Preto
5	25 years	Mercado Imobiliário	220	Ribeirão Preto
6	Mais de 50 years	Sugarcane	8400	Pradópolis
7	23 years	Pulp and Paper Industry	634	Luiz Antônio
8	20 years	Distributor of industrial automation products	80	Jaboticabal
9	40 years	Seeds	600	Jardinópolis
10	45 years	Veterinary pharmaceutical industry	944	Cravinhos
11	21 years	Development of an integrated management system (ERP) - Retail, Wholesale and Distribution	206	Ribeirão Preto
12	28 years	Metallurgy and services	80	Dumont
13	47 years	Services	28	Ribeirão Preto
14	6 years	Manufacture of paints	6	Ribeirão Preto
15	15 years	Hotel/Services	89	Ribeirão Preto
16	37 years	Civil construction	148	Ribeirão Preto

Source: Compiled by the author

Participating companies belong to different areas, allowing greater scope to the subject, as a general overview was outlined with regard to identifying which HR practices are applied and how they are associated with performance management, in these companies. Besides various branches of activity, the sample is composed by companies of different sizes, this factor did not affect the results because to tabulate data, generate and interpret graphs of the survey, it was found that the development of HR practices does not, necessarily, have relation to the size of the company. With respect to the environment chosen for the research, it is worth mentioning that Ribeirão Preto is one of the centers of the region with a greater growth rate in Brazil, based on the diversification of the economy and quality of life. That region is composed of more than 80 (eighty) municipalities, where 3 million inhabitants

occupy an area of 30.000 km². Complementing the other characteristics, the per capita income of Ribeirão Preto is nearly twice the national average³, which has contributed to the growth and visibility that the city has achieved in recent years.

For better analysis assimilation, some concepts will be resumed, as described in the theoretical framework. The results were grouped, from the strategic role of HR management and its major subsystems, along with the topics covered by them, using as a base the theory of Chiavenato (2004).

The analysis of the results allowed the identification of key HR practices carried out by companies, as well as its applications and possible associations with performance management.

The data presented in Table 1 refer to questions taken from the questioner, which sought to investigate the perception of companies, regarding the strategic role of HR. From the table, it is possible to state that the perception of company managers is positive about the strategic role of HR and their practices, as in 12 (twelve) of the 16 (sixteen) companies, HR professionals attended meetings that dealt with strategic planning, in which the practices are carried out and placed on the agenda and considered strategic elements. In addition, 14 (fourteen) of the 16 (sixteen) companies consider that HR practices influenced the results of 2010 and 2011. That confirms the theory that assuming the professional role of HR currently means moving beyond the operational work to the strategic, that is, means accepting responsibility for achieving results and at the same time accept the necessary responsibility to actually reach them (ULRICH, 2000, apud ALBUQUERQUE, LEITE, 2009).

Table 1 — The strategic role of HR and the influence of their practice

Questions from the questioner used to collect data	Number of Respondents	
	YES	NO
Do the managers of the company, in which they work, include HR professionals in the meetings that discuss the organization's strategic planning?	12	4
If the previous answer was "YES": Do HR practices are placed on the agenda as organizational strategies?	12	4
Do you consider that HR practices influenced the results achieved by the company over the past two years (2010 and 2011)?	14	2

Source: Compiled by the author

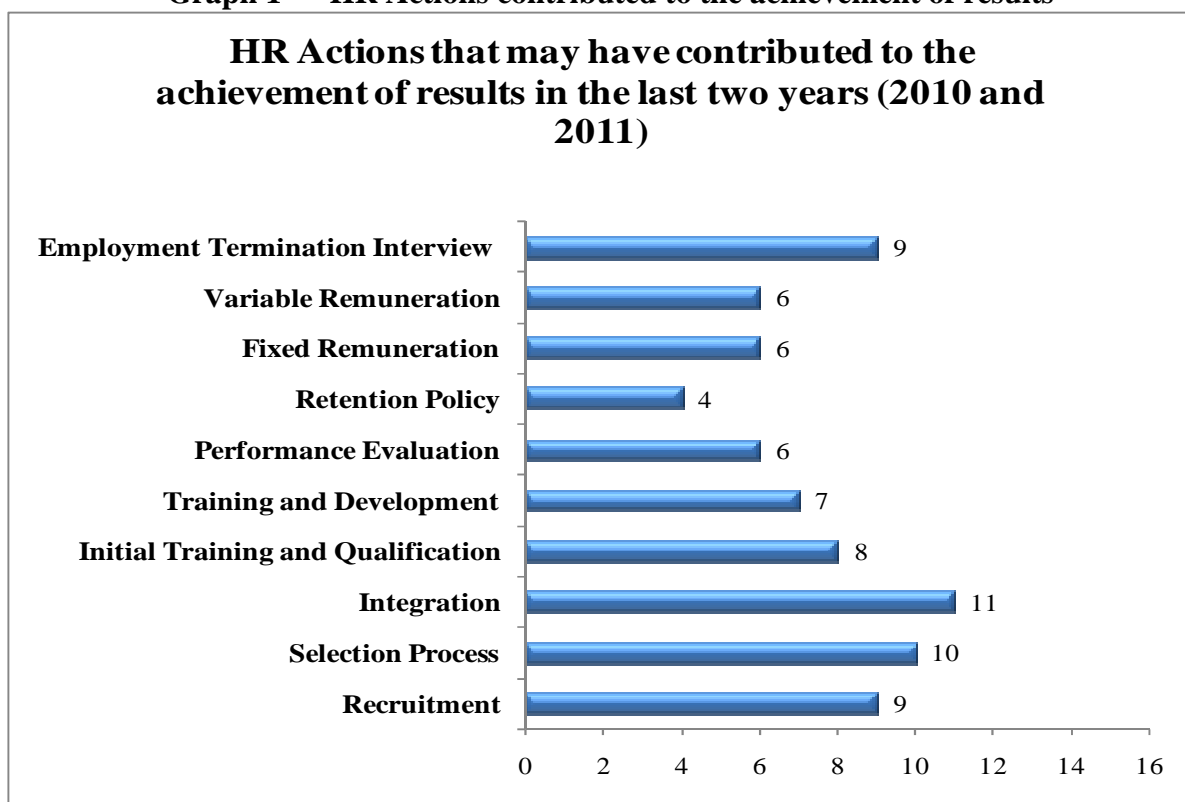
Graph 1, which aims to demonstrate HR practices, contributed to the achievement of the results of the companies. The graph was based on the responses of 14 (fourteen) companies, because as shown in the last question contained in Table 1, they believe that the actions taken by HR, can actually contribute to performance management. By the data analysis, it is possible to conclude that they indicate greater emphasis on practices related to

³ Available: <<http://www.ribeiraopreto.sp.gov.br/crp/i71regiao.htm>>. Access: 2012 Jan. 21.

the integration of people to processes of selection and recruitment and employment termination interview. In short, the subsystem Provision of Human Resources is recognized as the most relevant with regard to the contributions of HR to organizational performance management, from the point of view of the studied companies.

To the authors Chiavenato (2004), Zacarelli; Teixeira (2008) to select the right person for the right job and integrate that person into the organization's environment makes them reach – in less time – the expected effectiveness. With this theory, the authors reinforce the idea that this subsystem can directly influence the performance of the organization, because the employee's effectiveness in the delivery of satisfactory results in lower costs with employment termination, frequent and/or new hires integration and introductory training.

Graph 1 — HR Actions contributed to the achievement of results



Source: Compiled by the author

In order to facilitate understanding, Table 2 shows in a panoramic way, some of the HR practices developed by the companies studied and subsystems to which they are related. The questions contained in that table were withdrawn from the questioner used as a tool for data collection. From the results it is possible to show that most companies consider important to integrate and socialize new employees to company culture — 13 (thirteen) of the 16 (sixteen) companies – and consider important to train them to develop their activities — 12 (twelve) of the 16 (sixteen) companies — and also to investigate the causes that led to the rupture of contracts of those through employment termination interviews — 13 (thirteen) of the 16 (sixteen) companies. The results also indicate the need to further develop practices related to the implementation and maintenance of the subsystems of HR, which is consistent with the information shown in Graph 1, in which the participating companies do not consider

remuneration policies, practices of retention and performance evaluation, may have contributed to organizational outcomes relating to 2010 and 2011.

Table 2 — HR Practices for the major subsystems

Questions from the questioner used to collect data	Related Subsystems	Number of Respondents	
		YES	NO
Does the company conduct integration and socialization process?	HR Provision	13	3
Does the company conduct employment termination interview?	HR Provision	13	3
Does the company apply performance evaluation in employees?	HR Application	6	10
Is there a leader training program in the company?	HR Application	7	9
Is there a Variable Remuneration Program in the company?	HR Maintenance	9	7
Does the company conduct initial training and qualification for new employees?	HR Development	12	4

Source: Compiled by author

Following the same line of reasoning of Table 2 and aiming to facilitate the assimilation of readers, the other results were grouped from the major subsystems of HR, along with related practices. Thus it will be possible to identify not only what, but how and by whom the HR's actions are developed in the sample.

a) Provision of HR Subsystem

Regarding the practice of staff recruiting, it is possible to list the most frequently used means. Eleven (11) companies chose newspaper advertisements and indications, and nine of them opted for ads on recruitment websites. Networking sites (social networks) and employment agencies (consultants) are also used means, however, with fewer respondents — 6 (six) and 7 (seven) companies, respectively. Referring to the most frequently used methods it is important to mention the theory of Chiavenato (2004) in which he says that the indications exert influence on time and cost factors. This influence is due to the fact that some stages of the process can be suppressed, because usually the indicated candidate already knows the company and spontaneously expressed interest in working on it. However, if poorly managed, and if evidenced the lack of criteria and postponement in the selection processes, this method may lose its credibility. As for the ads in newspapers, still from the perspective of Chiavenato (2004, p. 75), this mean can be considered "one of the most efficient techniques to attract candidates", however, it is more quantitative than qualitative,

since it is directed to general public. Should be used or not, depending on the "degree of selectivity that is intended to apply."

As regards to the practice of people selection, the interview is the most widely used method, being chosen by 16 (sixteen) respondent companies. This result reinforces the idea of the authors Posthuma; Moregeson; Campion (2002 apud ROBBINS; JUDGE; SOBRAL, 2010, p. 536) when they state that "among all the tools that a company uses to differentiate job candidates, the interview remains the most used." The research also showed that, in the studied companies, those responsible for conducting the selection process are from the HR department and the manager of the requesting department, which had 11 (eleven) and 10 (ten) respondents, respectively. The result highlights the strategic role of HR, as it is responsible for one of most common practices as action that may have contributed to organizational outcomes (Graph 1).

The group of organizations involved in this study showed concern for new employees, because practices related to the integration of people are conducted by 13 (thirteen) of the 16 (sixteen) participating companies, as shown above in Table 2. As a means to integrate new employees 13 (thirteen) companies use the presentation of HR policies; 11 (eleven) companies direct the employee to the sector, which will develop its activities and present the products and/or services and 10 (ten) companies make visits to key sectors the organization. According to Chiaventato (2004), with the application of this practice, employees will feel part of the organization and thus more confident to conduct their activities. Moreover, a good integration results in a reduction of adaptation time, and employees satisfaction/motivation; stimulation of to interpersonal relationship and on the incentive for reduction on rates of work accidents. Although concerned with employees' integration, the results indicate two factors that require caution by the companies. The first consists of only 6 (six) studied companies include the requesting department managers in the integration processes, because according to Chiavenato (2004), to accompany the introductory training and learning development, managers can create a healthy and suitable climate in their team and make of this practice a management strategy, which certainly will influence the performance. The second consists of only 8 (eight) companies presenting safety standards, and the explanation of these standards can reduce the occurrence of work accidents and thus lower rates of absenteeism and costs generated by the absence of the employee. According to Cascio; Boudreau (2010) the consequences of this absence cause the execution of the work of the absent by other employees who feel overworked, generally, a process needs to be interrupted and activities are delayed or fail to be realized.

The dissemination of information of the integration process is performed by HR in 10 (ten) companies ratifying the essential and strategic role of the HR professional on the organizations. Therefore, the HR professional is the responsible agent for one of the practices that contributed most to the results and organizational performance, as demonstrated on Graph 1.

Although control of employees' rotation rate represents the reduction of a substantial cost to businesses due to the costs of termination and replacement, only 6 (six) of them realize it. Cascio; Boudreau (2010, p. 92) state that should also be considered, "the costs of loss of relationships and contacts, productivity of the new substitute while he or she learns the value of time that their colleagues spend to teach him."

As for absenteeism in companies, 14 (fourteen) of them reported that the Medical Leave is the main cause. Controlling this index means, according to Cascio; Boudreau (2010), to reduce or eliminate costs associated with absent themselves (benefits, wages), costs of

overtime compensation (to substitutes or temporary employees); increase supervision time (referring to problems management caused by lack of employee), and reduce the quality of work (stopped machines, poor quality in customer service due to lack of experience and/or knowledge).

Both employee rotation and absenteeism may have their causes revealed through the termination interview; a practice of the HR provision subsystem able to control and measure the results of human resource practices developed in the organization. However, to achieve this efficiency, it is necessary that the interview is well prepared and contains topics relevant to diagnosis (CHIAVENATO, 2004). It was found that 13 (thirteen) of the companies performed this practice and 11 (eleven) of these 13 (thirteen) respondents concluded that the largest number of employees evasion, is due to the fact that they found opportunities with better wage. This conclusion reinforces the idea Wood Jr.; Picarelli Filho (2009), which considers the remuneration primarily responsible for the maintenance of human assets in the company, yet they alert to the need for a transformation in the way, the salary is usually seen, that is, "as a factor of cost, to a view of remuneration as a factor of improvement of the organization, thruster of improvement processes and increase of competitiveness" (WOOD JR. PICARELLI FILHO, 2009, p. 37).

b) HR Application Subsystem

Ten (10) of the companies do not develop the practice of performance evaluation, which aims to assist in decision making of managers, as they relate to promotions, transfers and dismissals, as well as assists in needs assessment of technical and behavioral training (ROBBINS, JUDGE; SOBRAL, 2010). The application of performance appraisals interferes in the management of organizational performance, because by its results, it is possible to identify the skills and competencies of employees, for which improvement programs can be developed and consequently provide the development of the team in pursuit of excellence. Furthermore, the process enables the alignment of expectations, since it causes providing feedback from employee and from the company, making the communication channel more accessible and thus more effective (ROBBINS; JUDGE; SOBRAL, 2010).

Another important practice this subsystem consists of creating a training program for leaders, related to the concept of career management. In the survey, only 7 (seven) of the companies have some program aimed at capacitating their employees and motivation for professional self-development. The most used mean for this training is corporate training, chosen by 6 (six) of the companies. Complementing the concept of career management, Bianchi; Quishida (2009) argue that the responsibility for career belongs to people, not to the organizations, however, the last ones have assignments and responsibilities and by fulfilling them, provide opportunities to the employee. This way, it is possible to develop a people management composed of policies, processes and instruments capable to ensure and favor the involvement of people with the achievement of organizational goals.

c) HR Maintenance Subsystem

Regarding practices related to fixed remuneration policy, 10 (ten) companies have job descriptions, while 11 (eleven) have a structured pay scale. Results that indicate the existence of a functional remuneration, or by positions, which is the "most traditional form used by companies to compensate their employees for their work, representing, still today, the anchor, that is, the largest share of the total mix of remuneration." (WOOD JR.; PICARELLI FILHO, 2009, p. 49). These data lead also to an understanding of how the subsystems are interrelated, since the practices of analysis and job descriptions and salary structure fit as practices of the HR application subsystem, but provide the basis for the remuneration policy,

October 01-02nd, 2012

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which is related to HR maintenance Subsystem. Moreover, the practices of analysis and job descriptions and salary structure provide important data to the HR provision subsystem, since the maintenance practices of the employees interfere in rotation rates and consequently on the costs that their high rates can generate and thus interfere with the performance of the organization.

The variable practice of remuneration is developed by nine respondent companies, adopting for that, granting commissions (three companies) and participation on profit and results (four companies), as the most used methods. This type of compensation generates several benefits to the organization such as greater flexibility in costs management (fixed and variable) of labor, better performance management and greater stimulus to behavior directed to organizational success. It can also be associated to the performance of employees and to reach goals. Therefore, it is a self-sustainable practice and quite strategic for strategies planning and the achievement of overall goals of the organization (Hanashiro, 2008).

The sample showed concern about the affiliation of the employees because they offer a number of benefits, in order to retain talent, among which stand out the health insurance (15 companies), dental services (10 companies), the transport voucher (14 companies), contract with pharmacies and meal allowances (9 companies). Complementing Wood Jr.; Picarelli Filho (2009, p. 83) defend that "the benefits have a direct impact on the quality of life of employees, influencing their current and future security and on their living conditions." To Hanashiro (2008), these benefits are essential for attraction and retention of skilled labor in the Brazilian scenario. They will avoid expenses with new hires and especially, loss of skills and competencies that contribute to the development of business strategies.

d) HR Development Subsystem

The preparation of new employees to practice their activities occurs in 12 (twelve) companies. The gathering of feedback and Individual Development Plan stood out — and in 10 (ten) and 5 (five) companies, respectively – as practice of development of people. The results denote the concern of these in training and developing its employees. Trainings are intended to provide the acquisition and improvement of knowledge and skills, which improve the results, interfering on the quality of delivery and providing continuous improvement of the employees. The development aims to improve people's potential for superior performance in the future. With the joining of the two factors it is possible to optimize the skills of employees, enabling them, professional growth, increased self-esteem and greater commitment of those involved with their activities in pursuit of organizational goals and objectives (MARCONDES, 2008).

5. Final Consideration

During a survey of bibliographic references it was found that most of the works brings as a great challenge to HR professionals and researchers in the field, the relationship of HR practices to organizational performance. This relationship has been identified as one of the most relevant in this field of knowledge, as demonstrated the work of Wright et al. (2001, apud OLIVEIRA; LIMONGI-FRANCE, 2005).

The quantitative study allowed identification and analysis HR practices developed in the participating companies, based in the major subsystems of HR such as: HR Provision (planning, recruitment, selection and integration of people); HR Application (analysis and description of positions, career management and performance evaluation); HR Maintenance (wages and benefits policy) and HR Development (HR Development and Training). Was also possible to investigate how HR practices are performed and who are the main agents

October 01-02nd, 2012

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responsible for executing them in those organizations. The strategic role of HR — and the association of their practices to possible contributions to the management of organizational performance – It was possible to demonstrate through the description of the results uncovered by the research and the relationship of these with the grounded theory from the literature review.

This research demonstrated, through an overview, that although most of the studied companies develop HR practices, they do not make use of all the possibilities that such management practices offer and could influence the performance of the organization. It is also noted that companies do not correlate the actions of HR to all subsystems, that is, some practices are isolated and can thus jeopardize the results.

The influence of the political, economic and social context in the country could be noted in the analysis of results. The subsystem provision of human resources was recognized - by most companies — as the most relevant, with respect to the contributions of HR to management of organizational performance. Such recognition may be related mainly to low unemployment rates, caused by the growth of the economy. Based on data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)⁴ – released in January 2012 – the average unemployment rate in Brazil recorded 4.7% in December 2011 (start of data collection), which represents the smallest rate of the entire series of survey, which began in March 2002. A buoyant economy, due to Brazil – currently – to be in the ranking of the ten largest economies in the world, led the company to increase its production and, consequently, their demands of skilled manpower. Thus, at the time the data were collected (November/2011 to January/2012), attentions were turned to planning, recruitment, selection and integration of people, a fact consistent with the results presented in the survey. It is concluded, therefore, that recognition of a HR subsystem – as the most relevant or not to the organizational results – may be changed according to the time of the study.

If data collection were held today, likely the result would change. Although Brazil's economy is currently considered to be strong and solid, the IBGE⁵ data show that in the 2nd quarter of 2012 (April-June) the Brazilian economy registered an increase of 0.4% compared to the previous quarter and the last twelve months (until June 2012) Brazil's GDP grew only 1.2%. Even with government measures such as the decline in interest rates and reduction of IPI (Industrialized Products Tax), for some sectors of the economy, the expected economic growth was not achieved. That would directly influence the practices carried out in the companies included in this context and, consequently, the performance management of them.

To compile information about the major subsystems in a single survey was quite complex, however, it is understood that, in this way, it would be possible to show how to interrelate all subsystems of HR, providing the reader with a holistic / broad view of Strategic HR Management.

It is suggested for future work, further exploration of methods capable to assess and measure — through quantitative indicators — the alignment of people management to the main long-term goals of the organization. It is hoped that in this way, the practice of results evaluation generated by the HR area, are more widespread and HR manager may act more energetically on the strategic planning of organizations and establish itself as a partner and essential agent for sustainable growth of the organization.

⁴ Available: <www.ibge.gov.br>. Access: 2012 Apr. 20.

⁵ Available: <www.ibge.gov.br>. Access: 2012 Aug. 30.

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