

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND LEARNING ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE – A NEW PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

While focusing on developing new ways to increase business competition, we've conducted a qualitative research among HR managers in big Romanian companies, with the purpose of establishing the developmental status of organisational culture as well as new tendencies which have appeared in human resource management. The results point to a need to update the roles of the HR departments and to establish a coherent organisational culture learning process based on metacognition which should lead to an increase in employee motivation as well as personal and professional growth. Based on the research conclusions, we created an organisational model which could capitalize on the relationship between the Human Resources Management HRM and the Organizational Culture OC with the aim of improving results of each individual company.

KEYWORDS: *human resources management, organizational culture, organizational learning culture, metacognition culture.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: M120.

1. INTRODUCTION

The starting point for this paper was the Model of Culture Fit as presented by Kanungo and his associates (Kanungo & Jaeger, 1990; Mendonca & Kanungo, 1994) which pointed out the influence of the social and cultural environment on the internal work culture and human resources management practices.

In order to better understand the model's essence, we should point out the fact that Kanungo presented six sociocultural dimensions: paternalism (Redding, Norman&Schlander, 1994), power distance, masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, individualism / collectivism (Hofstede, 1980). Also, it is useful to know that the dimensions of the internal work culture have been identified by Schein (1992) and further elaborated by Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) and Mendonca and Kanungo (1994). The internal work culture includes managerial assumptions about *focus of control, malleability, futuristic orientation, proactivity / reactivity, responsibility, participation, obligation toward others*. As far as the human resources management practices are concerned, they regard three areas: job design, supervision and control, and reward management. (Kanungo & Jaeger, 1990; Mendonca & Kanungo, 1994; Mathur, 1996).

In a synthetic form, the Model of Culture Fit is presented in the figure 1.

Kanungo's concepts have an undeniable theoretical and practical value. As far as we are concerned, we reintroduced *the Model of Culture Fit* with the intention of adjusting certain of its components in order to fit them with the significant changes that took place or are about to occur in the internal and

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external organisational model. To do that, we've conducted a research among HR managers working in the largest companies activating in Romania, and, by doing so, we've identified the employees' perceptions regarding the large changes happening in the business sector, along with the tendencies in the HR field and the evolutions that have evolved within their organisational culture.

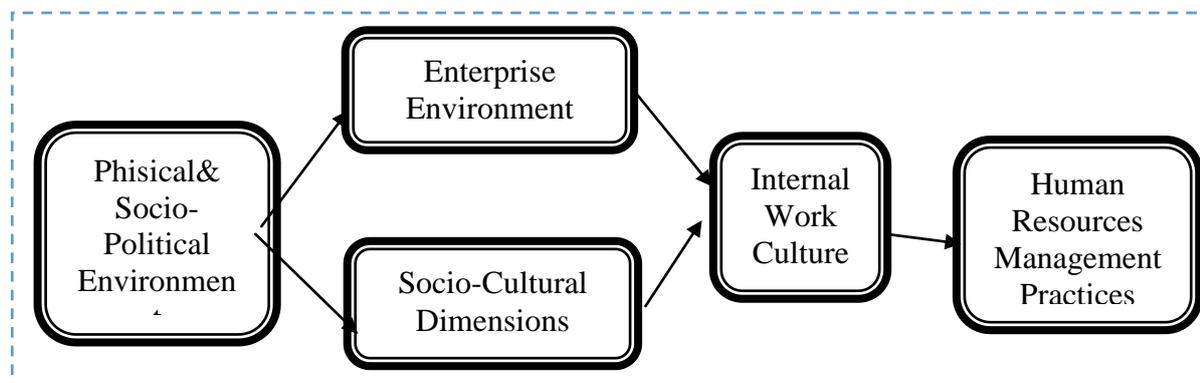


Figure 1. The Model of Culture Fit

Source: Aycan Z., Kanungo N., Sinha B. P., 1999

As a result, we've created a model with the purpose of pointing out the role of the Human Resources Management (HRM) – Organizational Learning Culture (OCL) relationship on economic and social performance.

2. RESEARCH REGARDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HRM AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE IN LARGE COMPANIES IN ROMANIA

We needed to better understand what the situation was in terms of the focus of our study as well as finding out what should be done to sustain the efforts made by companies to maintain or even improve their performance. Therefore, between February and May of 2015, we conducted a qualitative research which focused on 15 HR managers who were asked questions regarding policies and practices from within their companies. We should mention that, at the moment of our research, they were working in multinational organisations activating in Bucharest. The companies belonged to different sectors: two from the banking industry, one in production, two in tourism, two in retail, two IT specialized companies, two in telecommunications, and the remaining four in other business areas.

In order to develop our research, we went through the following stages:

- a) *The preliminary stage.* Here we configured the investigation area, we formulated the purpose of the research, we asked the HR managers for their permission to be part of our research program, and we developed the interview guideline, which consisted of 20 questions divided in the following subgroups: *global changes as perceived by employees; tendencies in the evolution of HRM, the status of organisational culture within their companies, the possibility to better capitalize on the relationship between human resources management (HRM) and organisational culture (CO).*
- b) *The interview stage.* The discussions went on over a period of four months (three interviews in February, four in March, April and May). Each interview lasted between 90 and 120 minutes and was recorded.
- c) *The interpretation and systematization of responses.* The recorded discussions were transcribed, analysed and systematized so that they could be used for this paper.

In what follows, we will look at the opinions expressed by the HR managers from 15 companies with regards to:

1. *The business environment.* The respondents' general opinion was that the business environment is extremely important for a company's success. Sometimes, it might be the single most important factor in an organisation's evolution. That is why employees and, especially, managers carefully analyse the environment outside of their own organisation, they try to capitalize on their opportunities and manage the threats and risks that they encounter. The interests of employees in large companies focus mainly on the social, technological, ecological, economical and geopolitical sectors. Out of the respondents' opinions, we highlight a few tendencies that have arisen:

- *Social trends.* In this category were included: the continual global demographic growth, the divergent evolutions of global population, the rapid acceleration of the urbanisation process, the increasing impact of individual contributions through entrepreneurship, the reconfiguration of individual and collective values, the changes in women's role in society, the economic and numerical growth of the middle class.
- *Technological trends.* In this category were included: the ever increasing connectivity, technological changes, the fast adoption of technological innovations, and the increase of data volumes.
- *Environmental trends.* In this category were included: the acceleration of resource competition, the increasing pressure on ecosystems, the increasingly severe effects of climate changes, the increased awareness of socially responsible behaviours, innovations in technology and their contributions to an increased efficiency in resource management.
- *Trends regarding the economic power of countries.* In this category were included: a multipolar world in which countries from the Eastern hemisphere have developed as true global economic powers, the pressure of public debt on sustainable economic growth, increasingly strong economic interdependencies, developing countries – differences and similarities between investments, the rearrangement of state economies based on knowledge (with Asia really becoming a focal point), and, last but not least, the distribution of government responsibilities.

These global tendencies are joined by other, **organisational tendencies** regarding consumers, as generated by collaborations and leaders.

2. *The organizational culture.* In order to start from a common basis for discussion, we started off from the Jones approach (2006) developed in the paper *In Great Company: Unlocking the Secrets of Cultural Transformation* and published in 2011 by Human Synergetics International. The authors, starting off from the relationship between leadership, culture, and performance, identify six types of organisations:

- *organizations in the denial stage:* our research shows that none of the 15 companies are in this stage. When they rejected the concept that their company was at this stage, the HR managers knew that organisations in the denial stage *are led by managers who don't realize the importance of culture on performance, who promote a type of short-term thinking, and who eliminate the impact of strategic, long term thinking out the equation. These organisations are characterized by a lack of understanding when it comes to leadership.*

- *organisations in the frozen stage:* Most of the companies which took part in this research consider themselves part of this category (over 66%). Unlike the former stage, these companies are aware and accept the importance of culture, although it is not, as of yet, perceived as a main influence on performance, but more as an irrelevant factor. Even though, officially, there is an improvement in attitude, it certainly doesn't influence the operational processes. The indifference is clearly seen even at top management level, as it is also uncommitted to the importance of leadership and culture.

Just as in the case of the first category, the companies that belong to this stage have a short-term focus and are mostly interested in improving their performance indicators.

- *organisations in the conforming stage.* Three out of the fifteen companies are included in this category, according to their representatives. Their managers understand that organisational change comes from evaluating the present culture, collecting data, without realising an action plan which might outlive them. The leaders' engagement is a bit higher, while the company's culture is in tune with employee satisfaction and loyalty indicators, although it's only seen as a point of interest for the HR department. The company's vision is mostly limited to the short-term or medium-term. In these organisations, conforming to internal rules and protocols is very important, although there are situations in which small steps are made in order to affect change, as a result of a generally accepted feedback.

- *organisations in the efficiency stage:* A single company out of the 15 places itself in this category. According to its HR manager, there's a balance between the short and long term approaches and there's a conviction that there is a need for change which will be made by adapting and adjusting what's already been put in place. What's characteristic about this organisation is that there's a process of incremental change as opposed to a transformational one, based on the continual improvement of performance indicators, with measures that are frequently applied in order to optimize systems, competencies, processes, and performance for the HR department. While interested in efficiency, the leader can sometimes be resistant to accepting his or her need for change, with the focus being put on analysing measurement results and using them as an instrument for organisational change. In this company, steps are being made to increase the efficiency of employee retention and increasing their level of commitment and satisfaction.

- *organisations in the proactive strategy stage.* Only one of the interviewed companies positioned itself in this category. The interviewed manager considers that his company is in a transitional period going, from a passive, reactive approach to its needs to a more active one. The need for change is clear; therefore the company's initiatives are directed towards this goal, although they are perceived as a source for extra costs. The managers and their collaborators understand the relationship between organisational culture and its performance. Top management leads by example, establishing continual growth as a strategic objective, which is both planned for the long term and sustained by immediate action.

- *organisations in the sustainable stage.* At this stage, which is considered to be the most advanced out of the chain of stages in the process of becoming aware of the need for organisational change, companies see cultural change as a personal value and not one that is predicated and proposed by the organisational environment; leaders take on this identity as part of their own and strive for sustainable performance. The organisational development is no longer defined solely as a result of the company's results, but of the business environment and society overall, involving all the types of stakeholders. The objective is to coherently develop, over a long period of time, ensuring the creation and development of a constructive culture and not its change.

3. Trends in Human Resources Management: Another dimension which was monitored by our research focused on the HRM practices and the tendencies that employees from large companies have observed. Analysing the resulting data, we could separate the tendencies toward the act of *development*, the act of *reconfiguration*, the act of *management*, and the act of *involvement*.

In order to better understand these tendencies, we feel we should make a few specifications, in the Table below.

Table 1. Trends in Human Resources Management

HRM Tendencies	Response Synthesis
Tendencies focused on development:	
- <i>Looking for solutions to solve the absence of competencies needed to solve the existing tasks.</i>	Many of the subjects feel that, in the future, the competency deficit will increase because a job's tasks and responsibilities will become more and more sophisticated. Their opinions back up the conclusions of a study conducted by Accenture (2013, p. 3); the study shows that, at a global level, 34% of employers have difficulties filling out their vacancies, while a different indicator reveals that 73% of them point to the lack of knowledge, experience and competencies as the main obstacle in the recruiting process.
- <i>Ensuring leadership at all levels.</i>	According to the participants, there is a great need for leadership development, especially for those belonging to generation Y (born in 1980-2000).
- <i>Developing organisational culture.</i>	The term 'organisational culture' is considered to be decisive in the process of business stability and sustainability. Yet, over 72% of respondents point to the fact that leaders don't seem to entirely understand their organisation's culture, while over 50% of the received answers show that the employees' motivations and expectations are more and more diverse, while interactions are also becoming more complex and difficult to foresee.
Tendencies focused on reconfiguration:	
- <i>Strategic learning within the organisation.</i>	The respondents feel that the learning process is very important and consider that the process of correlation between strategic long-term objectives and short term actions implemented by companies leads to strategic learning.
- <i>Following the role and ensuring competencies for HR employees.</i>	Respondents think that the world is fast becoming more unpredictable, with technology becoming more and more important. Companies that adapt faster will get a competitive edge, while the common element of all adaptive instruments (systems, processes, technologies, business models, leadership and so on) is people. The HR department will reconfigure itself and its role within the organisation.
Tendencies focused on involvement:	
- <i>Attracting top quality personnel.</i>	The received answers suggest that the main areas of competence management are: recruitment, ensuring a coherent allocation of funds and the HR department's development. Presently, the recruitment aspect is the only one that may be cause for concern, seeing that there's a more dynamic process of jobs becoming more specialized as opposed to candidates becoming more specialized.
- <i>People analytics in all of the department's functions.</i>	Although there's an explicit interest in this direction, the rhythm in which the HR employees' analytical competencies are improved and the rhythm in which technology is introduced are not satisfying at the moment.

Source: Author's contribution

3. THE HRM - OLC MODEL

As shown at the beginning of this paper, our purpose was to rethink the Kanungo model. We put together the opinions formulated by our practical specialists with a few valuable ideas taken from other research papers and came up with the HRM-OCL model, as presented below:

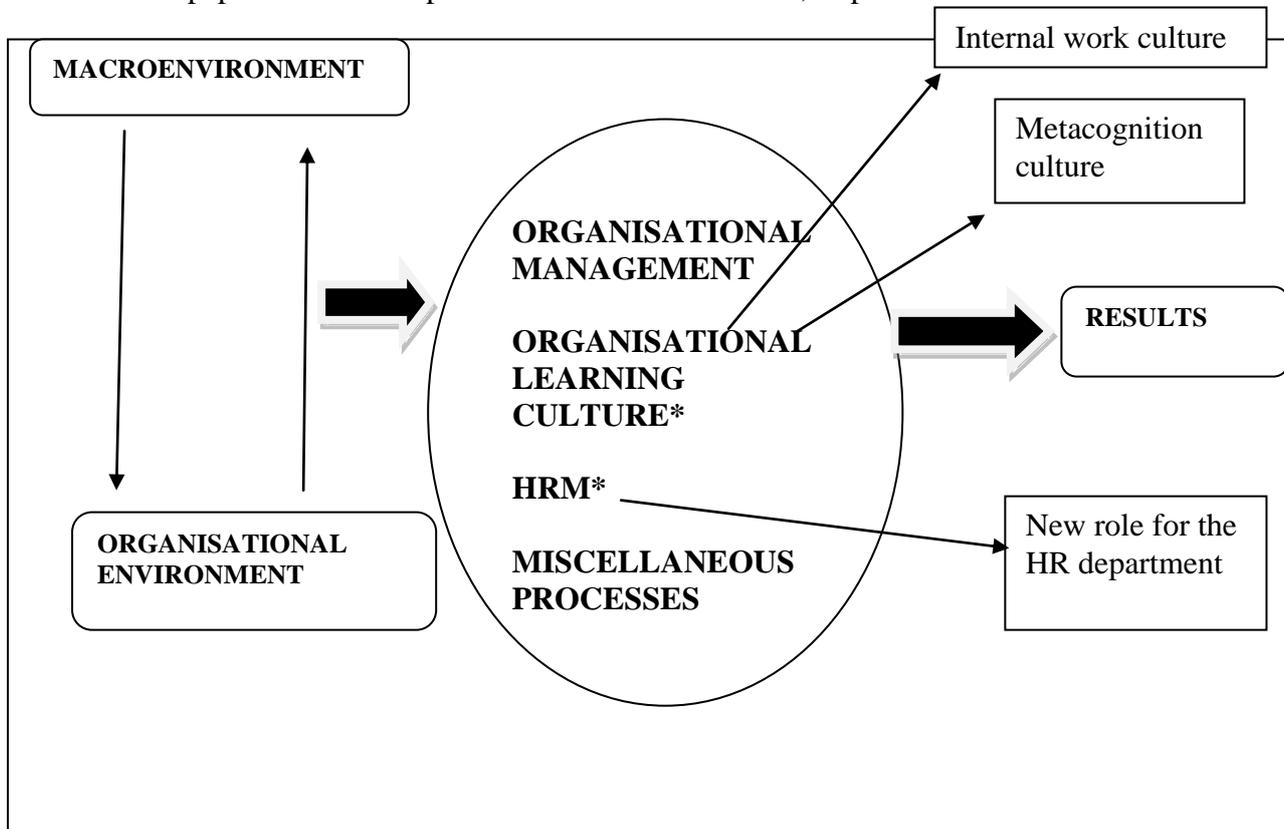


Figure 2. HRM- OLC Model
 Source: Author's contribution

In order to further detail the presented model, we must make the following statements:

- *Macro environment* includes: ecological context, political context, legal context, social context and historical context.
- *Organizational environment* includes: market characteristics, nature of industry, ownership, resource availability.
- *Organizational management* includes all prognosis, organisational, training, evaluation and control activities.
- *Learning organizational culture* includes: internal work culture (Task-Driven Assumptions and Employee-related Assumptions) and metacognitive culture (metacognitive knowledge and abilities).
- *HRM practices refer to:* job design, supervisory practice, reward allocation. Plus, there's a larger role for the HR department that should be taken into consideration.

Now, we will refer into more detail to the concept of metacognition, which we wish to insert into the model and we'll also present the way in which it was introduced in both specialized literature and large companies' practices. We will also talk about the importance of bringing metacognition to the organisational culture, in order to amplify the efficiency of the learning process and to diminish the competency gap which is seen at the company level and, on a larger scale, at national level. Furthermore, we will point out the way in which the role of the HR department will change, so that

organisational practices function better along with organisational learning and contribute to the improvement of learning systems, while also increasing motivation and performance of employees.

a. Metacognitive culture. The concept of metacognition is used frequently today by cognitive psychology theorists, but also by theorists and practitioners who are preoccupied with education and the development of human competencies. The concept is semantically linked to 'cognition', whose mission is to describe and explain the way the nervous system and rational thought work. Defined as the „activity designed to construct knowledge and the product of this activity” (Cerghit, 2002, p. 218), cognition represents a much larger spectrum of knowledge, going past the sole meaning of „status and content”. The term 'metacognition' comes from the concept of 'cognition', to which the prefix 'meta-' is added, which indicates a superior reference level. Furthermore, the 'meta-' prefix can be seen as informing change, as a means for the subject to intervene in order to transform the conditions for his or her own knowledge and learning (Cerghit, 2002, p. 218). We should also mention the opinion of Vos (2001, p. 26) which shows the connections between cognition and metacognition, while also making a comparison between the two concepts. Flavell (1976, p. 206) also points out the fact that metacognition and cognition differ in terms of content and function and are similar in terms of shape and quality. The two processes, cognition and metacognition, have many common elements, yet they are different in complexity, with metacognition being situated at a higher level from this point of view. In his opinion, metacognition represents the knowledge we have about our own cognitive processes. Later on, the concept's content was detailed by Schoenfeld (1987) and by Joița (2002) who consider metacognition as a reflection, an intuition on solving a task, a problem or a situation, which also includes identifying the negative aspects (in order to, then, avoid them, based on the connections formed at a conscious, controlled level in different contexts through self-regulation). It is extremely useful to analyse a different point of view which is complementary to those already expressed, as it shows the way in which we use metacognition either in the moment of action, or right after it, when we realize the motives which favoured our success, thus providing us with the opportunity to project strategies which will be usable in other circumstances (Cardiner, 1995, apud. Cerghit, 2002, p. 219). In many approaches, metacognition is associated with learning and an individual's development. So, metacognition is „nothing but the return to the self, acting in the sense of the act of learning itself... it is an interrogation on the sense and importance of our own actions, an interrogation which then allows for the intelligence to become structured and builds one's own personality” (Meirieu, 1992, apud. Cerghit, 2002, p. 219). Furthermore, Buchel (2000) correlates metacognition with the style of learning, and Cucoș (2006, p.162) considers it a positive factor in the transfer of knowledge and auto-education.

Our bibliographic endeavour has evidenced the fact that we can talk about multiple senses and meanings given by different authors when it comes to the concept of “metacognition”. There are, though, certain aspects on which researchers seem to have agreed on. What is certain is that metacognition was and still is a frequent topic of discussion both in theoretical studies and the experimental circles. It is a complex and “delicate” issue, open to new theoretical and practical approaches.

The in-depth analysis of metacognition (Flavell and Brown apud. Sălăvăstru, 2009, p. 186) revealed its two basic components: *metacognitive knowledge* (the declarative aspect of metacognition) and *metacognitive abilities* (the procedural aspect of metacognition). D. Sălăvăstru (2009, p. 187) studies the *metacognitive aspects* and shows that they include knowledge about other people, about tasks and strategies. Flavell (apud. Frumos, 2008, p. 82) classifies *metacognitive abilities* in three categories: *processes of anticipation, processes of evaluation and self-regulation, and processes of terminal evaluation of results by referring to the purpose.* Aligning himself to the same idea, R. Weinert (1999, p. 14) makes a difference, within the concept of metacognition, between two main types of metacompetencies: *metacognitive declarative competencies* and *metacognitive procedural competencies.* Schraw and Dennison (1994), the authors of the Metacognitive Acquisition Inventory, too have elaborated on the issue of metacognitive components. They see metacognition

as having two fundamental aspects: on the one hand, there's the *knowledge of cognition*, which includes declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge and conditional knowledge while, on the other hand, there's *cognition regulation*, which includes planning, information management strategies, the monitoring of understanding, strategies needed to overcome difficulties, and evaluation. *Carnoldi* (1998, 170) approaches to issue of metacognitive reflection and its components. He sees metacognitive reflection as an individual's own beliefs and interpretations of their own cognitive behaviour. It is divided in two important aspects: *metacognitive knowledge* and *metacognitive conceptualization of a task*.

A very interesting viewpoint belongs to Peirce (2003). The author identifies the relationship between *metacognition* and *motivation*, but also the role motivation has in the process of metacognition. By having an inherent, positive motivation, an employee can become more preoccupied with the way the learning process works, the strong and weak points in his intellectual process which, of course, can lead to becoming more aware of regulating his or her own cognitive processes.

b. Overcoming the competency deficit. The need for companies to stay competitive is imperative and many managers today see success as closely connected to the competencies of their employees. For this reason, they initiated several recruitment, training and development policies as well as different strategies of promoting key employees and keeping them loyal. They've also created internal structures which would help achieve these objectives and they've built partnerships with external structures when they thought it would guarantee better quality and efficiency.

Our preoccupation with human competency doesn't just extend to the organisational level. There are numerous studies and national and international debates in which members of the business world propose different analysis systems, new unified evaluation methods, they make comparisons and call for action to remedy mistakes. In the foreword of The Human Capital Report (2015), the founder and CEO of World Economic Forum, Klaus Schwab, points out the fact that „instead of capital, the potential of employees will be the decisive factor which will link innovation, competition and growth in the 21st century”. Starting off from that idea, the World Economic Forum proposes four integrated indicators in the profile of every state which would capture the perception of the business community in terms of the competition of the human resource and the way each country sees and influences the growth of human competency and growth. These are:

- (1) The quality of study programs in the management and business field;
- (2) The availability of specialized training services;
- (3) The degree to which the state (meaning the geographic space, in all of its components: economic, social, cultural, political, and natural) attracts a high level of competency from beyond its borders;
- (4) The degree to which the state retains competencies and individuals with very good potential.

The evaluation of each indicator is made by choosing a correspondent on the scale of 1 – 7, the numerical differences being the following:

Table 2: The evaluation of competition indicators of human capital

No. Crt.	Indicator	Evaluation
1.	(1)	1 (reduced) – 7 (excellent, among the best in the world);
2.	(2)	1 (completely unavailable) – 7 (plentiful);
3.	(3)	1 (not at all) – 7 (attracts people with the highest potential);
4.	(4)	1(individuals with the highest potential leave to pursue opportunities in other countries) – 7 (individuals with the highest potential stay and pursue opportunities within the country).

Source: adapted from The Human Capital Report (2015)

According to the average scoring taken from the four factors (using the weighted arithmetic average), the Romanian business environment profile looks like this: the quality of study programs in the management and business field is evaluated at a score of 4.21, which is close to the scoring of the availability of specialized training services (4.17), but a lot different from those recorded by the last two indicators: the degree to which the country attracts competencies from other states (2.62) and the degree to which the country retains its own competencies (2.47). If the average score of 3.5 represents an acceptable, average score, the scores of 2.62 and 2.47 can be easily interpreted as follows: in Romania, attracting and retaining competencies is a serious problem which needs a swift action plan and an immediate response.

The same study points to a modest level of human resources investments in Romanian companies. Therefore, the answers coming from the Romanian business environment to the question: *To which degree do Romanian companies invest in the training and development of employees?*, situates investments in the organisational process at a score of 3.56, on a scale of 1-7, where 1 means 'not at all' and 7 means 'to a very high degree'. In the hierarchy of the 124 states which were included in the study, the score places Romania in the 97th place. Given the fact that there is a great competition in recruiting and retaining competencies, such a low place in the hierarchy suggests there is a high risk that Romanian-based companies won't be able to operate at an optimum level and that they will not be competitive on a global scale.

Furthermore, the answers to the question: *How easy is it for Romanian companies to find employees with the required competencies that fit the business needs?*, on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 means 'extremely difficult' and 7 means 'extremely easy', complete the image on competence competition within the country. The final score of 4.2 is relatively high, but it only places Romania in the 43rd place overall.

Based on the discussions had with the 15 managers, we concluded that there is a need and a possibility to fuse together the concepts of Internal Work Culture and Metacognition Culture, with the result being called Organizational Learning Culture. The motives behind this endeavour have to do with conceptual reasons, as well as application reasons within companies in the business environment.

c. The role of the HR department. The basic idea behind our model is to create a connection between the *Organisational Culture* and *HR Practices*. This would be possible if organisations would be open to extend, diversify and consolidate the HRM field.

Next we will present just a few of the role changes we expect to see in the field of HR. They will be correlated with tendencies in the HRM field that we've already identified throughout our research.

Table 3. The role of the HR department

HRM Tendencies	Role of the HR Department
Tendencies focused on development	
- Looking for solutions to solve the absence of competencies needed to solve the existing tasks.	- taking and applying the just-in-time method in the recruitment process. - being proactive in recruiting in order to select the people with the right set of competencies to fill out vacancies. - daily activities required to learn and understand the needed competencies, using social media or peer-to-peer learning. - identifying solutions in order to resist the ever more aggressive competition when it comes to attracting, recruiting and retaining personnel; at the moment overspecializations are very desirable by companies.

<p>- Ensuring leadership at all levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - making sure that there is a succession for the leaders' positions; - using technology which offers the possibility to identify and evaluate the required leadership qualities, to identify the priorities of the organisation and to create the selection, evaluation and development set of criteria; communicating these within the organisation in order to guide and facilitate the understanding of future actions; - building a training program which integrates the currently fragmented sessions of shadowing, coaching, or mentoring; - offering certain employees, those who the company wishes to attain leadership abilities and competencies, the possibility to have different practical experiences in which they can hone these abilities; - creating a budget that allows for long-term investments; - making succession plans and using them as instruments to follow up on the progress of the transformation of leadership development into a permanent function of the HR department; - attracting top management in backing up the measures that were previously presented.
<p>- Developing organisational culture.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - frequently evaluating the organisational culture in order to anticipate and prevent any missteps that might steer the company away from its course, but also in order to identify the sources of competitive advantage and to articulate it coherently in building the employer brand.
<p>Tendencies focused on reconfiguration:</p>	
<p>- Strategic learning within the organisation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - putting someone in charge of the strategic organisational learning processes and creating a team with the right competencies in that direction; - reinventing learning experiences so that the technology, methods, and instruments help the participants focus on the content (the theme or the competencies that need to be formed and/or developed) rather than the infrastructure; - evaluating the rate of success of the current way of investing in the learning and development processes and creating a coherent strategy of capital allocation.
<p>- Following the role and ensuring competencies for HR employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appointing a team to be responsible for the overall process, but also to involve all the specialists from the department; - lobbying for the necessary resources needed to develop and train the HR personnel; - developing and implementing action plans in order to obtain the new categories of competencies and to reaffirm the department's position as a strategic partner of the organisation; - constantly evaluating the progress of reaching the department reconfiguration objectives.

Tendencies focused on involvement:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attracting top quality personnel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - keeping a permanent focus on connecting to the former, present, and potential employees in order to keep them abreast of the organisation's progress, but also to get access to their professional evolution and to formulate an employment proposal, should the need arise; - effectively using the instruments which reveal complex data about the human capital, such as social networks and recruitment platforms ; - redefining and diversifying the profile of the human capital, the types of collaboration with employees (one option could be that of working with freelancers on projects, on a short term basis); - building a visible and coherent organisational identity, knowing that the employer brand is a major factor in attracting talented professionals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People analytics in all of the department's functions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying and designating the employees who possess and use analytical competencies in their current activity as a process manager for the integration of analytical technology in all the department's functions; - creating practitioners' communities in order to use them as places where they can share knowledge, experiences, and best practices which deal with data analysis (using technology); - facilitating change by updating the complementary competencies with regards to time and project management.

Source: Author's contribution

4. CONCLUSIONS

Our study deliberately focused on large companies (large in the sense of overall financial indicators and/or number of employees). Conducting the research has convinced us that it was a good choice and it gave us the extremely useful opportunity to converse with these companies' management representatives, which gave us plenty of information, analyses, reflections and initiatives to ponder on.

We set out to explore, in greater detail, the functional relationships from within a company, with the aim of capitalizing on them in the process of improving the economic and social performance. We saw the importance and role that a company's soft behaviours (organizational culture, HRM) have, as well as the large companies' willingness to transform themselves in order to consolidate their position and improve their chances to succeed.

The dialogue with the companies' representatives proved that they have the correct perception about the changes that are happening in the business world; furthermore, it revealed the fact that there's an opportunity and sustainability of going away from a traditional work culture to a culture of learning, which stimulates and motivates a very high percentage of employees. Their ability to characterize their own organizational culture was remarkable.

We feel that the subject of this paper allowed us to analyse the applicability of several new concepts on different companies that are interested in creating a cultural background in order to support increased competencies and performance.

In order to increase the scientific dimensions of our results, it would be extremely important to increase the number of respondents and compile a quantitative research based on the questionnaire. The collected information could then be econometrically processed and its conclusion would a lot more nuanced.

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