

## RESOURCES AND COMPETENCIES IN THE AREA OF EMPLOYMENT – A COMPARISON OF DAIRY COOPERATIVES FROM ŚWIĘTOKRZYSKIE AND MAŁOPOLSKIE VOIVODESHIPS

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**Purpose:** The purpose of this article is to identify and compare the importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment from the point of view of dairy cooperatives from Poland from the Świętokrzyskie and Małopolskie Voivodeships, which are adjacent to each other.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Direct interviews using a questionnaire survey were conducted among representatives of cooperatives representing 41% of the population, which resulted from the willingness to participate in the survey.

**Findings:** Cooperatives' representatives are aware of the importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment. There is a difference in the opinion of cooperatives' representatives from both voivodships about the importance and state of resources and competencies in this area. Cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship higher assessed the importance of this kind of resources/competencies (the average rating is 4.22), while in case of cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship the average rating is 4.0. Moreover, cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship stated that the state of their resources/competencies is the same as the competitors. A different situation is in case of cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship as three of resources/competencies are assessed to have higher competitive potential than competitors and four to have lower competitive potential than competitors.

**Originality/value:** The comparison of the importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment of selected cooperatives from two different voivodships.

**Keywords:** resources, competencies, employment, cooperatives.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper.

## 1. Introduction

In the market economy it is crucial to know the importance and state of resources and competences especially in the case of employment, as human resources are the most important resource in the company, and their discontent can destroy the company because an organization's success is determined by decisions employees make and behaviors in which they engage (Omprasad Reddy, 2021, p. 36). Human resources represent the employees under direct control of the company; their management is the process or processes focused on maximizing employee performance to achieve the employer's strategic objectives (Garengo, Sardi, Nudurupati, 2022, p. 3057). Hence companies constantly face challenges in efforts to increase the knowledge, understanding, skills, and abilities of its employees so that they can provide the expected results (Mogea, 2023, p. 59). It comes from the fact that companies come across too many challenges or uncertainties including globalization, more innovations, advent of the latest technology use, economic and political instability and ethical and ecological challenges (Aslam, Aslam, Ali, Habib, 2013, p. 89). Therefore, boosting competitiveness, increasing flexibility, and raising the effectiveness are going to be out of reach if employees are not involved and fully devoted to their company's goals and do not take active part in all company activities concerning them (Veleva, Antonova, 2017, p. 140). Hence, companies should have under control this kind of resources and constantly receive information about to react on time. Only having continuous feedback on the state of resources/competences allows the company to react on time in case of any irregularities. Such knowledge also allows the company to react appropriately in the event of any problems with employees and allows it to retain the best employees, whose intellectual capital is invaluable. Additionally, knowledge about the state of resources/competences compared to the competition allows for appropriate actions on time to be better than the competition. Only such a way of proceeding can lead to success on the market and competitive advantage, and then to its maintenance. Hence, the aim of the article is to identify and compare the importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment from the point of view of dairy cooperatives from Poland from the Świętokrzyskie and Małopolskie Voivodships, which are adjacent to each other. To achieve the goal there were taken into account the following resources/competences established by Stankiewicz (2002): the level of education of employees, applied employee motivation systems, used employee recruitment and selection systems, applied training systems, work productivity, innovation and creativity of employees, openness of employees to changes, the willingness of employees to improve their qualifications, employee loyalty to the company, employees' trust in the company's management, knowledge of the company's strategy by employees, results orientation, willingness to compete, the existence of a spirit of cooperation, respect for the client and his needs, faith in success, knowledge of foreign languages by employees.

## 2. Human resources and competencies

Human resources in a company are a collective of employees. They are an organized workforce, creating a system that is defined in the following aspects: organizational, ergonomic, psychological, socio-economic, legal (Stabryła, 1995, p. 109). Human resources are the leading resource of any organization (Masłyk-Musiał, Rakowska, Krajewska-Bińczyk, 2012, p. 213). Human resources are renewable resources, unlike most natural and tangible resources. People have the ability to learn and constantly improve, while the feature of other resources is their gradual depreciation and consumption (Michalak, 2007, p. 58). The concept of human resources includes employees employed in the enterprise along with their education, experience, professional qualifications, performed work, interpersonal relations and communication skills (Strużycki, 2004, p. 144). Human resources include activity, skills and knowledge of employed people (Michalak, 2007, p. 58). Their potential can be assessed on the basis of education, experience, professional achievements and talents. Human resources in an organization are a source of organizational knowledge (Masłyk-Musiał, Rakowska, Krajewska-Bińczyk, 2012, p. 213). They are defined as labor resources or manpower (Michalak, 2007, p. 58), which is the social reserve of the organization, a reserve of human energy and knowledge, skills and habits that can be directed towards the implementation of the organization's mission and goals, but which can also independently influence in various, often uncontrolled ways, on the organization and its environment (Kozmiński, Jemieliński, 2008, p. 177).

Human capital can be a company's greatest asset; it can make or break the business strategy and is a key differentiator (World Economic Forum & Watson, 2020, p. 7). Firms can create a competitive advantage from human resources and their management practices when employees create organizational value (Pablos, Lytras, 2008, p. 49). Human resources create value by increasing the performance and agility of the talent (human capital) and culture (organization capability) of the organization (Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank, Ulrich 2012, p. 217). Therefore, it is extremely important to skillfully manage human resources.

Human resource management, the management of work and people towards desired ends, is a fundamental activity in any organization in which human beings are employed (Boxall, Purcell, Wright, 2007, p. 1). The purpose of human resources management is to adjust the available human resources to the mission and goals of the company. Employees are treated here as an important strategic factor in the development of the form and a resource in whose development one should invest (Unold, 2009, p. 375). Human resource management is the process of employing people, training them, compensating them, developing policies relating to them, and developing strategies to retain them (The Open University of Hong Kong, p. 2). Hence, strategic and operational human resource management is distinguished. Strategic human resources management includes long-term decisions (actions) in the personnel sphere,

of fundamental importance for the survival and development of the organization. On the other hand, resource management at the operational level comes down to current decisions (actions) in relation to the employees of the (Unold, 2009, p. 372). Effective human resource management generates a higher capacity to attract and hold employees who are qualified and motivated for good performance (Pablos, Lytras, 2008, p. 49).

The four key dimensions to human resource management include:

- **Organizational integration:** it involves the matching of human resources strategies to the needs of the business strategy.
- **Employee commitment:** it is expected of employees to identify the interests and goals of the organizations, and be aligned and committed in achieving these goals.
- **Flexibility:** employees are expected to adapt willingly to change within the organizational structure, without any strife or prejudice.
- **Quality of work:** high levels performance attainment of organization depend on the quality of members of staff and management of such organization (Guest, 1987).

The entirety of people's competencies and opportunities existing in the organization are also often referred to as human resources, which should be consciously planned, developed and nurtured, thereby shaping effective behavior in the organization (Kozusznik, 2002, p. 19). The term competence refers to the unique combination of business specializations and people's abilities that give an organization its specific character. In addition, it identifies the sources of motivation, effort, professional specialization and cooperation in the organization (Kossowska, Sołtyśńska, 2002, p. 12). In the case of employees, a competency is an acquired ability, which is described by a certain set of tasks that can be performed if one has the appropriate knowledge (Seel, 2012, p. 668). The performance of human resource depends on competencies that have many aspects, including knowledge, experience, technical and soft skills, motives, emotions, and behaviors (Ali, Qureshi, Memon, Mari, Ramzan, 2021, p. 1). The basic competencies of employees of modern organizations include: the ability to search for and process information; ability to work in a team and interact with people; ability to function in increasingly complex organizations; the ability to formulate a problem and look for solutions, classify problems according to their importance, respond to unforeseen situations; the ability to organize one's work, the ability to act on one's own, to set goals and priorities, to create an action plan; the ability to organize the work of others, manage resources, set directions, negotiate goals, decide and seek compromise solutions, analyze and control the results obtained (Mikuła, 2006, p. 210).

### 3. Materials and methods

The research was conducted among dairy cooperatives' executives who were asked to assess the importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment. All dairy cooperatives from the Świętokrzyskie and Małopolskie voivodeships were asked to take part in the research, however, because of the tendency of the representatives of cooperatives to participate in the research, the research had been conducted on a sample of 7 out of 17 dairy cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie and Małopolskie voivodeships, i.e. 41% of cooperatives running the business in the year of conducting the research. There was used an interview questionnaire, which was structured and contained carefully selected questions in terms of number, content, form and order.

### 4. The importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment – a research results

On the basis on the interview results, a table 1 was prepared.

**Table 1.**

*The importance from the point of view of competitiveness and state in comparison to competitors of resources and competencies in the area of employment*

Resources/competencies	The importance		The state	
	Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	Małopolskie Voivodeship	Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship	Małopolskie Voivodeship
The level of education of employees	4.00	4.75	2.00	2.00
Applied employee motivation systems	4.33	4.75	2.00	2.00
Used employee recruitment and selection systems	4.33	4.25	2.00	2.00
Applied training systems	4.00	4.00	2.00	2.00
Work productivity	4.00	3.75	2.00	2.00
Innovation and creativity of employees	3.67	4.50	2.33	2.00
Openness of employees to changes	4.00	3.75	1.67	2.00
The willingness of employees to improve their qualifications	4.00	4.50	2.33	2.00
Employee loyalty to the company	4.00	4.50	2.33	2.00
Employees' trust in the company's management	3.33	4.00	2.00	2.00
Knowledge of the company's strategy by employees	4.00	4.25	2.00	2.00
Results orientation	4.00	4.00	1.67	2.00
Willingness to compete	4.33	4.50	2.00	2.00
The existence of a spirit of cooperation	4.33	4.25	2.00	2.00
Respect for the client and his needs	4.67	4.25	2.00	2.00
Faith in success	3.33	4.25	1.67	2.00
Knowledge of foreign languages by employees	3.67	3.50	1.67	2.00

Where:

- in case of the importance from the point of view of competitiveness: 5 - extremely important from the point of view of competitiveness, 4 - very important, 3 - quite important, 2 - not very important, and 1 - completely unimportant,
- in case of the state of resources/competences in comparison to competitors: 1 – worse, 2 - similar, 3 - better.

Source: own work.

Taking into account the research results showed in Table 1 it can be seen that:

- extremely important resources/competencies in the area of employment from the point of view of competitiveness in case of cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship, are: the level of education of employees, applied employee motivation systems, innovation and creativity of employees, the willingness of employees to improve their qualifications, employee loyalty to the company and willingness to compete, while for cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship extremely important is only the respect for the client and his needs;
- most of resources/competencies in the area of employment from the point of view of competitiveness are very important in both voivodeships, however they vary taking into account the average rating. The highest are rated the applied employee motivation systems, used employee recruitment and selection systems, willingness to compete, and the existence of a spirit of cooperation in case of cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship (average rating – 4.33), and used employee recruitment and selection systems, knowledge of the company's strategy by employees, the existence of a spirit of cooperation, respect for the client and his needs, and faith in success in case of cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship (average rating – 4.25). Little bit lower (average rating – 4.0) are rated the following resources/competencies: the level of education of employees, applied training systems, work productivity, openness of employees to changes, the willingness of employees to improve their qualifications, employee loyalty to the company, knowledge of the company's strategy by employees, and results orientation in case of cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, and applied training systems, employees' trust in the company's management, and results orientation in case of cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship. Lower than this are rated: the innovation and creativity of employees, and knowledge of foreign languages by employees (average rating – 3.67) when we are looking at the research results of cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship, and work productivity, openness of employees to changes (average rating – 3.75), and knowledge of foreign languages by employees (average rating – 3.5) in case of cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship.
- only cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship stated that quite important are for them: employees' trust in the company's management and faith in success. For cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship non resources/competencies in the area of employment from the point of view of competitiveness are quite important.

When analyzing the state of resources/competences in the area of employment in comparison to competitors it can be seen that all of them are considered to be similar to competitors in case of cooperatives from Małopolskie Voivodeship. On the other hand, cooperatives from Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship stated that some resources/competences are better than competitors. These are: innovation and creativity of employees, the willingness of employees to improve their qualifications, and employee loyalty to the company. In the same time they stated that a little bit worse than in competitors are the following resources/competences: openness of employees to changes, results orientation, faith in success, and knowledge of foreign languages by employees.

## 5. Conclusion

A dynamically developing world means that it is necessary to constantly be up to date with all issues related to the operation of an enterprise in the economy, and this requires both employers and employees to constantly adapt to changing conditions and update their knowledge. Hence, it is extremely important for top management to constantly monitor the company's resources/competencies, including their condition in comparison to the competition, which is a manifestation of its intelligence. An intelligent company uses its resources and competences to build its competitive advantage. This is done through continuous learning, nurturing and expanding resources and competencies. Awareness of the importance and status of resources and competencies is a manifestation of the enterprise's intelligence (Konieczna, 2016, p. 272), especially when we take into account the sphere of employment, because having and improving employee competences influences business development. If employees have the opportunity to improve their competences, they gain the opportunity to acquire new knowledge and improve their skills, which affects their effective performance of tasks, increases motivation and avoids burnout. Such action is a competency-based human resources management process, the main goal of which is to guarantee the organization appropriate competency resources necessary to achieve its strategic goals.

As showed the research results cooperatives know the importance and state of resources and competences in the sphere of employment. As they stated the most important in this sphere are applied employee motivation systems (average rating of all respond is 4.54), then respect for the client and his needs (4.46), and willingness to compete (4.42). At the end of the ranking are: faith in success (3.79), employees' trust in the company's management (3.67), and knowledge of foreign languages by employees (3.59). However, they are stated as quite important.

Recommendations for future research can be made to address the area limitations of this research, namely to carry out a study among cooperatives from other voivodships, to find out if they are aware of the importance and state of resources and competencies in the area of employment.

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