Strategic insertion of human resource management units in organization decision-making arenas

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Abstract
This article reviewed the Brazilian and international literature on the strategic insertion of Human Resource Management (HRM) units in organizational decision-making arenas, analyzing elements that influence the performance of these units in the decision-making process. Dedicated to the theoretical gap in the political dimension that permeates human resources, bibliographic research was conducted without a temporal cut in the Capes Portal of Periodicals. A post categorical content analysis carried out on 32 articles identified four elements that make up the performance of the HRM area for an effective influence of the sector in organizational business, they are: the unit’s formal and informal actions of HRM, the representation of the HRM unit in top leadership, the roles of HRM professionals, and the involvement of the HRM unit in decision-making. As a limitation, considering that the people management models abstain from studying political models, the difficulty of defining the descriptors for bibliographic research is highlighted.

Keywords: Human resource management policies. Strategic human resource management. Strategic insertion. Decision making.

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Inserção estratégica de unidades de gestão de pessoas em arenas decisórias organizacionais

Resumo
Este artigo objetiva revisar a literatura nacional e internacional sobre a inserção estratégica de unidades de gestão de pessoas (GP) em arenas decisórias organizacionais, analisando elementos que influenciam na atuação dessas unidades no processo de tomada de decisão. Dedicando-se à lacuna teórica da dimensão política que permeia a GP, procedeu-se a uma pesquisa bibliográfica sem recorte temporal no portal de periódicos Capes. Como resultado, com base numa análise de conteúdo pós-categórica realizada em 32 artigos, foram identificados quatro elementos que compõem a atuação da área de GP para uma efetiva influência do setor nos negócios organizacionais. São eles: as ações formais e informais, a representação na alta liderança, os papéis dos profissionais e o envolvimento na tomada de decisão. Como limitação, considerando que os modelos de GP se abstêm de estudar modelos políticos, ressalta-se a dificuldade de definição dos descritores para pesquisa bibliográfica.


Inserción estratégica de unidades de gestión de recursos humanos en arenas de decisión organizacional

Resumen
Este artículo tuvo como objetivo revisar la literatura nacional e internacional sobre la inserción estratégica de unidades de gestión de recursos humanos (GRH) en los espacios decisorios organizacionales, analizando los elementos que influyen en el desempeño de estas unidades en el proceso de toma de decisiones. Al considerar el vacío teórico en la dimensión política que permea la GRH, se llevó a cabo una búsqueda bibliográfica sin corte temporal en el portal de publicaciones periódicas CAPES. Como resultado, a partir de un análisis de contenido poscategorético realizado en 32 artículos, se identificaron cuatro elementos que componen el desempeño del área de GRH para una influencia efectiva del sector en el negocio organizacional. Estos son: las acciones formales e informales de la unidad de GRH, la representación de la unidad de GRH en el liderazgo superior, los roles de los profesionales de GRH y la participación de la unidad de GRH en la toma de decisiones. Como limitación, considerando que los modelos de GRH se abstienen de estudiar modelos políticos, se destaca la dificultad de definir los descritores para la investigación bibliográfica.

Palabras clave: Política de gestión de recursos humanos. Gestión estratégica de recursos humanos. Inserción estratégica. Toma de decisiones.
INTRODUCTION

The decision-making process in organizations occurs based on choices defined by various groups of power, which try to influence and direct organizational strategy, objectives, and results to achieve these ends, using the actions employed by human resource management (HRM) units (BEER, BOSELIE and BREWSTER, 2015; BREWSTER, LARSEN and MAYRHOFER, 2000; MINTZBERG, 1983; PAAUWE and BOON, 2009). Within this context, strategic HRM demonstrates that certain practices affect operational and financial results and the organization’s employees, especially when aligned with organizational strategy (LENGNICK-HALL et al., 2009; JIANG et al., 2012). On the other hand, few studies evaluate the political context that affects HRM systems (BEER, BOSELIE and BREWSTER, 2015; SHEEHAN et al., 2015).

The political and procedural perspective of organizational activity, developed above all by the strategy literature, is considered to be a fundamental gap in the HRM literature because it reveals the field’s need to demonstrate how HRM activities assume a central role in strategic, tactical, and operational decisions which can influence organizational strategy and results (BECKER and HUSELID, 2006; BECKER, HUSELID and ULRICH, 2001; HENDRY and PETTIGREW, 1990; JACKSON, SCHULER and JIANG, 2014; WRIGHT and MCMAHAN, 1992).

Thus, assuming that the influence that needs to be understood is contingent on interpersonal relationships, which are woven by successive negotiations and marked by countless conflicts among HRM members and other organizational actors, above all those who possess the means to act, the phenomenon of strategic insertion merits investigation, which is the purpose of this study. Up until now, the evidence has demonstrated that the strategic insertion of HRM units in decision making arenas is fundamental in dealing with various difficulties that arise within the organizational context, to the extent that this implies that the department has some autonomy to discuss, formulate, monitor and revise proposals for the area and institutions (CASTRO, 2018; CÔRTES, 2016; FONSECA et al., 2013).

Given this scenario, this article seeks to identify the elements that influence the actions of HRM units in the decision-making process through a systematic review of the Brazilian and international HRM literature.

THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS

Considering the vertical integration of HRM principles, which underly the alignment of policies and HRM practices with organizational strategy (WRIGHT and MCMAHAN, 1992), the study of organizational strategic processes has been one of the field’s agendas dedicated to understanding how these units can assume a prominent role in the organizational decision-making process (BEER et al., 1984; INGRAHAM and RUBAIJ-BARRETT, 2007; PAAUWE and BOON, 2009; SHEEHAN et al., 2007; TRUSS, 2003).
Given that decision making is a dynamic process which is the result of interrelated choices adopted by various actors at various times, which cumulatively contribute to the final impact (HEIDEMANN and SALM, 2010), the need to consider the influence of political aspects holistically becomes evident as well as any decision-making process, including those relating to personnel matters.

This political dimension of the decision-making process considers the differences between status and power, which are revealed through the interactions between people and groups in directing their own interests and those of the organization (NEIVA and PAZ, 2005; PAGÈS et al., 1987). In this way, there is a relevant group of actors which delimits the field in which these disputes occur, and whose characteristics mainly determine the dynamics of political life, in accordance with the reigning decision-making institutions, the organizational configuration of groups, values and the priorities of the individuals involved (REIS, 2013).

In other words, the decision-making process depends on rational, ideological, cultural and professional aspects manipulated by various actors, each of which has a larger or smaller fraction of the organization’s available resources. In terms of strategic insertion, the phenomenon which this study is devoted to, it is a conceptual representation of how HRM units seek to participate in decision-making arenas to exercise some influence on processes that compete directly or indirectly with it. Through the study of strategic insertion in the HRM area in decision-making arenas, it is possible to recognize the political dimension, associated with the decision-making process, circled by professionals and HRM units in organizations in their bureaucratic and strategic issues, with the objective of putting these policies into action (ARAÚJO, 2018; SHEEHAN et al., 2016).

The participation of HRM units in the organizational decision-making processes can be understood through the formal-synoptic or informal-incremental perspectives (BREWSTER, LARSEN and MAYRHOFER, 2000). In the former, organizational decision making is a deliberate process in which there is a sequential division between the formulation and implementation of strategy. Thus, the participation of the HRM department in the strategic process occurs in a direct manner, through regulated access to the organization’s decision-making arenas. In the latter, the decision making occurs through an interactive process with various retro-alignments, in which decisions occur without divisions and strategy develops in an incremental manner, becoming visible during the implementation stage, which occurs in such a way that the participation of the HRM department in the decision-making process occurs through unregulated access to component members of the organization’s decision-making arenas (Figure 1).
In this way, HRM should not be reduced to the link between its policies and planning and organizational objectives. It should also include other aspects of the global process of strategic formulation such as informal and emergent decision-making processes which influence the demands submitted to the area (FONSECA et al., 2013). Even though this is a fixed repetitive routine structure, the decision-making process in organizations varies according to the structural and institutional contexts of each decision-making situation (HOWLETT, RAMESH and PERL, 2013). Moreover, as mentioned above, the political dimension inherent in the relationships among the actors involved in organizational business require the action of HRM units to influence the decision-making process, and as a result, the implementation of HRM policies and practices. In addition to recognizing policy elements in HRM units, this action is the basis for the relevance of the strategic insertion of HRM units in the decision-making arenas of organizations.

**RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES**

In the absence of a review of the literature and in order to better understand the object of our study, we have conducted bibliographic research without a specific time period, in order to identify the elements that influence the actions of HRM units in the decision-making process.

We consulted the Capes periodical platform which combines various Brazilian and international databases regarding this subject. Initially, our search consisted of “strategic human
resources management” and “strategic insertion” which led to a single article by Fonseca et al. (2013), which we have used as a theoretical foundation for this study. We also used terms based on the literature concerning this subject (Box 1).

**BOX 1**

**Sources for the Terms Used in Our Bibliographic Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Meaning of the Term</th>
<th>Source Article</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HRM involvement</td>
<td>Involvement of the department in the strategic planning process.</td>
<td>Caldwell (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM role</td>
<td>Traditional or strategic role, in terms of activities exercised by the department.</td>
<td>Brandl and Pohler (2010); Brewster (2007); Caldwell (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR professional</td>
<td>HR professional broadly speaking, consisting of managers and other professionals.</td>
<td>Brandl and Pohler (2010); Caldwell (2011); Ingraham and Rubaii-Barrett (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRM department</td>
<td>Human resources and the HRM department.</td>
<td>Brandl and Pohler (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic decision making</td>
<td>Strategic decision-making process, which involves the alignment between the units and organizational strategy.</td>
<td>Brewster (2007); Caldwell (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic influence</td>
<td>Contribution to business performance considering “symbolic capital”.</td>
<td>Brandl and Pohler (2010); Caldwell (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political influence</td>
<td>Actions in terms of organizational power.</td>
<td>Sheehan et al. (2007)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Elaborated by the authors.*

In total, we realized 30 combinations of descriptors, followed by a content analysis process to identify the articles which are consistent with the strategic insertion phenomenon. The search and filtering process began with a database containing 1,245 articles and finished with a database of 32 articles. Our post-category content analysis following the protocol recommended by Bardin (1977) which consists of two steps: the reading of the selected material, in order to identify the messages contained in the articles and propose the directions to be followed; the exploration of the material in which the texts were divided up into units and organized according to themes in order to identify similarities.
RESULTS

We performed interpretations and summaries of the analyzed material to make it possible to describe and analyze the identified categories. We found that the phenomenon under examination is made up of various elements which complement each other and are represented by four thematic categories: the formal and informal actions of the HRM areas (11 articles), the representation of the HRM areas in upper management (4 articles), the roles of HRM professionals (14 articles) and the involvement of HRM in the decision-making process (16 articles).

The Formal and Informal Actions of the HRM Area

Considering that the influence of HRM leaders in the decision-making process directly affects the effectiveness of implementing HRM policies, the dominant vision has been excessively formal and structural, which highlights the function of HRM depending on how the unit's leaders use influential and symbolic actions through their participation in strategic planning processes and the presence of upper management increasing its power, status and influence within the organization (KELLY and GENNARD, 2010; NGUYEN et al., 2019; OTHMAN, 2009). Thus, keeping in mind that formal decision-making involves upper management and the organization's decision-making arena in operational and strategic responsibility for the organization's business, the access to formal committees is needed for the recognition of HRM's influence, which requires a policy approach in terms of the professional performance in these areas to make changes in the organization's values effective (KELLY and GENNARD, 2010; SHEEHAN et al., 2015; SHEEHAN et al., 2016).

Formal authority is still the dominant attribute in contemporary organizations which indicates where the perceived power exercised by managers flows in decision making. There is evidence that HRM professionals have achieved growing recognition with the participation of boards of directors (SHEEHAN et al., 2016). However, the absence of representatives of the HRM department in upper management does not diminish its influence, keeping in mind that there are other ways to become involved in the decision-making processes through distinct groups of organization executives (CALDWELL, 2011; SHEEHAN, 2005). Even though they are present in meeting rooms and are invited to take part in decisions, the actions of HRM units in formal contexts do not necessarily mean they have influence in organizational decisions given that formal and informal decision making are paths of access for HRM professionals to participate in the strategic planning process (KELLY and GENNARD, 2010; SHEEHAN, 2005; SHEEHAN et al., 2016).

Thus, the power of the HRM unit can come from other sources, such as specialized knowledge, the control of information, and a direct relationship with the rest of the organization, situations which provide adequate access for the HRM department's contribution to organizational business, keeping in mind that in informal discussions, people can dedicate time to think based on options, debating possibilities and formulating ideas (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; NGUYEN et al., 2019; SHEEHAN, 2005). In addition, other factors, such as the HRM manager’s business credibility, upper management's level of commitment to HRM, and the level of cultural support
that the organization gives the department, are also aspects considered to be determinant for the strategic integration of HRM with the rest of the organization. In this way, the absence of these factors can just represent a symbolic compromise by the organization with the HRM area, not the result of tangible support for the area’s initiatives (SHEEHAN, 2005).

Informal participation tends to leave a series of issues untouched, such as broader considerations concerning decision making, workload, and representation in disputes (TOWNSEND, WILKINSON and BURGESS, 2013), confirming that studies dedicated to informal relationships among the principal movers in a firm and discussions of formal environments have been neglected (KELLY and GENNARD, 2010; OTHMAN, 2009). The alignment between formal and informal perspectives does not occur by chance and requires open and systematic integration to obtain the best results for an organization. The organizational environment makes it possible to overcome the barriers imposed by formal structures and demonstrates the importance of informal relationships in improving work processes and the diffusion of knowledge, given that, while technical knowledge is well distributed among hierarchical functions, there have to be conditions for it to be accessed and utilized in order to generate improvements for the organization, which thus affects the performance of HRM in the strategic process and improves the credibility of the area within the organization as a whole (AMALOU-DÖPKE and SÜß, 2014; CONDE and FARIAS FILHO, 2016; TOWNSEND, WILKINSON and BURGESS, 2013).

In conclusion, the use of formal and informal mechanisms is relevant to describe the strategic insertion of HRM units in decision-making arenas. The representation of the HRM department within upper management and all aspects that involve it means formal access to the organization’s decision-making process. However, informal actions, in terms of the performance of the HRM unit within the organization’s existing relationships, permits the development of discussions which assist the manifestation of this phenomenon in order to obtain success in the implementation of HRM policies.

**Representation of HRM Areas in Upper Management**

The second category of themes identified in our bibliographic research is concerned with the representation of HRM areas in upper management. Investigating the dynamic of HRM partnerships with upper management is fundamental to understanding the steps of the strategic decision-making process, independent of the conversations which occur within formal and or informal configurations (ZHAO et al., 2019). Thus, there is a growing need for HRM professionals to be part of upper management and participate in the business partnership with lower-level managers. Without support from upper management, HRM does not take part in the initial stages of the strategic decision-making process. In this way, the representation of the HRM department in decision-making arenas is a key indicator of the area’s strategic role, indicating the profession’s symbolic capital, that is its legitimacy, professional esteem, recognition, status and respect (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; SINGH, DARWISH and ANDERSON, 2012; TEO and CRAWFORD, 2005).

The status of the HRM area and its capacity to exercise influence on other actors are considered to be critical aspects in the HRM implementation process, especially in terms of the interaction
between the function of HRM and the strategic management process (TEO and CRAWFORD, 2005). In this way, the authors affirm that when the HRM area is a principal group in the upper echelons of management, lower-level managers are required to take on responsibilities for human resource management, so that the HRM unit can be free to concentrate on more strategic aspects.

An effective relationship between the HRM manager and upper administration based on trust and shared values on strategic development increases the area’s opportunities to participate in organizational strategy (SINGH, DARWISH and ANDERSON, 2012). The image of the HRM department as a strategic partner is reflected by the role performed by HRM departments in supporting upper management in searching for corporate strategy and meeting the needs of internal clients in a proactive manner, suggesting that the measurement of HRM activities can improve the credibility of the HRM department, as well as its position and relevance within the organization in comparison with other functions, so that this area belongs to the group of real decision-makers within the organization (AMALOU-DÖPKE and SÜß, 2014).

The main assumption is that the experiences, values and personalities of upper management affect their understanding of situations that an organization faces in the same way that the attitudes of upper management actors regarding HRM professionals have an important influence on this area’s involvement in strategic decision making (ZHOU et al., 2019; BOADA-CUERVA, TRULLEN and VALVERDE, 2019). In reality, it is the organization’s upper management that makes decisions in the same way that the actions of the HRM area are conditioned by having a supreme position in the upper management’s hierarchy and derives its power base from this structure (KELLY and GENNARD, 2010). Therefore, support from upper management for HRM has been seen as a critical indicator of the promulgation of a strategic role for the HRM department, which is only exercised when it has the support of upper management which recognizes the strategic contribution made by the organization’s HRM unit. (AMALOU-DÖPKE and SÜß, 2014; BOADA-CUERVA, TRULLEN and VALVERDE, 2019; ZHAO et al., 2019). Thus, the support of the upper echelons of management is important in giving HRM professionals the opportunity to collaborate in strategic decision-making decisions (KELLY and GENNARD, 2010; ZHAO et al., 2019).

To summarize, the representation of the HRM area in an organization’s upper administration is important in the area’s search for success in making strategic decisions and policy implementation. By demonstrating a strategic role for HRM, this representation reflects the expectations of this area’s professionals who seek to be present in the organization’s decision-making arenas, represented by formal authorities. However, it is important that this representation exist not only within the organizational structure, such as Boards of Directors and Administrative Boards, but also executive groups with effective discussions and formulations of organizational strategy, which can exert influence over organizational results.

Roles of HRM Professionals

The trajectory of HRM reflects the organization’s supposed commitment to the development of human capital, which involves the discussion of the strategic actions of HRM units, and the responsibility wielded by HRM functions throughout the organization (SHEEHAN, 2007; TANG et al., 2015). Strategic HRM can be understood as a response to the perception that
HRM units perform multiple roles, and thus these professionals face pressure to avoid their traditional functions focused on functionalist tasks (VAN BUREN, GREENWOOD and SHEEHAN, 2011).

As presented in the previous section, the dominant vision of the actions of HRM units has been excessively formal and structural in the way the role is performed by the unit within the organization and is perceived through the functions performed by the HRM department (SHEEHAN et al., 2016). Even though there have been attempts to insert a strategic approach for the HRM department, the management of the roles performed by professionals in this unit – strategic functions and traditional administrative activities – directly reflects the contribution which the area can make to the organization, because the variety of its duties can inhibit the inclusion of its units in the strategic decision-making process, more evidence is necessary about their impact on the variability of HRM's implementation of its policies and practices SHEEHAN et al., 2015; SHEEHAN et al., 2016; STEFFENSEN et al., 2019).

From a strategic perspective, HRM areas should assume part of the central direction and command of the organization, keeping in mind that its various actors perform in some form an important role, which is determinant in decisions linked to the area throughout the organization's hierarchy (CHIU and SELMER, 2011; STEFFENSEN et al., 2019). However, even in organizations in which HRM professionals and line managers understand the concepts of strategic HRM, the reputation of the HRM function is frequently a significant obstacle that needs to be overcome (BECKER and HUSELID, 2006; KELLY, 2001). Studies point out that both upper and lower levels of management believe that most HRM areas are not in the center of the organization, identifying a gap between them and the rest of the organization, for two reasons in particular. The first is that many organizations do not include HRM managers in the strategic planning and decision-making process, and also reduce the role of HRM managers to the mere implementation of area practices. The second is that HRM functions do not always interact productively with the management of other organizational activities, and they are often seen as administrative routines that have little effect on organizational effectiveness (CHIU and SELMER, 2011; RAUB, ALVAREZ and KHANNA, 2006; TEO, 2000).

According to Stewart et al. (2010), the function of managing people can occur mainly in three ways: from the center of administrative management which acts as a center of excellence in strategic partnership with the organization's units. These functions define the profile of HRM oriented towards the organization's internal environment, even though the external environment is considered from a contingent point of view in the understanding of HRM's strategic practices (STEWART et al., 2010; TEO and RODWELL, 2007).

The function of the center of administrative management refers to functional administration and represents the traditional role of the HRM unit, whose transition to a strategic role demands strong performance in two other complementary roles to legitimize the function of HRM as a central actor supporting the achievement of organizational results (STEWART et al., 2010; TEO and RODWELL, 2007). The center of excellence, in turn, represents the unit's technical competence in translating organizational needs into services relevant to managers and employees, above all in terms of the actions of human resource development (STEWART et al., 2010). Finally, within the strategic partnership, the HRM unit demonstrates the policy competencies of articulation together with other organizational actors to maintain the
alignment of its practices with the predicted and emerging needs of the organization (TEO and RODWELL, 2007). Considering the HRM department as a strategic business partner depends on the unit having a high enough profile to achieve a link between HRM activities and strategic organizational business, demonstrating its status and influence within the organization (GALANG and FERRIS, 1997).

Thus, to have a role of influence over the long term within an organization, an HRM unit needs to have political skills as one of its necessary competencies (NGUYEN et al., 2019). It may be inferred that these are not technical capacities, but rather the acting of the unit which demonstrates its efficacy in the strategic process. Since the HRM area is not directly responsible for an organization’s business, its actions need to be directly linked to the implementation of policies and practices. In this way, in considering that political aspects intrinsic to its performance permeate its instrumental and strategic functions, it needs to be recognized that the challenge that organizations face is highlighting the political dimension of the HRM unit in the sense of making its strategic insertion in decision-making arenas viable, so that it can contribute to the organization’s business.

HRM Involvement in the Decision-Making Process

The roles performed by HRM professionals are subject to great changes due to the need to demonstrate how the area adds value to the organization. To accomplish this, it is necessary to increase the area’s legitimacy to give it greater status and more influence within organizations (VAN BUREN, GREENWOOD and SHEEHAN, 2011; LEMMERGAARD, 2009). This can be better achieved when the HRM unit is strategically involved and exerts influence on this organizational process, which may be important to the effectiveness of strategic management policies (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; TEO and RODWELL, 2007).

In sum, the level of involvement of the HRM unit within an organization’s strategic management indicates the level of HR’s strategic integration, that is, its integration with other units to integrate HRM with business strategy (GOLDEN and RAMANUJAM, 1985; TEO and RODWELL, 2007). Thus, it is the influence in decision making that indicates the unit’s effectiveness, which is evaluated based on how it can meet the organization’s expectations and demands (NGUYEN et al., 2019; TEO and RODWELL, 2007; ZHAO et al., 2019). In addition, its strategic involvement and the HRM unit’s influence depend on the institutional relationships between the unit and other interested parties, with the leaders of the HRM seeking to legitimize their functions and status within the organization, explaining the benefits of the area’s involvement in strategic issues (GOLDEN and RAMANUJAM, 1985; KELLY and GENNARD, 2010). In this manner, the HRM needs effective involvement in the organization’s strategic activities and needs to delegate daily issues to upper and lower-level managers, a factor that could be considered a relevant indicator of how valued the HR area is within the organization (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; SINGH, DARWISH and ANDERSON, 2012).

The involvement of the HRM area in the strategic planning process is fundamental to the organization’s performance. When the organization perceives a high level of efficacy in this area, its strategic planning is considered constructive and exercises a positive influence on
the organization’s future performance. In contrast, when the HRM area has a low degree of efficacy, its involvement is seen as a waste of organizational resources, giving it little influence in terms of the organization’s future performance (CHEN, HSU and YIP, 2011; WELCH and WELCH, 2012). Thus, when an HRM professional exercises a mainly operational role and has little time to dedicate to other issues due to an overload of tensions produced by conflicting expectations, this can reduce confidence in the strategic capacity of the HRM professional and negatively affect the probability that HRM professionals will be included in formal and informal strategic involvement processes (SHEEHAN et al., 2016; WELCH and WELCH, 2012).

The HRM area seeks acceptance from the rest of the organization as a strategic business partner, establishing policies to implement and develop human capacities in addition to the development of the functions of line managers (TANG et al., 2015). This function as a strategic business partner can be exercised in various ways, with the actions of these professionals ranging from involvement in formulating organizational strategy to contributing to the implementation of HRM. Thus, the HRM area helps align its practices with the organization’s business strategy (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; RAUB, ALVAREZ and KHANNA, 2006).

It is worth examining a study conducted by Buyens and De Vos (2001), in which a structure was developed, presented in Figure 2, whose involvement in the HRM function is represented at different times during the decision-making process, based on an examination of problems, the development of solutions, implementation and control. The authors prefer the term “decision-making” rather than “strategy formulation” due to the fact that the former includes more decisions about HRM regarding organizational strategy. Each moment of involvement in the formulation or implementation step, can be important to the effectiveness of strategic management policies to the extent that the sooner HRM units are involved in the decision-making process, the greater impact they will have on strategic decisions (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; DYER, 1983).

**FIGURE 2**

HRM Involvement in the Decision-Making Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VALUE ORIENTED HR</th>
<th>REACTIVE HR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anticipated action</td>
<td>Reactive action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize and determine</td>
<td>Repairing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give meaning</td>
<td>Resolving bad fits</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OPPORTUNE INVOLVEMENT OF HR</th>
<th>EXECUTIVE HR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active adaptation</td>
<td>Passive adaptation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual understanding</td>
<td>Executive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Ad-hoc solutions to problems</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Adapted from Buyens and De Vos (2001).

Assuming the decision-making process begins with the real situation and the desired situation, the observation of a gap between the real situation and the desired situation can be described as quite anticipated if the area is involved from the beginning of the decision-
making process with it being possible to recognize and determine problems. A second moment of involvement can be categorized as the opportune involvement of the HRM area in the decision-making process and refers to a moment in which the unit is actively involved in the decision-making process, creating instruments and supporting the line managers responsible for their implementation. A third moment of involvement comes later and is restricted to the implementation of HRM activities without the team’s active involvement. Finally, the last moment of involvement is when the unit is just consulted for control or in case the implemented solutions do not function as expected, with the unit needing to act in some manner to solve the problem (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001).

The involvement of the HRM area in all of the decision-making processes is considered relevant for effective policies, given that the anticipated and total involvement in the decision-making processes is necessary for the area to be considered in strategic situations. However, the earlier that the HRM representative is involved in the decision-making process, or in other words, from the problem identification to the proposed solutions, the greater its impact will be, because being involved in the beginning of the formulation of strategy improves the chances that HRM issues will be reflected by strategy (DYER, 1983).

In a complementary manner, even though HRM leaders and other professionals share the same desire to reduce their operational workload to become more involved in the strategic roles of HRM, their leaders have a greater chance of influencing decisions in their initial stages, even though results indicate that most areas tend to be involved late in organizational decisions (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; RAUB, ALVAREZ and KHANNA, 2006).

In sum, seen as an element that assists the strategic involvement of HRM in decision-making arenas, we may consider that the anticipated involvement of the HRM unit in the decision-making process increases the chances that the area’s complaints are reflected in organizational decisions and are materialized in HRM policies. Thus, the influence of organizational business is more effective depending on the phase of the decision-making process in which the HRM acts, and the more HRM professionals are involved in this process, the greater their impact is on the organization’s strategic decisions.

**FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

More than considering the alignment between the HRM function and organizational strategy, the area’s involvement in decision-making arenas has to do with the recognition of the political aspects of the efficacy of the implementation of HRM policies. Thus, a redefinition of the role of human resource management requires professionals to be involved in the organization’s decision-making process in a formal and informal manner (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; SINGH, DARWISH and ANDERSON, 2012; LEMMERGAARD, 2009), reflecting the HRM area’s influence in the decision-making process, whose effect is reflected in the efficacy of the implementation of HRM policies (BUYENS and DE VOS, 2001; KELLY and GENNARD, 2010; TEO and RODWELL, 2007).

According to Côrtes (2016), the strategic involvement of the HRM unit can be considered the presence of the HRM unit in decision-making arenas with the freedom to discuss, formulate, monitor and revise proposals for the area. However, the phenomenon examined here addresses
elements in addition to this freedom of the HRM unit. It is necessary to recognize them as key participants in organizations, understanding the reasons why they are present in decision-making arenas and why the organizational dynamic excluded this area from this central position. Elements such as the roles exercised by HRM professionals, the level of involvement of this area in decision-making arenas, and its formal and informal actions demonstrate that politics is an inherent object in the strategic involvement of HRM units in organizational decision-making arenas, which allow them to influence organizational decisions and guarantee the effective integration of the organization's business.

Based on this bibliographic survey, it has been possible to identify elements which make up HRM involvement in decision-making arenas, bearing in mind that this phenomenon reveals itself in a variety of ways, and considering foremost that actions by this area are necessary to have effective influence on organizational business. From a management point of view, the evidence regarding this strategic involvement can assist managers and leaders in tracing strategies that will lead to better participation in organizational business and the influencing of decision-making processes.

In terms of the limitations of this paper, considering that HRM models do not study political aspects, we can again stress the difficulty of defining descriptors for the bibliographic research demonstrated in the examined articles which do not deal with HRM involvement in decision-making as their central object. In this way, this article is dedicated to a theoretical gap in the study of the political dimension which permeates HRM, demonstrating the need of deeper research in this area, dealing with issues which can broaden its agenda. What leads an HRM unit to participate in the decision-making process? How can they participate in the strategic process and be involved in decision making? Being strategic is wielding power? Supporting other actors is being involved in decisions? These are questions that can encourage new studies about the involvement of HRM units in organizational decision-making arenas.
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