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COMPETENCY MANAGEMENT IN BRAZIL: A MULTI-CASE STUDY

GESTÃO POR COMPETÊNCIAS NO BRASIL: UM ESTUDO MULTICASOS

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ABSTRACT

A large part of the contemporary organizations is inserted in a highly competitive and dynamic environment, bringing to the managers the challenge of rethinking organizational strategies and management models. In this context, competency management emerges as a promising model capable of linking people management processes to business strategy. Therefore, the present research had as objective to analyze the models of competency management implemented by large organizations in Brazil. Three case studies were carried out, comprising beverage, chemical and steel industries, and then a comparative analysis was performed. From the obtained results, it was verified the importance of aligning values and organizational strategies to the defined competency model; use feedback as a human development tool; and implement a horizontal and in Y career structure. The contributions of the present research are perceived in two different environments. Firstly, in the business sphere, it has the potential to contribute in order to reduce the difficulties experienced by various organizations when trying to adopt competency management, which often use practices that do not fit with this system and maintain human resources management processes not aligned with the business strategy. Additionally, regarding the administrative science, the accomplishment of this study contributes to mitigate the theoretical gap around the researched topic.

Keywords: Competency model. Strategic human resources management. Critical human skills.

RESUMO

Uma grande parcela das organizações contemporâneas está inserida em um ambiente altamente competitivo e dinâmico, trazendo aos gestores o desafio de repensarem estratégias organizacionais e modelos gerenciais. Neste contexto, a gestão por competências surge como um promissor modelo capaz de atrelar os processos de gestão de pessoas à estratégia do negócio. Por isso, a presente pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar os modelos de gestão por competências implantados por organizações de grande porte no Brasil. Foram realizados três estudos de casos, abrangendo os setores de bebidas, químico e siderúrgico, e, em seguida, conduziu-se uma análise comparativa. A partir dos resultados obtidos, constatou-se a importância de alinhar valores e estratégias organizacionais ao modelo de competências definido; utilizar o feedback como ferramenta de desenvolvimento humano; e implantar uma estrutura de carreira em Y e horizontalizada. As contribuições da presente pesquisa são percebidas em dois distintos ambientes. Primeiramente, em âmbito empresarial, tem-se o potencial de contribuir no intuito de reduzir as dificuldades experimentadas por diversas organizações ao tentarem implantar um modelo de gestão por competências, que muitas vezes utilizam práticas que não condizem com tal sistema e mantêm processos de gestão de pessoas não alinhados à estratégia do negócio. Adicionalmente, no que se refere à ciência administrativa, a realização deste estudo contribui para mitigar a lacuna teórica em torno do tema investigado.

Palavras-chave: Modelo de competências. Gestão estratégica de pessoas. Competências humanas essenciais..

1. Introduction

The current environment in which organizations are inserted is characterized by the intensification of competition and high volatility, consequences resulting from continuous technological evolution and also the movement of markets globalization , the latter responsible for the disappearance of numerous barriers to competition. In this scenario, however, many businesses are not able to reinvent themselves or adapt to deal with the new challenges imposed on them incessantly.

To reverse this, it is crucial that the organizations understand the dynamics, changes and trends that characterize their operation sector, being able to formulate and implement effective strategies, which demand highly qualified professionals, who have the critical competencies for the business.

In this context, new managerial models have been designed, aiming to provide the managers with tools that enable them to respond adequately to the new challenges that they face in their daily lives. Among such models, it is the Management by competencies, which, at the same time that favors the retention of talents, still directs the human development in the organization, ensuring the alignment between the portfolio of the employees' individual competences and the business strategic needs (FLEURY; FLEURY, 2003).

According to García-Sáiz (2011), the term competency refers to a set of behaviors that distinguishes the professionals who achieve superior performance. Thus, a competent individual can be described as the one whose quality of results delivered is substantially higher in relation to the others.

It is expected, therefore, that the individual who develops his or her skills be able to provide superior results and expand his or her occupational space (DUTRA, 2004; Lima; ROCHA, 2012), making it a valuable resource for the organization, to the extent that generates competitive advantage and value to the business.

The competencies management model should be structured in such a way that motivates the individual to commit with his or her professional development, given the organizational needs (LIMA; ROCHA, 2012; FERRAZZA; CUNHA; PINTO, 2012). For this reason, it is important that the critical skills be mapped to the business and then the people management processes be remodeled to stimulate and value the acquisition and improvement of such skills on the part of officials (MUNCK; MUNCK; SOUZA, 2011).

However, this process tends to be quite complex, because the concept of competence is still not consolidated, which complicates the definition of what would be the best development practices, evaluation and compensation (GARCÍA-SÁIZ, 2011). In addition, it is impossible to ignore that the alignment of people management processes to the strategic needs of the business and the retention of more competent professionals/talented still are two of the biggest managers' challenges who operate in this area (MEYER; XIN, 2017; THUNNISSEN; BOSELIE; FRUYTIER, 2013).

In this sense, considering the complexity involved in the design and operationalization of this model, allied to the lack of the theme theoretical consolidation (GARCÍA-SÁIZ, 2011; ZAGO; RETOUR, 2013), this study aimed to analyze the competencies management models deployed by large-sized organizations in Brazil.

This paper aims to clarify what are the competency management models and the practices that are being adopted by the organizations that have succeeded in implementing it in a successful way, providing subsidies for others companies to do. In addition, it is intended to demonstrate to managers who work in the area of human resources as management by competencies favors the coherence between processes focused on attracting, motivating and retaining talent.

2. Competencies Management

The impacts arising from globalization and technological advances achieved from the second half of the 20th century, which include increased competition and the growing market dynamism, influenced significantly the organizations and their paradigms and led to a ceaseless quest for new sources of competitive advantage. In this context, new practices began to be deployed in the framework of people management, among which the Competencies Management stands out, whose origin can be found concomitantly in the United States and the United Kingdom, in the decade of 1980 (HONDEGHEM; HORTON; SCHEEPERS, 2006).

The emergence of this issue in two distinct regions of the globe resulted in this same amount of approaches on competencies management, each carrying a proper sense. In the North American vision, competence is recognized as the behavior detailing capable of determining a high performance on the part of the professional in his or her labor activities; already in widespread view in Europe, competence is treated as a grouping of results that can be expected that the profession deliver at work (GORLOV; LAZAREVA; FURSOV, 2015).

In consequence of the emergence of these two conceptual chains, the term competence is treated in different ways in the literature. McClelland and Dailey (1972) and Spencer and Spencer (1993), for example, encompass in this concept the set of individual characteristics liable to observation, capable of predicting a superior performance.

Likewise, Boyatzis (1982) and García-Sáiz (2011) associate to the concept of competence the group of observable behaviors that lead to differentiated results at work. In this perspective, the word authority means the professional that delivers differentiated results of superior quality.

On the other hand, according to Amorim and Silva (2011), the concept of competence involves the integration of three possible knowledge in the work environment: namely, related to knowledge; the expertise concerning the skills; and know how to act, which refers to the professional's attitudes.

In this same line, it is verified in Corallo et al. (2010) an overview of competence as a personal pre-existing condition to perform certain activities, achieved from a set of knowledge arising from studies, skills acquired through practice, and favorable attitudes to work. In this other perspective, the word authority is used to indicate an individual considered qualified/trained to perform a set of pre-determined activities (FLEURY, 2001).

Despite being relatively different perspectives found in the literature, it should be noted that all converge to two points: (1) When present, the competencies generate shared learning, aggregate social, personal and economic values and impact both people and organizations (AMORIM; SILVA, 2011); and (2) competencies can be developed and improved through training programs and specific development (CORALLO et al., 2010).

It is important to point out that, to develop the professional's competencies, it is presumed that he or she will be able to perform more complex activities and that his or her work will add greater value to the organization DUTRA, 2004; TRIPATHI; AGRAWAL, 2014). Therefore, to the extent that the individual extends/improves his or her list of competencies, it is hoped that the increase of his or her responsibilities at work and, consequently the expansion of his or her occupational space (LIMA; ROCHA, 2012).

Based on the redemption of the theory of the Resource-Based View (RBV), it is possible to establish a strong relationship between organizational competencies and Competencies Management , whereas the latter guides the acquisition/improvement of individual competencies, which agglutinated, give rise to the organizational competencies portfolio (DRIES, 2013; LIMA; ROCHA, 2012; SILVA et al., 2014).

The People Management by competencies aims to ensure that the individual is prepared to carry out his or her activities, deliver high standard results and meet the expectations inherent to his or her role in the organization (KIMBLE; VASCONCELOS; ROCHA, 2016). Therefore, in order to deploy this managerial model, it becomes necessary the mapping of all critical human skills so that the organizational strategy is implemented effectively, being, from this point, established guidelines to carry out people management processes, such as recruitment and selection and performance evaluation (MUNCK; MUNCK; SOUZA, 2011).

These processes begin, then, to give subsidies so that managers will raise the gaps of existing individual competencies and provide specific training programs, and remunerate and promote the professionals based on clear criteria and aligned to the organizational strategy (BRANDÃO et al., 2011).

According to Gröschke (2013), the Competencies Management allows the behavior recognition and appreciation capable of influencing the delivery of the professionals' results. Other benefits associated to this managerial model include a greater understanding of the employee about the expectations of the organization and its activities; expansion of individual competencies and, consequently, of the organizational ones as well and progressions in the professionals' career associated with the contributions given to the business (CERIBELI; ALMEIDA, 2015; CORALLO et al., 2010).

When structuring a system of competencies Management, it is crucial that the organization has clarity about its competitive strategy, because this will be used to guide the definition of human skills that are critical to its business (SILVA et al., 2014; BRANDÃO, 2012). Following this line, it is verified in Gorlov, Lazareva and Fursov (2015) the need to align the Competencies Management to business strategy, which is performed in two steps: first, it uses the competitive strategy as a basis for defining the essential organizational skills; they, in turn, give rise to critical human competencies.

As evidenced in Schutte, Barkhuizen and Van Der Sluis (2015) and Rosa et al. (2015), the list of human competencies necessary for the successful deployment of the business strategy is used to restructure the people management processes, including recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, career and performance evaluation. Such list, called model of competencies, can be subdivided into two groups of competencies: fundamental, that are expected of all professionals, and specific, which are related to the individual's area and position (BRANDÃO et al., 2008).

It is notable that this restructuring process requires special attention, because the changes performed in people management processes of the organization shall ensure that the competencies of its professionals are developed and/or refined and also valued (AMORIM; SILVA, 2011).

To validate the competencies model developed, the following parameters must be used: content validity, from the test of the competencies descriptors; face validity, comparing the congruent meanings between the competencies description and what is understood by the professionals; reliability, which consists of measuring the accuracy with which the competencies are measured; and predictive validity, which measures the contribution that the competencies contained in the model produce in the individual's and the organization's performance (MUNCK; MUNCK; SOUZA, 2011).

After validating the proposed model, the people management processes must undergo modifications to the Competencies Management to be deployed effectively in the organization. These changes should begin through the process of personnel selection, which begins to focus on the identification of the employees' growth potential, their limitations and the delivery capacity (HEILMANN; HEILMANN, 2012; KIMBLE; VASCONCELOS; ROCHA, 2016).

When established a selection process with the focus on competencies, the interviews begin to play a greater role, due to its effectiveness to identify the set of competencies acquired by individuals throughout their professional trajectories (FERRAZZA; CUNHA; PINTO, 2012).

In turn, the training and development programs should be restructured with the aim to develop the professionals' critical skills, in order to enable them to act in line with the business strategy (CHOI; YOON, 2015; DE VOS; DE HAUW; WILLEMSE, 2015; GORLOV; LAZAREVA; FURSOV, 2015), reinforcing the psychological contract and the interdependence relationship between employee and employer (FESTING; SCHÄFER, 2014).

As observed in Stokes and Oiry (2012), the training and development programs, when justified by the organization competencies model, they tend to expand the professionals' intellectual structure, contributing so that employees have a greater capacity for understanding the organizational and marketing environment and can adapt to different situations.

Concerning the professionals' appreciation, a remuneration plan should be formalized, aligned to the competencies model, which ensures that employees are rewarded based on individual development achieved and real contribution to business (CERIBELI; ALMEIDA, 2015; McDONNELL et al., 2015). According to Gorlov, Lazareva and Fursov (2015) compensating by competencies demand that the organization abandon the traditional systems linked exclusively to the position that the employee occupies and use different mechanisms, able to reward professionals, individually, according to their performance and competencies portfolio.

Just as the remuneration, planning and career management by competencies must be tied to individual performance. In addition, the horizontal structure should be privileged, so that the positions have levels or gradations, being the employee's progression associated to the level of development of their competencies and ability to perform more complex activities (CERIBELI; ALMEIDA, 2015; SILVA; LUZ, 2010). Thus, it should be noted that the Competencies Management should encourage the individual to undertake with his or her own improvement, which depends both on his or her remuneration as well as his or her professional advancement (LIMA; ROCHA, 2012).

Considering the importance of measuring the human competencies in organizations that adopt the competencies management, because that will depend on the training and development programs, as well as decisions concerning the individuals' remuneration and career development, it is important to develop a model for performance evaluation based on the defined competencies model, which will be able to identify the competencies evolution considered critical in each professional assessed (GORLOV; LAZAREVA; FURSOV, 2015; TRIPATHI; RANJAN, 2013).

In this line, it is verified in Ripamonti and Scaratti (2011) that the information established by the model for performance evaluation focused on competencies are more useful to the organization when compared with those obtained using other models, because they highlight the ability of delivery of each professional and his or her growth potential.

As observed in Rosa et al. (2015) and Brandão et al. (2008) from the model of competencies performance assessment, it becomes possible to highlight the progress

of each individual evaluated, noting that the key competencies have been developed or not by the professional. It should be noted, therefore, that the competencies performance evaluation tends to stimulate the human development (SILVA; LUZ, 2010).

Concluding the discussion, the following guidelines for deployment of competencies performance evaluation are highlighted: (1) tthat multiple evaluation sources be consulted, which refer to the assessment method of 360 degrees; (2) that the professional's self-assessment be also used; and (3) that the results be presented and discussed with the own appraiser, in a process of constructive feedback (BRANDÃO et al., 2008). It is important to point out that, during this process, the professional's historical evolution should also be consulted to substantiate the discussions and direct the future individual's development planning (ROSA et al., 2015).

3. Methodological Aspects

The proposed research can be classified as descriptive, because it aims to describe, accurately, the facts and phenomena existing in a given context (TRIVIÑOS, 1987). There is also, in this study, the exploratory approach, which aims to assist in the clarification about issues still poorly consolidated, allowing the researcher a clearer vision about the phenomenon investigated (GIL, 2008).

The present study has a qualitative nature, which does not emphasize the numerical representation, but the understanding of social relations, groups and organizations (HAYES; HOPKINSON; TAYLOR, 2016).

As a method of research, it was opted for the case study, which can be defined as a technique of empirical research, focused on understanding a contemporary event in its real context, recommended in situations where is it not feasible to dissociate the phenomenon and the circumstances where it occurs (YIN, 2005). The employment of this specific method allows the understanding of a phenomenon on the basis of experience gained and the clarification obtained about a particular social context (YIN, 2005).

The use of case study can be observed in several studies, with the aim to assist in the organizational phenomena understanding. As observed in Yin (2005), this investigation method seeks to detect the characteristics that each organization brings along themselves, being possible the understanding of the reality studied.

In the present study, it was opted for the multicase study, which has as advantage, when compared to a single case study, greater robustness and obtaining of more convincing results, as evidences are collected and compared from different contexts, in search of similarities and divergent points(YIN, 2005).

The data collection was operationalized by means of structured interviews, carried out from a script of key issues previously elaborated, without, however, losing the flexibility, to the extent that they allow the researcher the submission of new questions that prove relevant at the time of data collection (MANZINI, 1990). Analysts and/or managers were interviewed who work in the departments of people management of businesses studied and that, therefore, know the processes of this organizational area.

Specifically for this study, a script of interviews was built organized in six sections: the first aimed to characterize the companies studied and the respective respondents; the others had as aim to allow the understanding of the functioning of the recruitment and selection processes, training and development, compensation, career and performance evaluation in organizations that work in the molds of competencies management.

In all cases, it was used as a data collection technique, in addition to the structured interviews, documental analysis, by means of which organizational charts, competencies models appreciated by organizations and plans/career structures were explored.

Still regarding data collection, direct observation was used as a complementary approach to structured interviews and documentary analysis, by means of which it was possible to researchers monitor routines in the people management department from each organization studied.

For the treatment of collected data, it was decided by the technique called content analysis, being used the following thematic categories: design of the model; selection by competencies; human development; remuneration, career and retention; and evaluation.

Three cases were studied, being important to clarify that all the organizations investigated in this study were chosen considering three criteria: (1) should be located in Minas Gerais or São Paulo, for logistical issues and ease of access of researchers; (2) competencies management should be deployed for at least three years, which would ensure that the people management by competencies processes were more consolidated and that there would be greater clarity with regard to the difficulties and benefits of adopting such a managerial model; and (3) should be large-sized companies, whereas, in this type of organization, practices and people management processes tend to be more robust.

The first topic of the next section of this paper presents a brief description of the cases studied, which were called Company X, company W and Z company, in to have their identities preserved.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Results

4.1 Presentation of the cases studied

The first case study carried out beheld a large-sized beverage industry, referred to in this work as Company X, active in the national market for over 60 years.. This organization has six units, all located in the southeastern region of Brazil, and operates in dozens of cities in the states of Minas Gerais and São Paulo. Among the principles that underlie the strategy of the organization, the following are mentioned: responsibility, integrity, collaboration and quality; all these guided the competencies management model deployed. The interviewees were four analysts of the Human Resources department of the company.

The second case study had as its object a multinational industry that offers solutions in silicones, called in this study of W. Such organization has operated in the national and international market for more than 70 years, being based in the United States and with subsidiaries in Brazil and Mexico; has as its area of expertise the

development of products composed of silicone, with silicon-based technology, for various industrial sectors. In addition, the company W has focus on innovation, safety and sustainability, investing in renewable energy. The human resources manager in Latin America and an industry analyst were interviewed.

Finally, the third case study included a large company belonging to the national steel sector, which operates in the long steel sector in the Americas, and is considered one of the largest suppliers in the world of this material for the automotive industry. Specifically in Brazil, the company produces steel and iron ore, highlighting also the use of scrap steel, which caused it to be recognized worldwide as a great recycler. For the purposes of study, this organization was called company Z. Five analysts of Human Resources were interviewed of level III, four human Resources consultants (called business partners) and the department manager.

4.2 Description of the cases

4.2.1 Company X

The competencies model adopted by the company X includes three groups of competencies, each one of them related to positions corresponding to an organizational level. As competencies expected of the strategic level include austerity, integrity, proactivity, team work, results orientation, analytical capacity, systemic vision and leadership; as competencies in the tactical level are expected austerity, integrity, proactivity, commitment, team work, interpersonal relationship and communication; and finally, at the operational level, are expected austerity, integrity, proactiveness and commitment.

In the selection process of the Company X technical and behavioral competencies are evaluated, which vary according to the requirements and level of each position, all of which are associated with the competitive strategy defined by the organization. Whereas regarding the selection techniques, psychological tests and interviews will be carried out by competencies, which, together, allow to map the existence and degree of development of competencies appreciated by the organization in each candidate.

Aiming to retain employees and encourage their development, company X prioritizes the recruitment procedure; the external recruitment is only performed when the skills necessary to occupy the position are not available in the organization itself.

The company works with an annual plan of trainings, which comprises, in a dynamic way, organizational needs aligned to market changes, i.e., the organization, annually, maps the human competencies gaps critical to the business strategy and outlines a formal planning to get rid of them. The evaluations of the training programs are also held annually, with the objective of evaluating the absorption of the content taught and the result presented in the work.

To prepare the professionals that will occupy management positions or to improve the management skills of those who have already occupied them, the organization works with specific development programs. These programs aim to develop competencies such as leadership, systemic vision and results orientation

The company adopts the Y career model, allowing employees to opt for a more technical professional trajectory, becoming experts in your theirof expertise, or

assuming managerial positions and leadership. In addition, it adopts a horizontal career structure, justified by the possibility of providing the employee a professional career without overloading the hierarchical superior levels.

Each position in the Company X has three different development levels. To be promoted, the professional needs, at the same time, to meet three criteria: (1) to be performing the position in the current level for at least six months; (2) to obtain good result in the annual performance assessment; and (3) to have a good recommendation from his or her manager, who will be consulted before any decision is taken related to his or her career.

To measure the employees' performance, the company opts for unidirectional evaluation, i.e., held only by immediate leader, which, in spite of being more dynamic, can bring certain biases of information, since it relies on a single source of information.

In spite of all employees undergo the performance evaluation process, there are differences in accordance with the levels of positions. For the tactical and strategic levels, structured questionnaires are adopted that come with the technical and behavioral competencies expected from each professional; these questionnaires are delivered to the areas managers, who are responsible for answering them, and then provide individualized and formal to the appraiser. On the other hand, for the operational level, the process is simplified, being used an instrument of the type checklist, which is filled by the leaders.

The Company X's remuneration plan has a Program of Results Participation, a model that enables the employee to obtain an annual bonus upon the achievement of certain goals and obtaining satisfactory results in the individual performance assessment. It should be noted, thus, the organization's effort to link part of the winnings of their professionals to the competencies presented by them and the quality of the results delivered, i.e., the real contribution given individually for the success of the business.

Additionally, the company offers a package of benefits that includes food ticket, restaurant at the work place, transportation, medical insurance and permission to purchase the products of the organization at cost price, as well as the possibility of joining a supplementary pension plan, whose monthly contributions are divided between employee and employer.

It is important to point out that both the benefits and the supplementary pensions are remunerations mechanisms adopted by the company X aimed specifically, to increase its employees' retention.

4.2.2 Company W

Company W uses a model of competencies composed of eight key competencies (called core competences), namely: (1) to deliver results, (2) to manage performance, (3) to deliver value to the customer, (4) communication (5) to develop and inspire people, (6) team work, (7) business judgment and (8) self-management. It is important to highlight that all competencies were defined based on the company's values and also in competitive strategy adopted.

In the personnel selection process, the core competencies assessment in the candidate is carried out through the application of psychological tests and knowledge

testes; for managerial positions, an American standardized interview guide is used, whose goal is to raise the candidate's experiences that allow the competencies recognition acquired/consolidated throughout his or her professional career.

Specifically regarding the recruitment process for managerial positions, the organization favors, initially, the internal public, a fact that stimulates the professionals' development and engagement. For this reason, the company uses a succession planning that is based on historic performance obtained by individuals in the evaluation process and the evolution observed, which enables to identify those that present the greatest potential (called "high potential") to be promoted to leadership positions.

The professionals' training programs are divided into global, technical and behavioral training. The first ones aim to fill competencies gaps related to the organizational values, which are expected regardless of the position occupied by the professional. The latter are more specific and are related to the skills necessary for the individual to perform adequately the functions related to his or her area of expertise; finally, the third one aims to broaden the employees' interpersonal competencies.

In turn, in the human development programs, focused on the long term, practical actions are prioritized, which include the participation in projects until the gradual expansion of the number and complexity of the tasks performed by the individual. This guideline is adopted having as background the organization experience itself, which noted the importance of the experiences granted to professionals to increase their portfolio of competencies.

The performance evaluation in the company W is operationalized through the application of a questionnaire three times a year. In the first quarter, the goals and behaviors to be enhanced are defined. In the middle of the year, there is a revision of the planning performed and partial discussion of the results achieved and, at the end of the year, a complete evaluation is performed, being all the information recorded in the people management system.

The manager of each area becomes responsible for evaluation of their team and the results of the process are delivered to employees through individualized and formal feedback. It is worth adding that the performance evaluation is applied to all the company's hierarchical levels and has great relevance from the point of view of other people management processes, because, from the results obtained, decisions are taken related not only to the training , but also the the employees' career and remuneration.

The remuneration plan adopted by company W encompasses different tools to attract and retain professionals, such as the supplementary pension plan available, however, only for higher hierarchical levels. Through this plan, the individual shall have the right to receive a monthly amount that will complement the official retirement perceived by him or her. If the employee opts to join, a percentage of his or her earnings is intended   for this purpose, plus the amount paid by the company.

In a complementary way, benefit packages are offered that include medical insurance, restitution of dental expenses, scholarships for dependents, food tickets and life insurance.

In addition to the options already mentioned, the organization still works with a model of variable remuneration, which allows professionals in a same hierarchical level

receive different values based on their contribution to the business, results delivery and competencies presented.

According to information collected at company W, the goals upon mixing different remuneration tools include: (1) to increase the retention of its professionals; (2) to highlight the individuals' contribution for the business; and (3) to encourage the human development.

Finally, it is added that the company W has a career plan divided into three distinct areas: production; technical and office positions; and Professional (executive level). However, regardless of the area, the levels of the positions are divided into seven sub-levels, with wage variations in each gradation, which reveals its horizontal structure. In addition, the Y model career is adopted, allowing the employee to have option to choose whether he or she will follow a technical or managerial career.

4.2.3 Company Z

Implanted in 1999, the people management by competencies in company Z aimed to stimulate and improve the training of its professionals, so that they are qualified to perform their tasks reaching higher performances, always in line with the organizational goals and values. It is important to point out that the competencies model originally developed, after a recent review of the organization strategic guidelines, which counted with the support of a large-sized and international operations consulting firm, was revised and new competencies were established.

In addition, several processes were changed: the rules for the employees' remuneration were modified; a new method of performance evaluation was adopted, based on multiple sources (360 degrees); and a Y career system was structured. All these changes were laid from interviews with dozens of global executives and a benchmarking process.

In order to validate the new model, it was decided to implant it, as a pilot project, in one of the units of the company. After being tested, the new people management model began to be used in all the units, being able to align the professionals performance to the company Z's competitive strategy.

The competencies model used nowadays includes three groups of competencies, namely: core competences (organizational and global competencies, common to all employees), management skills (required of those who occupy or aspire to occupy leadership positions) and technical competencies (linked to the area of activity specific to each professional).

As regards the selection process, interviews by competencies are employed to identify if the candidate has competencies skills valued by the organization. In these interviews, questions are posed whose aim is to collect information about the experiences lived by the individuals throughout their professional trajectories and the competencies portfolio acquired.

Whereas regarding the employees' training, company Z works with training and development programs focused on the competencies gaps raised. Following the competencies model adopted, these programs focus on global, managerial and technical competencies.

These competencies gaps are identified from the consolidation of information arising from performance evaluations performed; this content, already unified in a report serves as a basis for drawing up the Development Annual Plan of Development (DAP), which directs all efforts directed toward the professionals' training.

It is verified, therefore, the importance of the performance evaluation in company Z, whose implantation counted with the training of 600 professionals, among managers, trainees and facilitators. The evaluative method is adopted known as 360-degree evaluation, which comprises multiple evaluators, called mapmakers, for each professional assessed; the questionnaire used is available on the corporate Intranet. It is important to highlight that this method is not used at all the company's hierarchical levels, because, at the operational level, only the immediate manager evaluates the employees.

In addition to subsidizing the training and development programs, the results of the performance evaluations sustain decisions relating to remuneration and the employees' career and provide guidelines for managers to provide feedback to them, being this tool considered essential for human development in the organization.

The compensation plan through competencies used by company Z is based on the following questions: the result of the employee's performance evaluation; the evolution presented by him or her; and the quality of his or her deliveries. It should be noted that the value received by the employees of the company varies between 80% and 120% of the median salary of the respective sector. Furthermore, every professional is hired receiving 80% of the median and, according to their performance in the items above mentioned, can reach up to 120% before being promoted to a higher level of career.

Besides the aforementioned wage model, the organization still offers a complementary pension plan, of voluntary membership, in which it contributes monthly with a percentage of 150% in relation to the contribution made by the participating employees. Furthermore, the employees receive a robust benefits package, which includes a national coverage health care insurance, dental plan, subsidies for the purchase of medicines, among others.

The decisions related to the employees' career development are taken by a Development Committee, which has the function to evaluate and discuss the employees' performance and, subsequently, to determine the next step in their careers.

The search for the continuous employees' development, allied to the managers' motivation to retain them, resulted in the Y career implantation. This model is based on a survey of the individuals' profiles and their respective professional preferences, according to criteria adopted by the organization. Its structure presents two possible paths that can be followed by the company Z's employees: one of them is the technical career, specialist type, which comprises professionals who seek greater development in their expertise area; the other is the managerial career, which includes professionals interested and with a profile to occupy leadership position.

4.3 Comparative analysis of cases

After the presentation of the three cases studied, a comparative analysis among them will be carried out, supported by a review of the literature presented previously. This stage of the study aims to identify the possible similarities and disparities between the competency management models adopted by the companies investigated.

In the three cases of competency models studied, the search for the alignment between the organization's values and strategy and critical human skills was observed. This shows the concern in using the business strategy as a starting point for the implementation of this management system, what is supported by Brandão (2012), Munck, Munck and Souza (2011), Silva et al. (2014) and Gorlov, Lazareva and Fursov (2015).

Concerning the recruitment process, it was found that, in two of the three companies studied (X and W), there are clear policies in order to prioritize the internal recruitment, which tends to stimulate the human development and increase the employees' motivation at work.

Regarding to the personnel selection process, the three companies use a variety of techniques with emphasis on the interviews to raise the skills acquired by the candidates throughout their professional trajectory. Then, they compare those skills with those valued by the organization, aiming to identify the individuals with greater capacity of delivery and greater potential of development, which finds support in Ferrazza, Cunha and Pinto (2012) and Heilmann and Heilmann (2012).

When analyzing the training and development processes in the three companies a clear focus is seen in the improvement of the competences that are included in their respective competency models. There was a close link with the results obtained in the performance evaluations, which is supported by Stokes and Oiry (2012), Tripathi and Ranjan (2013) and Gorlov, Lazareva and Fursov (2015).

Additionally, it is verfied that, in all cases, the employees'training actions are formalized in a planning that envisions a time horizon of one year, which seeks to remedy the competencies gaps raised previously, and that, in addition to the training of technical character, there are also development programs geared to the managers' training.

Regarding the performance evaluation practices, in companies X and W the unidirectional model adopted, in which only the immediate manager evaluates each employee, while at company Z the 360º model was adopted, which has multiple evaluative sources. Although in all cases there is an evaluation model capable of mapping out the individuals' evolution regarding the competencies valued by the organizations, as recommended by Gorlov, Lazareva and Fursov (2015), Rosa et al. (2015), Ripamonti and Scaratti (2011) and Brandão et al. (2008), only one of the companies analyzed adopts the 360º method, pointed out by Brandão et al. (2008) as an alternative to reduce the bias associated with unidirectional methods.

From the results obtained in the evaluation processes, all the companies studied encourage managers to provide feedback to their subordinates, discussing their evolution, the points to be developed and the ways to do so. This practice, which tends to direct and subsidize the human development (SILVA; LUZ, 2010), is supported by Brandão et al. (2008) and Rosa et al. (2015).

Regarding the career plans in three companies investigated, it was found that the adoption of horizontal structures, based on the existence of gradations levels in the positions, with the progression of the professional associated with the development of their skills and expanding their capacity to perform more complex activities, what comes to corroborate with Ceribeli and Almeida (2015) and Silva and Luz (2010). It is important to add that this career model tends to encourage individuals to commit themselves to their own growth (LIMA; ROCHA, 2012).

In a complementary way, it is perceived that all organizations studied adopt a Y career structure, which has two main axes, being one technical and another managerial. Thus, not only professionals who intend to specialize in their expertise area but also those who have a leadership profile are appreciated.

Analyzing comparatively the remuneration mechanisms adopted by the companies in question, it should be noted that all of them work with tools whose objective is to supplement the salary that is paid to professionals in accordance with the position occupied by them.

In companies X and W, there is remuneration program available tied to the range of targets and superior performance delivery , while in company Z the individual has its base-salary added of his or her performance exhibited. It should be emphasized that both practices are corroborated by the study of Gorlov, Lazareva and Fursov (2015), whose findings indicate that the employees' remuneration in an organization that implanted the competencies management must be able to reward them according to their performance and expansion of essential competencies for the business.

Finally, it is possible to check that the three organizations offer their employees robust benefit packages, which positively affect the quality of their lives and those of their families, as well as the possibility of adhering to a supplementary pension plan, whose contributions are partially financed by them. The adoption of these tools highlights the focus of businesses studied in retaining their professionals, which becomes critical, to the extent that they invest and stimulate their development.

5. Final Considerations

Nowadays, it is perceived that, in many cases, the difficulty abandoning traditional paradigms of management makes that organizations become stagnant and become hostages of a status quo that tends to take them to the withering away. On the other hand, there is a substantial number of organizations that, abandoning premises and obsolete managerial practices, become increasingly competitive, anchored, for this reason, on their professionals' potential.

In this context, it is not possible to avoid the following question: how are some organizations able to count on highly qualified staff and engaged continuously in development, while others are able to remove relevant contributions of from their professionals?

Among the explanations for this contrast, it is highlighted the deployment of more effective models of people management, such as the competencies Management, which, at the same time in which seeks to maintain the individuals

engaged with their own development, stimulates and enhances their growth and the contribution they make to the business.

However, the competencies management still lacks theoretical consolidation (GARCÍA-SÁIZ, 2011; ZAGO; RETOUR, 2013), which encouraged the completion of this study, which aimed to analyze the competencies management models used by large-sized organizations in Brazil.

Among the main findings of the study, it is noteworthy the fact about the relevance of the alignment between the values and organizational strategy and the model of competences defined, i.e., the critical human competencies to be developed by employees must be consistent with the strategic and cultural needs of the business.

Another finding of this study refers to the recruitment process, which should prioritize the internal public, as it was observed in two of the organizations studied. Among the benefits brought by this practice the following are included: increase in the professionals' commitment to seek their development, the motivation at work and also the reduction of costs and risks that are inherent to the external recruitment process.

Among the research findings, the use of the 360° method stands out for the performance evaluation in the competencies management model. Despite being employed in only one of the three companies studied, this technique allows the biases arising from unilateral evaluative dimensions be reduced, ensuring a more robust and consistent result in relation to the actual performance of the professionals assessed, which tend to give greater legitimacy to the assessment that was imputed to them.

In addition, it was observed in all companies studied the encouragement given to managers on giving constructive feedback to their subordinates. It is worth noting that this discussion of the results achieved during the evaluation process by the professionals evaluated is considered by the managers interviewed as an effective tool for human development, as they discussed the points to be improved, as well as the paths to do it.

Another important finding of this study refers to career plans used by the three organizations surveyed, which allow the employees to follow a trajectory aligned to their professional preferences, from the structure in Y. In addition, as a way of preventing overload of the higher hierarchical levels due to excessive promotions, all three companies also use a horizontal careers structure.

Finalizing the explanation of the main study results, it should be noted that the different remuneration mechanisms adopted by the three organizations aim, in addition to retain the professionals, reward them according to their occupational space, abandoning the remuneration linked exclusively to the position and valuing the individual competencies expansion.

After listing the main results found in the study, some guidelines should be pointed out for an effective implantation of competencies management. As observed in the three cases studied, first of all, it becomes essential to have well defined the business competitive strategy. From there, the critical human competencies list can be delimited, giving rise to a model of the organization competencies. Then, the people management processes are aligned to the model formulated.

Therefore, the following are suggested: (1) As recruitment policy, to prioritize the internal public, appreciating the development achieved by employees; (2) in the

selection process, giving emphasis to interviews by competencies, aiming to identify the candidates' professional experience who have contributed to the acquisition/improvement of the competencies demanded by the organization; (3) to behold, in training and development programs, the human competencies critical to the business; (4) to tie the employees' training plan to the results of performance evaluations; (5) to provide constructive feedback to those assessed, subsidizing the human development; (6) to adopt remuneration mechanisms to reward the individual's occupational space and the evolution observed in performance assessments; (7) to adopt remuneration mechanisms that are capable of increasing the organization capacity to retain its professionals, such as supplementary pension plans and robust benefit packages; and (8) to adopt a career structure in Y, able to contemplate different professional profiles.

The contributions of the present research are perceived in two different environments. Firstly, in the business sphere, it has the potential to contribute in order to reduce the difficulties experienced by various organizations when trying to adopt competency management, which often use practices that do not fit with this system and maintain human resources management processes not aligned with the business strategy. Additionally, regarding the administrative science, the accomplishment of this study contributes to mitigate the theoretical gap around the researched topic.

As a limitation of this study, it is pointed out the resistance on the part of the organizations managers studied to provide more detailed information regarding to the competencies remuneration systems adopted and career structures implanted.

For future studies, it is suggested that the analysis of other companies that adopted successfully the competencies management, seeking to identify, in addition to the practices implanted, the challenges and benefits obtained. In a complementary way, it is suggested to investigate specifically the competencies remuneration mechanisms elected by such organizations, as well as the adoption of the 360º evaluation method and the benefits arising from this evaluation model.

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