

Myopia in Human Resources: reflections on labor relations and the labor market in the Brazilian case

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Distinct studies on human resources management (HRM) indicate the need for their interaction with the strategy of the organizations in which they operate (Ulrich, Ypungier & Brockbank, 2008). The idea of a strategic HRM should take into account its alignment and influence on organizational decisions (Brewster, 2007; Boxall & Purcell, 2011), as well as articulate the dynamics of HRM with the labor market and labor relations (Delbridge, Hauptmeier & Sengupta, 2011). In Brazil, between 2003 and 2010, in spite of instabilities arising from the international environment between 2008 and 2009, there was a resumption of economic growth and, at the same time, a drop in unemployment rates, an increase in the average income of workers and maintenance of high rates of turnover (Maia & Menezes, 2014). In labor relations, there was an increase in the bargaining power of workers and the consistent return of striking movements (Amorim, 2015). Within the companies, throughout the 2000s, research has indicated the increasing importance of HRM in Brazil, with its greater institutionalization in large companies (Zuppani & Fischer, 2016). However, this cycle seemed to close at the end of 2014, since the perception of risk in the Brazilian economy was accentuated by the economic downturn, the fall in average wages, the increase in unemployment and a reduction in the level of consumer and businessmen. It seems reasonable to assume that these contextual conditions would be sharply reflected in organizations and would interfere more directly with the strategic and everyday decisions of managers and HR professionals, as suggested by Lengnick-Hall et al. (2009) and Carvalho-Neto (2012). The article presents qualitative research results (May, 2004) that analyzes how HRM of companies considers the new characteristics of the labor market and labor relations in Brazil in the period 2000-2015 in their strategies. Four focal groups held at the end of 2015 and early 2016 with a total of 24 human resource managers in four of the country's major cities have indicated a great complexity for organizations to deal with the labor market and unions: such factors are treated intuitively by HRM in strategic or daily decisions, without careful analysis of data from official or academic sources; prevailing information and opinions obtained from the network of the human resources community. These findings indicate, in a way that is not mutually exclusive, that (i) issues related to labor relations and the labor market are even undervalued in the scope of strategic management of people in Brazil; (ii) these issues have not yet become normative for the human resources professional, not being considered as part of their mandatory training in the market or (iii) HRM and the management of labor relations are treated as separate professional and knowledge areas and organizations. The absence of HRM interaction aiming at a link between these fields reveals a myopia since issues relevant to the organizational strategy that should be led by the area of human resources for its scope in relation to topics such as "people management", "labor market" and "labor relations" are appropriated by other areas or neglected as to their strategic scope for the organization.

Keywords: people management, labor market, labor relations, HRM, Brazil

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