



ANALYSIS

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Innovative Practices in Human Talent

Prácticas innovadoras en Recursos Humanos

Cynthia Leticia Acosta Bogado¹ ¹ Universidad Americana. Escuela de Posgrado. Asunción, Paraguay. <https://ror.org/02f6q5s54>**Abstract**

This paper aims to examine the historical evolution of the various schools of thought that address the study of human talent. To this end, it examines the contributions of leading figures in this field over time to describe the stages that have led to the development of innovative practices. Specifically, it explores changes and updates in the conceptualization of the worker, as well as in related practices, with the goal of developing cutting-edge motivational mechanisms. These mechanisms seek to adapt to the changes that have emerged, especially in the post-pandemic period, and address the need to implement practices that respond to the new demands and needs of workers, including aspects such as safety, time optimization, and personal organizational management. This involves establishing motivational mechanisms aligned with the transformations experienced in the workplace, thus promoting an environment conducive to the development of human talent.

Keywords: Strategic human capital management, organizational innovation, administrative leadership, employee engagement and development.

Resumen

El presente trabajo pretende examinar la evolución histórica de las diferentes corrientes que abordan el estudio del talento humano. Para el efecto, se revisan los aportes más relevantes de los autores referentes en este campo a lo largo del tiempo para describir las etapas que han contribuido a la actualización de prácticas innovadoras. Para el efecto, se exploran los cambios y/o actualizaciones en la conceptualización del trabajador, así como la evolución de las prácticas asociadas con el objetivo de desarrollar mecanismos de motivación vanguardistas, los cuales buscan adaptarse a los cambios que han surgido, especialmente en el período posterior a la pandemia, promoviendo la implementación de prácticas que respondan a las nuevas expectativas laborales, incluyendo aspectos como la seguridad, la optimización del tiempo y la gestión de las organizaciones personales, estableciendo mecanismos de motivación que estén alineados con las transformaciones experimentadas en el entorno laboral, promoviendo así un ambiente propicio para el desarrollo del talento humano.

Palabras clave: Gestión estratégica del capital humano, innovación organizacional, dirección administrativa, compromiso y desarrollo laboral.

Correspondence: cynthia.acosta@ua.edu.py

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Introduction

According to Medina Macías and Ávila Vidal (2002), interest in the study of human resources began in the late nineteenth century with the economist John R. Commons, who first referred to human resources in his publication *The Distribution of Wealth*. Since then, the study of human resources has undergone significant transformations.

Medina Macías and Ávila Vidal (2002) noted that Mayo argued that large companies absorb smaller ones, giving rise to the need to create departments responsible for hiring workers to operate machinery. The same authors state that, in this context, employees did not need professional knowledge to perform their duties; rather, they were regarded as production resources. Consequently, matters related to personnel administration were considered part of industrial relations.

According to Medina Macías and Ávila Vidal (2002), the Industrial Revolution brought about rapid and poorly structured business growth, which resulted in greater management challenges. This new reality required optimizing worker efficiency in order to increase productivity and competitiveness. The authors point out that this context fostered the development of a scientific approach to management, from which the main Classical Theories of Management emerged. In this regard, the contributions of Frederick Taylor (1856–1915), with his Scientific Management approach, and Henri Fayol (1841–1925), with the Classical Theory of Management, are particularly noteworthy.

Although the contributions of both theorists did not focus exclusively on human talent management, they laid the foundations for scientific management and the formal organization of work. Taylor, in particular, promoted what became known as the Scientific Organization of Work, based on the division of functions between those who manage and those who perform the work.

Azuero-Rodríguez (2020) states that, around 1922, sociologist Max Weber developed the Theory of Bureaucracy, conceiving the organization as a kind of mechanical system governed by rules, controls, and a

hierarchical structure based on bureaucracy. According to the author, Weber maintained that “the best form of organization is one that has clear and rational rules, impersonal decisions, and technical excellence among its employees and managers” (Azuero-Rodríguez, 2020, p. 338).

However, these theories did not fully address the needs of the period, mainly because they failed to consider workers as individuals. This led to a shift in focus, from strict rationality and formal structure toward an understanding of individuals within the organization. Thus emerged the Human Relations Theory, which incorporated psychological and sociological aspects in contrast to the predominantly technical approaches that had preceded it.

Mary Parker Follett was one of the pioneers in the development of the Human Relations Theory. Her ideas introduced some of the earliest systematic studies of participative leadership, the delegation of authority to employees in decision-making, and collaborative approaches to problem-solving, thus emphasizing the human dimension of organizational management (Sánchez Moreno, 2015). Along the same lines, Rojas de Escalona (2007) points out that the humanistic approach took shape with the renowned experiments conducted at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company between 1924 and 1932. These studies showed that the physical conditions of the work environment significantly affect workers’ behavior and helped identify how various workplace factors directly influence productivity.

As this historical development continued, Abraham Maslow presented the Scientific Theory of Behavior in 1954, introducing his well-known hierarchy of human needs. This model proposes different levels of motivation arranged in ascending order: at the base are primary needs associated with survival, while at the top are the needs for esteem and self-actualization (Lozano Treviño & Barragán Codina, 2015).

Another major figure in the field of human resources was Douglas McGregor (1906–1964), who formulated two contrasting conceptions of the nature of workers: Theory X and Theory Y. The former is based on principles closely associated with Taylorism and assumes that people tend to avoid work and therefore

require strict supervision. In contrast, Theory Y views workers as an essential organizational resource and attributes to them such characteristics as initiative, dynamism, and adaptability (Madero-Gómez & Rodríguez-Delgado, 2018; Herrera-Rasmussen & Murillo-Antón, 2018).

To conclude this evolutionary review, Medina Macías and Ávila Vidal (2002) highlight the emergence of new

management approaches, including Theory Z, Total Quality Management, Contingency Theory, the Systems Approach, the renewed Human Relations Approach, and Organizational Development. All these approaches share a common objective: to strengthen the role of human resources and further emphasize the importance of human relations as a complement to administrative management (Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of the Historical Development of Human Resource Theories

Management Theories	Main Proponent(s)	Emphasis	Main Approaches
Scientific Management Theory	Frederick Winslow Taylor	Tasks	Rationalization of work at the operational level.
Classical Management Theory	Henri Fayol	Structure and functions	Formal organization. General principles of management. Functions of the manager.
Bureaucratic Theory	Max Weber	Organizational structure and the rules governing its operation	Formal bureaucratic organization. Organizational rationality.
Human Relations Theory	Hugo Münsterberg and Elton Mayo	Interpersonal relations	Informal organization. Motivation, communication, leadership, and group dynamics.
Organizational Behavior Theory	Abraham Maslow, Douglas McGregor, Chris Argyris	People	Management styles. Decision theory. Integration of organizational and individual objectives.
Total Quality Management Theory	W. Edwards Deming, Philip Crosby, Kaoru Ishikawa, Armand Feigenbaum, Joseph Juran	Technology and people	Commitment, participation, communication, teamwork, and planning as elements of total quality management.
Theory Z	William Ouchi	Human relations as a complement to scientific management	Participation in decision-making, communication, and teamwork.
Theory of Organizations as Social Systems	Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn	Cyclical nature of social events and the relationships among them	The organization as an open social system interacting with its environment.
New Human Relations Theory	Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman	People	Relationship between working conditions and workers' well-being. Occupational safety. Encouragement of creativity and employee rewards.
Contingency Theory	A. D. Chandler, T. Burns and G. M. Stalker, J. Woodward, P. Lawrence and J. Lorsch	Relationship between the environment and organizational structure	Analysis of the functional relationship between the environment and organizational structures and management techniques.
Organizational Development Theory	Warren Bennis, Edgar Schein, Robert Blake, Jane Mouton	People	Planned organizational change. Open-systems approach.

Source: Medina Macías and Ávila Vidal (2002).

In line with more recent approaches, Echebarría (2005) identifies several trends of change that are having a decisive influence on Human Talent Management (HTM), among which the following stand out:

a) The urgent need to move toward more flexible employment arrangements, since excessively rigid systems tend to hinder the efficiency and responsiveness of public administrations. It is therefore becoming increasingly necessary to incorporate more adaptive employment modalities that are consistent with new organizational dynamics.

b) The author highlights the orientation of human resource policies toward performance, which entails paying attention to job design, as well as to

recruitment, selection, promotion, mobility, and compensation processes.

c) The strengthening of the managerial function, based on the principle that there is no management without managers. Accordingly, the professionalization of leadership has become a priority objective, fostering specific policies for the managerial level of public employment.

d) Echebarría also highlights the reorganization of the human resources function, with a view to decentralizing management. This involves transferring responsibilities from central departments to implementing entities and from specialized technical units to the operational levels themselves.

e) Finally, he proposes a transition toward a new model of labor relations that is more consistent with current management dynamics and the challenges of the institutional environment (Echebarría, 2015, pp. 7–14).

For his part, Sanabria Pulido (2015) analyzes the challenges and opportunities currently faced by personnel units in public organizations. His review seeks to highlight characteristic aspects of public administration, based on managers' and public officials' perceptions of the functioning of Human Talent Management (HTM), perceptions that directly affect the work environment and the influence these units are able to exert. According to the author, these assessments tend to take two forms:

- a) Positive, when the personnel unit provides human-centered support that goes beyond the operational or strategic tasks it traditionally performs.
- b) Negative, when restrictions arising from the legal framework predominate, significantly reducing the unit's scope for action. One interviewee even remarks ironically that it is referred to as "inhuman management," since it is perceived as limiting public servants' opportunities for professional development, particularly because of regulations that hinder promotions, cause demotivation, and lead to frustration. This is compounded by the behavior of senior management, whose frequent changes or discontinuation of projects as a result of political and electoral pressures ultimately affect management consistency. Furthermore, the positive actions undertaken by the unit tend to be taken for granted, whereas the unfavorable decisions it is required to communicate generate greater resistance (Sanabria Pulido, 2015, pp. 107–108).

Among the legal aspects considered functional, Sanabria Pulido (2015) identifies several elements that may contribute to strengthening Human Talent Management. These include:

- a) Payroll payment, which acts as a motivating factor by contributing to a more favorable work environment;
- b) Civil service career regulations, which establish clear rules governing public officials' working lives;

c) Increases in staffing levels, which are viewed positively because they are usually accompanied by salary improvements; and

d) Successful training initiatives, which foster professional development and increase staff motivation (Sanabria Pulido, 2015, pp. 107–109).

On the other hand, the author also identifies several dysfunctional legal aspects that hinder the proper performance of HTM. These include:

- a) Excessive red tape, understood as overregulation that increases the workload;
- b) The limitations of the National Civil Service Commission (CNSC), which lacks sufficient incentives and resources to fully perform the functions assigned to it by the Constitution;
- c) The weak coordination of incentives, compounded by their limited presence in the legal framework;
- d) The existence of perverse incentives, reflected in practices that affect different stages of the public employee life cycle, such as ineffective competitive selection processes, heterogeneous forms of employment, rigid salary scales, limited resources for employee welfare and training—often available only to career civil servants—difficulties in obtaining promotions or temporary appointments, and problems with performance appraisal;
- e) Asustadurías, a term used by the author to refer to oversight bodies when they exert pressure or make accusations based on the presumption of bad faith in officials' actions; and
- f) Budgetary constraints, since many personnel units have sufficient resources only to cover payroll expenses and must seek additional funding for any other activity, thereby limiting their operational capacity and demotivating their teams (Sanabria Pulido, 2015, pp. 109–111).

It should be noted, however, that among all these dysfunctional aspects, the most serious problem appears to be performance appraisal:

Performance appraisal is regarded as the most problematic aspect, as it presents numerous difficulties that

prevent it from functioning as a useful tool for staff development or as a valid criterion for promotion processes. In some cases, when a public official receives a low rating, they may lose benefits such as a technical allowance, which places considerable pressure on immediate supervisors. Some specialists attribute this situation to a lack of firmness or commitment on the part of evaluators, who prefer to avoid giving negative assessments in order to prevent conflict. Other analysts, however, argue that the problem lies in inappropriate incentives—or even the absence of incentives—for conducting evaluations in accordance with established procedures (Sanabria Pulido, 2015, p. 110).

In addition to the above, strengthening organizational culture is also highly relevant. Martínez Llana and Lucero (2023) define organizational culture as the result of everyday interaction among people. This culture is built on a daily basis as the organization develops values and beliefs arising from the actions undertaken to address the challenges of survival and growth.

The authors point out that a well-established organizational culture makes it possible to:

- a) provide members with a clear sense of identity;
- b) define what is a priority and how tasks should be performed, thereby reducing ambiguity, uncertainty, and anxiety;
- c) function as an implicit control mechanism;
- d) replace strictly formal rules and procedures;
- e) strengthen commitment to and identification with the institution;
- f) project a distinctive image; and
- g) incorporate shared assumptions, values, and beliefs.

All these elements promote group cohesion and, in addition, require flexibility to foster motivation,

commitment, and creativity—essential factors for promoting continuous change that enables the organization to adapt to new conditions and environmental challenges (Martínez Llana & Lucero, 2023, p. 149).

Along the same line of research, Díaz et al. (2014) point out that several institutions show weak alignment between institutional strategy and human talent management. The Human Resources area is perceived as performing merely administrative and operational functions and is therefore excluded from the settings in which strategic decisions are made. Consequently, it tends to be viewed as a cost center rather than as a driver of value creation. In response to this situation, the authors propose the need to redefine the role of the area through a value-creation-oriented management model that integrates several key dimensions: alignment with the institutional vision and future direction, management of change processes, strengthening of organizational infrastructure, leadership development, and promotion of social responsibility. The aim is to position Human Resources as a strategic actor with the technical capabilities and comprehensive vision required to drive structural transformations within the organization.

Similarly, Pardo Enciso and Díaz Villamizar (2014) emphasize that continuous training and competency development are fundamental pillars for enabling organizational change processes, as they enhance the individual and collective capabilities required to address increasingly dynamic and competitive environments. According to the authors, companies are increasingly willing to invest in strengthening their human talent in order to remain competitive in more demanding markets. They also stress the importance of organizations using various mechanisms to identify the gaps between what employees do and what they should do; between what they know and what they should know; and between their current attitudes and those required. From this perspective, competency-based training aligned with industry standards is more likely to have an impact than training that is disconnected from business needs. They further warn that, in many cases, HR management remains focused on task completion rather than assuming a

strategic role aimed at creating value through an understanding of the internal and external environment.

The same study proposes different levels of intervention supported by a variety of tools, including feedback surveys, quality circles, team-building activities, awareness-raising programs, and analyses of the advantages and limitations of Organizational Development.

From another perspective, Parra and Toro-Jaramillo (2014) identify three approaches to characterizing Human Resource Development (HRD): the administrative approach, which focuses on training for specific tasks; the consultative approach, which adopts a systematic intervention process; and the strategic approach, which promotes future-oriented HRD with proactive implementation.

Reyes Castro and González Santafé (2014), in turn, maintain that the success of work teams depends on strengthening a range of soft skills, including: (1) participative leadership, (2) collaborative team building, (3) sustained motivation, (4) open and effective communication, (5) the ability to influence others in order to promote behavioral change, (6) participative decision-making, (7) integrative negotiation, (8) trust building, (9) constructive conflict management, (10) cultural and political sensitivity to the surrounding environment, and (11) continuous education and training.

Grijalva et al. (2017), on the other hand, define job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from an individual's evaluation of their job or work experience in comparison with their expectations. These authors analyzed the factors influencing job satisfaction and found that elements such as income, training opportunities—and, consequently, opportunities for professional growth—social security, and job stability act as important drivers. They also indicate that public-sector employees generally report higher levels of satisfaction than workers in other types of employment. In addition, they found that individuals working fewer than 20 hours per week tend to report lower levels of satisfaction, particularly when a limited number of working hours is combined with excessive workloads. Another noteworthy finding is

that receiving meals at work does not contribute to job satisfaction, as this benefit tends to be associated with jobs characterized by unfavorable working conditions.

In a Deloitte Insights report, Kaji et al. (2021) examine how organizations can strengthen themselves and adapt through key changes in human capital management. The main trends identified include:

a) Work design focused on holistic well-being: The COVID-19 pandemic placed the protection of people's physical and emotional health at the center of the organizational agenda. In response, many institutions adopted remote work arrangements, implemented health and safety protocols, granted special leave, and developed family-care support measures, while also introducing initiatives focused on financial stability and psychological support. At the same time, the digitalization and automation of processes intensified, helping to strengthen virtual coordination, optimize operations, and consolidate flexible and hybrid work arrangements.

b) Developing capabilities beyond traditional reskilling: The crisis required many employees to take on additional responsibilities or duties different from their usual ones, performing them with greater autonomy and creativity. This situation demonstrated that adaptability is a critical competency in contexts of high uncertainty. Consequently, organizations began to recognize the potential of internal talent beyond formal job profiles, acknowledging employees' capacity to respond strategically to dynamic and complex challenges.

c) Teams strengthened by technology: This approach emphasizes the effective integration of human capital and advanced technological tools, creating synergies that enhance collective performance. The convergence of interdisciplinary competencies and digital platforms facilitates faster processes and enables results that surpass those achievable by either element in isolation. In sectors such as the pharmaceutical industry, for example, collaborative teams supported by real-time information-sharing systems were established, strengthening coordination with universities and research centers.

d) Data-driven strategic human capital management: The experience of the pandemic highlighted the need for reliable information and analytical capabilities to anticipate workforce behaviors and needs. Some organizations used internal surveys, performance analyses, and data intelligence tools to understand expectations, levels of engagement, and challenges associated with remote work. These inputs made it possible to design work arrangements consistent with organizational culture, align behaviors with corporate values, and support strategic decisions with empirical evidence.

Finally, Herrera Herrera et al. (2023) point out that appropriate job-profile design has a positive influence on job satisfaction. According to their study, job satisfaction comprises five dimensions: (1) satisfaction with the work environment, (2) need for structure, (3) need for autonomy, (4) need for relatedness, and (5) need for privacy (p. 5).

Discussion

The different stages that have shaped the study of human talent, from its origins to the present context, were examined, together with the profound changes that have arisen from the need to introduce innovative practices aimed at motivating and protecting people within organizations. In this regard, authors such as Medina Macías and Ávila Vidal (2002), and Azuero-Rodríguez (2020) highlight how the concept of human resources has evolved: from initially viewing workers as a mechanical extension of the production process, with little consideration given to their training or development, to recognizing them as a strategic component of the organization.

As Sánchez Moreno (2015) points out, Mary Parker Follett pioneered some of the earliest studies within the framework of Human Relations Theory. However, the true turning point came with the experiments conducted at the Hawthorne plant of the Western Electric Company (1924–1932), which demonstrated that human behavior and working conditions directly influence productivity (Rojas de Escalona, 2007).

Subsequently, new lines of transformation in human talent management were developed by Echebarría (2005), Sanabria Pulido (2015), and Kaji et al. (2021).

These authors agree on the need to incorporate more flexible work arrangements, strengthen the managerial role, and concentrate training efforts at the higher levels of the organization. These contributions are complemented by those of Pardo Enciso and Díaz Villamizar (2014), Parra and Toro-Jaramillo (2014), Reyes Castro and González Santafé (2014), Grijalva et al. (2017), and Herrera Herrera et al. (2023), who emphasize the importance of training and competency development as pillars of organizational transformation, together with the design of job profiles that contribute to job satisfaction.

From this perspective, Sanabria Pulido (2015) argues that performance appraisal loses its purpose when it is reduced to a formal procedure and does not translate into genuine opportunities for learning, personal growth, or professional development. Within this analytical framework, appraisal becomes merely an administrative practice and fails to add value as an instrument for promoting development. Consistent with this view, Pardo Enciso and Díaz Villamizar (2014) suggest incorporating intervention tools such as feedback surveys, improvement circles, collaborative work activities, and awareness-raising programs, with the aim of transforming appraisal into a process geared toward continuous improvement and capability development.

Likewise, Martínez Llaneza and Lucero (2023) highlight the importance of promoting a strategic approach to human talent management linked to value creation through the consolidation of an organizational culture centered on recognition of the human factor. This approach is consistent with the position previously advanced by Díaz et al. (2014).

In summary, these contributions converge on the need to prioritize the strategic role of human capital in ensuring organizational sustainability. The evidence highlights the importance of promoting the continuous development of competencies and adopting flexible work arrangements that respond to changing contexts. Such measures not only strengthen institutional capacity to anticipate changes in the environment but also contribute to creating more robust working conditions that are better aligned with the evolving demands of the labor market.

Conclusion

The current business environment is characterized by frequent technological change, ongoing transformations in business models, and highly competitive markets. Against this backdrop, human talent management has gained considerable importance and now occupies a central place in organizational strategy, given that institutions' true competitive advantage lies in the preparedness, versatility, and learning capacity of their employees.

In line with the above, continuous training is fundamental to sustaining an institution's competitive advantage by fostering technical, analytical, and digital competencies. Such development not only has an impact on individual career paths but also contributes to greater efficiency, improved process quality, and value creation for the organization. Organizational learning thus becomes a driving force behind competitiveness and adaptability in the medium and long term.

In light of the above, work models have evolved toward more flexible arrangements that promote a better balance between professional and personal life. These include alternatives such as hybrid work, results-based management, and flexible working hours, all of which are intended to support the physical and emotional well-being of work teams. Several studies have found that healthy work environments contribute to motivation, reduce stress, improve the organizational climate, and foster a more collaborative environment.

Overall, investing in continuous training and development, as well as in strategies centered on people's well-being, has become a determining factor in organizational sustainability. The integration of professional development and comprehensive employee well-being contributes to better results while also strengthening organizational resilience and the capacity to respond to changes and to the demands of an increasingly dynamic and complex environment.

Availability of research data

This study is based exclusively on the analysis of documentary sources. No original datasets were

generated. The sources analyzed are duly cited in the References section.

Review comments

This article underwent an anonymous peer-review process in accordance with the journal's editorial transparency policy. The reviewers, who participated anonymously in this process, consented to the publication of the comments provided during the review.

Reviewer 1 comments: A comprehensive review of the manuscript structure is recommended, together with revisions to the writing. Comments are attached, and resubmission of the manuscript for further verification is recommended.

Reviewer 2 comments: The topic addressed is considered relevant, and the presentation of the manuscript meets the journal's standards. Publication is recommended following language and style editing.

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