

## **Abstract**

### **Human Resources, High Performance Work Practices and firm's performance**

The aim of this thesis is to describe and explore the relationship between the presence of High Performance Work Practices (HPWP) and the business context, this one intended both as structure and workforce arrangement. For the purpose, the Eurofound database has been used, at its third edition (data related to 2013). This dataset is composed by about 27000 firms representative of 32 countries.

The technique used is the one of a multiple linear regression model where, from the deviation of the intercept (whose known values correspond to Italy as country and to the other variables lower score) and the other values, it could be possible to see - the starting conditions being equal - which countries and what characteristics – possibly and subsequently grouped in two macro areas referred to firm structure and workforce arrangement - will facilitate the growth and development of HR systems.

The dependent variable, built by addition, is given by the sum of dichotomous variables – or dichotomised according to the literature indications - of categorical type. The validity of the model was examined through appropriate significance and robustness tests. The results, consistent with the expectations, have shown, with regard to the structure, a strong impact not only from the number of employees but also from the presence or absence of departments connected to development and innovation.

Regarding the workforce, a well-defined relationship was found between the dissemination of HR practices and the employee's education level and between the dissemination of HR practices and the presence of a highly skilled workforce.

The first chapter focuses on the content of HPWP: the attempt to define how many and which they are, if there is a way to limit/circumscribe them in a clear set or if their belonging to specific sets is left to the choice of the manager or, in this case, of the researcher. As regards the terminology and acronyms, the chapter has been enriched with a business-oriented vocabulary useful to have a common reference language for those topics already debated by the scientific research.

The second chapter opens to the sociological review. Here, too, there are two main purposes: to clarify some of the concepts presented in chapter I and to continue to identify, where possible, sets of concepts to be used in the econometric analysis. Particular attention has been paid to the various possible perspectives of post-Fordism, flexibility and collective action. At least one paragraph has been reserved for each of these three topics.

The third chapter presents the regression analysis produced, modeled on what has emerged from the two previous chapters and following the metodological and policy indications given by the European Union in terms of flexibility, specialization and education.

The conclusions are organized in a discursive chapter and they contain the commentary of the results from the point of view of the policies implications; the comment on the results from the point of view of the companies growth opportunities; the limit and the possible continuation and integration for future research.

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