



Journal of Organizational Change Management

Holistic approach to human resources and organizational acceleration

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Article information:

To cite this document:

Anna Pluta Aleksandra Rudawska , (2016), "Holistic approach to human resources and organizational acceleration", Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 29 Iss 2 pp. 293 - 309

Permanent link to this document:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-11-2014-0210>

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Holistic approach to human resources and organizational acceleration

Holistic
approach to
human
resources

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to propose holistic approach to human resources in the situation of organizational acceleration. Authors are postulating that the holistic approach to HR helps in maintaining sustainable individual resources of employees in the situation of continuous organizational changes and time pressure that further can prevent from the individual resources exhaustion.

Design/methodology/approach – This conceptual paper builds on the problem of occupational stress that is connected with organizational acceleration. Authors define stress as the individually perceived inability to match expectations caused by the deficiency of individual resources. They conceptualize the individual resources of employees basing on the concepts of human capital and the individual energy at work and propose a framework of individual resources of employees that enables holistic view of an individual in an organization.

Findings – In the situation of organizational acceleration HRM function plays important role in sustaining individual resources of employees in order to minimize threat of occupational stress and further burnout. HR practices should apply multidimensionality of individual resources and threat it holistically aiming at sustaining all four potentials – spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical.

Research limitations/implications – Authors indicate that managers need to understand how to deal with the acceleration in order to overcome the negative consequences for individuals. There is still need for identifying HR practices that are the key success factors in the situation of organizational acceleration.

Originality/value – Authors take up the current problem of organizational acceleration from the individual perspective. They propose a concept of individual resources of employees and connected to it holistic approach to HR in the times of great time pressure, work overload, occupational stress and burnout threat.

Keywords HRM practices, Occupational stress, Human energy, Human potential, Organizational acceleration

Paper type Conceptual paper

The success of an organization, understood as its survival, depends on the ability to implement anticipatory and adaptive changes (Brown and Eisenhardt, 1997; Huy and Mintzberg, 2003) as has been mentioned by researchers and practitioners since the 1990s (i.e. De Geus, 1988; Narayandas and Rangan, 1996). Contemporary management fashions indicate that organizations should be resilient (Hamel and Valikangas, 2003) or agile (Fliednerand and Vokurka, 1997; Roberts and Grover, 2012), which means that organizations should be capable of meeting the changing expectations of stakeholders (especially clients) by implementing changes regularly. Besides that, time pressure turns out to be an additional challenge for managers, as above average performance is the result of a high velocity of action, i.e. the speed of decision making, adjusting activities and responding to customer needs (i.e. Stalk, 1988). The time pressure that results from environmental acceleration escalates the dynamics of organizational



activities, and in consequence, organizations may run into the acceleration trap – to do more, faster, faultlessly (Bruch and Menges, 2010) – and as a result, fall into crisis (Probst and Raisch, 2005) as they begin to function unreflectively, without time for combining, internalizing and implementing the new knowledge created in the process of change (Schoeneborn *et al.*, 2013).

The above mentioned issues of the necessity of constant change and time pressure are most often analyzed by researchers from the perspective of the organizational level – the needed organizational capabilities, change alignment, change implementation process and positive and negative change consequences. However, in the presented framework we concentrate on the acceleration problem from the individual level – individual consequences, likely problems and obtainable preventative activities. We argue that reaching organizational sustainability, which is needed in a time of environmental acceleration, comes together with the rational acts of decision makers being directed towards strengthening employees (Desplaces, 2005), in helping them deal with usually stressful and unstable work conditions. Therefore we posed the following research questions:

- RQ1.* What is organizational acceleration, and how does it influence individuals in organization and further organizational performance?
- RQ2.* Whether and how HRM practices directed towards maintaining individual resources of employees can minimize the negative effects of organizational acceleration at an individual level?

In this work, besides presenting the organizational acceleration phenomenon, the consequences of this phenomenon concerning human resources are listed. We propose a framework of total individual resources of employees that enables a holistic view of an individual in an organization. This concept is a starting point in developing people management practices that minimize negative effects of organizational acceleration on individual. Our main purpose is to propose that a holistic approach to HR helps in maintaining sustainable individual resources of employees in a situation of continuous organizational change and time pressure, that can further prevent potential exhaustion of individuals.

1. The organizational acceleration phenomenon

The problems of time pressure and acceleration on an organization are caused by the acceleration perceived in the business environment. Basing on the observations and reflections of German sociologist H. Rosa (2003) concerning the phenomena of social acceleration, he identified three categories of that acceleration (technological acceleration, the acceleration of social change and acceleration of the “Pace of Life”) which interact with each other to cause the acceleration cycle. We propose that in business a similar acceleration is observable. Technological acceleration (technical, technological and process innovations) improves organizational capacity and causes numerous changes in the behaviours and expectations of employees, customers and other market players (acceleration of changes in the business environment). These two types of acceleration lead to acceleration of the pace of competition (acceleration of the “pace of organizational life”), because the reactions of organizations to the innovations and behavioural changes of the market players need to be implemented more rapidly than the competitors do (Stalk, 1988; Suarez and Lanzolla, 2007). Moreover, the growing pressure of hyper-competition intensifies the perception of a scarcity of time, and finally forces acceleration in the organization.

Acceleration in the organization seems to be strengthened by several intra-organizational factors, like: prior successes by the organization that cause an increase in optimism for the decision makers, the rise in desire and pressure to be a market leader (Gino and Pisano, 2011), and the approach of assessing management for the short-term performance successes and their quick results (Van Buren and Safferstone, 2009). Additionally, the type of business can also force a continuous high pace of activities and changes – for example in project-based organizations like consulting companies, where one project runs just after another without leaving time for reflection and absorbing past experiences (Schoeneborn *et al.*, 2013).

The issue of organizational acceleration is not yet well-described in literature. One work is research by Probst and Raisch (2005), who introduced the term “burnout syndrome”, that describes organizations which in order to respond to competitive pressure and the great aspirations of success by shareholders, are characterized with excessive growth, uncontrolled change, autocratic leadership and an excessive success culture. The consequences of the “burnout syndrome” are visible in numerous dimensions – financial (run-down of resources), strategic (lack of or limited strategic alignment), operational (limited coordination of activities and functions), cultural (limited down-up initiatives, communication, trust and internal cooperation) and personnel (stress and a reluctance to cooperate and innovate). Schoeneborn *et al.* (2013) describe the necessity of keeping organizations in constant motion or in a state of “restlessness” caused by the organization itself as well as external pressure, as the “organizational insomnia” syndrome. Using the metaphor of “insomnia” Schoeneborn *et al.* argue that constant, dynamic actions and changes without any rest leads to problems with organizational knowledge, memory and learning, which are destructive to organizations. Bruch and Menges (2010) suggest that organizations directed on a high pace of activity usually struggle with an “acceleration trap” that characterizes constant change, overloading and multiloading of employees. Such acceleration, as they argue, is negative, as it affects employees destructively and decreases organizational energy (Bruch and Goshal, 2003), to finally cause a deterioration in organizational performance.

When we put together the above mentioned research concepts, we can identify five areas where the signs of organizational acceleration can be found (Probst and Raisch, 2005; Bruch and Menges, 2010): strategic decisions, leadership, tactics and operational decisions, culture and work organization. By taking into account the organizational acceleration phenomenon from just the individual perspective, we can define organizational acceleration as an organizational condition that characterizes at least one of the following syndromes: employee work overloading; work multiloading of employees; introducing constant changes influencing individual work; individual performance-based culture (Table I).

Probst and Raisch (2005), Bruch and Menges (2010) and Schoeneborn *et al.* (2013) treat acceleration in an organization as an unwelcome situation (the wording they use: trap, burnout syndrome, insomnia) and they propose avoiding such situations (i.e. Bruch and Menges, 2010). We assume however that because of the great pressure of the business environment and stakeholders, organizational acceleration is rather unavoidable. Therefore there is a need to find a way to help managers minimize the negative consequences of that acceleration. In analyzing organizational acceleration from an individual’s perspective we argue that the acceleration has negative implications for employees in the form of additional occupational stress and further burnout, which in turn threatens organizational performance and development. We think that an increase of occupational stress and burnout risk is connected with an

insufficient level of individual employee resources to the needs of the organization. Therefore managers should be aware of this and aim at individual protection of resources, and regeneration through implementing personnel practices adjusted to the acceleration situation. This framework is presented in Figure 1, and in subsequent parts of the paper is explained in detail.

2. Employee stress as a consequence of organizational acceleration

Recently, the hazard connected with occupational stress seems to be so serious that WHO acknowledged stress as one of the biggest dangers of the twenty-first century. The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work indicates that in Europe stress issues are ranked very highly among health problems emerging from performing occupational duties, and the stress problems concern millions of European employees in all sectors (EU-OSHA, 2002; European Commission, 2014). Moreover according to Eurobarometer research almost 1/3 of employees claims that for previous year their working conditions had deteriorated because of occupational stress, depression and anxiety in the workplace (European Commission, 2014).

Table I.
Syndromes of organizational acceleration from the individual perspective

Syndrome	Characteristics
Work overloading of an employee	Increases of the quantity and quality of work obligations per employee usually causing the necessity for increases in working time
Work multiloading of an employee	Assigning diversified tasks in one period of time that require from employees diversified skills, abilities and the necessity of frequent switching from task to task
Continuous changes	Introducing numerous changes in type, range, manner or frequency of work that cause the necessity of constant learning of new things and a lack of sense of stability
Performance-based culture	Pressure on performance, efficiency, evaluating only measurable results

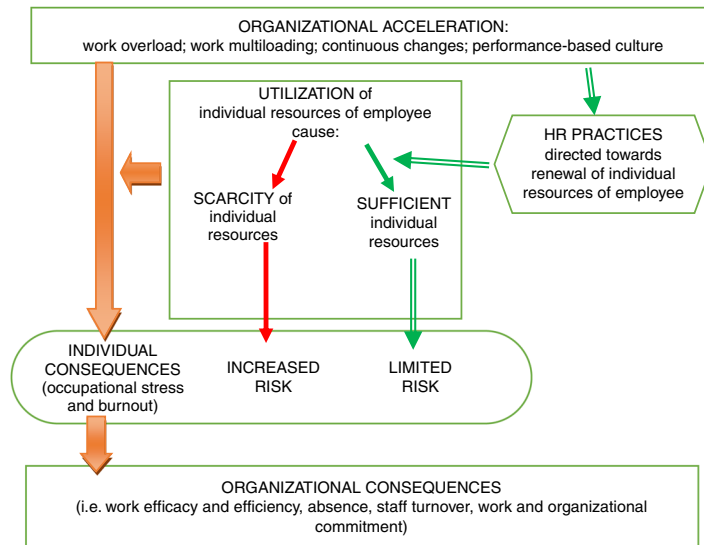


Figure 1.
Organizational acceleration from the individual perspective

The concept of stress is defined differently according to the research context. Le Blanc *et al.* (2008) and Babatunde (2013) summarize three groups of stress: stress as a stimulus (stressor) – unfavourable situation influencing an individual; stress as a reaction of the human body to some threat; and finally stress as a mediational process between stimulus and reaction (a consolidation of the two prior approaches). In this paper we understand stress according to the third integrative grasp, where stress reactions are the results of interactions between people and the environment. The stress reaction is the discrepancy experienced (cognitively evaluated) by individuals between the resources the individuals have at their disposal and the demands of the working environment, which is accompanied by physical, psychological and behavioural symptoms (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2008, p. 124). In a similar context, stress is defined by the UK Health and Safety Executive as an “adverse reaction people have to excessive pressures or other types of demand placed upon them” (HSE, 2004, p. 3, cited in Redfern *et al.*, 2008). Those requirements and expectations can be placed by employees themselves or by the work environment (i.e. supervisors), and the stressful job demands may lead to different types of stress reactions in different individuals, due to the different personal resources of individuals and different situational resources available to those individuals.

Coming back to the organizational acceleration situation in which organizations constantly put high job demands (perceived as chronic stressors) in front of employees, these in turn may cause chronic stress reaction in individuals to feel helplessness and weakness, which in the long term may transform into enduring negative mind conditions connected with work such as exhaustion (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2008), which is treated as one of the dimensions of job burnout (Maslach and Leiter, 2000). Freudenberger (1974) claims that burnout is the ultimate state of exhaustion caused by the excessive demand for energy and other resources of an individual, and Maslach and Leiter (2000, p. 17) define it as an index of chronic “dislocation between what people are what they have to do”. According to Maslach and Leiter (2000) when individuals experience burnout, their soul erodes, which is characterized by chronic exhaustion; cynicism and detachment from their work, and a feeling of increasing ineffectiveness. In a situation of high risk of individual burnout, the following symptoms appear gradually, like lowering efficiency and motivation, together with bad moods and development of dysfunctional job attitudes and behaviours (Schaufeli and Enzmann, 1998; Babatunde, 2013), onset of health problems (EU-OSHA, 2014; Le Blanc *et al.*, 2008) which all in turn covert into decreasing organizational performance.

We assume that the experience of organizational acceleration may influence employees unfavourably, creating a higher risk of stress and burnout. The constantly increasing work demands and continual frantic bustle of employees force the necessity of greater effort from employees, and not everyone is able to deal with that. Those who cannot, suffer occupational stress (McHugh, 1997) over longer periods of time. Moreover Lee and Ashforth (1996) and Maslach Leiter (2000) found that time pressure and work overload are some of the occupational burnout causes:

- P1. The organizational acceleration that manifests work overload, work multiloading, a high frequency of changes or pressure on individual performance, causes a situation of greater demands on employees in the work environment that leads to an imbalance between employee capabilities and those demands, exposing them to a greater risk of chronic occupational stress that may cause occupational burnout in the long term.

However, the level of stress or burnout risk is different between individuals even in the same working conditions (Lazarus, 1966; Michie, 2002) because the level of individual resources of employees play the role of buffers. According to the demand-induced strain compensation model of job stress, the negative effects of job demands can be counteracted through the availability and proper activation of the resources of employees (Le Blanc *et al.*, 2008, pp. 137-138).

3. The individual resources of employees

Focusing on the individual resources of employees comes not only from the fact that their condition may cause negative effects under organizational acceleration (above mentioned occupational stress and burnout) but also that employees and their resources are the success factors of successful companies, especially those functioning in knowledge-intensive sectors (Bontis and Fitz-enz, 2002; Fitz-enz, 2000). Organizations are under environmental pressure to be more productive and innovative, which converts to the level of employee exploitation and puts pressure on individual productivity and innovativeness. However, the capacity of individuals is limited within the level of the individual resources they have to use in the work process.

The individual resources of employees are generally understood as the sum of the various characteristics of an individual, but there is still no agreement on a specific list of those characteristics. There are two approaches in interpreting the individual resources of employees. The first treats resources as a set of individual attributes, and the second treats resources as a set of energies (Table II).

The first approach derives from the human capital theory, where individual resources are a set of attributes that are developed by an individual and differentiate him/her from other individuals (Ployhart and Moliterno, 2011). They mainly concentrate on knowledge, skills, abilities and work attitudes (Fitz-enz, 2000; Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995; Stewart, 1997). It seems however that concentrating only on the professional aspects of employee is insufficient, especially in an organizational acceleration situation, because even if an employee possesses all the needed competences but cannot deal with health problems (has no physical strength due to high dynamics of professional duties and no time for improving health status) then he/she will work at the minimum level or will be absent at work (Grossman, 1972). Therefore health, understood as complete physical, mental and social welfare, is treated as another characteristic of human resources. Moreover, Wrona-Polańska (2009) argues that besides the efficacy components of human resources (like competences, attitudes),

Approach	Elements	Authors (examples)
Attributes that characterize an employees	Knowledge, skills, abilities, experience Attitudes Talents Health	Fitz-enz (2000), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), Stewart (1997), Ployhart and Moliterno (2011), Grossman (1972)
Energies available by an individual	Energy types: Physical Mental Spiritual Social Emotional	Cole <i>et al.</i> (2012), Quinn <i>et al.</i> (2012)

Table II.
Approaches to the individual resources of employee

the immunological/resilience components (like health) are also important, because they help in dealing with stress at work.

In the second approach, human resources are considered as the energy that one has at their disposal – the individual energy at work (Cole *et al.*, 2012). However, there are several scholars that have made an attempt to interpret and define individual energy (i.e. Cole *et al.*, 2012; Quinn *et al.*, 2012; Schwartz, 2007), so there are still some differences in understanding the components of human energy at work. For example, Quinn *et al.* (2012) propose two aspects of individual energy – physical energy (ability to work) and energetic activation, which activates the physical energy (i.e. vitality, vigour, enthusiasm, zest). This energetic activation derives from separate energies like (Quinn *et al.*, 2012): mental energy (e.g. Lykken, 2005; Mayer and Gavin, 2005), spiritual energy (e.g. Ashar and Lane-Maher, 2004; Makselon, 2009), social energy (Seibert *et al.*, 2001) and emotional energy. On the other hand, Schwartz (2007) splits the energetic resources of an individual into: physical energy (related with the body), quality of energy (related to emotions), focus of energy (related to the mind) and energy of meaning and purpose (related to human spirit). The Schwartz proposition seems to be consistent with the description of human nature, which according to Covey (2004), Majewska-Opielka (2003) or Gut (2008) assume that an individual consists of the body, mind, emotions and spirit, and taking care of each of those spheres contributes to better human activity. Regardless, the energy approach to human resources seems to underestimate the efficacy factors (i.e. competences) which were strongly emphasized in the attribute approach to human resources, and influence organizational performance. Moreover in this approach it is assumed that energy is not constant over a period of time (Schwartz, 2007), decreasing and increasing, contrary to the attributes in the first approach (if somebody possess specialist knowledge it is assumed that he/she has this knowledge all of the time and does not lose it).

We see that the conditions of environmental pressure and organizational acceleration require organizations to employ and maintain capable human resources. In a practical perspective however, investing in human resources usually comes down to the development of employee knowledge and skills. Moreover managers usually assume that individual energy is constant, therefore it is rather rare that companies support and develop human resources in other spheres than their competences (Schwartz, 2007).

Therefore we argue that in a situation of organizational acceleration, by combining the attribute approach and the energy approach to human resources, adopting a holistic approach to individual human resources seems to be valuable. This holistic approach takes into account distinguishing and relatively constant individual attributes, as well as the changing energy level of an individual. We define the individual resources of employees as the sum of four internal potentials that are at the disposal of the individual: physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual (Table III).

Although all four potentials are interrelated, spiritual potential is at the core of the individual resources of the employee. Values are the internal individualized compass of activities, as they make sense for all activities and are a source of guidelines for other potentials (Covey, 2004; Zohar and Marshall, 2001), where physical potential provides strength for acting, intellectual potential enables selection of the efficient method of acting and emotional potential is the internal power that enables transforming intention into action. What is interesting, Salmela-Aro and Nurmi (2004) found that high levels of spiritual potential were connected with a high interest in hobbies (self-esteem and meaningfulness of work and life) and health promotion (values) seems

Table III.
Individual resources
of employee –
holistic approach

Potential categories	Characteristics	Sample features of the potential
Physical potential	Derives from the human body, physical condition, health, vitality and strength	Health Physical condition Hardiness Initiative Energy to act
Intellectual potential	Derives from intellectual dexterity and is connected with individual knowledge (both general and professional) and the ability of using it at work	Solving professional problems Concentration Memory Learning ability Creativity
Emotional potential	Derives from the emotional sphere of the individual and develops attitudes	Work attitude Self-control Well-being and satisfaction Mobilization and dedication to goals Emotionality in communication
Spiritual potential	Derives from individual values that give sense to every individual activities	Self-esteem Self-efficacy Meaningfulness of work Activities compatible with individual values Ethical acting

to be keeping balance in the level of other potentials and prevent individual stress and burnout (play a buffer role).

The mentioned interrelations between the four potentials cause change in one of them to induce changes in the others, and the capability of using one of the potentials is determined by the level of the others. For example, problems with body or health induce emotional anxiety and fear that weakens the intellectual potential in that moment (Gut, 2008). And from the other side, problems with spiritual and emotional potential negatively affect physical capacity and resistance to infections.

Therefore, we assume that adopting a holistic approach to the individual resources of an employee, to take into account all four interrelated potentials, enables a comprehensive evaluation of employee capacity and risk of occupational stress. A low level of individual resources of an employee means that the potentials are underdeveloped or do not regenerate sufficiently. Such a situation increases the risk of a misfit between high organizational demands and the individual needs and capacities of employees. That misfit can cause a risk of occupational stress and further individual or organizational consequences. Under organizational acceleration, work overload, work multiloading and introducing changes frequently first utilizes the physical and intellectual potentials (i.e. Bruch and Menges, 2010), and the multitude of task and duties cause individuals to lose the sense and alignment of actions and tasks they take part in, negatively influencing emotional and spiritual potentials. Meanwhile pressure on efficiency and performance (the fourth characteristics of organizational acceleration) influence spiritual potential (meaningfulness of work, self-efficacy, self-esteem) and emotional potential (attitudes, mobilization, satisfaction), which in turn diminishes intellectual and physical potential:

- P2. The individual resources of employees should be assessed, developed and maintained holistically, i.e. taking into consideration the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual potentials, especially in a situation of organizational

acceleration when the exploitation of individual resources is more intensive over a longer time period. This holistic approach enables more accurately identifying the capacity and possible problems of employees, and anticipating the negative consequences of acceleration.

There is one more aspect that should be considered. The individual resources of employees are individually unique to each employee. That uniqueness is both interpersonal, employees differ from each other what can be assessed, and intrapersonal, which means that the levels of the four potentials in each employee differ over time and the life phases of the employee (Kozusznik, 2002). Taking this into consideration, the managing of the total individual resources of employees seems to be a demanding (Dooreward and Benschop, 2002) but also necessary task for organizations.

4. HRM and holistic approach to individual resources of employees

Generally personnel management practices are concentrated on employee competences (skills, abilities, knowledge – intellectual potential) by such actions as staffing, work design, training and appraisal, in order to provide all the competences necessary for achieving organizational goals (e.g. Armstrong, 2006; Ivancevich, 1998). Moreover, managers use rewards, participation and communication to raise motivation and develop positive emotions (attitudes) towards work and the organization, and eventually prevent from strong change resistance. Wilkinson *et al.* (2001) observed that one common managerial practice is the short-term approach to people management in organizations, concentrated to a greater extent on human resources exploitation and terminating the exploited (used) individuals. It is not a common practice that organizations build, maintain and develop their total employee capacity (Schwartz, 2007), i.e. manage the individual resources of employees. However, for the last several years there have been some noticeable changes in the approach towards personnel management connected mainly with the concept of sustainability. The turning point, especially in high developed and knowledge-intensive economies, was observing that not only natural resources but also human resources are limited or scarce (e.g. Ehnert and Harry, 2012).

In the constantly developing idea of sustainable HRM, the long term and future orientation towards human resources is one of the strongest assumptions of the concept (Ehnert, 2009). It balances the economic and social aspects of people management, as Zaugg *et al.* (2001, p. II) suggest, that sustainable HRM is the “long term socially and economically efficient recruitment, development, retention and disemployment of employees”. On other hand, Gollan (2005) emphasizes that HR sustainability is connected with the organizational ability to create value, therefore implementing adequate HR policies and practices plays an important role in the renewal and regeneration of that value creation capability. Although the concept of sustainable HRM is still in its developmental phase, with many ambiguities and a misalignment in numerous scholarly approaches (Ehnert and Harry, 2012), there are several results suggesting that it is connected with competitive advantage in the labour markets (Zaugg *et al.*, 2001).

We argue that the concept of sustainability is the basis for the development of methods preventing the negative consequences of organizational acceleration. The specificity of organizational acceleration implies that HR practices should, among other functions, enable regeneration of individual employee resources within the workplace

(Docherty *et al.*, 2009), remembering the four individual potentials. Therefore HR practices are going to play two additional functions, as:

- (1) The bar-barrier preventing the appearance of strong work stressors. As an example, there is taking care of a healthy work atmosphere and good work organization (e.g. creating a sustainable work system, Docherty *et al.*, 2009). Such a harmonious work environment should protect employees from helplessness, anxiety or exhaustion, and that the individual resources of employees are not overexploited.
- (2) The buffer, to give employees protection from the negative results of acceleration and softening the feeling of overload. The HR practices and policies role is to soften the perception by employees of the stressors that are induced by acceleration, through, for example, introducing opportunities for a refreshing chat during lunch break, respecting professional and private priorities of employees, respecting private time after working hours, and vacations.

Concluding, we propose that:

- P3. In an organizational acceleration situation, human management practices should be directed towards the maintenance and protection of the individual resources of employees in order to protect them from the effects of overexploitation.

A company, by implementing HR practices and policies basing on a holistic approach to individual resources and a sustainability concept, provides conditions of safe usage and regeneration of individual resources. Several examples of such practices are presented in Table IV.

5. HR practical implications

An organization that is willing to develop its own people management practices, directed towards sustaining individual resources of employees, should pay particular attention to the following issues. First, there is a need for assessing the level of individual resources of employees at all four potentials (physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual) and performing regular audits of these resources. This enables a diagnosis of shortages in the four potentials, and will show the range of problems with the individual resources of employees as well as the risks connected with those problems. In such an assessment we propose measuring the level of the most important features of each of the four potentials (sample features are in Table III) using a semantic differential scale. The results of such an assessment may be used for preparing standardized HR policies and practices for the company or department (if there is a common potential problem among employees), or immediate individualized HR intervention (if there is a problem with a single individual). This assessment approach proposed by us differs from those proposed by Schwartz (2007) or Bruch and Menges (2010, p. 86), who rather concentrate on the evaluation of the degree of behaviours or activities that could decrease individual energy of employees or evaluate only how well-rested employees are during the employee-supervisor feedback. We propose to concentrate on the resources per se not the antecedents of the level of the resource. Nevertheless we predict some objectivity problems in such an assessment.

Second, HRM practices should be consistent with the identified problems. Since the four potentials of individual resources are interconnected, the proposed HRM interventions should reflect a holistic approach and should be taking into account the causality among those potentials of individual resources. Additionally, some

Individual resources of employees	Individual needs (examples)	Individual problems in organizational acceleration (examples)	Hypothetical HRM practices and interventions
Physical potential	Health and regular nutrition Proper air circulation and exercise Regular rest Relaxation of the whole organism	Physical overload of the body and impairment of immunity Lack of time for physical regeneration (during working hours and after) Problems in regular nutrition during working hours	Building culture of working that includes rest needs (regular breaks at work) Improving work organization, i.e. verification of individual duties Developing individual skills of time Enhancing employees to improve their fitness
Emotional potential	Motivation and desire Sensitivity – sensing others and the surrounding environment Way of reaction for stimulus Relations with people Communicating with people	Loosening and even disruption of hitherto interpersonal relations, mainly informal Feeling of uncertainty causing irritation and nervousness State of internal tension (stress), pessimism, insensibility Problems with balancing work and life	Rebuilding work atmosphere and developing new relationships (e.g. showing recognition and accolade by managers and building teams) Organizing integration events even short, in-company ones (facilitating communication and cooperation) Encouraging to finding hobby by informing about passions and hobbies of employee (internal magazines, contests) Introducing elements of work-life balance concept
Intellectual potential	Perceiving and understanding reality Problem solving and creative thinking Skills and knowledge enrichment Intellectual input in undertaken task	Intellectual overload causing distraction and a lack of attention when doing tasks Shortage or lack of information or professional knowledge connected with tasks Decrease of creativity and innovativeness, keeping up with proposed routines	Training basing on the individual needs Facilitating different forms of intellectual development Creating places for learning and reflection (libraries) Good work organization and meetings organization – helping to identify and concentrate on priorities and lowering amount of time wasted Creating psychological safety environment with tolerance for “intelligent mistakes”
Spiritual potential	Self-esteem Feeling concordance Feeling of being a part of something Dignity and equanimity Morality and ethos	Unclear and changeable key organizational values Problem of discrepancy of organizational and individual values Feeling a lack of sense and a lack of importance of the work Low self-esteem and conviction about self-inefficacy	Clearly defined values system in organization that is living Looking for alignment of individual and organizational values while staffing, training, evaluating, rewarding Concern about psychological development and self-esteem Taking care of aesthetics of working environment

Sources: Own research based on Covey (2004), Gut (2008), Majewska-Opielka (2003), Schwartz (2007)

Table IV.
People management practices directed to the development of individual resources of employees

individualization is also needed (“according to the needs”), therefore some practices could be implemented at the organizational or departmental level, but probably the majority of interventions should be introduced by the direct supervisors of the particular employees. This indicates that the direct supervisors, not the HR department staff, play a very important role in maintaining the individual resources of employees, and are agents then for the HR department. In numerous companies, individual evaluative, motivational and developmental interviews with employees are undertaken by the direct supervisors. The supervisor’s role is to propose and implement the intervention to renew and maintain individual resources, while the HR department’s role is informing, developing skills and supporting those supervisors.

Third, it seems that HRM specialists should analyze current organizational and departmental norms (culture of working) and instruments used for work organization in the first place, as sometimes the stress caused by long-term overloading derives from the problems of faults with work organization. If needed, the specific rules and instruments of work and elements of project and time management should be developed and introduced to both supervisors (in the first place) and employees by training and coaching. This should help employees to concentrate on their goals and tasks, give them a sense of clarity of expectations that are put in front of them, and efficiently use their time at work. A simple, negative example of poor work organization influencing employee work can be found in the public administration sector in Poland, where usually there are no formally defined lunch breaks during which the office is closed, and lunch rooms where employees can regenerate. Therefore there are situations that during the eight hour working day they have no time for eating, or they eat at their desks between clients or tasks. One of the consequences is increasing exhaustion and decreasing efficiency as the end of the day approaches. Moreover the lack of a formal break causes clients to expect that their business is going to be attended to immediately otherwise they express their dissatisfaction out loud.

And finally, something that seems obvious but not necessarily always put into practice. Any introduced change in people management practices, as well as work and culture organization, should be clearly informed to employees showing not only individual benefits for them but also benefits for the organization. Moreover, managers should convince and entice employees to use the introduced facilities and new practices without any negative consequences (Pluta, 2012). For example, in one medium-sized IT company in Poland, engineers from the software development department do not use the cafeteria to eat their lunch as they are afraid that one of the managers would see them not working. Previously, their direct supervisor received information that “there is always someone from the department in the cafeteria”.

The above mentioned general suggestions can facilitate implementing the concept of sustainable management of individual resources of employees, which seems necessary in organizations functioning at an accelerated pace. Concentration on the four potentials of individual human resources may minimize the destructive effects of exhaustive work.

6. Conclusions

There are several concluding findings and directions for future research. The problem of organizational acceleration due to revolutionary or frequent changes and dynamic organizational growth have been discussed in literature, especially taking into account the organizational perspective. In our work, we wanted to contribute to that field but

concentrate more on the individual perspective – how the organizational acceleration influences employees and how to help them. It seems that as competitive pressure and the pace of work in the future is rather going to increase even more, the consequences of organizational acceleration will be seen more frequently. Therefore we assume that managers in public, private and administration organizations need to understand how to deal with that acceleration in order to overcome the negative consequences for individuals, the organizations, as well as society. This needs changing the approach of perceiving employees – their capacity, roles and needs.

The next issue undertaken in the article was perceiving employees from a holistic perspective of individual resources. In management practice, employees in organizations are usually only treated from the perspective of the competences useful for the organization. However the problem with occupational stress, one of the greatest contemporary occupational health hazards, suggests that individuals in organizations should be managed holistically using research results from such fields as work medicine, psychology and physiotherapy. Therefore the authors propose a holistic approach to the individual resources of employees, which combines the attribute and energy approaches to individuals.

Finally, we refer to the sustainability concept of HR and HRM practices, suggesting that bringing together those concepts with our holistic approach to individual resources of employees, creates a proposition of dealing with organizational acceleration at an individual level. We suggest that one of the success factors of organizations that are in organizational acceleration, is developing the capability of sustaining individual human resources in organizations. Organizations should use a broad range of practices directed towards employees that will strengthen the endurance of employees, develop their time management skills in the workplace and ensure regeneration of their strained potential.

We see several directions of future research. One of them is the need to empirically analyze the influence of organizational acceleration on the four potentials of individual resources of employees, and identify the specific characteristics of organizational acceleration that influence individual potentials the most. This could be followed-up by research concentrated on identifying whether, and which, HRM practices and interventions are the best buffers of organizational acceleration. The next question that appears is whether organizational acceleration similarly influences employees at different levels, like managerial vs non-managerial, “white collar” vs “blue collar”.

We notice however several limitations in the concept we have suggested. First, our propositions require a change in the way managers perceive employees from a short-term perspective (economic issues only) to a long-term perspective (economic and social issues), and this needs time. The second limitation, or rather challenge, is connected with the need to individually evaluate the resources of employees. In the situation of a high unemployment rate, employees being anxious about their jobs would probably have concerns and a reluctance to admit to deficiencies in individual potentials.

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