

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract: *The paper addresses the specific features of human resource management activities within higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova. The aim of the research is to identify directions for improving human resource management in higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova in the context of innovative changes. Moreover, the paper examines possibilities for increasing the efficiency of human resource policies within a dynamic environment. The research methodology is complex and includes a wide range of methods, such as analysis, synthesis, induction, deduction, abduction, and content analysis. Therefore, in the context of multiple transformations that have affected the functioning of human resource management within higher education institutions, we consider it appropriate to develop agile and flexible policies that would support the adaptation of higher education institutions to the new context, thereby contributing to increased efficiency and effectiveness of specific human resource management processes.*

Key words: *human resources, higher education institutions, human resource management, human resource policies, human resource strategies.*

JEL: I23, M12.

Introduction

In the context of multiple transformations that have affected the functioning of the business environment, the 21st century imposes demanding obligations on organizations, setting clear limits and outlining strong requirements for both private sector enterprises that seek to remain on the market, grow, and develop, as well as for higher education institutions that aim to enhance their performance levels.

Moreover, in the context of numerous innovative changes—such as the intensive digitalization of institutional processes, the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the activities of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, and the adoption of new regulations—the need to improve the human resources of higher education institutions becomes evident, in order to strengthen the skills and competencies required for effective adaptation to new challenges.

Within an unstable external environment, higher education institutions are subject to various transformations, risks, and uncertainties, which are often difficult to implement, manage, and evaluate. This makes the effective management of a public institution increasingly challenging. At the same time, public institutions face the necessity of adapting to various regulations, norms, and innovative principles that must be integrated into their activities, with the aim of enhancing processes and improving resource management capabilities.

Consequently, there is a need to investigate the main transformations in human resource management within higher education institutions that have influenced their functioning in the context of these multiple changes.

Models of human resource management in higher institutions

Compared to other fields of activity where human resources play an important role in ensuring the functionality of organizations, in higher education institutions human resources represent the core of academic innovation, the main driver of change, the cultivation of values, and the development of competencies. Moreover, human resources in the academic environment constitute valuable human capital capable of shaping generations through agility, flexibility, dynamism, and competitiveness. Therefore, ensuring efficient, agile, and high-performing human resource management can contribute to increasing the performance, viability, competitiveness, and sustainability of higher education institutions.

Human resource management involves the continuous improvement of all employees' activities in order to achieve the organization's mission and objectives (Mathis, Nica, Russu, 1997). The implementation of such management requires, as an essential condition, that every manager serves as a model of behavioral attitude. The manager must assume responsibility for the process, actively engage in each action, discuss with employees every issue that arises as well as every progress achieved by the organization's human resources, penalize incorrect actions, and reward positive ones. Managerial actions focus on each employee individually, as a personality and an individual with specific values, aspirations, needs, and behaviors.

Analyzing the approaches of various authors regarding human resource management, we observe that this field is a complex one, including a wide range of activities carried out by organizations in order to ensure the efficient management of human resources.

Thus, according to researcher G. Dressler, "human resource management represents the process of acquiring, training, evaluating, and compensating employees, ensuring their health, safety, and well-being, as well as managing employee relations and equity issues" (Dressler, 2013).

At the same time, researcher Michael Armstrong defines human resource management as "a strategic and coherent approach to managing an organization's most valuable resource—its people—who, individually and collectively, contribute to the achievement of organizational objectives" (Armstrong, 2009).

In the same context, scholar Edwin Filippo states that "human resource management is the planning, organizing, directing, and controlling of human resources to ensure their maximum effective contribution to the achievement of organizational objectives" (Filippo, 2017).

On the other hand, researcher Mathis states that "human resource management involves a series of organizational processes aimed at attracting, developing, motivating, and retaining staff, thus contributing to the success of the organization" (Mathis, Nica, Russu, 1997).

Researcher Alic Bîrcă defines human resource management as "a set of general and specific activities, both having strategic and operational aspect, concerning the attraction, retention, utilization, and efficient motivation of human resources in order to achieve organizational objectives and satisfy employees' personal needs" (Bîrcă, 2014).

At the same time, researcher Adriana Prodan defines human resource management as "an essential component of organizational management, aimed at developing and optimally using human potential in order to achieve the organization's objectives." The researcher emphasizes that human resource management integrates strategic policies and practices focused on recruitment, training, motivation, and employee retention, thereby contributing to overall performance and increasing organizational competitiveness (Nica, Prodan, 2011).

Furthermore, researcher Alina Suslenco approaches human resource management as "a fundamental component of organizational management focused on the development and efficient utilization of human potential within the organization, from a strategic perspective, through planning, recruitment, selection, integration, development, motivation, remuneration, and evaluation of employees, thereby contributing to the increase of organizational performance" (Suslenco, 2025).

Additionally, Ina Crețu and Ala Oberșt define human resource management as “a field aimed at the efficient use of an organization’s personnel through activities such as planning, recruitment, evaluation, and development, with the purpose of achieving organizational objectives” (Crețu, Oberșt, 2020).

In the same context, Emilian Radu states that “human resource management is the process through which organizations manage their human capital, aiming to increase both individual and organizational performance” (Radu, 2008).

On the other hand, Aurel Manolescu defines human resource management as “the totality of strategic and operational decisions and actions through which the recruitment, selection, motivation, and development of an organization’s personnel are ensured” (Manolescu, 2003).

As a result of the analyzed definitions, it can be highlighted that human resource management is a strategic component of an organization which, through its activities, supports the optimal utilization of human resources by means of policies, procedures, and practices aimed at aligning employees’ individual objectives with the organization’s goals.

Human resources represent the creative, active, and coordinating element of organizational activity, having a decisive influence on the effective use of material, financial, and informational resources. Describing people as “resources” emphasizes their importance and highlights the fact that their management requires high levels of genuine concern, attention, and professionalism.

The strategic dimension of human resources within organizations is highlighted in the Harvard School model, developed early in 1984 (Figure 1). The behaviors associated with roles required for each type of competitive strategy differ and can be influenced through a coherent set of human resource management practices.

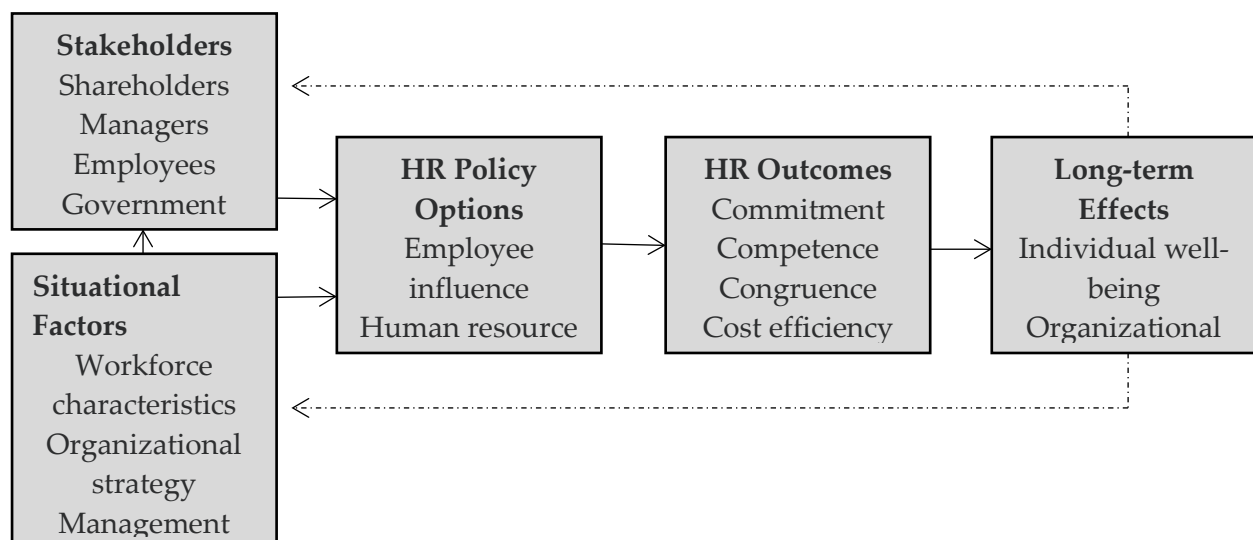


Figure 1. The Harvard School Model of Human Resource Management

Source: Beardwell, I.; Holden, L.; Claydon, T. (2003). Human Resource Management: A Contemporary Approach. 4th ed. Harlow: Prentice Hall, 739 p. ISBN 0273679112.

In this regard, Paauwe and Boon (2009) argue that, in the case of an innovation-oriented strategy, human resource management practices play the role of supporting collaborative and interdependent behavior, with a long-term vision, as well as stimulating the exchange of ideas and risk-taking. Relevant examples in this context include variable compensation systems and flexible career paths. These elements provide a clear perspective on how the content of a specific strategy correlates with the types of human resource policies required for its effective implementation.

The Harvard School Model (1984) represents one of the most influential conceptual frameworks in the field of human resource management, as it places employees at the center of organizational strategy and emphasizes their role as a strategic resource, not merely an operational one.

A first relevant aspect of the model is its holistic approach. It does not treat HRM practices in isolation but integrates them into a coherent system aligned with the organization's strategy, the external environment, and the interests of stakeholders. Thus, the model highlights that decisions regarding human resources are not neutral; rather, they directly influence organizational performance and long-term outcomes.

However, the model is not without limitations. One of the main criticisms concerns its relatively general and theoretical nature, which can make direct practical application within organizations difficult. Additionally, it does not always provide concrete guidance regarding the optimal selection of HRM practices depending on the specific context.

Therefore, the Harvard School Model remains a fundamental reference in the specialized literature, offering a strategic and integrated perspective on human resource management, but it requires adaptation and contextualization to be effectively applied in practice.

With the evolution of society and the development of human resource management practices, another model emerged in 2000—the AMO Model (Ability, Motivation, Opportunity). The AMO Model represents one of the key contemporary conceptual frameworks in the field of human resource management, used to explain the mechanism through which HRM practices influence organizational performance.

Initially formulated in the context of research on high-performance work systems, the model was consolidated in the work of Eileen Appelbaum, Thomas Bailey, Peter Berg, and Arne L. Kalleberg (2000), and was later further developed and refined in the specialized literature by researchers such as John Purcell and Patrick Wright.

The "Ability" dimension reflects the level of employees' competencies, knowledge, and skills, being directly influenced by recruitment, selection, and professional training processes. "Motivation" refers to the intensity and direction of the effort made by employees, shaped through reward systems, performance evaluation, and recognition policies. "Opportunity" concerns the extent to which the organization provides employees with the possibility to utilize their potential through participation, autonomy, communication, and involvement in the decision-making process.

From a functional perspective, the model highlights that human resource management practices do not directly generate performance, but rather act indirectly by influencing these three behavioral conditions. Thus, organizational performance emerges as a result of the interaction between the capacity to work effectively, the willingness to exert effort, and the existence of an organizational framework that enables the manifestation of these resources.

In essence, the AMO model provides an integrative and operationalizable approach to the relationship between human resources and performance, being widely used in the analysis of high-performance work systems and in studies concerning the effectiveness of HRM practices in modern organizations. As a result of the development of the AMO model, the 2000s saw the emergence of the HPWS (High-Performance Work Systems) model, which is based on the idea that universities should manage their academic and administrative staff through an integrated set of HRM practices that directly influence the quality of the educational process. The HPWS model focuses on integrated human resource management activities carried out by higher education institutions in the context of adapting to multiple changes in the external environment, which require increased adaptability and flexibility from universities. Schematically, the functionality of the model is illustrated in Figure 2.

The HPWS model represents a reference framework for conceptualizing the complex human resource management processes within higher education institutions. It highlights interconnected HRM processes carried out in universities through the efficient utilization of human capital and scientific-academic potential, emphasizing active involvement in order to enhance organizational performance.

Based on the characteristics of the core functioning process of universities—which relies on the educational, pedagogical, and scientific interaction of education and research actors—it can be unequivocally stated that human resources constitute the primary resource of the university. At the same time, the main process of universities is characterized by an inherent dependence on the development of human resources. The quality of human resources is determined by two main factors: the quality of individual human resources and the quality of their integration into the university's human resource system (Stangis, 2017).

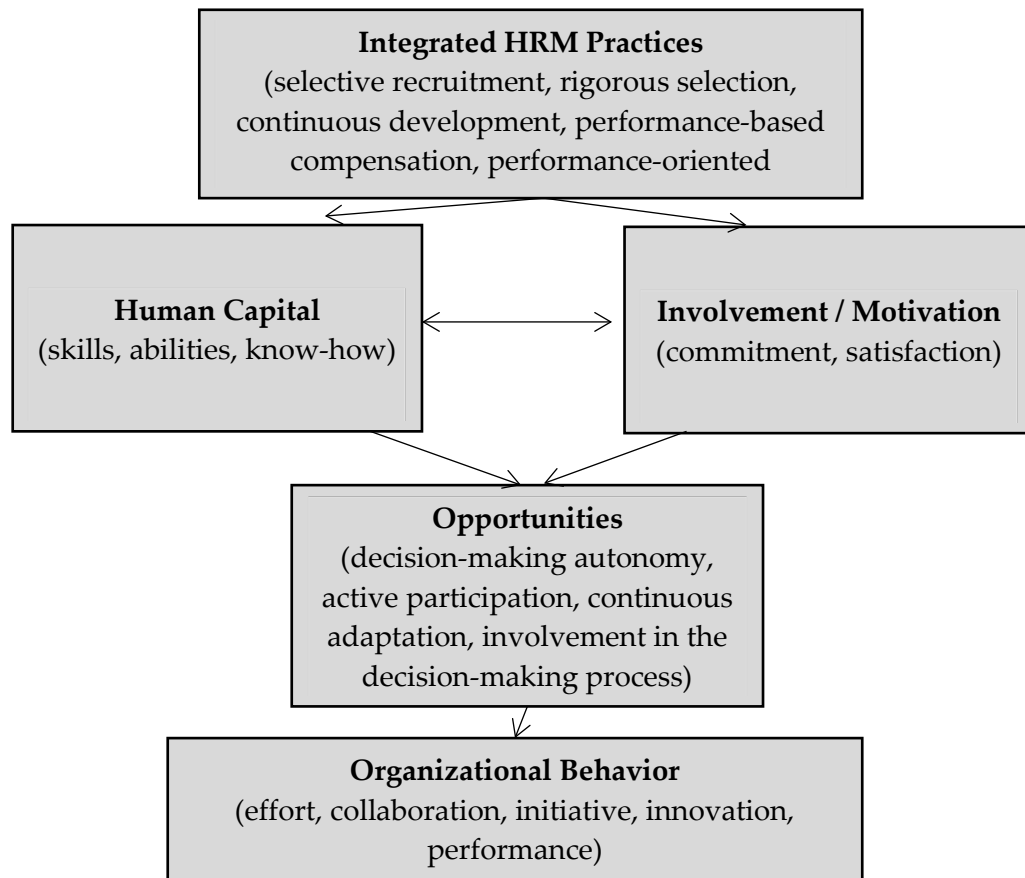


Figure 2. The HPWS Model of Human Resource Management within Higher Education Institutions

Source: APPELBAUM, E.; BAILEY, TH.; BERG, P. et.al. (2000). Do High Performance Work Systems Pay Off. In: Research in the Sociology of Work, nr.10, p.85-107.

Human resource management in higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova represents a complex system of administrative, strategic, and academic processes aimed at:

- recruiting and developing academic and administrative staff;
- ensuring the quality of the educational and research process;
- aligning human resources with the mission of the university.

According to the specialized literature, university HRM is distinguished by the fact that academic staff (professors, researchers) has a dual role: teaching activity and scientific activity, which are harmoniously integrated in achieving institutional performance.

The main human resource management processes within higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova involve multiple integrated processes focused on the efficient utilization of human resources in order to increase organizational performance. Moreover, each higher education

institution seeks to continuously develop its scientific and teaching human capital in order to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of higher education institutions.

The overall set of human resource management processes carried out in universities is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The set of Human Resource Management (HRM) processes carried out in universities

HRM processes	Process description
Human resource planning	- analysis of the need for teaching staff - aligning the provision of teaching staff with study programs and the number of students - planning of positions
Recruitment and selection	- public competitions for academic positions - existence of predefined criteria: scientific degrees, publications, experience - evaluation by specialized committees
Employment and contracting	- conclusion of the individual employment contract in accordance with the Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova - establishment of the teaching workload - clear definition of duties: teaching activity, scientific activity, etc.
Training and professional development	- teaching improvement - academic mobility - participation in projects and continuous development in research
Academic performance evaluation	- multi-source evaluation of teaching activity: students, supervisors, business environment, etc. - evaluation of scientific activity: preparation of annual reports on research activity
Compensation and motivation	- salary based on budgetary pay scales - provision of incentives for scientific performance - awarding bonuses and research grants
Academic promotion	- holding of scientific and didactic positions - clear criteria: scientific degrees, publications, experience, etc.

Source: elaborated by the author

The HRM system specific to the university environment is entirely dependent on national and institutional regulations in this field, including:

- Education Code of the Republic of Moldova no. 152/2014;
- Labour Code of the Republic of Moldova no. 154/2003;
- Law no. 270/2018 on the salary system in the budgetary sector;
- Integrity Law no. 82/2017;
- Regulations of the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova regarding higher education institutions;
- ANACEC regulations;
- Internal regulations of higher education institutions.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that in recent years, profound changes have taken place regarding HRM within universities in the Republic of Moldova.

The most significant changes that have affected the functioning of HRM processes within higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova are presented in Figure 3.

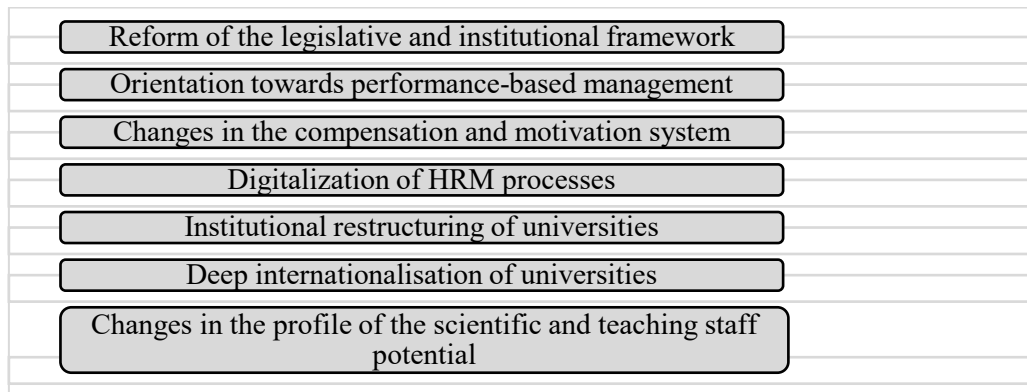


Figure 3. Main changes in HRM processes in universities

Source: elaborated by the author

One of the most extensive changes has been *the reformulation of the legislative framework and financial autonomy*. In recent years, amendments have been introduced to the Education Code of the Republic of Moldova, granting universities greater autonomy, strengthening financial independence, and introducing regulations related to meritocracy and public competitions for academic positions. At the same time, ethical and integrity standards in the recruitment and promotion process have been reinforced, making compliance with ethical norms and professional integrity a mandatory requirement for teaching staff.

Orientation towards performance-based management: in recent years, universities in the Republic of Moldova have increasingly integrated performance-oriented management systems, strengthening KPIs through the evaluation of publications, scientific research activity, and teaching performance. In addition, university HRM increasingly incorporates international criteria for academic promotion, based on teaching staff performance.

Changes in the compensation and motivation system: in recent years, the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova has sought to increase the attractiveness of the teaching profession by providing multiple benefits such as increased allowances for scientific degrees (PhD and habilitated doctor), salary increases, and the introduction of clear systems for evaluating and stimulating academic performance.

Digitalization of HRM processes: in recent years, the digital transformation of universities has become increasingly evident, significantly affecting the functioning of HRM departments as well. This includes electronic records of scientific and teaching staff, the implementation of information systems for HRM processes in universities, and the digitalization of administrative processes. These developments have increased the adaptability and agility of HRM processes within higher education institutions.

Institutional restructuring of universities is another important change related to the reorganization of higher education institutions in order to strengthen their capacities. This process has involved mergers and absorptions that began in 2022 and continue to the present day. Thus, some universities such as the State Agrarian University of Moldova and the Academy of Public Administration, as well as research institutes, have been absorbed or merged into universities such as MSU, TUM, and ASEM. This has increased their scientific and teaching potential, as well as their competitiveness.

Deep internationalization of universities: in recent years, due to globalization, universities have expanded their internationalization efforts, even developing their own internationalization strategies through which they aim to strengthen collaboration with European universities, as well as focus on accessing international projects, international research, and publishing in indexed international journals.

Changes in the profile of scientific and teaching staff potential: along with these developments, profound changes can be observed in the profile of university academic staff, such as increased recruitment requirements (PhD becoming mandatory for most positions); greater emphasis on staff involvement in international projects and collaborations; and growing interest in young academic staff with high development potential.

Following these changes in the functioning of HRM processes within higher education institutions, the main associated challenges are highlighted in Figure 4.

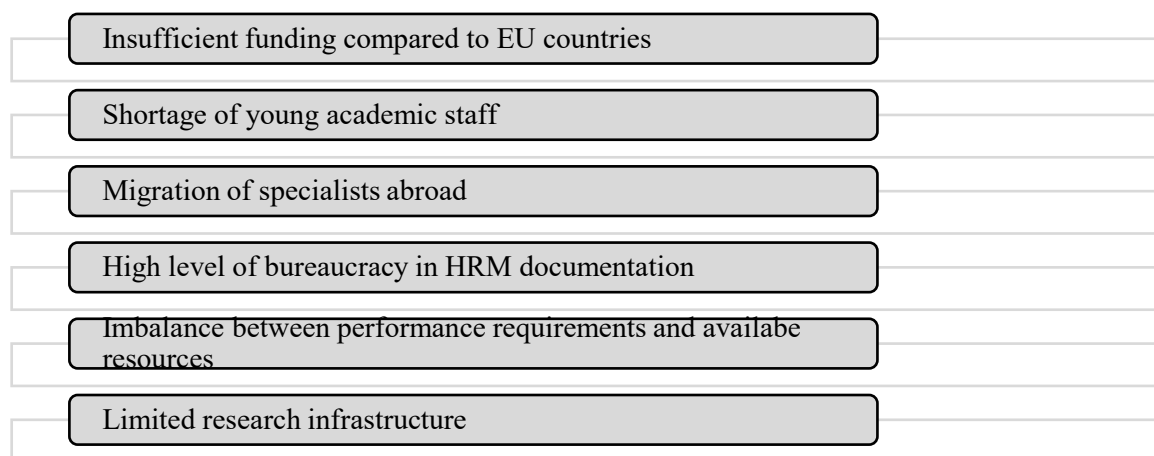


Figure 4. Challenges in HRM processes in universities

Source: elaborated by the author

Insufficient funding compared to EU countries – the higher education system in the Republic of Moldova is largely dependent on public funding, which is often limited. In some cases, financial constraints affect universities' involvement in research projects, as co-financing from higher education institutions is required. Insufficient funding leads to lower salaries for academic staff and researchers, reducing the attraction of young teaching staff. Overall, insufficient funding has a systemic impact on the functioning of all HRM processes carried out by universities.

Shortage of young academic staff – the Republic of Moldova faces a shortage of young teaching staff. Only about 25–30% of graduates from pedagogical specializations enter the labor market. Although in recent years the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova has implemented a number of measures aimed at increasing the attractiveness of pedagogical careers, this issue continues to remain a significant challenge.

Migration of specialists abroad – the brain drain phenomenon continues to affect the academic environment in the Republic of Moldova, reducing opportunities for development and decreasing the competitiveness of the university sector.

High level of bureaucracy in HRM documentation – HRM processes specific to universities are often excessively bureaucratic, imposing a formal and rigid framework of activity determined by numerous regulations and norms that ensure strict control of processes. At the same time, the lack of digitalization of HRM processes reduces opportunities for rapid adaptation to change.

Imbalance between performance requirements and available resources – although the requirements imposed on universities in the country are very high in terms of visibility, academic performance, and compliance with international standards, the limited human and financial resources reduce the development opportunities of higher education institutions.

Limited research infrastructure – although in recent years investments of over 40 million euro have been made in equipping educational spaces within higher education institutions by the Ministry of Education and Research of the Republic of Moldova, most laboratories still require technical modernization, as well as increased allocation of resources for research development.

Conclusions.

In conclusion, it can be noted that although in recent years multiple changes have been implemented in order to improve the development processes of higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova, universities in the country still face numerous challenges in the field of human resource management. These challenges hinder the development of higher education institutions on the one hand, and reduce opportunities for increasing the competitiveness and sustainability of the national higher education system on the other.

As a result, there is a need to accelerate the transition of the university development system from an administrative one to a strategic and competitive model, which would enhance the image and visibility of higher education institutions at the international level, as well as contribute to increasing their competitiveness. However, these objectives can only be achieved through increased funding allocated to universities, the implementation of active policies for the integration of young professionals into academia, the reduction of bureaucracy through the digitalization of processes, and increased investment in research.

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