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Application of the Merit Democratic Strategy for the Management of Human Resources in Artisan Sector

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Abstract: The current and growing need to ensure and enhance the development of skills, professional abilities and business competitiveness by means of human resources development inside and outside the field of work, gives rise to the so-called "democratic merit" innovative strategy, intended to guarantee the right to the social value of work and its constitutional protection, and based on "merit democratic" criteria. The Merit democratic Working Strategy stands as an instrument for human resources management, which aims to guarantee an adequate evaluation of skills, professionalism and competitiveness, and to allow firms to increase their performance by enhancing of the value of human resources. This paper proposes the application of the Merit democratic Working Strategy in the artisan sector of haute patisserie in Sicilian catering, through the implementation of MCDA (Multiple Criteria Decision Analysis) methods for the selection of personnel, first using an algorithm inspired by the Dominance-Based Rough Sets Approach (DRSA) for an initial skimming of the alternatives, and then the Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) method to rank the various alternatives considered in terms of the criteria used for their evaluation. In particular, we take into consideration the following selection criteria: creativity, innovation, skills, competencies and other merit democratic criteria concerning work and outside-work merits, social impact and the particular economic sector involved. Also the value is taken as a basic principle of the selection, recruitment and promotion of the individual, while ensuring an efficient and effective management of Human Resources processes and above all a high level of quality of human capital. That, guided by the professional needs of firms, can contribute to the achievement of excellence in labour policy, to support development, competitiveness and employment, in order to undertake innovative strategic choices for the effective development of the artisan sector.

Key words: human resources; merit democratic strategy; multiple criteria decision analysis; artisan sector; voluntary certification

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1. The Merit Democratic Strategy in the Artisan Sector

The Merit democratic Working Strategy is an innovative tool aimed at guaranteeing efficient and useful human resources management, but above all a high level of quality of human capital and performance for the companies and bodies which focus on the training and motivation of the human factor. The "Merit democratic Working Strategy" moreover guarantees the social right to work and its Constitutional protection through the merit-worthy enhancement of human resources, which springs from the need to contrast precariousness and social uncertainty in the field of work, until it becomes a tool for justice, "Merit democratic Justice" which is justified and legitimized by the "Higher National interest in the protection and defense of human resources which represent an inexhaustible source of economic, social and political progress for the Nation". The essence of the strategy is "Merit democracy", which is a system of enhancement aimed at rewarding, rehabilitating, preserving and defending the above-mentioned human resources, through the recognition and defense of the "right" to a just retribution in proportion to one's capacities, to the results obtained and to one's potential (http://www.autorita-meritodemocratica.eu). The basic criterion is Merit. The unit of measurement of merit is the "Merit democratic Value", determined through the application of multi-criteria mathematical models, that is with the methodology of *Multiple Criteria Decision Analysis* (MCDA). The value which measures the level of merit democratic quality is attributed and recognized by the awarding of a certificate, the *Certification of Merit democratic Quality of Human Resources CMQHR*, awarded by the *merit democratic evaluation nuclei,* or rather by *specialized commissions for employment and skills which aim to maximize the country's economic competitiveness and individual opportunities,* made up of university professors, free-lancers who have high skill levels and professionalism. Currently the only certification recognized at an International level is the *Investor in People* certification (Matarazzo A. et al., 2012). The experimentation and implementation of the strategy involves: (1) the setting up of a merit democratic employment office; (2) the constitution of merit democratic evaluation Nuclei; (3) its application to real cases; (4) the simulation of merit democratic rehabilitative processes; and (5) the demonstration of the useful application of "Merit democratic Jurisdiction" to a special "Merit democratic Justice Protection Authority".

One of the fundamental tools of the Association will be the *Merit Card,* a card of recognition of professionalism, issued to all the accredited subjects for the certification of merit democratic quality. In order to give a practical vision of the methods used by the Association AGM (Associazione della Giustizia Meritodemocratica or Merit democratic Justice Association), a case study was chosen in the artisan sector of Sicilian catering. It was hypothesized that a firm, operating in this sector be looking for personnel and would therefore use the tools proposed by the Merit democratic Working Strategy. The phases of the Strategy are the following: (1) gathering CVs from suitable candidates for the job; (2) evaluation of the CVs by 4 different evaluation nuclei, on the basis of identified selection criteria; (3) screening phase, through the generation of a sample of simulated alternatives which will be evaluated by the owner of the firm; (4) elaboration of a list of candidates considered to be acceptable; (5) ranking phase, in which the owner of the firm will be asked to express a judgment of the three best candidates; (6) application of the multi-criteria method AHP for the final choice; (7) elaboration of the Merit democratic Lists, through which the name of the candidate considered most suitable to cover that role will be obtained.

2. Application of the Multi-criteria Analysis for the Selection of Human Resources in the Artisan Sector

The Merit democratic Working Strategy is based on the application of the MCDA methodologies to calculate the merit democratic value. Multi-criteria analysis with decisional aims is a methodology which aims to support the decision-maker whenever they find themselves in a position to have to evaluate various different alternatives in respect to a number of conflicting criteria, thus allowing then to obtain a compromise solution in a coherent and transparent way (Matarazzo B. et al., 2005).

There are various methods for multi-criteria analysis, among which we can cite: *Multi Attribute Utility Theory* (MAUT), *Analytical Hierarchy Process* (AHP), *Multi-Attribute Global Inference of Quality* (MAGIQ), *Goal Programming*, *Outranking methods* like ELECTRE and PROMETHÉE, *Data Envelopment Analysis*, *Evidential Reasoning Approach*, *Dominance-based Rough Set Approach* (DRSA), *Aggregated Indices Randomization Method* (AIRM), etc. These methods give rise to the construction of rankings or classifications of the potential alternatives, taking into consideration qualitative and quantitative evaluations which would otherwise not be comparable, and combining multidimensional measurement scales into a single scale of priorities (Figuera J. et al., 2005).

To this end, the qualifying principles and multi-criteria analysis techniques will be briefly illustrated here, as well as their use as support in decision making processes. One particular decision making problem is that of the choice of which action to take among the various alternatives (options), by an individual or a group (decision-maker). In the decision making process three phases can be distinguished: (1) the formulation of alternatives or scenarios; (2) the evaluation of the alternatives, that is of their consequences; this evaluation is carried out on the basis of several criteria, eventually quantifiable through indicators; (3) the selection of one alternative, among those taken into consideration, on the basis of the outcome of the evaluation carried out (this selection obviously follows the ranking phase, also carried out on the basis of the criteria taken into consideration).

Case study: the choice of a highly qualified patisserie chef to be recruited for a famous Restaurant; it was decided to illustrate the application of the procedure in this paper by presenting a didactic example.

Strategy used for Human resources management: Merit democratic working strategy, based on the MCDA methods for the calculation of the merit democratic value.

Data source: Merit democratic Curriculum Vitae of the aspiring chefs.

Basic criteria: creativity, innovation, skills, abilities.

Merit democratic criteria: work merits, outside work merits, social impact, sector involved.

The (hypothetical) choice is made from among 100 candidates. The aim is to make the most merit democratic choice possible (for all the reasons that can justify this kind of choice) (Mazzaglia A. G., 2013). To this end, the methodology on which the merit democratic working strategy is based is applied, that is the approach based on the principles of the MCDA, because it seems to be the most appropriate for two reasons: this approach allows us to focus on and make explicit the characteristics on which the choice will be made; and secondly, this approach allows us to make an evaluation through nuclei (composed of multiple decision makers), which also allows us to let the responsibility for the choice fall on more than one subject.

These are two aspects which in themselves recall the principle of democracy. The evaluation criteria taken into consideration are: Creativity (the conception and production of something new); Innovation (the result of the

creativity); Skills (having the necessary knowledge and techniques); Abilities (capacity to apply one's knowledge to complete tasks and solve problems). Four evaluation nuclei are proposed possibly made up of different people. Each nucleus anonymously evaluates the CVs of the 100 candidates with reference to the characteristics under consideration. The candidates are evaluated for each criterion on a scale from 1 to 10. At the end of this first phase of the evaluation process the so-called *information matrix* is obtained. At this point, the decision making problem presents itself as a problem of choosing among candidates on the basis of criteria, clearly by establishing a ranking which emerges from a multi-criteria analysis. Thus a method of aggregation of the evaluations with respect to the single criteria must be used which permits an univocal and global evaluation for each candidate. So as to respect the merit democratic principles, the method of aggregation should at least have these characteristics:

(a) it must respect the principle of dominance (a better subject with respect to another over all the criteria considered, must be preferred);

(b) when there is not dominance, the procedure must be transparent with respect to both the evaluator and the person being evaluated: in other words it must guarantee the evaluator the possibility to state that there is a perfect coherence between the final decision and their preferences, and it must give a clear explanation to the person being evaluated about the reasons for their being chosen or not chosen (above all).

There are various methods of aggregation. In general, for instance in the selection processes used in the Public sector, the methods normally used can in different ways be connected to the ranking of the candidates on the basis of the value assumed by the following index (weighted average of the normalized evaluations):

$$V_i = \sum_{j}^{N} \gamma_j v_j{}^i$$

where

V_i is the overall evaluation of the i-th candidate

v_j is the evaluation of the i-th candidate with reference to the j-th criterion;

γ_j is the weight given to the j-th criterion in the evaluation process.

In these methods, if on the one hand it is true that whenever alternative a dominates alternative b, or rather is just as good as b in respect of all the criteria considered, $V_a \geq V_b$, on the other hand, with equal v_j^i for every j, that is if an equal evaluation is obtained for the i-th alternative (candidate) for every criterion, there can be infinite values for the index V_i as γ_j varies. Also, from the decision-maker's point of view it is often not clear how, for example, similar or identical evaluations of different candidates can emerge when the candidates have opposite evaluations with respect to different criteria, due to the implicit effect of compensation of the aggregation itself by means of weighted average, as is the index V_i (black box effect). On the other hand, another even stronger limitation of these methods is given by the even stronger hypothesis of additivity and by the linearity of the preferences which these methods assume on the basis of an aggregation by sum, which presupposes the independence of the preferences; in reality, instead, the interaction (positive or negative) among the various criteria plays a fundamental role, which cannot be modeled through linear functions. Often, though, in reality the weight given to the different criteria (that is their relative importance) also depends on the value assumed by them, which is therefore not constant.

In order to overcome these limitations, it is proposed here to establish an approach with aggregation of the preferences based exclusively on the principle of dominance, which is universally accepted and which does not require any simplifying hypothesis and which also has the advantage of making the link between the final choice

and the preferences expressed by the decision-maker on the various alternatives more explicit.

The evaluation process proposed by us is divided into two main phases: (1) Skimming; (2) Final Ranking. Moreover, the process can be defined as interactive, as it alternates phases of calculation with phases in which the decision-maker gives information about their preferences.

(1) Skimming phase. Starting from a whole set of individuals under consideration, a sample of selected alternatives is generated so as to be as representative as possible of the real alternatives. These alternatives are presented to the restaurant manager and he is asked to express a judgment on the simulated alternative, by classifying each of them as "ACCEPTABILE" or "NOT ACCEPTABILE". An algorithm is applied for the analysis of the table containing the multi-criteria evaluation of these alternatives; in this case an algorithm deriving from the DRSA method was chosen (Greco S. et al., 1999; 2001), which will reconstruct the decision-maker's preferences through the inference of appropriate decision-making rules. The DRSA analysis is developed thanks to a series of iterations, made by applying determined binary dominance relations, which allow us each time to obtain the decision-making rules given to the decision-maker and validated by them, whose later application allows us thus to reclassify and reduce the admissible alternatives who were considered valid. In other words, the decision-making rules make up a more concise representation of the knowledge contained in the information matrix. The preference model expressed by the decision-making rules obtained from the analysis of the sample alternatives is then applied to the set of all the alternatives, so as to identify a sub-set made up of those candidates who, on the basis of the decision-maker's preferences, should be considered acceptable. The skimming process then continues with following phases of interaction obtaining each time a new simulated table until, again using the DRSA algorithm, a further table is obtained containing the elements classified as "Acceptable", who will then be taken into consideration in the establishment of the final Ranking. These elements were therefore chosen on the basis of the preferences expressed by the decision-maker in this phase of the process (AL-Shemmeri T. et al., 1997).

(2) Final Ranking. The decision-maker is then again called on to express their preference in terms of ranking the seven remaining candidates (obviously this number can be altered to fit the real decision-making problem being faced). At this point the DRSA algorithm is applied again which gives the "explanation" of the ranking in terms of the decision-making rules. Moreover, the same algorithm highlights any consistent incoherencies on the part of the decision-maker in not respecting the principle of dominance. By carefully examining any inconsistencies on the basis of the principle of dominance within the set of individuals who have emerged from the skimming phase, the decision-maker is invited to alter their ranking until one is achieved which is coherent on the basis of this principle. In the simulated study, it is hypothesized that only three candidates of this ranking will be taken into consideration for the final phase, in that only they show the suitable qualities for being chosen.

3. The Application of the AHP Multi-criteria Method for the Elaboration of Merit Democratic Lists

Starting from the reduced set of the aspiring patisserie chefs, deriving from the application of the MCDA methodology described in the previous part and using the AHP multi-criteria method, the evaluation nuclei of the Authority aim to set up rationally a ranking of the remaining candidates, by constructing a list from the most merit-worthy candidate to the least merit-worthy on the basis of four merit democratic criteria: work merits, outside work merits, social impact, sector involved. To this end the AHP method is used, in that it is considered a

simple, but at the same time efficient, method for the objectives to be reached. It is also one of the multi-criteria analyses which allows the assignment of a priority to a series of decision-making alternatives and to take into consideration criteria characterized by qualitative and quantitative evaluations, not directly comparable, by combining multi-dimensional measurement scales into a single scale of priorities and by efficiently integrating objective and subjective factors (Mazzaglia A. G., 2013). The objective of this phase is to construct the merit democratic ranking in order to choose the most merit-worthy chef, after the initial skimming phase, which was carried out preliminarily to select from within the set of all the individuals considered, those who on the basis of the principles of evaluation taken into consideration, would be held the best.

The different phases in which the new process is articulated are:

(a) Initial situation: Analysis of the merit democratic CVs of the candidates

(b) Hierarchical decision

(c) Pairwise comparisons

- Criteria
- Criteria against objective

(d) Synthesis of priorities

(e) Final decision and elaboration of merit democratic ranking.

3.1 Analysis of Initial Situation

Analysis of the merit democratic CVs of the candidates. The top three candidates in the list are: A, B, C.

3.1.1 Hierarchical Decision

The AHP is a methodology of multi-criteria decision-making analysis which formulates the decision-making problem in a hierarchical structure and defines the priorities of its elements, at each level, by comparing their reciprocal importance with respect to a common attribute.

The hierarchical AHP analysis for this decision is illustrated below. To reach a decision, the priorities for the candidates will be determined, in relation to each of the decision-making criteria, and the priorities for each of the criteria, in relation to their importance in achieving the objective.

The priorities will then be combined through the whole hierarchy so as to assign an absolute priority to each candidate. The candidate with the highest priority will be the best alternative and as such will occupy the top place and the relationships of priority of the candidates will indicate their respective strengths in achieving the objective.

So the AHP analysis is articulated in 5 phases:

(1) Creation of a hierarchical structure through the breaking down of the decision problem into sub-problems (decision-making elements) which are easier to resolve (that is criteria and alternatives).

(2) The pairwise comparisons. The next phase consists of comparing, within a matrix, the various alternatives with respect to the decision making criteria used and to the relative objectives to reach, by assigning a score in a conventional scale of values from 1 to 9 (AHP scale, Table 1). Thus, for example, (a, b) = 3 means that the alternative a is judged “moderately more important” than alternative b.

In the same way, at each level of the hierarchy the relative importance of the criteria is determined in respect to the higher level decision making element (for example, class of criteria) by means of a pairwise comparison in terms of importance relative to the main decision making problem (the first level of the hierarchy) using the numerical/linguistic scale shown below.

Table 1 The Conventional AHP Scale

Linguistic assessments	Degree of importance
Equally important	1
Moderately more important	3
Noticeably more important	5
Greatly more important	7
Extremely more important	9

Source: Personal elaboration.

Intermediate values can be used to generate further levels of discrimination. So, for example, if criterion X is judged "greatly more important" than criterion Y, it is given a numerical value of 7.

The reciprocal values of those used in the table are used to express symmetrical judgements. So if criterion Y is "moderately less important" than criterion Z, then a numerical value of 1/3 is given to the pair (Y, Z).

The information derived from the pairwise comparison is gathered into a matrix (**A**) and used to obtain the absolute local weights (W_j^k; where the index $j = 1,..., n$ represents the criteria and the index $k = 1,...m$ represents the levels of the hierarchy) as shown below (Saaty's Method of Eigenvalue):

$$A \cdot W_j^k = \lambda \cdot W_j^k$$

where: A = matrix of the pairwise comparisons; W_j^k = vector of the absolute local weights; λ = maximum eigenvalue of the matrix A.

The *method of pairwise comparisons*, consists, in fact, of the construction of a square matrix with the elements to be ranked heading both the columns and the rows; each of its elements m_{ij} is the result of the comparison between the attribute of the row i and that of the column j from the point of view of a certain objective.

In order to clarify better what is mentioned above, here is an example. Let us suppose we have to rank $n = 3$ elements (alternatives), A, B, C. Carrying out a comparison between the pair of elements A and B means answering the question: "How important is A with respect to B from the point of view of a certain objective?". By answering this question, asked for each pair of elements, a *pairwise comparisons matrix* (Table 2) can be established which gives information about how much the row attributes are worth with respect to the column attributes. For example, with reference to the following matrix (M)

Table 2 The Pairwise Comparisons Matrix

	A	B	C
A	1	2	m_{13}
B	1/2	1	m_{23}
C	$1/m_{13}$	$1/m_{23}$	1

Source: Personal elaboration.

It can be seen that A is considered a little more important than B (see Table 1). On the main diagonal the values must of course be equal to 1 (A is only worth one in respect to itself), while in the other cells there are only positive values. Moreover for the matrix of the pairwise comparisons, the *reciprocity property* always holds true (that is $m_{ij} = 1/m_i$) and, sometimes, even the *consistency property* ($m_{ik} = m_{ij} * m_{jk}$);

Now, multiplying the matrix of the comparisons (M) for any one of its columns x and repeating this operation for every row gives

$$M * x = n * x$$

or rather the eigenvector associated with the eigenvalue n. The generic column $\boldsymbol{x}$ is then an eigenvector associated to λ_{max} and, as all the columns in the matrix are proportional, these represent the same eigenvector minus a constant multiplier.

Each column of the pairwise comparisons matrix, once normalized so that the sum of its elements is equal to 1, represents a ranking vector. Normalizing all the columns we can obtain the normalized eigenvector associated to the eigenvalue $\lambda_{max} = n$, that is $\boldsymbol{w} = (w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_n)$.

(3) Calculation of the global absolute weights of importance (W_j): $W_j = \Pi_k (W_j^k)$

(4) Determination, by pairwise comparison, of the weights of the decision-making alternatives with respect to each criterion, using the same procedure described in step 2. The outputs of this step are the absolute local rankings of the alternatives with respect to each criterion R_{ij}; where the index i = 1,..., p represents the alternatives).

(5) Calculation of the absolute global ranking (priority) of the decision-making alternatives (P_j), is obtained by means of the weighted sum of the absolute local ranking for each criterion multiplied by the corresponding absolute global weights of the criteria: $P_i = \Sigma_j (W_j \cdot R_{ij})$.

3.2 Criteria Work Merits

On the basis of what has been said previously, the evaluation nuclei will now have to evaluate the strengths of each candidate compared to the others, bearing in mind each candidate's work merits. Thus pairwise comparisons will be made and, for each comparison, the evaluation nucleus will assign a weight of between 1 and 9, or rather a weight of 1 to the weakest candidate and a weight of 9 to the best candidate. In practice, using the AHP scale, a relative preference is assigned with relation to work merits of each pair of candidates. Next, a matrix of these weights is constructed and is elaborated, using the method proposed by the AHP. Thanks to the AHP method (which verifies the internal coherence of the matrix, or rather, its reliability) it will be possible to determine the priorities for the candidates with respect to their work merits. The priorities are the measurement of relative merits, deriving from the judgments expressed by the evaluation nuclei. These are expressed by the values on the right of the priority evaluation matrix (Table 4), or rather, the main eigenvector. In practice, using the AHP scale a weight is assigned to the work merits of each candidate (Table 3).

Table 3 Comparison between Candidates with Respect to Work Merits

A	1	B	4	From the analysis of the CVs it emerges that Toni has fewer work merits than Dario
A	4	C	1	From the analysis of the CVs it emerges that Toni has more work merits than Angelo
B	9	C	1	From the analysis of the CVs it emerges that Dario has many more work merits than Angelo

Source: Personal elaboration.

Next, the above mentioned weights are put into a matrix (Table 4), using the AHP method.

Table 4 Matrix for the Evaluation of the Priorities

Work merits	A	B	C	Priorità
A	1	1/4	4	0.217
B	4	1	9	0.717
C	1/4	1/9	1	0.066
		Sum of the priorities		1
		Inconsistency		0.035

Source: Personal elaboration.

Thanks to the AHP method mentioned before (which verifies the internal coherence of the matrix, that is its reliability) it will be possible to determine the priorities for the candidates with respect to work merits. The priorities are the measurement of strengths, deriving from the judgments made by the evaluation nuclei, values on the right in the matrix for the evaluation of priorities (Table 4), that is of the main eigenvector.

These values are integrated by an inconsistency factor which represents the coherence, or lack of the same, of the judgments expressed by the nuclei (Table 5).

Table 5 Final Matrix for the Evaluation of Priorities

Work merits	A	B	C	Priority
A	1	1/4	4	0.217
B	4	1	9	0.717
C	1/4	1/9	1	0.066
		Sum of the priorities		1
		Inconsistency		0.035

Source: Personal elaboration.

The degree of incoherence is obtained through the calculation of an index called the *consistency index:*

$$IC = \frac{\lambda_{\max} - n}{n - 1}$$

where:

• n is the rank of the square matrix nxn (matrix of the pairwise comparisons) constructed thanks to the so-called priority coefficients (which represent the preference of one element over another);

• λ_{max} represents the sum of the so-called eigenvalues, or rather the single priorities assigned to the various elements. To make this consistency check, the size of the deviation of λ_{max} from the rank of the matrix must be determined. The condition of consistency is verified, in fact, only in the case of $IC = n$.

3.2.1 Outside Work Merits

Next the nucleus must evaluate the candidates with respect to their outside work merits, social impact and sector of involvement. As they did before with the work merits, the nucleus will now compare the pairs of candidates with respect to each of these criteria.

Thus, still using the AHP scale, it will assign a preference weight to each pair of candidates for the different criteria.

Starting from the three alternatives (Toni, Dario and Angelo) it is necessary to compare each of them with the other two, so there will be three pairwise comparisons with respect to each criterion: Toni against Dario, Toni against Angelo and Dario against Angelo. For each comparison, the evaluation nucleus must firstly decide which member of the pair is the weaker with respect to the criterion under examination. Then a relative weight will be assigned to the candidates. The nucleus then records its judgments in the AHP matrices, thus calculating the priorities obtained with respect to each criterion, in the same way as was done for the work merits.

3.3 Importance of the Criteria with Respect to the Objectives

Having evaluated the alternatives (candidates) with respect to their strength in satisfying the criteria, the nuclei go on to assess the criteria with respect to their importance in achieving the objective, through a series of pairwise comparisons between the criteria and the calculation of the resulting Consistency (Table 6). Thus the importance of the various criteria is established in order to achieve the objective, that is the forming of their merit democratic list.

Table 6 Matrix of the Criteria, Priorities and Consistency

Criteria	Work merits	Outside work merits	Social impact	Sector involved	Priority
Work merits	1	4	3	7	0.547
Outside work merits	1/4	1	1/3	3	0.127
Social impact	1/3	3	1	5	0.270
Sector involved	1/7	1/3	1/5	1	0.056
		Sum of the priorities			1
		Inconsistency			0.044

Source: Personal elaboration.

3.3.1 Final Synthesis of Priorities

Knowing the priorities of the criteria with respect to the objective and the priorities of the alternatives with respect to the criteria, we can calculate the priorities of the alternatives with respect to the objective. The priority of each alternative with respect to achieving the objective is the sum of its priority with respect to the criteria, multiplied by the priority of the work criteria with respect to the objective.

3.3.2 Final Decision

The evaluation nucleus, on the basis of the criteria adopted, elaborates the final ranking of the candidates, that is the MERIT DEMOCRATIC LIST.

Dario, with a priority of 0.492, occupies the top place as he is preferred with respect to the others, the second place is occupied by Toni, with a priority of 0.358, and Angelo, with a priority of 0.149, is in third place. Ultimately, the chef to recruit is subject B (Table 7).

Table 7 Merit Democratic List–Final Ranking

1st Place	B	0.492
2nd Place	A	0.358
3rd Place	C	0.149

4. Merit Democratic Certification of Human Resources in the Artisan Sector

The value which measures their own specific level of merit democratic quality is attributed and recognized to each chef with the issuing of a certificate, the Certification of Merit Democratic Quality of Human Resources (CQMRU). This certificate will be periodically updated, following an evaluation by the merit democratic evaluation nuclei.

Private and public firms accredited with the evaluation nuclei A.G.M. (Associazione della Giustizia Meritodemocratica) which succeed in increasing the efficiency and profitability of their firms by their means of management and development of human resources become part of a list of top businesses of the year, which is established by the A.G.M. association, on the occasion of the Conference held at the Merit democratic Open Day at the end of the year. The aim of this Open Day is to reward those organizations which, thanks to the application of the Merit democratic Working Strategy and with the support of the Protection Authority, have managed their resources excellently and have obtained extraordinary results in terms of productivity, growth and competitiveness.

Currently the only recognized certification at an international level is the Investor in People (IIP) certification. This model certifies the investment made by firms in terms of training and orientation of human resources, all

through a series of support tools provided by the appropriate management area (Clasadonte M. T. et al., 2012). The IIP is the only affirmed standard which places human capital at the top of the list of priorities of a business organizational structure: for this precise reason the similarities with the method and criteria proposed by the AGM are so evident.

To this end, the correct integration between the IIP principles and those of the Merit democracy, both characterized by the supposition of the recognition of the importance of human resources for a firm, allows the development of the individuals' capacities and aptitudes (so-called "Know How") so as to improve and optimize their performance over time and, consequently, that of the company they work for.

But what is still more important is the fact that these methods are not limited to indicating to businesses a way to improve the employees' necessary training route to learn about the role they will need to cover, but they suggest to them the effective involvement of those human resources with respect to different dimensions, strongly promoting the chance to participate and make a useful contribution to the company's business strategy with their ideas.

Figure 1 Application of the Iip Model for the Merit Democratic Certification of Human Resources

Source: Personal elaboration.

The affinities between the Investors in People model and the Merit democratic one allow a strategic idea to be proposed for the certification which, drawing from the IIP system, allows companies to choose, train, develop and monitor the best human resources available on the labour market (Figure 1). The 10 fundamental points which are proposed allow a perfect integration with the Merit democratic Methodology. The first point, called Merit Democratic Business Strategy, involves a clear and precise definition of the managerial strategy to apply on the basis of the merit democratic principles. The Learning & Development Strategy instead consists of a training and development plan of human resources finalized in achieving business targets. After this follows the People Management Strategy, with which the strategies to manage personnel well and the promotion of equal opportunities for development are defined. The Leadership & Management Strategy dictates to managers the guidelines for an efficient management and promotion of human resources (Matarazzo A. et al., 2009). Carrying on, there is the fifth point (Management Effectiveness) which analyses how managers effectively carry out the tasks given to them in the previous phases. With the next strategy, Recognition & Reward, through a series of rewards and recognitions the staff is incentivized to make contributions to the company. We then pass on to the

Involvement & Empowerment phase with which employees' involvement in the decision-making process is sought, with the aim of encouraging them and making them feel responsible and a part of a group. The eighth phase is Learning & Development which then allows the measurement of the effective skills of the personnel in learning and development and their dynamics. Lastly, there are the final two phases in which how much the investments in the development of these resources has improved the businesses' performance is evaluated (Performance Measurement) and a continuous improvement is promoted to optimize management and development (Continuous Improvement). The idea of presenting this series of strategies to implement within a firm allows us to underline the importance of the certification proposed by the Guaranteeing Authority of the Merit Democracy, or rather the Certification of Merit democratic Quality of Human Resources.

5. The Advantages Deriving from the Application of the Merit Democratic Working Strategy and Conclusions

Thanks to the Merit democratic working Strategy it was possible to choose excellence in terms of creativity, innovation, skills and competence, as well as rewarding and evaluating transparently even the results obtained from the candidates in outside work fields, such as economic, social, political, artistic, cultural and sporting ones. Furthermore, the merit-worthy human resources were promoted, rewarding their commitment, determination, professional skills, competence and abilities. The Strategy allows us to stimulate competitiveness among workers, thus guaranteeing higher professionalism, ensuring also higher efficiency and effectiveness of the work team both quantitatively and qualitatively.

By integrating the management of the new chef's performance, the efficient selection process and the worker's career development the firm will be certain to have within itself the talents it needs to reach success.

In general, therefore, this strategy is proposed as a really innovative tool. The basic idea is that of guaranteeing companies transparent human resources management which aims at excellence, by privileging certain fundamental requirements, such as competence, professionalism and competitiveness, without excluding the possibility of taking also into consideration other specific requirements. The peculiarity and carefulness used in the clarification of the criteria, in the evaluation of the alternatives and in the process of aggregation used to select the personnel, as shown in the example of this case study, propose a different way of reading from any other method that companies may decide to use. In fact, adhering to this new way of conceiving and promoting human capital within a work structure means being conscious of the fact that, at the base of a firm's affirmation in world markets, there is the fundamental idea of the just, merit-worthy and transparent promotion of the human resources available. It is merit, understood in its widest sense, which represents the basic criterion which allows firms to improve their performance and results thanks to the development of the intrinsic qualities of each person. The artisan sector, incidentally, represents the field in which the worker's abilities are the primary source of attraction for the clientele. Managing to understand that work, above all, manual work requires a high degree of professional skill, which can and must be scientifically and transparently evaluated thanks to this approach, allows us to offer the consumer a product of higher quality which can satisfy all their needs.

The criteria considered make reference to the candidate's work merits, to their outside work merits, to social impact and the sector involved. In this specific case study example, the AHP model allowed us to assign a weight to each criterion taken into consideration, which consented ultimately to reach the most efficient choice possible in terms of professional Quality, through the elaboration of the Merit democratic List. It is clear that the

methodology presented here is only an example of the possible MCDA methods which can be applied successfully to the problem under consideration and that the case considered is only an example of how it is possible to proceed effectively in most real cases in all working sectors.

For the competences considered here, in fact, today as in the past, Artisan work is a reference sector for the development of its potential, but the proposed approach can be opportunely considered a model of good practice to be extended and usefully applied to any other sector. Obviously particular attention has been paid to the importance of the artisan sector both nationally and regionally and even provincially, highlighting how, in the area of the Sicilian Economy, the Artisan sector can boast a highly significant role, not only from a numerical point of view of its presence, but also in relation to the quality and characterization of its products which qualify Sicilian products in local, regional, national and global contexts, by promoting the special capacities of this island's workers. The regional entrepreneurial fabric is in fact mostly made up of small-sized enterprises capable of supplying excellent products.

From the analysis conducted, it appears so evident how the success of a business is entrusted on the frontline to the professionalism and efficiency of its employees. In this sense certification should be read in terms of a service to the companies and workers, and also other forms of support for the development of competitiveness and employment should be thought up.

A useful labour policy should have as its main objective that of favouring innovative development of competence in order to increase competitiveness, showing how human resources specifically trained for the professional needs of companies and opportunely promoted can contribute to the growth of the companies themselves and become therefore a real development factor for the Country.

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