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“Human Resource Management, the melting pot of organizational performance”: An analysis of The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe

By

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Abstract

This study sought to determine whether the Human Resources (HR) Department is the melting pot of organizational performance through analysing the functions of the Human Resources Department in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The research aimed to examine the relationship between the HR department and other departments. The study adopted a mixed methodological approach. The research instruments used to collect data were questionnaires and personal interviews. Study participants were selected through convenience and simple random sampling techniques. Three hundred (300) respondents in The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education sector were used as research subjects. The data collected was presented in the form of tables, graphs and pie charts. Data was analysed using non parametric Chi-square test of independence through SPSS. The study findings highlight that the HR Department is of importance at Ministry through its functions such as recruiting and developing employees. The linkage of HR department with other departments through performance appraisal, promotions, employee retention and motivation make the department necessary. The research material also indicates that the main functions of Human Resource Department include selecting and developing employees. The research reveals that in performing HR functions staff adhered to laid down procedures from the statutory instruments of Public Service. From the findings it was also noted that the HR Department must have an open-door policy to allow ideas and adjustments due to some environmental or contextual changes. The study recommends that the Human Resource Department at the Ministry should be strategically positioned, thus the practitioners should be strategic business partners. This will add more value to department especially in building the relationship with other departments. Thus, planning should be done considering the internal and external environmental factors such as political influence, technological changes, economic effects and demographics as these have an impact in performing Human Resource functions. The research finally recommended that further research be conducted on analyzing the efficacy of Human Resource Planning as a tool of enhancing organizational performance.

Key words: Human Resources Management, Melting pot, organizational performance, Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, Zimbabwe

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Introduction

The management of human resources of an organization is as important as equipping that organization with machinery. If there is failure in directing employees the production will decline. Human resource department is a subsystem of the organizational system, which aims to deliver the human resource system and achieve a degree of congruency. Organizational performance is a key aspect in any organisation. It brings about the competitive advantage in the labour market. Human resource department is the main source of organizational performance as it is responsible for employee resourcing and management. Many organisations are worried about performance hence the need to increase effectiveness and efficiency in achieving organizational goals. There is a need to look at the functions of the HR department and its relationship with the employees in achieving organizational goals.

Employee performance is measured by performance management appraisal systems like balanced scorecard, performance pyramid and results determinants matrix (Lapina, Maurane & Starineca, 2013). These performance measurement systems contribute to employee performance which is a measure of a firm success in attaining goals reflecting on positive financial outcomes, high productivity and marketing efficiency (O’Sullivan, 2012). The assumption is that if human resources management is taken aboard effectively positive performance will be realised and this need to be established in the context of employees in the education sector in Zimbabwe. Galang (2015) eluded that quality or efficiency of human resources management practices may also be important to explain the performance of employees in the education sector. In the same vein, Jaffar, Selamat, Ismail and Hamzah (2011) argued that sustainability and competence of human resources management practices are measures to ascertain the performance of employees. The assumption is that if these measures are complemented by an even social, economic-political and legal environment, employee performance will be realised. Gamage and Sadoi (2015) propose that human resources management practices are not necessarily directed towards organisational performance but they influence employee’s competence and behaviour which eventually lead to performance.

There is an assumption that providing formal and informal training experiences for example basic skills training, on the job experience, coaching, mentoring and management development will increase both employees and organisational performance measured against high productivity (Manyani, 2014). Barrett and Meyyer (2014) argued that equitable compensation of employees coupled with timeous appraisal of employees give employees a niche and increases their performance. The use of incentive compensation may also help attract high performing employees leading to organisational performance measured against reduced absenteeism, turnover and high productivity (Sherazi *et al*, 2013). Human resources management is assumed to reduce employee absenteeism, turnover and increases performance and service delivery measured against high productivity

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is a government ministry that looks at the education system in Zimbabwe at primary and secondary level. The human resource department is intimately involved in the management of human resources through its functions. The

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management of human resources in all business sectors is a vital component as it leads to how the organization will achieve its intended goals. There is the need to look at the efficiency of human resource department in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Therefore, the research focused on the functions of human resource department and its role on organizational performance. The research is of relevance to Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and other organisations. It dwelt more on the functions of human resource department and its impact on organizational performance.

Statement of the Problem

The educational standards of the country as a whole would be maximized through increased organisational performance in the sector. It is assumed human resource department builds efficiency through its effective relationship with the employees. Globally the impact of human resources management largely focused on bigger organisations. However, there is dearth of information on the efficacy of human resources management on employee performance in the public sector which this study looks at in the context of Zimbabwe under the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education.

Objective

1. To assess the impact of human resources management on employee performance in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education sector in Zimbabwe.

Method

This study adopted survey research design as it attempted to seek the relationship between human resources management and employee performance in seven Districts in Mashonaland West Province in Zimbabwe. In this study, respondents were selected from 500 Provincial and District managers. For the purpose of this study, stratified random sampling method was employed to provide context for generalizing data. The type of survey used in this study was self-administrated 500 questionnaires in order to provide comfort to the respondents’ in answering the questions without the existence of an interviewer.

Hypothesis

H₁ Training and Development positively improves service delivery

H₂ Compensation management reduces employee turnover

H₃ Compensation management reduces absenteeism

Conceptual Framework

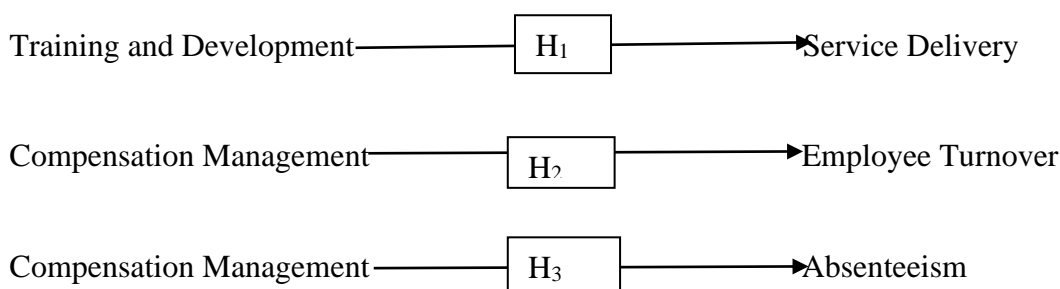


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

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Theoretical Framework

Configurational approach is going to be used as an underpinning theory in this study. The theory examines the structural relationship among human resources management practices (HRMPs) and its conjunctive effect upon firm performance (Stenholm, Pukkinen, & Heinonen, 2015). A firm's human resources management practices (HRMPs) should be internally aligned or bundled to create better organisational results (Stenholm *et al*, 2015). The basic premise of the theory is that the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education will perform better through a set of best HRMPs. Central to the configurational perspective, is the argument that the impact of HRMPs on employee performance is dependent on the adoption of an effective combination of HRMPs, often referred to as HRM bundles (Rashid, 2013).

The configurational approach combines the traditional market-based view with a resource-based view of strategic management theory, stimulating the consideration of interdependencies and takes into account the timing of strategies within the business cycle (Kaufman & Miller, 2011). Thus, the configurational approach argues that maximising firm performance is depended on bundling together of interrelated elements of HRMPs in an internally consistent manner (Dubrin, 2012). Armstrong (2013) explained the concept of bundling as the idea that practices within bundles are interrelated and internally consistent and that more is better with respect to the impact on performance, because of the overlapping and mutually reinforcing effect of multiple practices. Dundon (2011) found a tendency for performance enhancing HRMPs and policies to occur together, thereby creating high performance working system. Likewise, Wood, Daniels and Ogbonnaya (2018) found support for the potential impact of systems or bundles of HRMPs on organisational performance. The logic behind bundling HRMPs is a function of both ability and motivation (Vandekerkhof *et al.*, 2015). Thus, there are several ways in which employees can acquire needed skills such as careful selection and training as well as multiple incentives and contingent compensation to enhance motivation (Aguilera, Desender, Bednar & Lee, 2015).

The configurational approach does not only focus exclusively on the firm's environment or on its internal resources, but also on the mutual influence of the following variables, the environment, resources of the firm, personality of the entrepreneur as well as the management system adopted (Aguilera *et al.*, 2015). Each of the variables is only an aggregation of a larger set of variables for example the environment can be separated into macro and micro and into the social, legal, technical and economic spheres. The personality of the entrepreneur can be partitioned into traits, motivations and qualifications. The internal resources of the firm can be differentiated as tangible and intangible assets. Thus, it is assumed that development of employees' management needs to be interpreted as a sequence of configurations over time.

Therefore, integrating human resources management configuration with business strategy is conducive to the enhancement of organisational effectiveness, particularly for performance (Armstrong, 2013). Configuration approach examines the structural relationship among HRMPs and its conjunctive effect on firm performance (Oke, 2016). Empirical results from Singapore and Taiwan as well as other countries such as Korea support HRMPs configurations such as high commitment, compliance, collaboration and involvement work systems or practices having positive effect on organisational performance (Oke, 2016). The configurational approach is suited as a frame of reference for directing research in the strategic development of The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and may be able to identify firm-specific performance benefits to be derived from collaborative HRMPs. HRMPs configurations must be closely related to business strategies to remain competitive.

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Findings

Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table 1 shows gender of respondents. As shown in Table 1 out of the study sample (90%) were males whilst (10%) were females.

Table 1: Gender of Respondents

Gender of respondents	Frequency	Percent
Male	350	
Female	100	
Total	500	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Most respondents in this study were males comparably to female counterparts as indicated in Table 1. Table 2 shows marital status of respondents.

Marital Status of Respondents

Table 2 marital status of respondents. As shown in Table 2 the majority (91.6%) of the informants were married, (1.2%) were single, (3.8%) were divorced, (1.2%) were widowed and (2.2%) were separated.

Table 2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percent
Married	458	91.6
Single	6	1.2
Divorced	19	3.8
Widowed	6	1.2
Separated	11	2.2
Total	500	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

This shows that the majority of respondents in this study were married as shown in Table 2. Table 3 shows age range of respondents.

Age Group of Informants

Table 5 shows age group of informants. This study shows that (4%) of respondents fall between eighteen to twenty five age group, (5%) were between twenty six to thirty five age group, (30.8%) were between thirty six to forty five age group, (58,2%) were between forty six and fifty nine age group and finally (5.6%) were sixty years and above (Refer to Table 5).

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Table 1: Age Group of Informants

Age of Respondents	Frequency	Percent
18-25	2	.4
26-35	25	5.0
36-45	154	30.8
46-59	291	58.2
60+	28	5.6
Total	500	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2020)

The age group of respondents in this study may imply that The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is managed by active individuals who may have a strong influence in decision making.

Level of Education

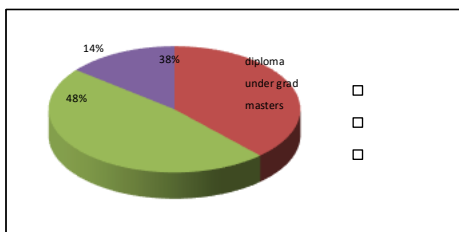


Figure 2 Level of Education

Source: Field Survey (2020)

Figure 2 shows that 40% have diplomas, 50% are under graduates and 10% of them are holders of a Master’s degree. This implies that the majority of the workforce obtained substantial professional qualifications to steer organizational goals and objectives.

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Working experience of respondents

Table 4 Working experience

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
Less than one year	25	5
1 to 5 years	2	0.4
5 to 10 years	291	58.2
10 years	154	30.8
Over 10 years	28	5.6
Total	500	100

Source: Survey data (2020)

Impact of human resources management on employee performance in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education sector in Zimbabwe

Hypothesis Testing: Chi-square tests of goodness of Fit

Table 5: Chi-Square test of relationship between human resources management and organisational Performance

Variable 1	Variable 2	Chi-square (x ²) Value	DF	P-Value
Recruitment and selection	Service Delivery	3.685	3	0.001**
Training and development	Innovation	4.559	3	0.111
Training and development	Productivity	10.642	3	0.014**
Recruitment and selection	Motivation	8.401	3	0.015**
Training and development	Absenteeism and motivation	2.574	3	0.033**
Recruitment and selection	Job security of employees	9.503	4	0.133**
Compensation management	Job security of employees	6.462	3	0.021*
Recruitment and selection	Decision making and innovation	53.553	3	0.123**
Compensation management	Decision making	6.625	4	0.013**
Performance management	Decision making and innovation	14.126	4	0.007**
Training and development	Decision making and innovation	3.874	4	0.032**

Source: Field Survey, 2018

*Significant at 0.05 level

**Highly significant at 0.01 level

DF=Degrees of Freedom

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Chi-square tests revealed that there is a relationship between recruitment and selection and service delivery ($X^2=3.685$, $DF=3$, $p=0.001$) at 95% confidence level as shown in Table 5. This implies that the use of recruitment and selection increases the ability of The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to offer service delivery. The results also indicate that there is evidence to suggest that training and development is related to innovation of employees ($X^2=4.559$, $DF=3$, $p=0.111$) at 95% confidence level as shown in Table 5. This implies that if training and development is adopted employee's ability to be innovative will be increased.

The study examined to see if there is evidence of relationship between human resources management practices of recruitment and motivation of employees. Using Chi-Square statistic, the relationship was found significant ($X^2 = 8.401.642$, $DF=3$; $p= 0.015$) at 95% confidence level as shown in Table 19. The results indicate that there is evidence to suggest an association between recruitment and selection and motivation of employees and the subsequent performance of employees in the organisation SMEs. This suggests that if the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education implement recruitment performance will be realised as employees will be motivated to do the work assigned. This suggests that if proper recruitment and selection is done, a committed workforce will be recruited leading to reduction of absenteeism at the workplace.

Prospectively, increased absenteeism has been documented as company size increases, increased working hours and overtime while employees whose supervision is more tolerant of unscheduled non-attendance tend to be absent more frequently. This confirms the assertion of Mayes, Finney, Johnson, Shen and Yi (2017) that organisations treat HRMPs as a strategy to encourage team responsibilities, enhance organisational culture and build up customer relationships through participation and empowerment leading to organisational performance and reduction of absenteeism. This implies that in organisations the recruitment process can be strategic if the stated recruitment objectives, strategy, activities and applicant factors are considered carefully.

Findings from the study established a relationship between recruitment and selection and job security of employees in the organisation. Using Chi-Square statistic, there was also a significant positive relationship between recruitment and selection and the job security of employees in the organisation ($X^2 =9.503$; $DF=4$; $p= 0.133$) at 95% confidence level (see Table 5). The results indicate that there is evidence to suggest that recruitment and selection is related to increased job security of employees in the organisation. This implies that employees associate their safety when formal employment procedures are undertaken by their organisation. This suggest that commitment is also heightened leading to positive outcomes in achieving desirable objectives.

The study also tested the relationship between compensation management and decision making of employees in The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. Using Chi-Square test of independence, there was a significant positive relationship between compensation management and decision making of employees ($X^2 = 6.625$; $DF=4$; $p= 0.013$) at 95% confidence level. The results indicate that there is evidence to suggest that compensation management is related to decision making abilities of employees in The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as shown in Table 5. With the aforementioned evidence from the chi-square tests, this study therefore rejects the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between human resources management practices and employee performance and adopts the alternative hypothesis that there is a positive relationship between human resources management practices and employee performance in The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education in Zimbabwe.

Inference to the study results suggest that human resources management enhance mutual commitment and coordinated action toward desired outcomes, foster the definition of goals and their communication, decreasing the uncertainty and leading to higher performance. Empirical studies show that the implementation of human resources management is useful and create value of

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their firms (Terpstra & Rozell, 1993; Katou, 2012; Starineca & Voronchuk, 2015; Johnson & Schaltegger, 2016). Inference is made to Byun, Lee and Park (2013) who asserted that human resources management increase the efficiency of locating solutions to task related problems. It is suggested that organisations treat human resources management as a strategy, encourage team responsibilities, enhance organisational culture and build up customer relationships through participation and empowerment leading to organisational performance and reduction of absenteeism. These findings were confirmed by Albring, Robinson and Robinson (2013) who asserted that irrespective of organisational size and domain the influence of human resources management is to create link between the strategy and culture of the organisation as well as its ability to manage employees' performance.

Inference is made to Stenholm, Pukkinen and Heinonen (2015) who asserted that satisfactory performance of the business is when it is able to increase output and sales in the competitive business environment. Neyesteani and Juanzon (2016) argue that some organisation owners who do not implement human resources management policies are compounded by lack of knowledge to do so hence decide to shun it. It was viewed that lack of capital management practices negatively affected that quality of management of the enterprises, hence the general poor performance of the enterprise both in terms of output (Chandra, 2013; Shaukat & Nawaz, 2013; Bigliardi & Galati, 2014 & Zizlavsky, 2014). The findings in this section are similar to the views of Jarvis and Rigby (2013) who asserted that managers, who do not possess knowledge, skills, and experience in the field of human resources management or do not perceive HR as important, will be less likely to adopt human resources management policies.

The study results show that training and development increase employ motivation (See Table 5). This may imply that organisations treat human resources management practice of training and development as a strategy to encourage team responsibilities, enhance organisational culture and build up customer relationships through participation and empowerment leading to organisational performance. This suggests that human resources management can increase the ability of companies to select, develop and motivate a labour force capable to produce superior results.

The study results showed respondents perception on the relationship between human resources management and organisational performance. This implies that respondents perceive human resources to have a positive effect on organisational performance. The study results are in tandem with various literature for example Nazlina *et al.* (2013) studied HRMPs and organizational performance of Malaysian firms and revealed that the survival of firms can be increased by adopting HRMPs. Asif, Searcy, Zutshi and Fischer (2013) also studied HRMPs and firm's performance in Pakistan and argued that product quality can be improved by following good HRMPs of compensation in an organization. Thus, it implies that, effective human resource management practices directly relate towards organisational performance by contributing to employee and customer satisfaction hence creating a positive reputation of the firm in the market. It is suggested that human resources management (HRM) studies tended to propose a direct link between HRMPs and organisational performance.

Recent evidence suggests that the relationship is mediated by a range of attitudinal and behavioural variables at the individual level employee engagement, task performance and organisational behaviours (Bisharat, Obeidat, Alrowwad, Tarhini, & Mukattash, 2015. Inferences to the study results suggest that the relationship between human resources management and organisational performance involves a complex interaction between bundles of HRM activities and outcomes. The study results are in line with Yi *et al.* (2016) who argue that, because of potential complementarities between related practices, HRMPs are most conducive to performance when

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adopted, not in isolation, but as a system of mutually reinforcing practices. Mayes *et al.* (2017) asserted that certain HRMPS like individual pay for performance systems, employee monitoring and performance appraisals reciprocate employer expectations about employment relationships leading to positive outcomes. Mayes *et al.* (2017) found that HRMPs focused on enhancing employee commitment such as decentralised decision making, comprehensive training, salaried compensation and employee participation were related to higher performance measured by higher productivity.

Increased productivity derived from human capital investments depends on the contribution of employees to a firm. Thus, the higher the potential for employee contribution in a firm the more likely the firm will invest in human capital through adopting HRMPs (Shafeek, 2016). Thus, the relationship between HRMPs and organisational performance may be further enhanced when practices are matched with competitive requirements inherent in a firm's strategic posture. Yi, Li, Hitt, Liu and Wie (2016) opined that there is a link between performance and HRMPs and found a tendency for performance enhancing HRMPs to occur together, thereby creating high performance work systems.

The study results show that human resources management increases decision making and innovation. This also suggests that delegating responsibilities improves the implementation phase of innovative behaviour, as an employee is made responsible for implementing and sustaining an innovation. This is in line with studies done by Zhou, Zang and Montoro Sánchez (2011) that teamwork results in greater decision making and innovative behaviour than individualism. It is also widely agreed upon in the literature that the flow of communication within teams influences the success of decision making and innovative projects (Altman & Engberg, 2015). It becomes evident that expressing decision making and innovation as a goal facilitates innovative behaviour by increasing task motivation and encouraging employees to generate ideas in SMEs thus increasing performance.

Additionally, delegating responsibilities facilitates the idea generation and improves the implementation phase, ultimately increasing innovative behaviour of employees in organisations. The study showed that human resources management increase job security of employees. It also implies that job security works best as a motivator when employees see a connection between job retention and their own performance. Barrick, Thurgood, Smith, Courtright and Texas (2015) asserted that credible signals to prospective employees that a firm is committed to providing its employees a high level of employment security must be documented to have positive results at the workplace. However, it is assumed that employees who don't fear for their jobs are more likely to perform at a higher level and feel greater commitment to an employer. The responses concur with Greer, Lusch and Hitt, (2017) who observes that the assumption underpinning human resources management is that employees are the organisation's key resource and organisational performance largely depends on them. Kroon and Van De Voorde (2013) also argue that effective deployment of human resources management offers one of the most powerful bases of competitive advantage if only human resources management fits into the business strategy of the firm. Therefore, it is assumed if an appropriate range of HRMPs and processes are developed and implemented effectively, then human resources management will make a substantial impact on firm performance.

Conclusions and Implications

Although general support exists for the idea that human resources management is relevant for organisations, the available knowledge is highly descriptive and yields theoretically supported guidelines. Government should all acknowledge the importance of configuration approach to human resource management practices. Such an approach examines the structural relationship

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among HRMPs and its conjunctive effect on firm performance and acknowledges human resource management as a continuous process of balancing labour demand and labour supply. Integrating human resources management configuration with business strategy is conducive to the enhancement of organisational effectiveness, particularly for performance. This study provides strategic solutions aimed at facilitating adaptation process instead of searching for ad hoc solutions to human resource management in organisations.

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