

Human Resource Management in the 21st Century: A Case of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO) In Zimbabwe

¹Sekai Noreen Gore, ²Kudakwashe Sithole, ³Kudzanayi Gondo

^{1, 2, 3} Zimbabwe Open University, Faculty of Commerce and Law, Department of Management and Business Studies, Harare, ZIMBABWE

Abstract: Change is unstoppable, and any organisation which does not have strategies in place for adapting in critical areas will not be able to remain competitive. The research sought to find out how the ever changing environment is affecting human resource management and to suggest solutions on how to prepare for the changes. The research was a qualitative research. A case study was conducted to collect data. Purposive sampling was done to select 45 human resources management practitioners that were going to be included in the study. NGO Human resource Management forum was used since it had expertise in the field. A structured guide for the forum discussion was used. The discussions were recorded and data was analysed using thematic content analysis. The findings showed that HR managers should rethink on how to best manage globalization, organizational culture, change and virtual workplaces.

Keywords: change, innovation, creativity, human resource planning.

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's business environment the success of individuals and organisations are measured by their adaptability to change. Human Resource Management in the 21st century has to be treated differently mainly because of unpredictable employee markets, tighter budgets, a demotivated and dissatisfied workforce, environmental pressures such as increasing globalization, rapid technological change, and tougher competition; organizational changes such mergers and acquisitions.

It is generally understood that the only constant thing in today's environment is change. There is uncertainty about whether today's human resources theories and plans will apply tomorrow. As a result, the authors were particularly concerned to find out how the ever changing environment is affecting Human Resource Management and to suggest solutions on how to prepare for the changes.

The roles of human resources have been evolving for some time this can be clearly seen from the shift from personnel to human resources. Practitioners later realised that employees are the most valued assets of the organization hence they must not be viewed like any other asset of the organization.

This shift to an unstable environment calls for HR to also come up with strategies that will enable the organization to remain competitive.

Research Objective:

- I. To find out how the ever changing environment is affecting Human Resource Management in NGOs
- II. To suggest solutions on how to prepare for the changes.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Human Resources management in the 21st century:

Dave Ulrich provides a clear path to the next generation of HR with Human Resources Champions: The next agenda for adding value and delivering results (Ulrich, 1997). He describes a multi-faceted approach to delivering HR services that meets the need for both employees and employers, and positions HR as a significant contributor to organizational success.

Ulrich presents his approach in terms of deliverables or outcomes, for which Human Resources should be responsible: strategy execution, administrative efficiency, employee contribution and capacity for change.

In the course of delivering in these four areas he describes four corresponding roles for HR to play within the business:

- a) As a strategic partner working to align HR and business strategy
- b) As an administrative expert working to improve organisational process and deliver basic HR service
- c) As an employee champion, listening and responding to employee needs and
- d) As a change agent managing change process to increase the effectiveness of the organisation.

May, K in her article, Work in the 21st Century: The Changing Role of Human Resources she suggested that making the shift to a new HR role will raise unique issues for every HR group that attempts it, but there are some common steps and activities that will increase the likelihood of success. Some of these steps and activities are:

- **Strong HR leadership.** As with any major change effort, a strong leader can develop a clear vision, motivate others to share that vision, and help them work toward achieving it. In order to change the role of HR in an organization, the HR leader will need to work both within the HR group and with the organizational leaders to reshape everyone's expectations of what HR can and will deliver. The success of the change will depend upon HR's ability to meet the real needs of the organization and the credibility it develops.
- **Acute future orientation.** One of the ways that HR can provide value is to understand how changing environmental, organizational, and workforce factors will likely influence the business, anticipate the associated HR needs, and be prepared to deliver appropriate solutions to meet those needs. By maintaining a focus on workplace trends, for instance, HR can prepare to evaluate the impact that particular changes are likely to have on an organization's people and processes, and be prepared to work with the business leaders to decide how to respond-being ahead of the curve, not behind it. For example, one movement that is likely to have significant impact on the way people are hired, managed, and valued is that of intellectual capital. A "new role" HR department is one that has learned about intellectual capital and its implications, evaluated the impact on current practice, and developed ideas and recommendations for changing HR practice and other business processes.
- **Flexibility and creativity.** An HR group that is successful in the future will likely be one that is responsive to the changing needs of its client organization. Responsiveness in the changing world of work will require being flexible-as the organizations change, so will their needs and priorities. In addition, traditional activities and processes may not be sufficient to meet the unique needs of the future-HR leaders will likely rely on creativity of their groups to achieve effective results. Increasing globalization of the market will create a need for both flexibility and creativity as businesses try to succeed in new locations, with a new workforce, and with new customers.
- **Delivering value.** Although this is not a new challenge for HR, it remains a critical one. HR is still perceived by many within today's organizations as simply a non-revenue generating function. It is important to make apparent the value provided by working with the management team to hire the right people, manage them well, pay them appropriately, and build a working environment that encourages success. Beatty and Schneier (1997) extended the concept of delivering value within the organization by arguing that HR must deliver economic value to the customers, as well as to employees.

3. METHODOLOGY

The research was a qualitative research. A case study was conducted to collect data. Purposive sampling was done to select 45 Human resources practitioners that were going to be included in the study. NGO Human resource Management forum was used since it had expertise in the field. The Forum is a platform where HR practitioners from both local and international NGOs meet once every month to discuss about HR matters that will be affecting their field. A structured guide for the forum discussion was used. Specifically the forum was charged with answering the following questions.

1. How is the environment affecting Human resource Management?
2. How do we prepare for changes as Human Resource practitioners?

In response, the forum convened an average of 32 members' expert panel with diverse backgrounds. Its members included 4 Human Resources Directors, 8 Human Resources Managers and 11 Human Resources officers and 9 Human Resource Assistants.

To ensure a full understanding of the charge, the researchers first met with the study focus person from the forum to discuss the scope of the discussion so that the focus person would inform them on what they needed to prepare. Document review was also done. The discussions were recorded and were analysed using thematic content analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Below are the major themes that emerged from the discussion:

Change agents:

Most of the participants agreed that there is needed to keep abreast with what is happening in the environment and cope with change in order to survive. HR practitioners should be flexible

Flexibility and creativity and innovation:

All the participants agreed that HR has to come up with initiatives that allows flexibility, innovation and creativity for organisations to survive in this era. These initiatives include:

- Reward innovation via more engaging work and/or autonomy- Creative people aren't always motivated by money for them, the work is the reward.
- Track innovation talent at both the college undergraduate and/or graduate level - The most effective companies find the brightest minds earlier than their competitors.
- Put in place a formalized or structured idea/innovation review process - When the creative ideas come flowing in, the next step is to create gates that allow purposeful review of those ideas, so that budgets for new projects can be allocated correctly.
- Provide internal training in creativity and innovation practices.
- Innovation and creativity levels vary from person to person, but that doesn't mean those abilities can't be improved. Research shows there are proven methods of improving the innovation process in the brain
- Put in place discrete budgets to fund innovation projects external to the enterprise (i.e. to generate ideas or products from non-employees - many groundbreaking ideas come from unlikely sources, and when it comes to innovation, more is almost always better. Even small rewards can be enough to interest customers in submitting their ideas.
- Have a formal program to find and promote creative/innovative programs, products, or ideas- organisations must create programs to allow employees to harness and showcase that creativity, much of it could be going to waste.
- Tie individual bonuses and/or salary increases to innovation – An organization must reward innovative minds.
- Include innovation as a major competency in leadership development plans- Having innovative leaders helps promote the commitment to creativity in an organization.
- Define and promote organizational values related to innovation, having an explicit message that innovation is important creates a more robust environment for innovation, and can allow employees to feel safer when taking the risks necessary for successful innovation.
- Use technology-enabled collaboration/social media tools to share knowledge - By using forums, intranets, and other media for group efforts, top companies are able to gather ideas from a diverse group of employees and sometimes even customers and company outsiders.

Human resource planning is becoming complex.

One of the participants noted: "It is getting difficult to effectively plan HR because it is becoming increasingly challenging to analyse the internal and external labour markets and the forces that are likely to affect the supply of human resources". They argued that there is nothing that one can predict about the environment. It has become difficult to forecast demand and supply of personnel.

Another participant noted: "The current economic crisis has put immense pressures on organisations to rethink their priorities and to cut costs and let go of many employees."

One of the Human Resources officers noted: "Employees' bargaining power is decreasing as supply of labour is increasing leading to unpredictable employee markets, tighter budgets, a demotivated and dissatisfied workforce"

It was also noted that, organisational culture is another part of human resource management that is being affected as well. The workplace is full of diverse people with diverse culture, which is good for innovation and new ideas but managing culture of so many diverse minds is not easy. Due to acquisition, mergers and globalization culture maybe diluted. There is need for a lot of hard work to develop a successful organizational culture. This means that HR staff also requires new skills such as language and trainings on culture management.

There is also need for continuous career development. Globalisation is bringing in a lot of technological developments. To remain competitive the employees need to have continuous training.

"Managing virtual workplace and ecommerce is becoming a new role in the 21st century" uttered one of the HR executives. "We are moving away from just localizing our products through the use of e-commerce and virtual centers hence the need to be flexible and start considering ways on how we manage the virtual workplace." Traditional managers have significant product and customer knowledge and are rigid to adapting to the changing situation. For example in marketing they believe in selling face to face of which in the current environment if an organization is to focus on the face to face customers it will not survive due to digital marketing being used globally.

The forum also agreed that there is need to share the responsibility of HR activities between HR staff and line managers. This approach will allow the line managers to be more fully involved in the development and direction of employees. It should not be the responsibility of HR staff only but for line managers as well

5. CONCLUSION

With change as the only constant factor in the environment there is need to move with it in order to remain competitive. This will not leave Human resource management out. This means that Human Resources experts must come up with strategies of managing the employees that are different from the ones they have been using in a stable environment. These include strategies on managing change, performance and virtual workplaces. It was also concluded that that HR can provide value through Strong HR leadership, acute future orientation, flexibility and creativity.

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