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The role of Human Resources transformation in the strategy enactment in the electricity company of Eswatini

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Abstract. Over the years the function of HR has transformed in an attempt to respond and align to changes and demands of the business environment. The purpose of this article was to explore the role of HR transformation in strategy enactment in the Electricity Company of Eswatini. To help HR personnel in Eswatini to gain and understanding in strategy enactment planning and strategic business operations since the changes in HR not only have implications for business operations, but also implicate the businesses that are positioned to respond to the changes. Questionnaires were personally distributed by the researcher to a sample of 28 management staff in the company. Descriptive statistics were used in analysing data. The strategy enactment requires HR to be active, prioritize value-adding actions and take lead in introducing the strategic HRM. This study highlights the linking between successful talent management and HR transformation. Managers and HR professionals as the role players and drivers of the process, it imperative that they possess more in-depth competencies and knowledge on the nitty-gritties of the implementation of TM. This study contributes to the body of knowledge concerning the dynamic nature of human capital necessities and the business environments frequent knowledge generation in order to assist businesses in positioning themselves in addressing talent management needs.

Keywords. Human Resource Transformation, Human Resource strategy, Strategic Human Resource

Introduction

HR transformation requires some clarification on how it formulated and grew from HR. Human Resource Management (HRM) has progressed tremendously in the past years when it comes to changes in the work environment. Discovering the past, HR field assists in developing the context regarding the environmental changes for better services. In 1920s the personnel management was formulated to focus on procedural aspects which deals with recruitment, selection appraisal and formulating policies. There was no intention and focus in the organisational strategy and performance. However, Long (2009) reveals that personnel management lacks in practices in the work environment. This proves that managers were not involved in the planning from the strategically point of view but focuses limitedly to labour issues. After the decades around 70s the personnel management term was replaced with a new term HRM which viewed employees as assets which developing and motivating employees in achieving the institutional goals of the business. This was supported by literature that HRM

provides a great impact in increase on technological developments, globalization and social values.

The strategic HRM planning involves the process of estimating future changes by aligning variate of components in promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation. Keenan (2008) indicated that the increased strategic thinking is one of the most critical forces for the survival of the business. While Mujahid, Sameen, Naz, Nazir and Manzoor (2014) stated that the changing trends in the competitive environment of an open market HRM is a significant variable for the efficient growth of the business. Taylor (2011, in Tubey, Rotich, and Kurgat, 2015) also revealed that HRM marked on new critical thinking which involves managers and leaders of the organisation. This was supported by Tubey et al. (2015) that a shift towards the transformation and streamlining of personnel activities to strategically, focuses on the overall organizational effectiveness. Since personnel management was replaced by HRM, research is silent whether there is a difference between the two. Therefore, this paper provides the in-depth contribution of HRM in the strategy enactment focusing in the electricity company of Swaziland.

Literature review

HR Transformation

HR transformation is viewed as a change agent in the operation and its duties by developing new ways in aligning to the organizational goals and ensure that all resources are available. Rothwell, Prescott and Taylor (2008) indicated that definition of HR transformation is not common since HR personnel skills changes. HR transformation is more about re-conceptualizing, reinventing and re-charting the duties of the HR. Silzer and Dowell, (2010) states that HR ensure that each and every function has a unique duty with aligns with the institutional goals. HR transformation as defined as a process that aligns the HR partners to contribute significantly to the business goals (Mercer, 2008).

The new roles of HR

There was no much change in HR roles and functions till the 1970s where the encouragement was on embracing more progressive on employee values. The concept of HRM and framework practice also show an important role in academia and business. The theories of HRM increased from those of personnel management which lead to embrace the strategic human resource management (SHRM) framework that emphasizes the employees' as a critical resource in the organisation (Nankervis & Compton, 1994, in Walters, 2006). It proven that organisations that utilise SHRM practices attract and retain quality talent for the success of the organisation. Literature proves that it is imperative for the organisations to rethink and redefine the roles of each to contribute to the performance of the organisation. Personnel management were limited on strategic of the business and play a role on operational level and responsible for administration and running the courses. The gap lies on being strategic such as investing in training and development as well as the direction in achieving the goals of the business (Keenan, 2008). For so many years, businesses leaders where scrutinising ways that can add value to the business. For adding value and increase performance, HR need to perform different role both operational and strategically through their employees (Ulrich, 1997). This is supported by Keenan (2008) that operational and strategical thinking carries more weight in the functions of HR. HR should be measured by outcomes and the value it creates to the organisation (Ulrich and Brockbank, 2005). Storey et al. and Ball (both in Boateng, 2007) emphasises that HR job

content and expectations drives the strategic goals of the business. While HR professionals justify their existence and contribution to the financial terms (Naves, 2002).

Ulrich, Brockbank and others as known as the scholars and proponents of HR indicate that HR has never receive notice. Business excellence is one of the critical pillars required from HR current and future of the organisation which determines the treatment of employees to get work done. This also includes motivation, team work and learning (Ulrich, 1998). The emphasis on HR is to shift from traditionally activities and focuses on business outcomes (Ulrich, 1998).

HR need to stress its role as a differentiator in adding value for the success of the business (Jarmog and Overholt, 2004). This can have a contribution in achieving competency by measuring the organisation effectiveness. This is a demand for HR specialists to think, act and design system-focused measures on how HR work enhances results in the organisation (Vosburgh & Resorts, 2007). To create value and deliver results, HR professionals need to define deliverables (Ulrich, 1998). The Ulrich framework that was proposed in 1997, indicates critical roles that must be fulfil by HR professionals to build a competitive organization. It resulted on the HR professional model that was presented by Conner & Ulrich in 1996 and subsequently further developed by Ulrich and Brockbank (2005).

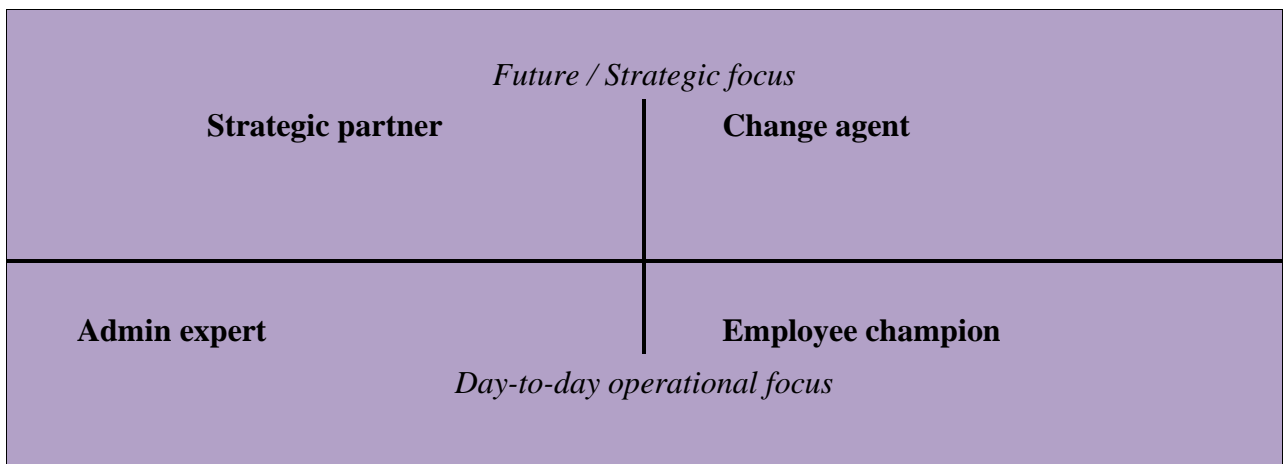


Figure 1. Typology of HR functional roles. Adapted from Truss, C., Mankind, D., & Kelliher, C. (2012).

Strategic human resources management

There is a need for an evidence-based for the HR professionals to be involved in business strategy such as contributions of their activities on strategical level (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart and Wright, 2008). While literature on SHRM theory has received significant attention by researchers in the past decades (Gilani, Zadeh & Saderi, 2012). Scholars such as Hendry & Pttigrew, (1999; Mabey et al. 1998, cited in Gilani et al., 2012) urges that in United State of America, the industrial turmoil of the 1980s led to the development of SHRM. This led to substantial changes in traditional HRM and gave rise to research and practice of SHRM. There is an increase in the relationship between HRM and organisational performance but the questions nearby on the need to investigate new ways in which HR could contribute to the success of business through the role and impact of HRM. Sippola, (2007, cited in Anyangwe, 2017) emphasises that HRM to be proactive lies on a shift from traditional HRM practices to strategic human resources management.

Cania (2014) indicates that the SHRM is an all-encompassing approach to the development and application of integrated strategies of HR in management of the organisations. These strategies put the plans on the table related to overall organizational considerations including all the programs of employees from recruitments to rewards. while Anyangwe (2017) states SHRM refers to all the plans to support the institutional goals through employees. SHRM is the patterns of employees' placements and practices designed to support the achievement of an organizational goals (Wright and McMahan, 1992, cited in Gilani, Zadeh & Saderi, 2012). Bratton and Gold (2007, cited in Mansour, 2015) refers SHRM as the alignment of the HR function to the strategic goals of organization in order to enhance organizational performance. Traditional human resource approach limited the ability of organizations to grow, whereas a strategic approach broadens innovativeness and ability to grow by being systematic and anticipating changes in the environment (Mello, 2011). Similarly, Nankevis et al. (2002) indicated that the role of HR department on the organisation is to contribute significantly in the global and technological changes, economic and societal conditions, and the operational requirements, then expand the long-term strategies to deal with other issues. HRM strategies which are integrated horizontally or vertically with the business strategy of the organizations (Gilani et al., 2012).

Methodology

Quantitative descriptive approach was adopted. Data were collected through questionnaires with only closed-ended questions. All questions were structured in a rating that required participants to select provided statements to which they agree or disagree through a Likert-scale. Simple random sampling was used to draw a sample comprising of $n=28$ management staff for quantitative data and census sampling was used for interviews comprising of $n=4$ executive board members. Management staff were deemed appropriate to provide relevant information as they deal with strategic planning and implementation issues within the organization.

Results

Table 1. Involvement of HR business strategy

Statement	Mean	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
HR is fully involved in strategy formulation and implementation in company	3.71	1	3.6	3	10.7	3	10.7	17	60.7	4	14.3
HR understands and speaks the language of business (Vision, Mission & Strategy)	3.50	0	0.0	4	14.3	10	35.7	10	35.7	4	14.3
HR implications are not considered in major strategic decisions	2.79	1	3.6	12	42.9	9	32.1	4	14.3	2	7.1

The involvement of HR in strategy decisions has had great effect in addressing human capital issues in the company.	3.30	2	7.1	3	10.7	10	35.7	9	32.1	3	10.7
HR does not have meaningful strategic plans which ensure support and growth of the business	2.93	3	10.7	7	25.0	7	25.0	9	32.1	1	3.6
HR service delivery strategy is aligned with the company's business strategy.	3.43	1	3.6	4	14.3	8	28.6	12	42.9	3	10.7
Organizational issues, such as mission and vision are considered in HR strategy	3.40	0	0.0	7	25.0	7	25.0	10	35.7	4	14.3

Table 2. HR capabilities

Statement	Mean	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
HR lacks the competence to be a strategic partner	2.61	5	17.9	7	25.0	10	35.7	6	21.4	0	0.0
The HR department is adequately staffed to meet business needs	3.14	3	10.7	6	21.4	4	14.3	14	50.0	1	3.6
HR takes the lead in integrating talent management issues with change initiatives/processes	2.96	3	10.7	8	28.6	5	17.9	9	32.1	2	7.1
HR has the capability to develop talent strategies aligned to business strategies	3.46	0	0.0	6	21.4	7	25.0	11	39.3	4	14.3
HR does not demonstrate a clear understanding of organizational and customer needs	2.86	3	10.7	8	28.6	8	28.6	8	28.6	1	3.6
The HR department personnel are cross-trained to perform duties outside their major areas of responsibility	2.79	1	3.6	10	35.7	12	42.9	4	14.3	1	3.6
HR services and functions are not aligned and prioritized to organizational needs	2.54	2	7.1	13	46.4	9	32.1	4	14.3	0	0.0

Table 3. HR reporting & accountability

Statement	Mean	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Not sure		Agree		Strongly Agree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
HR leads in showing management how its data can be used to inform strategic talent management decisions.	3.00	2	7.1	8	28.6	7	25	8	28.6	2	7.1
HR data and people analytics are used to predict workforce performance and improvement	2.77	5	19.7	8	28.6	3	10.7	8	28.6	2	7.1
HR metrics are used to provide valuable input into talent management and workforce strategic planning decision	2.82	5	17.9	4	14.3	11	39.3	7	25.0	1	3.6
HR does not clearly communicate its strategy to all stakeholders	2.37	3	10.7	16	57.1	3	10.7	5	17.9	0	0.0
Management consistently uses and requests HR data / metrics to support strategic decisions	2.85	3	10.7	6	21.4	11	39.3	6	21.4	1	3.6
HR data and people analytics are easily linked with business performance	2.81	4	14.3	6	21.4	9	32.1	7	25.0	1	3.6

Table 4. Recruitment & selection

Statement	Mean	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Not Sure		Agree		Strongly agree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The organization is able to recruit desired employees in a timely and consistent manner	3.10	1	3.6	8	28.6	9	32.1	7	25.0	3	10.7
The involvement of HR in strategy decisions ensures that the right people to drive strategy are recruited.	3.43	0	0.0	3	10.7	14	50.0	7	25.0	4	14.3
Recruitment strategies are not informed by future business needs and strategy.	2.96	2	7.1	7	25.0	10	35.7	8	28.6	1	3.6
Recruitment and selection in the company is focused on employee-job-fit	3.36	1	3.6	4	14.3	11	39.3	8	28.6	4	14.3

Discussion

HR strategy and involvement of HR in strategic planning

The satisfaction with the involvement of HR personnel in strategy enactment and the overall HR strategy was one of the findings. The findings gleaned from management's perception of HR's involvement and contribution in strategy formulation and implementation, HR understanding of the vision and mission of the company including combination of vision, mission and talent issues in HR strategy, and how the HR strategy aligns with the business strategy. Analysis of the sub-dimensions of the strategic role of HR show that HR personnel is fully involved in strategy enactment and implementation in the company. Fulmer and Genson (2006) stated that business considered HR to be an important partner in either the formulation or implementation of corporate strategy. The authors mention that what is critical to HR participation in strategic planning is their understanding of business needs. Accordingly, Khan (2014) states that the strategic HR is part of recent evolution in the roles of HR where HR executives work jointly with other executives in formulating the business strategy. Instead of playing a supportive role, they become part of the strategy decision-making.

Whilst many respondents felt HR was a valuable contributor in strategy formulation, it was worth noting that some members of the management team were not content with the contribution of HR in strategy formulation. Similar results were uncovered by Pieterse and Rothmann (2009). Their research revealed that business executives felt HR did not meet their expectations in relation to strategic contributions. They dismissed the potential of the HR department to implement "progressive people management" initiatives. In addition, research by Mercer of HR professionals found that only 15% of the exclusively strategic interventions performed by HR personnel. Sowetan (2012) state that HR still has a long way to go in transforming themselves to accountable and measurable strategic business partners. Lambert (2002, in Baldwin, 2007) noted that senior management's vision of focusing on the strategic role of HR does not tie with reality, as line managers commonly perceive HR as a functional

partner suffering from “lack of business orientation”. Similarly, investigations into the relevance of the HR function by Ofori, Sekyere-Abankwa & Borquaye (2012) found that management felt that HR delivered less on strategic roles as opposed to her transactional services. Ulrich (1998) avers that for HR to contribute value to business they need to understand each of the business functions well enough to propose and debate the merits of an array of solutions to any issues or problems that arise. Understanding the business is a ticket of admission for HR professionals into business discussions. Jayathilake (2014) adds that HR professionals with a sound knowledge of business operations will be able to provide solutions and add value to business. Contrary to the above, the findings demonstrate that HR forms partnerships with management and their service delivery is aligned to the business strategy. The findings correspond with findings by Seyyedjavad and Zadeh (2009) who reported that integration or “fit” of HR strategy with business strategy has been an important part of the HR strategy debate. The authors state that after devising the strategy of the organization, the HR strategy should be implemented to ensure that the overall organizational strategy is achieved. Accordingly, Deloitte (2010) state that instead of operating in silos and re-engineering in a strategic vacuum, the HR function must align its strategy with the organization’s operations strategy to be effective.

Laakso-Manninen and Viitala (2007) state that the organization vision determines the wider framework with which its HR is provided direction and parameters. There is a need for clear direction and understanding for HR which is aligned with the vision of the organisation. to fully address its future operations. The paper reveals a need to involve HR in the strategy decisions as they deal with human challenges in the organisation. However, some participants that HR personnel does not have proper plans to support the business growth. The study by Deloitte (2010) reported that HR develops new services and capabilities to the organisations which are not aligned with the business overall objectives. This was further supported that only 4% of the executives believed that their HR functions was highly effective in addressing the needs of the business. They state that for HR to develop the necessary strategies and capabilities, they need to work with the executives to understand its strategic priorities.

HR Capabilities

HR capabilities are a crucial determinant of HR success. The findings revealed low satisfaction on the capabilities of the HR function. The perception of management for HR to functioning as a strategic partner and integration of TM issues were change initiatives, aligning TM strategies with business strategies, demonstration of comprehension of organizational and customer needs by HR. other findings were that HR is not cross-trained properly to function outside of their normal areas of responsibility. There it is different to refer HR as a strategic partner and getting to understand the capabilities required and efforts needed to perform (Boudreau and Lawler, 2009 in Khan, 2014). Khan (2014) states that there is an association between the skills of a business partner and the role of HR in strategy and that the role of HR is more valuable and meaningful when HR develops human capital strategy and focus on areas where human capital and organization design initiatives contributes to strategy. Focusing more on strategic contribution rather than the transactional role contributes to the transformation of the HR function. Pieterse and Rothmann (2009) state that the perspective of the executives was that HR do not meet their expectations regarding strategic contributions in the organization. Similar to Ofori, Sekyere-Abankwa and Borquaye (2012), the authors believed HR is does not have what it takes to play a meaningful role in strategy implementation. Ulrich (2001, in Pieterse & Rothmann, 2009) also noted that business managers did not have confidence in the

ability of HR in driving bottom-line success of organizations. Managers regarded the strategic role of HR to be important with a mean score of 4.39 on a scale of 1 to 5. However, the perceived performance of HR as strategic partner scored a lower mean score of 3.28 (Pieterse and Rothmann, 2009).

Reporting and Accountability of HR

The paper indicates that management lacked confidence, and were indefinite about the credibility of HR reports. Similar results were found by Deloitte (2017) who reported that the quality of the data in HR reports is the major challenge facing HR departments. Accordingly, Amy Stuart from HRMS Solutions (2017) states business success is very much reliant on the quality of data provided to managers. It is of utmost importance that HR provide managers with quality and reliable data to be considered an integral part of the strategy team. Minbaeva (2016) argued that the quality of data is a serious impediment to the development of credibility in human capital analytics. She adds the nature and reliability of the data available to managers creates a lot of uncertainty in many organizations. Van Niekerk (2016) also stated that the inability by HR to provide quality and reliable data that demonstrates business value is a serious obstacle which lead to HR being side-lined in strategic planning.

The results showed high uncertainty on the use of HR metrics in TM and strategic workforce planning by HR. The findings are in alignment with research by Angrave, Charwood, Kirkpatrick, and Stuart (2016) who found that organizations who engage in HR data analytics merely use it for reporting purposes rather than strategic planning. There is slight or no evidence of strategic use of HR analytics. In a similar vein Levenson (2011) mentioned that irrespective of the advancement in the use of HR analytics, there are still challenges regarding the best way to design, apply and use analytics in daily HR activities. He states that the challenge facing HR is understanding the types of analytics and the accuracy in their application, including the time and resources needed to achieve true insights.

The impression of using data as a prediction tool is not new to many organizations. However, organizations are overwhelmed by its intensity and sophistication. Executive draw insight from data to stimulate change and improvement in business CIPD (2013) were only 21%. Infor (2017) showed that less than 44% of HR professionals apply objective data regarding talent performance to guide business decisions, and only 14% of HR professionals were currently using data analytics. Moreover, literature indicate that HR professionals do not possess the ability to engage with analytics. There is considerable disparity in their capacity to be data-driven and evidence-based in their decisions. This was confirmed through studies by EY (2014) which reported that the challenge in usage of data is being able to interpret the huge amount of data collected from various sources.

Recruitment and Selection

Acquiring the right people at the right time is instrumental in strategy formulation and implementation. The findings indicated satisfaction with the time taken to fill positions in the company. Contrary to research reports, "time to fill" has risen in the past few years. The challenge in filling up job openings has been attributed to the increased demand for highly skilled people and the power shift from employers to employees. Between 2011 and 2015, time to fill increase from 48 days to 52 days respectively, and about 434% of employers globally have been struggling with filling vacancies (Bersin (2015; Accenture, 2014). Similar findings were reported by the Institute of Finance Management (2014). Their study showed that seventy three percent of recruiters were having challenges in recruiting talented candidates. Oracle

(2013) maintained that organizations can increase recruiter efficiency and find the right talent needed to drive business strategy and reduce time to hire by 50% and cost of hire by 70% by implementing recruiting best practices and supporting technology. Millmore (2003, in Argue, 2015) argued that for recruitment and selection to be categorized as strategic, it must possess three features: strategic integration, long-term focus and a method for interpreting strategic demands into suitable recruitment and selection design. The Hay Group (2011) state organizations should first define the type of talent they need to deliver their strategy. This process has to take into consideration skills of their current workforce and future roles in the organization. Analysis on the person-job-fit (p-j fit) recruitment practices in the company revealed that recruitment is based on candidate compatibility with the job requirements. Research by Kristof-Brown (Lauver & Kristof-Brown, 2001) on recruiter's perceptions of person-job fit found a high correlation between p-j fit and its contribution to predicting hiring decisions. Review of literature also reveal considerable evidence on the positive effect p-j fit has on job stress, motivation, retention, and attendance.

Conclusion

The aim of the paper was to ascertain HR role in the strategy enactment in the business. Tough economic climates viewed HR evolve into a strategic role that needs alignment of human resources with the strategic goals of the organization. From the findings of the paper, it can be concluded that HR should actively engage with business executives in order to understand issues on the ground. Business is HR's primary customer, and they need to arrange their core actions related to business and SHRM to ensure that business needs are catered for in a satisfactory manner. In addition, for HR to function effectively outside their domain, they have to upgrade their competencies. They have to be proactive, focus on value-adding activities and spearhead strategic talent management initiatives. This will enhance their credibility and recognitions as value-adding participants in strategy enactment.

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