

**ANALYSIS OF RECURRING THEMES IN HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR
SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN NIGERIAN ORGANIZATIONS**

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Abstract

This study examines the recurring themes in human resource management. It covers the strategic approach, international human resource management, maintaining ethical policies and behaviour, and benchmarking, measuring, and evaluating human resource results. The study employed literature survey method to gather information concerning the areas of the work. The study observed that organizations are under tremendous competitive pressure worldwide. It is also recommended that human resource managers should find ways to develop effective international programmes to meet its competitive advantage.

Key-Words: Recurring, Human Resource Management, Organizations, Managers.

Introduction

Human resource management is a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well-being of the people working in organizations. The overall aim of human resource management is to ensure that the organization is able to achieve success through people. Human resource management aims to increase organizational effectiveness and capability, that is the capacity of an organization to achieve its goals by making the best use of the resources available to it. Ulrich and Lake (1990) observed that human resource management systems can be the source of organizational capabilities that allow firms to learn and capitalize on new opportunities. The policy goals for human resource management include managing people as assets that are fundamental to the competitive advantage of the organization, aligning human resource management policies with business policies and corporate strategy, and developing a close fit of human resource policies, procedures and systems with one another (Caldwell, 2004).

Four general concerns span all functions of human resource management in organizations. They are the strategic approach, the increasing globalization of human resource activities, maintaining ethical policies and behaviour within the organization, and the need to benchmark, measure, and evaluate the cost-benefit utility of human resource endeavours.

Strategic Approach

Business organizations says Moore (2001) use the resources available to compete with other companies. These include (1) physical resources, e.g.; plant, equipment, technology, (2) organizational advantage, e.g.; structure, coordinating systems, and (3) human resources. The

human resources include the experience, skill, training, and commitment of the employees. It is the allocation and integration of these resources that provides a company with a competitive advantage. Thus, in the words of George (2001) human resources are directly or indirectly related to all organizational processes and are important in allowing an organization to gain and sustain a competitive advantage. To be maximally effective, the human resource management function must be integrally involved in any company's strategic management process. This means that people related issues should be a primary concern in any organizational decision. Further, an accumulation of important research now demonstrates that when strategically linked, human resource practices have an economically significant impact on both employee outcomes, that is turnover and productivity, and short-and long-term measures of corporate financial performance (Mark, 1995; John and Mark, 1996; Mark et al, 1997). Some of the most interesting aspects of human resource management are not just acquiring human resources, building performance, rewarding employees, and maintaining human resources, but the fusion of these elements with the strategic goals of the organization. Dave (1997) remarked that in any organization, the challenge is managing the interplay of resources, including human resources, to gain and sustain a competitive advantage.

International Human Resource Management

The impact of the dynamic international economy has become a major force in business in general and in human resource management in particular. Much of the researches have described state-of-the-art human resource practices in North America; however, other nations have sometimes chosen different approaches to dealing with the human side of organizations (Okere, 2019). For instance, in some countries a condition of doing business is a government mandate on the number of individuals who must be employed. Obviously, this alters many human resource practices, including human resource planning, selection, compensation, and job design (David, 1995). Although interesting in their own right, these varied practices are also important realities faced by multinational firms doing business overseas.

Maintaining Ethical Policies and Behaviour

Research has long recognized that managers have a duty to serve the interests of the business and its owners. For some time, however, there has been an interesting realization that profit cannot be the only goal, that managers and organizations have a duty to be in a responsible fashion toward a set of stakeholders, which goes well beyond owners (Robert and Milton, 2001). These stakeholders include customers, the community in which the business is located, employees, and even nonhuman entities such as the environment. The human resource manager has a special role in ensuring that the organization deals fairly and ethically with its employees and that employees deal fairly with one another, the organization, and clients. Some theories of ethics list the duties that human beings owe to one another in general (Robert and Milton, 2001). Although Kenneth and John (1982) maintained that organizations are not necessarily subject to all the ethical duties to which persons are, at least some of these duties might be applied to businesses to guide the dealings with employees and applicants. These duties are:

1. Respecting persons and not using them solely as means to one's own ends.
2. Not doing any harm.
3. Telling the truth.
4. Keeping promises.
5. Treating people fairly and without discrimination.
6. Not depriving people of basic rights, such as the right to free speech and association.
7. Instituting careful health and safety practices, informing employees of potentially hazardous working conditions, and taking responsibility for occupational diseases and stress-related illnesses traceable to working conditions.
8. Being truthful in recruiting.
9. Avoiding the use of invalid and discriminatory selection, appraisal, and advancement systems.

10. Providing equal pay for work of comparable worth.
 11. Providing ways for employees to voice their concerns and not illegally constraining employees from exercising their right to form a union.
 12. Following fair policies with regard to discipline, termination for cause, and reductions in force.
- Human resource professional, as an intermediary has a role to play in ensuring fair treatment. The Society for Human Resource Management has recognized this role by adopting a Code of Ethics to guide the activities of Human Resource Professionals. This code is reproduced in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Code of Ethics of the Society for Human Resource Management



SOCIETY
HUMAN
RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT

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Code of Ethics

As a member of the Society for Human Resource Management. I pledge myself to:

* Maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct	* Instill in the employees and the public a sense of confidence about the conduct and intentions of my employer.
* Strive for personal growth in the field of human resource management	* Maintain loyalty to my employer and pursue its objectives in ways that are consistent with the public interest.
* Support the Society's goals and objectives for developing the human resource management profession.	* Uphold all laws and regulations relating to my employer's activities.
* Encourage my employer to make the fair and equitable treatment of all employees a primary concern.	* Refrain from using my official positions, either regular or volunteer to secure special privilege, gain or benefit for myself.
* Strive to make my employer profitable both in monetary terms and through the support and encouragement of effective employment practices.	* Maintain the confidentiality of privileged information.
	* Improve public understanding of the role of human resource management

This Code of Ethics for members of the Society for Human Resource Management has been adopted to promote and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct and professional standards among its members. Adherence to this code is required for membership in the Society and serves to assure public confidence in the integrity and service of human resource professionals.

Resource Management, Alexandria, VA.

Okere (2019) posit that human resource function is also charged with protecting the organization from potentially unethical employees. According to the "bad apple perspective," says Mary (2000) some individuals are simply predisposed to behave unethically and should be weeded out by the selection process. Applicants who are likely to steal from their employer, take bribe, demands kick-backs, violate the law, or work under the influence of drugs sometimes may be identified by careful back-ground investigation, reference checks, or paper-and-pencil honesty testing. More recently, after several horrific incidents, there is ever-increasing concern with violence in the workplace (Mary, 2000). Although there is some merit to the "bad apple" perspective, it is far from the whole story. Fred (2001) suggested that employees do not make ethical choices in a vacuum or entirely on the basis of their preexisting values and ethical upbringing. Instead, they behave within a context that includes organizational training, role models, formal rules and policies, and appraisal and reward systems. It is the responsibility of the human resource manager to ensure that these influences are positive and consistent with the ethical values desired by the top managers of the organization. The Ethical perspective box lists some ways in which human resource staff can help to elicit and maintain ethical behaviour among employees.

Benchmarking, Measuring, and Evaluating Human Resource Results

Another interesting ever-present reality in today's organizations is the need to strive for the best practices, that is benchmarks, and to then substantiate the cost-effectiveness of programmes, approaches, and policies. According to Dave (1997) human resource benchmarking is the process of comparing one's human resource practices with those of another firm, particularly a competitor, as a way to outperform the competition. The benchmarking perspective is basically a method that allows a manager to strive for the best practices and then compare the costs associated with selecting, training, and rewarding employees to the money benefits resulting from these efforts. For example many training programmes are proposed and undertaken without examining the extent of increased productivity, that is benefit as opposed to the costs of training material, time away from the job for those being trained, salary of the trainer etc (John, 2000). There is an ever-increasing need for human resource managers to speak the language of business and, in so doing, to justify the economic value of existing or proposed programmes.

Gaining Competitive Advantage

One of the two major ways of using effective human resource management at the strategic level is to gain competitive advantage (Schuler, 1985). Organizations use one or more effective human resource management activities to become the lowest-cost producer through increased efficiency or to differentiate their products from the competition by enhanced quality or innovation. Organizations also can use their effective human resource management practices to produce a higher-quality product, thereby differentiating itself from its competitors. Compensation in particular can be used by organizations to increase production efficiency and thereby lower the cost of their products.

Research Method Adapted

The study adopted literature survey method, whereby past studies were reviewed. The information obtained was qualitatively analyzed.

Conclusions

The current challenge of human resource management is to integrate programmes involving human resources with strategic organizational objectives. More and more, organizations are under tremendous competitive pressure worldwide. Human resource managers must find ways to develop effective international programmes to meet this challenge. Another important aspect of human resource management is the need to ensure the cost-effectiveness of programmes and policies through the optimal utilization of human resources.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following for sustainable competitive advantage in Nigerian organizations

1. Human resource managers should find ways to develop effective international programmes to meet its competitive advantage.
2. Nigerian organizations should ensure the cost-effectiveness of its programmes and policies through the optimal utilization of human resources.
3. Human resource management function should be integrally involved in any company's strategic management process.
4. Managers and their organizations should exhibit responsible fashion toward customers, community members where the company is located, employees, and nonhuman entities such as the environment.
5. There should be benchmarking that allows managers to strive for the best practices, and also compare the costs associated with selecting, training, and rewarding employees to the money benefits resulting from these efforts.

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