

The Role of Human Resource Officer in an Organization: The Case of Vista Bank Sierra Leone

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Abstract: Midst contextual themes of new technologies and globalization, Sierra Leone Vista Bank is challenged to attract, develop and retain suitable skills in a labour market that will continue to suffer shortages. The Human Resource Officer of today is required to partner with organizations at a strategic level in response to this challenge. Successful organizations understand that transforming the HR function require regular in-depth analyses of effectiveness. The study aimed to assess the role of an HR officer operating in a public sector, against current trends in HR transition. Different evaluation methodologies are explored to develop a theoretical evaluation model for the effectiveness of a HR officer. The results confirmed that the HR officer is effective in role as strategic partner, and highlights significant differences in perception between the stakeholders and the Human Resource Officer regarding effectiveness.

Keywords: Human Resource Officer, Vista Bank, Role, Management

Introduction

This research deals with an evaluation of the role of human resources officer within a business unit of a public utility. The mentioned human resources officer reports operationally within the business unit but with functional direction from a national human resources head office. The business unit in the public utility is known as the **vista bank**.

The background to the research, the problem statement, research aims, research design, and research method are discussed, followed by the classification of the study.

Contextual themes such as new technologies, an evolving world order, an emerging value systems, are transforming the nature of society and the economy. Computer and communication technologies transcend national boundaries, introducing global standards of service, quality, and cost at organizational level, and demand continuous learning and unlearning at individual level. The macro geopolitical face of the world is changing, and global values such as corporate governance and corporate citizenship are impacting most strongly on business. It is within this context of a changing global landscape, regarding the roles and responsibilities of human resources (HR) functions into the future.

According to Furnham (2017), other challenges being faced by organizations are increased competition and the need for greater speed on delivery, the temporary nature of the workforce, a demand for better quality skills, and the increasing concern with the psychological quality and social meaningfulness of work, are under pressure to develop and integrate a conceptual model for alternative Organizations working arrangements.

Boninelli (2018) highlighted the need of Vista Bank to attract, manage, develop, and retain suitable skills in a labour market that will continue to suffer shortages in many sectors. She further stated that changes in union relationships, business models, and strategic priorities, would require ongoing change management and human resources initiatives that are both proactive and effective.

1.3. Aims and Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to explore the role of human resource management (HRM) as a part of business system to critically study the chosen HR role in an organization.

To focus on the performance effect of human resources management operation in an organization. This study contributes to knowledge about results of HR management on the performance of people in and business organization.

To examine the influence on the role of an HR officer in an organization.

To explore the influence of employee reward management practice on the performance of an HR officer in an organization

To establish the influence of employee training and performance in an organization

To establish the influence of performance in an organization Examine the influence of career management in an organization.

In this multi-role model, Ulrich (1997) indicated that HR professionals must learn to be both strategic and operational, focusing on the short and the long term. The HR function and the HR professional of today need to be proficient in four principle HR roles. These roles are the following:

- Management of strategic human resources (strategic partner).
- Management of organizational infrastructure (administrative expert).
- Management of employee contribution (employee champion).
- Management of transformation and change (change agent)

Significance of the Study

The research has been conducted in such a way that it has certain significances for practices as well as literature:

- ❖ The findings of the study will help the organization to identify areas of potential problems related with the organization's human resource practices: mainly training & development policies, performance management system, career paths, compensation & reward policies and selection procedure which will have a direct or indirect impact on the organization's effectiveness.
- ❖ The recommendations which described based on the conclusions of the research findings will help the organization either maintain, improve or totally change the existing HR strategic approach. Besides, the study adds value for the researcher gaining more knowledge regarding the topic and then getting the opportunity to work on strategy formulation, analysis and implementation of the organization and to conduct a research with similar titles in different public sectors.
- ❖ The study will help other governmental or nongovernmental organizations as a tool to customize the suggested models in to organizational context to improve their HR related strategic problems.
- ❖ The study will help other researchers working in similar/related topics as a reference.

Theoretical Framework

Different academic fields tend to gravitate to specific perspectives. For example, industrial relations and labour economics scholars generally adhere to a Universalist and configuration perspective in explaining how systems of human resource management practices are related to organizational performance. Those from the field of business policy and strategic management generally take a contingency perspective. Scholars in the fields of comparative and international human resources, sociology, and political economics are a disparate group, although they tend to adopt a contextualize perspective. The details on the views of different perspectives are discussed in the next section as follows:

Strategic Planning:

Strategic planning is the systematic determination of the organizations 'goals and objectives and the technique to transform it into plans to achieve them. A *strategic plan* is a tool that provides guidance in fulfilling a mission with maximum efficiency and impact. If it is to be effective and useful, it should articulate specific goals and describe the action steps and resources needed to accomplish them. As a rule, most strategic plans should be reviewed and revamped every three to five years.

Universalist Perspective

Delery and Doty (1996) second formally identified the Universalist mode of theorizing in the early strategic human resource literature. As they noted: 'Universalistic arguments are the simplest form of theoretical statement in the human resources literature because they imply that the relationship between a given independent variable and a dependent variable is universal across the population of organizations. Developing universalistic predictions requires two steps. First, important strategic HR practices must be identified. Second, arguments that relate the individual practices to organizational performance must be presented', (p. 805) The statement suggests that the relationship between HRM practice and organizational performance occurs, no matter the context in which an organization operates, is what separates this mode of theorizing in SHRM from the others.

Configurational Perspective

The third theoretical framework, the Configurational perspective, explains how systems, clusters, or bundles of human resource management practices interact with each other to have synergistic outcomes at the organizational level. As Lepak and Shaw (2008) explained: Researchers focusing on this perspective have used a variety of terms such as "horizontal fit," "internal fit," "complementarity," or "bundling" (Baird & Mesboulam, 1988; Delery & Doty, 1996; Wright & McMahan, 1992) to emphasize the focus on alignment among multiple HRM practices. This perspective suggests that a configuration of a set of internally aligned HRM practices will have a much greater ability to explain variation in organizational performance than single HRM practices taken in isolation (Delery, 1998).

Contingency Perspective

The fourth SHRM theoretical framework is based on classical contingency theory. The choice of HRM practices and the relationship these practices have with organizational performance depends on external environmental factors as well as on organizational factors, primarily the strategies the organization formulates and deploys to successfully adapt to a changing external environment (Scott, 1995).

Contextualize Perspective

The fifth theoretical mode of theorizing is the conceptualist perspective. Unlike the other three modes, this perspective encompasses the particularities of geographic and industrial contexts and macroeconomic and social factors such as business systems (Tempel&algenbach, 2007), varieties of capitalism (Edwards & Kuravilla, 2005), historical path dependence, and institutional environments. International SHRM scholars applying this theoretical framework to identify and describe how these various macro-social factors affect the relationship between HRM practice and organizational performance (Martin-Alcazar et al., 2005).

Strategic Management:

Strategic management consists of the analysis, decisions, and actions an organization undertakes in order to create and sustain competitive advantages. This definition captures two main elements that go to the heart of the field of strategic management. First, the strategic management of an organization entails three ongoing processes: analysis, decisions, and actions.

Research Design and Methodology

Vista Bank Holding Serra Leone is a financial services holding company with the objective to build a world-class pan-African financial institution group and contribute to economic and financial inclusion in Africa. The bank was first named First International Bank (FIBANK) Sierra Leone Limited, and its name was changed to Vista Bank Sierra Limited in March 2011 to present. The Headquarters of Vista Bank is located at 2 Charlotte Street, Freetown.

Vista bank has entered in strategic partnerships with various global financial institutions to drive its growth strategy by focusing on MSME (SME banking, leasing, micro finance, and banking on women), trade and supply chain finance, banc assurance increasing profitability while controlling operating costs and mitigating risks.

Vista Group SA is focused on maximizing the opportunities in its respective markets to become the Holding financial institution of choice through innovative banking and insurance products.

The objective of Vista Bank is to build a world-class and pan-African financial institution that promotes financial inclusion and fosters economic development of the continent.

The core values include service, integrity, innovation, excellence, respect, performance, governance and accountability.

Vista Bank believes that sound corporate governance is an important element in creating and sustaining shareholder value. We maintain high standards of corporate governance and comply with the requirements of the legislation in all the countries in which we operate. The Board of Directors has adopted IFC principles and methodology to guide its corporate governance framework. Vista Bank's governance practices are also aligned with the Basel Committee standards.

The bank is committed to corporate social responsibility initiatives that positively impact the socio-economic development of the relevant communities which believe in acting ethically, honestly and with integrity. It is ingrained to corporate social responsibility initiatives that positively impact the socio-economic development of the relevant communities in which believe in acting ethically, honestly and with integrity.

It is ingrained in all we do as an organization and how we interact with our customers. This belief and commitment expands to do business and how we approach working with other businesses. As a financial institution serving a wide range of industries and customers, we are in a unique position to drive economic development in our communities, while also holding ourselves and our customers to a high standard of business ethics. We believe in the importance of treating each other with respect and fairness, and we work to make positive change in our communities.

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Branches Of Vista Bank

Headquarters Cline Town

2 College Road, Freetown
2^b Charlotte Street, Freetown
SHELL NEW ROAD, 53 Bai Bureh New Road, Freetown

LUNGI, International Airport, Lungi, Port Loko District

FOURAH BAY ROAD (CLINE TOWN)

53 Bai Bureh New Road, Freetown
PORT LOKO, 46 Falaba Road
KAILAHUN, 5 Old Market Road Mofindor
KONO, 5 Old Yengema Road, Koidu City
MAKENI, 1 Station Road
MAGBURAKA, 4, Bo Road, Magburaka, Tonkolili District

Board of Directors

The Management and Board of Vista Group comprised of seasoned professionals with multiple years of experience in banking, investment, finance, Non-Governmental Organizations, and leadership roles. This wealth of experience will be leveraged to successfully manage our business.

Adherence to corporate governance principles is articulated in a number of corporate documents. Vista Bank's Articles of Association and those of its subsidiaries define the respective roles of the Board of Directors, management and shareholders (including the protection of minority rights) in the administration of the Group. Vista Bank adopts standard rules for the internal operation of the Board of Directors, a corporate governance charter, a code of conduct for directors and rules on business ethics for staff, all of which are aimed at ensuring transparency and accountability.

As a Pan-African Group, our corporate responsibility is evidenced by all the commitments of our affiliates, acting as the operational and efficient vehicle. Whether this relates to financing of developmental projects or to community-based actions geared to promote financial inclusion, the Group, in its African dimension, has managed to position itself as a key player, highly involved in the economic, social and environmental development of the many countries where we are doing business. As we strengthen our African presence, we continue to review our compliance and risk management skills, systems and processes and, where appropriate, enhance them further.

Employees Working Performance

The highest level of performance of employees working on projects often depends on the interaction with the sales manager, functional managers, teams and the organization as a whole. Such interaction places an obligation to monitoring the work of subordinates, their behavior with the client and other members of staff. These items are the center of the control behavior of human resource management in large companies.

For Vista Bank Company, the behavior control system becomes the prevalent in the foundation of employee processes and achieving the target objectives of corporate system. It is wondering that the matrix structures have their own specificity in this approach. The behavior and actions of employees, as well as their reporting activities are controlled not only in the vertical direction with consideration of all the characteristics and the specified parameters, as well as from the other functional departments, which also expose the framework for the project teams.

In this study, the behavior approach in the organization involved the certain areas of human capital management. Each item, which is reflected in the table, was investigated in terms of impact on the problems of the structure and their interactions through corporate information system on the employee performance and psychological conditions in the working environment.

However, this approach in human resource management should deal with common problems of the bank and consequences from these actions.

The awareness of common goals, its philosophy, mission and objectives, as well as their own functions by employees at all levels of the company are an obstacle to executives. The behavior HR control handled with this problem ambiguous. Sale, project and functional managers almost identically said: "The overall objective of our company, I think, is the production of high quality electric motors and other electrical engineering, fulfillment of all obligations as dealers of foreign brands and to provide quality sale and delivery services of our projects in accordance with the order directly from the company-customer". (Sale manager). However, the

assistant of sale manager, which work and help with clients and is a part of team, states that proving a set of quality service connected with projects and goods is the main goal of the bank.

Discussion

This discussion section evaluates and interprets the implications of the findings. Thus, an attempt has been made to examine, interpret, qualify the results and draw inferences from them and tried to emphasize theoretical consequences of the results and the validity of the conclusions. The results of this study indicate that HRM was integrated into the company's business operations, although such strategic alignment was only at a moderate level (70 percent). From the perspective of management committee membership, senior management integration appeared to be satisfactory as the HR division head reports from the interview. That is, average number of the company's management officials (from both cores & supporting divisions) expect the HR division as their strategic partner in decision making and majority of them believe that being a strategic partner determines their success as a management group members. However, the majority of management officials surveyed are not satisfied with the existing HR practices emphasizing on placement, performance management, career & succession planning and they suggest need to improve. In contrast, the empirical evidence regarding management development in HR practices reflects a mixed story. While line managers believe and understand that acquiring HR skills are very essential to them and the overall business performance, on average the level of training given to line managers to perform these practices is low (30 percent) which indicates that the transfer of HRM knowledge of line managers is somewhat limited. Insufficient training offered to line managers would greatly undermine the capacity of line managers to perform HR activities effectively.

The results also indicate that all the strategic HRM practices tested in this study: strategic HRM alignment, line management development, training and development, compensation system, career planning system and employee participation are all positively related to perceptual measures of effectiveness in the organization.

Recommendations

After data presentation, analysis, and providing answers to the research questions the researcher provides the following recommendations:-

1. Though there is an attempt to integrate HR practices with business strategies, an effort has to be made to potentially exploit the maximum advantage out of the modern Banking concept (i.e. Strategic HRM) through strategic alignment/ integration. Because it enables the Bank to achieve its strategic goals through the strategically available workforce.
2. The process of the strategic integration of HR with business and corporate strategies shall be followed the following steps; *Linking HR to strategy, Involving in the strategic planning process, and Applying the Strategic HR planning model.*
3. The process of strategic linkage must apply either of the following options; start with corporate/organizational strategy and then create HR strategy, start with HR competencies and then craft corporate strategies based on these competencies and, doing a combination of both in a form of shared relationship.

✚ **Membership in the executive team:** to insure that the person responsible for HRM is included in management committee membership;

4. The Involvement of HR in the company's strategic planning process shall be in the form of:
5. In order for the Bank to potentially introduce the concept of Strategic approach to HRM; one the Strategic HR Planning Model (see Figure-2.1.2.5) has to be applied, and two at least the former name for the following sections must be modified to;
6. Linkages have to be made at earlier stages. HR director, officers and managers should be supplied with information about employee capabilities, be part of the strategic planning committee, and be documented implications of strategic drives.

✚ **Integrative linkage:** to make sure that the interaction between the members of the executive committee and the HR director are frequent, and the HR director is involved in strategic decisions, even when the HR implications are not readily visible.

✚ **Review/React linkage:** to ensure that HR managers have the opportunity to review strategic plans before they are implemented. They can then approve or modify them.

Conclusions

The study assesses the relationship between or the role played by the modern HR approach Strategic HRM on organizational effectiveness of Vista Bank. The term organizational effectiveness is used as a measure of performance in other studies. There is no universally agreed definition and expression of organizational effectiveness. The term effectiveness as a measure of performance used different expressions such as productivity, efficiency, profit, quality, growth, conflict/cohesion, information management & communication, the value of human resource etc.,. For the purpose of this study organizational effectiveness is defined by constructing a new model: Balanced Score Card model of organizational effectiveness. This is further explained as an organization is effective to the extent the four BSC dimensions (Customer satisfaction, Financial growth, Learning & development and Internal process) are achieved. The results obtained from this study indicate that strategic HRM is moderately practiced by the company. And that organizational effectiveness symbolized by the four Balanced Score Card dimensions ; **Customer satisfaction** (the level and attempt to satisfy customers), **Financial growth** (sales & profitability), **Learning and development** (intellectual capital, equipment's, technologies), **Internal process** (organizational structure, scope, definition and integration internal work process, the attempt to support and automate those business process through Enterprise Resource Planning) is reasonably enhanced by seven out of the eight strategic HRM practices tested.

Moreover, an effective HR strategy is characterized by external fit (fitting HR strategy to organizational strategy), internal fit (linking the various HR programs in other functional areas such as, marketing, and a fit among all HR programs or functions) and focus on results. Results reported that, the separate Strategic HRM practices also significantly correlated to each other. Indicating that to some extent there is an attempt/ promising initiation to internally integrate those practices with each other and with other business strategies. The study, to this extent, has provided evidence for the value added by strategic HRM through the integration of HR functions within the organization's key strategies and operations. At the same time, questions need to be asked about the results of moderate levels of involvement in Strategic HRM practices as against high levels reported elsewhere.

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