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The Use of Human Factor Approach in the Study of Connectivity between Organizational Training and Workplace Practice Using Chinhoyi University of Technology Employees' Perceptions as a Case Study *(pp. 36-48)*

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions of Chinhoyi University of Technology employees about the possibility of using the Human Factor approach as a tool of analysis in enhancing connectivity between organizational training and workplace practice through inculcation of positive attitudinal and behavioral change among its staff. The research adopted a quasi – qualitative approach allowing for triangulation of data. Data were collected through questionnaires for lower grades and interviews for heads of section. Stratified sampling was employed to select 109 respondents who filled in the self completion questionnaires which were analyzed using the social packages for social scientists (SPSS). Eleven heads of sections were interviewed and the recorded data were analyzed using a descriptive thematic generation approach. The research findings reveal that employees are aware of the negative Human Factor issues that affected organizational culture and behavioral norms, an element which was said to be working against organizational effectiveness within the university's service structure and departments. Lack of good work ethics, 'hunhuism' and absence of induction was identified as a major critical component characterizing the negative workplace practice. Additionally the study highlights cases of human factor decay as evidenced by dismissal of perpetrators. Thus, the study recommends the provision of relevant training programmes as part of Human Factor development thrust through prioritization of training programmes aimed at inculcating the correct human factor characteristics in employees

Key words: organizational culture, behavioural norms, induction, workplace practice

1. INTRODUCTION

While many organizations have been able to establish a quality which identifies key service delivery processes and benchmarks, they often find it much more difficult to change employee attitude about quality (Soutar and McNeil, 1996). According to Soutar and McNeil changing attitudes is particularly important for service organizations where performance assurance programmes are essentially doomed if the service delivery people lack a belief in organizational spiritedness.

One way to attain this organizational satisfaction mindset is to develop an understanding in the employee that appropriate Human Factor (HF) is concerned with meeting customers' requirements. However, there is a tendency for the Training and Development programmes to be designed from the technical perspective models in which emphasis is more on skills development. At Chinhoyi University of Technology, for instance, there has been little attempt to approach Induction and Training workshops from the point of view of the Human Factor philosophy. Within the Human Factor spectrum, personality dimensions such as commitment, trust, loyalty, love, responsibility and so on have been described as the anchor posts to human virtues of life (Adjibolosoo, 1998; 1999; Chombo, 1998; Chivaura and Mararike, 1998; Ofori-Amoah, 1998, Willer, 1998).

Anyone working in an organization needs to recognize his or her moods, their emotions, and deeper emotional needs that drive them and how they shape their behavior. This is because the dedication, sense of responsibility and commitment to his/her organization, in addition to social values are characteristics of the Human Factor (HF) personality spectrum that are essential to the overall development and well-being of any organization. The prosperity of a country depends on the cultivation of a special organizational character through training and induction programmes that have definite social goals, with definite strategies for attaining them. These social goals must include organizational spiritedness, diligence, respect for clients and organizational property, impartiality and moral uprightness. All these constitute the missing half many of the training and induction programmes this study sought to address. These social values are not genetically inherited. They are inculcated in the workforce and are sedulously developed. They will never come of their own accord.

Statement of the Problem

The fundamental of On-and-Off the Job Training do not appear to bear much fruit in terms of improving effective organizational culture. This is more pronounced in terms of bad behavior, lack of commitment and lack of love for work. More often than not, clients, especially students and stakeholders complain of negative attitudes and human factor decay among some employees in various levels of organizational operations. The question is: Can induction and internal training programmes at CUT in the absence of appropriate HF enhance connectivity between organizational culture and work practices, and are there sufficient provisions for controlling human factor decay characteristics that are poised to affect organizational image?

Purpose and Objectives

It has been argued that training strategies have great impact on organizational productivity and that it is only through training and development that performance gaps can be filled (Cloete, 1985). The purpose of this study was, therefore, to establish the extent to which the Human Factor approach could be incorporated as an improvement model to the current training strategies if there are any. The specific objectives were:

1. To establish the level of awareness in Chinhoyi University staff of the negative Human Factor characteristics that affect performance.

2. To examine employees' perceptions of using the Human Factor approach to developing positive attitude to work.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizations the world over have been awakened to the organizational truth that the human capital constitutes the most vital asset of any organization. As such, organizations need to change in order to suit the dynamic environment (Bradley, 1992). This is a crucial management imperative based on the philosophical views of Drucker (1974), Handy (1980) and Kanter (1998) who hail the need for flexibility, responsiveness and disciplined efficiency aimed at improving interpersonal skills in order to deliver effectiveness. Organizational visions, missions, goals and objectives have proved to be people oriented and achievable through human performance. Cloete (1985), mentions that "organizations therefore have a mandate to train and develop employees so as to fill performance gaps and gain competitive advantage". In an increasingly competitive world, a link (bridge) should exist between the training and development that the organization undertakes and the business strategy (Wilson, 2004; Harrison, 2000; Armstrong, 2010). Bontis et al (1999) see human capital as the human factor in the organization, "the combined intelligence, skills and expertise that give the organization its distinctive character". As such, the human elements of an organization are capable of learning, changing, innovating and providing the creative thrust which, if properly motivated, can ensure the long-term survival of the organization (Rank, 1998). It is the knowledge, skills and abilities of individuals that create value. Scarborough and Elias (2002) are of the opinion that organizational focus should be on attracting, retaining, developing and maintaining the human capital they represent.

Notwithstanding the positives about the Human Capital theory on its contribution to economic growth versus diminishing returns, and concerns raised against the screening hypothesis effect on productivity. Bradly (1992) argue that it remains essential to sustaining a competitive advantage if organizations link individual behavior with corporate goals through dialogue and discussion, training and hiring practices. But in recent years, the focus in training has been on skills enhancement (Wilson, 2004; Jones and George, 2003) paying less attention to implications of individual and group processes and actions as critical components of organizational culture, training and development. Brooks (1991) states that an organization, by its very nature is composed of individuals who are 'organized' in some way or form in order to achieve certain objectives and that individuals form the "building material" around which an organization functions. Therefore, an understanding of individual behavior becomes an essential pre-requisite to exploring how an organization behaves. Senge (1990) and Burgoyne (1995) seek to develop people so that an organization can constantly learn from good practice and have a continuous adaptation to a fast - moving environment. Herriot and Zijlstra (1999) acknowledge the confusion and discussion about organizational culture and also point out that this has not made the term disappear from organizational literature and practice and that management of organizational culture remains a controversial topic. According to Antony (1994); Trice and Beyer (1990); Burack (1991); Nord (1985) organizational management is constrained by many factors such as

multiplicity and complexity of sub-cultures, conflicting political interests, bad timing, and communication failures.

Researchers argue that organizational culture is a socially constructed system of shared beliefs and values (Robbins, 1990). They claim that it can only be influenced in an indirect way and is the result of interaction between the individual and organizational processes. Those researchers who believe that organizational culture can be controlled/ managed are of the opinion that an organization has/produces a culture as the social and normative "glue" that holds the organization together (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Kilmann, (1985) observes that organisational culture as a complex phenomenon manifest in behavioural norms, hidden assumptions and human nature. He further sees the feasibility culture if focus is on behavioural norms and not on assumptions. As Kilmann (1985:365) in Wittle and Van Muijen (1999) reason, executives may try to dictate a new culture by making dramatic changes in their own behavior, symbolic gestures and fiery speeches, but only when work group members encourage one another to be receptive to overtures by other groups will culture change take place". The outcomes would then be an effective and competitive organization; conflict reduction, co-ordination and control as well as uncertainty reduction and to cap it all, higher motivation among employees.

Within the spectrum of organizational culture, Mararike (1998) explains that the verb 'manage' is the derivative of the term management and argues that one cannot manage anything else before managing oneself. In his words, you cannot manage others if you are "a moving civil war". He defines management as getting tasks or activities done with or through other people. At the centre of management are people and according to Mararike, management therefore is a process which requires process thinking. He summarizes management functions as planning; organizing one's own mind first then other activities and resources, directing activities so that they follow a particular sequence, for example, a football coach barking instructions from the touchline at a soccer match and controlling activities totally. Meanwhile Ewen (1988) in Brooks (1999:11) argues that "the starting point for the examination of individual behavior is personality which he defines as comprising specific characteristics of individuals which may be open or hidden and which determine either commonality or differences in behavior in an organization". He says this affects people through interaction and how individuals see themselves thus resulting in them being a positive or a negative force in the organization. Personality, Ewen in Brooks (1999) points out, could lead to hostility thus hindering teamwork and the right mix of different personalities can lead to efficient teams (Berlbin in Brooks, 1999). How individuals perceive themselves within the organization affects self esteem and self efficacy. Positive self-esteem results in a positive attitude while low self-esteem causes a negative attitude and inefficiency. It is therefore important to develop self-efficacy through training in time management and other techniques.

Harrison and Stokes (1992) argue that "organization culture is to an organization what personality is to an individual and that it is that distinctive constellation of beliefs, values,

work styles, and relationships which distinguish one organization from another". Kapur (2004) says, an organization is as good as its people. As Brooks (1999:24) puts it, "attitudes and values have a key bearing on how an individual functions within the organization through positive or negative behavior and the challenge facing the modern manager is how to effect an attitude change in the organization within cultural or strategic change. He further suggests that attitudes can be changed by being more customer-focused and through personality, perception and communication. Brooks (1999) says values are more embedded in character and are deeper than attitude, long lasting and give us a sense of right or wrong (ethics) and organizations should therefore create a specific corporate culture for a competitive advantage that may be enshrined in the mission statement (Milkovich and Boudreau, 1998).

3. METHODOLOGY

An explorative descriptive case study of Chinhoyi University of Technology employees was conducted to establish their perceptions on organizational training model and Human Factor issues that affect performance and organizational image. Broadly, it sought to find out what meanings they gave to their actions and which training issues concern them. As such, the use of methods that capture large amounts of relatively unstructured information was recommended (Engel and Schult 2005:12). Interviews were used to capture social life as participants experience it, rather in categories predetermined by the researchers (Ritchie and Lewis 2003; Engel and Schult, 2005). The questionnaire was used to collect some pertinent data the latter method is unable to.

Population and Sampling

Population of the study was made up of bonafied employees of CUT falling in grades 12 to 4. Three stratus comprising secretaries, human resources section and lecturers formed the sampling frame. Purposive sampling was then preferred as individuals in these categories were found to be knowledgeable about the issue under investigation. Herbert Rubin and Irene Rubin (1995) in Engel and Schutt (2003:122) suggest three guidelines for selecting informants or participants when designing any purposive sampling strategy which these researchers observed. Accordingly participants were found to be knowledgeable about the cultural arena, situation and / or experience being studied. They also represented the range of viewpoints sought.

Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure

A structured questionnaire constructed using both open and closed item was used to collect data unavailable to the qualitative strategy. It therefore, complemented the interview guide in collecting pertinent data from the majority of employees. The process of data collection, including formal interviews and questionnaire administration took three weeks. Interviews targeted divisional heads with face-to-face discussions at the offices during working hours. Recording was done by taking notes and by reconstruction after discussions through triangulation of research notes.

Data Analysis Techniques

Analysis of data took a transformative approach (Cresswell, 2003), continuous and iterative. This process involved two critical key stages; first managing the data (for the purpose of collation, reviewing or understanding material collected), and the second phase involves making sense of the evidence through descriptive and / or explanatory notes in the form of emerging themes. Thematic frame works for the descriptive analysis using worksheets was adopted to accommodate emerging themes (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003; Punch, 2000). A Statistical Package in Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze quantitative data collected using the closed items of the questionnaire. Triangulation of data was done to provide accurate interpretations and discussion of findings.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Of 120 CUT employees who participated one hundred and nine (109) of these responded to the questionnaire. They include 20 lecturers, 27 teaching assistants, 14 administrators, 35 secretaries, 8 technicians, 3 library assistants and 2 accounts clerks. Eleven (11) heads of sections comprised of academic deans, directors and heads of department were interviewed. The average age of those who responded to the questionnaire was 27 years which reflects the organization has a relatively young working force. The majority (60%) of the 109 joined CUT between 2005 and 2009; sixteen (14,5%) joined between the period 2000 to 2004; and 24.7% joined the organization between 2010 and 2011.

Conceptions of university employees about induction / workshops

A collapsed scale indicating agreement or disagreement (**Agree** = 1 and 2; **Not Sure** = 3; and, **Disagree** = 3 and 4) was used with respect to closed items on the questionnaire. To this end, ninety-five out of 109 (87.2%) who responded to the questionnaire indicated they had attended seminars / or workshops previously organized by the university management as part of the developmental programmes. The workshops / seminars focused on skills development as top priority, work ethics second with human factor issues last. Some of the respondents indicated that the workshops are being utilized positively but little was being done regarding service delivery. Others perceived the workshops as being poorly organized with misplaced or wrong emphasis. Respondents also agreed with a mean of 1.76 (agreeing), a mode of 2 (agreeing) and a standard deviation of 0.745 (close) that all new employees should receive adequate induction prior to work. They further indicated that the induction / training programmes should equally focus on human factor issues that promote norms and values of the organization. According to the respondents, training was important in order to inculcate loyalty, commitment, trust and friendly approach when dealing with clients. The majority of respondents (87.2%) agreed with a mean of 1.96 (agreeing) and a mode of 2 (agreeing) for induction / training programmes to focus on developing honest employees.

Similarly, heads of division who responded to interviews concurred that induction was very important and there was none being practiced. In cases where it was carried out, it was said to be inadequate. They indicated that the practice of leaving departments to induct new employees was not proper. This was the duty and responsibility of the Human Resource

department's initiative so as to inculcate organizational norms and values in the new employees". In one Dean's words,

> *" it is assumed that new employees know how to navigate their way so they are just thrown into the deep end". Another Dean said induction" was not systematic" and that, " it was not only , about how to do one's job but also about settling new employees, for example, lecturers do not have offices and basic equipment while some were in squalid offices".*

The coming in of the Academy of Teaching and Learning with support of management and all stakeholders was perceived as an opportunity to change for the better with respect to academic staff only. Apparently they indicated there was no clear policy on induction though efforts were being made to rectify the situation. Chombo in Chivaura and Mararike (1998) argues that manpower training has to address poor worker attitudes, beliefs, norms and values. In concurrence with Chombo (1998) who states that a nation's greatest resource is its people (Bradley, 1992; Drucker, 1974; Handy, 1980; Cloete, 1985; Bontis et al, 1999 and Scarborough and Elias, 2002), likewise consider that an organization's greatest resource is its human capital. This then makes the Human Factor approach an essential and critical area for training in any organization.

Perceived complaints about employee behavior

Table1: Respondents' agreement or disagreement to statements pertaining to human factor issues and employee behavior prevalent at Chinhoyi University of Technology.

Statement	No	Mean	Mode	SD
There is need for the majority of employees in the service section to be courteous with clients	108	1.50	1	.538
There is need for most employees to improve on public relations when dealing with clients	108	1.57	1	.659
Stakeholders or clients are not happy with service delivery in some departments/ sections at CUT	107	2.17	3	.976
Delays in providing services and long queues are a result of lack of commitment among staff employees	108	2.55	2	1.218
More often clients complain of poor service delivery	107	2.50	2	1.111

Table 1 results show that respondents agree to all statements a sign that there is some discord in the system. Similarly, interviewees noted that there had been complaints on service delivery and the bad conduct of employees. Students have complained of poor service delivery at central services, records and registration, Students Canteen, Accounts, Examinations, Library, Information and Communication Technology centre, Admissions and Students Affairs Departments. Respondents said there were numerous complaints from clients concerned with long queues, incompetence of lecturers, poor telephone services, poor reception of guests particularly at the Admissions and Human Resources departments. The registration process was said to be *long and cumbersome and manned by "rude, uncooperative and unfriendly staff members"*. In one respondent's words, "There is a very serious attitudinal problem. Service should be client-centered and not vise versa."

One divisional head's response extract reads: There is glaring evidence of bad conduct, with students being ill-treated left, right and centre". The respondents stated that the existent bad conduct regarded favoritism in marking and assessment, improper association, bribes particularly in the library, absenteeism from duty, threats to students, lack of confidentiality, lack of integrity in the examination processes, unethical behavior and discontent on the dress code of female employees. One respondent capped it all, "Employees lack a human face".

Concerns of employees' and experiences regarding human factor decay and poor works

Respondents indicated that some employees have not been morally upright in executing their duties. They agreed with a mean of 2.15 (agreeing) and a mode of 2 (agreeing). In addition the respondents also agreed with a mean of 1.61 (agreeing) and a mode of 2 (agreeing) to the statement that Heads of sections also needed to exercise a sense of responsibility.

Interviewees also consented that there had been not only rumors, but even charges of corruption, improper association , disappearance of examination scripts and selling of transcripts and some employees had been dismissed. Cases of abuse of resources (both time and stationery), abuse of positions and also gender-related abuse have been experienced. According to one respondent, "Rumors of serious human factor decay are rampant. It is a national problem". He pointed at corrupt and dishonest Teaching and Non Teaching staff. Another respondent said, "Organizations are a sub-system of the society to promote norms and values of society", *"Hunhuism*", but we are not promoting societal values in both employees and students, for example, some students do not respect elders or even greet them". Yet another respondent said, morality being a function of socialization, ethics can still be taught and inculcated into our minds so there is need for more workshops on ethics". One respondent felt that ethical standards should be set, a breach of which would make one liable for dismissal . Another respondent pointed out that human factor decay had become a very worrying thing in the recent past but with the coming in of the new blood into management team, the situation had improved. Yet another respondent, however, cautioned against employing punitive measures without first counseling, inducting and training employees.

Opinions regarding the most valuable assets of the university

Table 2: Respondents' perceived view of most valuable asset of the University and the supporting reason

Asset Type	Frequency	%	Reason
Human Capital (students and employees)	62	59.05	Make organization tick/ drives institution as they provide key service – teaching and learning
Computers / internet / equipment	16	15.24	Back borne of research - almost replacing books

Buildings / Library	13	12.39	N/A
Books	3	2.86	Form the core of the institution
Farm	1	0.95	
Telephone	1	0.95	Reduces time wasting
Date stamp	1	0.95	Shows authenticity of documents
Generator	1	0.95	Provides continued service
Staff Bus	1	0.95	Brings staff to work on time
N/A	6	5.71	N/A
Total	**105/109**	**100.0**	

Results show that sixty - two (59.05%) indicated that the human capital was the most valuable asset since they drive the institution. From the table it is evident more than 35% of employees did not see reason why the human capital is the most critical of all assets in the university. This suggest a lack of sense of belonging or ignorance when individuals do not regard their service as paramount in achieving organizational goals as well as promoting norms and values that give the university its image. There exists a clear gap. Yet Cloete (1985) argues that organizations have a mandate to train and develop employees so as to fill performance gaps and gain competitive advantage. Wilson (2004) advocates for a link between the training and development and the business strategy of organizations, while Harrison (2000) regards this as a good business sense. Armstrong (2010) regards training and development as bridging gaps between human resources and strategy. Bontis et al (1999) sees human capital as the intelligence skills and expertise that gives the organisation its distinctive character and rank this as providing the creative thrust which can ensure the long term survival of the organization.

Approaches to influence behavior change

Respondents indicated that cases of corruption in the university could be avoided if training focuses on developing correct human factor characteristics. They agreed to the statement with a mean of 2.25 (agreeing) and a mode of 3 (not sure). As such, interviewees advocated for regular workshops to develop a sense of belonging and unity of purpose. As one respondent said "The University is not an individual but an organization so it is everybody's responsibility to improve operation and image". Identification of training needs and deliberate training programmes on work ethics, staff discipline and customer care. Ordinances governing the institution and Code of conduct was another approach given for influencing behavior change. Team building activities, for example, ball games was another approach suggested by respondents while proper induction can not be sidelined. Involvement of participants (bottom-up) approach to training was also suggested. One respondent stated

> "*The climate of an organization is reflected in its management for they become role models".*

Statements such as *"Unoenda", "ndikamira paroad ndinowana vamwe",* should be avoided at all costs while a give and take situation should prevail". It was noted that "it is

not prudent for Human Resources department to 'witch-hunt' instead of counseling and advising". Respondents also suggested that facilitators for workshops should be thoroughly selected so that their personality and delivery would reach the participants. Workshops should be participatory and "not assume that participants are empty vessels", thus creating a sense of ownership. Yet another respondent said, "Through socialization we imbibe perceptions which form the psychological mindset which determines attitudes and that in turn directs behavior", hence the respondent suggested workshops on work ethics and customer care and other related issues as critical.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The operational level employees are the implementers of policy so they should be continuously trained. Breaking continuity destroys whatever will have been gained. The practice of dwelling on theoretical principles at the expense of practical ones does not help much. Workshops may have good content but may lack credibility because it seems that training is sometimes done to justify the existence of some departments and not because of need. Public Relations is not an entity but is for everyone, thus workshops on etiquette and customer care should be all inclusive and continuous with the Public Relations department acting "not only as spokesperson of the university but also as a string that cuts across the university's operations and link it with industry. Lecturers who go for Industrial Attachment visits as well as students on Industrial Attachment are ambassadors of the organization through training and provision of resources.

The feeling among the respondents was that the marketing department was not playing its inclusive role of university strategy to promote '*hunhuism*'. Training should also extent to the students as ambassadors of the organization. The human factor issues missing in the training packages could account for this gap as portrayed through employee bad behavior and attitude.

There is need for Chinhoyi University of Technology to become a Learning Organisation which it presently is not. Harrison (1997;2000) describes learning organizations as continous learning systems to develop long term organizational capacity through promotion of awareness of the need for strategic thinking at all levels. He also called for a powerful and clear vision, frequent dialogue and communication as well as a condusive learning and innovative climate. Pedler, Boydell and Burgoyne (1989) described it as an organization that facilitates continuous learning for all its members while Senge (1990) says it is an organizational that continually expands to create its future or adopt to its context (Burgoyne, 1994). Garvin (1992) says such an organization is skilled at creating, acquiring and transferring knowledge and insights. Sloman (1999) believes that in a learning organization, learning is a continuous process rather than a set of discrete training activities. In such an organization, the organizational culture can be inculcated in workers through induction and training and through socialization. Training then becomes systematic, consistent, continuous, universal, participatory and tailor made for existing performance gaps.

Respondents advocated for a universal approach in which everyone including management should take responsibility. Selection of words should be through Ordinances that guide the operations of the university. The Human Resources section appears to be witch-hunting instead of playing an integrated role, counseling and giving advice. There is need to promote participatory type of workshops that focus on work ethics and customer care.

Armstrong (2010) advocates for the inculcation of a learning culture that promotes learning, a growth medium which encourages employees to commit a range of positive behaviours. Concurring with Amstrong are (Mello, 2006; Chahabra, 2006 and Erasmus et al, 2008). Armstrong (2009) encourages improving organizational performance through development of the performance of individuals and teams. In agreement Armstrong and Murlis (2008) with Amos et al (2008) add that it begins with the translation of overall strategic objectives of organizations into clear ones for individual employees. Mulins (2005) says a performance gap is the discrepancy between what employees are currently doing and what they should do. Armstrong (2010) reiterates saying an effective organization meets the needs of its stakeholders through the closure of such gaps. Johnston (2002) suggests fighting for a reputation of service excellence. All this can be done through the incorporation of the Human Factor Approach to training (Adjibolosco, 1995) which has such attributes as preparedness, awareness, willingness, ability and capacity (Mararike, 1998). An inculcation of these attributes will then result, hopefuly in employees with correct human factor competencies and correct anthropic space. At Chinhoyi University of Technology, the human factor characteristics could be instilled in employees through socialization regular work ethic and customer care training programmes.

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