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THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SUPPORTING THE ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SUPPORTING THE ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Law Commerce and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management)

Supervisor: Dr Wendy Ngoma

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ABSTRACT

Grappling with realities of the role of human resource management (HRM) in supporting the implementation of organisational strategy requires a pragmatic analysis of the interplay between this strategy and the HR function. Human resource management must provide support to management in its implementation of the organisational strategy. The analysis of this role should also (based on cognitive evidence) inform various strategic options to improve the role played by human resource management within organisations. In shaping these options, it is necessary to draw on available data on the management of human resources, both locally and across the globe, and particularly on the specific realities facing South Africa.

The primary focus of this study is to analyse the role of human resource management (HRM) in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy, and to establish and highlight the challenges that impede the HRM in executing this role. The study focuses its attention on the role of HRM within the Public Service, and in particular within the Public Service Commission. The analysis of literature and evidence from the interviews indicates that there are challenges facing the management of human resources in the public service. Accordingly, the study has identified a need for the role of HRM to be realigned to ensure that it provides support to management and facilitates the implementation of the organisational strategy.

The study has identified three strategic frameworks, namely, the Contingency Model of Human Resource Management, the System-Functional Model and the HC Bridge® Framework. These models are intended to assist the HRM discourse in moving the ‘traditional HRM administrative role’ to a strategic HRM role. Using these strategic models, the study hopes to inform and shape debates around the management of human resources in organisations, with a view to achieving the best HRM models and improving productivity within the South African labour force.

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree of Masters of Management in the field of Public and Development Management at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

Sibusiso A. Zondi (Mr)

November 2009

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DEFINITIONS

Corporate governance refers to a formal system of accountability between the board of directors and shareholders.

Human Relations describes the way in which people who comprise an organisation think about each other and deal with each other.

Human Resource Management refers to all those activities associated with the management of employment relationships in the firm. It entails various functions and activities, from the human resource planning and organising to procurement, including the management of relations within organisations.

Management is a scientific art of attaining intended organisational objectives by working effectively with and through the human and material resources of the firm.

Public Administration includes particular functions of public institutions, otherwise known as governmental institutions.

PSHRM refers to all practices and decisions aimed at continuously achieving an optimal match or fit between the work, the human resources required to execute the work of public sector institutions, and the environment in which these institutions operate.

New Public Management is a set of particular management approaches and techniques borrowed mainly from the private for-profit sector and applied in the public sector.

Leadership refers to an influential relationship among leaders and followers who intend real change and outcomes that reflect their shared purposes.

The human resource plan is a process whereby the organisation uses its goals and strategies to forecast its human resource needs in terms of finding, developing and keeping a qualified workforce.

Strategy refers to the game plan management has for positioning the company in its chosen market arena, competing successfully, pleasing customers, and achieving good business performance.

Strategic management refers to a process by which all organisational functions and resources are integrated and coordinated to implement formulated strategies which are aligned with the environment, in order to achieve the long-term objectives of the organisation and therefore gain competitive advantage through adding value to stakeholders.

Strategic human resource management has been seen as a pattern of planned human resource deployment and activities intended to enable an organisation to achieve its goals.

Strategic public sector human resource management comprises long-term, senior-level management decisions and actions regarding employment relationships that are made and performed in a way that is fully integrated with the overall general strategic management of public sector institutions.

Strategy implementation refers to a process that turns strategic plans into a series of actions and tasks and ensures that these tasks are executed in such a way that the objectives of the strategic plans are achieved.

The **structure of an organisation** is a pattern of relationships between roles in an organisation and its different parts.

Synergy refers to the creation of advantages for a corporate parent's business units that would not be available if they were independent, freestanding business units.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Affirmative Action
DG	Director-General
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
LRA	Labour Relations Act
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
PA	Performance Agreement
PSHRM	Public Sector Human Resources Management
PMS	Performance Management System
PDP	Performance Development Plan
PRC	Presidential Review Commission
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSR	Public Service Regulations
WPTPS	White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service
WSP	Workplace Skills Plan
SMS Members	Senior Management Services members

CHAPTER 1: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

This chapter provides the background to the research and the context of the study. It discusses the problem statement, the purpose of the research, the rationale for the study, the research questions, and the focus, significance and limitations of the study. It concludes with an outline of the rest of the report.

a) Some preliminary remarks to place the study in context

The public service plays a pivotal role in stabilising and enhancing the day-to-day administration of the state and its resources. Fifield (1998) argues that

> it is widely accepted that a country's public service can be a stabilising factor in its day to day state administration, even amidst changes in governments, and in this regard, it is especially gratifying to mention that the South African public service has, indeed, contributed enormously to the smooth transition of the country from the old to the new order (Fifield, 1998: 398).

In the period post 1994 and with the adoption of South Africa's Constitution, government saw a need for a rigorous review of the public service to mirror the social changes taking place in society at large. This resulted in government implementing new policies and legislation within the public service. Following the implementation of these new policies and legislation, South Africa witnessed a smooth transition from the old apartheid order to a new democratic system of government. Central to this paradigm shift is the need to capacitate the state to deliver seamless services to society, and to ensure that the public service is managed effectively and efficiently by the elected Executive. In this regard, the state finds authority in, amongst others, Chapter 10 (1996, Section 195 (1)) of

the Constitution referring to the basic values and principles governing public administration.

As a result of the adoption of the Constitution, the country also witnessed the passing of a number of legislative frameworks including, but not limited to, the Labour Relations Act (1995), the Employment Equity Act (1998), the Skills Development Act (1998), the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1995), the Skills Development Act (1998), the Occupational Health and Safety Act (1993), and the Service Act of 1994 as amended. These legislative frameworks were passed in an attempt to transform the public service from an old apartheid system to a more people-centered and responsive public service.

Most of the changes implemented within the South African Public Service in the 1990s were to a large extent influenced by New Public Management (NPM) ideology. NPM thinking was initially implemented in the United Kingdom, North America, Australia and the Pacific Rim in the 1970s, and was also advocated by world organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in the 1990s (McLaughlin, Osborne and Ferlie, 2002). The NPM still enjoys popularity today, with most governments attempting to transform their public service to the one that is more flexible and customer-orientated.

The NPM discourse was founded on the premise of improved public accountability by public institutions and the implementation of best management practices. Compared to the traditional public administration schools of thought, the NPM is oriented more towards outcomes and efficiency through improving the management of public institutions and the efficient utilisation of budgets. It argues that private sector management principles can and should be applied within the public sector in order to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. “New public management philosophy views the beneficiaries of public services much like customers” (Hood, 1995).

Amidst all these changes, government also produced a document that was later known as the “White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service” (WPTPS) in 1995. The main objective of this document was “to establish a policy framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies and legislation aimed at transforming the South African Public Service” (DPSA, 1995). Flowing from the release of the WPTPS, several key documents and reports were further produced by the state, including the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997), the Baskin Report (2000), the White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service (1995), the Public Service Regulations (2001), the SMS Handbook (2003) and, more recently, the draft Public Administration Management Bill (2007).

Such efforts were introduced to transform the public service from a non-responsive state organ into a more people-centred, responsive and effective service. The WPTPS contained a number of recommendations for implementations within the public service. One of the key recommendations contained in the report was an appeal for the establishment of a commission of enquiry. The objective of this commission was to investigate, analyse and make recommendations on the state of the public service within the South African context. Accordingly, in 1998, a commission of enquiry was constituted, referred to as a Presidential Review Commission (PRC). The PRC conducted its research into the functioning of the public service as mandated and produced a report.

As highlighted above, the PRC was commissioned with the mandate to define and outline a process of transforming the state and its principal executive arm including the public service (PRC, 1998). This was to be achieved through the compilation of a report with recommendations to overcome the major challenges facing the transformation process. In the period pre-1994, the then apartheid regime had created a public service that was characterised by a lack of racial, gender and occupational

representativeness. This public service was controlled centrally and a top-down management style was adopted, with productivity and service delivery significantly low.

When the ANC government took over the reins after the 1994 elections, it was faced with the task of transforming the system and addressing all the socio-economic ills manifest in the public service that had been created by the apartheid system. Key to the PRC and the WPTPS was an attempt to transform the public service into a more flexible and customer-focused organ. Of particular relevance to this study is Chapter 4 of the report (that is, PRC report), which was dedicated to analysing of the current state of HR within the public service and to providing recommendations to improve the current scenario.

The PRC report brought to the fore a number of challenges facing the public service in the area of human resource management. The report argued that because of these problems, the strategic planning process within departments had not taken into account the human resource function. It also found that within departments where strategic planning was inclusive of HR, the strategic planning process was still in its “infancy” and was largely the responsibility of junior staff (PRC report, 1998).

The report argued that, despite the achievements that were recorded in relation to the other functions pertaining to human resource management within departments, progress was slow and inadequate. The PRC report reiterated the view held by various scholars and HR commentators (Salaman, Storey & Billsberry, 2005; Van Dyk, 2004) that human resource management has shifted its focus from the traditional roles of administration and payroll to a new role of strategic human resource management. In today’s world, human resources is on a par with other business units whose contribution is vital to the success of the business.

This argument has immense implications for HR practitioners within the public service, who are expected to identify and equip themselves with the

necessary skills to transform from support staff to competent business partners. Traditionally, it has been widely accepted that human resource managers have been largely responsible for the management of employment contracts and the general administrative duties attached to human resource management. However, today they are expected to be part of the strategic team responsible for the effective management of the organisation.

This study aims, therefore, to investigate the challenges that face the public service in so far as the management of human resource is concerned. In doing so, it has borrowed to a large extent from the findings and recommendations in the PRC report. This is critical as it will allow the researcher to understand the origins of these problems, trace them to the current scenario and ultimately gauge any progress that has been made in addressing these challenges.

An understanding of the abovementioned problems will assist human resource practitioners in understanding the origins of the management of human resources as a science and a process, its history and the causes of the paradigm shift. Further, it will introduce HR practitioners to the concept of strategic human resource management and its evolution within the HR discourse and related sciences and disciplines. Another issue requiring attention is an understanding of what strategic human resource management means for the individual HR manager and the organisation as a whole.

This report has already alluded to the fact that the major changes within public management discourse and, in particular, in the field of human resource management, have occurred as a result of NPM ideology. Coupled with this has been the realisation that human resource management must be seen as a strategic partner within the organisation. In responding to this reality, the South African government commissioned a Presidential Review Commission (PRC) in 1998 to conduct an in-depth investigation into the structures and the functioning of the public service.

Government efforts to transform the public sector did not go unnoticed. Various studies, seminars and conferences on the state of human resources in South Africa have been conducted by statutory bodies such as the Public Service Commission (PSC), the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) and the Auditor-General. These statutory bodies have all commented on the state of human resources in South Africa, and a common theme has emerged suggesting that human resource management within the public service needs to change.

The changes that government implemented within the management of the public service necessitated a rigorous review of the current laws to bring them in line with the desired developments within the public service. It is a fact that various pieces of legislation underpinning the functioning of the public service have a huge bearing on the manner in which organisations are managed and therefore, have a potential to affect the way organisations operate, particularly around human resource matters. These matters include, but are not limited to, appointments, dismissals, performance management, promotions and retrenchments.

The impact of these laws is complex. Accordingly, it is imperative for line managers and human resource officers alike to understand and adhere to them. Any breach could have devastating effects for the organisation. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) is the single most important piece of legislation in the Republic. The Constitution, 1996 sets out a framework for all government structures, citizens and organisations in terms of how they should behave, what is regarded as acceptable and what is not. It also provides for the Bill of Rights, which outlines citizens' rights and the limits on such rights.

The Constitution gives effect to various pieces of legislation that are fundamental to labour rights. For example, the Labour Relations Act (1995) gives effect to the rights contained in sections 9 and 23 of the Constitution. Of particular interest for a human resource practitioner is Section 23 of the Constitution, which relates specifically to labour rights.

Various other pieces of legislation have been enacted pursuant on the Constitution in order to give effect to the rights it enshrines, particularly those in section 23.

In addition, the Labour Relations Act (LRA) (1995) was enacted to give protection to labour rights as enshrined in section 20 of the Constitution. It aims to promote sound and fair labour relations within organisations. For the first time in the history of labour relations in South Africa, the promulgation of the LRA ensured that employees within the workplace were afforded an opportunity and a framework to voice their opinions through labour organisations.

With the promulgation of the LRA, government intended to provide a framework that would regulate and promote sound labour relations within the labour market. Such relations are key to the promotion and success of businesses within the labour market. The LRA also sets out what the act terms fair labour practices, and remedies for individuals who are faced with unfair labour practices. In this way, the act aims to eliminate labour unrest and to provide a framework for negotiation and resolution of labour disputes.

Furthermore, government also promulgated various other pieces of legislation in an attempt to promote sound labour relations. One should appreciate the fact that most of these pieces of legislation were promulgated to redress the effects of past injustices in the workplace. In a nutshell, the majority of pieces of legislation that have been promulgated are mentioned in this report. Their importance cannot be overstated. Debates are still raging around the current relevance of some of these laws. Central to these debates is the relevance of the policy of “affirmative action”.

One example of legislation passed is the Employment Equity Act. The EEA created one of the most controversial and contested policies, better known as the “affirmative action” (AA) policy. This policy is a government

policy implemented to address the past discriminatory effects of apartheid laws. For certain sections of our society (especially young white graduates), the AA policy is a sore point as they regard it as discriminatory and an impediment to their ambitions of securing employment. However, the merits and demerits of this policy are not part of this paper, and shall be reserved for future debates.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The PRC report highlighted a number of challenges facing government and the public service in the implementation of an effective and efficient human resource management function. Amongst the major challenges was the fact that strategic planning processes in departments do not take into account the human resource function.

The report also alluded to the fact that most departments are still faced with the challenge of the development and implementation of strategic HRM plans. Those departments that are actually implementing strategic HRM planning are still in the “infancy” stage. These findings have serious implications in terms of HRM’s ability to support and facilitate the implementation of an organisational strategy. These findings suggest that human resource management is not playing an effective or efficient role in supporting an enabling environment for the successful implementation of the organisational strategy (PRC, 1998). This situation denies organisations the benefits that should accrue as a result of such support in achieving strategic goals.

Against this background, this research study will investigate the factors that hinder human resource management (HRM) in supporting and facilitating the implementation of the overall organisational strategy within public sector organisations. It will explore the role that HRM is currently playing within state organisations, particularly within the Public Service Commission. Finally, it will determine how human resource management should position itself as a strategic business partner and further provide a

working environment conducive to the effective implementation of this organisational strategy.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

Human resources management is at the heart of the business of any organisation. It is the people (the human resources) who translate the organisational objectives and goals and convert them into useful goods and services. Accordingly, the management of human resources dictates that organisations develop and implement a human resource strategy to allow them to manage their human resources effectively and efficiently. This human resource strategy ensures the existence of a “grand plan” which provides a framework to regulate the role of the human resource unit within the organisation. In addition, such an HR strategy ought to be aligned to the overall organisational strategy.

Evidence suggests that employees are a source of continued competitive advantage that could allow the organisation to compete and succeed within the industry (Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998). The key in ensuring that human resources play a role in the success of the organisation lies in the ability of the human resource management unit to support and enhance organisational strategy. The development and implementation of a sound HR strategy is therefore vital.

Human resource management must thus position itself as a strategic partner within the organisation. Such partnering requires new strategies to enhance relationships within and amongst business units. In addition, the role(s) and perceptions of line managers must change and a positive mindset must be developed in all involved in the organisational management process.

This research is a direct response to the challenges and problems faced by public sector organisations in relation to their human resource management’s (in) ability to effectively support the organisational strategy.

The main purpose of this research is, therefore, to explore the role of human resources in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy. For this purpose, the research will focus on the Public Service Commission as its case study.

Furthermore, the research will also endeavour to provide answers to the question of the role of human resources in supporting the organisational strategy by exploring the factors affecting human resources in the performance of its strategic role within the organisation.

1.4 THE RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The human resource management unit plays a pivotal role in an organisation in terms of procuring and providing the human capital that carries the responsibility of implementing the organisational strategy. It is this human capital that transforms and converts the organisational vision, mission and goals into concrete physical goods and services. It is therefore logical that procured human resources should meet the requirements in terms of skills and attitudes.

An organisational strategy cannot be formulated or implemented without factoring in human resource issues, and therefore a unit specific HR strategy is vital. Effective implementation of the human resource strategy within the organisation dictates that the HR strategy should be aligned with the overall organisational strategy. Ensuring this alignment is not the function of the HR manager alone, but rather an all-inclusive function involving all managers within the organisation.

Salaman, Storey and Billsberry (2005), Van Dyk (2004) and Du Toit, Erasmus and Strydom (2007) argue that for human resource management to be operationalised it is essential that line function managers, employees as well as HR practitioners work closely together in an integrated manner within the guidelines set by the strategic goals and mission of the organisation.

The changing nature of business has had an impact on the manner in which people are managed within organisations. This applies to both the private and public sector, with organisations looking for new and better ways to manage their human resources. As such, human resource practitioners have to understand the changes and demands exerted by globalisation, including the need for strategic alliance between the line function and human resource management. It is of paramount importance that these changes be understood as they cannot be avoided or ignored.

Van Dyk (2004) argues that “nowadays, and because the world has become a global market, the focus of human resources management lies in the integration of the HRM strategy into the global strategy of the organisation”. Van Dyk (2004) reiterates the need and the importance of integration of the overall organisational strategy and the HRM strategy. Such integration would assist the organisation in ensuring that one strategy feeds into the other, and that the organisation is able to procure, manage and develop its human talent in order to succeed in today’s global world.

This research is, therefore, a response to the need for understanding strategic human resource management (SHRM), both as an ideology and as a process. It has been informed by the desire to reveal the benefits that SHRM can have for an organisation, especially within the public sector. This desire has also informed the current review of the role of human resource management within organisations in the public service.

The study has been informed by a need to understand the process of integrating organisational strategy within the human resources strategy, and how such integration can be achieved and maintained. In the end, it is envisaged that the findings and the recommendations of the study will assist, influence and shape current practice in the human resources field.

The researcher’s focus is within the public service, using the Public Service Commission (PSC) as a reference. It is envisaged that the study

will assist the PSC in understanding and effectively managing its employees. At a macro level, it will assist organisations in developing and implementing an effective human resource strategy, and aligning such a strategy with the overall organisational strategy.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The type of the research questions that a researcher adopts influences and shapes the nature and the quality of the data and the findings of a study. They can contribute to the success or failure of the research project. Therefore, a researcher needs to appreciate that the questions adopted are crucial to the research project. This study addresses the following questions:

a. What role does human resources play within the Public Service Commission?

b. What factors affect and influence the current role of HR within the PSC?

c. What factors hinder the human resource unit in playing a strategic role within the PSC?

    (i) How do they affect the organisation's achievement of its strategic goals, and

    (ii) How can organisations overcome these obstacles?

d. What skills and competencies are needed to transform the human resource management unit from inactive supporters of the business activities to active strategic business partners?

e. Does the human resource unit currently have the necessary skills to support the organisational strategy?

f. What plan has been put in place to ensure that the human resource unit acquires such skills?

1.6 FOCUS OF THE RESEARCH

This research will limit its focus to the strategic role that human resources play in supporting and enhancing the overall organisational strategy within the PSC. It will also explore the nature of skills and competencies required of human resource practitioners in order to perform this strategic role. It is important that a study should be manageable, focusing on a specific problem and taking into account available time, finance, sample size and abilities of the researcher (Brynard, 2003: 172, in Maila, 2006).

The researcher will limit the study to the PSC, as this has been identified as a unit of analysis. However, in order to ensure that the data and findings obtained are representative of the state of human resource management within the overall public service, other participants from various departments will be requested to participate in the study. Data collected from these participants will be analysed and used as supporting evidence.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The researcher has been influenced by the transformation process that has been taking place within the South African public service. Particular influences include publications that have been produced as well as discussions amongst public service leaders and HR fundis on the role of HR within organisations. The recommendations contained in the PRC report have also been influential.

It is therefore envisaged that this research will influence the role and functioning of human resource management within the public service. It will also be used to advance discussions around human resource management to ensure that it supports the organisational strategy. This is crucial in ensuring that the organisation delivers quality service to society.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Any research project will reveal certain limitations during the process. Such limitations should be borne in mind and appropriate measures must be taken to manage their impact. In this research study the following limitations were encountered:

i. The unavailability of the selected participants because of busy work schedules might have presented a major risk to the study. The following steps were taken to address the risk:

   - Ensuring timely and effective communication with all selected participants;
   - Encouraging participation by all selected participants, especially management and HR practitioners; and
   - Stating clearly the objectives of the project and the desired output.

1.9 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS OF THE REPORT

Chapter 2 provides a review of literature dealing with management and public administration, human resource management and strategy. It will then provide a review of the concept of human resource management strategy. It will further review literature on the concepts of leadership, new public management, strategy and efficiency, systems thinking, organisational design and strategy, including the role of human resource development in the overall human resource strategy. Lastly, it provides an account of the legislative framework regulating the human resource management within the South African context. **Chapter 3** presents the research design and the methodology used in the collection of data. **Chapter 4** presents the findings. **Chapter 5** contains the analysis and interpretation of the data presented in chapter 4. **Chapter 6** concludes and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study bases its theoretical arguments on literature on management, public administration, human resource management and strategic management. The importance of human resource management in supporting the organisational strategy, particularly within the public sector, has been investigated by various scholars and institutions, for example, Andrews (1998), Werther and Davis (1989), Gellerman (1966), Swanepoel, Erasmus, Schenk, van der Westhuizen and Wessels (2005), as well as the DPSA and the PSC, to mention only a few. The study draws further on literature on the concept of new public management, leadership, system thinking as well as organisational design, and their links to strategy.

Furthermore, literature on strategic human resource management from various sources has been consulted with the aim of providing a theoretical framework upon which to ground this study. Lastly, the legislative regulation of the field of human resource management within the South African context (particularly the legislative framework regulating HR within the public service) has been explored.

2.2 THE ORIGIN OF HUMAN RESOURCES AND ITS EVOLUTION

The phenomenon of human resource management both as a science and as rhetoric has come a long way, from personnel function to a resource equated to other resources such as finance and physical resources within an organisation. Gellerman (1996) maintains that the advent of the behavioural sciences, including industrial psychology, led to the popularity of the human resource subject. Over time, the human resource management function has been given various names. In the 1950s,

scholars such as Gellerman (1960), Taylor (1950) and other theorists of the 1950s and 1960s who were instrumental in popularising this phenomenon referred to it as personnel management.

Price (2007) argues that the human relations and human factors approaches were absorbed into a broad behavioural science movement in the 1950's and 1960's. He argues that this period produced some influential theories on the motivation of human performance, for example, Maslow's hierarchy of needs provided an individual focus on the reasons why people work. He argued that people satisfied an ascending series of needs from survival, through security to eventual 'self-actualisation' (Price, 2007: 14).

In the 1980s, scholars such as Werther and Davis (1989) and Andrews (1988) added impetus to this phenomenon as more and more behavioural scientists were attempting to gain an understanding of this phenomenon. The advent of human resource management was largely a response to such attempts by scholars given above to provide answers to the question of management of people within the organisation.

The development of disciplines such as industrial psychology, management and other behavioural sciences was centred on enquiry into providing answers to questions about the behaviour of people in an organisation, and what management could do to develop that behaviour to its advantage. Ehlers and Lazenby (2004) argue that “organisations, particularly the Japanese, realised that the success of any organisation depends on its people”.

Gellerman (1966) succinctly sums up the importance of human resources, when he argues that “the quality of human relations can have an important effect on productivity and creativity and therefore on the profitability and efficiency of the enterprise”. In addition, the rise in stature of the role of human resources within organisations went hand in hand with the

popularity of various disciplines such as industrial psychology and other organisational behavioural sciences.

2.3 THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FUNCTION

It is important to highlight the fact that without people, the human resources, there would be no operation within the organisation. People are at the centre of organisational operations and are the lifeblood of any organisation. They are the resource that gets other resources going, converting raw material into useful goods. It is the human resources that convert the organisational mission and vision into reality. Thus, without these human resources there would be no activity in an organisation. The organisation must thus at all times endeavour to judiciously and effectively manage this resource, its people.

The management of human resources in an organisation is central to its continued existence. Whether this function is performed by a specially dedicated unit or by management as a whole is really not a focal point. Rather, the main issue is ensuring that the organisation is able to effectively and efficiently manage its people. After all, as noted above, it is the people who actually carry out the implementation of the organisational goals, transforming them from ideas into concrete physical goods and services.

People are important because they are the only living resource within the organisation, and because they are creative (Andrews, 1988; Werther and Davis, 1989). Gibson et al. (1994) argue that “it is people who ensure that the organisation is designed in such a way that it can adapt to a changing environment”. Appreciation of this reality is the key to management, as it is people who determine the potential of the organisation as a system by choosing the appropriate strategy for its survival in a turbulent environment.

The importance of managing people in an organisation is echoed by Du Toit, Erasmus and Strydom (2007) who state that “managing human resources is fundamental to organisational success”. It is important to understand that managing people is every manager’s business, and that successful organisations are those that are able to blend and combine the experience of line managers with the expertise of HR practitioners to manage, develop and utilise the talent of the people within the organisation to their greatest potential (Du Toit, Erasmus and Strydom, 2007).

Du Toit, Erasmus and Strydom (2007) argue that “the **human resource function** is concerned with much more than filing, routine administration actions, and record-keeping activities”. The human resource function can enhance or limit the strength or weakness of the organisation. It is for this reason that human resources should be managed carefully, and with utmost care. However, it is worth noting that the human resource function alone cannot deliver on the organisational mandate: rather, a dual role must be played by both HR and the line managers within the organisation.

It is evident, therefore, that management of human resources is central to the achievement of the organisational goals. Gellerman (1966), however, cautions that this does not imply that “happy” employees are more productive and creative than “unhappy” ones. This is because the relationship between productivity and staff morale is complex. Nel and Werner (2004) argue that “organisations recognize that there is a critical relation between an organisation’s human resources and its contribution to the achievement of organisational objectives”. This statement is particularly true as human resources are the one resource that practically converts other resources into finished products: they are at the heart of production.

Werther and Davis (1989) argue that “the purpose of human resource management is to improve the productive contribution of people to the organization”. In addition, Nel and Werner (2004) maintain that

“organisations recognize that there is a critical relation between an organisation’s human resources and its contribution to the achievement of organisational objectives”.

These arguments suggest that human resource management has a critical role to play in ensuring that organisations achieve their objectives and goals. In this regard, it is crucial that HR should have a plan in place that will provide direction for its functioning. This requires a well crafted and clearly defined plan. In addition, this plan needs to be carefully implemented and managed. To this end, the management of human resources within an organisation is the key to the success or failure of the organisation.

2.4 MANAGEMENT AND THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Management plays a critical role within the organisation, ensuring that it is well resourced and that such resources are well utilised and managed. These resources include, among others, financial, human and physical resources. The management and full utilisation of these resources will determine the success or failure of the organisation.

Flowing from this, it is evident that management has an important role to play in the management of human resources within the organisation. The type and style of organisational management will directly or indirectly affect human relations within an organisation. It is crucial that both management and human resource practitioners take note of this reality, and consider it in their decision-making processes.

Management must appreciate the fact that people within the organisation assume different roles at a particular time. Management should devise proper strategies to better manage its people. People should be considered from different angles, that is, people as people, people as resources, and people as social systems.

Indeed, approaching people as people is important in the sense that it allows management to understand that each person within an organisation is unique, with unique needs. People work to satisfy their needs, and the organisation is a means for individuals to gain resources that allow them to do this. Work is a means of satisfying these needs. In order for a manager to make better informed decisions, he or she must, therefore, know how people function, how they learn, what motivates them, how they perceive things, what makes them unique, how they function in a group, and how they make decisions.

In the 1950s and 1960s, various scholars such as Argyris (1963), McGregor (1957), Smith (1911) and others made several attempts to analyse and define the concept of management and what motivates people within an organisation. Argyris, in Gellerman (1966) argued that

> "Most organisations, especially at the lower levels, are geared to men who make a very child-like adjustment to life: they leave very little leeway for choosing, for using discretion, or for adapting rules to fit circumstances. Most employees are expected to do just as they are told and leave the thinking to the foreman, whose capacity for doing so is a perennially moot point among the people he supervises. In any case millions of grown men are required to spend forty hours a week suppressing their brainpower in order to maintain a system that is not nearly as efficient as it looks. 4:73 (Gellerman, 1966: 44)".

If organisations do indeed hold such views and perceptions about their employees, then the presence of management within organisations is justified. Traditionally, two forms of management dominated the management school and both implied certain underlying assumptions about employees and human nature. Gellerman (1966) argues that traditionally, management was either through "coercion" or "compensation". He argues that employers used coercion in the form of threats of dismissal as a means of compelling an individual to behave,

whilst on the other hand they used compensation, in the form of money, as a means of enticing an individual to act in a manner beneficial to the employer. However, he advances a contradictory view that seems to debunk this perception. He argues that “the modern concept of human relations is considerably subtler than the traditional one” (Gellerman, 1966: 2).

Gellerman adds that the modern human relation is based on the “idea that no belief is illogical to the man who believes in it and that no deed is unjustified in the mind of the man who does it” (1966: 2). Therefore, on this basis, there is no point in management using coercion and/or enticement to get an employee to perform a task. In today’s world, the employee’s performance is largely influenced by various factors, and the manner in which the organisation manages and treats its employees is one of them. Crainer (1996) believes that “the roots of modern management lie in the ‘machine age’ of the nineteenth century, though the practice of management has far more historical antecedents”. He further argues that the machine age of management is fast being replaced by what commentators call the “information age”.

Numerous studies by well known scholars such as Taylor (1911), Toffler (1980) and Hughes (1994) have been conducted in the field of human motivation, management and human behaviour. These studies have influenced the manner in which organisations view and approach the management process. Modern scholars such as Mintzberg view management as key to the survival and success of the organisation. It is widely accepted that management and administration are geared to the achievement of organisational objectives. Cribbin (1972) argues that “at times, the concepts of management, administration and leadership are confused or even considered identical. It might be well, therefore, to make certain distinctions among them even at the risk of seeming a bit pedantic”.

Accordingly, management should note that human resources and the management thereof, play an important role in achieving organisational objectives. It is through working with and through human resources that the organisation will achieve its desired objectives.

2.5 PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Difference of opinion still occurs on the concepts of public administration and public management. Management in the private sector is different from management in the public sector. The public sector, as opposed to the private sector, is not a profit-motivated organisation, and as such, the underlying management principles and strategies (such as take-overs and acquisitions) applicable to the private sector might not be appropriate for the public sector. Furthermore, the public sector, which is made up of various public institutions (government departments) does not have private clients, nor does it produce goods or services for the private market. Rather, it provides services to the citizens of a country as a whole.

In this regard, public management or administration should be different to private sector principles. As noted above, this is largely influenced by the fact that the public sector is different from the private sector, which comprises profit-driven institutions and adopts “cut-throat” strategies to eliminate competition and increase its market share, for example, buy-outs and mergers. This view concurs with the argument advanced by Bain (1986) who argues that “each sector has its set of ‘vocabulary of concepts’, and as such, it could be beneficial that a clear demarcation and separation of terminology is created”.

Hughes (2003) argues that “administration is a narrower and more limited function than management, and, in consequence, changing from public administration to public management means a major change of theory and of function”. He further notes that the traditional model of public management, which dominated most of the twentieth century, has

changed since the 1980s to a more flexible, market-related management model. This has been largely influenced by the role that governments play in society, and the relationship between government and the citizenry.

Whether one views public management as a science or a paradigm is not important, rather, an understanding of public management as a process should be the focal point. Such understanding will allow the organisation to adopt relevant strategies and management practices to better the management of its human resources and subsequently improve its performance.

Hughes (2003) argues that “public management ‘is, to a large extent, management of the external environment of the organisation’, public administration is ‘within the context of the organisation’”. Therefore, management should be able to differentiate between the two practices, and apply them accordingly. This will dictate the nature of human resource management that management will adopt within the organisation. At the same time, failure by government to understand these two practices will lead to difficulties in implementing the relevant management practices within the organisation.

2.5.1 PUBLIC MANAGEMENT AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The management of human resources in an organisation, whether in a private or public organisation, is an important function that cannot be ignored. Notwithstanding the different management approaches that a private sector organisation will adopt as opposed to a public organisation, both need to dedicate resources and time to the management of their human resources. It has been noted that human resources are the most important assets an organisation possesses. They are the lifeline of any organisation, ensuring that it produces goods and services for human consumption.

According to Swanepoel, Erasmus, Schenk, van der Westhuizen and Wessels (2005), the management of human resources within the public sector (in South Africa) is critical for government in fulfilling its mandate to society. In this regard, they have advanced a concept referred to as Public Sector Human Resource Management (PSHRM). This concept is centred on what these scholars view as the complex and difficult nature of managing human resources within the South African public sector. Accordingly, this view reiterates the need for understanding the relationship between public management, leadership and human resource management.

The most important factor is this regard is the fact that PSHRM concentrates its focus on the management of human resources within public sector institutions. Embedded in this is an element of management, with management responsibilities necessary for the execution of the tasks required for the achievement of the organisational goals. In addition, the PSHRM raises the importance of human resources within the public institutions as they (public institutions) rely on these resources to execute and implement management decisions for the achievement of the organisational goals.

Subsequently, the ability of public institutions as well as government to deliver quality service to its citizens is largely dependent, and in turn influenced by, the quality of human resources it has at its disposal. This will inevitably include the management of such human resources as well as the public service leadership which carries the responsibility of providing leadership and vision within the public service.

a. The influence of the New Public Management discourse on human resource management functions

In the recent past, the changing views around the role of governments within societies have led to new ways of management in the public service. Traditionally, the role of government was seen to be all-

encompassing, with government controlling borders and state departments and providing all services on its own. However, due to fragile fiscal abilities and growing economic crises faced by developing countries, there has been an enormous change in thinking on the role of government in society and the economy, with government opting to form partnerships with civil society and the private sector for the provision of services to society.

Nowadays, government is largely instrumental in promoting the NPM doctrine within the public service. The current government has adopted the concept of outsourcing most government projects to outside consultants, who render a certain service for a fee. This has been aligned with the government's black economic empowerment initiative (BEE) that has taken the public sector by storm. These changes have also affected the management of human resources within the public service.

The advent and huge utilisation of outside consultancies (mostly black-owned) in the field of human resource management bears testimony to this reality. Most departments make use of consultants in one way or another, for example, in the advertising of their vacancies, recruitment and placement companies and research and development. Whether such reliance on consultants who largely employ private sector strategies in their conduct has benefitted the human resource management arena remains to be seen.

During the 1990s, world economic bodies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank pushed aggressively for the introduction of Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (ESAPs), particularly in the developing African States. Evidence of such attempts can be found in countries such as Zimbabwe, Ghana and Sri Lanka, among others (Batley and Larbi, 2004). Implicitly embedded within the introduction of such ESAPs in these countries was the philosophy surrounding the transformation of the public sector and a transparent government. Ultimately, this led to the progressive spread of the NPM within developing countries.

Barzelay (2002) maintains that the term “new public management” was first conceived by political scientists who were working in the field of public administration. They conceived the NPM as a point of view on organisational design in the public sector. Based on this idea, the philosophy of NPM grew and gained popularity around the world, eventually reaching South Africa around the 1990s when government embarked on a major public sector makeover.

The proponents of the NPM model viewed the traditional public management model as wasteful, inflexible, unresponsive to the needs of citizens and caught up in rigid rules and regulations. They therefore proposed a more flexible model, relying largely on the principles and private sector techniques as an answer to problems that bedevilled the public sector. Hence the new public management model was born.

If such thinking as promoted by the proponents of the NPM was to succeed, government, including state departments, needed to change the manner in which it carried out its business. The introduction of private sector ideology to state departments meant that they needed to operate like private firms, with all business units contributing to the success of the organisation. The inflexible nature of the public departments needed to make way for flexible thinking and partnerships.

Human resource management was not insulated from these changes. It too faced huge pressures to change the way it conducted its business, with the adoption of new strategies in management relations within the organisation. Organisations began to talk about strategic partnering of business units within the organisation, lean structured organisations, as well as the need for performance accountability by individuals and individual units within the organisation.

A new era of management dawned, with attendant euphoria, and all (public and private sectors) were carried along on its wave. South Africa was not to be left behind. Government joined the race for the new public

management syndrome, and introduced major public sector reforms through white papers in the 1990s. The dichotomy created by the quest for private sector philosophies in state organisations also had an effect within the South African public service.

2.6 THE INFLUENCE OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE ORGANISATION ON THE MANAGEMENT OF PEOPLE

The structure of the organisation is vital as it helps define and provide an understanding of the roles within an organisation and the location of power. Ignoring the role that the structure of the organisation plays in dictating the role-players and their roles could lead one to arrive at inconclusive findings. It is an invisible hand that blends the different players and roles together and allows them to function coherently within the organisation. Also, the structure allows for the implementation of rules, discipline and command within the organisation.

With the influence of globalisation and the introduction of new public management, most public entities have seen a need to re-engineer their organisational structures. The end result of this process has been the introduction of flexible and lean structures within the public service. However, it should be noted that evidence (particularly in South Africa following the failure of GEAR) seems to suggest that these are not always effective or efficient, in particular, because the public service is by nature driven not by profit but by provision of service to the masses and the creation of public goods.

Notwithstanding the argument raised above, an analysis of literature (Cribbin, 1972; Gioja, 2000; Pascale, Milleman and Sayles, 1989) points to the importance of an organisational structure and the relationship between it and the size, strategy, environment and culture of the organisation. Pascale, Milleman and Gioja (2000) argue that “the organisational design is the invisible hand that brings organisations to life and life to

organisations". They argue further that the organisational design is critical in ensuring that the organisation operates effectively.

The issue of organisational design is closely related to human resource management. Because the human resource component is the custodian of an organisational structure, and as such controls the structure, it is critical that it understands the importance of such a structure to the organisation as well as the impact it has on organisational effectiveness. The organisational structure performs the role of allocating work and responsibilities, whilst allowing for activities to be directed amongst individuals. It is seen as ensuring that all within the organisation know what is expected of them, in order to deliver on the organisational objectives. This could be regarded as echoing the view that the organisational structure is closely related to human resources.

Sayles (1989), Morgan (1997), Mullins (1993) and Jaffer (2001) have provided different forms of organisational structure, from traditional hierarchical structures to modern flat structures. These are the two main opposing forms of structures that have dominated the discourse. Traditionally, the bureaucratic structure, informed by the need for control and authority, dominated the discourse. However, in today's world, with the influence of globalisation, organisations have changed their structures to place more emphasis on flexibility and results. This has led to new forms of organisational design, what Jaffer (2001) refers to as "post bureaucratic organisations".

Like most government institutions, the PSC structure can be seen to fit what Jaffer refers to as a "rational-bureaucratic model of organisation" (2001: 89). For human resources, this is crucial as it dictates the power allocation and the important role that management ought to play in managing the organisation. It also has a direct impact on the role of the human resource component in assisting management and achieving the strategic objectives of the organisation.

As a support unit and the custodian of human resource policies, HR needs to create environments conducive both for management to implement its strategic objectives and to a healthy working environment for employees.

2.7 LEADERSHIP AND THE GAME OF INFLUENCE

Assuming the role of leadership within the organisation, human resources should express the work ethic and values that hold the organisation together. HR needs to allocate organisational resources and human capital in terms of the requirements that exist within the organisation, to chart the best way forward for the achievement of organisational goals and to manage change and uncertainty during turbulent times.

Leadership is about providing vision and guidance within an organisation. It is about exercising influence and convincing followers to perform as you want them to. It should be noted, however, that leadership requires the leader to be visible, to be seen and to be proactive. As such, it is important that human resource managers realise this and lead from the front. They need to be able convince employees to perform at the optimum, and this they can do through the various human resource policies and practices they implement. For example, most organisations will emphasise the need for the implementation of a customer satisfaction survey as a tool to form an understanding of what line functions think of the support they receive from the human resource unit.

According to Sayles (1989) and Charan, Drotter and Noel (2001), leaders are concerned with the future. It is, therefore, important that the human resources component, as part of the management team within the organisation, should assume the role of leadership. It should concern itself with leading the future growth of the organisation through effective human resource interventions. It is about looking ahead and providing motivation for achievement in the future.

Brevis, Vrba and de Klerk (1997) maintain that “leadership is the activity that infuses energy into the organisation to activate its members and resources to get things moving and keep them in motion”. However, it ought to be noted that leadership as an explanatory principle or management tool is implemented and defined in various ways within organisations. It is thus important that the human resources component assumes a leadership role within the organisation and uses such influence to focus both management and employees on achieving the organisational objectives.

2.7.1 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are complementary but different from one another. Leadership is about motivating and inspiring people to perform. It is the art of getting others to do the work for you, whilst ensuring that such people are motivated to perform, and rewarded for their performance. On the other hand, management is about devising plans to cope with complex management decisions. Management is about managing processes, dealing with and solving problems and ensuring that rules are obeyed.

The two concepts of management and leadership are interrelated rather than contradictory. The one supports and allows the other to be effective. “The leaderless work organization is nothing more than pie-in-the sky propaganda or a Hollywood portrayal of the good life”, according to Gibson, Ivancevich, and Donnelly (1994: 398). It is important that human resource practitioners are cognisant of this reality. Ultimately, the presence or lack of leadership within an organisation will affect the relationship between management and staff, including the organisational culture.

Inevitably, like management, leadership involves people management and relations management. “Management and leadership both involve deciding what needs to be done, creating networks of people to accomplish the agenda, and ensuring that the work actually gets done” (Kotter, 2001: 2). Daft (2002) argues that highly successful leaders like

Jack Welsh and Gary Henson, the Vice President of Chrysler Corporation Division, have mastered the process of effective leadership. Ultimately, the type of leadership that exists in the organisation will produce a group of highly satisfied or dissatisfied employees, and this should be a concern for human resources management.

2.7.2 PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS.

It is important that the human resource component realises that people perform different roles in society, such as a mother, sister, an employee of the organisation and a union member. The human resources component should be aware of these dynamics when approaching people. Whether the organisation approaches its people as individuals or as a group will have a bearing on how people react and perform within the organisation. For instance, approaching people as a social system is important because people interact with one another within the workplace. They rely on one another to perform certain tasks which are impossible for one man to perform. In this manner groups within the organisation are formed.

This is important for management because managing groups requires a different approach than managing an individual. Two distinct forms of groups exist within an organisation, formal and informal. Formal groups are those set out in the organisational structure, and informal groups are those formed by individuals as they interact with one another. The latter tend to be formed along the lines of friendship, race, gender and education. With the formation of these groups, an informal organisational culture develops. Informal culture is an unwritten, unprescribed culture that people create and share amongst themselves.

Among these groups, an enormous amount of influence and knowledge exists. In order for a manager to tap into this knowledge and influence and to manipulate it to the advantage of the organisation, he or she needs to understand these groups and how they operate, the amount of power they wield and ultimately how to manage them. Appreciation of this reality is

important for a human resource practitioner to gain insight into how better to manage people within the organisation.

According to Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly (1994)

> it is apparent that the successful management of an organisation to a large extent revolves around the way **people** in the organisation are managed, and an unprecedented interest in factors such as relationship, **LEADERSHIP**, motivation, communication, group information and teamwork gave rise to an extended body of knowledge on the management of people.

2.8 THE STATE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SERVICE

An analysis of the state of human resources in any country should be informed by both global and continental states of affairs and such analysis should not be conducted in isolation. This is certainly true if we consider the reality we face as a result of globalisation and technological development which are taking place worldwide. The world has become one huge entity, with various countries interconnected with one another by technological advancements. Changes in one country's economic and related factors tend to in one way or the other affect other countries throughout the whole continent. The current financial turmoil affecting the US economy and the banking sector is a case in point.

With the introduction of the new government in South Africa after 1994, a number of changes were introduced within the public service. As mentioned in chapter 1 of this report, the primary aim of these changes was to transform the public service from the old racially focused public service to a more people-centred system. Along with this were the changes that emerged within the human resource management fraternity. These changes were aimed at ensuring that the human resource management discourse keeps abreast of the changes taking place within the public service.

A common theme that seems to emerge from such discussions is that human resources within the local sphere have not, as yet, developed adequately to assume a more strategic role within organisations. In the report produced by the PSC (2007), a number of challenges facing the management of human resources in South Africa and other developing countries were raised. Some of these challenges are as follows:

- A perception exists that South African labour laws are inflexible, the cost of hiring and firing is high, and that it is virtually impossible to dismiss employees in South Africa.
- As South Africa is a developing country, competing with developed countries for the available scarce skilled labour force, it is difficult to recruit and retain competent professionals.
- There is global competition for talent and recruitment of knowledgeable workers. This competition seems to favour developed countries with better working conditions and huge salaries. With reference to South Africa, this problem is exacerbated by stiff competition for skilled workers, professionals and senior government officials imposed by the private sector on the already ailing public service.
- Human resource planning within government departments has not improved.
- The issue of job-hopping within government is a huge problem. Certain kinds of talent are scarce within the country, specifically financial skills, information technology and technical skills. Owing to high demand, these workers are often poached by other departments, where they command better salaries, and hop from one post to another, without accumulating the necessary skill and experience before they move to the next level (PSC, 2007).

Over the years, a number of initiatives have been implemented within the public service to address the abnormalities highlighted above, the latest being the proposed development of the Single Public Service Bill, 2007. This Bill aims to implement rationalisation and harmonisation in terms and conditions of service within the public service in all three spheres of government. It is hoped that through such initiatives, the state of human resource management within the public service will improve from being mechanical and reactive to becoming strategic and proactive.

In this regard, the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) as custodian of human resource management policies should be at the forefront of this development.

2.9 THE HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT AS A HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIC PARTNER

Any organisation that is serious about the development of its employees must have a human resources development strategy. The concept of the human resources development (HRD) strategy arises from the fact that training and development are part of our social and professional lives. Some departments may create a separate entity that will be responsible for the training and development within the organisation, whilst others may opt to make the HRD unit a sub-unit of the overall human resource management component.

Whether the organisation bestows this responsibility on a separate unit, the human resource development unit, or makes it part of the overall HRM unit, the need for human resource development to support the implemented organisational strategy is critical. Auluck (2006) argues that "improving performance through better employee development practice is a recurrent theme within the UK public sector". In this regard, governments across the globe, including the South African government, are under enormous pressure to make better use of their human resources. Consequently, pressure is often brought to bear upon human resource

development to come up with strategies to support the organisation in developing its people.

Erasmus and van Dyk (2003) argue that “the training function in an organisation is part and parcel of the human resource function and it is therefore essential that the broad human resource strategic plan should first be finalised”. The overall human resource plan should ensure that the people with the right skills are procured and, in addition, that the right skills are available to achieve the organisational goals. As such, the development and maintenance of strong working ties between human resource management and human resource development is required.

Furthermore, Erasmus and van Dyk (2003) argue that “the main aim of training and development in organisations should be to assess and address skills deficiencies for the short and long term and should therefore be a priority”. Endorsing this view, the DPSA has developed a document referred to as the “Strategic Framework Vision 2015” for the South African public service.

The DPSA (2008) states that “the strategic framework for the development of human resources in the Public Service is a sub-system of a larger human resource development framework which addresses the focused demand for human resource development in the Public Service”. Through this framework, the DPSA hopes to address the skills problem within the South African public service.

However, it must be kept in mind that the HRD component cannot address the challenges of skills alone. A strong partnering between management, human resource management and human resource development is required. Scholars such as Auluck (2006), Erasmus and van Dyk (2003) and Baird, Scheiner and Laird (1983) have advanced a concept of strategic human resource development. However, Auluck (2003) cautions that this concept is not a clear-cut phenomenon. He argues that despite

the fact that the conceptual frameworks relating to this concept are well defined, what this means in practice is less clear.

Despite the challenges of defining this conceptual framework, Auluck (2003) maintains that “people and skills development (which the author has taken to mean ‘human resource development’) is seen as playing an invaluable role in enabling the public sector to respond to the demands for improved public service and performance”. Ultimately, the success of the HRD in its efforts to build capacity and assist management in attaining its strategic objectives will to a large extent depend on the alliances that have been built within the three role players: management, HRM and HRD itself. A need for greater cooperation as well as better communication channels exists.

2.10 STRATEGY AND STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Amongst the key functions performed by HR in an organisation are human resource planning, job analysis, human resource forecasting and talent sourcing, to mention just a few. The primary function that organisations bestow upon the human resources component is to assist managers within the organisation to better manage their people. Human resources can make a unique and critical contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation, including the achievement of its goals.

The need for a strategy development process may seem obvious, but it has proven to be elusive for most organisations. More often than not, particularly within the public sector, organisations operate without human resource plans. Interestingly enough, when such organisations are unable to deliver on their mandates, they often wonder why. Indeed, the answer is always obvious: how does one expect to succeed if one does not have a plan (short or long term) for the sourcing, development and management of its most important resource, its people?

2.10.1 THE HUMAN RESOURCE PLAN

Of particular interest to us as human resource practitioners is the increased emphasis on the development of a human resource plan and participative management. Suggestions have been made that in order to achieve an effective and efficient human resource component, a well developed plan or strategy must be implemented. Du Toit et al. (2007) argue that “today, human resource management should be integrated with organisational plans and be in line with the broad organisational plans”.

Accordingly, Du Toit et al. (2007) assert that the primary objective of the human resource plan “is to provide concrete guidelines and steps that indicate how the business’s short-, medium- and long-term human resource requirements can be provided for”. Indeed, the analysis of the information attainable through the human resource plan will allow the organisation to draft and compile an organisational human resource strategy.

Equally important is the appreciation of the fact advanced by Du Toit et al. (2007) that “such an HR plan should dovetail with the strategic plan of the business”. Indeed, central to the publication of the WPTPS was government’s attempt at redefining the role of government and the public service. The WPTPS suggested a number of approaches that could be used to redefine and transform the public service. These included but were not limited to:

- a move away from centralised and corporate planning, trimming state expenditure and the size of the public service,
- ensuring greater accountability and devolution of managerial authority and resource control, and
- increasing emphasis on HR development and participative management.

The human resources function is an integral part of strategic planning and management within the organisation. It is vital that the human resource function be managed efficiently and effectively in order to ensure that the organisation operates successfully. Nel and Werner (2004) argue that “the need for active participation by HR in the realisation of the organisational strategy is vital, and the organisational vision, mission and values and strategy are only meaningful if employees participate in the formulation of these concepts, and they translate and integrate them into everyday behavior”.

Such thinking contradicts the view expressed by Bryson (1988) who argues that “the corporate strategic planning typically focuses on an organisation and what it should do to improve its performance, not on a *community* or a *function*, such as health care within a community or personnel within an organisation”. However, as the literature suggests, this is not entirely true. In recent times, literature has pointed to the fact that organisations need to develop and implement a “unit specific strategy”, for an example, a human resource strategy.

An organisational strategy is a deliberate action or plan developed in order to improve the organisation’s performance and in turn to achieve a competitive advantage over its rivals. In order to achieve competitive advantage, Ehlers and Lazenby (2004) argue that the organisation will first need to meet and satisfy the needs of its stakeholders, which they argue means adding value.

The idea of satisfying the needs of stakeholders and adding value to such stakeholders is equally important for public sector organisations. One should be cognisant of the fact that public sector organisations do not compete with one another in terms of market share and customers. In addition, public sector organisations do not produce goods and services for the private market in order to make a profit. On the contrary, their business is producing public goods to satisfy the needs of the country’s citizens.

The development and implementation of the unit strategy is, therefore, vital. Without this, the organisation or the organisational unit will not be able to monitor and gauge its progress in terms of achieving its desired goals. As one of the overall organisational business functions, human resources should then be mindful of this reality. The human resource game plan (strategy) will allow the unit to procure the right people with the necessary skills and attitudes, allowing the organisation to deliver on its mandate.

Hiltrop (1996) argues that "throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, academics have proposed a number of models and theories that postulate explanatory links between HRM and competitive advantage". The models intended to explain the important role that HRM plays in ensuring that the organisation achieves competitive advantage over its competitors. As noted above, in public governments, departments also compete with one another for the scarce resources available within the state basket. As such, being able to outsmart other departments in securing a larger piece of the pie is critical.

Most documented cases in this regard include the contingency models of HRM. Contingency models of HRM emphasise "the importance of developing 'appropriate' HRM systems that are consistent with broad organisational requirements such as quality enhancement or productivity improvement". According to this model, supported by the argument advanced by Swanepoel et al. (2003), the underlying assumption is that organisational effectiveness depends on the existence of a "fit" between human resource practice and business strategies, and how well this matches all other business units as well as the overall organisational strategy.

Swanepoel et al. (2003) define the concept of "fit" as the compatibility between the HR strategy and other key managerial and business strategies. It is also important to ensure that the "HRM corporate strategy fits with the business strategy and is facilitated by the execution of the

HRM business plan" (Swanepoel et al., 2003). On the one hand, Hiltrop (1996) argues that

> different HRM practices serve to elicit and reinforce the appropriate behaviors in the organisation". "These role behaviours are seen to cut across the specific skills, knowledge and abilities that are required to perform particular tasks, and are considered instrumental in the implementation of competitive strategies. HRM strategies are all about making business strategies work.

Ehlers and Lazenby (2004) suggest that the model adopted by the South African Breweries is largely premised on the contingency model. They cite "the SAB Way", as a case in point. They argue that SAB's strategic people management differentiates it from other organisations. "SAB was voted the 'Best Company to work for in SA' for the past two years by the Corporate Research foundation/Finance Week survey, and has been in the top three of the 'Best Company to Work For' study undertaken by Deloittes and the FM for the past three years" (Ehlers and Lazenby, 2004). They further argue that SAB attracts, trains, develops and retains talented, competent people and rewards them accordingly. This points to a well crafted and implemented people management strategy and the results bear testimony of this.

Whilst it could be argued that strategic planning or strategic management covers organisation-wide planning, different units within the organisation also need to have their own strategic plans that complement the overall organisational strategy. Such strategies are not aimed at replacing the organisational strategy, but rather at supporting and complementing it.

Bryson (1998) emphasises the fact that any strategic planning process is worthwhile only if it helps key decision makers *think* and *act* strategically. Strategic planning is not an end in itself, but merely a set of concepts to help leaders make important decisions and take important actions. The implementation of the organisation strategy is as important as its

development. Without careful implementation, a strategy is not worth the paper it is written on. For a strategy to be successfully implemented, “certain drivers should be in place; these include leadership, culture, reward systems, organisational structures and allocation of resources” (Ehlers and Lazenby, 2004).

According to Salaman, Storey and Billsberry (2005), “it is virtually impossible to define strategic human resource management (SHRM) because there is nothing as SHRM. The SHRM is not a unitary phenomenon but a collection of phenomena. It consists of very diverse phenomena: prescriptions, models, theories and critiques”. Instead of trying to define strategy, focus should be placed on the role that human resource practitioners play in the achievement of the strategic objectives of the organisation.

The concept of SHRM can assist an organisation in achieving its objectives in two ways:

a) Through ensuring that the organisation achieves long-term viability, and

b) Providing a form of sustained economic advantage over its competitors (Boxall and Purcell, 2003: 48).

According to Erasmus et al. (2005), “adopting a strategic perspective to HRM implies that the term ‘public sector human resource manager’ can almost be viewed as a misnomer”. That is to say that human resource managers are not responsible only for the management of human resources, but rather are there to help manage the public sector in its totality, ensuring that it is resourced with the right human resource knowledge, skills and competencies to help it survive in the long term” (Erasmus et al., 2005).

The shift in focus within human resources, from traditional administrative functions to a more strategic role, has finally been realised and welcomed

in South Africa (especially by the public service). Nel and Werner argue that the ball is now in the court of human resource practitioners who must shift their mindset, and take part in strategic decisions in order to meet the expectations of top management (2004: 522). They further maintain that "the key idea behind overall strategic management is to coordinate all of the company's resources, in such a way that everything a company does contributes to carrying out its strategy". Strategic in this regard will include "adopting wide-ranging techniques such as organisational redesign, process re-engineering and outsourcing" (DPSA, 1997).

2.11 HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The human resource strategy should be informed and aligned to the overall organisational strategy. It is, however, important to highlight the fact that the implementation of the HR strategy is as important as its development. Whilst an enormous amount of effort is required in developing a successful organisational strategy, which is then cascaded down to a unit specific strategy, an equal amount of effort is required in terms of the implementation of this strategy.

Strategy implementation is about strategic communication, interpretation and adoption, whilst at the same time ensuring that the ideas that management has are translated into action in order to achieve the objectives of the organisation (Ehlers and Lazenby, 2004). In this regard, Ehlers and Lazenby (2004*)* identified five drivers and instruments for strategy implementation. However he argues that only three are essential in this regard, namely leadership, organisational culture and reward systems. These drivers and instruments are critical to the contemporary organisation as they concern the people of that organisation. They are also equally critical to the human resource component as it is mandated to ensure that the welfare of people within the organisation is managed efficiently.

2.12 CENTRALITY OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE UNIT IN THE ATTAINMENT OF THE ORGANISATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Successful organisations have mastered the art of aligning their individual business unit strategies with the overall organisational strategy. Such business unit strategies include the human resource strategy. At the same time, it is commonly accepted that those organisations that still do not have a human resource strategy in place are doomed to failure. Employees need to participate not only in the formulation and provision of support to the overall organisational strategy, but in addition, they need to ensure that it aligns its business unit strategy (HR strategy) to the overall organisational strategy.

This has a tremendous impact on public organisation as most organisations' business units operate in silos. Such organisations have not been able to incorporate individual business units' strategies into the overall organisational strategy. It is also important that the organisation develops and implements a sound human resource strategy. Such an HR strategy should be aligned to the overall organisational strategy. The need for human resources in supporting the organisational strategy has led to the development of the concept of strategic human resource management. Effective alignment between the organisational and other business units' strategies will create synergy within the organisation. Like any profit orientated organisation, public departments need synergy to be able to deliver quality service.

Notwithstanding the amount of literature that exists in support of strategic human resources (Boxall, 1994; Budhwar, 2000; Stroh and Caligiuri (1998); Swanepoel et al., 2005; Truss and Gratton, 1994), Auluck (2006) cautions against human resources deploying more of its energy on being a strategic HR at the risk of neglecting more routine tasks, some of which may be viewed as critical by some stakeholders. In addition, consensus exists amongst authors that "it takes more than a change in title to ensure

that the HR function takes its proper place as an important means of attaining business objectives" (Auluck, 2006: 168).

Therefore, it is imperative that there is a balance between the routine functions that HR managers ought to perform on a daily basis and the strategic role that they play. Furthermore, according to Auluck (2006), "HR directors are often exhorted to play a more strategic role in organisations. This is regarded as more desirable than what is perceived to be personnel's 'traditional administrative' role". However, there is a large enough body of evidence to suggest ambivalence on the precise meaning of the term strategic and this further questions the extent to which it is possible for departments to change their role on a whim.

When the strategic human resource discourse is pursued, it is important that careful consideration be given to the nature and extent of such a strategic role and that those HR practitioners themselves are capable of advancing and performing the task at hand. Stroh and Caligiuri (1998) agree with this notion of employees being a source of competitive advantage. They argue that even past research supports this view, and add that employees can determine the ultimate success of their organisations.

For an organisation to realise its objectives, it needs an effective way of managing its employees. In this regard, it must develop and implement a human resource strategy, a human resource plan, including a recruitment strategy. The organisation must realise that the nature of the people it employs will determine the success and/or failure of the organisation. "One can conclude, therefore, that when an organisation's HR strategy is linked to its business strategy, organisational effectiveness should improve (Stroh and Caligiuri, 1998: 2).

2.13 THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AS A STRATEGIC BUSINESS PARTNER

Ensuring that the role of human resource management is elevated to a senior one of strategic business partner is the focus of most organisations, within both the private and the public sector. The reasons behind this move are informed by the critical role that the HRM component plays in an organisation. In this regard, the HRM plays an important role in terms of providing support and advice to management in matters relating to the management of employment relations.

Kenton and Yarnall (2005) argue that the concept of business partner implies a "level of strategic intervention which goes beyond the individual". They argue that this differentiates between the historic role of HR that was about people and work at an operational level, and the new role which includes professionalism and credibility. Furthermore, they maintain that this role includes having a good understanding of strategy and what it means to be working strategically. In this regard, Kenton and Yarnall (2005) argue that partnership implies "working alongside, equal responsibility and shared skills and expertise, and supporting clients with business rather than coming from an expert perspective."

The above suggests that HRM as a strategic business partner is equal to other business units whose task it is to provide advice and support to the organisation. HRM is no longer an operational support unit whose expertise is only applicable to operational issues, but rather a strategic player entrusted with the task of ensuring that the organisation achieves its goals. Kenton and Yarnall (2005) argue that the aforementioned goes much further than just the change of title. They argue that "the difference between an operational HR role and a strategic Business Partner goes beyond changing job descriptions to looking more carefully at the skills and the capacity for an individual to influence change at a strategic level".

It is important, therefore, that the HRM component should be aware of this phenomenon, and ensure that it is well capacitated in terms of expertise and understanding of the core business of the organisation as well as strategy, in order to make a meaningful contribution. This requires a change in the mindset of the HR practitioners and a new set of skills. Finally, Kenton and Yarnall (2005) maintain that "it is unlikely that any HR business partnership can succeed unless the HR function has spent time analysing what it is seeking to achieve and how it can add value to the business".

2.14 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

One of the most important characteristics associated with good governance is answerability to the society by government officials and accountability. This ensures that those serving in government act in a manner that benefits the country as a whole and not just themselves. It also ensures that the society is able to summon those in government structures to account for their actions. Therefore, it is important that management ensures that the organisational strategy incorporates the elements of good governance.

Corporate governance refers to the informal and formal relationship between the organisation and its stakeholders in the general society. Taking cognisance of the fact that management relies on policies, procedures and frameworks to manage the organisation, and that the human resource component is the custodian of such prescripts, it stands to reason that the human resource component has a critical role in ensuring that the organisation adheres to the prescripts of corporate governance.

The King Report on Corporate Governance (2002) is regarded as the cornerstone of the fundamentals of corporate governance in South Africa. The report provided a foundation for many of the attempts to improve management and promote corporate governance, within both the private and the public sector. This relates to promoting accountability and transparency in the management of organisations.

Therefore, the human resource component, as part of management within the organisation, should ensure that the overall organisational strategy as well as the policies that are in place in order to implement such a strategy are developed such that they entail and promote good governance within the organisation. In addition, the human resource component should ensure that it promotes accountability and transparency within the organisation.

2.15 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THE STUDY

From the review of literature in this chapter, a number of theoretical frameworks that could be applied to organisations have been identified. The effectiveness and appropriateness of various frameworks proposed in this sub-section will vary from one organisation to another, depending on certain factors within each department. Factors that could have a bearing on the success or failure of these frameworks include management buy-in into the model, the nature and size of the organisation, as well as external factors (legal and socio-economic factors).

In developing the various models that are proposed in this study, the researcher will borrow from various models that have been developed, some of which have been covered in this study. Whilst the researcher will borrow just a few from the wealth of models that exist, this is not intended to imply that one model is superior to another. The models proposed in this study have largely borrowed their principles from the Contingency model of HRM, the Systems-functional models of HRM and the HC BRidge® model advanced by Boudreau & Ramstad.

2.15.1 CONTINGENCY MODEL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

In this chapter, reference has been made to the contingency model of HRM. This model emphasises the importance of developing appropriate HRM systems to influence the financial performance of an organisation, that is, the return on investment. According to Swanepoel (2003), organisational effectiveness and productivity depends largely on the existence of a fit between the human resource practices and the overall organisational strategy, and how well these practices fit with other business units' strategies. In a study conducted by Yao-Sheng (2006) in 93 firms using controls of the parent organisation of a conglomerate to influence productivity of its subsidiaries, it was found that there was a positive relationship between the use of appropriate HRM controls and the productivity of the subsidiary.

The contingency models of HRM rely on the use of HRM controls to influence and improve the productivity of the organisation. In another study of a total of 102 single product firms conducted by Snell and Youndt (1995), it was found that there was a positive relationship between the HRM controls used by the executives and changes in the financial performance of the organisation. For instance, when the approach to the HRM controls was based on behaviour controls, the firm's performance was higher when the executives had complete knowledge of the cause-effects. Furthermore, when the controls were based on input control, performance was higher when standards of desirability were ambiguous (Snell & Youndt, 1995).

According to Snell and Youndt (1995), from a practical point of view, "management should take in cognisance the several contingencies that might affect and guide their choices among various approaches to HRM, as well as the effects these choices have on the performance of the organisation". Therefore, for management the choice of controls and decisions made could have an impact on the productivity of the

organisation: it is thus imperative that management takes note of this notion in its decision making process.

This is particularly true if one notes that the success and/or failure of the organisation will to a large extent depend on the manner in which its employees are managed, both as individuals and as a group. Snell and Youndt (2005) argue that “researchers have suggested that HRM practices such as selection, training, performance appraisal and rewards systems may each bear some relationship to the firm’s performance”. Hence, management should pay special attention to these variables when making its decisions to ensure that the organisation performs at its optimum level.

The contingency model is largely premised on the notion of fit. The theory behind the notion of fit is that effectiveness of any HR practice or set of practices for impacting on a firm’s performance depends upon the firm’s strategy (or conversely, the effectiveness of any strategy depends upon having the right HR practices) (Wright, 1998: 1). In terms of the notion of fit, great emphasis is placed upon the need for congruence between HR and strategy. The management of people within the organisation is inevitably linked to the performance of the organisation itself.

Scholars such as Prahalad (1983), Reich (1990) and Stewart (1990) argue that “as the dynamics of competition accelerate people are perhaps the only truly sustainable source of competitive advantage”. They further argue that the effective management of human capital, even more than physical capital, may be the ultimate determinant of organisational performance and survival (Snell and Youndt, 1995: 1).

It is therefore imperative that management as well as HRM should bear these facts in mind when making management decisions. According to this phenomenon, management needs to be aware of the influence that various control measures could have on the financial and overall performance of an organisation. In addition, management must be

cognisant of the fact that the way in which the human resources are managed will determine the success or failure of the organisation.

2.15.2 THE SYSTEM-FUNCTIONAL MODEL

According to Swanepoel et al. (2003), the system-functional model is a theoretical model that aims to provide HR practitioners with an insight into how processes and systems work in practice. It is founded on the premise that in practice “all the organisational functional areas, internal and external factors, decisions and activities are interrelated, and in dynamic interaction making for a very complex phenomenon”. Swanepoel et al. argue further that, within this complex phenomenon, one can apply the basic management principles of planning, organising and controlling to the human resource system of an organisation.

Through the application of the basic management principles to the organisational HRM system, management would be in the position to control and influence the processes of the organisation, as well as its performance using the HRM system as a management lever. Swanepoel et al. (2003) add that “in this way the HRM process can then be viewed as the planning and organising for, and the directing/leading and control of, the organisation’s human resource subsystem”. Using the HRM system as a lever, management is able to plan and organise what jobs are to be done and by whom. Furthermore, management is able to exercise control over the processes and make management decisions within the organisation.

In order to effectively and efficiently perform the abovementioned functions, appropriate HR plans or strategies need to be developed and implemented. These plans or strategies will be aligned to the overall or “grand” organisational strategy. Once all these activities and processes are in place, the organisational HR subsystem will be activated, and the organisation will be good to operate and produce the required output.

It should be noted that this model places emphasis on the interconnection between the organisational HRM system and the basic management principles, where the HRM system is utilised as a controlling, planning and organising tool to ensure that the organisation achieves its objectives.

2.15.3 THE HC BRIDGE® FRAMEWORK

Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) believe that "a paradigm shift is taking place around the HR discourse and business leaders increasingly define organisational effectiveness beyond traditional financial and shareholder outcomes to encompass 'sustainability'- achieving success today without compromising the needs of the future". Sustainability has been defined to include "values, governance, transparency, and ethics, as well as such goals as diversity, social responsibility, supporting human and employee rights, protecting the environment, and contributing to the community" (Boudrea and Ramstad, 2005: 130).

Boudreau and Ramstad argue that the traditional HR paradigm defines the "traditional HR contribution as supporting organisation goals through aligned HR services, policies, practices, and programs", adding that the traditional HR contribution to the organisation needs to be reviewed. They argue that, over time, HR has struggled to define its strategic role within organisations. However, the answer to this phenomenon can be discovered "not only in benchmarking HR organisations, but also in benchmarking the evolution of more mature strategic functions such as finance and marketing" (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005: 131).

The HC BRidge® model advanced by Boudreau and Ramstad outlines the logical supporting talentship, and is based on three anchor points, namely efficiency, effectiveness and impact (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2003: 132). Boudreau and Ramstad believe that the term efficiency focuses on "what resources are used to deliver HR practices, and the typical indicators of efficiency would be cost-per hire and time to fill vacancies". Effectiveness would focus on "how HR policies and practices affect talent pools and

organisation structures to which they are directed". They argue that effectiveness refers to the "outcomes of HR policies and practices on human capacity (a combination of capacity, opportunity and motivation and the resulting aligned actions of the target talent pools" (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005: 132).

Efficiency and effectiveness, according to the Boudreau and Ramstad's (2005) thinking, has to do with getting the best possible results with the least input. Effectiveness, specifically, addresses the question of how the HR system in an organisation affects the ability and attitude of the personnel to deliver optimum output. It answers questions around how the HR policies and system improve on the available talent, and the capacity of the available talent to improve organisational performance. Whilst financial effectiveness can be assessed in terms of figures and return on investment, human resource effectiveness, in this regard, is assessed in terms of people (talent) productivity.

Lastly, Boudreau and Ramstad argue that impact asks questions such as "How do differences in the quality or availability of different talent pools affect strategic success? (2005: 132)". The notion of impact addresses the notion of after-effect or meta-analysis. It tries to answer the question of how the available differing talent in an organisation affects its strategic objectives. Furthermore, it answers the question of how improvements (through training and development) to the available talent would improve the ability of the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives.

In a study undertaken in DuPont and three other large companies in 2000, Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) applied the HC BRidge® model to advance their argument. These large companies agreed to share technology, free of charge, with African scientists to increase food security in areas where mass starvation was a recurring threat. They would donate patent rights, seed variables and laboratory know-how.

They argued that, using a traditional strategic analysis, only the financial outcomes and competition would identify patent rights, seed variables and laboratory know-how as strategic resources. However, in applying talentship and HC BRidge® analysis to the sustainability objective of alleviating hunger in Africa, the resources of laboratory know-how and seed variables are still important, but now it is for their effectiveness in hunger reduction, not just profits that are important, (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2005: 134).

They concluded that through the application of HC BRidge® and talentship "the DuPont's and African scientists will be able to discover what starvation preventing features can be cheaply and easily deployed". Through the application of the HC BRidge® model, the scientist will be able to discover the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the resources that were donated.

The HC BRidge® model is thus pivotal in providing clarity on the question of efficiency and effectiveness of human resources. It assists managers in making decisions on the quality of human resources that the organisation should deploy at the most cost effective price, and the impact that these resources will have on the achievement of organisational strategy. This is critical for managers and HR managers alike, as decisions on the availability of talent within the organisation affect the effectiveness of the organisation. Furthermore, it clarifies and provides answers to the question of the need for training, effectiveness of available talent, both before and after training, and the impact of this talent on the realisation of organisational strategy.

2.16 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the management of human resources is of paramount importance within an organisation. Human resource management is becoming increasingly involved with strategic planning and the development of means by which people can work proactively towards the

achievement of organisational objectives. One of the common and crucial mistakes that organisations make is to restrict and consign the management of human resources squarely to the human resource component, with management playing no role in this regard.

Furthermore, the relationship between management and the human resource component should be dealt with effectively, with management and line managers taking responsibility for the management of human resources. Secondly, it should be noted that the days of human resources being limited to administrative functions within the organisation are over. Nowadays, human resource practitioners are important strategic players within the organisation, whose role is critical in providing strategic support and advice to management.

This is all the more relevant to the public service, bearing in mind that the role of government within society is not limited only to the governing of the country and the formulation of legislation: it also plays a crucial role in stabilising and enhancing the day-to-day administration of the state and its resources. If the state is to perform such a task, it requires state organisations that are able to deliver on their mandate.

PSHRM plays an important role in ensuring that organisations (public institutions) are able to execute and implement management decisions for the achievement of the organisational goals. It is important, therefore, that both human resource practitioners as well as management change their attitude towards the role of HR within the organisation. Such a change in mindset should be centred on the role of public institutions as being at the centre of achieving the goals of government, and the “developmental state agendas” that government purports to pursue.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of this research report is to investigate and analyse the role of human resource management in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy within the PSC. Taking this into account, it is imperative that the research design and methodology of the study facilitated the realisation of this objective. This chapter will, therefore, cover the following areas:

- The nature of the research
- Method of data collection
- Sampling
- Data analysis
- Reliability and validity
- Limitations of the research.

3.2 THE NATURE OF THE RESEARCH

This study is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research focuses on investigating particular aspects of social life as constructed and construed by a particular group or individual's life experiences. Welman et al. (2005) argue that "qualitative research can be used successfully in describing social groups of people, communities and organisations". Various scholars view qualitative research differently. Trochim (2002) believes that "the qualitative research approach naturally lends itself to yielding detailed expositions and experiences of the phenomenon of interest". In conducting the study, the researcher interacts with the participants and adopts various methods of collecting data aimed at providing an understanding of the views held by these participants.

Furthermore, Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) argue that "qualitative research can, theoretically speaking, be described as an approach rather

than a particular design or set of techniques". They add that "it is an 'umbrella phase' covering an array of interpretative techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning of naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Welman, Kruger and Mitchell, 2005: 6).

The point of interest in this study is the role of human resource management in facilitating the implementation of the organisational strategy within the PSC. The researcher has adopted a qualitative research approach because it is best suited to studies that are exploratory in nature. Qualitative research provides detailed and qualitative findings as opposed to statistical findings arrived at through statistical procedures or quantification (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 3).

Merriam (2002) argues that "the key to understanding qualitative research lies with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world". A qualitative research study aims to understand, provide meaning and explore issues as they are constructed and defined by the world. Merriam (2002) adds that qualitative research tries to understand the interpretations that the world attaches to certain issues at a given time. It is important to note, however, that such meaning is not static: it changes from time to time, place to place and people to people.

The approach of this study leans further towards the basic interpretive qualitative study. Merriam (2002) argues that the characteristics of this type of study are that "the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive".

In the end, the study aims to provide answers to the questions pertaining to the role played by the human resources unit within the organisation and how such a role contributes to the difficulties experienced by HR in

supporting the organisational strategy. The issues of capacity and experience within the HR unit are explored and analysed with a view to understanding its readiness to support the organisational strategy.

3.3 METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

In conducting qualitative research, there are various methods that are employed to collate data. According to Trochim (2002), some of most common methods used include: direct observation, semi-structured interviews and the case study. In adopting the direct observation technique, the researcher does not get involved in the context, but rather distances him/herself from it and observes from outside, without being practically involved. On the other hand, other methods such as structured or in-depth interviews call for the researcher to get personally involved with the context (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:138).

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) note that “the in-depth or unstructured interviews are one of the main methods of data collection used in qualitative research”. They add that “classical ethnographers such as Malinowski stressed the importance of talking to people to grasp their point of view (Burgess, 1982a), and personal accounts are seen as having central importance in social research because of the power of language to illuminate meaning….”. In this regard, in-depth interviews take the form of conversation (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003:138). The researcher interacts and get personally involved with the context, and directly interviews his/her subjects.

Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005) argue that “there are various methods and techniques available and, in general, the aim of a specific research project will determine which of these methods are the most appropriate”. A decision, therefore, to employ one form of research methodology as opposed to another is guided by whether the researcher aims to explore, explain, describe and/or predict a particular area of interest. In addition, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that “there are two broad ways in which

data can be collected, that is, those focusing on naturally occurring data and those that generate data through the interventions of the research".

In this regard, they argue that those focusing on naturally occurring data include participant observation, observation, documentary analysis, discourse analysis and conversation analysis. On the other hand, generated data includes biographical information individual interviews, paired (or triad) interviews and focus groups or group discussions (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 34-38).

In this study, the researcher identified various role-players, such as senior and middle managers as well as HR practitioners, for the sample population. Using a carefully crafted questionnaire, the researcher conducted a number of semi-structured interviews within the PSC in order to collect data.

a) Interview questionnaire guideline

A standardised questionnaire guideline was utilised as a research tool to elicit participants' views and perceptions on their experiences within the organisation. The selection of the questionnaire as a data collection tool was made on the assumption that it would provide a valid and detailed account of participants' experiences.

Furthermore, this tool allows access to detailed information including informal comments made by the participants during interaction with them. Such information is critical in the sense that it provides an insight into participants' experiences and the perceptions they hold of the phenomenon of interest, in this case the role played by HR within the organisation. The interview questionnaire guideline contained questions on facts, demographic information and questions on attitudes and perceptions, and dealt with thoughts, experiences and assumptions of the respondents relating to the area of inquiry (Appendix A).

The questionnaire was divided into four (4) sections, and included the following:

Section A: Biographical questions.

Section B: Questions referring to the perceptions of the participants regarding the role played by HR within the organisation.

Section D: Questions focused on support provided by management to HR practitioners. These questions were directed at both members of top management and HR practitioners.

Section E: Questions focusing on the how, as well as the expertise required of human resources, to improve the role that they currently play within the organisation.

The questionnaire contained both open-ended and closed-ended questions. The open-ended questions were aimed at eliciting participants' views and perceptions whilst the closed ended questions were used to elicit more precise responses. The questions were posed to the participants and the researcher recorded the responses. Each interview took between 30 and 45 minutes. The questions were written in English and in most cases were posed in English.

b) The interview

The researcher conducted various interviews with different role players within the PSC using the questionnaire. The researcher informed the interviewees of the background, the reason and the goals of the interviews. Interviewees were informed of the purpose of the interview, and ultimately the objective of the study. Furthermore, the interviewees were told that the study would investigate how the role currently performed by the human resources management could be improved within the PSC

in order to ensure that it plays a strategic and supportive role in the implementation of the organisational strategy.

The interviews were semi-structured. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), “semi-structured interviews take different forms, but a key feature is their ability to provide an undiluted focus on the individual”. They go on to say that “they (semi-structured interviews) provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of people’s personal perspective, for in depth understanding of the personal context within which the research phenomena are located, and for very detailed subject coverage”.

Therefore, the choice of using the semi-structured interviews was informed by the need to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subject matter and clarification of the issues attached to this phenomenon (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 36). Such understanding and clarification will be based on the understanding of the matter that each interviewee holds and shares during the interview.

According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996), the major advantage of interviews is their ability to build trust and a bond with the respondents. Through such trust, the researcher is able to solicit more and personal information that he or she would not have obtained through the use of other methods such as the questionnaire. By the same token, through the personal interaction between the researcher and the interviewee, the researcher is able to build trust, which is key in allowing the interviewee to feel at ease to share his experiences and knowledge.

The researcher was very careful to exercise care when meeting with participants and conducting the interviews. He started by obtaining approval from the Head of the Department (HoD) to conduct interviews within the organisation. All participants were contacted telephonically, and this was followed by confirmation in the form of an e-mail. After permission had been obtained to conduct the interview, participants were verbally

informed of the purpose of the interview, their involvement in the research and the fact that their responses would be recorded.

Participants were assured of the confidentiality of the interviews, and that their identity would not be disclosed, and that the information gathered through the interview would not be used in any way that would adversely affect them. In this regard, the researcher chose to use fictitious names, for example, Mr A or Mrs B, to protect the identity of the participants. Lastly, participants were informed that participation in the interview was voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time (see Appendix A).

3.4 SAMPLING

One of the most important questions that the researcher has to deal with in conducting research is the nature of the sample that will be used. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that "when sampling strategies for social research are described, a key distinction is made between probability and non-probability samples". They further argue that "probability sampling is generally held to be the most rigorous approach to sampling for statistical research, but is largely inappropriate for qualitative research".

Accordingly, this study uses non-probability sampling. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) note that "in a non-probability sampling, units are deliberately selected to reflect particular features of or groups within the sampled population". The study also uses purposive sampling. In this regard, the selection of participants, settings or other sampling units is criterion-based or purposive (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78). The sample was chosen because participants have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central themes and puzzles which the researcher wishes to study (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 78).

The researcher identified the Public Service Commission (PSC) as the unit of study. The reasoning behind this choice was largely based on the core

business of the organisation. The PSC is a constitutional institution that was created in terms of Section 9 of the South African Constitution, 1996. The PSC's vision and mission are derived from the values and principles of public administration laid down in the Constitution, Section 195 (1) (a)-(i).

The PSC is an independent and impartial body created to enhance excellence in governance within the public service by promoting a professional and ethical environment and adding value to a public administration that is accountable, equitable, efficient, effective, corruption-free and responsive to the needs of the people of South Africa. It aims to promote the constitutionally enshrined democratic principles and values of the public service by investigating, monitoring, evaluating, communicating and reporting on public administration.

To this end, to allow the PSC to execute its mandate judiciously, the PSC largely recruits candidates with high levels of educational training and research. The structure of the organisation is such that most of its employees are appointed at high level positions (that is, at Deputy Director level upwards) with only a few officials appointed at entry level positions (below Deputy Director), usually support staff.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) mention that "defining the study population involves two stages, first specifying the characteristics of the 'collective' unit required and then specifying those of the individual(s) required within them". Therefore, in defining the study population, the researcher considered participants who were thought to have the attributes or experience that would add value to the study. With this in mind, the study population included the following people:

- Human resource practitioners at various levels within the organisation (PSC)
- Top and middle management

- Line officials from other business units within the PSC

A discussion of the selected sample as well as the study population's biographical details follows below.

a) Biographical Data of the Sample

The biographical data of the selected sample is discussed below. The information has been provided in the form of tables. Such data will be analysed to reflect the following issues:

- The position of the respondent
- The level of education of the interviewee
- The level of experience
- The gender of the individual interviewee

Table 1: Profile of Senior Management

Participants	Position	Gender	Years of Service	Level of Education	Qualification
1.	DDG: Corporate Services	Female	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Degree in Financial Management
2.	DDG: Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)	Male	Over 10 years	Tertiary	Masters in Public Administration
3.	CD: M&E	Male	Over 10 years	Tertiary	PhD in Public Management
4.	CD: Leadership and Performance Improvement	Female	Over 10 years	Tertiary	Masters in Research

5.	SM: HRM	Male	Over 20 years	Tertiary	Degree in Public Administration
6.	Specialist Researcher	Female	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Honours in Research

Table 1 above reveals that six members of the senior management echelon were interviewed during the study. All senior members interviewed have more than five years' working experience. This is important as it suggests that the interviewed participants have extensive experience within the public service. Accordingly, it could be argued that their responses are based on solid years of experience and observation of the functioning of government departments.

In addition, all senior members interviewed have a tertiary qualification. The seniority of the respondents and their level of education and experience within the public service are important factors suggesting that the information provided by these respondents is grounded in experience and academic knowledge. This creates an adequate basis for an authoritative perspective on the role of management as well as on human resources in supporting the implementation of organisational strategy.

Table 2: Profile of Officials below the Senior Management Echelon

Participants	Position	Level	Gender	Years of Service	Level of Education	Qualification
1.	DD: HRM	12	Male	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Degree in HRM
2.	DD: Human Resource Best	12	Female	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Masters in HRM

	Practice 2 (HRBP)					
3.	DD: PAI	12	Male	Over 5 years	Tertiary	PhD in Public Management.
4.	DD: HRBP 1	12	Female	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Degree in HRM
5.	Assistant Director (ASD): HRM	10	Male	Under 5 years	Tertiary	Degree in HRM
6.	Senior HR Practitioner	8	Female	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Diploma in HRM
7.	State Administrative Officer	7	Male	Less than 5 years	Tertiary	Under-graduate degree in Public Admin.
8.	Secretary	6	Female	Over 5 years	High School	Matric
9.	Personnel Administrative Clerk	5	Female	Over 5 years	Tertiary	Diploma in Public Admin.

Table 2 shows that nine (9) officials below the senior management echelon were interviewed during the study. Six of these officials have more than five years' experience in the public service, while three respondents have less than five years' experience. This information is important as it shows that the majority (67%) of the respondents interviewed have extensive experience within the public service. It can therefore be argued that they have a clear understanding of how the public service operates and the challenges that are faced by various departments.

Table 2 also indicates that most of these members have a tertiary qualification, with only one respondent having only a matriculation certificate. It is important to highlight that the information provides an adequate basis for establishing an authoritative perspective on the role of management as well as the human resources in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy.

b) Secondary data

"Secondary data can be a valuable resource, providing an opportunity to bring a new perspective to existing data, to use elements of the data that have not been fully analysed, or to form a base for comparison with newly collected data" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 61). Secondary data can also be useful in clarifying, complementing or supporting data that has been collated. For the purposes of this study, the following sources of secondary data will be consulted: books, journals, reports and academic articles. All these have been used to corroborate evidence gathered from other sources.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis process commenced as soon as the researcher started collecting data, that is, as soon as the first interview had been conducted. Through data analysis, the researcher tries to make sense of the collated data by organising what has been read, observed or heard. The analysis comprised the following steps: transcription, checking and editing, analysis and interpretation, generalisation and verification (Sarantakos, 1997: 321).

The processes of data collection and data analysis ran parallel, as it was envisaged that during the analysis process new information would be added as it was discovered. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) argue that "one of the most critical steps of data analysis becomes the development of a set of categories, themes and patterns that adequately encompass and

summarise the data collected". In this study, collated data were analysed through identifying common themes and patterns that emerged.

The information collected from the interviews is presented in chapter four. In addition, data collected during the review of literature in chapter two has also added. This information is then analysed, scrutinised and conclusions drawn.

3.6 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that "reliability is generally understood to concern the replicability of research findings and whether or not they would be repeated if another study, using the same or similar methods, was undertaken". In this regard, they caution that the applicability of the reliability in a qualitative study has always been questioned on a number of counts (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 270).

They also affirm that "the first requirement is to have a clear understanding of what features of qualitative data might be expected to be consistent, dependable or replicable" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). This means that the data that has been collected and the meaning generated through the analyses of such data would have to be repeated if another researcher using a similar method were to investigate the same phenomenon. The concept of validity refers to the "correctness or precision of a research reading" (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 273).

To ensure reliability of the research instrument that was developed for this study, the researcher conducted a pilot interview to determine whether the targeted questions were precise, vague or misleading. By conducting this interview and putting the research instrument through a test, the researcher was able to identify difficult areas of investigation and received objective assessment of the tool from third parties. From feedback received, the researcher could make adjustments where deemed necessary. The set of questions that were included in the final research

instrument was then finalised. The respondents who were interviewed were all asked the questions contained in the research instrument.

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The major limitation of the study was the fact that it is qualitative research and, as such, has limits on what can be generalised. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) argue that “there are also variations in the level of certainty that can be attributed to the inference, depending on the level of meaning or interpretation being assigned”. Therefore, the researcher was very cautious in the manner in which data were analysed and the kinds of interpretations that were made.

Another limitation was the busy work schedules of the selected participants (top management, line officials and HR personnel) which made them unavailable at times. The researcher managed this situation by ensuring that appointments with the respondents were made in a timely fashion and confirmed beforehand.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The research was designed to investigate the role of human resources in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy. A questionnaire (appendix A) was used as a guide in conducting the interviews. During the interviews, participants were asked the questions contained in the questionnaire. This is critical in ensuring objectivity and justice during the interviews. The findings are presented according to the emergent themes below:

i. The role of management within the organisation

ii. The management of human resources as part of the overall management responsibility

iii. The role of human resource management and development within the organisation

iv. Factors that have an impact on the current role of human resource management within the PSC

v. Skills or competencies required to uplift the human resource management unit to perform at a strategic level

vi. The role management ought to be playing in supporting the human resource management component

vii. The need for a strategic partnership between HRM and HRD in supporting the implementation of organisational strategy

viii. Plans to address challenges facing the human resource management unit

4.2 THE PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.2.1 THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

Analysis of the data revealed that management's overarching role within an organisation is to drive the implementation of the strategic objectives of the organisation. Eleven (11) respondents (69%) agreed that management's key responsibility is to ensure that the organisation delivers on its mandate. Respondents confirmed that management is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the implementation of organisational strategy is executed judiciously. Management's role entails making and implementing management decisions that relate to the management of personnel, budgeting, implementation of proper control systems and monitoring the implementation of departmental policies and programmes. "At a micro level, the management's role is providing strategic leadership within the organisation such that the organisation is able to realise its strategic objectives" (Senior Manager: HRM, PSC, 08 November 2008*).*

The interviews further revealed that management is responsible for providing leadership within the organisation. Twelve (12) respondents concurred that management's function encompasses provision of leadership and vision in an organisation. However, one respondent, Ms A, was of the opinion that the role of management is much bigger than simply providing strategic leadership within the organisation. She argued that "management has to ensure that the organisation makes an impact on the overall society that it is serving, the notion of impact versus outcomes" (Ms A, Public Service Commission, 28 October 2008, 15:00).

> The role of management is much bigger than the latter. Managements' role within organisations is to ensure that the public service (government departments) improves the life of people through delivery of quality services for the betterment of society. (Ms A, Public Service Commission, 28 October 2008, 15:00)

An affirmation of this was observed in various views of other respondents. For example, Ms L stated that “management is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing and operationalising the organisational strategy*” (*Ms L, PSC, 12 October 2008). This statement confirms the view that management is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that it establishes an organisational structure that will drive and implement the organisational plans. Another key theme that emerged suggests that management is about providing strategic leadership necessary for the realisation of organisational strategic goals. Six (6) respondents agreed that management is about providing leadership, solving problems and giving guidance within an organisation.

Mr C summed up this view succinctly when he suggested that

> Management must lead the implementation of the organisational strategy. It must ensure that it creates and implements an organisational structure to drive the implementation of the strategy. Ultimately, it must ensure that the various components and branches of the organisation contribute towards the realisation of the overall mission and vision of the organisation. Within the PSC, we are blessed in that we have management who clearly understand and execute this role prudently (Mr C, PSC, 12 October 2008).

The analysis of the responses presented above demonstrates the views shared by the respondents in relation to the role of management within an organisation. The analysis also suggested that management is at the heart of the organisation, planning, leading and providing resources for it to function. Accordingly, management should be the driver of the organisation, providing strategic leadership and direction and making sure that the organisation is directed towards the achievement of the organisational goals. As the leader of an organisation, management should not concern itself with operational issues; on the contrary, it should

place emphasis on driving the implementation of the organisational strategy.

4.2.2 THE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES AS PART OF THE OVERALL MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITY

As far as the management of human resources as part of overall management responsibility is concerned, the majority of respondents agreed that this is undoubtedly part of the overall management of the organisation. The respondents argued that people management falls within the purview of the overall management of the organisation. Some of the senior managers who were interviewed attested to this reality, affirming that they are entrusted with the responsibility of managing human resources within the organisation, and within their respective units. One member of the Senior Management Service (Director) suggested that

> The management of human resources is central to the implementation of the business plans. Therefore, an inefficient management of human resources would prove contrary to the aspirations of management in relation to the implementation of the organisational plans. And as such, it is critical that management should take note of this fact, and play their part in the management of human resources within the organisation (Senior Manager, PSC, 14 October 2008).

The majority of the respondents also agreed that the failure of both the HRM component and the management team to work together in managing human resources may prove disastrous for the organisation. Management and the human resource management component must work collectively, as a unit, in order to ensure that the organisation functions like a well oiled machine. The two units need to work jointly, and not against each other. Ms M confirms this

> Yes, the management of human resources is part and parcel of the overall organisational management. The strategic business plan of

> any organisation “comes to life” through the human resources. In order to achieve this, human resource decisions should be taken at the strategic planning level (Ms M, PSC, 12 October, 2008, 17:49).

A similar view was raised by Mr M. He suggested that

> Management of human resources is central to the implementation of business plans. An efficient and/or ineffective human resource management (due to poor skills, insufficient numbers/manpower, low incomes and poor supervision) is equal to fruitless expenditure if it’s not able to provide the necessary contribution to achieving the objectives of an organisation (Mr M, PSC, 10 November 2008).

The analysis of data presented above shows that there is sufficient evidence to conclude that management of human resources is part of the overall management of the organisation. However, it is important to emphasise that despite the presence of evidence suggesting people management is an element of the overall organisational management function, there are some organisations that still overlook this fact. One Deputy Director-General stated that “there is a common tendency, both in the private and public sector, that management overlooks issues pertaining to management of human issues in the human resource management unit: this is clearly wrong and has cost many organisations dearly” (DDG, PSC, 29 September 2008).

Although the majority of respondents concurred that the management of human resources is part of the overall management function, five indicated that, in reality, the opposite tends to be true. A summation of this view is provided in the statement by Mr D, who argues that

> Theoretically, yes, the management of human resources forms part of the overall management function. However, in practice no, it is not happening. Various policies, frameworks and legislation like the Public Service Act, Public Finance Management Act and others entrust the accounting officer with the powers to manage the

> organisational structure, but in the PSC, like most departments I know, it is not happening. In government we lack management that has an understanding that the human resource management is a strategic partner within the organisation. Management does not want to get involved in the management of human issues, and treats such issues as secondary to the success of the organisation. Management still treats people as costs or commodities and not as an important asset of the organisation that they need to invest in (Mr D, PSC, 15 November 2008).

Considering the data presented above, a compelling argument has been made that, regardless of the views held by management on the management of people within organisation, this is a very important element of management, and one which cannot be overlooked or left solely in the hands of the human resource management unit.

4.2.3 THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT (HRM) WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

In respect of the role of HRM unit within the organisation, four (25%) respondents agreed that the HRM unit should be responsible for managing the organisational human capital. One needs to appreciate the fact that this view locates the role of the HRM unit within the traditional role of HR, which largely includes the sourcing of personnel, administration of service benefits, management of conditions of employment and payment of salaries, that is, the human resource administration.

Some respondents saw the HR component as responsible for the daily management of HR issues, e.g. salaries, leave and appointments. Some extracts taken from the views of respondents during the interviews are given below.

> The role of HRM within the organisation is to ensure that the organisation has the skills and competencies for the implementation

> of the PSC's key performance areas/strategic business objectives (Ms A, PSC, 28 October 2008, 15:00).

More evidence of this can be found in the statement made by Mr D. He argues that

> The role of HRM within the organisation is to provide training and development, to develop human resources policy, to support line function and to ensure that skills are managed and shared effectively (Mr D, PSC, 11 November 2008).

A contradictory view was advanced by some respondents who argued that the role of the HRM unit is much greater than simply managing the organisational investment in people. In this regard, seven respondents agreed that the HRM unit's responsibility is to support management and line managers in implementing the organisational strategy. Furthermore, they argued that the unit needs to advise management on issues pertaining to the current capacity within the organisation, the projected future needs and best practices around the management of human resources, and the development and implementation of the human resource plan. These issues were regarded as having an impact on the ability of the organisation to realise its objectives.

> The HRM unit is a support structure to management. The HRM unit needs to advise management with regard to the needs of the organisation in terms of personnel and skills. It also needs to advise management on best practice to enable the organisation to recruit the right people for the job. HRM function is broad: HRM should anchor the strategic plans of management by providing management with the relevant information to enable it to successfully implement its plans (Mr D, PSC, 11 November 2008).

A senior HRM manager confirmed this notion.

> Simply put, HRM is responsible for the management of human resources within the organisation. However, at a more advanced level, HRM is responsible for the development of the organisational HR plan which is linked to the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) of the organisation. It presents the plan to management for approval and spearheads the implementation of the HR plan within the organisation. In organisations like the PSC, the HRM unit is also responsible for far more than just the management of employment relations. It is responsible for transformation and change, labour relations and management of the organisational employee wellness programmes. The above is necessary for the creation of a favourable working environment (senior HRM manager, PSC, 08 November 2008).

The respondents were then asked whether they felt that the unit was performing the task as outlined above. Eight (8) respondents felt that the HRM unit was incapable of performing a strategic supportive role to management. They argued that the HRM unit has not been able to make a meaningful contribution to the organisation, except for the normal recruitment and selection function.

> No, within the PSC the HRM is not given the room to contribute effectively within the organisation. It is utilised as a separate unit, and not as part of the strategic leadership team. Management and HRM do not work together hand in hand, but as two separate units. The HRM processes and systems do not provide impetus to management aspirations, and management itself is unable to provide leadership in terms of how this anomaly ought to be resolved (Senior HR Practitioner, 12 November 2008).

A similar assertion came from a Deputy Director, who emphasised that the unit failed to provide efficient support service. He stated that “the unit within the organisation is currently facing challenges. For example, the advice that HR provides during interview processes has been found to be

contradictory at times. A human resource practitioner sitting in an interview will advise the panel on one thing, and the same practitioner will later during the process, provide contradictory advice on the same matter. And this has occurred in a number of instances (Deputy Director, PSC, 25 October 2008).

Four (4) respondents did, however, argue that the HRM component was effectively discharging its duties. They maintained that the human resource management is providing leadership and support in terms of implementing new processes within the organisation. “The recent upgrading of Deputy Director positions from level 11 to 12 is a case in point. HRM has spearheaded this process, from obtaining management buy-in until the final stage of implementation. Our next project is upgrading the assistant director positions during the 2008/09 financial year” (Ms B, PSC, 9 October 2008).

Another fascinating view was raised by the same Deputy Director, who noted that, “Yes, HRM is effective in discharging its duties, but there is room for improvement. HRM could do better at understanding the core business of the organisation better than currently. It also needs to keep to in touch with the dynamic evolving HRM, keeping abreast of the dynamics taking place around the globe in order to inform and improve its processes” (Deputy Director, PSC, 25 October 2008).

The interviews provide conclusive evidence that human resource management plays an important role within the organisation. There is also evidence that it is vital that every organisation realises this and draws from the benefits that the HRM unit can bring to an organisation. The HRM unit has a crucial role to play in supporting and creating an enabling environment for the implementation of the organisational strategy. Organisations and managers alike who ignore this reality do so at their peril.

4.2.4 FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON THE CURRENT ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

The key theme emerging suggests that there are a myriad factors impeding HRM's ability to judiciously discharge its duties within the PSC. Amongst the factors highlighted is the lack of strategic leadership within the unit. In this regard, a senior manager stated that "the lack of capacity, a poorly resourced unit, and heavy reliance on interns who are not yet fully capacitated as well as weak leadership and lack of initiatives with staff, all constitute factors that impede the HRM unit's ability to perform" (Mr D, PSC, October 2008).

Another key theme observed in the interviews was that a lack of skills and proactive behaviour was a key factor in this regard. **Table 3** below provides a catalogue of factors mentioned by the majority of the respondents as hampering the unit in the execution of its duties. Key indicators associated with these factors have been included.

Table 3. Factors impacting on the current role of HR within the PSC

Factors impacting on HRM within the PSC	Manifestation of the problem within the HRM unit
○ Lack of human capacity within the unit. ○ Over-reliance on internships and learners. ○ Lack of appropriate knowledge and relevant work experience. ○ Lack of strategic leadership and creativity. ○ High staff turn-over.	• Poor quality of service and advice given by the unit and slow turn-around times. • High staff turnover and resignations. • Low morale. • Slow pace of service delivery • Low productivity. • High staff turn-over and resignations.

Table 3 sets out issues impeding the unit in the execution of its duties. These factors include the lack of capacity within the unit, over-reliance on internships and learners, high staff turn-over and a lack of creativity amongst others. Respondents felt particularly that a lack of leadership within the HRM unit was a key factor affecting the role of the unit and its ability to perform accordingly. A senior HRM practitioner affirmed this view

> Management within the HRM unit is given an opportunity to concentrate on strategic management within the unit. But rather, one normally finds management concentrating on operational issues that we, as junior officials, should be handling, and as such, it does not have time to provide decisive strategic leadership. One could argue that management is to blame for that; they place huge demands on the leaders, and hence they end up being operational rather than being strategic. This is a cause for concern, because it leads to frustration within the unit and people wonder why HRM has such a high turn-over rate (Senior HRM practitioner, PSC, 12 November 2008).

The respondents were asked to indicate how these factors manifested themselves within the PSC. The consensus was that this could be witnessed in the high number of resignations. Respondents argued that, because of the disillusionment and frustration that prevails within the unit, practitioners tend to take up transfers to other departments. This is also attributed to discontent with the manner in which the unit is managed. “For example, from the beginning of this year, January to date, no less than five experienced HR practitioners have left the organisation” (Senior HRM practitioner, PSC, 12 November 2008).

The majority of the respondents indicated that these challenges can also be observed in the quality of service and support provided by the HRM unit. The quality of service, including the turn-around time in responding to queries, is very poor. Ms T indicated that “the unit is challenged in terms of creativity and innovation in the execution of their tasks. The response time

is way too long, and you can never be certain of the accuracy of advice they give. The situation is a cause for concern" (Ms T, PSC, 05 November 2008).

Respondents agreed that these factors affect the ability of the organisation to discharge its duties. "The prevailing revolving door (high turn-over rate) is both the indication and the net result of the aforementioned factors, for example, a number of HR practitioners have joined and left the organisation within a short space of time" (Ms T, PSC, 05 November 2008).

These factors and their implications manifest the gravity of the problem within the HRM unit. The study has unveiled the challenges that overwhelm the unit, impacting on the organisation's ability to deliver on its mandate. Chief among these challenges is the lack of strategic leadership which tends to disable the unit and prevent it from functioning effectively. The next question posed to respondents was on the nature of skills required to assist the HRM component.

4.2.5 SKILLS REQUIRED TO UPLIFT THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNIT TO PERFORM AT A STRATEGIC LEVEL

Respondents were asked what skills and competencies are required to capacitate the HRM component to perform its strategic role within the organisation. The data collected suggests that the majority of the respondents believe that the HRM unit needs a blend of hard (technical HR knowledge) and soft (interpersonal, communication and creativity) skills in order to perform optimally.

In relation to the question on the required skills, the common theme emerging from the majority of respondents was that, in the main, the HRM unit needs strong strategic leadership and guidance. Respondents agreed that this can only be achieved through capacitating the current leadership to provide guidance and strategic leadership within the unit.

> The unit needs to appoint a strategic leader who will provide leadership and give the unit a voice (Ms L, PSC, 12 October 2008).

The majority of the respondents also stated that it is imperative for the unit to embark on a deliberate strategy of recruiting competent and experienced personnel. These appointments should be made if candidates possessed demonstrable knowledge and experience in human resource management, communication and service orientation.

> The issue of the required skills set within the HRM as a component is a bit confusing to say the least, depending on the sub-unit that one is looking at. One would find that there are pockets of excellency in some areas, whilst others are appalling (for the lack of better words). And as such, it really depends on the function at hand. Generally, the unit needs to embark on a drive where they will recruit competent and experienced personnel to beef up the unit (Ms B, PSC, 9 October 2008).

In addition, respondents were asked whether they thought that the current crop of human resources practitioners (within the HRM unit) has the necessary skills. The theme that emerged here suggested that there is a serious lack of expertise and experience within the human resource unit. Respondents claimed that this situation is exacerbated by an over-reliance on the use of interns as additional capacity. One Chief Director, Mr M, indicated that “the current situation within the unit is a ‘wait and see’ scenario. One has to hope that with the appointment of the new DDG within the branch, there will be change within the unit. At this stage, it will be premature to make any pronouncements without giving the new leadership a chance to implement its new strategies and processes” (Mr M, PSC, 21 October 2008).

The interviews suggested that the human resources unit also faces serious and perennial shortages of skills. The analysis reveals that, whilst pockets of excellency can be found, in the main, the unit does not have

adequate skills to deal with the demands it faces on a daily basis. The interviews also indicated that there is an urgent need for leadership development within the unit in order to build the necessary strategic leadership that seems elusive within the component. Ultimately, the collective view was that there is an urgent need for capacity building within the organisation.

4.2.5.1 The availability of adequate personnel within the human resource management component

The majority of respondents indicated that they are not swayed into believing that there is adequate human capacity within the unit. Respondents maintained that the current poor performance levels besetting the unit are a manifestation of the fact that there is a lack of capacity within the unit.

> The unit is seriously thin in terms of skills and warm bodies required to perform at a strategic level in the organisation. The current staff complement we have is far less than the required number. In addition, they do not have the required knowledge and experience to perform at a higher level. In terms of the daily administration function, management of leave and others, they are able to execute such duties excellently but strategically, they are poor (Ms L, PSC, 12 October 2008).

Furthermore, it was evident from the interviews with HR personnel that the current vacancies that remain unfilled within the unit are hampering service delivery. The HR personnel agreed that vacancies are placing a strain on the current staff, preventing them from meeting the huge demands placed upon them. This has led to a strategy where the unit relies largely on internships and learnerships as additional resources to meet their demands.

A senior HR practitioner stated that “the HR component is currently operating with a skeleton staff. We are currently understaffed. One can

easily observe this situation since the departure of the three practitioners who have just left during the past three months (Mr Chibi, Ms Nkhona and Ms Sibuyi). Even though the current staff is trying their level best, it is difficult as they are stretched to the limit. It is difficult to imagine what the situation would have been if the current crop of learners were not on board" (Senior Practitioner, PSC, 12 November 2008).

Some respondents also alluded to the fact that even though the unit is trying its best to fill the current vacancies, it is also important to mention that other problems emanate from the HR structure itself. These respondents noted that the structure is relatively small in relation to the key functions that it is expected to perform. Accordingly, management would need to look into this matter, with the view to increasing the structure to allow for more people to join the unit.

> If one considers that the organisation has just gone through a restructuring process, one would have anticipated that management would have considered increasing the HR structure to ensure that it is able to meet its demands. However, that did not happen, and the implications are that we are the same number of people, we are expected to service a high complement of staff. This is proving too cumbersome (Senior Practitioner, PSC, November 2008).

Ultimately, after consideration of the interviews, it is evident that the common view is that the staff complement available within the unit is not adequate. In addition, the problem is compounded by high staff turn-over. Based on the views raised by the HR personnel, it may seem that the current structure is not proportional to the overall organisational structure. This results in a unit that is expected to provide service to a population that is too large in relation to its own size. In the end, it may be worthwhile for management to reconfigure the HR structure in order to establish whether this assertion by HR personnel is accurate. If that is indeed the case, management ought to explore the possibility of increasing the size of the structure to allow the unit to bring in more people.

4.2.6 THE ROLE MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE PLAYING IN SUPPORTING THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT

In relation to the role of management in supporting the HRM component, the interviews revealed consensus amongst respondents on the point that there is a great deal that management could be doing to support the HRM unit. The respondents stated that the pressing issue in this regard is the provision of a platform for the HRM unit to air it views, challenges and possible solutions. Another theme that emerged was that management should solicit input and advice proactively from the HRM component. Whilst respondents raised the need for management to involve the unit in strategic issues and decisions affecting the organisation, at the same time they maintained that management should actively endeavour to train and develop the leadership of the unit, and the personnel in general, in strategic leadership skills.

> Management does not provide an adequate platform for the unit to be heard. Instead, the component is sidelined to the periphery, with no meaningful role to play (Senior HRM practitioner, PSC, November 2008).

Nine (9) respondents suggested that it was crucial for management to implement a development programme, particularly for human resource practitioners, with a view to improving the skills of current staff within the component. This development programme should encompass the basic human resource functions as well as the personal attributes expected of a human resources practitioner.

> Management needs to implement a capacity building exercise within the unit. A thorough skills audit needs to be undertaken, and based on the results of such, management should develop and implement a plan to train and build capacity within the unit. The problem thus far has been that HRM themselves do not know what needs to be done, or where and when. Therefore, management

> cannot assist them without an indication from their side (Ms A, PSC, 28 October 2008).

Participants were further asked whether they thought that management was aware of the challenges facing the human resources component. Respondents argued that the challenges facing the unit are common cause, and accordingly, management ought to be aware of them. On the other hand, one respondent maintained that it would be difficult for management to be aware of the challenges facing any component within the organisation if such problems were not communicated to them.

> Unfortunately, management is not privy to such problems; how is management expected to know that HRM has a problem unless they tell us? We cannot. They need to communicate and request assistance where necessary. Maybe there is a need for the development of a monitoring tool to monitor and evaluate the performance of the HRM unit (DDG, PSC, 12 November 2008).

Another common theme that emerged was that management is undeniably creating opportunities for the human resource component to be part of the strategic leadership team within the organisation. Whilst confirming the role that management plays in trying to partner the unit within the strategic leadership team, respondents argued that the question of what steps have been taken to ensure that it plays a meaningful role in this regard should be posed to the unit itself.

> Continuously, management has sought advice and provided support to the human resource management unit. This takes place in the form of ongoing advice, support and information required by the HRM component to perform its duties. Whether such information is being utilised is another issue (DDG, PSC, 29 September 2008).

A contrasting view was provided by some respondents who argued that management does not provide support to HRM. They claimed that

management has systematically relegated the unit to the periphery, reducing its role to that of well paid administrative clerks.

> No, there is no support from management. This is evident in the manner and the attitude of management towards the HRM as a unit. Management demonstrates no interest in us, always looking to punish us for the mistakes we make. This is discouraging us and destroys self confidence (Senior HR practitioner, PSC, October 2008).

Certainly, the data shows that it is a prerequisite that management should provide support to its line functionary, whether it is HRM or any other unit. The analysis of data shows that management has the inherent obligation to ensure that it provides leadership, support and mentoring to its line functionaries and such support is necessary for the organisation to perform.

In relation to the support that management provides to the HRM unit within the PSC, contradictory views were advanced by various respondents. Whilst some supported management and confirmed its support to the unit, there were those who differed and argued that management was deliberately marginalising the unit. The analysis of data shows that regardless of the views that management holds of the HRM within the PSC, it has a responsibility to provide for and guide the HRM unit (and other line functionaries) in order to ensure that the organisation functions as a collective.

4.2.7 THE NEED FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HRM AND HRD IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

Human resource development (HRD) plays a critical role in supporting both the human resources management and management in implementing the organisational strategy. It is important to note that the HRD component falls within the purview of the human resource

management directorate, and therefore the unit has a responsibility to ensure that the training and development needs of the employees are taken care of.

The theme emerging from the interviews is that the HRD unit is the custodian of training and development within the organisation. Therefore, under the guidance of the HR manager, it must ensure that the organisation has a workplace skills plan to inform and direct the provision of training and development within it. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the unit is entrusted with the responsibility of ensuring that the required training and development intervention are implemented within the organisation and directed at the right people at the right times.

The senior manager: HRM cited the need for the development and implementation of a succession plan and a retention strategy to address the problem of the skills drain.

> It is the responsibility of the HRD component as a sub-unit of the human resource management unit to develop and implement an organisational succession and retention strategy. The aim of the succession and retention strategy will be to curb the high levels of staff turnover, to ensure that the critical skills are retained within the organisation and that the organisation has reserves in terms of capacity (SM: HRM, PSC, 14 October 2008).

This statement highlights the role that HRD should play within the organisation. It also highlights the importance of partnerships between the HRM and HRD in supporting each other as well as management within the organisation. However, in order to achieve this goal, there ought to be open and continuous communication amongst the three role-players. This was echoed by the SM: HRM who stated that

> There is a need for robust communication and partnership between the two components to ensure that the organisation achieves its objectives. Without communication and partnership, one unit will not

know what the other is doing and this is often the case within the organisation (SM: HRM, PSC, 14 October 2008).

The need for communication and partnership between the two parties cannot be overemphasised, and this is clearly evident from the views shared by the respondents. Such communication will also assist in building and promoting the partnership between the two units as well as management. The silo approach that most organisations tend to fall prey to does not assist the organisation to achieve its objectives. Instead, it causes an “us” versus “them” approach.

4.2.8 PLANS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FACING THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNIT

A negative response was voiced by the majority of the respondents to plans to address challenges faced by the HRM unit. More than 50% (nine) of the respondents indicated that management had not put any plan in place to address the challenges facing the human resource management unit. It could be argued that this assertion debunks the earlier assertion made by some respondents (e.g. DDG) suggesting that management has continuously provided support to HRM. Ms L stated that “currently, there is no management plan to support the unit in dealing with its problems. HRM is left on its own to address its problems. With its leadership and capacity problems, it remains to be seen whether this will happen (Ms L, PSC, 12 October 2008).

On the other hand, however, one respondent cited a “developmental plan” that management is currently proposing to capacitate the HRM component as proof of its support to the unit. She stated that “management is looking at putting in place a plan which includes, among other things, mentoring and coaching. Management has noted an increase in the number of junior officials and interns that the component is currently using. The coaching and mentoring plan will thus be aimed at capacitating these interns and

junior staff to allow them to acquire the required skills and capacity" (Ms B, October 2008).

Some respondents stated that they were not in the position to respond to this question. They indicated that it would be difficult to provide an answer as they were not working closely enough with the human resource management unit and/or management to know what was planned by either party.

4.2.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the findings of the study. It has provided the results of the analysis of the data in the form of tables. Furthermore, it should be noted that where respondents declined to provide a response to a question, such instances were treated as no answers and highlighted accordingly. The analysis of this data has highlighted the need for an HRM-management partnership. It has shown that strong management support of HRM is a prerequisite if the unit is to perform at optimal level.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to provide an analysis of the findings obtained from interviews conducted with various participants, and to link such findings with the problem statement of the study, the research questions and the literature review. The purpose of this analysis is to highlight common themes in terms of the views of the participants with regards to the problem statement of the study. From the data gathered during the study, the following themes and trends emerged:

5.2 THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

It is important that, from the beginning, a clear understanding of the role of management within the organisation is established. Smit and Cronjé (1992) argue that “managers must activate and guide the organisation. That is, they must get things going and keep them going until the goals have been realised. Without management, an organisation is lifeless”. In this regard, management becomes the heart of the organisation. Management has to manage, direct, plan and monitor the activities within the organisation. According to Smit and Cronjé (2003), organisations do not exist or operate on their own; someone has to deploy the resources, monitor the utilisation of these resources and make decisions that directly impact on the ability of the organisation to realise its objectives.

Cribbin (1972) argues that “management and administration are geared to the achievement of organisational objectives”. With regard to the role of management, the findings of the study reflect congruence in terms of the views of the respondents and the literature on the role of management. The findings indicated that management is about providing strategic direction within the organisation. This includes the implementation of the

organisational mission and vision, and ensuring that the mission and vision find meaning in the strategic plans of the organisation. To this end, the role of management is to drive the strategic objectives of the organisation which are contained in the organisational mission and vision. This vision is then cascaded down to the strategic plan of the organisation.

Furthermore, the findings also revealed that in order for management to achieve these goals, it must to pay special attention to organisational assets, to human capital in particular, and its needs. Management must ensure that the organisation is well resourced in terms of the financial and human resources that are necessary to allow the organisation to perform its duties. Swanepoel et al. (2005) state that “people management is no longer the sole responsibility of HR specialists, but rather a dual responsibility of the HR specialists and all other line managers”. A tripartite management arrangement should, therefore, be developed and maintained, which includes the Executive Authorities (EAs) (Political Heads), the line function employees and the human resource specialists. Management must prioritise the needs of the organisation in terms of human capital. It is worth pointing out that HR fundis (such as Swanepoel et al. (2005), Gellerman (1966) and Erasmus et al. (2005) believe that the human resources are the “most important resource and valued asset” of an organisation, and management ought to bear this in mind when making management decisions.

The findings have revealed that the PSC management subscribes to the notion of treating its people as its most important asset within the organisation. It was found that management views its people as its most valuable resource, and continuously looks for ways to motivate and develop its staff. The current drive to upgrade posts for officials below the SMS level was cited as a case in point. Throughout the process, management has been leading the process, providing leadership and ensuring the practical implementation of these high level goals.

5.3 THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT WITHIN THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

An interesting view emerged during the analysis of the findings. This suggested that when analysing the role of human resources within any organisation, such an analysis needs to be made within the context of the environment within which the organisation operates. The findings also suggest that before any attempts are made to define and analyse the role that HR plays within the organisation, it is critical that HR understands the core business of the organisation: through this understanding it will be in a better position to clearly define what is expected of it, and how it will perform this role. With this view in mind, it is important to point out the core function of the PSC as an organisation. As was earlier mentioned, the PSC is a knowledge institution, its main function being to research best practices with regard to public service leadership and to monitor trends and compliance with regard to issues of good governance.

Against this backdrop, in order for the human resource component to provide world-class support, it is expected to understand the core function of the organisation and to align its operations with the aspirations of the organisation. Since the organisation is a knowledge institution, the expectation exists among other units that the HRM unit should be at the forefront of development and innovation in the field of HR. They expect the unit to be the pioneer in its field, generating new ideas and best practices in processes related to the management of people.

According to Erasmus et al. (2005), the public sector human resources management phenomenon is an important and difficult issue. Furthermore, Swanepoel et al. (2005) argue that “to a very large extent, the South African nation’s ability to achieve success through effective service delivery depends on the performance, honesty and motivation of public employees”. It is important, therefore, that we pay attention to the role of human resources within the public sector organisations. This is vital as

literature has shown that most organisations view their human resources as their most valuable assets.

Mixed views on the role of human resources within the PSC were noted. Whilst some viewed human resources as merely a support unit, there were others who painted human resources as an important strategic role player within the organisation. These findings indicated that the majority of the respondents who felt that HR was just a support function based their argument of the fact that the unit does not get involved in top management meetings where strategic decisions affecting the organisation are taken.

Swanepoel et al. (2005) argue that “traditionally, personnel or human resource management was viewed as a second-class function where ‘washed-up’ or substandard managers would land up, with a reactive role to play”. In addition, they argue that this role was limited to administrative functions rather than pro-active and strategic actions. The implications of this state of affairs within the PSC are disastrous, to say the least. In today’s world of business, no organisation can afford to have an HRM unit that still functions at an administrative level. Today, HRM is expected to be strategic, pro-active and involved in taking strategic decisions that affect the organisation. Therefore, it is important for the PSC as an organisation to ensure that it transforms its HRM unit, from what Swanepoel et al. (2005) call “second-class functions to a world class unit which is strategically focused”.

A contradictory view was also revealed in suggestions that the unit plays a crucial role within the organisation. This view is based on the argument that the HRM has been instrumental in ensuring that the organisation is able to recruit the right caliber of people with the required skills, expertise and knowledge to implement the organisational strategic objectives. It is further argued that this role is not limited to acquiring the right people with the requisite skills within the organisation, but also to driving the transformation agenda of government forward and creating a working environment conducive to success within the organisation.

The findings also revealed that management has largely been able to manage as a result of the support it receives from the human resources unit. In this regard, the findings suggest that HR has played a huge role in providing leadership in the area of change management, policy development and the implementation of new organisational projects to improve performance. Brevis, Vrba and de Klerk (1997) argue that "leadership is the activity that infuses energy into the organization to activate its members and resources to get things moving and keep them in motion".

5.4 FACTORS THAT IMPACT ON THE CURRENT ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE COMPONENT WITHIN PSC

Based on the findings of this study, a catalogue of factors that influence the role of the human resources unit within the organisation was outlined. At the heart of these factors is the lack of adequate capacity within the unit to perform its duties effectively and efficiently. A common view that emerged from the interviews was that the human resource component is currently understaffed and running on a skeleton staff. This has been attributed to the structure of the unit which, according to the findings of the study, is very small. This has contributed to a situation where practitioners are overburdened with work.

Notably, the findings also revealed that the human resource component was plagued by lack of efficient and effective leadership. Smit and Cronjé (1992) argue that "the performance of any enterprise, small or large, is directly related to the quality of leadership". This view can be applied to individual organisational units: it can be argued that the performance of any business unit is directly related to the quality of leadership. Without good leadership, the organisation is doomed to fail. Smit and Cronjé (2005) further argue that "a delicate balance between management and leadership is required to ensure that the organisation succeeds".

The findings suggest that the lack of leadership and effective management within the HRM unit has led to a situation where the human capacity available within the unit is not utilised effectively or efficiently. This has resulted in the component being regarded as unable to perform its duties and subsequently unable to provide support to the organisation as a whole. This assertion seems to lie at the heart of the opinion voiced earlier that the unit is not strategic, lacks proactivity and provides a "second-class function". It can therefore be concluded that this emanates from the lack of proper leadership and direction from the management of the unit.

Another issue that emerged was that the processes and procedures within the component are rigid and cumbersome. The findings revealed that these processes do not facilitate a speedy delivery of services: on the contrary, they stall service delivery. They are regarded as cumbersome and time-consuming. However, respondents noted with optimism that the current effort by management and HRM to review some of its processes and procedures will yield positive results in addressing this challenge.

5.5 MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN CAPITAL AS PART OF THE OVERALL MANAGEMENT FUNCTION WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

"Management is given the responsibility to manage all the organisational resources, including the human resources" (Swanepoel et al., 2005: 5). The findings suggested that, theoretically, the management of human resources is an integral part of overall management of the organisation. However, in practice, more often than not, this is not the case. In this regard, it was earlier noted that most organisations tend to relegate the issues of people management to the HRM unit, and not to pay much attention to human issues, with specific attention being paid to the achievement of the organisational strategy and budgets. As discussed in Chapter 4, this practice has led to the demise of many organisations.

Although the management of public organisations is regulated by various legislative frameworks that provide for certain directives being followed in the management of various aspects of the organisation, with human resources being part of these, experience has shown that such directives are not necessarily adhered to by public institutions. For instance, in accordance with Section 7(3)(b) of the Public Service Act, 103 of 1994, public managers are responsible for the efficient management and administration of public sector institutions, including the effective utilisation and training of staff, the maintenance of discipline, and promotion of sound labour relations (Erasmus et al., 2005:106). In practice, this rarely happens.

Smit and Cronjé (1992) argue that

> one should realize at this point that the fundamental management tasks and the enterprises' resources and goals are not separate entities but form an integral process which has to do with *planning* of the goals and the resources to accomplish those goals, the organising of the resources and people, *leading* the people, and finally, *controlling* the resources to determine whether the goals have been attained as productively as possible.

Smit, Cronjé, Brevis and Vrba (2007) argue that "when managers are questioned about the focus of their work, one theme crops up time and again - people. Managers often mention that people issues take up most of their time: issues such as motivating the workforce, resolving conflict, negotiating a performance contract with an employee, keeping subordinates informed, sharing ideas with them. Since it is the task of managers to manage people, they must learn more about people and their behaviour in the organisation". However, despite evidence pointing to the fact that the management of people forms an integral part of the overall management of the organisation, there are some organisations that still relegate this function to line management, especially the human resource management unit, without giving this function enough consideration.

The interviews revealed that the PSC management has made conscious efforts to ensure that it incorporates the management of people into its management framework. The findings revealed that management has incorporated the annual HR plan in its overall strategic plan. Such incorporation aims to ensure that people issues are considered and addressed at organisational strategic level. Whilst the findings acknowledge that there are challenges in terms of involving the HRM unit, they did however reveal that management is making an effort to address this situation through the proposed HR development plan.

5.6 THE STRATEGIC ROLE PERFORMED BY THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT WITHIN PSC

As far as the strategic role of human resources within the organisation is concerned, the view is held by some scholars (Swanepoel, 2005; Erasmus et al., 2005; Ehlers and Lazenby, 2004) that partnerships formed between the human resource and line function managers involve the establishment of strategic linkages between HRM policies as well as organisational operations which create an enabling environment for the attainment of organisational objectives. Interestingly, the findings of the study seem to validate this notion. The findings from the interviews indicate that there is a deliberate effort by management to foster a strong partnership with the HRM with a view to providing support for the unit.

Such strategic links are also necessary to create a platform for the HRM unit to play a meaningful strategic role within the organisation. Kenton and Yarnall (2005) caution that “there is a general recognition that more business understanding is needed in HR, but they suggest that HR need to prove that they can deliver effective and efficient service on the administrative functions before they are able to make the transition to supporting top priority business needs”.

This seems to suggest that there is a need for human resources to prove its worth by assuming a more strategic position within the organisation. This begins when human resources masters its own function, and is able to elevate this to the higher position of strategic player. Accordingly, there are a number of strategic roles that the unit ought to perform within the organisation, such as:

- Providing professional advice to senior management of the organisation;
- Developing HR processes and policies on a continuous basis;
- Developing and implementing the human resource management and development plan; and
- Developing a framework for staff retention, development and career management.

It should be noted that the Public Service Regulations, 2001, Chapter 1, Part III D.1. obliges all state departments to compile and implement departmental human resource plans. However, in this regard, the findings revealed that the HRM unit has only recently managed to comply with this directive. Considering that the HRM plan has to be incorporated in the overall organisational strategic plan, failure on the part of the unit to develop and implement its HR plan would mean that human resource management issues are not incorporated into the overall strategic plan, and therefore not brought to the fore when management makes its strategic decisions and interventions. This points to the failure by the unit to i) update management on the work and progress within the unit, and ii) provide support to management in dealing with people management issues.

In the main, the findings confirm the notion that the unit is not able to provide world class support to the organisational management. The findings further suggest that the HRM component is more reactive than pro-active. Whilst literature has shown that it is critical that the HRM component should be strategic in the execution of its duties, the reality on

the ground within the PSC paints a different picture. One of the challenges noted during the analysis of the findings was the invisibility of the HRM unit within the organisation. The common view that emerged was that the only times the unit is visible is when a new official joins the organisation, during the performance evaluation cycle and or when there are labour relations issues. As such, the unit is not able in absentia to make a meaningful contribution within the organisation.

5.7 THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

A common theme emerged from these discussions: like most organisations, the PSC is putting emphasis on the development of skills and competencies of its employees. Auluck (2006), Erasmus and Van Dyk (2006) and Baird, Scheiner and Laird (1983) argue that “people development practices can be equated to improved employee performance”. Auluck (2006) notes that “the HRD function is reported to have a vital role in the development of those working within the public service organizations”.

Lynton and Pareek (1990) argue that “no one doubts the contribution that training can make to development of all kinds. Training is essential, obviously so.” It is important, therefore, that the organisation pays attention to this phenomenon. In terms of the findings of this research, a positive affirmation of this view was noted. The study found that employees are expected to submit their annual skills development plans as part of their annual work plans. The unit compiles an organisational skills development plan from these plans.

Whilst efforts have been made to improve on this function, the general feeling among the respondents was that more could be done. For example, one official indicated that for the past two financial years, he had

identified a need for training in the field of organisational development as this fell within the scope of his responsibility. To date, the employee has not been sent for any training in this field. Instead, he will be sent for computer training sessions organised by the Information Technology component.

The study found that the human resource component has a huge a task in assisting management in its quest for improved employee performance by providing adequate training and development opportunities. The findings suggest that it is critical for the organisation to develop and implement a Human Resource Development (HRD) strategy that will provide direction within the HRD component.

In addition, participants expressed the need for greater cooperation between the human resource management sub-component and the human resource development sub-component. A common theme of strong partnerships and communication between the two units emerged. Flowing from the fact that the HRD is the custodian of the workplace skills plan, it is better positioned to identify the skills required and any skills gaps within the organisation. With this information available, HRD should make the human resource management component aware of any critical skills gaps. This information is crucial if the HRM component is to develop a functional succession plan as well as a retention strategy.

5.8 SKILLS OR COMPETENCIES NEEDED TO CAPACITATE THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNIT TO PERFORM AT A HIGHER LEVEL

The findings of the study revealed that a great deal must still be done in order to transform the HRM unit from its current state to a more strategically focused unit. The view was that, despite progress that has been made in capacity building within the unit, there is still room for improvement. From the outset, it is worth mentioning that in terms of

current skills within the unit, the findings indicate that there are certain pockets of excellence on the one hand, and on the other, utter disaster.

Kenton and Yarnall (2005) argue that “the difference between an operational HR role and a strategic Business Partner goes beyond changing job descriptions to looking more carefully at the skills and the capacity for individuals to influence change at a strategic level”. Whilst certain pockets of excellence could be observed, the findings revealed that the unit needs to keep constantly abreast of new developments in this field. According to Bohlander and Snell (2004), “the information technology has, of course, changed the face of HRM in the United States and abroad. Perhaps the most central use of technology in HRM is an organization’s **human resource information systems** (HRIS).” The findings endorsed this view and further suggested that it is crucial for the human resource component to prioritise the recruitment of highly skilled and knowledge personnel.

This view was supported by the majority of the respondents. In this regard, emphasis was on the HRMIS which the respondents felt was lacking within the organisation. The findings also revealed that the task of building strategic planning and management expertise within the component requires special attention. One of the key problems mentioned within the unit was the lack of strategic leadership. It was noted that management lacked knowledge and experience in terms of strategic planning and management. The respondents felt that such a skill should be built into the organisation, and that this should be done in phases. Priority should be given to management, then middle management and lastly to junior staff.

Finally, the findings reflected that the skills needed within the organisation can be categorised under two main headings namely, soft and hard. The soft skills would include conceptual and human skills, for example, communication and creativity, while hard skills would include technical skills such as policy formulation, research and planning.

5.9 PLANS TO ADDRESS CHALLENGES FACING THE HUMAN RESOURCE UNIT

The findings confirmed that management has adopted a plan to capacitate the human resource component, and this will take the form of increasing personnel within the unit. Furthermore, the findings also revealed that the plan will include developmental programmes to develop capacity within the current staff of the unit. Among others, emphasis will be placed on mentoring and coaching. The number of junior officials and interns dictates that a plan to address this situation is an imperative.

The findings highlighted the fact that, because of the high level of low skilled practitioners within the unit, management has seen fit to embark on a project in which senior HR officials will mentor and coach junior officials. Each senior HR practitioner will be allocated one or two officials, depending on the number of people requiring mentorship, to mentor and coach. It is hoped that through this process, a transfer of skills and knowledge will be achieved.

A common theme in the findings is the pressing need for a restructuring process within the HRM component. This process will be two-fold: i) a creation of additional posts and ii) the upgrading of current low level positions to higher levels. With the upgrading of these positions comes an increase in the level of responsibility and accountability. These positions will then be filled by the current incumbents if they qualify. This will be effected through a job evaluation exercise. In the event of no internal candidate meeting the requirements, the position will have to be advertised and filled through a normal recruitment process.

5.10 CONCLUSION

The study has revealed a high level of congruency between literature and collated data. The role that the human resource management unit ought to play within an organisation cannot be overemphasised. Indeed, this role is

not limited to the administration of human resources, that is, the traditional role of managing service benefits and filing leave forms, but should include the strategic role of supporting management in the implementation of organisational strategy. By the same token, it should be noted that such a role is not only the responsibility of the human resource management component: management support and support from line managers is crucial. Without this, the HRM unit cannot perform effectively or efficiently. Whilst support from other business partners is important, it is also vital that human resource practitioners gear themselves to acknowledging the role they ought to be playing and making reasonable efforts to acquire the necessary skills and capacity that will allow them to make a meaningful contribution within the organisation.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The research questions were developed in a manner that would provide the researcher with insight into the role of the human resource management in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy within the PSC. This was corroborated by respondents' views on the role that management ought to play in supporting human resources management as a unit, allowing it to perform its functions, as well as the role management should play in the overall management of human resources within the PSC. Based on the data collected and analysed, the following recommendations have been formulated.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations can be made:

6.2.1 THE ROLE OF THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT

The role that the human resource component plays within the PSC can be summarised as twofold. On one hand, it was established that the HRM& D unit is responsible for performing the administrative human resource management function, whilst on the other hand, the HRM&D unit is also responsible for the provision of strategic support to management and the organisation as a whole. The administrative role includes the daily administration of human resources as well as the management of conditions of service. This will include the management of appointment and terminations, the payment of salaries, the administration of leave and any other service benefits relating to human resource management.

In this regard, the findings suggested that this role demands that the human resource management unit has an understanding of the fundamentals of its functions, of human resource prescripts and legislation as well as of human resource best practices. A high level of proficiency was observed in the human resource management component. The HRM component was found to be most effective in managing and administering the conditions of employment.

Therefore, improving the role of human resource management is critical to ensuring that the unit delivers the expected level of service. Human resource management should shift its focus from administrative duties to high level strategic issues that face the organisation. A need, therefore, exists for management and the human resource management component to arrive at an agreement and develop a plan that will assist the component to overhaul the HRM&D unit and elevate its role to a higher level. It is also important that human resource practitioners and human resource management leadership ensure that they acquire the necessary expertise to allow them to participate meaningfully in the strategic management of the organisation. This requires a change of attitude, mindset and an improvement in their technical skills, including an understanding of core human resource functions.

Erasmus et al. (2005) argue that “the provision of strategic support to management includes the provision of information that management requires in order to be able to make and implement management decisions”. Such advice includes information on the best human resource management practices, organisational design and staffing needs as well as the development of appropriate human resource plans and policies for the maintenance of discipline in the organisation.

Human resource management is the lifeline of any organisation. Within the PSC, management relies on its employees to provide impetus to any operations within the organisation. Such employees need to managed, motivated and rewarded accordingly for their efforts. Indeed, in this regard,

this research confirms that management must have a plan to manage, motivate and reward its human capital such that it is willing to provide its services. It was established that such a human resource plan does exist within the organisation. Amongst other things, this plan aims to provide strategic direction to the organisation in terms of its human resource needs, and on how the organisation will respond to such needs, including the retention of scarce skills.

The development of a retention strategy falls within the strategic role that the human resource management and development unit ought to perform. In line with this role, the HRM unit requires an in-depth understanding of strategy and strategic management. However, it was established that the HRM component is currently facing challenges in elevating its role to the required level.

It has also been noted that the HRM unit still relies largely on other organisations such as the DPSA to initiate new processes. In addition, the research has shown that the HRM unit is more reactive and mechanical in its approach. Lastly, questions exist on the process surrounding the development of the human resource management plan, the workplace skills plan as well as human resource policies within the organisation. Data collected during the research could not establish the original source of these plans and policies or the role players who were involved in the process of their development.

In the light of the abovementioned factors, it is important that the HRM unit develops and implements a plan to address these issues. In order to ensure that the two interventions do not conflict, the proposed plan should be aligned to plan which management is contemplating. These interventions should, in the end, build capacity within the unit.

6.2.2 SKILLS NEEDED TO BUILD CAPACITY WITHIN THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT UNIT

It is important that the leadership of the human resource component re-examines its tendency to rely heavily on junior and underqualified staff. It is not suggested that the component should abandon the appointment of internships and learners, but rather that it should use these resources as a supplement to the staff complement. The component must recruit highly qualified and experienced practitioners in order to acquire the much sought after expertise. At the same time, the unit must ensure that it adopts a plan to improve the current skills set available within the component.

Such a plan will include capacitating and developing the component's leadership in matters of strategic leadership and management. This has been highlighted as one of the major challenges facing the unit. In addition, planning to develop the current cadre of practitioners in the identified set key categories of skills (technical, conceptual and human skills) is essential.

Smit et al. (2007: 62) argue that

> …change is a complicated process, at the heart of which lies people and their natural resistance to change. The change process therefore poses a major challenge to South African managers - and also to managers in the rest of Africa and world-wide. How organisations manage change will inevitably mean the difference between success and failure in a very volatile business environment.

Human resource management as a unit should appreciate the role it ought to be playing in leading change and service delivery improvement in the department. As the leader of change, this component must accept that it forms part of management, and must therefore ensure that it commands its participation in the management issues of the organisation.

In addition, a number of skills have been identified as essential to the capacitation of staff and in ensuring that the unit delivers on its mandate. These include IT skills, leadership and strategic management and project management, to mention only a few. In summation, these skills were categorised into three categories, namely, technical, conceptual and human skills. Various key indicators in each category were also identified.

For an example, the key indicators in the technical skills category include policy formulation, project management and research and report writing. Human resource management must devise and develop a plan that will allow the unit to acquire these skills as speedily as possible. It was also concluded that the acquisition of these skills by the unit will place it in a position where it will be able to provide support and advice to the overall organisation, whilst allowing it to elevate its performance to a higher level.

6.2.3 THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN SUPPORTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY

This study has established that human resource development within the PSC is a sub-unit of the overall human resource management component. With this in mind, the conclusion could be reached that it should support and advise the human resource management unit on matters of human resource development and training. Notably, the research has confirmed that the HRD is providing effective support and advice to the organisation on matters relating to human development and training.

A strong strategic partnership between the HRD as a sub-unit of the human resource management should be forged. Improved communication between the two units is crucial. Such improvement in communication will further enhance the facilitation of a strong partnership between HRD and human resource management, allowing for synergy between the two. A need also exists for the senior manager in the human resource

management unit to spearhead and facilitate the alignment and synchronisation of the work of the units.

In addition, it was established that the HRD, as the custodian of the workplace skills plan, should be in the position to advise management on the skills requirements of the organisation, the available skills and the plan to acquire the necessary skills. This will allow the organisation to perform optimally. Lastly, such support would include the implementation of a performance management and development system to manage performance within the organisation. Such a performance management system would deal with the management of performance, regulating the payment of performance rewards and the management of poor performance by employees.

The performance management system forms a pillar in the evaluation of productivity and payment of incentives within the organisation. In this regard, the organisation has adopted the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) as its performance management system. The PMDS aims to provide a framework for the management of performance within the organisation. The HRD unit has been the leading figure in the development and implementation of this system.

6.2.4 THE ROLE OF MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

The role of management within the organisation is to provide strategic leadership and guidance in terms of the implementation of the organisational objectives. Indeed, the research confirmed that management was efficiently discharging this responsibility. The responsibility of management in providing strategic leadership begins with the translation of the organisational vision and mission into meaningful, measurable output. It is these measurable outputs or indicators that the organisation is expected to work towards achieving. Management bears the responsibility of ensuring that the organisations are well resourced and that such resources are utilised to the optimum.

Ultimately, management must ensure that it performs an overseeing role in the functioning of the overall organisation. Also, it is important that management should recognise the fact that the management of human resources is part of its overall responsibility. By so doing, management will appreciate the role it is currently playing in this regard, and improve its efforts in assisting the human resource component to develop and improve its performance.

It is recommended that management should explore the possibility of increasing the size of the human resource structure. This will allow the unit to recruit and strengthen its current capacity by attracting highly qualified and experienced practitioners. This will also require that management considers the current salary packages and salary levels of employees, not only within the human resource unit, but within the department as a whole.

6.2.5 LINKS BETWEEN THE ORGANISATIONAL AND HRM STRATEGY

It has been found that a link is needed between the overall organisational and the HRM strategy. Smit et al. (2007) argue that “a hierarchy of plans exists in all organizations. At the top of the hierarchy one finds the strategic plans, followed by the tactical and operational plans at the lower level. The strategic plan is the guiding star - it provides focus and direction to all other plans in the organisation”. Therefore, the organisational strategic plan should inform the HR plan to ensure that the latter supports the grand plan. The development of a link will bridge the gap between the two strategies whilst ensuring that they are aligned.

In this regard, the study has confirmed that alignment between the organisational and HRM&D strategy is necessary if synergy between the two strategies is to be achieved. Without this link, the two strategies will run the risk of operating as two distinct strategies that are not interrelated.

At the same time, the importance of communication between management

and the HRM&D unit cannot be underestimated. Literature has shown that one of the key responsibilities attached to the management function is the provision of leadership. It has also been established that the human resource management unit, likewise, has an important role to play in the provision of leadership within the organisation. However, for the two units to achieve this synergy, communication between them is critical.

At present within the PSC there is no effective communication strategy between the two units. Whilst a limited degree of what can be termed one-way communication (that is, the HRM unit communicating its activities and plans with management, and no reciprocal communication from management) has been observed, such communication is inadequate. Therefore, improvements in the communication channels are required as a matter of urgency.

6.3 CONCLUSION

The manner in which the public service is managed plays a critical role in the success of government in delivering quality services. The management of the public service includes, amongst others, the management of the human resources whose primary responsibility is to convert the vision of government into physical services ready for human consumption. It is widely accepted that most organisations have a dedicated unit, referred to as the human resource management unit, which manages matters pertaining to employee relations. In this regard, this unit bears the responsibility of ensuring that the organisation can recruit and retain competent employees to assist with the achievement of the organisational goals. This research has highlighted and explained the role that the human resource management unit plays in supporting the implementation of the organisational strategy.

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