

**HUMAN RESOURCE PLANNING AND BUSINESS STRATEGY: THE CASE
OF PRESS CORPORATIONS LIMITED**

**MASTER OF ARTS (HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS) THESIS**

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**UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI
CHANCELLOR COLLEGE**

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By

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Submitted to the Faculty of Social Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Human Resource Management
and Industrial Relations)

**University of Malawi
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May, 2019

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work which has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purpose. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

Full Legal Name

Signature

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the students own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

Signature _____ Date: _____

Master D Mfunne – MA (Lecturer)

SUPERVISOR

DEDICATION

It is my desire to dedicate this work to my late Dad Demis Kunje and my Mum Ann D Kunje.

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ABSTRACT

It is argued that HR creates a competitive advantage of an organisation. This is done by HRP translating business strategy and organisational goals into HR requirements of skills and competences. This study analysed the link between Human Resource Planning and Business strategy. The study was predominantly qualitative. The study used key informant interviews and desk research to collect data. Data was analysed using thematic themes. The central argument in this study is that Human Resource Planning helps in resourcing strategy, making sure that there is a continuous flow of talented people who are innovative and creative in order to create a competitive advantage and achieve organisational goals. The study findings established that there is a vertical integration between human resource planning and business strategy. The study revealed that PCL uses emergent human resource plans which include resourcing, retention and downsizing. The study also noted that PCL practised an entrepreneurial mode of strategy which involves vision and concept attainment. The study further established that PCL practises a top-down approach to HR strategy-making. Through the HRP process and by linking it to HRM and Business strategy, HRP has helped PCL Group of Companies to maintain its leadership role in the private sector, by nurturing profitable operations to ensure sustainable growth in market share. This was implemented through various HR plans which were developed such as redundancy plan and business strategies such as innovation and creativity. Among the challenges of Human Resource Planning the study noted that PCL's main challenge is that plans are solely left in the hands of the Group Chief Executive Officer.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CA	Competitive Advantage
BS	Business Strategy
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
HRP	Human Resource Planning
IRs	Industrial Relations
OHSW	Occupational Health and Safety Welfare
PCL	Press Corporations Limited
PMS	Performance Management
R&S	Recruitment and Selection
SBU	Strategic Business Units

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study was to analyse if there is a link between Human Resource Planning and Business Strategy. This Chapter outlines the background to the study, statement of the research problem and the research questions. It also outlines the objectives, and it justifies why the research was carried out and then a conclusion was drawn.

According to Beardwell, Holden, & Claydon (2004), Human Resource Planning is the process of identifying an organization's current and future human resource requirements, developing and implementing plans to meet those requirements and monitoring their overall effectiveness. Armstrong (2009) argues that human resource planning is an integral part of business planning. Armstrong further elaborates that the strategic planning process defines projected changes in the types of activities carried out by the organisation and the scale of those activities. It identifies the core competences the organisation needs to achieve its goals and therefore its skill and behavioural requirements.

Human resource planning interprets these plans in terms of people requirements. But it may influence the business strategy by drawing attention to ways in which people could be developed and deployed more effectively to further the achievement of

business goals as well as focusing on any problems that might have to be resolved to ensure that the people required will be available and will be capable of making the necessary contributions (Armstrong, 2009).

It is proper that organisations should know how many people and what sort of people they should have to meet the present and future business requirements (Armstrong, 2001). Attwood and Dimmock (1996) argues that the business strategy provides the basis for the Human Resource Planning insofar as it sets out what the organisation intends to do in terms of activities and the scale of the activities. HRP translates the Business organisational goals and strategies in human resource requirements in terms of skills and competences and numbers in order to create a competitive advantage and achieve organisational overall goal.

1.2 Background to the study

In most private sector companies, employment policies are usually geared to corporate goals of profit and growth (Attwood and Dimmock, 1996). Different management teams and decision makers have to ensure that the right people, in the right numbers, with the right knowledge, skills and experience, in the right jobs, in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost deliver services for both organisational and client needs (Moyo, 2015). Management's choice of human resources strategy will depend on the values held by those in positions of power within the organisation. Here the planning for human resource becomes a search for those individuals who now and in the future will contribute most to the success of the organisation (Attwood and Dimmock, 1996). This simply means there is a vertical and horizontal integration that links corporate strategy with business strategy and

human resource management strategy and human resource practices and policies. This is in agreement with Armstrong's (2006) argument that strategic resourcing is a key part of strategic human resource management that is matching human resources to the strategic and operational requirements of the organisation and ensuring the full utilisation of those resources. The concept of strategic human resource management implies that human resource strategies must be totally integrated with corporate/business strategies in the sense that they both flow and contribute to such strategies (Armstrong, 2001). This is why Armstrong (2010) explains that human resource planning is an integral part of business planning. A business strategy is underpinned by the resource - based view which states that it is the range of resources in the organisation including its human resources that produce a unique character and creates a competitive advantage (Boxall, 1998). Boxall (1998) goes further to suggest that key human resources are a source of competitive advantage. According to Baron, Clake, Turner & Pass (2010), Human Resource Planning may be conducted as an overall approach to establishing and satisfying people requirements covering all major employee categories and skills.

Press Corporation Limited (PCL) is a public company incorporated in Malawi, under the Companies Act 1984; and is listed on the Malawi Stock Exchange and on the London Stock Exchange as a global depository receipt. Being the largest holding company in Malawi, Press Corporation has interests in different sectors of the Malawi economy including financial services, telecommunications, food and beverages, energy and consumer goods. The highly diversified company has a stake in thirteen companies comprising of eight subsidiaries, four joint ventures and one associate. The Press Corporation Limited's strategy emphasizes on the growth and sustainability of

the companies in which it holds stakes. The strategy further embraces new sectors earmarked for future investments like tourism and energy. Press Corporation Limited's investment activities focus on maintaining a leading position in the private sector; and concentrate in sectors where potential market growth is ascertained from the global economic and social trends. The group continues to explore viable investment opportunities in various sectors of the economy in order to strengthen its portfolio of investments and enhance shareholder value. PCL has 13 subsidiaries currently (see appendix 1 for details). From the foregoing, what PCL requires is to have a human resource plan that can help to acquire the right human resources with knowledge, skills and competencies that could give PCL and its subsidiaries a competitive advantage over its competitors.

The researcher wonders if Press Corporation Limited has a human resource planning that is aligned with a business strategy in such a way that it is able to achieve a competitive advantage over its competitors like Shoprite and Bakers Pride among others.

1.3 Problem statement

In the contemporary business environment, organisations are in a constant state of competition. Firms have been trying to defeat one another in order to be the last survivor and are able to enjoy total benefits as the market leader (Lee, Lee & Wu, 2010).

In essence, firms are trying to gain competitive advantage over one another. However, competitive advantage is achieved through the strategic management of resources, capabilities, and core competences, as well as the firm's responsiveness to

opportunities and threats in the external environment (McGee and Bonnici, 2014). Theoretical analysis and empirical evidence indicate that competitive advantage is obtained when there is a proper link between the business strategy and human Resource Planning. HRP is considered the primary means of ensuring that an organization's human resources contribute to the achievement of its business strategy; it is a vital function in terms of assisting the organisation to achieve its goals (Wahshi, Omari & Barrett, 2013).

As such, in any organisation which practices strategic planning, human resource planning plays a crucial role at both stages of strategic planning (formulation and implementation) (Sadder 2013). Within this context, HRP can be considered as a function, which seeks to achieve a linkage between HRM programs and an organization's current and emerging mission and programmatic goals (Al Wahshi, 2016). The concern with the link between business strategy and human resource strategy today represents a growing recognition of the importance of people in the achievement of organisational strategy (Minoo, 2010). Traditionally, product technology and process, accessible capital sources, and so on, were essential to win the game. However, at present, those kinds of resources as suggested by (Pfeffer, 1994) fail to fulfill their roles to defeat competitors (Lee, Lee & Wu, 2010). Therefore, the significance of human resources (HR) as the greatest asset of a business enterprise has increased since Human Resources constitute an organisation's intangible, irreplaceable and, un-imitable resources (Pfeffer, 1994).

According to Majumder (2014), an organisation's success to a great extent lies on the skill, creativity and dedication of its employees. This is usually achieved through the human resource planning process. Armstrong (2006) agrees to this by saying that

human resource planning determines the human resources required by the organisation to achieve its strategic goals. In view of this, Akhugbe (2013), in his study, acknowledged that Human Resource Planning is one of the key elements for ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation, so as human resource planning deals with people and jobs, human resource planners need to plan for what is acceptable as well as what is feasible in their organisations

PCL together with its subsidiaries faces a lot of competition. For example there are a lot of banks competing with National Bank of Malawi, in the case of PTC, there are many supermarkets. Castel Malawi, previously known as Carlsberg Malawi also faces competitions with Castle lager and other companies brewing beer. Local estates also have mushroomed and are competing with Press Cane Limited.

However, Appleby (1994) outlined that many organisations have devised guidelines on how to conduct workforce planning, but a few have begun to put them into practice. This concurs with Firoiu (2003) who argue that Human Resource Planning can help organisations succeed but faces the challenge that to a greater extent an organisation can have proper plans but fail to implement them.

Despite the importance of the link between human resource management practices to corporate competitive strategies there appears to be no study that has addressed the relationship between these two concepts more so in Malawi. Given the developing nature of the Malawian economy, one cannot assume that firms have automatically made this alignment (adapted from Minoo, 2010). Moreover, the application of HRP is often seen differently in private and public sector despite both sectors

acknowledging the role of managing people as an important source of success (Wahshi, Omari, & Barrett, (2013).

A research conducted by Nkhwangwa, (2014) on Achieving Strategic Fit/Integration between Business Strategies and Human Resource Management Strategies in the banking Sector: An Assessment of the Commercial Banks of Malawi (Nkhwangwa, 2014), focused on components of HRM strategies some of which are not specifically components of Human Resource Planning. As such the research did not fully reflect the linkage between Business Strategy and Human Resource Planning and their impact on competitive advantage in Malawi more specifically in Press Corporation Limited. On the other hand, the research was made on commercial banks in Malawi and did not cover the other sectors. So Press Corporation Limited being a group of companies may be experiencing situations requiring a different approach from those of commercial banks.

This study attempted to answer a puzzle that remained on the link between human resource planning and business strategy of the organisations in Malawi. The study sought to address the research gap by addressing the link between Human Resource Planning and Business Strategy at PCL and how they have impacted on its competitive advantage.

1.4 Research questions

1.4.1 Main research question

The main research question of the study was: Is there a link between human resource planning and business strategy being managed at Press Corporation Ltd?

1.4.2 Specific research questions

The study answered the following specific research questions:

- i. How is the process of Human Resource Planning undertaken at Press Corporation Limited?
- ii. What are the business strategies adopted by Press Corporation Limited?
- iii. How does Press Corporation Limited integrate human resource planning with Business Strategy?
- iv. What are the effects of integrating Human resource Planning and Business Strategy at PCL?
- v. What are the challenges human resource planning is facing in its implementation at PCL

1.5 Objectives of the study

1.5.1 Main objective

The main aim of the study was to analyse the link between human resource planning and business strategy at PCL and how that impacts on its competitive strategy.

1.5.2 Specific objectives

In order to achieve the main objective of the study, the following specific objectives were explored:

1. to analyse the process of human resource planning undertaken at Press Corporation Limited
2. to find out the business strategy adopted by PCL

3. to examine how the human resource planning is integrated with the business strategy at PCL
4. to find out the effects of human resource planning on business strategy at PCL.
5. to examine the challenges human resource planning faces in its implementation at PCL

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research study sought to analyse the link between human resource planning and business strategy at Press Corporations Limited. The study would help in filling the relationship gap between Human Resource Planning and business strategy and the impact they have on competitive advantage in a different setting like PCL and in a different country like Malawi. The study would contribute to the academic knowledge on the nature of Human resource planning undertaken in organisations; the business strategies adopted and how the two are integrated to achieve a competitive advantage. It should be stated that studies on human resource planning have been conducted by many researchers but from a different approach where in most cases it was included as a practice of HRM and considered together with other HRM practices. This study therefore complements the findings of other research works on Human Resource Planning. Hence the research study was necessary to be undertaken.

1.7 Organisation of the thesis

The research study comprised of five chapters and is organized as follows:

Chapter one presents the introduction to the study which includes background to the study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, and significance of the study. Chapter two entails literature review which comprises of the

clarifications of concepts like Human resource management; Process of Human resource planning; Business Strategy; Competitive Advantage; Integration of Human resource planning and Business Strategy; Effects of Human Resource planning and Business Strategy; and Challenges of Human Resource Planning Implementation. It also discusses some theories and also undertakes an empirical review. Lastly a conceptual framework is shown. Chapter three presents the methodology of the study which comprises of the study design, population and sampling methods, data collection methods, ethical consideration and limitations of the study. Chapter four presents the findings and discussion of the study. Chapter five presents the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background of the study and has also stated the problem of the research; it has also outlined the objectives and the rationale for carrying out the research. The next chapter reviews the literature on human resource planning and business strategy particularly on how it creates a competitive advantage.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers definitions of key concepts of the research study which are Human Resource Planning, Human Resource Management, and business strategy. It also outlines the process of Human Resource Planning, its approach and also its significance to the organisation. A theoretical framework and conceptual framework will also be outlined and then a conclusion will also be drawn.

2.2 Clarification of concepts

2.2.1 Human Resource Management

Since this paper is based on human resource management, it would be ideal for the researcher to define what human resource management is before defining Human Resource Planning. Storey (1992) believes that Human Resource Management can be regarded as a set of interrelated policies with an ideological and philosophical underpinning. Armstrong (2006) defined Human resource management as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organisation's most valued assets – the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives. In Armstrong's definition, the concept of strategy stresses that when developing HR strategies it is necessary to achieve congruency between strategy and the organisation's business strategies within the context of external and internal environment. The coherence means what is termed bundling.

Bundling is the development and implementation of several HR practices together so that they are interrelated and therefore compliment and reinforce each other. This process is also known as horizontal integration (Armstrong, 2001). The strategic approach to HRM defines how organisations goals will be achieved by the means of HR strategies and integrated HR policies and practices. It was described as the process of developing corporate capability to deliver new organisational strategies. It is based on two key ideas namely the resource based view and the need for strategic fit (Storey, Mabey & Salaman ,1998.)

2.2.2 Human Resource Planning

Armstrong (2006) defined Human Resource Planning as the process for ensuring that the human resource requirements of an organisation are identified and plans are made for satisfying those requirements. Attwood and Dimmock (1996) also defined Human Resource Planning as acquiring the right people in the right numbers, with right knowledge, skills and experience in the right jobs, in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost. According to Mahapa (2010) Human Resource Planning is described as a process by which management determine how the organisation should move from its current manpower position to its desired manpower position. It is based on the belief that people are an organisation's most important strategic resource.

Beardwell, Holden, & Claydon (2004) also defined Human Resource Planning as the process for identifying an organisation's current and future human resource requirements, developing and implementing plans to meet these requirements and monitoring their overall effectiveness.

However, the working definition of the paper will be the one outlined by Attwood and Dimmock (1996) which states that Human Resource Planning means acquiring the right people in the right numbers, with right knowledge, skills and experience in the right jobs in the right place, at the right time and at the right cost and that of Mahapa (2010) which is based on the belief that people are an organisations most important strategic resource.

2.3 Process of Human Resource Planning

It should be noted that there are two approaches to HRP. These are traditional, also known as hard and contemporary, also known as soft (Beardwell, Holden & Claydon, 2004) . These two approaches differ in that hard HRP ensure that the right numbers of the right sort of people are available when needed. Soft human resource planning is concerned with ensuring the availability of people with the right type of attitudes and motivation who are committed to the organisation and engaged in their work, and behave accordingly (Armstrong, 2006). The hard approach can also be referred to as Manpower planning. A distinction can be made between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ human resource planning. The former is based on quantitative analysis to ensure that the right number of the right sort of people is available when needed. The latter, as described by Marchington and Wilkinson (1996), ‘is more explicitly focused on creating and shaping the culture of the organisation so that there is a clear integration between corporate goals and employee values, beliefs and behaviours’. But Marchington and Wilkinson (1996) as they point out, the soft version becomes virtually synonymous with the whole area of human resource management. It should also be noted that these approaches also differ in their processes.

However the fundamental concern within traditional or hard HRP relates to balancing the demand for and the supply of human resources. Demand reflects an organisation's requirements for human resources while supply refers to the availability of these resources, both within the organisation and externally. HRP comprises three stages as mentioned here under: Forecasting future people needs (Demand Forecasting); Forecasting the future availability of people (Supply Forecasting); and Evolving plans to suit supply and demand (Parashanti, 2013).

2.3.1 Contemporary approach to HRP

Armstrong (2001) modified the phases of traditional human resource planning to reflect aims which are more appropriate for contemporary circumstances. However, contemporary human resource planning occurs within the broad context of organisational and strategic business planning. It involves forecasting the organisation's future human resource needs and planning for how those needs will be met. It includes establishing objectives and then developing and implementing programmes (staffing, appraising, compensating, and training) to ensure that people are available with the appropriate characteristics and skills when and where the organisation needs them. It may also involve developing and implementing programmes to improve employee performance or to increase employee satisfaction and involvement in order to boost organisational productivity, quality or innovation (Mills, 1985).

This approach differs from traditional HRP in that it puts greater emphasis on the soft between demand and supply forecasting. It also differs from the traditional approach

in its emphasis on the internal labour supply. The diagram below shows how the process of contemporary approach works.

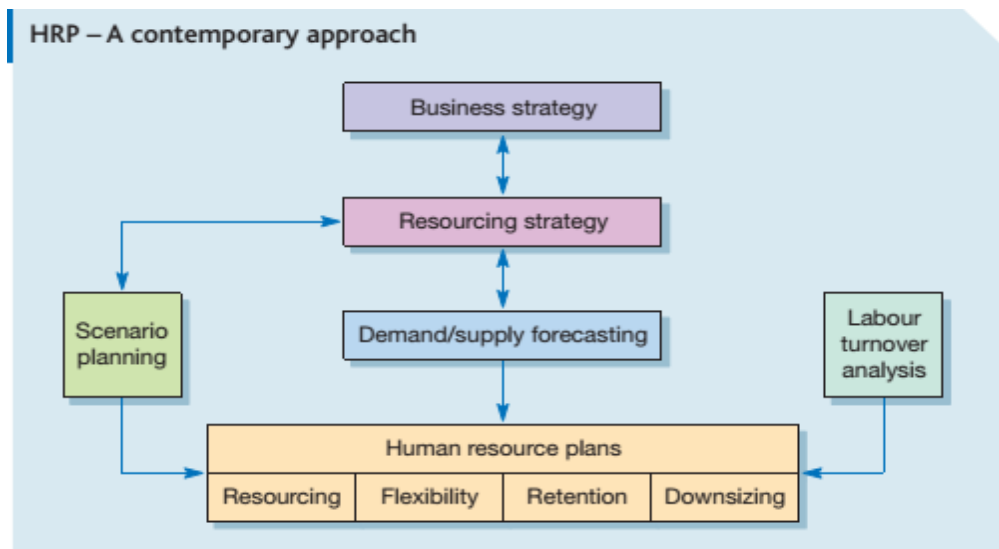


Figure 1: Process of HRP

Source: Beardwell, Holden & Claydon (2004)

The figure above shows how a contemporary approach of HRP works. There is indeed a fundamental difference between this model and the traditional HRP model. The underlying assumption of the HRP model is that much of the process might be rather vague. It cannot be assumed that there will be a well-articulated business plan as a basis for the HR plans. The business strategy may be evolutionary rather than deliberate; it may be fragmented, intuitive and incremental. Resourcing decisions may be based on scenarios that are riddled with assumptions that may or may not be correct and cannot be tested. Resourcing strategy may be equally vague or based on unproven beliefs about the future. It may contain statements about building the skills base, which are little more than rhetoric (Armstrong, 2001).

Such statements could lead one to question whether there is any point to the process at all. Armstrong (2001) goes on to argue that even if all that is achieved is a broad statement of intent, ‘this could be sufficient to guide resourcing practice generally and would be better than nothing at all’. However, this does suggest that any plans inevitably have to be tentative, flexible and reviewed and modified on a regular basis.

2.3.1.1 Business Strategy

The first step in this approach is Business Strategy. It is imperative to highlight that strategies can either be emergent or deliberate (Whittington, 1993). Deliberate strategies assume a rational evaluation of external and internal circumstances and an identification of the best way to ensure competitive advantage. Emergent strategies, on the other hand, are the product of market forces and these are the most appropriate strategies that emerge as competitive processes that allow the relatively better performers to survive while the weaker performers are squeezed out (Legge, 1995).

2.3.1.2 Resourcing Strategy

Another step in the contemporary approach entails resourcing strategy which derives from the business strategy and also feeds into it. It entails planning to achieve competitive advantage by developing intellectual capital-employing more capable people than rivals, ensuring that they develop organisation specific knowledge and skills, and taking steps to become an employer of choice (Opoku-Mensah, 2012).

For example, the identification of particular strengths and capabilities might lead to new business goals, especially if strategy formation is emergent rather than deliberate. The rationale underpinning Armstrong’s perception of this strategy is related to the resource based view of the firm ‘the aim of this strategy is therefore to ensure that a

firm achieves competitive advantage by employing more capable people than its rivals' (Armstrong, 2001). Thus, the implicit assumption is that the vertical integration between business strategy and resourcing strategy will include practices designed to attract and retain a high-quality workforce, such as offering rewards and opportunities that are better than competitors and seeking to maximize commitment and trust. Porter (1985) proposes three strategic options for securing competitive advantage: cost reduction, quality enhancement and innovation. A high-commitment approach is more likely to 'fit' with the latter two strategies than with a strategy based on cost reduction. Arthur(1992) found that the majority of firms in the study that were following a cost reduction business strategy had poor HR practices (e.g. relatively low pay, minimal training, little communication and no formal grievance mechanisms). However, the cost reduction model is frequently associated with a lack of formalization and planning (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2002) and so the process of developing a resourcing strategy may be more likely to include a high-commitment approach.

2.3.1.3 Scenario Planning

This element is not explicit in traditional HRP models and reflects a development in planning models designed to cope with increased uncertainty and unpredictability in the environment. Scenario planning can be used to supplement or replace more traditional demand and supply forecasting. In other words, it entails assessing in broad terms where the organisation is going in its environment and the implications for human resource requirements.

This approach is based on the assumption that if you cannot predict the future, then by speculating on a variety of them, you might just hit upon the right one (Mintzberg, 1994). Mintzberg (1994) argues that it is difficult to determine the required number of scenarios, that is enough to have a good chance of getting it right but not so many as to be unmanageable. In other words, scenario planning is all about assessing in broad terms where the organisation is going in its environment and the implications for human resource requirements.

The ease with which scenario planning can be undertaken has been greatly improved by the use of computer modeling, in which figures and formulae can be altered to calculate the implications of different predictions. However, this can in itself lead to problems of information overload and difficulties in how to respond to the results. Porter (1985) suggests five key options:

- Bet on the most probable one.
- Bet on the best one for the organisation.
- Hedge bets so as to get satisfactory results no matter which one results.
- Preserve flexibility.
- Exert influence to make the most desirable scenario a reality.

This approach can help to broaden perspectives and consider a number of future options but each decision has its own costs and these also need to be considered.

For example, opting to preserve flexibility might be at the expense of following a clear-cut business strategy to secure competitive advantage. Similarly, devoting resources to the best scenario for the organisation might be little more than wishful

thinking. Scenario planning has been described here as a fairly formal process but it can also be regarded as an informal approach to thinking about the future in broad terms, based upon an analysis of likely changes in the internal and external environment (Armstrong, 2001).

2.3.1.4 Demand and Supply forecasting

Forecasting entails predicting how the need for and availability of human resources is likely to change in the future. Beardwell, Holden, & Claydon (2004) outlined that demand and supply forecasting in the model includes all the objective and subjective techniques described in the traditional model. The key difference lies in the emphasis given to labour turnover analysis; in the traditional model this is seen as an element of supply forecasting but here it is deemed worthy of its own category. Nevertheless, the techniques used to measure it are the same as discussed earlier in the traditional approach to HRP (Beardwell, Holden,& Claydon,2004)

2.3.1.5 Human resource plans

Human resource plans are derived from the resourcing strategy and take into account data from a combination of scenario planning, demand and supply forecasting and labour turnover analysis. The model again reflects the lack of certainty and predictability: ‘the plans often have to be short term and flexible because of the difficulty of making firm predictions about human resource requirements in times of rapid change’ (Armstrong, 2001). The plans are divided into four broad areas namely resourcing plan, flexibility plan, retention and downsizing.

2.3.1.5.1 Resourcing plan

This is primarily concerned with effective use of the internal labour market as well as attracting high-quality external applicants. Armstrong (2001) identifies two main components to the resourcing plan: the recruitment plan (e.g. numbers and types of people required, sources of candidates, recruitment techniques, etc.) and the ‘employer of choice’ plan.

2.3.1.5.2 Flexibility plans

The flexibility plan is likely to involve the use of functional and numerical flexibility. Armstrong (2001) suggests that the aim of the flexibility plan should be to:

- provide for greater operational flexibility;
- improve the utilisation of employees’ skills and capabilities;
- reduce employment costs;
- help to achieve do
- increase productivity.

From this perspective, flexibility appears to be mainly employer-driven rather than a means to help employees achieve work–life balance and therefore there may be some potential contradictions between this and the ‘employer of choice’ plan. Alternatively, it may be that different plans can be applied to different sections of the workforce. Purcell (1999) suggests that distinctions are growing in the treatment of core workers, who may be nurtured owing to their contribution to competitive advantage, and non-core peripheral or subcontracted workers.

2.3.1.5.3 Retention plan

Williams (2000) stated that ‘today’s high performers are like frogs in a wheelbarrow, they can jump out at any time’. It appears that there is an increase in numbers of organisations recognising this and are turning their attention to the retention of key staff since this is vital in organisations. The exact components of the retention plan will be largely determined by the outcomes of labour turnover analysis and risk analysis and initiatives are likely to focus on ‘pull’ factors. Retention measures can include some of the following (Bevan, 1997).

Pay and benefits – competitive rates of pay, deferred compensation (e.g. share options, generous pension scheme), retention bonuses, flexible benefits, and benefits package that improves with service.

Recruitment and selection – set appropriate standards, match people to posts, provide an accurate picture of the job.

Training and development – good induction processes, provision of development opportunities to meet the needs of the individual and the organisation, structured career paths.

Job design – provision of interesting work, as much autonomy and team working as possible, opportunities for flexible working to meet the needs of the individual.

Management – ensure managers and supervisors have the skills to manage effectively.

Attention to the skills and abilities of managers is perceived by some as a key element of retention: simply put, employees leave managers and not companies (Buckingham, 2000). Buckingham (2000) argues that employees are more likely to remain with an organisation if they believe that their managers show interest and concern for them; if they know what is expected of them; if they are given a role that fits their capabilities;

and if they receive regular positive feedback and recognition. However, he also suggests that most organisations currently devote far fewer resources to this level of management than they do to high-fliers.

2.3.1.5.4 Downsizing

Downsizing is the unfortunate fact of life for some organisations. When business declines or if certain skills in organisations are no longer necessary, HRP efforts in this case need to focus on how to reduce workforce in ways that are fair and focused on business needs. This is concerned with the numbers to be downsized, the timing of any reductions and the process itself. Methods of reducing the size of the workforce include natural wastage, redeployment, and early retirement, voluntary and compulsory redundancy. Armstrong (2001) implies that this plan is implemented as a last resort that is if anything else fails, otherwise it may be necessary to deal with unacceptable employment costs or surplus numbers of employees by resorting to downsizing.

2.4 Vertical integration

In analysing the level of vertical integration evident in organisational practice, it soon becomes clear that organisations pursue and interpret vertical integration in different ways. Some organisations tend to adopt a top-down approach to HR strategy-making, with senior management cascading defined strategic objectives to functional departments, who in turn cascade and roll out policies to employees, while other organisations recognize HRM as a business partner. Torrington, Hall & Taylor (2008) have explored the varying interpretations of fit or integration by attempting to qualify the degree or levels of integration between an organisation's business strategy and its

human resources strategy. They identified five different relationships or levels of ‘vertical integration’.

Below is a figure demonstrating five levels of vertical integration.

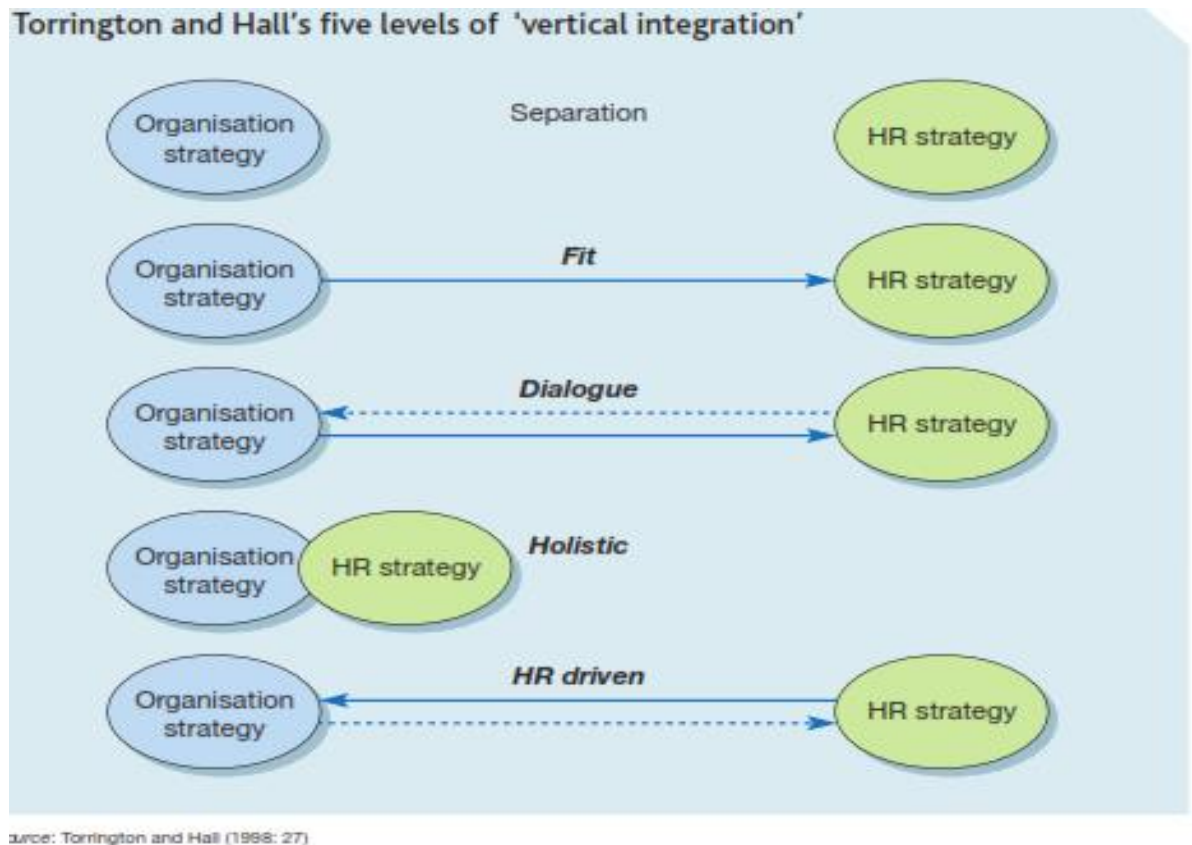


Figure 2: 5 levels of vertical integration

Source: Torrington & Hall (1998)

In the separation model, there is clearly no vertical integration or relationship between those responsible for business strategy and those responsible for HR, thus there is unlikely to be any formal responsibility for human resources in the organisation. The ‘fit’ model, according to Torrington Hall & Taylor (2008), recognises that employees are key to achieving the business strategy; therefore the human resources strategy is designed to fit the requirements of the organisation’s business strategy. It is therefore important to emphasize that these models assume a classical approach to strategy.

Thus they assume that business objectives are cascaded down from senior management through departments and later to the individual employees.

The dialogue model recognises the need for a two-way relationship between those responsible for making business strategy decisions and those responsible for making HR decisions. In reality, however, in this model the HR role may be limited to passing on essential information to the Board, to enable them to make strategic decisions. The 'holistic' model, on the other hand, recognises employees as a key source of competitive advantage, rather than just a mechanism for implementing an organisation's strategy. Human resource strategy in this model becomes critical, as people competences become key business competences. This is the underpinning assumption behind the resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1991). The final degree of integration identified by Torrington and Hall is the HR driven model, which places HR as a key strategic partner thus linking human resource planning/ strategy to business planning/strategy.

2.5 Business Strategy

Johnson and Scholes, (2002) defines business strategy as the direction and scope of an organisation over the long-term, which achieves competitive advantage for the organisation through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and to fulfill stakeholder expectations. Business strategy is concerned with the match between the internal capabilities of the company and its external environment (Campbell, Stonehouse, and Houston, (2002). A strategy, whether it is an HR strategy or any other kind of management strategy, must have two key elements: there must be strategic objectives (i.e. things the strategy is supposed to achieve), and there must be a plan of action (i.e. the means by which it is proposed that the objectives will be met

(Mayhew, 1985) The emphasis (in strategy) is on focused actions that differentiate the firm from its competitors. The definition by Johnson and Scholes therefore would be the working definition for this paper. It should be noted that the business strategy may be evolutionary rather than deliberate; it may be fragmented, intuitive and incremental.

Implementation of business strategy necessitates breaking it down into smaller manageable components (Bird and Beechler, 1995). They further say that the process of decomposition occurs as the various functional or divisional units within the organisation develop responses specific to their activities.

Lee, Lee & Wu, (2010) reports that the concept of business strategy derives primarily from Porters (1985) classification of general strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, and focus. They also say Miles and snow (1984) have classified business strategy into three types: defender, prospector, and analyser. It is also reported that Schuler and Jackson (1987) have classified business strategies slightly differently from those of Porter into three types: cost reduction, innovation, and quality enhancement.

This therefore implies that cost leadership, differentiation, focus, defender, prospector, analyser, cost reduction, innovation, and quality enhancement are the business strategies that were developed and can be adopted by organisations. However, Lee, Lee & Wu, (2010) contend that many scholars have employed Schuler and Jackson's approach. It is therefore an issue of interest to find out which business strategies have been adopted by Press Corporation Limited.

According to Lee, Lee & Wu, (2010) firms adopting a cost reduction must strictly control and minimize expenses, and struggle for greater economies of scale; firms adopting an innovation strategy must adapt to a rapid market change and technological development; and firms adopting quality enhancement strategy must make frequent changes or continuous improvement in the production process in order to continuously upgrade the product quality.

Bird and Beechler (1995) explain that firms with a defender strategy limit their search for new opportunities and instead focus attention internally on ways to enhance organisational effectiveness. Analysers represent organisations that operate in relatively stable as well as changing product-market domains, and consequently, these firms must identify and pursue new product-market opportunities while simultaneously maintaining a presence in existing domains (Miles & Snow 1978). Lastly, Bird and Beechler (1995) explained, firms compete in broad product-market domains characterized by continual states of flux. Constant product-market innovation reflects a response to this dynamic domain, requiring the capacity to closely monitor external events (Miles & Snow 1978). Additionally, the ability to develop new products and enter new markets requires creativity and idea generation.

In view of Porters Business strategies, Tanwar (2013) describes Cost Leadership strategy as a strategy that emphasizes efficiency. Further to that, Tanwar says by producing high volumes of standardised products, the firm hopes to take advantage of economies of scale and experience curve effects. The product is often a basic no-frills product that is produced at a relatively low cost and made available to a very large customer base. Maintaining this strategy requires a continuous search for cost

reductions in all aspects of the business. The associated distribution strategy is to obtain the most extensive distribution possible. Promotional strategy often involves trying to make a virtue out of low cost product features. To be successful, this strategy usually requires a considerable market share advantage or preferential access to raw materials, components, labor, or some other important input. Without one or more of these advantages, the strategy can easily be mimicked by competitors. Tanwar (2013) also put it that differentiation is aimed at the broad market that involves the creation of a product or services that is perceived throughout its industry as unique. The company or business unit may then charge a premium for its product. This specialty can be associated with design, brand image, technology, features, dealers, network, or customer's service. It is also said that, differentiation is a viable strategy for earning above average returns in a specific business because the resulting brand loyalty lowers customers' sensitivity to price. Increased costs can usually be passed on to the buyers. Buyer's loyalty can also serve as entry barrier-new firms must develop their own distinctive competence to differentiate their products in some way in order to compete successfully. Regarding Focus Strategy, Tanwar (2013) says that in this strategy the firm concentrates on a selected few target markets. It is also called a focus strategy or niche strategy. It is hoped that by focusing your marketing efforts on one or two narrow market segments and tailoring your marketing mix to these specialized markets, you can better meet the needs of that target market. The firm typically looks to gain a competitive advantage through effectiveness rather than efficiency. It is most suitable for relatively small firms but can be used by any company. As a focus strategy it may be used to select targets that are less vulnerable to substitutes or where a competition is weakest to earn above-average return on investment.

2.5.1 Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage is a state in which company gains a superior market place relative to its competitors (Gulati & Monica, 2016). On the other hand, Gavinelli (2016) explain that competitive advantage is the result of a strategy that leads a firm to occupy and maintain a favorable position in the market place in which it operates and that is superior to that of competitors. Competitive advantage is obtained when organisation develops or acquires a set of attributes (or executive actions) that allow it to outperform its competitors (Appleby, 1994). Organisations sustain a competitive advantage only so long as the services they deliver and the manner in which they deliver them have attributes that correspond to the key buying criteria of a substantial number of customers. competitive advantage is described as occurring "when a firm is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by any current or potential competitors" (Wright, 1993). According to Gulati & Monica (2016), a study was conducted on HRM practices in small and medium sized enterprises. This paper addressed a significant gap in the HRM performance literature within the extent of such firms. In this study significant relationship between HRM practices and performance indicators are found which ensures that HRM practices positively enhance sustained competitive advantage. The above implies that both strategy and human resource planning have an impact on competitive advantage.

2.6 Integration of HRP and Business Strategy

The aim of linking the organisation's Human Resources Strategies with the organisation's overall strategies is to realise its objectives in a manner that operates effectively and efficiently within the constraints and opportunities that have been defined (Sader, 2015). Recent studies show that human resource is being transformed

from a specialized, stand-alone function to a broad corporate competency in which human resource and line managers build partnership to gain competitive advantage and achieve overall business goals and also, HR managers are increasingly included on high level committees that are shaping the strategic direction of the company (Minoo, 2010). Walker (1980), a renowned HRP expert, outlined that, 'Today, virtually all business issues have people implications; all human resource issues have business implications', HRP and Business strategy integration is therefore essential (Wright & Snell, 1998). Human resources planning are the thread that ties together all the human resources activities and integrates them with the rest of the organisation goals (Susan and Schuler, 1990). According to Armstrong (2009), Human resource planning is an integral part of business planning. The strategic planning process defines projected changes in the types of activities carried out by the organisation and the scale of those activities. It identifies the core competences the organisation needs to achieve its goals and therefore its skill and behavioural requirements. On the other hand, Armstrong (2009) says that Human resource planning interprets these plans in terms of people requirements. This may influence the business strategy by drawing attention to ways in which people could be developed and deployed more effectively to further the achievement of business goals as well as focusing on any problems that might have to be resolved to ensure that the people required will be available and will be capable of making the necessary contribution (Koontz and Donnel, 1993). Therefore, integrating HRM into the organisation strategic plan is the first step in aligning it with the mission (Appleby, 1994).

Wright & Snell (1998) contend that good HR managers "marry" human resources planning to the strategic planning for their organisations as a whole. They also say

that Human resources planning relates to strategic planning in several ways, but at a fundamental level, we can focus on two issues: strategy formulation and strategy implementation. Human resources planning provides a set of inputs into the strategic formulation process in terms of what is possible, that is, whether a firm has the types and numbers of people available to pursue a given strategy. They continue to say in addition to strategy formulation, HRP is important in terms of strategy implementation. In this context they say, once the firm has devised its strategy, the company's executives must make resource allocation decisions to implement that strategy, including decisions related to the firm's structure, processes, and human capital.

According to Al Wahshi (2016), various models have been developed in the literature for describing how HRP is integrated with strategy. He further outlined that there are four linkages between HRM and the business plan and these are administrative linkage, one-way linkage, two-way linkage, and integrative linkage. An administrative linkage describes a situation where there is little or no linkage between HR and business strategy. In one-way linkage, HR specialists develop practices and processes in order to support the organisational strategy provided by top managers. Two-way linkage has a strategic characteristic as it involves a reciprocal relationship between HR and business strategies. It is further said that integrative linkage is the most advanced linkage as in this kind of linkage the interaction between HRM and business strategy is sequential, and HR managers play a key role in the senior management team (Al Wahshi, 2016).

However, Appleby (1994) explains that administration linkage refers to a situation in a firm where human resource concerns are unimportant and human resource department provides only day to-day operation support. It only develops certain programs as needed and handling the paper work and logistic aspects of the employment function. One-way Linkage is where human resource function reacts to the existing strategy and designs programs as needed to support strategies. In two-way Linkage all the three forms of strategies are present; planning, implementation and control. The only thing, which is lacking is representation when crafting the strategy or in top-level management. Integrated stage is when all levels are present. This is the full-blown strategic human resource management. The integration may also be vertical or horizontal as shown in the diagram below.

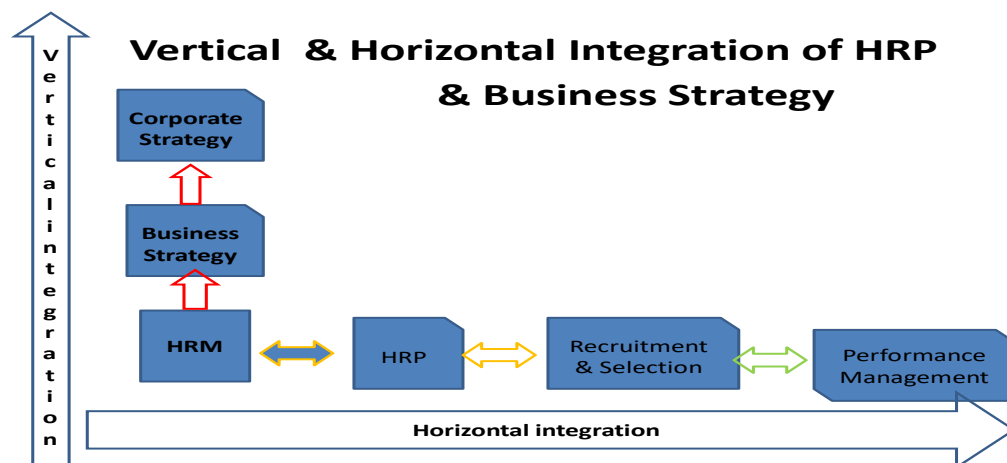


Figure 3: Horizontal and Vertical integration of HRP, Business and Corporate strategy of HRP

Source: Biswajeet (2010)

2.7 Effects of Human Resource Planning on Business Strategy

According to Prashanthi (2013), Human Resource Planning (HRP) is an integral part of Business planning. It is further coined that, the Strategic planning process will

define the changes protected in the scale and the types of activities carried out by the organisation. It is also contended that, it will identify the core competences the organisation needs to achieve its goals. In as much as strategic business plans are articulated, human resource planning interprets them in terms of people requirements. In addition Parashanti (2013) however, explained that it may influence the business strategy by drawing attention to the ways of development and deployment of people more effectively for the achievement of business goals. Parashanti (2013) also says, it will focus any problem that may have to be solved in order to ensure that the people required are available and are capable of making the necessary contribution. Lee, Lee & Wu, (2010) confirms the effect of this linkage by saying that a number of researchers found that a link to HRM practices with some influential variables seemed to increase firm performance. They gave an example that Youndt, Snell and Lepak (1996) found that business the strategy and HRM interaction is an important factor in organisational effectiveness.

Human Resource is about managing employees. According to Byers and Rue (1984) human resource planning involves applying the basic planning process to human resource needs of the organisation. Any human resource plan must be derived from the long term and operation plans of the organisation. In essence, human resource planning helps in the achieving of organisational goals. For an organisation to still exist, it has to achieve its objectives. This is expressed in the strategic plan which is centred at the corporate level. This therefore means that by planning for the right people with right skills to be put in the right place in the right manner, it would be expected that the employees recruited will perform effectively and efficiently and contribute to the attainment of organisational goals (Dessler, 2015).

It should also be noted that human resource planning can also have an effect in an organisation in that it helps towards creation of a competitive advantage. When one plans to have employees who have rare skills which cannot be easily imitated, they give that organisation a competitive advantage among its rivals (Walker, 1980).

It is imperative to highlight that if human resource plans were poor, it would have a negative effect on the organisational productivity. Unproductive workers are not enthusiastic or engaged in their duties and responsibilities. In many cases poor management, lack of motivation and changes in organisational structure are at the forefront of unproductive employees. It is therefore the responsibility of the HR department to ensure that managers have the training and resources necessary to meet the needs of employees. If the HR department fails to implement planning strategies that support management training and workplace morale, there would definitely be a decline in productivity that organization (Mursi, 2003).

HR Planning requires that an organisation, has to match its employees with job functions that best meet their skills and interests. It is imperative to note that the most important assets in organisations are the employees. Without the right people, it is unlikely that even the most comprehensive business plans/strategies would deliver positive performances. One tends to ask if at all human resource planning is worthwhile. Despite that numerous studies have looked at the relationship between planning and performance, this does not necessarily conclude that the relationship is always positive (Olusanya, Adelaja & Chukwuemeka, 2012). However, Human resource planning is a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of

human resource management. HR planning is the strategy for the acquisition, utilisation, improvement and preservation of an organisation's human resources. So for an organisation to realize its organisational goals, it has to acquire the right people with right knowledge, skills and behaviour to be deployed throughout the organisation. Mahapa (2010) outlined that Human Resource Planning entails forecasting Human Resources requirements. This means that the organisation should be in a position to detect what it will need and how many in terms of human resources (Afzal, Mahmood , Sherazi , Sajid , & Hassan , 2013). Detecting the human resources requirements should be aligned with organisational strategies. It should not be a stand-alone thing. It should be noted that HR Planning helps in an effective management of change. It is important therefore to cope with the change associated with the external environmental factors (Mahapa, 2010).

HRP helps to assess the current human resources through HR inventory and adapts it to the changing technological, political, socio-cultural, and economic forces. Majumder (2014) described that Human Resource Planning can also ensure a proper career planning for employees and help them in achieving their goals. In other words, HRP has an effect in that it helps to determine levels of training, development and management development programmes. This will enable employers to know the skills and attitude required in the organisation in order to map out strategy for personnel development.

Armstrong (2001) explained that human resource planning has an effect in an organisation in that it helps to attract and retain the number of people required with the appropriate skills, expertise and competences. Every organisation needs personnel

of desired skill, knowledge and experience. If an organisation has well experienced workforce with good expertise, it will help the organisation to achieve its organisational productivity. HRP helps in defining the number of personnel as well as the kind of personnel required to satisfy its needs. It ensures the reservoir of the desired human resources as and when required (Armstrong, 2010).

Organisations usually become unable to meet the desired objectives due to the fact that in times of stiff competition, the morale of their employees is not as good as it is of their counterparts. The reason is quite clear to everyone that the employees of that organisations, are not having that level of potential or motivation which becomes due while operating at that level. In other words, HRP helps to ensure that employees have best level of interaction and satisfaction with their jobs (Aslam, Aslam, Ali, Habib, Jabeen, 2013). Similarly, Ulrich (1987) added that HR planning is recognized as a source of development of organisational functions based on missions and objectives of the business. With the help of planning, areas that need better functioning are identified to make them grow and succeed.

Another important aspect is that HRP helps to anticipate problems of potential surpluses or deficits of people. In other words it helps in checking labour imbalance (Appleby, 1994). The shortage of manpower as well as surplus of manpower is not good for the organisation. This can be costly to the organisation. In case of shortage of human resources, physical resources of the organisation cannot be properly utilised. In case of surplus of human resources, this resource may remain under-utilised. It therefore helps to counter balance the challenge of shortage and surplus employees. However, Human resource planning helps in correcting this imbalance

before it become unmanageable and expensive (Appleby, 1994). In order to do away with the imbalances, there is need for action plans in this regard. This entails planning for activities which would include identifying internal resources available now or which could be made available through learning and development programmes. An organisation can do well to have proper plans in place so as to attract employees as this would help in reducing labour turnover and absenteeism thereby increasing employment flexibility. Proper recruitment plans are also important as an action plan (Appleby, 1994). It is also imperative to mention that HR Planning plays a role in developing a well-trained and flexible workforce, thus contributing to the organisation's ability to adapt to an uncertain and changing environments. If managers in organisations pay more attention to HR Planning, it would enable them to reduce dependence on external recruitment when key skills are in short supply by formulating retention and development strategies (Heneman and Judge, 2003).

Human resource planning ensures that people are available to provide the continued smooth operation of an organisation. This means that human resource planning is regarded as a tool to assure the future availability of manpower to carry on the organisational activities. This therefore determines the future needs of manpower in terms of number and kind (Appleby, 1994).

(Mahapa, 2010) outlined that HRP helps in the development of Human Resources in that it identifies the skill requirements for various levels of jobs. This therefore enforces managers to organize various training and development campaigns to impart the required skill and ability in employees to perform their tasks efficiently and effectively. Therefore if these employees can acquire rare skills that would not easily

be copied, this can help to have superior performance thereby creating a competitive advantage.

To sum it all, HR planning enables an organisation to pursue both employees and expectations of management organisation (Firoiu, 2003). Hence, when preparing HR planning programmes, managers in organisations should bear in mind that their staff members have objectives which they need to achieve. This is the reason why employees seek employment in the first place and neglecting these needs would result in poor motivation that may lead to unnecessary poor performance and even Industrial actions.

By and large, human resource planning, that is having the right number and kinds of people, at the right places and at the right time, will be taken to mean any rational and planned approach for ensuring: the recruitment of sufficient and suitable staff, their retention in the organisation, the optimum utilisation of staff and the improvement of staff performance.

2.8 Challenges of Human Resource Planning implementation

Mahapatro (2010) explained that the objective of the HR planning is to maintain and improve the organisation's ability to attain its goals by developing the strategic purporting to magnify the contributions of human resources regularly in the foreseeable future. Despite this organisations still face challenges in implementing the human resource plans.

It is noted by Byars and Rue,(2004) that some managers are not involved in the implementations of human resource plans in an organisations. This poses as a

challenge in that human resource planning is not strictly an HR department function. Rather a successful human resource planning requires a coordinated effort on the part of the operational managers and HR personnel (Byars and Rue, 2004). It should also be emphasized that a human resources planning needs to be linked to the overall strategic direction of the company and HR needs to have a seat at the strategic table to both define that strategic direction and to have an accurate information about the corporate strategy. Unfortunately, HR is still seen as a nuts and bolts part of the organisation rather than a strategic lever to make things happen. Not only is HR left unheard but the skills of HR staff are often not strategic in nature and are oriented towards the completion of short term tasks, like getting people hired, or more tactical functions (Opoku- Mensah, 2012).

On the other hand Mahapatro (2010) outlined another challenge of human resource planning which is accuracy of forecast. It is highlighted that human resource planning involves forecasting the demand and supply of human resources. Thus the effectiveness of planning depends on the accuracy of forecasts. If the forecast is not correct then planning will be defective. Inaccuracy comes in when departmental forecasts are merely prepared without critical review. On the same note, planning relates to the difficulties of developing accurate forecasts in a turbulent environment but this does not reduce the need for it. Rothwell (1995) suggests that the need for planning may be in inverse proportion to its feasibility, on the other hand studies conducted by Biswajeet (2010) argues that the more rapidly changing environment makes the planning process more complex and less certain, but it does not make it less important or significant. Biswajeet (2010) also states that the process is more

important in a complex environment and uses a navigation metaphor to emphasize the point.

When implementing human resource plans it is important to have the support of the top management. Appleby, (1994) outlined that HR Planning requires full and wholehearted support from the top management. In the absence of this support and commitment, it would not be possible to ensure the necessary resources, cooperation and support for the success of human resources planning. Such high-ranking support can ensure the necessary resources, visibility, and cooperation necessary for the success of the human resource planning programs (Appleby, 1994).

It should also be noted that resistance from employees poses as a challenge when implementing human resource plans. Employees and the Trade Unions resist manpower planning. They feel that this planning increases their overall workload and regulates them through productivity bargaining. They also feel that it would lead to wide spread unemployment, especially of unskilled workers (Yee and Ali, 2011).

Opuku-Mensah (2012) explained another challenge as insufficient initial efforts by management. Successful HR Planning flourishes slowly and gradually. Sometimes sophisticated technologies are forcefully introduced just because competitors have adopted them. These may not be possible unless matched with the needs and environment of the organisation. If there is a mismatch between the two it would mean that human resources plans would not be effective. The mismatch can also be between the applicants and the skills required.

An organisation may find it difficult to fill the positions. This might be because there is more demand in the organisation than there is in the available talent in the job market. If the organisations recruitment strategies are not that attractive, it would be difficult to acquire the right skills and talent in the organisation. That is why forecasting human resource needs should be followed up by effective recruitment, replacement and retention of employees (Armstrong, 2009).

Torrington, Hall & Taylor (2008) analysed poor utilisation of people in organisations as a pitfall to human resource planning challenge. There are some employees in organisations that are underutilised. He described that inappropriate human resource practices can hinder effective utilisations of employees in organisations. Also if an organisation has lack of sufficient skills, people or knowledge in the business, it will prevent the strategy from being implemented successfully. However, Armstrong (2009) admitted some managers find human resource planning process as expensive and time consuming. Employers therefore may resist human resource planning feeling that it increases the cost of manpower.

2.9 Theoretical Literature Review

Purcell (1999) says that Human Resource Planning being the human resource practice is practiced in line with specific Human Resource Management theories. The theories described herein include Behavioural Perspectives, Resources-Based View of the firm theory, Systems Model and Cybernetic. Byremo (2015) explain that the possible link between HRM and performance has been interpreted and explained through numerous perspective and theories. Some of the outlined predominant theories and perspectives are Universalistic Perspective; Contingency Perspective; Configuration Perspective;

Resource Based View of the firm; AMO theory and KSA theory. However, Whittington (1993) identified four distinctive approaches to strategy-making as a model of analysis. These are the classical or rational planning approach, the evolutionary approach, the procession approach and the systemic approach. The theories expounded below:

2.9.1 Behavioural Perspectives

According to Purcell (1999), behavioural theory is one of the popular theoretical perspectives that focuses on the role behaviour of the employee as the moderator between strategy and firm performance. It is reported that Schuler and Jackson (1987) defined role behaviours as "the recurring actions of an individual, appropriately interrelated with the repetitive activities of others so as to yield a predictable outcome". Purcell (1999) also explained that, the theory assumes that the purpose of management in the organisation is to elicit control of the employee's attitudes and behaviours. The specific attitudes and behaviours that will be most effective for organisations differ depending on various characteristics of the organisation including the organisational strategy (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). Purcell (1999) continues to say that, this theory does not focus on the knowledge, skills and ability of the employees but rather on the role behaviours play as the interdependent component that make up the organisation system (Schuler and Jackson, 1987). It is further said that, the rationale developed in this theory is based on what is needed from the employees, apart from the technical skills, knowledge and abilities required to perform a specific activity.

2.9.2 The Resource-Based View (RBV)

There are empirical Strategic HRM studies that have used the Resource-Based View as the basis for exploring the relationship between HR and organisational performance and it has significantly and independently influenced the field of strategy and SHRM (Sajeevanie, 2015). This theory is centred on the competitive advantage and sustained advantages (Purcell, 1999). The origins of the RBV go back to Penrose (1959), who suggested that the resources possessed, deployed and used by the organisation are really more important than industry structure (Wang, 2014). It is further said that the term ‘resource-based view’ was coined much later by Minno (2009), who viewed the firm as a bundle of assets or resources which are tied semi-permanently to the firm (Minno, 2009). The RBV focuses on the concept of difficult-to-imitate attributes of the firm as sources of superior performance and competitive advantage (Bratton, 2003). It has been argued from the firm’s resources point of view that to provide sustained competitive advantages the resources must be unique or rare among coherent potential commodities in the organisation (Purcell, 1999). When applied to the HRM-performance link, one is to consider the employees as a resource similar to other organisational resources, where the main goal for the HR practices is to build up the human capital and stimulate the kind of behaviour that creates advantages for the organisation (Byremo, 2015). In the resource-based view, the emphasis is on gaining sustainable competitive advantage by means of effective and efficient utilisation of the resources of an organisation (Bratton, 2003). The RBV asserts that ownership and control of strategic assets determines which organisations will earn superior profits and enjoy a position of competitive advantage over others (Bratton, 2003). RBV essentially explains and predicts the relationship between the

particular resources of a firm and sustainable competitive advantage by performance – related outcomes (Heinemann and Judge, 2003).

2.9.3 The evolutionary theory

An alternative view of the strategy-making process is the evolutionary approach. This suggests that strategy is made through an informal evolutionary process in which managers rely less upon top managers to plan and act rationally and more upon the markets to secure profit maximization. Whittington (1993) highlights the links between the evolutionary approach and the ‘natural law of the jungle’. Whittington (1993) argued that ‘Darwin is probably a better guide to business competition than economists are’, as he recognized the fact that markets are rarely static and indeed likened competition to a process of natural selection, where only the fittest survive. Darwin noted that more individuals of each species are born than can survive, thus there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence. Evolutionarists, therefore, argue that markets, not managers, choose the prevailing strategies. Thus in this approach, the rational-planning models that analyse the external and internal environment, in order to select the most appropriate strategic choices and then to identify and plan structural, product and service changes to meet market need, become irrelevant. The evolutionary approach suggests that markets are too competitive for ‘expensive strategizing and too unpredictable to outguess’ (Whittington, 1993). They believe that sophisticated strategies can deliver only a temporary advantage, and some suggest focusing instead on efficiency and managing the ‘transaction costs’ (Beardwell, Holden & Claydon (2004).

2.9.4 The Processual theory

Mills (1983) recognised that in practice strategy formation tends to be fragmented, evolutionary and largely intuitive. His ‘logical incrementalist’ view, therefore, while acknowledging the value of the rational-analytical approach, identified the need to take account of the psychological, political and behavioural relationships which influence and contribute to strategy. Mills’s view fits well within Whittington’s processual approach which recognises ‘organisations and markets’ as ‘sticky, messy phenomena, from which strategies emerge with much confusion and in small steps’ Whittington (1993) summarised his four generic approaches of classical, evolutionary, systemic and processual as shown in figure 3 below.

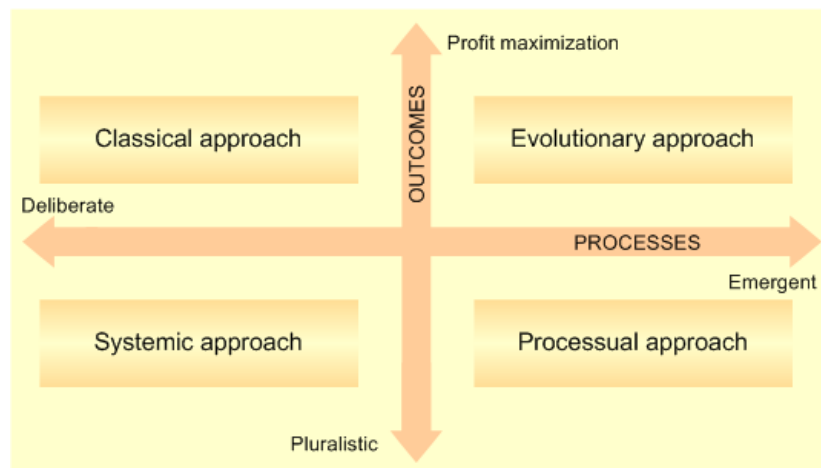


Figure 4: Approaches to classical, evolutionary, systematic and processual theories

Source: Whittington (1993)

2.9.5 Universalistic perspective

Byremo (2015) contend that some claim that there is a universalistic link between HRM and performance, where some HR practices or systems of HR practices give way for increased organisational performance across the population of organisations and under all circumstances. Essentially, scientists holding this view believe that it is not necessary to adapt the HR practices in accordance with any particular strategy or to any specific organisational context (Lengnick-Hall, Lengnick-Hall, Andrade, & Drake, 2009). Universalistic perspective claims that the availability of a set of HRM practices when combined effectively perform better than others do, therefore suggesting that all organisations adopt these practices (Vui Yee & Ali, 2011). According to this there is a universal prescription or ‘one best way’ or a general pattern that can be adopted by various organisations to manage their people, without considering organisations circumstances (Sajeevanie, 2015).

2.9.6 Contingency Perspective

According to Byremo (2015) scientists holding a contingency perspective argue that the relationship between the relevant independent variables and the dependent variables will vary across different levels of contingency variables. It is further said that, the organisation's business strategy is considered perhaps the most important contingent factor within the HRM-performance literature. The various HR activities that the organisation carries out must be aligned with the organisation's business strategy, or other contingencies, in order to have an effective impact on performance according to this view (Armstrong, 2006). The contingency approach tries to link variations of HRM practices to specific organisational strategy (Vui Yee & Ali, 2011).

2.9.7 Configuration perspective

In the configuration perspective, the focus lies on the synergistic effects that the HR practices can create when they are grouped together and exercised in a coherent manner. It is argued that the total effect that can be achieved is far greater than the sum of the effects for every single practice. In accordance with this view, Ichniowski and Shaw, (1999) found that systems of innovative HR practices had a significant impact on production workers' performance, whilst changes in individual practices showed small to non-existing effects. The configurational perspective refers to the pattern of multiple, planned human resource practice deployment and activities to achieve the organisational goals (Ali, 2012). They further say that this perspective also argues that HRM practices should look at the system rather than individuals.

2.10 Empirical literature review

Nkhwangwa (2014) conducted a study on ‘‘Achieving Strategic Fit/Integration between Business Strategies and Human Resource Management (HRM) Strategies in the Banking Sector: An Assessment of the Commercial Banks in Malawi’’. The study tried to find out how the commercial banks fit their business strategies with human resource management strategies so that they continue surviving amid economic hardship situation. The objectives of the research were: finding out which Human Resource Management strategies were commonly used by commercial banks to gain maximum output/profit; finding out some of the business strategies frequently used by commercial banks in Malawi; finding out how best do leading commercial banks in Malawi fit their Human Resource Management strategies with business strategies; and finding out if the fit influences organisational performance. The study covered National Bank of Malawi, Standard Bank and New Building Society. The findings were that commercial banks always aim at achieving a vertical fit-integrating business and HRM strategies, the commercial banks use various HRM strategies that tend to be used under different business strategies, and all the studied banks attach strong importance in recruiting best candidates; in providing training to their employees; and in retaining best employees. This study focused on HRM strategies such as learning and development, commitment, productivity, reward, retention, collaborative, and compliance some of which are not strategies of HRP per say. As such it is necessary to examine how HRP as a stand-alone practice of HRM integrates with business strategies. In addition, the research was conducted in commercial banks whose results could not just be applied to a group of companies like PCL. It was therefore necessary to conduct another research to reflect the circumstance of PCL.

Lee, Lee & Wu, (2010) carried out a study on the relationship between HRM practices, business strategy and firm performance: evidence from steel industry in Taiwan. The primary objective was to investigate the relationship between human resource management practices, strategy and firm performance. The HRM practices examined were training and development; team work; compensation/incentives; HR planning; performance appraisal and employee security. The results were that all six HRM practices help in improving performance, all six HRM practices have a close relationship with the business strategies including cost reduction, innovation and quality enhancement; business strategies do substantially and positively relate to firm performance; and all the six HRM practices integrated with the three business strategies will be positively related to firm performance. The study also confirmed what other researchers found that there is a link between human resource management which includes HRP with business strategy. However, it is not known whether the integration of the nature of HRP undertaken at PCL and the business strategies adopted may reflect the same results.

Another research was conducted by Vui Yee & Ali (2011). The topic of the research was, 'Relationship between Business Strategies and Human Resource Management practices in private and public companies in Malaysia.' This study examined the relationship between two business strategies (differentiation and low cost) and six Human resource Management (HRM) practices (recruitment and selection, training and development, compensation, performance management, employment security, and work life balance). It was found that differentiation strategy stressed on all six HRM practices while low cost strategy emphasized four HRM practices only. The results showed that the effects of business strategy and HRM practices performed in

Public Limited Companies were only slightly different from the ones in private limited companies. The study was much of a comparison between types of company and despite the fact that the results were not far away from what other researchers found, it was necessary to limit the research to the Malawi context and in this respect to PCL. This will bridge the existing gap just like the author of the research had suggested that future research should examine the relationship between business strategy and HRM practices in other sectors such as primary agricultural, manufacturing and service sector. In addition, it is seen that measurement of HRM practices may also need to be redefined by modifying the HRM practices to reflect different settings and countries.

Most of the researches conducted concentrated on the link between business strategy and HRM in general. There are scanty researches that have examined this link between HRP and Business Strategy so the carrying out of the current research in the Malawi setting was imperative in order to bridge the existing gap in knowledge.

2.11 Conceptual framework

It is generally believed that people are the most valuable resources in the organisations. It is through people that other resources are managed and for the organisation to achieve its mission statement, which is the reason for its existence as is usually outlined in the corporate strategy in mission statement, this requires people. Even where the organisation would like to be in the future, its vision, it also requires the human resource. For the organisation to have a competitive advantage over its competitors it needs the human resource operations. These human resource have to be managed by having the functions of its coherent starting with human resource planning (HRP) which will feed in recruitment and selection of the right people with

right skills, knowledge and attitudes (core values) of organisation, put in right place and at the right time, with the right cost (Armstrong, 2001). The employee's performance has to be managed through performance management system, if the performance is well managed, the employees might receive some form of rewards such as salary increase or bonuses. These could also be in a form of non-monetary rewards such as promotion, training and development or sometimes rewards in the form of monetary. If the performance is above average, the individual could be earmarked for a development programme to prepare him or her for higher positions and if it is below standards, the individual could be sent for training in order to improve their performance in their present job. This brings about complaints by management about the performance which becomes a disciplinary issue or a grievance if the complaint is by a member of staff about management decision or action or fellow employee behaviour towards them. In order to have a conducive working environment, and to abide by occupational health and safety welfare of work place, as laid down by rules and regulations governing it, these issues have to be resolved through various mechanisms.

It is believed that if human resources are well managed, then they will add value to the organisation and help it achieve its competitive advantage, since it is believed that it is the people or the employees that create a competitive advantage and help achieve the corporate goals. So the assumptions that there is a relationship between human resource planning and business strategy that impacts on competitive strategy are reflected through three variables such as Human resource Planning (HRP), Business Strategy and Competitive Advantage as depicted in the diagram below.

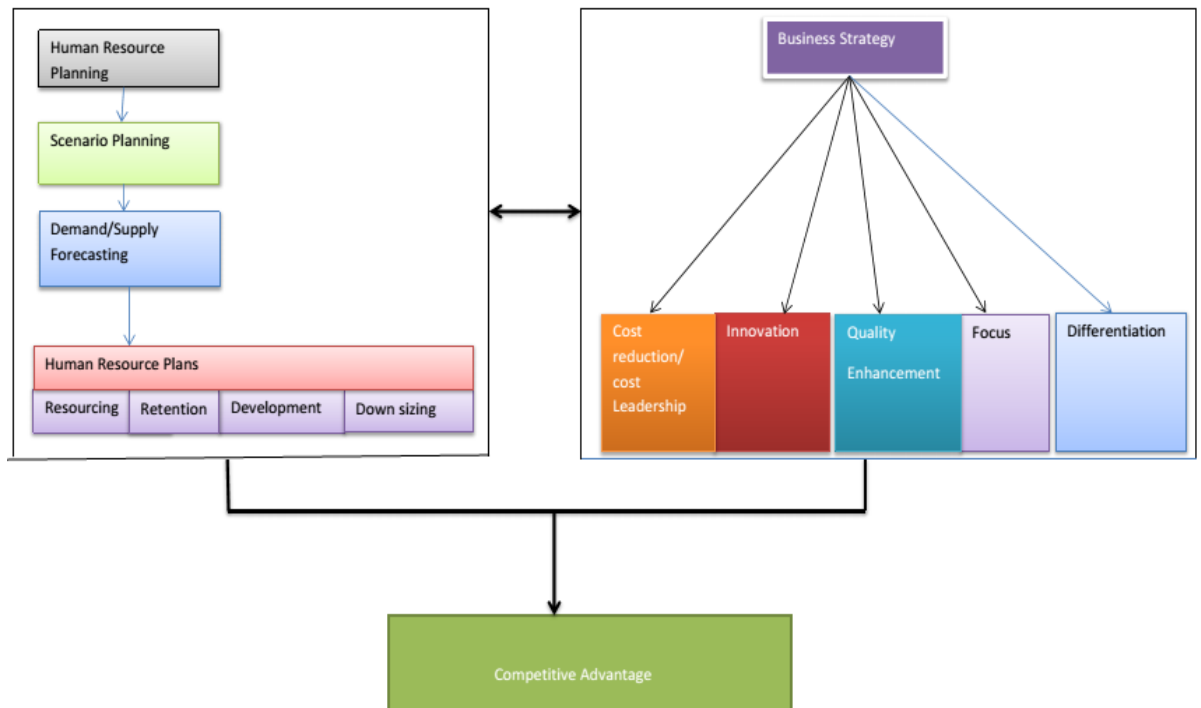


Figure 5: HRP, business strategy and competitive advantage depicted

Source: Appleby (1994)

As shown in the diagram above, under Integration of HRP and Business Strategy, Human Resources Planning relates to strategic planning in several ways, such as strategy formulation and strategy implementation. Human Resource planning provides a set of inputs into the strategic formulation process in terms of what is possible, that is, whether a firm has the types and numbers of people available to pursue a given strategy. In addition to strategy formulation, HRP is important in terms of strategy implementation. In this context, once the firm has devised its strategy, the company's executives must make resource allocation decisions to implement that strategy, including decisions related to the firm's structure, processes, and human capital

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed literature on human resource planning and business strategy. A selected theoretical and empirical literature has highlighted link between human resource planning and business strategy, how it is done, and its importance, how human resource planning creates a competitive advantage for an organisation at business strategic level.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents methodological approach through which objectives of the study were operationalised. The chapter begins with the research design where philosophical approach underpinning the choice of the methodology and its relevance to the study is articulated. It describes the study area which is followed by the discussion on the sampling technique which was employed in the study. Later, a section on data collection techniques follows, where the use of various data collection techniques is explained. This is followed by a section on data analysis approach used in the study. The last two sections present ethical considerations and limitations of study respectively.

3.2 Research design

The study employed qualitative research method which enabled an in-depth explanations to explore more on the HRP and Business strategy and it used exploratory methods. There is not much evidence regarding the link between human resource planning and business strategy not only in Malawi but in the region, Africa and the entire world. This is what necessitated the study of this nature to explore the link (Tandon, 1984). In order to achieve this, the study relied on the use of a case study research design. In a case study, researchers focus on single individual, group, community, event, policy area or institution and study it in depth (Burnham, Gilland,

Grant & Henry, 2008). The strength of the case study lies in the fact that data on wide range variables can be collected on a single group, institution or policy area. However, this does not imply that case study designs are only limited to single cases (Burnham et al, 2008). Thus, depending on the nature of the study or the type of questions to be investigated they can involve multiple cases. For the qualitative data, in-depth interviews were used at Press Corporation Limited executive management and members of staff in order to understand how the link between human resources planning and business strategy created a competitive advantage.

3.3 Study population, sample and sampling technique

The population of the study was thirteen subsidiaries. Out of the thirteen subsidiaries, six were sampled. In this regard, the study employed purposive sampling where according to Singleton and Bruce (2005) the investigator relies on expert judgement to select units that are representative or typical of the population and it involves selecting subjects because of some characteristics they possess (Patton, 1990). In view of this, respondents are deliberately included in the sample depending on the aim of the study (Babbie, 2007). In this study, purposive sampling was used in selecting management members and members of staff. The study sampled 60 respondents and this included 10 employees from each of the six sampled subsidiaries namely: Press Corporations Limited, National Bank of Malawi, Peoples Trading Centre, Press Cane Ltd, Castel Malawi (Carlsberg Malawi) and Malawi Telecommunications Limited. These were purposively sampled because they had some characteristics. Management were policy makers drawn from different subsidiaries whilst the employees were implementers representing various sections from various subsidiaries.

The choice of management members was based on two facts of reasoning. The Chief Executive Officer both the current one and his predecessor. The rationale behind this was that the current Chief Executive was less than a year old in his current position during the time of data collection. The Chief Executive Officer of PCL was also acting as the chairperson of the subsidiaries of PCL. Therefore, this served better in as far as getting the required information on strategic direction was concerned. Those who were responsible for human resource and administration functions and also operations in the subsidiaries as this operates like a business unit for PCL subsidiaries took part in the study.

3.4 Data collection

3.4.1 Desk research

The study employed document and analysis technique which refers to the use of sources such as newspapers, research reports, books, financial reports and government records as sources of information or data (Burnham et al, 2008). This method was central in gathering empirical data for the study. This was crucial for the study because the sources contained information about political, economic, social and technological events which were crucial in shaping the outcomes of the human resource planning since 2002 as Malawi liberalised its economy. The technological booming in the country and companies in the private sector faced stiff competition.

3.3.2 In-depth interviews

According to Devine (2002) in-depth interviews “are based on an open ended interview and informal probing to facilitate discussion of issues in a semi-structured manner or unstructured manner”. In this case, the interview guide was used as a

checklist of topics to be covered. Such a technique targets respondents who are deemed to be knowledgeable of the topic under investigation. The utility of this method lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to probe further in the course of interacting with the informant (Creswell, 2003). In this study in-depth interviews were used to obtain information from key informants who were executive managers at PCL, PTC, Castel Malawi (Carlsberg Malawi), MTL, and Press Cane Ltd. In this regard, such key informants included present Chief Executive Officer, past Executive Chief Executive Officer of PCL, executive management team, Head of Human Resource and Administration, and Chief Executive Officers and employees of the selected subsidiaries.

3.5 Data processing and analysis

The data was analysed using interpretational content analysis. Content refers to words, symbols, pictures, themes or any message that can be communicated (Creswell, 2003). In this regard, content analysis involved segmenting information, developing coding categories and generating categories, theories and patterns. This method was appropriate for the study in that it helped to streamline recurring themes since to a large extent the study dealt with constituting meanings, ideas, values, attitudes and norms which are not statistical analysis (Hay, 2002).

3.6 Ethical consideration

For social scientists, ethics poses questions on how to proceed with research initiatives in amoral and responsible way (Singleton and Bruce, 2005). In order to conform to these standards, a letter of introduction was obtained from the Department of Political and Administrative Studies at Chancellor College -University of Malawi

which introduced the author to PCL to be allowed to conduct the study. In addition to this, the integrity of the respondents was safeguarded by strictly adhering to the principles of confidentiality which requires that the full identity of the respondents should not appear in the report against what they contributed.

3.7 Limitation of the study

The major limitation of the study was that it was difficult to find some key informants particularly, executive management team members and the chief executives, both the former and present one. This was largely due to the fact that the study was being conducted at a period when the chief executives officers had just done handovers of the office; the former one was vacating the office whilst the new one was assuming the duties of Chief Executive Officer. As a result three of the desired individuals did not commit themselves to participate in the study. However, such limitation was compensated by the availability of rich documentary data on training and development programmes and what the former head of administration who was then based at Ethanol Company Limited provided. As such the limitation could not compromise the validity of the findings.

3.8 Conclusion

The chapter has presented the methodological approach through which the study objectives were operationalised. This involved articulating the research design, study population and the issue of study limitation. The next chapter would outline findings and discussion of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research study. It examines and analyses the findings and compares the results with literature. The main objective of this study was to analyse the link between human resource planning and business strategy at PCL. To this effect, the study had five specific objectives. The first objective was to analyse the process of human resource planning undertaken at PCL. The second objective was to assess the business strategy adopted by PCL. The third objective was to examine how the human resource planning is integrated with the business strategy at PCL. The fourth objective was to find out the effects of human resource planning on business strategy at PCL. The last objective was to examine the challenges human resource planning faces in its implementation at PCL.

This section presents major findings of the study in accordance with the five objectives.

The research targeted a total of sixty respondents, ten respondents at the PCL head office and ten respondents from each of the six sampled subsidiary. These included both managers and mere employees from the following subsidiaries: Peoples Trading Centre, National Bank of Malawi, Malawi Telecommunications Limited, Castel Malawi (Carlsberg Malawi), Press Cane Ltd and Ethanol.

Almost the targeted respondents showed familiarity with the concept of the human resource planning. Only a few key informants from the other subsidiaries were not that sure if human resource planning was practised and if at all the process was followed.

4.2 Analysis of the process of human resource planning undertaken at Press

Corporation Limited

This objective aimed at getting the information on how human resource planning is done at PCL and its subsidiaries, as well as human resource activities involved. The findings revealed that there are human resource plans in place at PCL. However, looking at the desk review conducted it revealed that there is an emergent corporate plan and business plan.

It is imperative to highlight that human resource planning is formulated or developed after the organisation put in place the corporate strategy, and then business strategy so that human resource planning should link directly with the business plan. The findings indicated that the practice of human resource planning reflected more aims of contemporary Human Resource Planning. It was found out that PCL decided to enter into a merger with SPAR of South Africa to operate under Peoples Trading Centre (PTC) in Malawi. PTC was prepared to attract and retain the number of people required with the appropriate skills, expertise and competencies. PCL ran a comprehensive leadership development programme annually where individual managers are selected from the PCL head office and its subsidiaries to undergo the management development programme in order to develop a well-trained and flexible

workforce, thus contributing to the organisation's ability to adapt to an uncertain and changing environment. One key informant narrated:

“The former Chief Executive Officer of National Bank of Malawi took over from late Professor Mathews Chikaonda as Group Chief Executive Officer of PCL. And despite that the recruitment process was open to external candidates, he still emerged successful because of his highly skilled competences.”

It is vital to point out that PCL has been formulating retention and development strategies to reduce dependence on external recruitment which has seen the current Group Chief Executive Officer of PCL and Chief Executive of National Bank being promoted from within. About intuitive thinking on demand and supply, capabilities of the present staff and future demand for labour, problems of potential surpluses of employees were anticipated and it was felt that there was a need for some members of staff at the PCL head office and PCL Clinic to go for voluntary and early retirement. Just as it was indicated earlier on by Armstrong (2001) that resourcing decisions may be based on scenarios that are riddled with assumptions that may or may not be correct and cannot be tested. Resourcing strategy may be equally vague or based on unproven beliefs about the future. It was indicated that PCL clinic made profit than the clinics in other subsidiaries yet the new Group CEO saw it as not an area of business investment interest and a risk to keep on running the clinic, yet the clinic not only served PCL group of companies (subsidiaries) staff and family members but also general public benefitted from the clinic. This is an example of intuitive thinking which could make a wrong scenario planning that could not take place. The PCL clinic was closed but it was later bought under management. They reopened the clinic in order to keep on thriving and making profits.

In view of this, it is clearly noted that PCL is practicing what Beardwell, Holden & Claydon (2004) calls contemporary approach to human resource planning and not traditional approach to HRP. The prime concern regarding traditional HRP relates to balancing the demand for and the supply of human resources. It is important to note that the traditional approach is more explicitly focused on creating and shaping the culture of the organisation so that there is a clear integration between corporate goals and employee values, beliefs and behaviours (Marchington and Wilkinson (1996).

At PCL Human resource planning is usually done by the top management of PCL and planning in its subsidiaries is done by PCL head office and in particular, by the Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO) and the directors. It is also done in consultation with employees in other subsidiaries. It was outlined that Human resource strategy is critical because employee's competences become key business competences. This is what Torrington and Hall (2008) describe as holistic model of HR strategy. This model recognises employees as a key source of competitive advantage, rather than just a mechanism for implementing an organisation's strategy.

4.2.1 Human resource plans

The study revealed that PCL has emergent human resource plans in place but that there were efforts to develop HR strategy and it proved futile. However the plans originated from the human resource planning process they did previously and also the current one.

4.2.2 Resourcing Plan

The study revealed that there is a documented plan having numbers and types of people required, sources of candidates and recruitment techniques. The recruitment for executive management for subsidiaries is done through promotion from within and some are recruited as management trainees. These are usually those who are just graduates from the University of Malawi and performed well. The recruitments for PCL headquarters and National Bank are sourced from within the PCL group. As for the other posts of managers and workers, these are advertised in the Newspapers. This process applies to the selected subsidiaries as well.

4.2.3 Retention Plan

The study revealed that PCL offering total reward system in an attempt to attract and retain quality staff. These included better salaries and other benefits inclusive of annual bonus than their competitors. Those employees whose performance is above set standards are offered management development programme and upon completion of such programmes they are usually promoted and posted away to the subsidiaries. The key informant gave examples of promotion of General Manager of Ethanol Company Limited, Company Secretary of Ethanol Company Limited and General Manager of Peoples Training Centre.

4.2.4 Downsizing Plan

It was revealed that that the coming in of a new Group CEO brought in a new business strategy. This came with the different utilisation of employees. Some were redeployed to other subsidiaries whilst others are motivated to opt for an early retirement. Usually the early retirement is done with some extra benefits which

attract the individuals targeted who desire to retire earlier. The study found that 18 employees in July went for an early retirement which included the head of human resource and administration. The early retirement was necessitated by an analysis done by the new Group CEO who looked at the scenario and found that some positions were not in line with the business strategy that was crafted and then devised a redundancy strategy which was cascaded to the head of administration and human resource. The head of administration and human resource management was one of the people on the list of those targeted for early retirement. This also applied to what MTL faced in 2002, where more than 100 employees were retrenched. This was a strategy that was employed to downsize the numbers and enhance productivity in a competitive environment.

The findings above reflect that the company engages in a number of HRP strategies in order to ensure that things are moving in the right direction. The strategies include retention, development, downsizing and recruitment.

4.3 The business strategies adopted by Press Corporation Limited

This objective tried to discover the strategies put in place at PCL for the effective running of the organisation to achieve its objectives. It is important to outline that PCL does not have what could be termed as “a formal strategy” at corporate, business and functional level. The findings indicate that PCL group of companies and its subsidiaries practiced what is termed a formal emergent strategy with a specific objective at the corporate level that is to provide strategic leadership for the growth and sustainability of the companies in which it holds stakes. The business strategy could be summed up as position strategies that are maintaining a leading position in

the private sector. This therefore would have a competitive advantage over its competitors in the private sector. PCL does this not through having a preconceived route to success but this is intuitive and rest much upon the strategic management and leadership at top level who is the Group CEO who at that particular time drives the strategy that is be it at corporate, business and human resource management level. This is how it is put:

The Press Corporation Limited's strategy emphasizes on the growth and sustainability of the companies in which it holds stakes. The strategy further embraces new sectors earmarked for future investments like tourism and energy. Press Corporation Limited's investment activities focus on maintaining a leading position in the private sector; and concentrates in sectors where potential market growth is ascertained from the global economic and social trends. The group continues to explore viable investment opportunities in various sectors of the economy in order to strengthen its portfolio of investments and enhance shareholder value (*Source: Press Corporation Limited website*)

Out of this strategic direction, emerges a flexible statement of intent that could be taken as an informal corporate strategy and business strategy. The strategic direction could be interpreted in the context of corporate strategy as it gives out the desired future (vision) and the reason for their existence (mission statement). This reflects the views of Mintzberg (1994) which says an emergent strategy may be as effective as a deliberate strategy. By following a consistent pattern of behaviour, an organisation may manage to arrive at the same position as if it had planned everything in detail. This seems to be the case both for the three levels of strategies that are corporate, business and operational.

The same views like those of Mintzberg are echoed by Armstrong who puts it: *It cannot be assumed that there will be a well-articulated business Plan as a basis for the HR plans. The business strategy may be Evolutionary rather than deliberate; it maybe fragmented, intuitive and incremental. Resourcing decisions may be based on scenarios that are riddled with assumptions that may or may not be correct and cannot be tested. Resourcing strategy may be equally vague or based on unproven beliefs about the future. It may contain statements about, for example, building the skills base, which are little more than rhetoric* (Armstrong, 2001)

It was also revealed that PCL practiced Entrepreneurial mode of strategy which involves vision and concept attainment, which is intuitive and non-analytical, thrives on uncertainty and is geared to seeking out opportunities. It is often based on the personal vision of the chief executive and may not be made explicit. This means therefore that much of the strategic decisions are solely left on the Group CEO at PCL and sometimes with his directors.

The study revealed that the Group Chief Executive officer was the one who was giving the organisation a competitive advantage because of the competences that he had during 2002-2016. The Group Chief Executive Officer cascaded defined strategic objectives to functional departments, who in turn roll out policies to employees. An example was given of the decision which involved the closing down of Plate Glass Industries and later on the shares were sold out because Plate Glass Industries was making losses and the blame was put on the General Manager that he lacked skills to turn around the fortunes of the organisation. All the employees at Plate Glass were

declared redundant and were laid off. In these decisions, PCL head office acts as a strategic business unit for the subsidiaries as it is put on its website: “...*The Press Corporation Limited offers strategic management and Leadership to its subsidiaries...*”

This is witnessed by how many companies responded to failure in maximisation of profits, where in most instances they reduce the number of employees in the notion of downsizing. For example at MTL in 2014, many employees lost their jobs due to downsizing. This was part of their HR planning as a strategy to avoid wastage of money in order to have an impact in profit maximization. It should be noted that even employees in key positions were not left out.

Another example is that when PCL was going through turbulent times, its position of leading the market was dwindling due to the globalisation and liberalisation policy that was introduced by Malawi Government in the early 2000. The market faced stiff competition almost in all areas of operations. PCL was hit hard especially in areas of food and beverages, retail and hardware trade. This made the new Group CEO to strategise in order to survive the competition from emerging new entrants in the market like Shoprite, local supermarkets which were then competing with People’s Trading Centre shops, Press Bakeries faced stiff competition from Bakers Pride, and Enterprise Container faced competition from several new plastic manufacturers. Human resource policies and practices that were cascaded from top management to the human resource were downsizing and some people had to be laid off.

The results show that PCL develops different business strategies depending on the circumstance in which the business is and what the business wants to achieve. In this

instance, some of the strategies adopted are: position strategy where the aim is to maintain their market share and grow at the same time; entrepreneurial strategy where more opportunities are explored in order to expand the business which is done by merging with other businesses; and lastly focus where they want to concentrate on the businesses they will be able to run efficiently and subletting those that can be handled better by others. These strategies are in agreement with the strategies developed by Porter; Miles and Snow; as well as Schuler and Jackson. This also fits well with its strategic direction which says:

“the Press Corporation PLC’s strategy emphasizes on the growth and sustainability of the companies in which it holds stakes. The strategy further embraces new sectors earmarked for future investments like tourism and energy. Press Corporation’s investment activities focus on maintaining a leading position in the private sector; and concentrates in sectors where potential market growth is ascertained from the global economic and social trends. The group continues to explore viable investment opportunities in various sectors of the economy in order to strengthen its portfolio of investments and enhance shareholder value.”(Source: Press Corporation Limited website)

4.4 How the human resource planning is integrated with the business strategy at PCL

This is a third objective which aimed at exploring the relationship between Human resource Planning and Business strategies at PCL. It was highlighted that in 2002 the new Group CEO for the first time in the history of PCL group of companies introduced what, the Group CEO termed “strategic direction” of the PCL which explained an intent of the PCL in the near future from where it was. This is how one respondent explained it: PCL wanted to consolidate its position of leading holding company in Malawi and have a cutting edge over its competitors in the competition

we were in the private sector in this globalized and liberalized economy and trading. This was new and we had to find a new way of dealing with it. The way was through innovation by this new Group CEO. The new Group CEO shared the direction to the executive management team and we had to go by that new tradition in PCL group of companies.

According to Mintzberg (1994) this crafting strategy is the new way to outfit your competitors. Such an explanation corresponds well with the definition of business strategy by Johnson and Scholes (2002) which is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long-term, which achieves competitive advantage for the organisation through its configuration of resources within a changing environment and to fulfill stakeholder expectations.

It should be noted here that a business strategy is emerging out of the circumstances of globalization. Several market players came on the market scene and are offering competition to PCL group of companies which was relatively a monopoly. As Whittington (1993) puts it a business strategy can be either deliberate or emergent. Emergent strategies are a product of market forces that is the most appropriate strategies emerge as competitive processes that allow the relatively better performers to survive while the weaker performers are squeezed out (Legge, 1995). As PCL on its website puts it: The PCL group of companies is looking at sustainability of the companies in which it holds stakes. Press Corporation Limited's investment activities focus on maintaining a leading position in the private sector; and concentrates in sectors where potential market growth is ascertained from the global economic and social trends.

4.4.1 Resourcing strategies

What is emerging from this study is that from the strategic direction PCL is taking recruitment and selection strategies to have been born and then feeds the recruitment and selection strategies back to business strategy. The PCL group of companies has looked at the experience and capabilities of its employees. It was also revealed that when recruiting, PCL Human resources managers have been in the past consulting with the University of Malawi to get candidates who pass with distinctions and even get students as interns to go in various subsidiaries like, for example, National Bank and Carlsberg Malawi. In certain instances, they offered best students awards in colleges for example at Malawi College of Accountancy. This has enabled PCL to enter into a merger with SPAR, a South Africa supermarket giant to open supermarkets in Malawi. This was a new business goal. The SPAR supermarket is wholly ran by Malawian staff who have served in PTC for some time but have been trained by SPAR so that they can be innovative in their approach to doing business. It was also revealed that the members of staff in SPAR are offered better rewards and opportunities. However, this is in line with the rationale underpinning Armstrong's perception of this strategy as being related to the resource based view of the company. The aim of this strategy is to ensure that an organization achieves competitive advantage by employing more capable people than its rivals' (Armstrong, 2001). Thus, the implicit assumption is that the vertical integration between business strategy and resourcing strategy will include practices designed to attract and retain a high-quality workforce, such as offering rewards and opportunities that are better than competitors and seeking to maximize commitment and trust.

4.4.2 Scenario Planning

The respondents explained the moment of truth where there is a new Group CEO who joined the Group in 2016. The new CEO wants the numbers of current members of staff in PCL group of companies to be reduced as he feels some business areas like PCL clinic and some positions are no longer required at the head office and in some subsidiaries. He went on to say that this will be done in line with the capabilities of officers and the skills, knowledge and competencies that are required for future positions. The respondent gave several scenarios that they considered and which have made them predict some outcomes which feedback to resourcing strategy. One example that featured highly among several respondents was “what if SPAR supermarket from South Africa also came to Malawi to operate supermarkets? What if we closed People’s Trading Centre?” Another respondent explained that this was the reason that led them to enter into a merger with SPAR, partly to bar it from operating in Malawi and secondly, to be innovative in their approach to services.

This approach is ‘predicated on the assumption that if you cannot predict the future, then by speculating on a variety of them, you might just hit upon the right one’ (Mintzberg, 1994). Mintzberg (1994) argues that it is difficult to determine the required number of scenarios, i.e. enough to have a good chance of getting it right but not so many as to be unmanageable. The ease with which scenario planning can be undertaken has been greatly improved by the use of computer modeling, in which figures and formulae can be altered to calculate the implications of different predictions. This approach can help to broaden perspectives and consider a number of future options but each decision has its own costs and these also need to be considered. For example, opting to operate SPAR supermarket under a merger

business strategy, but using local human resource that has high commitment and well trained and experienced to secure competitive advantage (Armstrong, 2003).

4.4.3 Forecasting and labour turnover

On how labour turnover could affect their forecast for supply and demand for labour, it was explained that there is not much of supply and demand forecasting done as per se. Rather it is usually overtaken by events of scenario planning. An issue of natural wastages as a major threat to both supply and demand for labour was cited. The key informants gave examples of deaths of key members of staff in executive management and subsidiaries who had quality skills which they got from management development programmes that PCL provided to them. The skills have been not easily replaced as it takes time to develop leadership and managerial skills. This is seen as a loss of skills plus also the replacement of the human resource and funeral arrangement logistics and absenteeism from time off to attend funerals. However, there seemed to be no analysis of labour turnover at PCL Group of Companies.

4.5 Effects of integrating Human resource Planning and Business Strategy have at PCL

Through HRP process and by linking it to HRM and Business Strategy, it has helped PCL Group of Companies to maintain its leadership role in the private sector by nurturing profitable operations to ensure sustainable growth in the market share. This was implemented through various HR plans which were developed such as scenario plan, redundancy plan, quality products, innovation and creativity which talented or skilled and competent employees translated the business strategy into HR skills and competence and numbers required. It was explained that the human resource planning

process has made a significant contribution to the integration of HR policies and practices with each other and with the business strategy, i.e. horizontal and vertical integration. Marchington and Wilkinson (2002) suggest that HR plans can be developed to 'fit' with strategic goals or they can contribute to the development of the business strategy but conclude that 'either way, HRP is perceived as a major facilitator of competitive advantage'.

The study revealed that PCL practices a top-down approach to HR strategy-making. In view of this, human resource planning starts with the Group Chief Executive Officer, cascading defined strategic objectives, to functional departments, who in turn cascade and roll out policies to employees. To a certain extent, PCL does a holistic model of strategy-making. In its holistic model to human resource planning, PCL recognises employees as a key source of competitive advantage, rather than just a mechanism for implementing an organisation's strategy. The human resource plans put in place becomes critical, as peoples competences become key business competences. This is the underpinning assumption behind the resource based view of the firm (Barney, 1991). Thus they assume that business objectives are cascaded down from senior management through departments to individuals. This is done through human resource practices that are interrelated starting from having the right people with right skills put in the right place at the right time and right cost which human resource is planning. The human resource function then translates those into human resource policies and practices. The next step is getting these people recruited and selected so that they can perform, the superior performance expected from these which surpasses that of the competitors. The individuals go through an appraisal and then get rewards either in monetary or non-monetary. Usually, at the end of the year

in the past years up to 2015 they have been receiving an annual bonus. One key informant narrated:

“I am deeply grateful for our organisation (PCL) for the bonus or thirteenth cheque that we get annually. This is indeed a motivating factor”. (Key Informant, November, 2017)

This has been a source of motivation and commitment to employees at PCL. There has been a record of high performance and lessened grievances. This is what literature termed horizontal fit or integration which is achieved when the various HR strategies are coherent and mutually supporting (Appleby, 2004).

It was also stressed that it was due to human resource planning that enabled the managers to develop redundancy policies since they saw fit that there were more surpluses and that is why others were encouraged to go for early retirements. According to the key informants, PCL Group of Company experienced a 50% human resource reduction in 2017. For example all sampled subsidiaries had a redundancy policy in place which was being implemented in order to improve the overall group performance. For example, when PCL Head office, MTL and Press Cane saw that there was a surplus between HR supply forecast and demand forecast in the group of companies, it implemented a redundancy procedure. The downsizing plan of its employees was not difficult to implement because the policies were already in place and employees were given their dues.

It was also highlighted that it was due to Human Resource Planning that enabled management team to embark on strategies that would make PCL competitive than its rivals. It is imperative to note that planning itself cannot generate strategies but rather

can make them operational by clarifying each of the strategies that are put in place. In this regard, the study revealed that group performance of PCL group of companies delivered strong results with a consolidated profit after tax of MK39.67 billion representing a 159% growth. This is in line with their mission statement which is to generate real growth and shareholder value. According to one key informant, this is attributed to talented people whom PCL has managed to have.

Human Resource Planning also brings lots of opportunities to the organisation, the respondents admitted that it was due to the process of human resource planning that managers were able to be creative and innovative in bringing in ideas so as to expand and be more competitive. For example, Maldeco has diversified in that it has opened outlets throughout the country through agents and also it has opened 'Maldeco Corner' in Peoples, Spar and other supermarkets.

Also as part of innovative strategies, PTC plans to open additional Spar stores across the country. The company is looking for potential partners to improve the brand and enhance its levels of innovation, competitiveness and shopping experience. As such, PTC intends to enter into franchise agreements for operations of some of its shops.

For the subsidiaries to be working in coordination with PCL, it needed human resource plans. This therefore shows that Planning acted as a tool to communicate and control other subsidiaries. In the long run this encouraged everyone to pull in the same direction. That is that of being competitive that its rivals.

4.6 Challenges of Human Resource Planning at PCL

Having looked at the process and the effects of HRP at PCL, It was also imperative to analyse the challenges PCL faced in implementing human resource planning. One of the challenges was that the plans were solely left in the hands of the Group Chief Executive Officer. If the CEO decided to leave the organisation, he would go together with his strategies which were not imparted to the other management team members.

Attrition was also a challenge in the implementation of human resource plans in that plans may be made to be implemented by employees and death can thwart the plans and also employees may decide to resign. This in itself can affect the strategies that the organisations wanted to implement.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented main findings in line with the objectives of the study and literature review. It has looked at how HRP is practiced at PCL and how the process is done. It has also outlined the HRP approach PCL uses and its significance and also how PCL's business strategy creates a competitive advantage over its rivals. The next chapter provides the conclusion of the study and its recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This section will provide conclusion of the findings from the overall study and it will also outline recommendations that have been drawn from the study.

The study investigated the link between Human Resource Planning and Business Strategy and in particular the focus was on the competitive advantage. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher outlined the following objectives: The main objective of this study was to establish the link between human resource planning and business strategy at PCL. To this effect, the study had five specific objectives. The first objective was to analyse the process of Human Resource Planning undertaken at PCL. The second objective was to assess the business strategy adopted by PCL. The third objective was to examine how the human resource planning is integrated with the business strategy at PCL. The fourth objective was to find out the effects of human resource planning on business strategy at PCL. Lastly, the final objective was to examine the challenges human resource planning faces in its implementation at PCL.

The findings of the study revealed that the nature of human resource planning employed at Press Corporations Limited is a contemporary approach and that the decisions made from top management derive from emergent strategies. The human resource planning emerges from the business strategy which is initiated from the top by the Group CEO and trickles down to the individuals employees. The business objectives are cascaded down from senior management through departments to individuals. This is done through human resource practices that are interrelated starting from acquiring the right people with right skills who put in the right place at the right time and at the right cost. The human resource function then translates those into human resource policies and practices. The next step is getting these people recruited and selected so that they can perform and are expected to demonstrate superior performance which can surpass that of the competitors. These individuals go through an appraisal process and then get rewards either in monetary or non-monetary terms. Usually, at the end of the year, they had been receiving an annual bonus. This has been a source of motivation and commitment to high performance. Some keys informants admitted that their organisation is better off in terms of remunerations and other benefits that they enjoy as compared to their rivals and lessened grievances and improved employees' welfare.

HR planning can be conducted at the organisation level or at any component level, but a key to success is always understanding and linking to business direction.

The study has also revealed that there is a relationship between human resource planning and business strategy in that organisations have to have strategies on how

they can operate in terms of acquiring the right number of people with right skills and how those employees will be utilised.

5.2 Recommendations

It is in the light of the finding of the research that this section offers recommendation pertaining to the findings outlined.

Having looked at how Human Resource Planning is practiced at Press Corporations Limited and how it is linked to business strategy, it is in the interest of the researcher to outline the following recommendations:

Despite that there have been studies on human resource planning; much has not been said of the correlation of human resource planning, corporate strategies and also business strategies in organisations. There is need therefore for a further study to look at the integration. For the effectiveness of the organisational performance, there is a need to investigate if these variables are linked or not that is both in public and private sector organisations. In other words, there is need to have a comparative analysis study.

Human resources refer to people whose knowledge, skills, and abilities are utilised to create and deliver effective services in organisations. As such HR, is considered the greatest resource of an organisation. For PCL to continue to strive and be leading amongst its competitors, it is recommended that HR Planning has to cascade down to other departments and sections where all employees should be involved in the process not just to involve the managers and directors only.

Another area of interest is that much as people are attracted to Press Corporations Limited, it is recommended therefore that PCL Managers and directors should still embark on more attractive strategies to enable the organisation to become an employer of choice. All in all, the study has indicated that human resource planning and business strategy go together in an organisation.

5.3 Conclusion

The study's aim was to analyse the link between human resource planning and business strategy and Press Corporations Limited was a case study. The study has analysed and found that there is a link between human resource planning and business strategy. It is this relationship that helped to enhance and improve work performance at PCL which enabled the subsidiaries to be competitive on the market.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

A list of Subsidiaries of Press Corporation Limited

1. Macsteel Malawi Limited
2. Limbe Leaf Tobacco Company Limited
3. Ethanol Company Limited
4. Malawi Telecommunications Limited
5. Maldeco Fisheries
6. National Bank of Malawi
7. Presscane Limited
8. Press Properties Limited
9. Peoples Trading Centre Group Limited
10. Puma Energy Malawi
11. Telekom Networks Limited

APPENDIX II

CHECKLIST QUESTIONS GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANTS

1. Explain how Human Resource Planning is done at PCL and its subsidiaries

2. As part of Management team, what strategies have you put in place for the effective
running of PCL to achieve its desired goals

3. How is the process of Human Resource Planning like in your organisation?

4. Explain some Human Resource Planning activities in your organisation

5. Is there a relationship between Human Resource Planning and Business
strategies that are used at PCL

6. Do you think there are effects of Human Resource Planning at PCL

7. Explain the challenges you face when implementing Human Resource Plans
