

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY HUMAN
RESOURCES PRACTITIONERS IN MALAWI: THE CASE OF FDH BANK
LIMITED AND BLANTYRE CITY COUNCIL**

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION DISSERTATION

JOYCE ASHLEY PELUSI DZIMBIRI

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

THE POLYTECHNIC

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BY

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BBA (Arts) – University of Malawi

**Submitted to the Department of Management Studies, Faculty of Commerce, in Partial
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Business Administration**

University of Malawi

The Polytechnic

MARCH 2022

DECLARATION

I declare that the work contained in this dissertation was completed by the author at the Polytechnic, University of Malawi between 2016 and 2020. It is original work, except where due reference is made, and the work has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted for the attainment of any qualification to any other University.

.....

Signature

Joyce Ashley Pelusi Dzimhiri

Name of Student

.....

Date

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my father, Professor Lewis Baison Dzimbiri for always encouraging me to better myself and being my constant reminder that learning never stops. Without him I would not have reached this level of education in my life.

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Firstly, I thank God for carrying me through this gruelling process. Whether in times of self-doubt or self-assurance, he continued granting me favour and mercy, ensuring I received support from the important aspects of my life at work and at home, spiritually, financially, and emotionally.

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ABSTRACT

Human Resources Management (HRM) function is one of the critical components for organisations to achieve their corporate strategy. HRM undertakes critical activities that enable employees to enter, stay and exit the organisation. In the process of employee management HR practitioners face multiple challenges. This study aimed to undertake a comparative analysis of the challenges that are faced by the human resources practitioners at First Discount House (FDH) Bank and Blantyre City Council (BCC). It was an attempt to formulate a comparative analysis of the challenges that human resources practitioners face in the private sector and in the public sector. This was done by first looking at the human resources activities performed in both sectors, then exploring the challenges human resources practitioners meet and the perception of the various stakeholders. A survey questionnaire was administered to 180 respondents from both FDH and BCC, however only 119 responded. The questionnaire provided quantitative data while semi structured interviews with top human resources management provided qualitative data. On HR activities performed, the findings revealed that human resources practitioners perform activities such as training and development, talent management, conflict management, and grievance management, among others. The challenges faced included staff retention, change management, promoting organisational culture and managing multigenerational workforce. Human resources practitioners from BCC encountered three key challenges namely, politics (63%), staff retention (45%) and conflict management (39%). Meanwhile FDH practitioners faced two major challenges, staff retention (71%) and politics (58%). It is quite evident from the study that challenges that are faced emanate from both the internal and external environment in which the organisation operates and as such human resources practitioners need to ensure that they take these into considerations when performing their various functions. Recommendations to tackle highlighted challenges include encouraging employee and line management involvement in human resources management activities which will lead to continual staff engagement with employees for the better appreciation of the human resources function. Secondly, management should ensure human resources practitioners undergo periodic training on people management to better adapt to the dynamic and ever-changing human resources trends.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCC	Blantyre City Council
CDH	Continental Discount House
DHR	Director of Human Resources
DHRMD	Department of Human Resource Management and Development
FCB	First Capital Bank
FDH	First Discount House
GHHR	Group Head of Human Resources
HR	Human Resources
HRM	Human Resources Management
HRP	Human Resources Practitioners
LASCOM	Local Authority Services Commission
MSB	Malawi Savings Bank
NBM	National Bank of Malawi
RBM	Reserve Bank of Malawi
SACCO	Savings and Credit Co-operatives
TELCOMMS	Telecommunications

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter the background of the study is provided, and this provides further insight of the two organisations that will be researched. It further encompasses the problem statement, research objectives, research questions and the research justification.

In this research the aim was to provide a comparative analysis of the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners in Malawi's private and public sector. A case study approach was utilised by analysing challenges in one organisation in the private sector and one organisation in the public sector in the city of Blantyre, Malawi. Multiple studies have been reported regarding human resources related challenges. However, to our knowledge, none have been done in this context and with the organisations chosen. Insights were drawn from institutional theory and content analysis of the literature. Therefore, it is against this background that the study will provide a comprehensive analysis of the key similarities and differences in the challenges of human resources practitioners in the private against the public sector.

1.1 Background

Armstrong and Taylor (2014) define human resources management as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organisations most valued assets- the people working there who would individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives. These objectives are achieved through activities such as recruitment, training and development, talent management, compensation and benefits administration, reward management, performance management and employee welfare, among others. This study examines two organisations', namely First Discount House (FDH) Bank and Blantyre City Council (BCC). These organisations have different mandates, clients, services, structures, policies, and missions. A brief background of the two institutions is presented.

1.1.1 Private Sector

According to the Annual Financial Institutions Supervision report of 2017 the banking industry in Malawi is comprised of eight commercial banks namely; Continental Discount House (CDH) Investment Bank, Eco bank, FDH Bank, First Capital Bank, My Bucks, National Bank of Malawi (NBM), New Building Society (NBS) Bank and Standard Bank of Malawi. These banks are governed by the Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM). These banks offer similar products and services but different mechanisms of service provision. Over the years' competition has been on the rise with these banks now competing for market share with non-bank institutions like Savings and Credit Co-operatives(SACCO), Micro Financing, Insurance Companies, Telecommunications (TELECOMS), and village banks to name a few. According to the Registrar of the Reserve Bank of Malawi (2017) a sound, stable and developed financial system is key for the transmission and effectiveness of monetary policy and for the development of an economy. Therefore, in accordance with the Financial Services Act (2010), the Registrar of financial institutions undertakes prudential supervision of the financial sector to ensure the interests of the public are always safe guarded. According to the FDH human resource structure (2020) like most organizations, FDH Bank Limited has a functional Human Resources department. The department consists of thirteen members of staff, namely the Group Head of Human Resources (GHHR), three HR Managers for Administration, Employee Benefits and Learning and Development sections, eight Officers and one clerk. The overall strategic objective of the Human Resources Department at FDH is staff engagement. It is aimed at making the FDH Group a great place to work. This is the department that everyone would expect to contribute towards ensuring that FDH attracts, retains, and manages its human resources. It is therefore important to study the roles of human resources practitioners and assess the extent to which these roles contribute to the effective achievement of the goals of FDH.

1.1.2 Public Sector

On the other side of the coin is the public sector. According to the country profile of Malawi 2017-2018, Malawi is a democratic republic with two spheres of government: national and local. National refers to central government machinery where there are ministries and government departments which are headquartered at Capitol Hill in Lilongwe. Local government relates to the machinery of government at the grassroots where the people are. In this case there are twenty-eight district councils, four city councils, two municipal councils and one town council. The Ministry of

Local Government provides the central oversight of all these various councils. In this study focus is on Blantyre City Council (BCC). BCC is the oldest urban centre in Malawi. It is governed in accordance with the Local Government Act of 1998. BCC has elected representatives of the various city wards and other ex officio and non-voting members headed by the Mayor to manage the city. The act outlines the functions of the BCC clearly and regulates its operations. The BCC has seven departments namely, Administrative Services, Leisure, Culture and Environmental Services, Health and Social Services, Town Planning and Estates Management Services, Commerce and Industry Services and Education Services.

The Human Resources department is a section under the Administration Directorate at BCC which is headed by the Director of Administration. This section has a five-member team which comprises of: one Director of Human Resources, one Human Resources Management and Development Manager and three Human Resources Clerks. According to the official BCC website, the overall aim of the department is to ensure that it supports the BCC mission to provide environmentally friendly, high quality, efficient and effective demand driven municipal services in partnership with the individual and corporate residents to attain better quality of life for all residents in the city.

1.2 Problem Statement

People are the life blood of organisations and a company's workforce represents one of the most potent and valuable resources. Consequently, the extent to which a workforce is managed is a critical element in enhancing internal effectiveness and improving the organisation's competitiveness (Du Plessis, Paine & Botha 2009). Parameswari and Yugandhar (2015) stresses that an organisation cannot build a good team of working professionals without human resources. Therefore, an ideal human resources function is fundamentally concerned with matching the human resources of the organisation with its strategic and operational needs thus ensuring full utilization of those resources. Unfortunately managing a diverse group of people is not a straightforward task. People are complex and as such no two people can think, feel, value, perceive and understand in the same way. Human resources practitioners have found themselves facing many challenges that prevent them from performing their functions in various organisations.

Much literature pertaining to emerging challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners has been published worldwide in different sectors of employment. Shukla (2014) did a study on emerging challenges of human resources management in public sector banks in India. The results revealed that talent management, performance appraisal, leadership and succession planning, and

compensation incentives were some of the emerging human resources management challenges. Similarly, Kaur (2013) conducted a study titled HRM in the 21st Century: Challenges of Future. The results of the study revealed that human resources managers (practitioners) faced challenges such as attracting and selecting the best candidate, promoting organizational culture and career development.

Public institutions have their fair share of challenges that human resources practitioners must deal with. According to the Malawi country profile of 2017-2018 it is important to note that local authorities are overlooked by Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. There are set structures just like any other organization that must be followed. These local authorities in many African countries are framed by their constitutions and service commissions which provide regulations for administering and managing the people in the organizations (Msiska, 2015). Government ministries and departments are mainly transactional in their human resources management and in turn render human resources practitioners less strategic because of the heavily centralized decision making in the public service. Msiska (2015) further notes that there are delays in processing personnel matters due to lengthy and multiple levels involved which adds no value. There is also poor working culture and weak performance management systems that are not linked to the organizational goals and politicization of appointments in public sectors.

Malawi, just like many countries, has many kinds of industries that employ people, and these organisations exist for different purposes which requires people who are employed by human resources practitioners. Literature has discussed various challenges including succession planning, talent management, attracting and retaining staff members, performance management, leadership, compensation incentives, promoting organisational culture and career development to name a few. Apart from the study done on employee advocacy in Malawi (Mamman, Rees, Bakuwa, Branine, & Kamoche, 2019) there is nothing that has been found by the author specifically addressing challenges faced by HR practitioners. Most of the studies that have been addressed in this area of research have been done outside Malawi. Therefore, this study is an attempt to fill this gap. Are the challenges human resources practitioners face in the public and private sector similar or different? It would be helpful to inquire into the functions HR practitioners perform in these sectors, and the challenges they face. It is also prudent to analyse the extent to which the sector within which human resources practitioners operate influence the type of challenges they face. To gain an adequate understanding of challenges faced by the human resources practitioners generally, a comparative analysis of the bank environment and Blantyre City Council was felt suitable. This

comparison would give more light to the challenges HR practitioners face, thereby helps to fill the knowledge gap that exists in Malawi due to limited studies on the subject under investigation.

1.3 Objectives

The research seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1.3.1 Main Objective

The main objective of the study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the challenges faced by human resources practitioners in the bank setting versus a local government setting.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Specific aims of the study will aim:

1. To assess the employees' perceptions on the functions of the human resources practitioners.
2. To examine the employees' perceptions on the key challenges that are faced by Human Resources Practitioners in the bank setting versus a local government setting.
3. To examine the employees' perceptions on the relationship between the challenges faced by the Human Resources Practitioners and the sector in which the organisation operates.
4. To analyse the employees' perceptions on the overall perceptions of the various internal stakeholders (HR practitioners, Line Managers, and employees) regarding the challenges faced by Human Resources Practitioners.

1.3.3 Research Questions

The following questions will address the problem statement:

1. What are the employees' perceptions on the functions that are conducted by Human Resources Practitioners?
2. What are employees' perceptions on the key challenges that are faced by Human Resources Practitioners?
3. What are employees' perceptions on the relationship that exists between the challenges faced and the sector in which the organisation operates?
4. What are the employees' overall perceptions on the various stakeholders in the organisations regarding the emerging challenges faced by the Human Resources Practitioners?

1.4 Research Justification

The research will prove important in both the short and long term as the information obtained will contribute both theoretically and practically in how human resources are managed. It is quite apparent that there has been research across the world aimed at scrutinising the challenges that HR practitioners face while carrying out their jobs. However, this particular angle of drawing comparisons between the private and public sector in Malawi particularly FDH Bank and BCC has not been done. Theoretically the research will provide information that is not currently available which can be used as a reference point. Future researchers will identify the gaps available for further studies. The research will provide a comprehensive analysis of the similarities and differences in the public and private sector institutions regarding the challenges that are faced by HR practitioners.

On the other hand, practically the findings and recommendations will help the two organisations address their challenges and ensure that the HR department is able to achieve its objectives and in turn achieve the objectives of the organisation. Policies can be revised because of this research. The research will gather insights in learning the various perceptions of the stakeholders of FDH Bank and BCC regarding what they view as the emerging challenges the HR practitioners are facing and how they can be resolved.

1.5 Research Limitations

In this study the major limitation was that 119 people responded to the questionnaire from the planned 180. Therefore, the findings of this study did not exhaust all technicalities of the challenges faced by human resources practitioners at FDH Bank Limited and Blantyre City Council.

1.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter the purpose of the study was provided. Further to this background information pertaining to the two organisations that were under scrutiny was provided. Following this the research objectives and questions were clearly outlined before the research justification was provided.

In the next chapter literature review is provided, research design and methodology are discussed in chapter three, chapter four presents and analyses the findings of the study and finally chapter five encompasses the conclusion and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter literature pertaining to the emerging issues of the HR practitioners in the public and private sectors will be discussed. It encompasses review of literature from journals, books, and institutional documentation to identify the gaps which the study seeks to address. Human resources management is defined, the functions of the human resources department, the challenges of the human resources practitioners, Perceptions of Stakeholders to Human Resources Challenges, Empirical Literature and Research Framework.

2.1 Human resources management defined

Over time, various publications have defined and refined the definition of Human Resources Management (HRM). Schneider (1987) writes that organisations are the people in them, that the people make the place. Mahapatro (2010) adds that HRM is a process of bringing people and organisations together so that the goals of each are met. Furthermore, Armstrong and Taylor (2014) defines HRM as a strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization most valued assets, the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives.

From the three definitions it is evident that the human resources function deals with issues that employees should be the most valued assets in the organisation. This involves bringing people to the organisation, ensuring that they are competently contributing to the organisation and how they are taken care of until they leave the organisation. It is therefore important that human resources should be used as a tool of sustaining inward investment in organisations. Employers should see their employees as valuable assets and not just another statistic. How they are brought into the organisation, how they are treated and managed would also have a bearing on how they perform the functions that they were employed to do. Human resources practitioners in different organisations have different ways of adopting the human resources function in their organisation.

2.2 Theories of Human Resources Management

Theories of management are a collection of general rules which guide managers in managing an organisation. Theories are also a justification for encouraging workers by responding effectively to business goals and to incorporate successful means of achieving the same. Armstrong (2014) proposed eleven theories of HRM namely; contingency theory, social exchange theory, transaction cost theory, AMO theory, Agency theory, resource dependency theory, human capital theory, resource based view, organisational behaviour theory, motivation theory and institutional theory. In this research only three theories link closely to the area of study namely; organisational behaviour theory, motivation and institutional theory.

Organisational behaviour theory

Ekene (2015) writes that organisations are created generally created to achieve a goal or a set of goals. As a result they employ the services of humans who manage the resources of the organisations towards the achievement of this goal (s). In the course of achievement of this goal(s) there evolves a pattern or a way of behaviour which is accepted and is manifested when workers are discharging their responsibilities. According to Armstrong (2014), organisational behaviour theory describes how people act in organisations at individual and group level and how organisations function in regard to structure processes and culture. Armstrong continues to note that organisational behaviour influences HRM approaches to organisational design and development and enhancement of organisational capability. It is important to apply this knowledge in order to improve the effectiveness of any organisation. Therefore, human resources practitioners need to appreciate that human beings are social beings and as such how they act has an impact on the effectiveness, productivity and overall achievement of organisational goals.

Motivation Theory

Motivation Theory explains the factors that affect goal-directed behaviour and therefore influences the approaches used in human resource management to enhance engagement (Armstrong, 2014). There are many theories that contribute to motivation but the essence of it all is to ensure that a high level of passion is ignited in employees in order to achieve the organisational goals. There are several theories of motivation that have been widely accepted including; Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of needs, McClelland's theory of needs, Aldefers ERG theory, Vrooms expectancy theory and Herzberg's two factor theory to name a few Armstrong 2014; (Dzimbiri, 2015). In order to optimise productivity, it is imperative for human resources practitioners to motivate their

employees adequately. Employees can only display high performance if they are soundly inspired and eager to workout optional effort (Armstrong 2009). In this study Maslow's hierarchy of needs and Herzberg's two factor theory are explored briefly.

Abraham Maslow hypothesized that everybody has five basic needs that create a need hierarchy in ascending order starting with the simplest needs such as; physiological needs like water, food, sex and shelter. Safety needs are wishes for security (i.e. protection from physical and emotional harm) as well as assurance that physical needs and absence of pain will be met. Social needs are a person's need for affection, belongingness, acceptance and friendship. This need can be met in both formal and informal groups. Esteem needs are a person's need for power and status. Individuals need to feel vital and get recognition from others. The final need is self-actualisation which represents the need for fulfilment, a sense that the person's potential has been achieved.

On the other hand Herzberg's two factor theory aimed at distinguishing two types of motivational factors he labelled "hygiene and motivators". Herzberg proposed that there are certain factors in the workplace that cause job satisfaction while a separate set of factors cause dissatisfaction. The hygiene factors are things like wages, good working conditions, good company policy and administration, good relationships with supervisors and peers and job security. The existence of these however does not guarantee satisfaction and the absence of these factors leads to dissatisfaction. On the other hand, motivator factors include recognition, personal growth, sense of achievement, responsibility, the work itself i.e. meaningfulness of the work. Employees find the motivators intrinsically rewarding and motivate employees towards superior performance. In short improving the motivator factors increases job satisfaction and improving hygiene factors decreases job dissatisfaction

Institutional Theory

Armstrong (2014) writes that institutional theory conforms to internal and external environmental pressures in order to gain legitimacy and acceptance. This entails that the environment inside the organisation has a direct impact on formal organisational structure development. This environment encompasses culture, symbols, and normative beliefs among others.

In conclusion it is important to note that these theories support human resource functions. The organisation behaviour theory helps practitioners to understand employee's behaviour and explain why certain different behaviours have an impact on employee performance. On the other hand

motivation theory entails creating a high amount of passion between employees to obtain the desired goals and to be able to address individual needs. Finally, the institutional theory helps practitioners to anticipate environmental dimensions that have direct impact over organisational structure development. What is important to note here is that some of the challenges human resource practitioners face in carrying out their functions might be attributed to the absence of elements that these human resource theories espouse. The theories are therefore a framework within which effective human resource practitioners should function.

2.3 Functions of the Human Resources Department

There are several functions that are performed by the Human Resources Department. However, it is important to note that there is an overlap between these HR practitioner functions and activities performed by line managers. The HR practitioners are entrusted to organise people accordingly i.e. through departmentalising, assigning roles and tasks, resources allocation, among others. They are to view people as assets rather than liabilities. Parameswari and Yugandhar (2015) agrees that any organization without a proper set up for human resources management is bound to suffer from serious problems while managing its regular activities. Therefore, today's organizations have specialized personnel hired to manage the organizations human resources.

It is important to understand the functions human resources practitioners perform in any organisation in order to gain an adequate understanding and appreciation of the challenges that they face. Irrespective of the kind of organisation, the functions are the same. Recruitment, providing a conducive work environment, compensation and benefits administration, performance management, conflict management, training and development, employee relations are explored below. However, the outcomes of these functions are shaped by the context in which the organisation is found.

2.2.1 Recruitment

Torrington, Hall, and Taylor (2008) defines recruitment as a process for discovering the sources of manpower to meet the requirements of the staffing schedule and to employ effective measures for attracting that manpower in adequate numbers to facilitate effective selection of an efficient workforce. Torrington et al. (2008) continues to note that recruitment consists of many activities including finding out and developing the sources where the required number and kind of employees

will be available, developing suitable techniques to attract the desirable candidates, employing the techniques to attract candidates and stimulating as many candidates to apply irrespective of the number of candidates the job requires. Human resources practitioners need to therefore attract many people to apply for jobs so that it widens the pool of candidates from which the desired candidate can be selected from. Private and public institutions might employ different methods of recruitment because of the nature of the sector in which they are operating. Public institutions often rely on traditional methods of attracting potential employees like advertising in newspapers although they are slowly moving into the digital platforms. On the other hand, private sector is more digitally inclined and not limited to traditional platforms alone. They utilise various social media and digital platforms such as LinkedIn[®], Facebook[®], and employment websites. It is important that this stage is done well to avoid attracting the wrong kind of applicants.

2.2.2 Providing a conducive work environment

Armstrong (2009) writes that setting an obligation to maintain the work environment is an important function of human resources practitioners. Every organization has their own policies designed with the involvement of high-level experts to ensure the equality, continuity, and task completion on given time. This is supported by Parameswari and Yugandhar (2015) who acknowledged that it is imperative that there is good atmosphere in organizations as people spend the better part of their day in their respective workplaces. Some organisations have policies in place that ensure that there is consistency in how this environment is maintained for all members of staff. These might include disciplinary policy, vacation policy, and benefits policy to name a few. On the other hand, some institutions believe in providing a good physical environment that appeases the employees. Providing a good physical environment entails improving the lighting and ventilation of the office space, making sure it is safe and clean and providing good furniture as well as other useful equipment as per job specifications. It should be noted that providing a conducive work environment is not limited to only bettering the physical environment. Other organisations give more focus on creating open communication, incentivising, and disciplining employees who foster poor working conditions to name a few. When provided with good working environments these organisations noted that employees show better productivity during the working hours.

2.2.3 Compensation and benefits administration

Compensation and benefits administration is another crucial function played by human resources practitioners. This includes determining fair compensation and benefits according to industry standards. Compensation encompasses everything received by an employed individual in return for work (Price, 2007). Compensation and benefits administration is a sensitive and controversial area that has been extensively debated at both practical and theoretical levels. It is crucial for human resources practitioners to establish effective compensation programs that should have a pay philosophy that is linked closely to the company's business strategy. This philosophy should reflect the organisations culture as well as long term goals. As such a competitive compensation and benefits package is key to a company's ability to attract and retain top talent (Torrington et al., 2008). Pay is an important feature of human resources management; it is the main reason why people work. In most organisations' compensation includes salary, health benefits, retirement plan, vacation time, sick leave, and bonuses to name a few. Therefore, human resources practitioners need to ensure that their employees are paid what is fair in comparison to the market and in accordance with the capability of the organisation. In some organisations however issues of compensation and benefits administration is among the core activities that are performed in the finance department.

2.2.4 Performance management

Parameswari and Yugandhar (2015) write that another function of the practitioners is performance management. For the organisation to achieve its goals it is imperative that each employee contributes significantly. Aristotle writes "the whole is better than a sum of its parts". This is evidenced when individuals can meet their performance targets which in turn enables sections/departments to achieve towards the overall organisational goals. Human resources practitioners therefore need to ensure that line managers are fully able to grasp the essence of performance management so that they can steer their employees in the right direction. This is supported by Armstrong (2009) who writes all organisations are required by their stakeholders to perform well. To be able to do this there is dependence on the enthusiasm, dedication, expertise, and quality of people working in the organisation at each level. Human resources practitioners should aim at ensuring that they should develop high performance culture in the organisations they manage so that high performance culture becomes a norm. Torrington et al. (2008) adds that training and development and reward management systems play a role in ensuring that performance

of employees is maximised. Human resources practitioners need to ensure that those employees whose performance has fallen short of the requirement are assisted so that they can improve which will in turn help the organisation to achieve their overall objectives. Different organisations adopt different performance management systems that are in line with their business so that they can ably monitor how their employees are performing. Most organisations also tie individual's performance to salary increments, bonuses, and other reward measures to encourage employees to meet and succeed their targets.

2.2.5 Conflict management

Conflict management has been defined by the business dictionary as the practice of recognizing and dealing with disputes in a rational, balanced, and effective way. As long as organizations continue to work in teams, conflict is inevitable. Conflict is an outcome of behaviors and is an integral part of human life. Whenever there is interaction there is conflict (Thakore, 2013). That is why in any organization with a diverse group of people conflicts are bound to arise. No two persons are the same and as such human resources practitioners will time and time again find themselves having to mediate and manage disputes that arise. These disputes can occur between two or more employees, employee, and line management, and sometimes between the employee and the employer. Although conflicts are not regarded in a positive way, they are normal and healthy. The important aspect it to realize which conflicts are healthy and which ones disrupt operations. Therefore, some organizations engage their members of staff in team building exercises, sporting activities, mentorship programs and after work activities. The aim of this interaction is to encourage people to get to know each better in a personal capacity with the hopes of bettering the working relationships. On the other hand, other organizations engage their employees in formal training and workshops in conflict management to address the disputes.

2.2.6 Training and development

The effective operation of any enterprise or system requires that the individuals involved learn to perform the functions of their current jobs at a satisfactory level of proficiency. An effective organization however, also requires that it has available within itself a pool of individuals who are qualified to accept increasing responsibilities to move into higher level jobs with reasonable facility (Sing et al., 1992, as cited in Njau, 2012). Training refers to the teaching and learning of activities carried on for the purpose of helping members of staff to acquire and apply knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes needed by the organization (Torrington et al., 2008). It increases the skills

of an employee needed to do a particular job. Development on the other hand is a term that implies something that is ongoing, and progress is made over time. As people work longer they need to continue to develop to improve their skills, knowledge or competencies (Foot et al., 2008, as cited in Njau, 2012). Therefore, human resources practitioners are entrusted with the function of ensuring that employees are trained and developed adequately to enable them to fulfil their current and future roles. It is imperative that practitioners conduct employee skills assessment and job analysis to assess the employees training needs. Training and development increases productivity (Price, 2007). It is important to note that employee training and development is good human resources management practices and risk management strategy. The ever-changing business environment also requires human resources practitioners to furnish their employees with knowledge that is going to be helpful in their day to day activities. A positive learning environment is critical for the success of the organization be it a private or public organization and this kind of environment is embedded in the organization. Well trained and developed members of staff are often satisfied.

2.2.7 Employee relations

Human resources practitioners are concerned with managing the employment relationship that exists between employer and employee. Particular reference is made to terms and conditions of employment, issues arising from employment, providing employees with a voice and communication with employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Mostly employment relationships are regarded as an exchange of labour and pay, often times seen as a power relationship in which the employer has the formal authority to direct efforts towards specific goals whereas informally the employee can frustrate the achievement of those objectives (Njau, 2012). It is important to note that the relationship is not only about money, but employees are also concerned with their working conditions, their free time, their holidays etc. It is quite evident organisations find themselves engaging in activities that ensure that there are sound employee relations. Human resources practitioners in some organisations involve their employees in business planning process, celebrating work anniversaries and birthdays, celebrating performance achievements, keeping employees informed on the direction of the company, emphasising work life balance, social sporting activities e.g. fun runs, social football, aerobics. Sound employee relations in turn leads to harmony, participation, productivity, lower labour turnover, commitment, sense of belonging and in profitability for the organisation.

2.2.8 Developing public relations

Just as positive brand image helps promotes sales, positive employer branding helps attract and retain more qualified employees (Comcowich, 2018). Human resources practitioners are entrusted with ensuring that they engage in public relations that make their organization an employer of choice. Branding should be done in such a way that potential employees and current employees know the organization. With the labour marketing becoming more and more competitive specialized skills and committed employees are wanted in every organization. Therefore, human resources practitioners need to move from the traditional train of thought that public relations are simply done by the human resources department. Human resources practitioners are responsible for internal communications to the members of staff and to the external stakeholders. To the external stakeholders the main idea is to attract potential employees as an employer of choice. Good press is important therefore, social media should be adequately utilized. It is important to note that public relations and employee relations go hand in hand. Human resources practitioners maximize the employee experience when they adequately manage the company's image. Human resources practitioners develop public relations through activities such as holding meetings, interviews, disciplinary hearings, planning events, disseminating information, encouraging adoption of culture and values of the organization.

2.2.9 Employee welfare

Employee welfare is defined by the Oxford dictionary as efforts to make life worth living for a worker. Employee welfare entails everything from services, facilities and benefits that are provided or done by an employer for the advantage or comfort on an employee. It is undertaken in order to motivate employees and raise the productivity levels (Luenendonk, 2017). Choudhary (2017) agrees with the definitions. However, he points out that there is no single universal definition of employee welfare. Definitions would vary depending on the country, region, social institution, degree of industrialization and general level of social and economic development. Often employee relations are associated in monetary terms, but this is not always what is expected of human resources practitioners. There are other employee welfare issues including health insurance, stipends, transportation, and provision of food. Human resources practitioners by monitoring and providing conducive work environments are also looking into employee welfare. It is important that human resources practitioners are aware of the various welfare needs of their employees so that they are catered for. Sometimes employee welfare efforts are seen to be more of an expenditure

however if done properly it helps employees feel that management and their human resources practitioners care about their well-being. Consequently, the employees have boosted morale which causes an increase in work commitment and productivity. For services providers like BCC and FDH Bank Limited satisfied employees lead to good customer service and hence increased profitability for the organization. When employees are satisfied, staff retention is high, and this is beneficial for the BCC and the bank. As such good employee welfare enables organizations to compete favourably with other employers for the recruitment and retention of quality staff.

2.2.10 Talent management

Talent management is defined as a process of ensuring that the organization has the talented people it needs to attain its business goals. This involves the strategic management of the flow of talent through an organization by creating and maintaining a talent pipeline (Armstrong, 2009). However, it is important to understand what talent is before human resources practitioners can begin to manage it. Talent was defined by Michaels et al. (2001) as cited in Armstrong (2009) as the sum of a person's abilities, his or her intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgement, attitude, character and drive. It includes his or her ability to learn and grow. Human resources practitioners need to be able to identify the talent that exists in their organization and aim to keep and develop talented people because it is that talent which enables them to perform extremely well in their roles. Iles and Preece (2010) as cited in Armstrong and Taylor (2014) identified three main perspectives of talent management namely exclusive people, exclusive position and inclusive people. Exclusive people only focus on key people with high performance and/or potential irrespective of their position. Exclusive position focuses on the right people in the right jobs and inclusive people focuses on everyone in the organization being seen as actually or potentially talented given the right direction and opportunity. The first two perspectives, or a combination of the two are most common in many organizations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Human resources practitioners need to strike a balance between the different perspectives so that they are not merely developing the talent of the elite so that other employees do not feel left out. There is need to appreciate that everyone is talented but how talent is developed from individual to individual.

2.2.11 Grievance management

A grievance is a formal employee complaint. This complaint usually arises when the employee feels that he or she has been negatively affected by the employer not holding up terms (misapplying the terms) of the employment agreement (Miller, 2016). A grievance could come from an individual or a group of people. When grievances are brought to the employer, they go through the human resources department to address the issues at hand. As such human resources practitioners are entrusted that the concerns of the employees are addressed in line with terms and conditions of services. Organizations tend to have formal grievance management procedures that are universal but differentiated to suit the organization. If not managed properly employee's productivity and morale will be affected and on the extreme end employees can leave organizations or pursue litigation. Human resources practitioners in other organisations find themselves constantly coming up with various ways to create a favourable working environment. They also make sure that they should be having working policies and procedures in place in how to handle grievances. Employees want to see that their human resources practitioners treat their grievances with much required attention.

2.2.12 Change management

Organizations are constantly changing to suit the environment in which they operate. Human resources practitioners need to ensure that the employees are moving in line with the new direction, (Torrington et al., 2008). These changes can occur due to globalization, increased pace of competition, technological advancement, and information flow, among others. Therefore, these changes force organizations to change. Changes can sometimes just require the organization to change its operating structures whereas sometimes it is cultural changes which requires employees to alter their attitudes. It is important for human resources practitioners to question their role in the change management process (El-Dirani, Hussein, & Hejase, 2019). The process of change of management involves three key steps. These are unfreeze the organization from the current situation, make the desired type of change and refreeze the organization in a new desired state (Lewin, 1947, as cited in El-Dirani et al., 2019). The aforementioned steps enable the organization to drive the change in a systematic manner. Change management is therefore defined as formal management for organizational change, including a systematic approach and application of knowledge (Benedict, 2007, as cited in El-Dirani et al., 2019). Ulrich asserted that human resources practitioners are the change agents in the change management process (El-Dirani et al., 2019). Therefore, human resources practitioners must ensure that they are at the forefront of any changes

that the organization will go through. It is crucial for employees to be made aware of change from the human resources practitioners. Grapevine communications are often misleading and instil fear which causes employees to have a negative attitude of the change that is to take place. Employees need to be assured of the impact of the change and the positive aspects of the change. Furthermore, employees are supposed to be encouraged to participate in the change process and it falls on the human resources practitioners to adequately come up with plans that ensure everyone in the organization participates in whatever small way possible. This increases the sense of ownership of the changes that are bound to occur. Benedict (2007) as cited in El-Dirani et al. (2019) reports that when human resources practitioners are involved in processes related to major organizational changes, they perform a variety of functions associated with the communication, implementation and tracking of such changes. Therefore, human resources practitioners need to be more proactive than reactive and reduce resistance as much as possible.

2.2.13 Aligning organizational strategy with human resources strategy

No formal organization can exist and function well without formal rules of engagement in managing people. These are the general guidelines that express how the management intends to manage people and what is expected of employees in the workplace (Armstrong, 2006). Such policies include human resources policies. Human resources policies help human resources practitioners to ensure that people management is in line with corporate values. Further to this it helps ensuring that human resources practitioners make decisions that are consistent and minimize inequality of employees. These human resources policies help to come with strategy for the human resources department which in turn helps in achievement of overall objectives of the organization. In an ideal situation, it is strongly recommended that an organization formulates human resources policies that will cover overall all human management functions including recruitment, selection, performance management, training and development (Beach, 1985).

In this section functions of the human resources department were outlined. These include recruitment, providing a conducive work environment, compensation and benefits administration, performance management, conflict management, training and development, employee relations, developing public relations, employee welfare, talent management, grievance management, change management and aligning organisational strategy with human resources strategy.

2.4 Challenges faced by the HR Practitioners

A challenge is an obstacle which prevents a given policy instrument being implemented or limits the way in which it can be implemented (Kamuri, 2010, as cited in Njau, 2012). Challenges are not exempted from any organisation irrespective of the mandate or sector in which the organisation is operating and as such it is important for human resources practitioners to identify the challenges that they face in their organisations and find a means of eradicating or minimising the challenges that they face. According to Gunnigle and McDonnell (2008) people are the life blood of organizations. A company's workforce represents one of its most potent and valuable resources. Consequently, the extent to which a workforce is managed effectively is a critical element in improving and sustaining organizational performance. This then entails that managing people is one of the toughest aspects of organisational management. If organisations operated in a perfect world HRM would be executed with so much ease given the various schools of thought that have attempted to understand HRM. Managing people is one of the most difficult aspects of organizational management: it means dealing with people who differ physically and psychologically. The essence of personnel management is that aspect of organizational management concerned with the management of an organization's workforce.

2.3.1 Managing organisational change

In an article written by Ullah (2019) titled 'Changes in the organisation: Change management' it is well noted that organisations that aspire to become more innovative and adaptive in the global market have to reorganise themselves in regards to their work culture, process, products and services to meet the demands of the market. As such change management is inevitable in organisations and with a forever changing workforce the HR practitioner is faced with the challenge of how to manage this change. The HR practitioner can ease the impact of this change by identifying formal and informal organisational leaders who can act as change agents for the change by addressing the human concerns, quickly and systematically explaining why the change is needed, identifying cultural and diversity concerns and explaining the benefits of the change (Ullah, 2019).

2.3.2 Achieving a healthy work life balance

Achieving a healthy work life balance for employees has been a challenge that many HR practitioners have been struggling to achieve. Macky and Boxall (2008) writes work life balance is finding the balance between work and non-work, with neither of them intruding on the other in

terms of time, resources, and emotional energy. Where employees fail to strike this balance, it leads to decreased productivity and retention issues can arise as employees find themselves dissatisfied and feel overloaded and will be looking for better working conditions. In some organisations human resources practitioners go the extra mile to ensure that work life balance becomes a reality. Utilisation of technology has allowed employees over the years to work from home which has seen productivity going up and labour turnover slowed down (Macky & Boxall, 2008).

2.3.3 Managing a multigenerational workforce

According to Kaur (2013) managing multi-generational workforce is becoming more and more difficult to achieve. The workplace is comprised of different generational groups e.g. baby boomers, baby busters, generation X and generation Y. Situations arise where the older employees prefer less technology and would prefer to work with traditional methods. On the other hand, younger employees would want to use the latest technology and HR managers need to ensure that they are able to identify the HR needs of both kinds of employees and offer a balance that suits well with both of them. He further writes that attracting and selecting the best candidates is becoming more and more difficult, mostly because the employees are influenced by each line managers' values, beliefs, perceptions, and social views. As such, high quality and skilled talent is not widely available which stresses HR practitioners on exploring other avenues aside from advertising and promoting from within to embarking on head hunting, outsourcing the HR function to companies specialising in recruitment, etc. Quality of employees depends solely on this recruitment and selection process which does not always run smoothly. There are so many associated problems with this process including cost of advertising, communication gaps between hiring managers and the HR practitioners, narrow pool of suitable candidates, biased opinions of interview panellists to name a few.

2.3.4 Promoting organisational culture

Williams (2003) as cited in Nasir (2017) states that promoting organisational culture also becomes a challenge with more and more rampant changes. For example, mergers and acquisitions are very difficult to promote culture with all these employees having diverse minds and instilling in them one culture is a tough task for human resources practitioners. Williams (2003) further states that HR practitioners must develop a culture that supports any change that can occur in the organisations. This can include tactics that will foster cultural diversity. Organisations are always

learning and striving to better themselves and as such how they choose to operate can be adjusted from time to time to suit the internal and external environment in which it is operating.

2.3.5 Retaining talent

Retaining talent is yet another challenge that is faced by human resources practitioners. These practitioners need to focus on how best to retain staff in their respective organisations. Retention strategies need to be identified and put in place. Examples of staff retention strategies include but are not limited to fostering an appealing company culture, engaging employees in two-way communication, offering incentives and recognition. Nasir (2017) adds that providing internal career growth opportunities can help organisations keep top talent from seeking opportunities elsewhere.

2.3.6 Conflict management

Nasir (2017) noted that conflict management and resolution is another challenge which is faced by today's HR practitioners. Organisations can have both constructive (positive) and destructive (negative) conflicts which require HR practitioners to be well equipped to handle. If conflicts are not handled properly it might lead to employees leaving the organisation because they would become frustrated. When employees leave, human resources practitioners are tasked with recruiting new members of staff. There is also decrease in productivity because people end up spending more time on the conflict as opposed to their core roles in the organisation.

2.3.7 Workforce Diversity

Workforce diversity is also another major challenge HR practitioners are faced with in the workplace (Thomas, 1992). Thomas defined workforce diversity to include but not limited to age, gender sexual orientation, marital status, religious beliefs, geographic location, income, education background and work experience. Thomas was an advocate for turning this diversity of the workforce into a strategic asset that will ensure that the goals of the organisation are met. Opportunities can be seized, threats can be curbed, strengths can be capitalised. Therefore, it is imperative for practitioners to ensure that their work environment supports diversity and can align its strategy and ensure that core values are synced with the diversity to minimise the risk of losing skilled labour force.

In summary there are various challenges that human resources practitioners in any kind of sector of employment. In this chapter change management, managing a healthy work life balance,

managing a multigenerational workforce, attracting, and selecting the best candidate, promoting organisational culture, retaining talent, conflict management, and managing workforce diversity.

2.5 Stakeholder perception

A stakeholder is defined as a party that has interest in a company and can either affect or be affected by the business (Chen, 2020). Primary stakeholders in most organisations include investors, customers, employees, and suppliers (In this research stakeholder's entails line managers, employees, and human resources practitioners. These stakeholders hold their own perceptions as to how well human resources practitioners manage the human resources in the organisations irrespective of the type of organisation.

2.4.1 Perception of employees

A study was done to determine if there are any differences in how employees perceive human resources practitioners in public and private organisations. The study further attempted to characterise the nature of problems if at all they exist (Veloso, Tzafirir, & Enosh, 2015). Veloso et al. (2015) citing Gibb (2001) stated that employee perception is of important because it allows a different evaluation of human resources practices than those provided by management which reflect the interests of the shareholders, and performance concerns. Another importance was that it enables a deeper evaluation than one that is centred on economic theory, which limits the full understanding of the impact of human resources, leverages the people perspective hence raising the importance of the individual within the organisation. Guest (1997) also suggested that human resources practices lead to attitudinal outcomes. In public organisations human resources practitioners are perceived to be operational, administrative, and weak due to diversity of practices and strategic role. Employees also feel their participation in the organisation is constrained by political issues. Meanwhile employees in the private sector view human resources practitioners as both operational and strategic and acknowledge the diversity and specialisation concerning human resources practices. The employees also recognise the efforts made by human resources practitioners to increase employee commitment. In a survey done by Pay-check they interviewed 1000 employees from different company's, 90 of which were HR practitioners. The aim of the study was to find out what the employees felt about the human resources department. The results showed that employees generally felt the department and its practitioners were average performers in their roles.

2.4.2 Perception of line managers

According to many business managers, an impression was created that human resources practitioners do not add value to the business. However, these managers expect a higher level of performance than human resources practitioners deliver (Pieterse & Rothmann, 2009). Further to this Pieterse and Rothmann (2009) stated that modern human resources practitioners ought to strive to contribute to the business value chain as both employees themselves and consultants which in turn influences employee performance. Worsfold (1999) as cited in Pieterse and Rothmann (2009) agrees that the involvement of human resources practitioners in budgets and other mainstream decision making indicate a trend to integrate human resources and business strategies. King (2002) as cited in Pieterse and Rothmann (2009) alludes that human resources practitioners aspire to build a close relationship with business managers without understanding what it means to be a business partner. In a study conducted by Buyens and Vos (2001), in Belgium the HR role assessment survey was administered to determine whether non-human resources functions and senior executives support the importance of the human resources practitioner's role as a strategic partner. The results indicated that despite human resources practitioners aspiring to become a strategic business partner they were still held to the traditional view which places emphasis on activities such as recruitment and remuneration.

The findings can be understood that perceptions play an important role in the way human resources practitioners are evaluated regarding their performance. It can be concluded that both line managers and human resources practitioners regarded roles defined by Ulrich as important. Ulrich defined four roles of human resources practitioners to be strategic partner, administrative support, employee champion and change agent. Human resources practitioners know what is expected of them and they possess sufficient ability for business success however they find it difficult to deliver at the level that they and their customers believe is necessary and line managers perceive the existence of the human resources practitioners in organisations to be important.

2.4.3 Perception of human resources managers

A study by Ofori, Sekyere-Abankwa, and Borquaye (2012) aimed to determine the perception of human resources among professionals in Ghanaian organisations. The results of the study revealed that respondents ranked recruitment of qualified personnel, training and development and staff retention as the most important functions of human resources practitioners. It also revealed that the perceived relevance of human resources function is influenced by age, job position, being side-

lined for recognition and being denied assistance. Another study done on human resources function competences in European countries (Boselie and Paauwe, 2005, as cited in Ofori et al., 2012). The results indicated that generally human resources managers had a more positive perception of the human resources function and department than other employees and managers. However, both line managers and human resources executives perceived the human resources as being more effective in delivering services as opposed to the strategic role. In some organisations it is evident that human resources practitioners view themselves to be more than just agents of hiring and firing, but rather playing a very significant role in the organisation. Meanwhile from the European study conducted it is evident that there are many more other factors that can influence how human resources practitioners are viewed. Ulrich defined four roles of human resources practitioners to be strategic partner, administrative support, employee champion and change agent. According to Ulrich (1997) as cited in Pieterse and Rothmann (2009), modern human resources practitioners are actively carrying out the strategic partner role, administrative support, employee champion and change agent role. The practitioners can appreciate what is expected of them, they know the business and how to adapt themselves in all these four roles.

In summary, line managers, employees and human resources practitioners all have a perception on how human resources are managed in any organisation. It is imperative to understand these perceptions to manage these key stakeholders who all contribute to stay and exit of employees in the organisation.

2.6 Empirical literature

There are several studies that were done which tried to establish the challenges which are faced by human resources practitioners both in the present and in the past.

A study by du Plessis et al. (2009) titled ‘Challenges for HR Practitioners: Some Empirical Evidence of New Zealand Organization’s Expectations’ aimed at determining the extent to which the current levels of capabilities of HR practitioners in New Zealand organisations match the challenges and expectations of their current roles and responsibilities. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in data analysis. Three major findings emerged from the study namely, diversity management, work life balance and strategic role of human resources management. The first finding was on work life balance. Macky and Boxall (2008) supports that finding the balance between work and non-work with neither of them intruding into the other in terms of time, resources and emotional energy can be an elusive goal for more and more employees

as the twenty-four hour, seven day working week gains dominance. In this study it was discovered that the failure for employees to achieve a work life balance would end up in the employee being stressed which can lead to low productivity and eventually retention would be an issue as they will start looking for better employment elsewhere. Barrat (2007) as cited in du Plessis et al. (2009) stated that employers will need to get serious about work life balance and go beyond lip service, because most organizations who talk the talk of work life balance, are struggling to make it reality and actually achieve work life balance.

The second finding that emerged from the study by du Plessis et al. (2009) was diversity management. Managing people from different cultures and backgrounds has become a norm for HR practitioners. According to Ulrich and Brockbank (2005) worldwide immigration patterns have sharply internationalized the labour force and there is need for organizations to move beyond intellectual diversity and formally ingrain diversity into their culture. Hartel, Fujimoto, Strybosch, and Fitzpatrick (2007) believe it is the responsibility of HR practitioners to manage diversity and to teach other managers and employees the essence of having a diverse workforce. The challenge that exists is to overcome the stereotypes and prejudices and to welcome dissimilarities because diversity management should view employees as unique individuals.

Finally, the third and final finding that emerged is the strategic role of HR practitioners. According to Boxall and Purcell (2000), HR policies and strategies have strategic implications on organizational performance and in making decisions about any employment related structures. HR practitioners must be able to make strategic decisions. This is backed by Raich (2002) who suggests that there is a shift of HRM from a service provider to a business partner. At the end of the day organizations should strive to provide a work life balance as employees also have their own personal goals outside those of the organization. It was apparent that human resources practitioners play a vital role in ensuring that they align their departmental strategy towards the achievement of the overall goals of the organisations.

Specific recommendations were made to address the particular challenge. To address work life balance, it was recommended that policies ought to be developed and implemented in response to changing demographic needs. Furthermore, there is need to proactive in the approach to overcoming barriers to implement work life balance. In as far as diversity management programs need to be implemented effectively and use the talents of people of different backgrounds, experiences, and culture. Finally, there were several capabilities that are required to provide

significant input into the organisations strategy as follows: develop achievable vision for the future and envisage probable consequences, to develop and implement coherent human resource strategies which are aligned with the organisations strategies and to take part in framing business strategies and making key business decisions.

Study by Mwemezi (2011) “Challenges facing HR succession planning in Tanzania work organizations: a case of public and private work organizations in Dar Es Salaam”. The study aimed in assessing factors affecting human resources succession planning in the Tanzania public and private organizations. Specifically, the study aimed in finding answers to four objectives: assessing the extent of human resources succession planning activities in Tanzania work organizations; examining the challenges facing human resources succession planning in the Tanzania work organizations; assessing the positive factors influencing human resources succession planning in Tanzania work organizations and the finally the strategies used for enhancing the application of human resources succession planning in Tanzania work organizations. Qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analysis were used to analyse data mainly Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The study findings indicated that most of the respondents did not have knowledge on the concept of human resources succession planning and how it works in their organizations. Few organizations surveyed conducted succession planning but how effective and regularly done in the organizations remained questionable. Furthermore, it was revealed that human resources succession planning played an important role for the organization development. Hence, all organizations should understand the paramount role played by human resources succession planning for their survival. Moreover, various strategies of enhancing human resources succession plans were identified during this study and included attracting and recruiting potential employees, effective leadership and management development and improving budget. Finally, the study also provided the recommendations of what should be done to improve succession planning including but not limited to; commitment by management in implementing human resource planning, disseminating information on the importance of the human resources succession planning, organisations need to have a uniform process that provides a disciplined approach for matching human resources with the anticipated needs of the agency and the organisations need to have a strong vision in matters related to human resource planning in the selected organisations.

Study by Mamman et al. (2019) titled Employee Advocacy in Africa: the role of HR practitioners in Malawi. The main purpose for this paper was to investigate the extent to which human resources practitioners are perceived to play the role of employee advocate within an African context where

institutions and trade unions are weak. The rationale behind this study was to further test Ulrich's model of the employee advocate role in an African context. This was done by examining the significance of each element that together constitute employee advocate and to draw out practical implications of the findings both for employment practice and future research. Data analysis was done using Cronbach Alpha coefficient to test for reliability. The findings of the study indicated that human resources practitioners were perceived by the stakeholders (line managers and employees) to be playing a key role of employee advocate, despite the challenges of the context. It was further found that the major contribution for the stakeholders to perceive human resources practitioners this way is their contribution to motivating employees. The findings suggest that further research is needed to determine whether certain elements are more important than others.

2.7 Conceptual model

As an exploratory study adopting a case study approach there is no model that is explaining the variables that are linked to this research. Therefore, a conceptual map was drawn to describe the framework of the study. The research is based on comparative analysis of the human resources function in the private and public sector. The assumption that is made is that all human resources functions are common in a public or private organisation. It is well known that human resources management helps the organisation to realise its corporate strategy irrespective of the sector. These functions include recruitment and training and development of people in the organisation. They also include aligning human resources strategy with the overall strategy, employee welfare, talent management, grievance management, conflict management and developing public relations (Armstrong, 2006; Njau, 2012; Torrington et al., 2008). In the process of realising organisational goals it is anticipated that human resources practitioners face different challenges. These challenges may be different in different sectors (Kaur, 2013; Nasir, 2017; Ullah, 2019). This could be due to the context in which the human resources function is performed. It is also believed that various stakeholders within the organisation do perceive differently the challenges that the human resources practitioners face. Overall, the study is an attempt to explore the extent to which hr practitioners face challenges in various organisations irrespective of industry and how that is perceived by various stakeholders in the organisation (Pieterse & Rothmann, 2009). The aforementioned is demonstrated below:

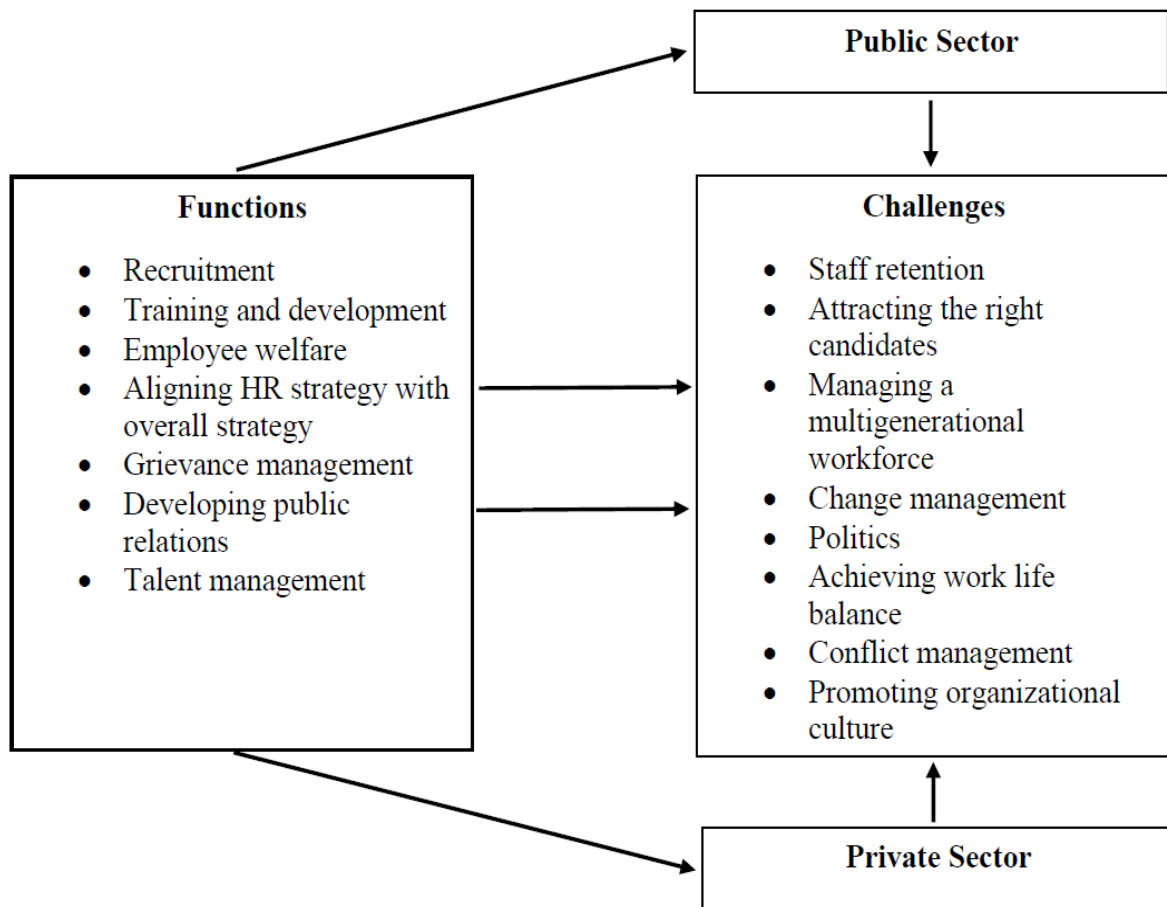


Figure 1. Demonstration of HR functions performed by HR practitioners

The two diagonal arrows show that these functions are performed in both private and public organisations. The two horizontal arrows indicate that the human resources functions are faced with challenges in public or private organisations. The arrow pointing from the public and private sector to the challenges is to demonstrate that challenges can emerge due to the context in which the HR function is performed. In other words, the way the HR functions behave in public sector as opposed to the private sector can shape the challenges that are listed.

This framework will be instrumental in analysing the key functions performed in the two sectors of employment by the human resources practitioners. It will also help to examine the challenges that are faced by both sectors of employment. Furthermore, it will examine the extent to which the type of organisation affects the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners.

2.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter human resources management was defined, and human resource management theories were presented as a framework within which human resource practitioners perform their functions. Human resources functions were also outlined and challenges faced by HR practitioners were discussed. The chapter also tackled the perceptions of the various stakeholders (e.g. employees, line managers and human resources practitioners) about human resources practitioners and provided empirical literature and a research model that informs the research. In the next chapter Research design and methodology will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In this section research design, study population, sample size and sampling, primary data collection, secondary data collection, data analysis methods, ethical considerations will be discussed.

3.1 Research Design

Blanche et al (2006) defines research design as a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research. These are plans that guide the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. In this study a sample survey research design was adopted in the collection of data from respondents at FDH and BCC.

3.2 Study Population

Study population refers to the totality of cases that conform to some designated qualifications (Sekaran, 2000). In this research the study population comprised of the employees of Blantyre City Council and FDH Bank, respectively. The study population was based in the city of Blantyre and population of 124 and 110 employees of the two organisations. The population data was drawn from the staff compliment reports from both organisations.

3.3 Sample size and sampling

Sampling methods is a procedure for selecting a sample from the population. It entails selecting a few from a bigger group for the basis of predicting a fact, situation outcome regarding a bigger group. Blantyre city was purposefully selected, and the respondents were selected from the various branches and sections within the bank and from various departments within BCC. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), purposeful sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which qualitative researchers select individuals who will best help them understand the research problem and research questions. To ensure that the sample size was representative 180 questionnaires were distributed targeting 84 employees from BCC and 96 from FDH. However, only 51 employees from FDH Bank Limited and 67 employees from BCC responded to the questionnaire that were administered. Yamane (1967) provides a simplified formula for calculating sample size which was adopted to come up with the sample size for this study.

Yamane's formula

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n = sample size

N= population size

E = margin of error

95% confidence level and 5% level of precision.

The selected target sample were stratified based on gender, age, education level, type of stakeholder and job level. The respondents were purposefully chosen by the researcher knowing that they would provide the data that was needed. Both primary and secondary data were collected.

3.4 Primary Data

Primary data refers to first-hand data gathered by the researcher (Salkind, 2020). Examples include surveys, observations, questionnaires, and interviews et cetera. In this study primary data was collected by employing questionnaires as well as in depth interviews with the Group Head of Human Resources (GHHR) at FDH Bank Limited and the Director of Human Resources (DHR) at BCC. Data was collected from human resources practitioners, line managers and employees of both BCC and FDH Bank Limited.

3.5 Secondary Data

Secondary data refers to data that is already collected by other sources (Salkind, 2020). In this study secondary data for this study was collected from books, journals, online articles, and institutional documents. In this regard secondary data provides a basis to compare the collected primary data and literature which would shape the research.

3.6 Data Analysis Methods

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) defines data analysis as a process that involves organizing, accounting for, and explaining the data or in other words, making sense of the data. There are two types of data analysis that focused on both the qualitative and quantitative. Quantitative data (in the form of questionnaires) was analysed using a statistical package SPSS. Content analysis was used to analyse qualitative data (interview guide). Content analysis is a wide and heterogeneous

set of manual or computer assisted techniques for contextualised interpretation of document or reports having as ultimate goal the production of valid and trustworthy inferences (University of Miami Institute for Data Science & Computing, n.d.). The researcher analysed the content of the responses from the discussions and the interviews and drew common categories and themes which are displayed using tables and charts. The results from content analysis complement the quantitative data.

Quantitative data was entered in Statistical Package for Social Scientist (SPSS) version 20. Data was entered using the prior coding of the variables from the questionnaire. The entered data set was then analysed using techniques that range from Descriptive, Exploratory and in some instances Deductive reasoning basing on certain criteria.

3.6.1 Descriptive Analysis

Cross tabulation was used to see the Demographic characteristics of the respondents such as Gender, Marital status, Education level, Job Level and Stakeholder type with respect to the Sector of employment. Totals and percentages of the respondents under each Sector of employment were reported.

3.6.2 Exploratory Analysis

Under this analysis, Cross Tabulation was used to come up with the totals and percentages for the following.

- The challenges faced by the HR Practitioners by the Sector of Employment (Public or Private).
- The possible functions of the HR Practitioners
- Respondent's opinion as to whether the type of Sector influence the type of challenges the HR Practitioners face.
- Stakeholder's perception as regards to what they perceive as the Biggest Challenge, Least Challenge and the Common Challenge faced by HR Practitioners.
- Challenges that can be faced by both Public and Private sector of employment.

Also, pie charts were used to see how adequately Employees are assisted by HR Practitioners in each of the two sectors under study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is defined as a method, procedure, or perspective for deciding how to act and for analysing complex problems and issues (Resnik, 2015). In this study there was strong commitment to strict compliance of research ethics by observing the following: demonstrating full and genuine commitment and dedication towards the specific performance and completion of the study. The study was conducted in strict confidence and in accordance with the guidelines and instructions given by FDH Bank and BCC. No information obtained through the research was and shall be used, directly or indirectly, to the advantage or gain, personal or otherwise, of the researcher. There was no favour (based on such characteristics as age, marital status, education level, type of stakeholder) of any member of the population when sampling in the different organisations to avoid sampling bias. Unnecessary errors like interview bias or prejudice were avoided in the study. Consent was sought without coercion from the respondents and were advised that participation was voluntary. Data was collected and recorded as accurately as possible. It was also analysed correctly, comprehensively, and objectively. There was no deliberate misrepresentation or omission of vital information or addition of any false statements or half-truths. Ethical considerations were important to allow respondents to answer with utmost freedom the questionnaire that was administered as well as the in-depth interview.

3.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter it informs the research design and study population and further broken down to sample size and sampling techniques. It outlined the primary and secondary data, and it was collected and informs of how this data was analysed. It also discusses the ethical considerations to be considered.

In the next chapter the study findings will be present, analysed and discussed.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

4 Introduction

In this chapter the results of the study will be presented, analysed, and discussed. It is divided into four sections. Section 4.1 deals with the demographic characteristic of the respondents, Section 4.2 describes the functions of the human resources department, Section 4.3 focuses on the key challenges faced by human resources practitioners at FDH Bank Limited and BCC and the analysis of the overall perceptions of stakeholders in regards to these challenges. Section 4.4 deals with the relationship between the key challenges faced and the industry the organisations operate.

4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Based on the study objectives 180 was the desired sample size, however only 119 responded to the questionnaire administered in both organisations. This represents a 66 % response rate. Out of the 119 respondents 44% were from FDH and 56% were from the BCC. The sample was stratified by the following demographic characteristics: age, gender, level of education and type of stakeholder.

Table 1. Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Overall Percentage (%)
FDH	44
BCC	56
Gender	
Male	55
Female	45
Age	
20s	40
30s	36
40s	13
50s	3
60s	Nil
Educational Level	
Certificate	8
Diploma	35
Degree	49
Postgraduate	8
Job level	
Lower management	31
Middle management	34
Senior Management	4
Other	31
Type of stakeholder	
HR practitioner	11
Line manager	27
Employee	62

N = 119

Overall, 55% of the respondents were male and 45% were female. This indicated that more males responded to the questionnaire than females in both organisations. The age composition of the respondents varied from their 20's to their 50's. There were no respondents in the 60-age bracket in both organisations. In terms of overall percentages 40% of the respondents in both organisations were in their 20's, 36% were in their 30's, 13% were in their 40's and only 3% were in their 50's. The remaining 8% did not indicate their age. It is clear to see that most of the respondents were in their 20's in both organisations, followed by the 30's and 40s.

The overall level of education of the respondents indicated that 8% possess a post graduate degree, 49% a bachelor's degree, 35% a diploma and 8% a certificate. This indicated that the majority of the respondents in both organisations possessed a bachelors' degree.

The job level of the respondents was also investigated for both organisations and it was found that 31% were lower management, 34% middle management, 4% senior management and 31% other. Based on these statistics it is shows that the majority of the respondents were middle management.

Finally, the study categorised the respondents in terms of the type of stakeholders. 11% were HR practitioners, 27% were line managers and 62% were other employees.

Functions performed by HR practitioners

Human resources practitioners have various functions in their respective organisations. These range from employee relations, providing a conducive work environment, compensation management, motivation, employee discipline, health, and safety et cetera. However, for this study eight functions were looked at including recruitment, talent management, employee welfare, grievance handling, change management, developing public relations, aligning organisational strategy with human resources strategy and training and development. Understanding these functions is very crucial in this study. An analysis of these functions was important to understand exactly what human resources practitioners do in their organisations so that there can be an appreciation between the functions and the challenges that may arise in each organisation. In order to appreciate the challenges that are faced by the practitioners there was a need to understand the functions of human resources practitioners. It is easier to compare the challenges in different settings because the functions that have been mentioned in the study appear in both organisations.

Respondents were required to indicate a Yes or No response to confirm whether or not the functions listed were human resources functions of the human resources practitioners in their organisation. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Employees perception of the Functions of HR Practitioners

	Function	SECTOR OF EMPLOYMENT	
		FDH Bank Limited	Blantyre City Council
1	Recruitment		
	No	2 (4%)	3 (5%)
	Yes	50 (96%)	64 (95%)
2	Talent Management		
	No	18 (35%)	55 (82%)
	Yes	34 (65%)	12 (18%)
3	Change Management		
	No	26 (50%)	52 (78%)
	Yes	26 (50%)	15 (22%)
4	Training and Development		
	No	3 (6%)	25 (37%)
	Yes	49 (94%)	42 (63%)
5	Grievance Management		
	No	10 (19%)	44 (66%)
	Yes	42 (81%)	23 (34%)
6	Employee Welfare		
	No	5 (10%)	23 (34%)
	Yes	47 (90%)	44 (66%)
7	Developing public relations		
	No	43 (83%)	56 (84%)
	Yes	9 (17%)	11 (16%)
8	Aligning organizational strategy with HR strategy		
	No	13 (25%)	44 (66%)
	Yes	39 (75%)	23 (34%)

N = 119

Out of the eight functions four key functions (recruitment, training and development, grievance management and employee welfare) were highly mentioned by respondents in the bank. On the other hand, three key functions (recruitment, training and development and staff welfare) came out clearly for BCC. These key functions were isolated by looking at the functions which had a higher percentage of more than 60% (yes). However, this does not mean that other functions are not performed.

It is apparent that respondents from FDH were more aware of the HR functions that exist in the organisation. This is supported by the statements made by the Group Head of Human Resources (GHHR) of FDH bank when interviewed. The GHHR's indicated that there are over fifteen policies that are circulated to members of staff including the FDH Recruitment Policy, FDH Training and Development Policy, FDH Grievance Management Policy and FDH Benefits Policy. These policies are circulated to all members of staff to ensure that there is awareness and this helps the employees to know exactly how their various needs can be addressed and by whom in the organisation during the tenure of their employment. Armstrong (2009) agrees that recruitment, training and development, grievance management and staff welfare are some of the functions of human resources practitioners.

On the other hand, BCC employees do not have the same kind of access to the Terms and Conditions of Service which govern the human resources. The Director of Administration at indicated that the department is mostly reliant on applicable policies and directives from the Local Authority Services Commission (LASCOM) and for the conditions of service. This might explain why the respondents indicated recruitment, training and development and staff welfare only. Employees are not given policies for them to be able to appreciate what other functions ought to be performed by the human resources practitioners and because of this they have a narrower view what is supposed to be done for them by their human resources.

Table 2 of the findings also outlines human resources functions that are least considered to be done by the respondents. It is noted that 83% respondents from FDH considered developing public relations not to be a function of human resources practitioners and 84% of respondents from the BCC indicated the same. This could be because both organisations have a department / section that addresses all issues relating to public relations of the organisation and hence the respondents concluding that this is not a function of human resources practitioners. The respondents therefore were unable to pick out that the communications that are made through email circulars or notice boards are part of internal public relations meant for the employees. Snipes (2019) states that public relations are one of the skills that human resources practitioners ought to master to ensure that employee relations within the organisation are sound. However, the respondents did not consider this as a function mainly because public relations are considered to be solely a function to be done by marketing departments. Talent management was also a least considered function of human resources practitioners, with 82% of the respondents indicating as such. From this observation, one can conclude that BCC does not visibly promote talent management.

4.2 Employees perceptions on key challenges faced by HR Practitioners at FDH Bank Limited and Blantyre City Council

One of the objectives of the study aimed at identifying the key challenges that HR practitioners face in both FDH Bank Limited and BCC. Although there are many challenges that human resources practitioners face, only eight challenges were presented for the respondents to choose amongst them. The challenges that were listed included the following: change management, staff retention, achieving a healthy work life balance, attracting the right candidates, politics, promoting organisational culture and conflict management. The respondents were supposed to indicate which challenges are faced by human resources practitioners in their organisation. Table 3 presents the results.

Table 3. Employees perception of the challenges faced by HR Practitioners

CHALLENGE	FDH Bank Limited	Blantyre City Council
Change Management		
No	29 (56%)	42 (63%)
Yes	23 (44%)	25 (37%)
Managing a multigenerational workforce		
No	30 (58%)	44 (66%)
Yes	22 (42%)	23 (34%)
Staff retention		
No	15 (29%)	37 (55%)
Yes	37 (71%)	30 (45%)
Achieving healthy work life balance		
No	31 (60%)	43 (64%)
Yes	21 (40%)	24 (36%)
Attracting the right candidates		
No	32 (61%)	44 (66%)
Yes	20 (39%)	23 (34%)
Politics		
No	22 (42%)	25 (37%)
Yes	30 (58%)	42 (63%)
Promoting organizational culture		
No	33 (64%)	46 (69%)
Yes	19 (36%)	21 (31%)
Conflict Management		
No	35 (67%)	41 (61%)
Yes	17 (33%)	26 (39%)

N = 119

Table 3 clearly shows that the key challenges that emerged were staff retention and politics. At FDH staff retention emerged a key challenge faced by human resources practitioners. This was quite evident with a 71% response rate. There are a lot of competing financial institutions offering better offers to employees on the market which makes it harder for the human resources practitioners to retain staff at FDH. Most employees who leave the organisation get employed

within the same financial market. However, others branch out to other organisations and not necessarily sticking to the financial markets.

The results support the literature drawn from (Nasir, 2017) that retaining staff in the organisation is a major challenge that is faced by human resources practitioners. Ordinarily organisations that have satisfied employees result in satisfied customers. FDH being a service provider ought to ensure that it retains its skilled and carefully selected staff, not only to give it a competitive edge over its competitors but also to ensure that efficiency and quality of service is not compromised by constantly recruiting new employees to replace the other staff members. The nature of the banking industry alone is competitive without having to look at other players in the recruitment market which makes it hard for employees to be retained and hence quite apparent that employees leave FDH. Malawi has eight commercial banks providing similar services and products and this becomes problematic regarding staff retention. Aside from banking institutions there are also other non-banking institutions which can also attract the same employees. There are always packages that become more attractive for employees, better working conditions etc. which puts strain on the HR practitioners to find ways to retain staff which might not always be feasible.

The respondents at FDH also indicated that politics is another challenge that is faced by the human resources practitioners at FDH, with 58% of the respondents supporting this view. It is important to appreciate that despite having policies and structures in place it becomes more difficult for the practitioners to carry out their duties without political interference. One would wonder how politics influences a private organisation. A private institution such as FDH Bank limited might not meet much political influence from the government because it is governed by Board of Directors and various shareholders who ensure that there is business continuity to avoid too much government influence. However, being a family-owned business, family politics are inevitable despite having the organisation operating as a separate entity from its owners. If the family has a different direction regarding how business should be handled in terms of human resources issues it leaves the practitioners with no choice but to proceed as instructed.

On the other hand, 63% of respondents from BCC responded that politics is a major challenge that affects human resources practitioners. This is more apparent at the BCC because of the nature of the organisation. The top management of the BCC is government appointed and as such it is

inevitable that political influence on how employees are managed is affected. Human resources practitioners might not necessarily provide the best practices if they are hindered.

Despite the differing magnitude of the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners a similarity can be drawn. Political influence is considered a challenge in both organisations. This informs the study that despite different sectors of organisation having different mandates challenges are somewhat universal if anything it is the extent to which these challenges are experienced in the organisation that differs.

The study further aimed to understand what the possible causes of the challenges faced by HR practitioners in both the private and public sector. In depth interviews were conducted with the GHRR from the bank and DHR from the council to understand how the challenges are caused. Table 4 represents the findings.

Table 4. Employees’ perceptions of the causes of challenges faced by HR Practitioners

FDH Bank Limited	Blantyre City Council
Perception of HRM as Personnel Management	Lack of planning
Lack of support from Line management	Lack of HR strategies
Merger and acquisition	Political factors
	Levels of decision making

There were three main causes that were identified to be faced by human resources practitioners at FDH Bank limited. These causes were perception of human resources management as personnel management, lack of support from line management and merger and acquisition. Stakeholders (employees and their line management) still have the old view of human resources as personnel management and fail to appreciate the strategic role it now takes. Often lack of understanding causes a lot of disruption in how employees work regarding their contribution to day to day activities which might leave them frustrated enough to leave.

The other cause that emerged was that due to the nature of the human resources practitioner’s advisory role it becomes difficult to work without line management. Human resources practitioners rely on line managers for them to carry out their tasks and when line managers do not avail themselves it makes it very hard for practitioners to work as one respondent said: -

“Unfortunately, as practitioners we cannot work in isolation without involving line managers in the various departments. As such their availability or lack thereof makes it difficult for the human resources department to function with much ease”

Another cause of challenges faced by HRPs is that line managers is that their tendency not to take the advice given to them by the human resources practitioners on people management issues. If line managers do not take the advice that is given to them, it sometimes can lead to legal woes and disruption of work. Unfortunately, issues regarding human resources management come back to the human resources practitioners to sort out. One respondent noted that: -

“There would be times you advise line managers that decisions that they are taking have legal implications they sometimes do not want to take this advice and in the end when the decision has caused havoc and escalated to the courts human resources practitioners have to come in and sort out the mishap. There would be times when disciplinary cases have not been handled properly because line management did not want to follow the necessary steps prescribed by polices and upon advisement of the human resources practitioners”.

The biggest cause however that emerged was the merger and acquisition that occurred between FDH Bank and MSB Bank in 2015. This caused a lot of problems especially with culture integration because there was a tendency for ex MSB employees sticking to their way of doing things and not wanting to appreciate the set values and culture of excellence. The merger saw a lot of employees being dismissed or resigning because they failed to adopt the new excellence culture of FDH. At the same time because of the uncertainties that come with mergers and acquisitions employees are constantly on a hunt for other opportunities that offer job security, so this caused others to leave FDH. One respondent observed that: -

“A lot of the disciplinary cases that occurred since the merger involve the ex-MSB members of staff. This has seen to a lot of dismissals from employment. It has greatly affected staff turnover and staff retention since the merger occurred”.

On the other hand, the Director of Human resources from BCC was also interviewed and he concluded that there are four major causes of the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners. These are lack of planning, lack of human resources strategies, political factors and level of decision making.

Human resources practitioners at BCC fail to plan their work in a strategic manner which causes them to lose sight of their core activities and end up firefighting. One respondent noted:

“Often times we discovered that we end up being overtaken with day to day routine tasks. The council is labour intensive and in the end routine work becomes the order of the day. Firefighting becomes the way in which our work is done, without any direction”.

Another cause of the challenges is that the human resources department does not have human resources strategies put in place to ensure that the overall objective of the organization. What occurs instead it that instructions are taken from top management of the organization which then directs the human resources practitioners. This means that human resources practitioners do not have long term consideration but aim to satisfy the objectives of the council without taking ownership because they are simply instructed. Therefore, human resources practitioners fail to align the objectives of the human resources department with the organizational strategy.

Another possible cause of the challenges faced is level of decision making. There are systems that have been put in place that operationally challenge the way in which the human resources practitioners execute their tasks which are not flexible as noted by one respondent:

“All documentation that the Council receives has to go through the Chief Executives officer before it reaches our office late. Sometimes the issue at hand might be urgent but if it takes time to reach our office late, we execute late and this leads to employee frustration and thinking practitioners are slow and inefficient”.

Politics was seen to have a huge bearing on how human resources practitioner execute their tasks. Due to the political nature of the organization it becomes difficult for human resources practitioners to operate for the best interests of the employees. The political factors for example affect how people are recruited, who is recruited, how the employee stays in the organization and eventually how they end up exiting the organization.

4.3 Employees perception of the relationship between challenges faced and sector of organisation

Objective number three of the study aimed at determining if there was any relationship between the challenges that are faced by the human resources practitioners and the sector in which the organisation is operating. FDH Bank Limited is private sector and BCC is public sector.

Respondents were asked to state to what extent they felt that challenges are linked with the sector in which the organisation operates. A Likert scale was provided for them to indicate whether they strongly disagreed, disagreed, neutral, agreed and strongly agreed. Figure 2 presents the findings.

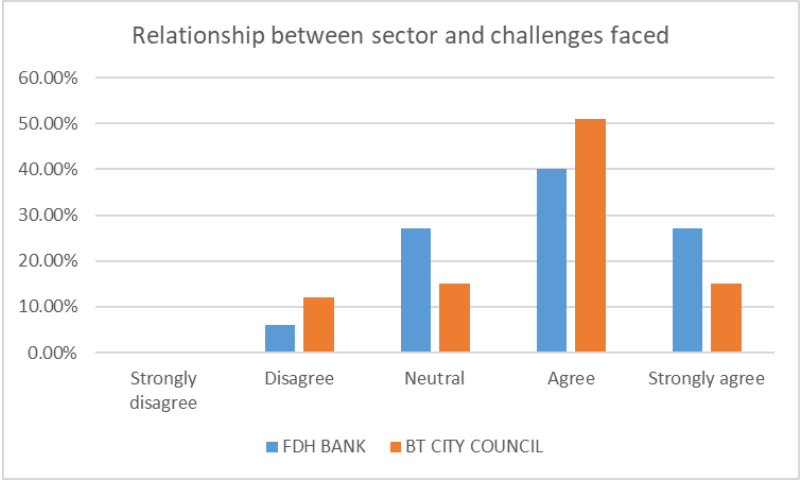


Figure 2. Employees perception of the relationship between sector and challenges faced

Respondents were asked to state the degree to which they agree if sector influences the challenges faced. Looking at FDH alone 21% concur that sector influences challenges and 37% of the respondents from BCC concur that sector influences challenges faced. Collectively the findings of the study revealed that 66% (This 66% is coming about after combining those that are strongly agreeing and those that are agreeing then it can be confirmed that the sector has a bearing) of the respondents were of the view that the sector in which the organisation is has a bearing on the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners.

This is supported by the earlier discussion of the key challenges that exist in the organisations which found that for FDH staff retention and politics were major challenges that are faced. While for the Council respondents indicated politics was a major challenge. In general, the results obtained in table 3 indicate there are some similarities in terms of the challenges that are faced in the Council and the Bank, only that the extent to which the challenges seemingly exist is what varied. These challenges could differ possibly because of the mandate in which the organisations are operating. FDH being a private organisation is for profit making while BCC is mainly in existence to render services to the inhabitants of the city of Blantyre without profit making in mind.

In conclusion a relationship exists between the sector in which an organisation operates and the kind of challenges that would be faced by the organisation. Further to this some challenges can exist in both sectors.

4.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter research findings of the study were reported and were discussed aimed at comparing the challenges faced by human resources practitioners at FDH and BCC. In the chapter functions that are performed by the human resources practitioners in both the bank and the council were discussed. Further to this, challenges faced by human resources practitioners were discussed and some key challenges that are faced by both organisations were isolated. Lastly the research tried to answer the objective whether challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners are related to the sector in which they operate.

In the next chapter of study conclusions and recommendations will be drawn from the results.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5 Introduction

In this chapter, focus is on the summary of the findings on the comparative analysis of the challenges faced by human resources practitioners at FDH Bank Limited and BCC. It will discuss the summary of the findings, conclusions of the study, recommendations, and suggested areas of further research.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study sought to compare the challenges that are faced by the human resources practitioners in the private and public sector by looking at FDH Bank Limited and Blantyre City. Emphasis was placed on three objectives aimed at attempting to achieve the overall objective of the study.

The research strategy that was used was a case study approach by exploring the challenges faced by human resources practitioners at FDH and BCC. The sample size that was drawn from both organisations was 180 respondents, however only 119 responded. A questionnaire and in-depth interview were the employed data collection methods. To analyse this data content analysis and statistical package for social science (SPSS) were used.

The first objective was of the study was to assess the function of human resources practitioners. The study found that there were eight key functions performed in the organisations. These were recruitment, training and development, staff welfare, grievance management, conflict management, aligning human resources strategy with overall strategy, change management and employee welfare. Four key functions that emerged from FDH were recruitment, training and development, grievance management and employee welfare. As for BCC, three key functions came out clearly namely recruitment, training and development and employee welfare. Understanding the functions was important for the study in order to create a common ground for human resource practitioners in both organisations and then proceed to compare the challenges that are faced by the practitioners. If the organisations were the same there would be a higher probability of the challenges being the same because of the common ground of the functions.

The second objective was to assess the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners at FDH and BCC. The study found in varying degrees that both BCC and FDH faced all the challenges including talent management and change management. However, for FDH the two key challenges were staff retention and politics. With staff retention appearing to be the topmost challenge. On the other hand, politics emerged as a key challenge that was faced by human resources practitioners.

The third objective was to examine if there was a relationship that existed between the challenges faced by the human resources practitioners and the sector in which they were operating. All the challenges that the study explored were present in both organisations. The challenges included change management, managing a multigenerational workforce, staff retention, achieving a healthy work life balance, attracting the right candidates, politics, promoting organisational culture and conflict management. However, the results indicated that the degree to which a challenge is faced is dependent on the sector. Some challenges were more apparent in the FDH than they are at BCC.

Lastly the study aimed to analyse the overall perceptions of the various internal stakeholders (HR practitioners, Line Managers, and employees) regarding the challenges faced by Human Resources Practitioners. The overall perception that emerged was that human resources practitioners are there to simply hire and fire and not to represent the best interests of the employees. Another general overview was that line managers do not appreciate the role the human resources practitioners play in ensuring that their objectives are met and how they ensure that this leads to the achievement of the overall objectives. The view is that the core tasks done by line managers are more paramount than the human resources department.

5.2 Conclusions

FDH Bank Limited and Blantyre City Council being essential service providers require that they have efficient human resources function that support the service delivery. It is therefore important that there should be sound human resources management which will ensure the overall objectives of the organisation are achieved. Human resources practitioners need to be aware of the people they manage and the challenges they might face in managing these people. There are no clear-cut ways of managing people and no one way of managing the challenges that might be faced by the human resources practitioners in the public and private sector. It is quite evident from the literature

presented that challenges that are faced emanate from both the internal and external environment in which the organisation operates and as such human resources practitioners need to ensure that they take these into considerations when performing their various functions. Practitioners are not always up to date in terms of training and awareness of the ever-changing trends and this poses a big threat because learning how to manage people adequately reduces some of the challenges that are faced.

5.3 Recommendations

Three recommendations were made following the results of the research conducted on the challenges that are faced by human resources practitioners. The recommendations are discussed below:

Management should make sure that human resources practitioners are trained periodically on people management. People management is very dynamic, and the ever-changing trends are known by the practitioners. This training would help address issues of politics and how practitioners can adequately function in an environment with a lot political influence.

Continual staff engagement so that employees (both line managers and employees) understand the role and significance of human resources management activities done by the human resources practitioners. In turn all the stakeholders in the organisation would be retained.

Employee and line management involvement and recognition should be encouraged so that they can adopt a good relationship with the human resources practitioners which will in turn lead to understanding of the significance of the human resources practitioners in the organisation. This would greatly assist the organisations in retaining members of staff.

5.4 Suggested Areas for Further Research

Further study should be done using a sample of human resources practitioners only and extend to other organisations in Malawi to determine the extent to which the findings will come out any different. This is so because the focus currently was on all the stakeholders however the research could be done with particular emphasis on the human resources practitioners who meet these challenges in their day to day management of people.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Blantyre City Council Research Approval Letter



Blantyre City Council

The Secretariat
Town Hall
Civic Centre
Kasungu Crescent
Private Bag 67
Blantyre
Republic of Malawi

BCC/ADM/20/1

All correspondence to be addressed to:

The Chief Executive Officer
Phone: +265 1 870 211
Fax: +265 1 870 508 / 1 870 417
Email: bcachief@bccmw.com
Website: www.bccmw.com

06th November, 2019

Miss Joyce Ashley Dzimbiri
FDH Financial Holdings
P.O. Box 512
Blantyre

Dear Miss A. Dzimbiri

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH TITLED 'A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EMERGING CHALLENGES FACED BY HR PRACTITIONERS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN MALAWI: THE CASE OF FDH BANK AND BLANTYRE CITY COUNCIL'

The above stated subject refers.

We are in receipt of your letter dated 30th October, 2019 in which you requested Blantyre City Council to grant you permission to conduct research on the above stated subject.

We are pleased to grant you permission to conduct the study at FDH Bank and Blantyre City Council.

Relevant individuals or Officers are therefore advised to provide you with assistance that you may require towards your research.

Yours sincerely



A.M. NYENGO
DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
FOR: CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Appendix 2. FDH Bank Research Approval Letter



FDH Financial Holdings Limited

1st Floor, Umoyo House
No. 8 Victoria Avenue North
P.O. Box 512
Blantyre, Malawi

Tel: (265) 01 820 219
Fax: (265) 01 823 044
E-mail: fdh@fdh.co.mw
Website: http://www.fdh.co.mw

Joyce Ashley Dzimbiri
FDH Bank Limited
P.O Box 512
Blantyre

Human Resources

Date
29 April 2019

Our reference
fm/ CRC

Your reference

Dear Joyce

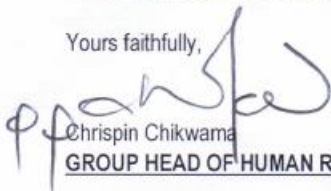
CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Reference is made to your letter dated 7th January 2019 in which you are requesting some information that will assist you in conducting your academic research work, "A comparative Analysis of the Emerging Challenges Faced by HR Practitioners in the Private Sector and Local Authorities in Malawi: The case of FDH Bank and Blantyre City Council".

The Group will assist you in collecting the necessary data for your paper on the understanding that the information will be used for academic purposes only.

Please sign, along with your respective university's stamp in the space provided below as an undertaking of confidentiality i.e. that you and the university shall use the information purely for academic purposes only and that the same shall not be made public.

Yours faithfully,


Chrispin Chikwama
GROUP HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES


Joyce Dzimbiri

(Signature and Stamp of University Representative)

Dated this _____ day of _____, 2019

Appendix 3. Interview Questions for the Director of Human Resources at Blantyre City Council

This interview guide has been designed for the purpose of collecting data titled “Emerging challenges of Human Resources Practitioners in Public and Private Sector of Malawi: The case of FDH Bank Limited and Blantyre City Council”. You have been identified as one of the participants in the study and therefore you are requested to complete the following questionnaire. Let it be known that participation in this study is voluntary and that the information provided will strictly be used for purpose of this study. Participants are highly assured of confidentiality of the information provided and your identify will be concealed.

1. What is the staff compliment of your organisation?
2. How many members of staff do you have in the HR department?
3. Do you think the number of HR staff against the staff compliment is adequate? Elaborate.
4. Literature states that HR Practitioners meet challenges when executing their tasks, what is your opinion on the matter?
5. As a Head of HR what are some of the challenges that you meet in carrying out your tasks?
6. State the most prevailing challenges that your department faces in carrying out your role as Human Resources Practitioners?
7. What do you think are the causes of these challenges?
8. How can you ensure that these challenges are curbed or minimized to ease your role as Human Resources Practitioners?
9. Do you think that there is a relationship between the type of organisation and the challenges that are experienced in these organisations?
10. Some have said Human Resources Department is redundant. Where do you think this perception comes from?
11. Do you have policies that ensure that the department is functioning at full capacity and mention at least five policies?
12. What do you think are the overall perceptions of the various stakeholders (your fellow HR team, line managers and the employees) in the organisations regarding the challenges that the department faces?
13. What your final comments?

End of questions, Thank you for your time and support

Appendix 4. Study Questionnaire

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EMERGING CHALLENGES FACED BY THE HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTITIONERS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR: CASE OF FDH BANK LTD AND BLANTYRE CITY COUNCIL

Study Questionnaire

This questionnaire has been designed for the purpose of collecting data titled “Emerging challenges of Human Resources Practitioners in Public and Private Sector of Malawi: The case of FDH Bank Limited and Blantyre City Council”. You have been identified as one of the participants in the study and therefore you are requested to complete the following questionnaire. Let it be known that participation in this study is voluntary and that the information provided will strictly be used for purpose of this study. Participants are highly assured of confidentiality of the information provided and identify will be concealed.

SECTION A- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF THE RESPONDENTS

This section of the questionnaire focuses on the demographic information of the respondents

Kindly indicate your response by placing a cross in the appropriate boxes below:

1. **Gender** (Please indicate your gender)

1	Male
2	Female

2. **Age**

3. **Education** (Please indicate your highest educational qualification completely)

1	2	3	4
Certificate	Diploma	Bachelor’s degree	Post-Graduate degree

4. **Job Level** (Please indicate the level of your job)

1	2	3	4
Lower Management	Middle management	Senior management	Other

5. **Type of stakeholder** (Please indicate whether you are an HR practitioner, Line Manager, or an Employee)

1	2	3
HR Practitioner	Line Manager	Employee

6. **Sector of Employment**

1	2
Private	Public

SECTION B: CHALLENGES FACED BY THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

1. How many employees are in your organisation?

1	2	3	4	5
Less than 200 employees	Between 200 and 400 employees	Between 401 and 600 employees	Above 600 employees	I do not know

2. What are some of the functions that an HR department is responsible for in your organisation?

1	Recruitment	
2	Talent Management	
3	Change Management	
4	Training and Development	
5	Grievance Management	
6	Employee Welfare	
7	Developing public relations	
8	Aligning overall organisational strategy with the human resources strategy	
9	Any Other	

3. What do you think are some of challenges faced by the human resources practitioners in your organisation?

1	Change management	
2	Managing a multigenerational workforce	
3	Staff retention	
4	Achieving a healthy work life balance	
5	Attracting and selecting the rights candidates	
6	Politics	
7	Promoting organisational culture	
8	Conflict management	
9	Any other	

4. To what extent would you agree that employees in your organisation are adequately assisted by the Human Resources Practitioners in light of the challenges they face as highlighted in question 3?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly disagree

SECTION C: ASCERTATION OF DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES FACED BY HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTITIONERS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANISATIONS

5. Literature discusses the various challenges faced by HR practitioners. What is the likelihood of the same challenges faced in the public sector being found in the private sector?

1	2	3	4	5
Highly unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Highly likely

6. Which challenges would be faced by both private and public sector human resources practitioners?

1	Change management	
2	Managing a multigenerational workforce	
3	Staff retention	
4	Achieving a healthy work life balance	
5	Attracting and selecting the rights candidates	
6	Politics	
7	Promoting organisational culture	
8	Conflict management	
9	Any Other	

7. Which challenges would not be faced by both the private and private sector human resources practitioners?

1	Change management	
2	Managing a multigenerational workforce	
3	Staff retention	
4	Achieving a healthy work life balance	
5	Attracting and selecting the rights candidates	
6	Politics	
7	Promoting organisational culture	
8	Conflict management	
9	Any Other	

SECTION D: INDUSTRY SHAPING CHALLENGES FACED BY HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTITIONERS

8. To what extent would you agree that the challenges faced by the human resources practitioners are shaped by the kind of sector they are operating?

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree

9. In your opinion what factors can shape the challenges faced by human resources practitioners?

.....

.....

.....

SECTION E: STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTITIONERS

10. Listed below are a series of challenges, what would you consider the biggest challenge faced by the human resources practitioners in your organisation?
(Pick only one)

No	Challenge
1	Change management
2	Managing a multigenerational workforce
3	Staff retention
4	Achieving a healthy work life balance
5	Attracting and selecting the rights candidates
6	Politics
7	Promoting organisational culture
8	Conflict Management
9	Any other

11. Listed below are a series of challenges, which would you consider to be the least challenge faced by the human resources practitioners in your organisation?
(Pick only one)

No	Challenge
1	Change management
2	Managing a multigenerational workforce
3	Staff retention
4	Achieving a healthy work life balance
5	Attracting and selecting the rights candidates
6	Politics
7	Promoting organisational culture
8	Conflict Management
9	Any Other

12. Listed below are a series of challenges, which would you consider to be the most common challenge faced by the human resources practitioners in your organisation? (Pick only one)

No	Challenge
1	Change management
2	Managing a multigenerational workforce
3	Staff retention
4	Achieving a healthy work life balance
5	Attracting and selecting the rights candidates
6	Politics
7	Promoting organisational culture
8	Conflict Management
9	Any other

13. Would you agree that HR practitioners contribute to the challenges they that they face?

1	Yes
2	No

End of Questionnaire
Thank you for completing the questionnaire