

An evaluation of comparative Human Resource Management practices at two universities in South Africa

Dr. Loshni S Govender

University of Mpumalanga, South Africa

Abstract

Universities are complex organisations that play an integral role in society. From an organisation perspective, there are a mix of core outputs which require rigorous management, and one aspect of these core facets is the effective management of employees. The Human Resources (HR) function therefore plays a critical role within organisations. This paper analysed the approach utilised for the management of employees at two higher education institutions. The traditional HR systems and models utilised in South African universities have, to a greater extent, been based on those which have been developed in other countries or developed along shared practices basis on a sectoral level. The HR function has traditionally been administratively heavy and one which has required regular interface with employees and third party organisations, stakeholders and service providers, requiring dedicated physical space, presence and accessibility by employees. The role of the HR practitioner has demanded a re-orientation. As the HR management theory has evolved, so too has the praxis, thereby requiring new competencies to be acquired. A comparative evaluation was undertaken by way of a case study to evaluate the challenges and effectiveness of HR systems and models utilised. A mixed method approach was used to explore efficiency, relevance of models used and leadership support of the HR function. The results led to the development of the South African Value Aligned HR Model. The paper and its findings are relevant to the higher education sector, and is intended to provide a model for HR departments, based on legislation and regulatory requirements, transformational leadership principles, HR competencies, HR structure and other critical elements required for enhancing positive organisational culture.

Key words: higher education, human resources, practice, model, efficiency