

Workforce Planning and Organizational Performance in Selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State

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Abstract

The study focused on the impact of workforce planning and organizational performance in Selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. It assessed the impact of demand forecasting and assessment, ascertained the effect of contingent workforce on organizational efficiency, examined the influence of succession planning on employee performance and determined the relationship between workforce planning and organizational performance in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The study made use of a survey design and adopted both primary and secondary sources of data to collect information from respondents. The target population was 170 respondents from eight selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, while the sample size was 119 respondents. Thus, a total of one hundred and nineteen (119) copies of the structured questionnaire were administered to eight selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State, while ninety of them (90) were retrieved. These translated to a response rate of 75.6%. A regression model was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The study found that succession planning has a significant influence on the employee performance of selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State and that there is a positive relationship between workforce planning and the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The study recommended that Organizations should adopt a workforce plan that will enable them to design the most appropriate organizational structure, acquire and maintain a sustainable pool of employees with the requisite skills and develop a blueprint that will help them adapt easily to ever-changing government policies.

Keywords: Workforce planning, contingent workforce, demand forecasting and assessment and organizational performance.

Introduction

Planning is a basic function of management, therefore it pervades all the functional areas of management which include personnel, production, research and development, marketing and finance. It is through planning that an organization's goals and objectives are determined; the resources available must be strategies to achieve the goals and objectives. Human resources planning is sometimes referred to as workforce planning, and it is defined as the process of recruiting the right number of qualified staff for the right job at the right time. To ensure an adequate workforce in the organization, management must plan properly. Proper planning in this respect involves accurate projection of the future, taking inventory of the existing workforce, comparing the force with the existing one and taking corrective measures (Graf, 2000). Workforce planning entails the duties and responsibilities of the personnel employed and how their activities are to be interrelated. Thus, workforce planning is used to assess external forces to help the firm deal with environmental uncertainty by mobilizing scarce or limited resources to neutralize potential threats (Sono, 2001).

Workforce planning aids the managers of SMEs to play proactive roles in moving the firm toward a future desired state. For effective workforce planning in the organization, owners of SMEs should consider staffing, that is acquiring a qualified and appropriate number of workers in the firm, as well as the determination and acquisition/allocation of the right type of resources. The coordination of the activities of all staff and parts of an organization is another major purpose of human resource planning, to boost production (Hamilton & Cynthia, 2005). Workforce planning is a set of work in an organization that focuses on the management of staff, giving direction to the people who work in the organization and handling issues related to the people such as hiring, employee motivation, remuneration, communication, wellness, safety administration and training. Every organization must have a formal human resource department and nowadays, workforce planning is seen as a strategic function of top management (Hamilton & Cynthia, 2005).

Workforce planning has to do with forecasting demand for manpower based on business needs and employing strategies required to meet those needs. The dimensions of the study include forecasting manpower demand and strategic action. Forecasting manpower demand involves the estimation of the number and type of human resources required at different levels in different departments in an organization (Pradeesh, 2011). Strategic actions for human resource entails staffing activities carried out to achieve organizational success in the long run. It is a disciplinary and creative process for determining where the organization should be in the future and how to take to the future with the help of workforce staffing activities (Graf et al, 2000).

There must be a proper utilization of the workforce for SMEs to achieve high-performance standards. Organizations may have adequate non-human resources like machines, materials and money but an inadequate workforce cannot achieve high performance. Workforces are the main asset of an organization. There is a rapid change in the way human resource personnel ascertain the exact number of workforces that are required to assist managers in achieving organizational performance. Over the years, the way and manner human resource managers plan for their workforce determines the extent the organization will perform. In other words, it is better to get it right during the planning stage to avoid laying off innocent workers that have found their way into the organization. This study seeks to examine the impact of workforce planning and organizational performance in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Statement of the Problem

The workforce planning practice has been changing rapidly in SMEs for decades. However, the results of those practices compel SME owners to have insufficient reasons to be aware of the employee behaviour and methods which can enlarge their performance, thus, most employees' attitudes are absurd. One of the most serious problems facing SMEs is disregard for essential services such as insurance, legal and professional services. SMEs in Nigeria generally tend to ignore the importance of the aforementioned services which leaves them one unfortunate incident away from complete ruin. Some of the problems faced by workforce planners are mismanagement of fund, where funds kept for the proper planning of the organization is always converted to their private pocket by the top management. The rate of labour turnover is increasing because the right facilities, equipment and machinery are not put in place. Planning processes in some organizations show that employees are not in the right number as required, no proper redeployment i.e. there is neither a surplus of manpower nor a shortage. The key problem with employee recruitment is that the organizations hire inexperienced and unskilled staff that require the organization to invest heavily in training them on various organizational job task functions, whereas SMEs in Akwa Ibom State are still plagued by the dearth of basic infrastructures such as power supply, road network, water supply and waste disposal. In most cases, business owners often have to carry out capital-intensive public projects by themselves to have access to these essential amenities. This diverts attention from proper manpower planning investments and activities. It is against this backdrop that this study tends to examine the impact of workforce planning and organizational performance in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the impact of workforce planning and organizational performance in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives are to:

- i. assess the impact of demand forecasting and assessment of workforce on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.
- ii. ascertain the effect of a contingent workforce on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Questions

- i. What is the impact of demand forecasting and assessment of the workforce on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State?
- ii. What is the effect of a contingent workforce on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State?

Research Hypotheses

Ho₁: Demand forecasting and assessment of the workforce has no significant impact on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State

Ho₂: Contingent workforce has no significant effect on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Review of Related Literature

Workforce Planning

The concept of workforce planning is a serious issue in human resource management. This is because planning is one of the functions of management. Planning is the first process that human resource personnel execute before recruitment, selection, placement, training, promotion, performance appraisal, and compensation. Workforce planning is therefore a

process carried out by the human resource experts or personnel to ascertain the accurate number of workforce needed in the organization. It is also a process of allocating resources to the various departments in the workplace. Mintzberg (1994:26) argued that workforce planning "begins with a sound strategic business plan, reliable and available workforce data, a strong internal and external analysis, and a keen awareness of trends at the local and national levels that have an impact on how an organization does business and the types of skills an organization will be able to attract".

Bechet (2000:40) views workforce planning as "the process of aligning an organization's human capital (its people) with its business plan to achieve its mission, or, in other words, ensuring that an organization currently has and will continue to have the right people with the right skills in the right job at the right time performing at their assignments efficiently and effectively". According to Koontz & Donnell (1993), workforce planning is a systematic process for identifying the human capital required to meet organizational goals and develop strategies to meet these requirements. Sinclair (2004) views workforce planning as a process in which an organization attempts to estimate the demand for labour and evaluate the size, nature and sources of supply which will be required to meet that demand. Sinclair (2004) describes workforce planning as a process of getting the right number of people with the right competencies in the right job at the right time. Sloan (2010) posits that workforce planning is a continual process used to align the needs of the organization with those of its workforce to ensure that it meets its organizational objectives.

The process by which an organization finds that it has the right people, who are capable of completing those objectives that can help the organization to reach its objectives is part of workforce planning. Workforce planning was introduced because at previous times there was no suitable system of managing people within the organization and certainly while following the human resource management, top managers realized that the efficiency of work had increased and certainly there were some techniques and processes developed which could increase the organizational performance, then gradually the whole layout of human resource management was made and it was concerning the staffing needs, its demand and supply. In the past, there was not much value in employees being treated as labour only, and then managers realized that by proper management of staff, they could gain efficient control of staffing progress (see Atakpa, 2015). However, the businesses changed their thinking of taking into consideration employees as an expense and finding out that if human resource practices are followed then those employees can bring a positive change in the organization in terms of profitability, success and growth in the market (Mintzberg,1994).

Workforce planning is seen as the process for ensuring that the human resources requirements of an organization are identified and plans are made for satisfying those requirements. However, workforce planning refers to the planning of all the various activities carried out by the human resource department or even planning how the activities of the human resource department can be executed. Some of these human resource activities are recruitment, selection, motivation, coaching, career development, empowerment, and evaluations, among others (Cotton,2007).

According to Kehinde et al (2012), workforce planning involves eight steps to guide human resource practitioners in their functions. They include:

- Step 1: Understanding the business and its direction
- Step 2: Analyzing the workforce
- Step 3: Identifying skills gaps
- Step 4: Assessing future workforce demand
- Step 5: Recruitment and selection
- Step 6: Understanding labour markets and planning for succession

Step 7: Training and development plans

Step 8: Developing workforce plans.

Cotton (2007), on his part, enumerated the following seven steps of workforce planning:

Step 1: Define the organization's strategic direction

Step 2: Scan the internal and external environments

Step 3: Model the current workforce

Step 4: Assess future workforce needs and project future workforce supply

Step 5: Identify gaps and develop gap-closing strategies

Step 6: Implement gap-closing strategies

Step 7: Evaluate the effectiveness of gap-closing strategies and revise strategies as needed.

Adele (2016) highlighted the following seven-step benefits of workforce planning:

- i. Support the strategic and business planning process, enabling a business to be more proactive and less reactive
- ii. Improve efficiency, effectiveness and productivity through workforce management
- iii. Serve as a mechanism for identifying and managing critical talent
- iv. Facilitate strategic staffing and planning for future workforce requirements and highlight talent shortages, and the process of identifying sources of new talent
- v. Strengthen the organizations capability now and in the future
- vi. Align Human Resources strategies and policies to maximize the capacity of the existing workforce and shape the desired workforce
- vii. Support the budgeting process by providing mechanisms for monitoring, forecasting and managing workforce costs.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance as a concept suffers from problems of conceptual clarification. The term, 'performance' is often used indiscriminately to describe everything from efficiency, and effectiveness to improvement. According to McCloy et al (1994), the term performance has to do with those behaviours or actions which are regarded as relevant to the goals of the said organization in question. They further argued that performance itself cannot be said to be the outcome, consequences or the result of behaviors or actions, rather performance can be said to be the action itself. Thus, they argued that performance tends to be multidimensional, a situation whereby for any specific type of job, there tends to be several substantive performance components that are distinguished in terms of their intercorrelations and patterns on co-variation with other variables. However, there is no one definition of organizational performance. The primary reason for this is that researchers from different fields of study such as psychology, human resource management, public administration and organizational behaviour have dealt with the concept based on their field of study. Hence, this study presents the various definitions offered by human resource scholars on their perspectives on organizational performance.

Daft (2000) posits that organizational performance is an organization's ability to attain its goals by using resources efficiently and effectively. Consequently, it is evidence of the output of members of an organization measured in terms of revenue, profit, growth, development and expansion of the organization. In the same vein, organizational performance refers to the ability of an enterprise to achieve such objectives as high profit, quality product, large market share, good financial results, and survival at a predetermined time using a relevant strategy for action. It can also be used to view how an enterprise is doing in terms of the level of profit, market share and product quality of other enterprises in the same industry. It is a

reflection of the productivity of members of an enterprise measured in terms of revenue, profit, growth, development and expansion of the organization (Kehinde et al,2012).

In the context of workforce planning, an organization can do better if the manager understands the various approaches and steps of planning for the workforce. Workforce planning therefore is the bedrock for effective performance for both public and private organizations (Daft, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Resource Base View Theory

This study is anchored on the Resource Base View Theory propounded and developed by Barney (1991). According to Barney, Resource Base View Theory takes an 'inside-out view' or forms a specific perspective on why organizations succeed or fail in a competitive environment. It refers to how competitive advantage can be achieved through the possession of valuable and rare resources that other competitors cannot imitate. Competitive advantage comes from the internal resources (human resources) that the organization has. It establishes the need for organizations to build a valuable set of human resources and uniquely bundle them, to achieve firm success.

The resource-based view has long provided an essential theoretical rationale for the human resource potential role. It has to do with resource features that contribute to the creation of sustainable competitive advantage. Barney (1991) identified four criteria of resources which are valuable, rare, inimitable and without substitutes. Human resources are the sustainable competitive advantage that a firm has and should be taken seriously. He also suggested that sustainable competitive advantage is attainable when firms have a human resource pool which cannot be imitated or substituted by competitors. Resource-based view theory recommends that firms should often evaluate their human resources by ensuring that the right people with the right skills are in the right place to sustain their competitive advantage over others. It also opines that the major strength or weakness of a firm has to do with the calibre of people employed in the organization. Thus, for firms to generate human capital advantage, they should recruit and retain exceptional individuals. Technology and capital can be acquired at any time for a price by most firms but it is not easy to acquire highly qualified and motivated employees. Companies need to be careful when selecting employees.

The adoption of this theory for this study is based on two reasons:

- (1) It analyzes and interprets the resources of the organization to understand how organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage.
- (11) It is a model that sees resource planning and management as an inevitable key to superior firm performance.

Evidence from several other studies gives support to the application of Resource Base View Theory as a managerial framework used to determine the strategic resources a firm can exploit to achieve sustainable competitive advantage in an organization. Although the Resource Base View Theory has been criticized by some theorists, (Takeuchi et al 2007), the theory is a model that sees resource management as a key to superior organizational performance. It is also important because the theory advocates how competitive advantage can be achieved through the possession of valuable and rare resources that other competitors cannot imitate or duplicate.

Empirical Review

Farman et al (2013) investigated the effect of human resource planning on organizational performance. The objective of the research was to determine key determinants of formal human resource planning that contribute towards performance in the telecom sector. Data were collected from top managers, middle-level managers and the first-line HR managers of 50 offices including head offices and regional offices. The results from the factor analysis on HRP

measures selection, training, and incentives and the organizational performance measures which are job satisfaction, efficiency, employee motivation and technology had a significant and positive relationship with organizational performance. As modern HR practices are implemented in the telecom sector and companies would spend more on Human Resources, it would lead towards high-performance achievement.

Adele (2016) conducted a study on the factors that influence human resource planning among insurance firms in Kenya. The target population was all the (49) insurance companies in Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive research design where the respondents were the chief executive officers and human resource managers. Two questionnaire materials were given to each of the insurance companies. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics. The outcome of the study was presented in tables. There was a large percentage of male respondents who took part in the study compared to females, implying that the two top positions in the insurance firms are dominated by men. The study results indicated that technological changes, organizational structure, attrition rate, availability of scarce and critical skills and government policy had a significant influence on human resource planning. It was concluded that most of the insurance companies have adopted human resource planning. The study recommended that insurance firms embrace the changing times and adopt state-of-the-art technology in developing their human resource blueprints. Firms should also adopt human resource planning to help them design the most appropriate organizational structure, to curb the turnover while acquiring and maintaining a sustainable pool of employees.

Gap in Literature

Previous studies by several scholars focused on human resource planning, training and development. The current research focuses on workforce planning and organizational performance in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. This is because a close examination of past research revealed that considerable emphasis has been on supply and demand, forecasting of demand and customer satisfaction rather than a broader view of contingent workforce, demand forecasting and assessment. This is the gap that the current research aims to fill.

Methodology

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Data Presentation and Analysis

A total of one hundred and nineteen (119) questionnaire were administered to the respondents of the selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State while ninety (90) were successfully retrieved. This translates to a response rate of 75.6%.

Table 1: Assess the Impact of Demand Forecasting and Assessment of Workforce on Organizational Effectiveness in Selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

RESPONSES	SA 5	A 4	UN 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	SD
Better recruiting from the beginning/employee benefits improves organizational market share	62	23	5	-	-	417	4.6	.825
Training your managers to foster retention enhances organizational market share	75	15	-	-	-	435	4.8	.752
Measure and support engagement improves organizational market share	72	10	8	-	-	424	4.7	.789
Good manager-employee relationship contributes to employee safety.	77	11	2	-	-	435	4.8	.689

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 shows the impact of demand forecasting and assessment of the workforce on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The majority of the respondents with the highest mean scores of 4.8, 4.8, 4.7 and 4.6 strongly agreed that a good manager-employee relationship contributes to employee safety; training your managers to foster retention enhances organizational market share; measure and support engagement improves organizational market share; and better recruiting from the beginning/employee benefits improves organizational market share.

Table 2: Ascertain the Effect of Contingent Workforce on Organizational Efficiency In Selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State

RESPONSES	SA 5	A 4	UN 3	D 2	SD 1	Total	Mean	SD
Freelancers improve organizational objectives	60	20	7	3	-	407	4.5	.792
Independent contractors increase organizational efficiency	70	15	5	-	-	425	4.7	.780
Consultants improve organizational support	68	10	8	4	-	412	4.6	.801

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 shows the effect of the contingent workforce on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. The majority of the respondents with the highest mean scores of 4.7, 4.6 and 4.5 strongly agreed that independent contractors increase organizational efficiency; that consultants improve organizational support; and that freelancers improve organizational objectives.

Hypotheses Testing

H₀₁: Demand forecasting and assessment of workforce has no significant impact on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State

Table 3: Regression model on Demand forecasting and assessment on organizational effectiveness.

Variable	Parameters	Coefficient	Std error	t – value	Sig
Constant	β_0	0.058	0.057	1.017	.000
DFA (X_1)	β_1	0.082	0.072	1.139**	.015
R-Square		0.690			
Adjusted R – Square		0.546			
F – statistics		7.125***			

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 3 shows the coefficients of demand forecasting and assessment of organizational effectiveness. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was 0.690 which implies that 69.0% of the variations in dependent variables were explained by changes in the independent variable, while 31.0% were unexplained by the stochastic variable indicating goodness of fit of the regression model adopted in this study, which is statistically significant at 1% probability level.

The coefficient of demand forecasting was statistically significant and positively related to organizational effectiveness at a 5 per cent level (1.139**) with p-value =.015<.05% significance level. This implies that demand forecasting and assessment of the workforce has a significant impact on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State

H₀₂: A contingent workforce has no significant effect on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Table 4: Regression Model on Contingent Workforce on Organizational Efficiency

Variable	Parameters	Coefficient	Std error	t – value	Sig
Constant	β_0	0.055	0.082	0.670	.005
CW (X_1)	β_1	0.105	0.057	1.842**	.009
R-Square		0.609			
Adjusted R – Square		0.530			
F – statistics		7.788***			

Source: Field Data, 2023

Table 4 shows the coefficients of contingent workforce on organizational efficiency. The coefficient of multiple determination (R^2) was 0.609 which implies that 60.9% of the variations in dependent variables were explained by changes in the independent variable, while 29.1% were unexplained by the stochastic variable indicating goodness of fit of the regression model adopted in this study which is statistically significant at 1% probability level.

The coefficient of the contingent workforce was statistically significant and positively related to organizational efficiency at a 5 per cent level (1.842**) with p-value=.009<.05% significance level. This implies that a contingent workforce has a significant effect on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Discussion of Findings

The result of the analysis shown in Table 3 implies that demand forecasting and assessment of the workforce has a significant impact on organizational effectiveness in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. Also, the coefficient of demand forecasting was statistically significant and positively related to organizational effectiveness in selected SMES in Akwa Ibom State.

Furthermore, the result in Table 4 shows that the contingent workforce was statistically and positively related to organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. This implies that a contingent workforce has a significant effect on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

However, the finding is not in agreement with the findings of most researchers who found that there is no significant relationship between contingent workforce and organizational efficiency, and no positive relationship between demand forecasting, assessment and organizational effectiveness (see Adele, 2015; Bechet, 2000; Mathis et al, 2015).

The result of the findings is no doubt in line with the decision rules of the research hypothesis. The study therefore concludes that there is a positive correlation between contingent workforce and organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State

Conclusion

The study examined workforce planning and organizational performance in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. Workforce Planning involves people whose knowledge, skills, and abilities are utilized to create and deliver effective services. Workforce Planning is considered the greatest resource of an organization. Effective retention and succession planning attract the right quality and quantity of people, develop the knowledge, skills, and abilities of employees, and retain employees within the organization. Thus, the study found that succession planning, contingent workforce, employee forecasting and retention have a significant effect on organizational efficiency in selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State. Workforce planning is vital to any organization since it connects the business objectives of manufacturing firms to the human resource function. Workforce plans can be affected by internal and external changes in the business environment. However, timely redeployment and sound forecasting are essential for effective planning. In conclusion, there is a positive relationship between workforce planning and the organizational performance of selected SMEs in Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

- i. Organizations should adopt a workforce plan that will enable them to identify gaps, design the most appropriate organizational structure, acquire and maintain a sustainable pool of employees with the requisite skills and develop a blueprint that will help them adapt easily to the ever-changing government policies.
- ii. A contingent staff should undergo an orientation or training that will enable him/her to follow up instructions and cover-up space towards continuous improvements of a particular position towards enhancing organizational effectiveness
- iii. Organizations should endeavour to redeploy an employee at a stage where he/she will be able to plan for potential retirement and every accrued benefit and gratuity given to a retiree to plan for investment and social security.

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