

Chapter 110

The Future of Workforce Planning

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ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the future of workforce planning in contemporary work organisations. Workforce planning is regarded as one of the essential human resource management (HRM) activities in recent times. The reason is that it gives indication on areas of needs and serves as the pillar for all HRM activities such as job analysis, recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration/rewards, and promotion. A review of empirical literature reveals that workforce planning has a strong relationship with organisational performance as well as productivity. This chapter submits that HR metrics and workforce analytics can be used as a tool to improve organisational outcomes. To boost human activity, intelligence apps and analytics or cognitive analytics robotics could be adopted to improve HR's value to the business.

INTRODUCTION

Workforce planning is considered as the most critical activity of every organisation because it gives indication on areas of needs and serves as the pillar for all human resource management activities such as job analysis, recruitment and selection, training and development, remuneration/rewards, and promotion (Karia, Omari, Mwanaongoro & Ondieki, 2016). According to Aslam, Aslam, Ali, Habib and Jabeen (2014), serious organisations are those that consider human resource as the most valuable asset. Scholars such as Choudhury (2007), Lunenburg (2012), and Werner, Jackson and Schuler (2012) argue that organisational objectives can only be achieved through effective workforce planning. According to Choudhury (2007), effective workforce planning serves as the mechanism for building long-term capacity

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to meet the workforce challenges. Werner et al. (2012) postulate that workforce planning plays a critical role in HRM due to the fact that it translates the overall objectives of the organisation into a number of workers needed by determining the human resource required by the organisation to achieve its strategic goals. The scholars further suggested that for any organisation to manage human resource, it must ensure effective workforce planning. Jacobson (2010) in his study recommends that workforce planning is the core HRM activity which seeks to prepare organisations for their current and future human resource needs by ensuring that only the right people are recruited into the right place at the right time. Colley and Price (2010) also advocated that workforce planning is an effective tool for organisations to achieve their objectives understanding and planning for people needs in the short, medium and long-term.

However, Akhigbe (2013) in his study, on the “human resource planning: a key factor in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of organisation” argues that in spite of the efforts made by most organisations to ensure that there are right persons, in the right place, at the right time, yet they encounter a number of challenges in the effective implementation of workforce planning. According to Akhigbe (2013), the failure of most employers to plan for their workforce or human resources has forced them to become reactive, rather than proactive. The scholar is of the view that the tendency of reactivity causes problems of rush recruitment which sometimes results in wrong recruitments. Lunenburg (2012), and Robbins and Judge (2011) also supported the view that proactive workforce planning is required for the full realisation of the HR management objectives of the organisation. The scholars are of the view that workforce planning has not been beneficially successful in attaining most of its predetermined objectives as most organisations are still struggling with diverse issues. It has also been argued most HR practitioners still gamble with workforce planning by bringing on board individuals that lack the requisite qualification(s), knowledge, talents, abilities, and skills without actually having a blueprint to develop and enhance these HR for the task and duties ahead (Lunenburg, 2012). Also, most organisations are not able to meet their desired objectives because at the time of stiff competition, their employee’s moral becomes very low as compared to their rivals (Karia et al., 2016). According to Buradum (2017), the future of workforce planning is uncertain because of challenges such as labour turnover, absenteeism, seasonal unemployment, market instabilities, and modifications in technology. Buradum (2017) suggests that these critical issues must be well thought-out in the course of workforce planning. There is no doubt that these uncertainties pose a major challenge to the future of workforce planning that is likely to affect managers’ ability to forecast human resource needs in particular as it hinders the organisation’s much needed strategic actions, with the resultant effect of ineffectiveness, unproductiveness, and unsuccessful goal attainment.

The aim of this chapter is to determine future or working force planning in contemporary organisations. However, to achieve the broad of the chapter, the literature review will be based on the following objectives, namely: to explore internal and external forces which influence workforce planning; to examine the approaches to workforce planning; to identify the strategies for addressing labour shortage and surplus, to determine the contribution of workforce planning in an organisation; to investigate the challenges of workforce planning; and to identify the most appropriate techniques which support workforce planning. The chapter will begin with the background to the study by tracing the historical development of workforce planning. The chapter will proceed with the conceptualisation of the term workforce planning. It will also review empirical works on workforce planning which will focus on the objectives of workforce planning, factors influencing workforce planning in organisations, importance of workforce planning, steps in workforce planning, and hard versus soft workforce planning. The chapter will also cover the solution and recommendations, directions for future book chapters, conclusion and definition of key terms.

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