Human Resource Information Systems for Small to Medium Mining Enterprises in Mashonaland West Province, Zimbabwe

[1]Gondo Kudzanayi, [2]Gore Sekai Noreen, [3]Sithole Kudakwashe

Lecturers, Zimbabwe Open University
Department of Management & Business Studies; Faculty of Commerce & Law
Corresponding author: kudzanayigondo@gmail.com

Abstract: This research study sought to examine the functionality of Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) in human resource management service delivery for small to medium mining enterprises in Mashonaland West province of Zimbabwe. The study was necessitated by the realisation of the significance of HRIS in improving human resource management service delivery following the persistence and continued use of undependable human resource manual systems that are adversely affecting strategic decisions and subsequently the performance of small to medium mining enterprises in the province. The study adopted a cross sectional survey approach which was descriptive and analytical in nature with questionnaires and interview guides used as the key research instruments. The population of the study comprised 116 human resource managers. Purposive sampling was used to draw a sample size of 82 respondents. Key findings of the study revealed that the staff in human resource departments of most small to medium mining enterprises in the province did not possess the required competencies to effectively use HRIS. From the findings, several challenges that affected the efficacy of HRIS were pointed out. These included inadequate funds, inadequate knowledge, and lack of corporation between human resource departments and other line functions. However, research findings further revealed that the quality of human resource management services offered had improved as result of the adoption of HRIS by the small to medium in the province. Due to the availability of the HRIS, staff and management expectations were beginning to be realised. It is recommended that adequate financial resources should be availed to strengthen HRIS for effective human resource management service delivery. It is also important to ensure support from top management in order to fully implement HRIS and enhance strategic human resource decision making. Organisations should identify the right staff and take them through HRIS training as a means of imparting knowledge and skills that are desirable for the effective use of HRIS. Finally, it is recommended that a comparative study on HRIS usage between large mining corporations and small to medium enterprises be undertaken to proffer measures for bridging the gap in HRIS.

Keywords: Human resource information systems, human resource management service delivery, small to medium mining enterprises.

I.   INTRODUCTION

Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) are important in strategic decision making processes enabling human resource professionals to be involved in organisational strategy decisions and transforming human resources into a business strategic partner. HRIS provides information about an organisation's human resources. Most organisations in both the public and private sectors continue using manual systems that have weaknesses in human resource management service delivery. HRIS make the human resource function more efficient. HRIS are designed to support the planning, administration, decision making and control activities of human resource management. Broderick and Boudreau (1992) define HRIS as a composite of databases, computer applications, hardware and software necessary to collect or record, store, manage, deliver, present and manipulate data for human resources. HRIS offer sufficient, comprehensive and ongoing information about people and jobs supplying up to date information (Kovach et al; 1999, 2002). The benefits of HRIS are higher speed retrieval and processing of human resource data, reduction in duplication of efforts and higher accuracy of reported information.

In view of this, there is increasing realisation of the importance of HRIS in improving human resource management service delivery for small to medium enterprises in Mashonaland West province of Zimbabwe. There is evidence to suggest that indexing procedures and file tracking systems are lacking in small to medium mining enterprises in the province given the lengthy time taken by human resource personnel to search and retrieve a file. There are instances where personnel files are moved from one office to another in the course of day to day administration with no master filing systems that enable names and numerical file codes to be matched and retrieved easily.

Some enterprises reportedly have challenges in leave administration because of the manual systems used to manage human resource information. For those enterprises that have taken steps to implement HRIS; there has been a lot of resistance and fear by both staff members and human resource professionals. In light of this, it became imperative for the researchers to examine the efficacy of HRIS in human resource management service delivery for small to medium mining enterprises in Zimbabwe with specific reference to Mashonaland West province. The findings of this study may help human resource managers of the small to medium mining enterprises to understand and appreciate the importance of HRIS in human resource records management and decision making processes. The study may initiate increased adoption of customised and dependable human resource systems that enhance resource management service delivery for small to medium enterprises in the Zimbabwean mining sector.

1.1 Statement of the Problem:

In view of the challenges in human resource management service delivery confronting small to medium mining enterprises in Mashonaland West Province of Zimbabwe, there is the realisation of the rationale of HRIS in improving human resource management services provided. This follows concerns relating to poor record keeping, delayed personal data aggregation, poor talent management that are continuously hindering human resource management service delivery in the small to medium mining enterprises. The manual human resource systems are stalling strategic decisions.

1.2 Research Objectives:

The study sought to achieve the following objectives;

- To examine the efficacy of HRIS in human resource management service delivery in small to medium mining enterprises.
- To ascertain the impact of HRIS in human resource management service delivery.
- To identify the challenges faced by small to medium mining enterprises in adopting HRIS.
- To establish strategies for effective implementation and utilisation of HRIS in small to medium mining enterprises.

1.3 Research questions/Sub problems

This study was guided by the following research questions;

- How effective are the available HRIS in small to medium mining enterprises enhancement of human resource service delivery?
- What is the impact of HRIS in human resource management service delivery?
- What are the challenges being faced by the small to medium mining enterprises in adopting HRIS?
- What strategies can be adopted for effective implementation and utilisation of HRIS by small to medium mining enterprises?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Choga (2012) citing Cascio (1998) posit that the HRIS model consist of strategic integration, personnel development, communication and integration, records and compliance, HR analysis, knowledge management, forecasting and planning. These factors are integrated and linked to organisational outcomes through the influence of strategic organisational vision. Choga (2012) suggests that HRIS can be helpful in recruitment through position inventory, recruitment using the internet (e - recruitment) and employee selection. According to Choga (2012), a computerised inventory helps the current job listings match openings with available personnel. Human resource personnel can analyse the position of inventory and its changes over time. Thus, information from the analysis can support decisions on promotions, salary administration and training plans. Many companies advertise on the internet and this helps employment agencies who attempt to match job seekers and positions available in companies.

Choga (2012) further suggests that HRIS can be helpful in human resource maintenance and development, performance evaluation, turnover, tardiness and absenteeism analyses, human resource management and planning, skills inventory, benefits administration, succession planning and implementation as well as labour-management negotiations. It is reiterated that large companies have developed Decision Support Systems (DSS) models that support employee-employer negotiations. It is possible to use DSS to identify causes and patterns and assess the impact of programmes aimed at reducing turnover, tardiness and absenteeism. In support, Walker (2001) posit that HRIS create cost savings and provide more accurate data upon which to base strategic decisions, an indication that human resource management has shifted into a more strategic role. This strategic role needs a system that can manage the human resource activities. HRIS becomes imperatively the solution. HRIS keeps the human resource department in the right path to deliver effective service to the organisation (Ngai and Wat, 2004). Strohmier (2006), postulates that challenges of adopting HRIS include resistance by employers and employees, past practices, lack of training, inadequate education, lack of information communication technology infrastructure, funding constraints and uncertainties.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross sectional survey approach which was descriptive and analytical in nature and used questionnaires and interview guides to collect required data from respondents. Questionnaires were cheaper and suitable for use for a sample size of 82 respondents. With questionnaires, respondents could respond better to sensitive questions since they were anonymous. Interviews on the other hand, allowed probing and respondents could expand on areas of interests complemented by non verbal communication through facial expressions to emphasise their responses. Interviews offered the researchers greater flexibility. Researchers were able to explain to respondents the purpose of the study and build their confidence. Content Validity Index (CVI) was used to assess the relevance of the questions to the objectives of the study. The reliability of the questions was improved through pre-testing of pilot samples for human resource managers thereby facilitating the rephrasing of some questions.

The population of the study comprised 116 human resource managers from registered small to medium mining enterprises in Mashonaland West province of Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling was used to select 82 respondents for the study. Seventy questionnaires were administered whilst 12 interviews were conducted. The questionnaires were administered personally by the researchers. For the interviews, prior appointments were made with the concerned respondents. A Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) software was used to analyse questionnaire responses.

For this study to be ethically acceptable, the researchers adhered to various ethical guidelines that regulate the conduct of research. Permission was sought from authorities to carry out the study. Respondents were fully informed of the purpose of the study and their rights to withdraw their participation at any stage of the research process. Anonymity of responses was guaranteed and respondents were not permitted to reveal their identity and participation was voluntary.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study were drawn from questionnaire and interview responses.

4.1 The efficacy of HRIS in enhancing human resource management service delivery:

The results showed that staff in human departments did not possess the required competences required to operate the HRIS much as the quality of service offered by staff had improved as a result of the use of HRIS. As a result of the combined knowledge and skills on the HRIS, the performance of staff had improved. Human resource personnel was the key to the future success of HRIS and critical for effective human resource management service delivery. This implies that for effective delivery of human resource services to be realised, HRIS is critical in the delivery of the services. This is in agreement with the assertions of Andersons (1997), who postulates that in organisations which implement the use of HRIS, they are able to meet the needs of the different stakeholders. Ulrich (1997) and Brockbank (1999) posit that human resource professionals provide value to the organisation and improve their own standing in the organisation by using HRIS.

4.2 Impact of HRIS on human resource management service delivery:

The results on the assessment of the impact of HRIS on human resource management service delivery revealed that due to the availability of HRIS staff is satisfied with human resource services. HRIS has improved the human resource functions at the mines. HRIS has helped with forecasting staffing needs, improved the data input and maintenance processes,

dissemination of information. There was cost saving on the human resource functions. Results also showed that HRIS has improved the dissemination of information. The findings further revealed that due to the availability of HRIS, staff and management expectations were beginning to be realised. Ordonez (2004) suggests that implementing an effective HRIS keeps the human resource department in the right path to deliver more effective and streamlined service to the organisation.

4.3 Challenges of adopting HRIS by small to medium mining enterprises:

The results revealed that among challenges of adopting HRIS by the small to medium enterprises were; inadequate knowledge to operate HRIS, insufficient financial support and lack of cooperation between human resource departments and other line departments. Other challenges included, fear of changing the way staff do things and lot of paper work that is difficult to computerise thereby undermining the full potential of HRIS. The findings are supported by Beckers and Bsat (2002), who assert that the cost of setting up and maintaining HRIS can be high, which is the major obstacle in the implementation of an effective HRIS. Similarly, Kovach and Cathcart (1999) pointed out that lack of money and support from top management was the biggest barriers to achieving the full potential of HRIS. They further indicated that other challenges were lack of human resource knowledge by systems designers. According to Strohmier (2006), many employers resist HRIS as they think that it increases cost of manpower as trade unions demand for employee based plans, more facilities and benefits including training and development.

4.4 Strategies for improving the efficacy of HRIS in human resource management service delivery:

Interview responses revealed that the institutional level strategies that can be adopted for improving the effective utilization of HRIS included; ensuring that source of funds to cover costs of setting up and maintaining HRIS are available. There should be mobilization of financial resources required to setup the HRIS. There is need to train staff on how to use and appreciate HRIS. Likewise stakeholder involvement at different stages of the implementation process was also proffered by interviewed respondents. The results further revealed that in order to realize the benefits of the HRIS, there was need for small to medium mining enterprises to mobilise more financial resources, gain the support from top management, training of staff on how to use HRIS. The findings are given credence by Beukese-Amiss and Chiware (2006) who suggest that many organisations come to a standstill because an obstacle appears in the HRIS path towards achieving their goals.

V. CONCLUSION

When assessing the critical HRIS required for effective human resource management service delivery, it was revealed that the staff in human resource department did not possess the required competencies to operate the HRIS. However, the quality of the services offered by human resource staff had improved as result of the use of the HRIS.

In regard to the assessment of the impact of HRIS on human resource management service delivery, the study concluded that due to the availability of the HRIS, staff and management expectations were beginning to be realised, the HRIS had improved the human resource functions at the mines, the HRIS helped with forecasting staffing needs, HRIS improved data input process. Likewise HRIS improved the training process, HRIS improved the ability to disseminate information and the information generated from the HRIS increased coordination between the departments.

From the findings, the study further concluded that inadequate funds, inadequate knowledge, and lack of cooperation between departments were the key challenges in adopting HRIS by most small to medium enterprises in Mashonaland West province of Zimbabwe. Likewise fear of changing the way staff does things, lack of commitment and involvement by all employees and a lot of paper work that is difficult to computerise undermined the achievement of the full potential of HRIS. Other challenges included, limited support from top management, lack of training of staff on how to effectively operate HRIS and staff attitudes towards the HRIS.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above conclusions, the researchers proposed the following recommendations:

• Adequate financial resources should be available to strengthen HRIS for effective human resource management service delivery.

• It is also pertinent that top management support the drive to fully implement HRIS and enhance strategic human resource decision making.

- Small to medium mining enterprises need to identify the right staff and take them through HRIS development training as a means of imparting knowledge and skills that are desirable for the operation of the HRIS.

- There is also need for attitude change amongst staff on HRIS. It is recommended that small to medium mining enterprises should inculcate culture that fosters and facilitates change within the organisation. There is also need to ensure effective communication, where the change message is communicated consistently and provision of feedback is made for users.

- There is need for effective and integrated cooperation between human resource departments and other line functions. Human resource departments should not drive the process alone but rather have input from the line managers and supervisors as well. This should be augmented by adequate support from top management.

- Finally, it is recommended that further longitudinal research be conducted in small to medium mining enterprises in the other provinces of Zimbabwe for improved generalisation of findings and establishment of the nature of association between HRIS and human resource management service delivery.

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