PERCEIVED FACTORS INFLUENCING STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AT THE NATIONAL CEREALS AND PRODUCE BOARD

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A MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA), SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and has not been presented in any other university for an academic award.
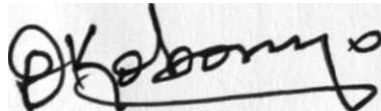
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This research project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the University Supervisor.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project to my Dear Father John, Brothers and Sisters and to my Friends for their moral support.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EAGC   East African Grain Council

MT   Metric Tonnes

NCPB   National Cereals and Produce Board

SGR   Strategic Grain Reserves

WRS   Warehouse Receipting System

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ABSTRACT

This research project reports the findings of the perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practice at the National Cereals and Produce Board. The objective of the study was to establish the perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practice at the National Cereals and Produce Board. A descriptive research design was used to gather data by means of questionnaires. The study revealed that the Board has been using various Human Resource development practices in attempt to equip its employees with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them handle their current and future needs. This has been mainly through on the job training and career development. Delegation, Job enrichment Programs, Peer Consultations by employees and Employee empowerment human resource development practices were fund to be used to a moderate extent. However Job enlargement, Coaching, Mentoring, Job rotation and Succession Planning human resource development practices were fund to be used to a low extent. Another key finding of the study was that the Board is facing the challenge of how to develop and manage its employees, as well as having well established overall direction and objectives on key areas of human resource development in order to ensure that they are not only consistent with but also support the achievement of business goals. Additionally it was found that the Board did not have detailed procedures and systems which reflect its strategic framework in human resource development developed and implementation structure.

Despite having programs to support and sustain human resource development practices, the study found that the Board experienced various challenges which included integration of human resource development and the support of human resource development plans and policies to wider business needs. Other factors related to the evaluation of human resource development activities so that its strategic contribution and relevance can be assessed, lack top management support, human resource development function failing to a line its activities with the organization strategy and culture, the capacity to

continuously analyze external environment to identify both opportunities and threats to business and human resource development strategies, provision of sufficient investment or budgets for human resource development activities and involvement in formal work teams or other related work related problem solving activities.

Since it is clear that there are factors influencing strategic human resource development practice, This study recommends that the board should diversify some of the human resource development practices such as Job enlargement, Coaching, Mentoring and Job rotation, this will aid in succession planning and help in the development of personal career development plans. The Board should ensure that human resource development practices are not only consistent with but also support the achievement of business goals. Additionally management should ensure that there are detailed procedures and systems which reflect its strategic framework in human resource development and implementation structure. The study further recommends that the Board should integrate human resource development plans and policies to support wider business needs, evaluate human resource development activities so that its strategic contribution and relevance can be assessed and top management support. The capacity to continuously analyze external environment to identify both opportunities and threats to business and human resource development strategies, provision of sufficient investment or budgets for human resource development activities and involvement in formal work teams or other related work related problem solving activities all need to be addressed by management.

Further studies can be done to establish on the various ways of measuring the return on investments on strategic human resource development practices and establish specific links to improved organization performance and competitiveness as well as ways in which organizations can mitigate on the various factors influencing strategic human resource development practices.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Developing an effective human resource system that is compatible with organizational strategy is critical for the functioning and success of an organization in today's competitive business arena. Indeed, the increasing complexity of contemporary corporate life has elevated the importance of shedding traditional beliefs that were concerns of personnel managers and to shape new mindsets, proactive attitudes and professional identities, orientation that have placed greater emphasis on the utilization of human recourses (Wei. 2006). Strategic human resource management is a concept that integrates traditional human resource management activities within the firms overall strategic planning and implementation. Strategic human resource management also emphasizes the implementation of a set of policies and practices that will build employees pool of skills, knowledge and abilities that are relevant to organizational goals.

Armstrong (2006) proposed that human resource management is a strategic and coherent approach to the management of the organization's most valued assets. The people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives for sustainable competitive advantage. This implies that the successful achievement of business objectives depends upon the effective use of human recourses along with financial and physical recourses and therefore human resources initiatives should be allied with strategic objectives of the organization. According to Graham and Bennett (1998), the strategic approach to human resource management involves the integration of personnel and other human resource management considerations in to the firms overall corporate planning and strategy formulation procedures. Establishing a strong human resource strategy that is clearly linked to the organizations strategy is not enough. Human resource strategy needs to be communicated, practiced and perhaps and most importantly spelled out and written down.

1.1.1 The Concept of Perception

Boundich and Bouna (1997) define perception as the process by which an individual selects organizes and interprets stimuli into a meaningful and coherent picture of the world. Mullins (1995) defines perception as the mental function of giving significance stimuli such as feelings and shape, while Bennet (1997) asserts that perception is the process in which one interprets sensory inputs such as smell, sight, sound or feelings. Perception is considered relative to expectations, a person's own needs and values. The level of perception varies depending on a particular person's reference point and their motives, needs, desires, wants and interests. Individuals act and react based on their perceptions, not based on objective reality. Individuals make decisions and take actions based on what they perceive to be a reality. It is therefore important for mangers to understand the whole motive of perception and its related concepts to more readily determine what factors influence strategic human resource development practices.

According to Mullins (1995) perceptions are influenced by stimuli. These are any physical, visual or verbal communication that can influence an individual's response. He identifies two important stimuli that affect individual behavior as environmental stimulus and organizational stimuli. Key factors that will determine which stimuli the individual will perceive is how they will interpret the characteristics of the stimulus and how individuals will perceive the stimulus. A person's knowledge creates his or her reality as much as the truth, because the human mind can only contemplate that which it has been exposed. When objects are viewed without understanding the mind will try and reach for something that it already recognizes, in order to process what it is viewing. That which most closely relates to the unfamiliar form of our past experiences, makes up what we see when we look at things that we don't comprehend. Employees need to perceive they are receiving the human resource development necessary to do their jobs and keep up with new technologies (Truelove, 2005). A critical factor that can influence the success of strategic human resource development is how employees perceive it, since the driving force behind the success, or otherwise of any organization rests on its employees.

1.1.2 Strategic Human Resource Development

Lisk (1996) suggests that Strategic Human Resource Development refers to continuous development of man power to constantly achieve the set vision and Mission of any organization and encompasses training and development and the use of other human resource development initiatives aimed at improving the performance of individuals. It involves a planned approach to learning aimed at changes in knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and values in the behavior of a leaner or group of learners. Human resource development focuses on a series of actions directed at helping participants in the development process to increases their knowledge skills and understanding to develop the attitudes needed to bring about the desired developmental change. Kotler and Armstrong (1994) defined strategic human resource development as the development activities undertaken by organizations in their long term ability to achieve their mission effectively and efficiently through management, governance and persistent re-dedication to achieve results.

Tregoe and Zimmerman (1980), argue that strategic human resource development is critical in the improvement of organizational performance. He further argues that the impact of training is linked by a cause and effect chain, where by training leads reactions, which lead to learning, which lead to changes in behavior, which leads to changes to the organization which lead to changes in the in the achievement of ultimate goals. Harrison (1992) argues that strategic human resource development involves the alignment of training and development activities within the organization's mission and strategic goals so that through enhancing the skills, knowledge, learning ability and motivation of employees at all levels, there will be continuous organizational as well as individual growth. Strategic human resource development involves, introducing, eliminating, modifying, directing and guiding processes in such a way that all individuals and teams are equipped with the skills, knowledge and competences they require one to undertake current and future tasks required by the organization (Walton, 1999).

1.1.3 Strategic Human Resource Development Practice

Slack and Lewis (2000) argue that strategic human resource development practices can be defined as employee developmental activities which an organization deliberately undertakes from time to time to ensure that the employees have what it takes in terms of skill, knowledge and attitude in order to drive the organizational strategy. These are undertaken in a planned manner depending on the short, medium, and long term strategies of the organization. Thus human resource development practices encompasses activities which are intended to have an impact on organizational and individual learning and is constituted by planned interventions in organizational and individual learning processes.

Strategic human resource development practice focuses on the creation of a learning culture, within which a range of training, development and learning strategies both respond to corporate strategy and also help shape and influence it. It is about meeting the organization's existing needs, in addition to helping the organization to change, develop, thrive and grow. It is the reciprocal, mutually enhancing, nature of the relationship between human resource development and corporate strategy which lies at the heart of strategic human resource development and at the heart of the development of a learning culture. Strategic human resource development practices may be considered as a range of training and development interventions linked vertically to business goals and strategy, and horizontally to other human resource business activities, to actively encourage and support employee learning, commitment and involvement throughout the organization (McCracken, 2000).

1.1.4 Factors Influencing Strategic Resource Development Practice

Garavan (1991) suggests top management support is a factor that influences strategic human resource development, where the strategic integration of human resource development requires the active support and participation of senior management in order to become a reality. In addition line manager commitment and involvement that is consistent with the development of strategic human resource management is important. This is because the line managers take centre stage in identifying and addressing the human resource development needs of subordinates. This requires his or her active commitment and participation, where any relegation of their human resource development roles and responsibilities in their list of managerial priorities will jeopardize its successful delivery. Further human resource development plans and policies where systematic integration requires the formulation of human resource development plans and policies to support wider business needs is key and may influence strategic human resource development practices. Recognition of culture where the onus is on the human resource development function to develop its activities in line not only with organizational strategy but also with organization culture is key if human resource development practices are to be successful. This includes the key role of shaping human resource development activities to maintain and change corporate culture.

Changing work force dynamics and competition in the global economy as a result of new technologies, the need for more skilled and educated workers are factors that influence strategic human resource development practices. The challenge to organizations is to develop human resource development programs aimed at eliminating skills gaps and focusing on the need for lifelong learning due to organizational change, technological changes, product changes and process changes that require people to change. Integration with organizational missions and goals is important where human resource development is systematically integrated with wider business planning in a supporting role so that sight is not lost of organizational strategic objectives when developing human resource development interventions (Carl and Roland, 2000).

1.1.5 National Cereals and Produce Board

The National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) is a body corporate established in 1985 under Cap.338 of the Laws of Kenya and gives the Board the mandate to purchase, store, market and manage cereal grain in Kenya. NCPB infrastructure network consists of over 110 Warehouses located all over the country with a storage capacity of over 1.8 million MT. The Board's main services constitutes, commercial grain trading, leasing out surplus facilities, post-harvest services such as grain handling, grain drying, and fumigation. The Board procures stores and maintains a Strategic Grain Reserve (SGR) stock of up to four million bags of the Government to be used for food security. The Board also facilitates the procurement, storage, maintenance and distribution of famine relief food to deficit areas, under the National Famine Relief Program on behalf of the Government. *National Cereals and Produce Board Strategic Plan (2009-2013).* The Cereals Sub-sector was fully liberalized in 1993. This not only removed the Government regulatory role through NCPB, but also weakened the institution and created gaps in the grain sector. The reforms have since forced the once monopoly and regulator to re-examine its purpose and role in a liberalized environment. NCPB's Commercialization Project was undertaken between 1996 and 1997. The key objective of this program was to transform NCPB into a commercially viable entity, free to make independent commercial decisions whilst removing dependency from the Exchequer. *Paper on the Cereal Sub-sector Reform Program (1993).*

A five-pronged approach to addressing the institutional gaps and food security issues comprises proposals to transform NCPB into a major National Warehousing Institution, introduce a Warehouse Receipting system in Kenya and the Region, establish a Commodity Exchange that encompasses all agricultural commodities in the Region, Prepare adequate Legal and Regulatory frameworks to govern grain trade and facilitate emergence of private sector warehouses. The Warehouse Receipting System (WRS) initiative aims at strengthening the commodity supply chain through a linkage of certified

warehouses systems. The WRS will enable farmers and other players access credit/financing for the banking sector, sell when market conditions are right and trade warehouse receipts at the Commodity Exchange. The Commodity Exchange initiative consists of establishing a robust and effective Commodities Exchange that promotes efficient functioning of commodity markets to enhance food security in Kenya and the Region. The commodity exchange would boost price discovery for maize and other grains, increase transparency in the grain industry, lower transaction costs, enhance risks management through hedging, and improve efficient management of warehouses in the region. *National Cereals and Produce Board Strategic Plan (2009-2013).* The Board has a fully-fledged Human Resource Department, which use a detailed Human Resource Manual that contains policies and procedures covering human resource functional activities including the Board's training and development policy The Board has an establishment of about 995 employees falling under four broad categories, namely Senior management (job group M and above), Middle level management (job group K-L), Supervisory management (job group G-J) and Operational staff (job group A-F/ *NCPB Human Resource Staff Establishment report. Appendix K (2012)*

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Strategic human resource development is important because it results in high levels of expertise among employees. Enhancing employee expertise through human resource development increases the likelihood that business objectives will be achieved (Jacob and Jones, 1995). The need for strategic human resource training and development has been highlighted by researchers who argue that it is important for organizations to build their human resource capacity in order to sustain competitiveness. Drucker (1974) argued that the aim of strategic Human Resource development is to enhance productive capacities in specific fields or to increase organizational capacity in those organizations chosen as agents of development. Strategic human resource development aligns the formal structure

so that they drive the strategic objectives of the organization hence leading to the successful implementation of strategy.

The National Cereals and Produce Board embarked on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2009-2013, which came up with initiatives to establish a warehouse receipting system and a commodity exchange that required staff directly involved be well trained to ensure that they are equipped with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to cope with modern trends in grain management. Some of the requirements of success under the strategic initiatives highlighted gaps in the area of managing quality grain standards, grain handling, warehousing and collateral management. The East African Grain Council (EAGC), the body charged with the mandate of certifying warehouses and influencing a structured grain trading system in the East African Region, introduced new grading equipment and quality parameters that included aflotoxin testing. This necessitated the need to train and develop the Boards quality assurance staff on the new technologies and on the use of the new grading equipment and aflotoxin testing procedures.

From a human resource development perspective the board addresses the above challenges by identifying human resource development needs for the organization that will ensure the organization stays focused in the pursuit of its strategic goals in the long term. These include; mentoring, delegation, coaching, succession planning, and empowerment. In addition the board identifies the degree to which internal career development systems facilitate organizational progression and personal development and addresses the extent to which organizations perceive the need for skill enhancement to equip the employees with the relevant skills for future work demand. This is done mainly through, job rotation, job enrichment, job enlargement and on the job training. However implementation of the human resource development programs at NCPB has been affected by the lack of adequate investment in training and development, focus on those at the beginning of their careers and those in more senior and specialist posts, rather than

employees in lower carders and those with skill deficiencies. This has led to staff making requests for promotions, complaining that the process of selection and nomination for training and development opportunities is biased in addition to employees stagnating in the same job groups for many years and that the Board did not have personal career development plans and succession plans were reactive rather than proactive detailed succession plans. It is against this background that the study sought to investigate factors influencing strategic human resource development practices at NCPB.

In prior studies Ndege (2006) carried out a survey of human resource development strategies in state corporations in Kenya. Ndege found that state corporations appreciated the fact that for any organization to remain competitive and in order to achieve its strategic plan, the development of human resources must be continually planned and properly monitored. Waruguru (2010) carried out a study on strategic human resource training and development practice at the Cooperative bank of Kenya. Waruguru found that by having strategic human resource training and development in place the bank was able to develop their staff and keep them up to date so that they can handle the market changes that include globalization, increased competition, technology advancement and e-commerce. Owino (2006) in a survey of training and development practices applied by the international NGOs operating in Nairobi asserts that training and development of employees is necessary to prepare them on how to manage changes. These changes should have a positive contribution to the organization where employees improve in performance. The above studies closely relate strategic human resource training and development practices but do not deal specifically with factors that influence strategic human resource development practices particularly within the cereals sub sector. This is a matter of concern since the cereals sub sector is unique in that it deals with issues on national food security and thus studies done in other sectors may not apply to them wholesome because of factors considered in this sector may not be based on rational economic justification. This study is informed by the need to fill this gap in knowledge and specifically sought to identify the perceived factors influencing strategic human

resource development practices at NCPB. This study therefore sought to answer the following question. What are the perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practices at NCPB.

1.3 Objective of the Study

To establish the perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practice at the National Cereals and Produce Board.

1.4 Value of the Study

The research findings will be important to the Board's human resource department in establishing if there are ways in which they can enhance the impact of strategic human resource development to ensure optimum staff utilization. In addition the Boards human resource department may use the research findings to examine the existing human resource development practices, highlight the main deficiencies affecting them and point possible ways of improving upon the Strategic human resource development practices

Other parastatals within the Ministry of Agriculture and other stakeholders within the grain sub-sector may find the research findings important to improving their strategic human resource development practices and will also be able to appreciate the challenges facing the sector and address them through putting in place policies to support their strategic human resource development practices

The outcome of the research findings may form a basis for further research and add to studies already carried out in strategic human resource development. Further study will also provide the background information to research organizations and scholars who will want to carry out further research in this area, as they may use it as reference material and as a basis of identifying research gaps.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Strategic Human Resource Management

Human resource strategy of an organization refers to its fundamental approach towards its employees. The patterns of human resource decisions made by the managers reflect how strategics are directly related to organizational and environmental conditions. The approach ensures that human resource activities are integrated to provide a unified pattern to the employment relationship which is consistent with organization conditions and strategies. Human resource strategy positions the organization in relation to the pressures in its environment and guides managers' personnel decisions (Milkovich and Boudrcau 2000)

According to Mello (2001) strategic human resource management involves the development of a consistent, aligned collection of practices, programs and policies to facilitate the achievement to an organization's strategic objectives. It considers the implications of corporate strategy for all human resource systems within an organization by translating company objectives in to specific people management systems. Taking a strategic approach to human resource management involves abandoning the mindset and practice of "personnel Management" and focusing more on strategic issues than operational issues. Strategic human resource management involves making the function of managing people the most important priority in the organization and integrating all human resource programs and policies within the framework of the company's strategy. Strategic human resource management involves realizing that people make or break an organization because all decisions made regarding finance marketing operations or technology are made by an organizations people.

By design the perspective demands that human resource managers become strategic partners in business operations playing prospective roles rather than, being passive administrators reacting to the requirements of other business functions. Strategic human

resource managers need a change in their mind setting from seeing themselves as relationship managers to resource managers knowing how to utilize the full potential of their human resources (Li, Zhao and Liu, 2004). In a growing number of organizations human resources are now viewed as a source of competitive advantage. There is a greater recognition that distinctive competencies are obtained through highly developed employees skills, distinctive organizational cultures, management processes and systems. This is to the traditional emphasis on transferable resources such as equipment. Increasingly it is being recognized that competitive advantage can be put into the high quality workforce that enables organizations to compete on the basis of market responsiveness, product and service quality, differentiated products and technological innovation (Wang and Zang, 2004).

The shape and structure of the organization and individual roles depends on selection, development and training. Valuing the contribution of individual's roles through, job evaluation, remuneration strategy and managing individual performance. The human resource agenda would be driven clearly by the strategic objectives and priorities of the organization. The approach taken to human resource management would recognize that there are critical interrelationships and interdependences between the distinct areas of human resource management. For example, if the organization structure was changed and individual roles were redefined, then this would have implications for the way in which individual performance was managed, and the way in which pay structure needed to be designed in order to reflect and support new ways of working (Li, Zhao and Liu, 2004). Specific human resource management initiatives would recognize the need to understand "where you are now" in relation to each of the distinct areas, and consequently ensure that the sequence of change took place in the right order. For example, it would be pointless to embark on a job evaluation exercise or to implement a new pay structure, if the organization was considering a fundamental rethink of work practices and processes.

Organizations that do not adopt a strategic approach are easily recognized by a fragmented and ad hoc approach to the development and implementation of human resource initiatives. As a consequence, the organization may get the timing of these initiatives wrong, and will probably also fail to recognize the interdependence and interrelationships between them. (Madsen et al.2004). In organizations that do not adopt a strategic approach, existing approaches often act as barriers to the implementation of strategy. The design of individual roles and work processes will obviously conflict with the needs of the organization for cost reduction and quality improvement. Similarly, pay and reward systems often encourage individual jobholders to behave in a way which is completely at odds with the goals of the organization (Wang and Zang, 2004).

Organizations which fail to adopt a strategic approach are clearly at risk of reacting to somebody else's agenda. They may react to the external agendas of Government bodies, or professional associations. Equally, the human resource function may be drawn into reacting to the trade union agenda, because it has no strategic direction of its own to pursue. Failure to take a strategic approach to human resource management will directly impact on the performance of the organization. Critically, failure to take a strategic approach will have implications for costs, efficiency, productivity and quality (Li Zhao and Liu, 2004; Madsen et al. (2004). Strategic human resource management focuses on linking human resource strategic goals and objectives in order to improve business performance and develop organization culture that fosters innovation and flexibility. Strategic human resource means accepting the human resource function as a partner in the formulation of the company's strategies as well as the implementation of those strategies through human resource activities such as recruiting, selecting, training and rewarding personnel. Whereas strategic human resource recognizes human resource's partnership in the strategizing process, the term human resource strategies refers to specific human resource courses of action the company plans to pursue to achieve its aims (Madsen et al.2004).

The adoption of a strategic human resource management approach necessitates the alignment of human resource strategies with overall business strategies. This can provide a benefit, for without a clear overall strategy into which a strategic human resource management approach can be integrated, and then strategic human resource management is not possible. Strategic human resource management can be a driving force with regard to the development of the organization. The critical management task is to align the formal structure and the human resource management system so that they drive the strategic objective of the organization (Formbrun et al., 1984). Because strategic human resource management puts a strong emphasis on ethics, business strategy can be influenced to develop beyond the immediate needs of the profit and loss account. Mueller (1996) argues that strategic human resource management grows out of an organic development process which is facilitated by persistent intent and builds on underlying developments in skills formation and establishing patterns of spontaneous co-operation thereby ensuring that the best of the existing practices and attitudes can be retained, whilst alignment with overall objectives takes place. Additionally, the holistic approach required by strategic human resource management encourages the best interaction between human resources and other resources, resulting in more complex interdependencies which are harder to imitate than straight forward good quality human resource systems which are imitable.

Aligning organizational and human resource strategies also presents a number of difficulties. Strategy development may be incremental, ad-hoc social, cultural and political affairs where numerous cognitive, information limitations- allied to culture ways of thinking and political loyalties, and historic relationships and interests play major roles in structuring the way managers think and what they think about (Mabey et al., 1998). Strategic human resource management presents as inevitable and necessary organizational strategies which may be political choices aimed at displacing the costs of organizational decline to the less advantaged members of the organization, while presenting these polices as inevitable and neutral (Mabey, et al., 1998). Many

organizations may be unable to formulate clear strategic objectives which can be cascaded and owned round the organization. Strategy may be determined bottom up rather than top down, or cross-sectional, putting the holism of strategic human resource management into jeorpardy. Strategic human resource management has been held to consist of contradictory ideas- for example, simultaneously stressing individualism (in pay schemes) and co-operation; employee commitment and managerial flexibility (Mabey et.al., 1998).

2.2 Strategic Human Resource Development

Human Resource Development encompasses activities and processes which are intended to have an impact on organizational and individual learning. The term assumes that organizations can be constructively conceived of as learning entities, and that the learning processes of both organizations and individuals are capable of influence and direction through deliberate and planned interventions. Thus, human resource development is constituted by planned interventions in organizational and individual learning processes (McGoldrick and Stewart, 1996). A strategic approach to training and development can be depicted as one where all those involved are engaged in a connected, explicit and developmental purpose which helps to simultaneously fulfill an individual's learning goals and the organization's mission (Mabey et al ., 1998)

According to Pearson et al (1992) strategic human resource development focuses specifically on the pattern of planned human resource deployments and activities intended to enable the organization to achieve its goals. Such activities are work force centered directed mainly at the organizations employees, finding and training them, working modalities of payment, explaining management's expectations, justifying management action satisfying employees work related needs, dealing with their problems and seeking to modify management action that could produce unwelcome employee response. Harrison (1997) argues that strategic human resource management therefore

involves a planned approach to learning aimed at changes in knowledge, skills, understanding, attitudes and values and in the behavior of leaner a learner or group of learners. The author further observes that it focuses on a series of actions directed at helping participants in the development process to increase their knowledge, skills and understanding to develop the attitudes needed to bring about the designed developmental change. From the foregoing strategic human resource development is therefore associated technical goal of providing a trained work force, promoting the knowledge and skills required by organizations to acquire greater prosperity and to achieve its goals both in the long term and short term.

According to Cohen (1993) strategic human resource development is intended to provide or build productive capabilities and encompasses aspects of awareness raising education and training attitude change, confidence building participation in the decision making and action. The critical goal being the maximization of people's potential to contribute to development by participating fully in all activities. It develops the effectiveness of the human resource which is critical for the provision of the key to competitive differentiation between firms. Meritz (2005) on the other hand argues that strategic human resource development involves the organizational mechanisms used to support the training and development of individuals, the critical goal being the maximization of people's potential to contribute to the development and achievement of organizational goals both in the short term and also the long run by actively participating fully in all activities geared towards organizational success. In order for an organization to remain relevant these activities must be monitored and reviewed from time to time.

As an organization that engages in strategic human resource development, it is expected that four training outcomes would eventually be achieved. These are; trainees reaction to the program content and training process, knowledge and skill acquisition at the end of the program (learning) behavior change in the job (behavior) and improvements in tangible individual or organizational outcomes such as turnover, accidents or

productivity(result). Strategic human resource development process should be seen as continuous exercise in structured autonomous and social learning of individuals and organizations in order to adopt abilities to the continuously emanating opportunities challenges and constrains in the market place. This exercise assists in the diagnosis of organizational performance and institutional strengths and weaknesses. It articulates and prioritizes the required capacities that need to be imparted to the individuals and institutions and it implements the support by using a variety of tools and instruments (Tregasiks et al, 2001).

2.3 **Strategic Human Resource Development Practice**

Human Resource Development is a frame work developed for helping their personal and organizational skills, knowledge and abilities The focus on all aspects of human resource development is on developing the most superior work force so that the organization and individual employees can accomplish their work goals in serving the customers. According to Harrison (1992) development is the process through which individual and organizational growth can through time achieve its fullest potential. Development practices are outlined below.

Job involvement serves to increase employee commitment to their work and to their organization in order to facilitate work force suitably. By creating an environment in which employees could have better control over their work, managers also assume that workers would become more committed to their jobs, thereby enhancing quality, safety and service Kanter (1997). There are three general categories of employee participation programs, parallel suggestion involvement, job involvement and high involvement systems. These range in scope from simple suggestion systems and improvement teams to joint goal setting and gain sharing. Employee involvement designed for various functions such as increasing employee trust and commitment in the organization, providing a forum through which employee's can express their beliefs and attitudes about

daily operations and enabling employees identify and solve problems so that they can improve their own performance.

Job enrichment practices such as those building on increased productivity or autonomy, knowledge of results, meaning full work, knowledge of how assigned tasks contribute to greater activity of the larger organization. Practices that enhance job latitude and job satisfaction have a positive impact on employee retention. According to (Gosh 2000), job enrichment constitutes of an increase in the variety of tasks performed by an employee for the purpose of reducing monotony and fully utilizing the potential skills and capabilities of the individual and allowing the worker more freedom and responsibility in the performance of his job. Such changes permit more social contacts and greater control over the work process. The purpose of job enrichment is to eliminate undesirable characteristics of highly repetitive specialized jobs and enhancing the concept of the job.

Job enlargement is a management technique used to increase the number of tasks that an employee should perform without changing the challenge. According to Brinkerhoff (2006), it involves the addition of tasks at the same level of skill and responsibility. He observes increasing of tasks that an employee can do could mean that an employee is required to perform tasks that that are not even within their divisions. For example an accountant can be required to undertake human resource duties. This has been found very useful by employees because it has been possible for staff to step in when some of their colleagues are indisposed. The technique ensures that one can perform various jobs cutting across departments. Ortega (2001) argues that when employees are used this way, the organization is able to pick the strong attributes of staff and reinforce them and also they are able to identify areas that they may need enhancement. This way human resource development programs are developed in order to address the weak areas identified.

Jacobs et al (1995) argues that on the job training focuses on the acquisition within the work environment generally under normal working conditions. Through on the job

training workers acquire both the general skills that they can transfer from one job to another and specific skills that are unique to a particular job. Rothwell et al (1994) affirms this position and further observes that on the job training has been used to develop employees and typically includes verbal and written instruction, demonstration and observation and hand on practice and imitation. In addition, on the job training process involves on employee, usually a supervisor or an experienced employee, passing knowledge and skills to novice employee. The supervisor is normally at hand to ensure the employee has mastered the techniques that he or she is being trained in. Management is able to determine areas that the employee is weak in and therefore come up with appropriate human resource development programs that would continuously improve the technical capacities of employees. Armstrong and Baron (1998) referred to this process as "sitting by Joe"

Parsole (1999) suggests coaching is the management style that requires managers to help other people unlock their potential and enhance their own performance. It is supporting people to leam instead of telling them what the answers are. Clutterbuck and Megginson, (1999) observed that the mindset of the manager-coach is to create an environment that fosters learning, independent thinking and opportunities to contribute. On the other hand, Armstrong and Braon (1998) argue that in coaching the manager-coach does not want to be seen as a solution provider. Rather they want to be seen as a facilitator paving the way for team members to achieve their career objectives. Aranjo et al (1996) also argues that coaching removes barriers and boundaries and emphasizes individual and team achievement to a common organizational goal. The coaching leadership style builds personal and team moral and fosters a partnership where employees feel like they are contributing to the successes of the organization. The authors conclude that by the end of the coaching process, the employee is better refined and can be able to perform his or her duties better and on the part of the organization, it understands employee development needs more clearly.

Jenks and Kelly (1986) suggests delegation, is the assignment of authority and responsibility to another person (normally from a manager to a subordinate) to carry out specific activities. However the person who delegates remains accountable for the outcome of the delegated work. This practice is supported by Gilardi (1998) on the ground that it empowers a subordinate to make decisions and it is therefore a shift of decision making authority from one organizational level to a lower one. When delegation is done properly it does not amount to abdication (Culp and Smith 1997). The opposite of delegation is Micromanagement where a manager provides to much input, direction and review of delegated work. In their study, Jenks and Kelly (1986) found out that in general, delegation is good and can save money and time, help in building skills, motivates people and that poor delegation on the other hand, might cause frustration and confusion to all the involved parties.

According to Slack and Lewis (2000), delegation aids in succession planning in that employees are exposed to more challenging assignments hence making them continually able to meet the ever increasing challenges in the market place. Organizations have been able to reap high performance, increased motivation, and skills development where proper delegation has been utilized. Also when employees are exposed to higher responsibilities, organizations are able to develop proper human resource development programs that will be used by the organization in future. It is a way of developing employees within the work place and thus enhances change over during the absence of managers. According to Clutterbuck and Megginson, (1999), succession planning as a strategic human resource development tool is not simply identifying people for the top leadership positions but is a strategic management process used for identifying and developing internal people with the potential to fill key leadership positions in the company. Management in this case identifies individuals who have the potential to take up more challenging jobs and come up with training and skills enhancement programs that would prepare them to assume higher responsibilities. Kessler (2000) also argues succession planning increases the availability of experienced and capable employees that

are prepared to assume those roles as they become available and concludes that succession planning also builds a pipeline of employees ready to step into various key jobs roles throughout an organization.

According to Gosh (2000), empowerment is the concept of giving people more responsibility for how they do their own job. It is concerned with more involvement in decision making. Empowerment is a process to increase efficiency and make greater use of each individual's contribution. It implies synergy, where the whole can be greater than the sum of the parts. It requires creation of a culture which both encourages people at all levels to feel they can make a difference and helps them acquire the confidence and skills to do so. Empowerment can be of three types: suggestion involvement where employees are encouraged to contribute ideas through formal suggestion programs, job involvement where jobs are redesigned so that employees use a variety of skills and high involvement where information about every aspect of the business is shared horizontally across organizations as well as up and down the structure. Autonomous work groups are another form of employee empowerment. A self managing team enlarges individual jobs to include a wider range of operative skills (multi skilling), decides on methods of work and the planning, scheduling and control of work, distributes tasks itself among its members and monitors its performance taking corrective action when required. This approach takes into account the social or group factors and the technology as well as individual motivators (Armstrong 2009).

Job rotation seeks to provide a broader view of the organization and as a result may involve inter-departmental of cross functional assignments. Use of job rotational programs is positively correlated with company size. Job rotation has the benefit of development of a generalist view and avoiding over dependence on supervisors. The strategic advantage is that such programs develop a pool of managers who have been exposed to an area of the business who can then provide management talent in the event there is an unexpected or sudden increase in the level of business in that area (Greer

1995). Role modeling is one of the best methods of developing new managers since the effective managers teach them. The role model set as a good example of how to be a manager, answers questions and explains why things are done the way they are. It is the manager's obligation to help the trainee manager make the proper contacts so that the job can be learned easily and performed well (Milkovich and Boudreau 2000). Research on the role modeling approach stresses that if trainees are to develop, the superior must delegate enough authority to let them make decisions and even mistakes. A climate for learning not only provides opportunities to learn but also encourages a feeling of mutual confidence. Appropriately chosen task forces and special assignments are often used as a form of coaching and counseling by a role model.

Mentoring is usually used for training managers and professionals according to Greer (1995). Many of the suitable skills needed to advance to the highest level positions are learnt through mentoring relationships. Aside from providing; viable role models, candid feedback instruction, insights into the company politics advice and other support. Mentors also serve in valuable capacities. Mentors are frequently in the position of sponsors who help their proteges gain visibility and responsibility. Potential benefits of mentoring include enhanced employee motivation, job performance and organizational culture. People learn what is expected of them and what is reasonable to expect from the organization. Mentors themselves also receive valuable feedback on what is happening at lower levels.

Career development refers to a formal approach used by firms to ensure to ensure that people with the proper qualification and experiences are available when needed. Career development benefits both employees as well as the organization, as properly developed employees are better equipped to add value to themselves and to the company. Organizations can device and implement several initiatives in order develop their employees careers. More significant of them are career planning workshops, career counseling, mentoring, personal development plans and career workbooks (Aswathappa

2008). Career development is an important way to utilize the vast supply of untapped human resource potential. A growing number of organizations are creating fully fledged career development programs. The most important point to remember about career development activities is that they are an ideal way to integrate the needs of employees with the goals of the organization. The person has need for challenge, job satisfaction and growth. The organization needs to tap creative potential of all its employees to a far greater extent than ever before.

2.4 Factors Influencing Strategic Human Resource Development Practice

Organizations today must grapple with revolutionary trends such as accelerating product and technological change, international competition, deregulation demographic changes and a shift towards a service society. These trends have increased dramatically the degree of competition in virtually all industries. Companies in such an environment can either become competitive high performers or varnish (Dessler, 2000). Within this competitive organizational context strategic human resource development practices have gained increased significance.

As organizations develop, they operate in increasingly interconnected world (Schuler, 2000). Training and development activities are going to support those changes in the near future and are essential to the successes of any organizational strategy. In the highly competitive global market place, the competitive advantage for companies in the quality of their human resources (Pickles et al., 1999) Holden (1997) believes that the recognition of the importance of training in recent years have been heavily influenced by the intensification of global competition and the relative success of economies like Japan, Germany and Sweden, where investment in employee development is considerable. Technological developments and organizational change have gradually led some employers to the realization that success relies on the skill and abilities of their employees translating into continuous investments in training and development. This

investment has also been underscored by the rise of human resource development with its emphasis on the importance of people and the skills they possess in enhancing organizational efficiency. Such human resource management concepts as commitment to the company and the growth in the quality movement have led senior management teams to realize the increased importance of training and development (Muhlemayer and Clarke, 1997).

According to resource dependency theory (Pferffer and Salanick 1978), human resource development is critical for the organizations existence and development. Internally, the development of various human resource management functions depends on the resource provision from the organization (Tsui, 1996) The amount of investment or budget devoted to human resource development represents the resources available for the human resource department. This is critical if the human resource department is to design or implement high quality human resource development practices. Ability and skill of organizational members are important for the successful implementation of organizational goals and strategies (Lado and Wilson 1994). As a major function the human resource system and practices are crucial in facilitating the achievement of business strategy through the management of people. Therefore it is necessary to identify the impact of personnel factors on human resource based on prominent characteristics of the human resource function. First based on the competency perspective, managerial are important organization dimensions which add value to an organization through its determination on the acquisition and arrangement of business resources, process of human resource transformation to valuable products or services as well as the value delivery process to organizational stakeholders (Wilson 2005). The capacity of human resource managers is critical in designing an internally consistent as well as compatible human resource system. Secondly human resource managers have been found to play significant roles in business strategic making process (Dutton and Ashford 1993).

Managers and human resource specialists must work in partnerships to ensure the communication policies and procedures bolster employee relations, since to develop and sustain employee relations employees must keep employees informed of company policies and strategies (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2001). To foster good employee relations managers must listen to and understand what employees are saying and experiencing and provide employees with freedom of expression about management decision. (Ivanacevich, 2001). Likewise empowerment is another important part of human resource development. In essence, the process of empowerment entails providing workers with the sills and authority to make decisions that would traditionally be made by managers (Ivanacevich, 2001).

According to the competency based perspective, organizational competencies can be employed as potential sources of competitive advantage. As an important type of organizational competencies, managerial competencies refer to the ability of strategic leaders to create and enact the strategic vision of an organization, (Lado and Wilson 1994). The support of top managers for the human resource function to adopt a series of internally compatible human resource practices that impact on the fit of human resource system its self and the human resource system with the firms strategy. Prior research evidence (Tsui 1990) also indicates that top executives are one of the most important constituents on human resource management and the priorities of top management have significant influences on human resource policies and practices (Kane and Palmer 1995)

The nature of strategy that a firm adopts has unique implications on diverse human resource practices and will influence the achievement of vertical fit (Huselid, Jackson and Schuler 1997) Human resource practices are designed and arranged to reinforce functional implications of the various generic strategies (Porter, 1985). A Study undertaken by Martell, Gupta and Caroll (1996) demonstrated the effects of different human resource practices and business strategy on firm performance. Specifically, these researchers found that training and development has higher positive effects for firms

adopting a cost leadership strategy than with differentiation strategy. The authors of this investigation attribute the ineffectiveness of training and development to a higher extent of creativity and flexibility needed, which is not likely to be learned through pre-defined training.

Organizational values and culture shape the human resource management practices (Bowen and Ansorff, 2004). The influence of values and culture is mainly reflected on how quickly or how good the strategy can be merged into the designing of human resource management practices that are compatible with the strategy. Development of a strategy compatible human resource management practice is affected by corporate values and culture, partly because the human resource management system takes on an advisory role in the management structure of a firm. If the contribution of the human resource function is deemed as minor or unimportant, it is difficult to induce the efforts of the human resource managers to design a series of human resource practices according to corporate strategy. Even if the human resource department is self motivated to provide a set of strategy compatible human resource arrangements, the adaptation and implementation of these human resource activities may become problematic due to lack of enough support from top level managers who are representatives of the values and unique culture of a firm (Wei and Lau 2005).

Other factors that affect strategic human resource development practice include the integration with organizational missions and goals where human resource development is systematically integrated with wider business planning in a supporting role so that sight is not lost of organizational strategic objectives when developing human resource development interventions. The existence of complementary human resource management activities that cover such areas as improving of human resource planning, recruiting higher-caliber employees, more exacting performance appraisal and identification of human resource development needs, and individually and organizationally focused career development plans. In addition the expanded trainer role

where to support a strategic orientation human resource development specialists need to develop their roles to become more proactive, interventionist, central and influential. This is likely to be embodied in the movement from training provider to a consultant, innovator role (Garavan 1991).

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

A descriptive research design was used. This design is appropriate because of the need to collect data across many respondents at one point in time.

3.2 Population of study

The targeted group for the study constituted top management, middle level management and supervisory management employees. This group had a population of 225 employees where 50.2% (113) employees are based in Head Office, while the rest are scattered in its regional offices and depots. The choice of this population was based on the fact that strategic human resource development practiccs arc targeted at the employees in management level. The composition of management in theses job groups is presented in table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Distribution of respondents by management level

MANAGEMENT LEVEL	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE
Supervisory Management (J AND K)	143	65.1
Middle level Management (L AND M)	51	22.4
Top Management (N AND **P)**	31	12.5
Total	**225**	**100**

Source: Authorf 2012)

3.3 Sample Design

A stratified sampling technique was used whereby 30% of the 225 employee's in top management, middle level management and supervisory management were divided into strata or non-overlapping sub-population based on departments as shown in table 3.2. After stratification the sample was selected randomly as follows: -

Table 3.2:   Computation of Sample

DEPARTMENT	TOTAL POPULATION	PROPORTION (30%)	SAMPLE SIZE
Finance	30	0.3	9
Human Resources	21	0.3	6
Administration	19	0.3	6
ICT	9	0.3	3
Operations	**77**	0.3	23
Quality Control	9	0.3	3
Technical	14	0.3	4
Procurement and R&D	9	0.3	3
Audit	**11**	0.3	3
Public Relations & Legal	9	0.3	3
Sales and Marketing	**17**	0.3	**5**
Sub-Total	**225**	**0.3**	**68**

Source: Author (2012)

3.4 Data Collection

The researcher collected data for the study using primary sources. Primary data was obtained using a self administered semi structured questionnaire. Closed ended questions were used to guide the respondents and facilitate analysis. Open ended questions were also used in the in the data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three parts. Part A was used to capture the demographics of the respondents, part B was used to capture human resource development practises, while part C was used to collect data on the factors

influencing strategic human resource development practices at NCPB. The questionnaire was self administered using a drop and pick method for respondents based in head office while for the respondents in the regional offices the questionnaire was distributed through internal courier system.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data was obtained from both the closed and open ended items in the research instrument. Before analysis, the questionnaires were checked for accuracy, uniformity, completeness and consistency. The edited data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Specifically the researcher used means and percentages to analyze the data. Results were presented in tables which provided a pictorial view of the outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Demographic Information

Sixty eight (68) questionnaires were given to the respondents, out of which 64 were returned, representing a response rate of 94.1%. The response was considered adequate to make valid conclusions on the perceived factors influencing strategic human resource development practices at the National Cereals and Produce Board

4.1.1 Response rate

Table 4.1 Analysis of Response rate by department

DEPARTMENT	TARGET POPULATION	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Administration	6	6	100
Audit	3	3	100
Finance	9	8	88.9
Human Resources	6	5	83.3
ICT	3	3	100
Operations	23	22	95.7
Procurement and R&D	3	3	100
Public Relations & Legal	3	3	100
Quality Control	3	3	100
Sales and Marketing	5	4	80
Technical	4	4	100
Sub-Total	**68**	**64**	**94.1**

Source Author (2012)

As shown in table 4.1, data was collected data from different departments, with administration, audit, quality control, 1CT, and technical departments recording 100% response. Sales and marketing department recorded the lowest response rate recording a score of 80%

4.1.2 Response by Management level

Table 4.2 Analysis of Response rate by Management level

MANAGEMENT LEVEL	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
Supervisory Management (J AND K)	46	71.9
Middle level Management (L AND M)	10	15.6
Top Management (N AND P)	8	12.5
Total	64	**100**

Source Author (2012)

According to the findings in table 4.2, majority of the respondents were at the supervisory management level, representing 71.9% followed by 15.6% of the respondents in middle level management and 12.5% in top management .Thus each level of management was adequately represented.

4.1.3 Level of education

Table 4.3 Distribution of scores by Level of education

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE
High school certificate	0	0
College certificate	4	6.3
Diploma certificate	12	18.8
Bachelors Degree certificate and above	48	75
Total	64	**100**

Source Author (2012)

Majority (75%) of the respondents had Bachelors Degree certificate and above, followed by 18.8% of the respondents with diploma certificates and 6.3 with college certificates. None of the respondents had only a high school certificate as shown in table 4.3. These results imply that the respondents were able to understand the contents of the questionnaire.

4.1.4 Gender Distribution

Table 4.4 Distribution of Responses by Gender

GENDER	RESPONSE	PERCENTAGE OF RESPONSES
Male	40	62.5
Female	24	37.5
Total	64	100

Source Author (2012)

As indicated in table 4.4, it was found that 62.5% of the respondents were male while 37.5% were female.

4.1.5 Length of service

An individual's knowledge about the employer depends on the number of years he or she has been in the organization.

Table 4.5 Distribution of Respondents by Length of Service

NO OF YEARS WORKED	NO OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Less than one year	4	6.3
One to Five Years	22	34.4
Six to ten Years	13	20.3
More than Ten Years	25	39.1
Total	**64**	**100**

Source Author (2012)

From the findings in table 4.5, majority of the respondents representing 39.1%, had served the board for more than ten years followed by employees that have served the board for one to five years with 34.4%, 20.3% had been in the board for six to ten years, while 6.3 % had served the board for less than one year. These results suggests that majority of the respondents had been with the board long enough to know the factors influencing strategic human resource development practice in the organization.

4.2 Human Resource Development Practices

On a five point Likert scale, the respondents were asked to rate the frequency with which the Board undertook generally accepted human resource development activities. The results are presented in table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Average Ratings on the frequency in which NCPB uses human resource Development Practices

Seq	Human Resource Development Practice	Mean Rating
a)	On the job training	3.3
b)	Job rotation	2.2
c)	Job enlargement	2.5
d)	Job enrichment Programs	2.7
e)	Career Development	3.0
f)	Mentoring	2.4
g)	Coaching	2.5
h)	**Peer** Consultations by employees	2.6
i)	Delegation	2.9
j)	Employee empowerment	2.6
k)	Succession Planning	2.2

Source author (2012)

From the findings in table 4.6, on the job training recorded the highest mean rating of 3.3 followed by career development 3.0 indicating that both the practices were used to a large extent. Delegation, Job enrichment Programs, Peer Consultations by employees and Employee empowerment human resource development practices were fund to be used to a moderate extent recording average ratings ranging from 2.9 to 2.6. Job enlargement, Coaching Mentoring, Job rotation and Succession Planning human resource development practices were fund to be used to a low extent recording average ratings ranging from 2.5 to 2.2.

4.3 Strategic Human Resource Development

Table 4.7 Average Ratings on attributes of Strategic Human Resource Development

Seq	Strategic Human Resource Development	Average Rating
a)	The Board is facing the challenge of how to develop and manage its employees strategically in order to achieve more with less and make optimum use of their potential	3.6
b)	The board has a strategic and coherent approach to management of its most valued assets namely the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objective for sustainable competitive advantage	2.8
c)	The Board identifies each person's skills, motivates them to use those skills and places the appropriate individuals to key positions to have a great impact on the boards efficiency	2.2
d)	The Board has a well established overall direction and objectives on key areas of human resource development in order to ensure that they are not only consistent with but also support the achievement of business goals.	3.1
e)	The Board's performance is as a result of its human resource development practices that contributes to employees efficiency, commitment and potential	2.9
f)	The Board has developed and implemented detailed procedures and systems which reflect its strategic framework in human resource development	3.0
Overall Mean Rating		**2.9**

Source author (2012)

According to the average ratings for different questions on strategic human resource development employees respondents were found to be to agree that The Board is facing the challenge of how to develop and manage its employees with an average rating of 3.6 followed the Board has a well established overall direction and objectives on key areas of human resource development in order to ensure that they are not only consistent with but also support the achievement of business goals with an average rating of 3.1 and the

Board having developed and implemented detailed procedures and systems which reflect its strategic framework in human resource development with a mean rating of 3.0. However the respondents did not agree that The Board identified each person's skills motivated them to use those skills and places the appropriate individuals to key positions to have a great impact on the board's efficiency which recorded a mean rating of 2.2

4.4 Identifying Strategic Human Resource Development Needs

The researcher asked the respondents to rate frequency of the methods used by the board to identify strategic human resource development needs

Table 4.8 Methods used to Identify Strategic Human Resource Development Needs

Seq	Method of Identifying	Responses	Percentage
a)	Through appraisal and performance reviews	63	98.4
b)	Using Psychological tests	3	4.7
c)	Through informal identification	13	20.3
d)	By use of panel or group interviews	14	21.9
e)	By use of assessment centers	1	1.6
0	Through assignments and special responsibilities	13	20.3

Source Author (2012)

From the findings in table 4.8, majority of the respondents reported that the board identified strategic human resource development needs mostly through appraisal and performance reviews representing 98.4% of the respondents followed by, use of panel or group interviews representing 21.9%, and assignments and special responsibilities and informal identification representing both representing 20.3%. The use of assessment centers was the method that was used less often in the identifying strategic human resource development needs at 1.6% followed by psychological tests which only accounted for 4.7% of the respondent's views.

4.5 Factors Influencing Strategic Human Resource Development

Table 4.9 Average Ratings on Factors influencing strategic human resource Development Practice

Seq	Factors influencing strategic human resource Development Practice	Average Rating
a)	Top management actively supports and participates in the strategic integration of human resource development practices	2.8
b)	Line managers are committed and involved in identifying and addressing the human resource development needs of subordinates.	2.6
c)	Human resource development plans and policies support wider business needs.	3.1
d)	The human resource development function develops its activities in line not only with organizational strategy but also with organization culture.	2.8
e)	Human resource development is systematically integrated with wider business planning in a supporting role.	3.1
0	Human resource development function has the capacity to continuous analyze external environment in order to identify both opportunities and threats to business and human resource development strategies and thereby reinforce access to top table planning discussions.	2.8
g)	The Board provides sufficient investment or budgets for human resource development activities.	2.8
h)	Majority of employees are involved in formal work teams or other related work related problem solving activities	2.8
i)	Line managers regularly meet employees to discuss issues of concern, including issues concerning performance and quality	2.5
j)	Human resource development function evaluates its activities so that its strategic contribution and relevance can be assessed.	2.9

Source author (2012)

According to the average ratings on the extent various factors influenced strategic human resource development practices at the National Cereals and Produce Board as presented in table 4.9 respondents were of the view that integration of human resource development and the support of human resource development plans and policies to wider business needs were factors that influenced strategic human resource development practices to a large extent with mean rate of 3.1. Other factors that influenced the use of a factor to a large extent included evaluation of human resource development activities so that its strategic contribution and relevance can be assessed, top management support, human resource development function developing activities that are in line with organizational strategy and organization culture, the capacity to continuously analyze external environment to identify both opportunities and threats to business and human resource development strategies, provision of sufficient investment or budgets for human resource development activities and involvement in formal work teams or other related work related problem solving activities all recording average ratings ranging between 2.9 and 2.8. Regularly meeting employees to discuss issues of concern and line manager commitment are the factors that influenced strategic human resource development practices to a low extent with average ratings of 2.6 and 2.5 respectively.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary'of Findings

The board is concerned with how to develop its Human Resource and align it to support the wider business objectives. The Board has been using various Human Resource development practices in attempt to equip its employees with the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them handle their current and future job needs. This has been mainly through on the job training and career development that have been used to a large extent while Delegation, Job enrichment Programs, Peer Consultations by employees and Employee empowerment human resource development practices were fund to be used to a moderate extent. However Job enlargement, Coaching, Mentoring, Job rotation and Succession Planning human resource development practices were fund to be used to a low extent. The board's management should put in place programs to ensure that human resource development practices that are used to a low extent are incorporated to support human resource development activities at the board.

The board's management believes that having a strategic human resource development practices plays a very big role in the achievement of the boards strategic objectives through providing employees with up to date expertise to meet present and future performance demands. It assumes a valid role in shaping strategy and enabling the board to take full advantage of the emergent business opportunities. However respondents were found to agree that the Board is facing the challenge of how to develop and manage its employees, as well as having well established overall direction and objectives on key areas of human resource development in order to ensure that they are not only consistent with but also support the achievement of business goals. Additionally it was found that the Board did not have detailed procedures and systems which reflect its strategic framework in human resource development developed and implementation structure. However the respondents on the other hand did not agree that Board identified each

person's skills motivated them to use those skills and places the appropriate individuals to key positions to have a great impact on the board's efficiency.

Despite having programs to support and sustain human resource development practices, the boards finds various challenges in their implementation due to the factors influencing strategic human resource development practices to which includes integration of human resource development and the support of human resource development plans and policies to wider business needs. Other factors included the evaluation of human resource development activities so that its strategic contribution and relevance can be assessed, lack top management support, human resource development function failing to a line its activities with the organization strategy and culture, the capacity to continuously analyze external environment to identify both opportunities and threats to business and human resource development strategies, provision of sufficient investment or budgets for human resource development activities and involvement in formal work teams or other related work related problem solving activities all recording average ratings ranging between

5.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

The board has undertaken a variety of strategic human resource development practices in a way that is consistent with modern human resource practices. However, the board should diversify some of the human resource development practices such as Job enlargement, Coaching, Mentoring and Job rotation that were found to be used to a low extent, this will aid in Succession Planning and help n the development of personal career development plans. In today's dynamic world the management should ensure that staff are well trained and equipped to deal with challenges brought by the changing environment. In this age of a uncertain dynamic and rapid changes in the political, economical, social and technological environments organizations must regularly examine how and where they fit and what interventions or adjustments need to be undertaken to

transformed into a competitive advantage. This can only be achieved if organization considers the staff as an investment which will bring back good returns to the business. By having a strategic human resource development plan in place the board, will be able to develop their staff and keep them up to date so that they are able to handle the market changes, increase innovation and develop new ideas. There is a tendency to consider strategic human resource development as a standalone process with no ties to other links of the total development systems such as career development, selection procedures, and performance and reward systems. The role of strategic human resource development plays an important role in supporting the achievements of the overall business goals. Linking strategic human resource development activities with other activities would put human resource development in perspective and give employees the incentive to learn, practice and pass on to others what they have learned through mentoring, coaching and other human resource development practices.

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research is necessary to establish on the various ways of measuring the return on investments on strategic human resource development practices and establish specific links to improved organization performance and competitiveness as well as ways m which organizations can mitigate on the various factors influencing **strategic** human resource development practices.

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APPENDIX I COVER LETTER

Charles Nzyoki Kisilu

School of Business, University of Nairobi

P.O BOX 28645 00200, Nairobi

May, 2012

Dear Respondent,

RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PORPOSAL DATA

1 am a postgraduate student at the University of Nairobi, School of Business. I am carrying out research on "*Perceived Factors Influencing Strategic Human Resource Development at the National Cereals and Produce Board".* This is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Masters in Business Administration (Human Resource Management) Degree program at the University of Nairobi.

This study uses National Cereals and Produce Board as a case study. The success of this research substantially depends on your help and co-operation.

The information which will be forthcoming will be treated with utmost confidentiality and at no time will the content or identity of the informant be revealed. Please complete the attached questionnaire and give any relevant information that you may feel is relevant to the study.

Thank you in advance,

Yours sincerely,

Charles N. Kisilu   Prof Peter K'obonyo
(Student)   **(Supervisor)**

APPENDIX 11   QUESTIONNAIRE

PERCEIVED FACTORS INFLUENCING STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE AT THE NATIONAL CEREALS AND PRODUCE BOARD

Part A. Demographic Information

Please tick where applicable

l.Sex

a) Male   Q   b) Female [_

2. Age

a) 18 - 25 years   [J   c) 36 - 45 years   Q

b) 26 - 35 years   •   d) 46 years and abovedl

3	Level of Education	
a)	High school	
b)	College certificate	
c)	Diploma certificate	
d)	Bachelors Degree certificate and above	
e)	Others specify	

4.   Length of service in the organization

a) Less than one year Q   c) 6 to 10 years

b) One to 5 years   Q   d) More than 10 years

5	Management Level	
a)	Supervisory Management (J-K)	
b)	Middle level Management (L-M)	
c)	Top Management (N-P)	

6.   Department you work in:

Part B Human Resource Development Practice

7. Rate the frequency with which NCPB applies the following Human Resource Development   Practices

l=No extent; 2=Less extent; 3=Moderate extent; 4=Large Extent; 5=Very large extent;

Human Resource Development Practice		1	2	3	4	5
a)	On the job training					
b)	Job rotation					
c)	Job enlargement					
d)	Job enrichment Programs					
e)	Career Development					
0	Mentoring					
g)	Coaching					
h)	Peer Consultations by employees					
i)	Delegation					
j)	Employee empowerment					
k)	Succession Planning					
	Others Specify					

Where the response to the above is to "No extent" or "Less extent" Pleases explain briefly and give reasons,

(i) Why is this the case

(ii) What would you recommend

8. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following attributes on strategic

human resource development

On a scale of 1-5 where:

1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Don't agree; 3=Neither Agree Nor Disagree; 4=Agree;

5=Strongly Agree;

Statement		Rating
		[1] [2] [3] (4) (5)
a)	The Board is facing the challenge of how to develop and manage its employees strategically in order to achieve more with less and make optimum use of their potential	[) [] () [) (]
b)	The board has a strategic and coherent approach to management of its most valued assets namely the people working there who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objective for sustainable competitive advantage	() [ ) (5 [ ] ( )
c)	The Board identifies each person's skills, motivates them to use those skills and places the appropriate individuals to key positions to have a great impact on the boards efficiency	U U (1 O [J
d)	The Board has a well established overall direction and objectives on key areas of human resource development in order to ensure that they are not only consistent with but also support the achievement of business izoals.	C 3 CD () ( ] U
e)	The Board's performance is as a result of its human resource development practices that contributes to employees efficiency, commitment and potential	( ] U (J M ( )
f)	The Board has developed and implemented detailed procedures and systems which reflect its strategic framework in human resource development	[ ) U (J I J [J
	lathers, specify	L U U M n U L

9. How dose the organization currently identify strategic human resource development needs (please tick where applicable)

a)	Through appraisal and performance reviews	
b)	Using Psychological tests	
c)	Through informal identification	
d)	By use of panel or group interviews	
e)	By use of assessment centers	
0	Through assignments and special responsibilities	
g)	Others, specify	

10. Dose the Board's strategic plan have a strategy for the development of staff in the organization? Please tick as appropriate.

Yes   •

No.   •

Part C Factors influencing strategic human resource development

10. To what extent have the following factors influenced strategic human resource development at the National Cereals and Produce Board.

Use the following Scale **1= Very low extent; 2= Low extent; 3= No effect; 4= High extent; 5= Very high extent;**

Factors influencing strategic human resource Development Practice	1	2	3	4	5
a)	Top management actively supports and participates in the strategic integration of human resource development practices					
b)	Line managers are committed and involved in identifying and addressing the human resource development needs of subordinates.					
c)	Human resource development plans and policies support wider business needs.					

Factors influencing strategic human resource Development Practice	1	2	3	4	5
d) The human resource development function develops its activities in line not only with organizational strategy but also with organization culture.					
e> 1 luman resource development is systematically integrated with wider business planning in a supporting role.					
0 Human resource development function has the capacity to continuous analyze external environment in order to identify both opportunities and threats to business and human resource development strategies and thereby reinforce access to top table planning discussions.					
g) The Board provides sufficient investment or budgets for human resource development activities.					
h) Majority of employees are involved in formal work teams or other related work related problem solving activities					
i) Line managers regularly meet employees to discuss issues of concern, including issues concerning performance and quality					
j) Human resource development function evaluates its activities so that its strategic contribution and relevance can be assessed.					
k) Others Specify					

Thank you