

**A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS  
IN SELECTED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

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## **DECLARATION**

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## ABSTRACT

Human Resource Management (HRM) systems are a critical component of every organisation and encompass models, practices, orientations and other key elements, which impact on the efficiency and relevance of the services and other related outputs provided to users. The associated successes and failures of HRM systems ultimately have a significant organisational impact.

This exploratory work sought to ascertain the impact of Human Resource (HR) models, HR competencies, and transformative leadership, on employee performance, satisfaction and perception. Further, an analysis of the competencies required of HR practitioners were identified. This study and its findings are intended to assist HR departments in their consideration of the need for transformational leadership and improvement of HR models and competencies, relevant to the requirements of the higher education (HE) sector. HRM systems in higher education in South Africa are facing challenges. To meet the dynamic needs of contemporary organisations, a critical review of current practices and models are required.

The principal aim of this study was to examine the HRM systems used in higher education institutions in South Africa. In addition, transformative leadership models and competencies within the HE sector in South Africa were explored. The focus of this study is on how these aspects advance the social justice agenda of the country and that of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

A case study approach by way of a comparative study of HRM systems in two universities in the Eastern Cape of South Africa was undertaken. A mixed method approach was utilised in this study. The first phase involved in-depth qualitative data collection. This was followed by a quantitative data collection process.

The results of the study indicate the need for a relevant, localised HRM Model which meets the needs of South African universities and other sectors in South Africa. The current HRM curricula used for the training of HR practitioners needs are to be reviewed to ensure relevant content is covered in preparing graduates for the workplace. Further, institutional executive general management and HRM capability

require attention and a renewed focus on HRM development and capacity building are required. The capability of the executive management of universities was found to be a key factor in the advancement of transformational change. In addition, the need for localised HRM research with specific emphasis on HR practice and effectiveness as well as the location of HRM within the South African legislative milieu emerged as a critical factor. Finally, the institutional positioning of HR needs to be addressed in terms of structural alignment and decision-making capability.

The recommendations propose that the South African Regulatory Value Aligned (SARVA) HRM Model be used in the South African context; as it considers the extraneous variables and factors that can meaningfully lead to effective HR practices. It is envisaged that the model will act as the nexus between the organisation, its strategy, outcomes, values in alignment with the provisions of the ILO, the country's legislative framework and stakeholder requirements.

The development of the SARVA HRM Model which can be used across different sectors and industries both in South Africa and within the Southern African Development Community region, is a key contribution emanating from the study. The model may be utilised in a global context as it proposes the prescripts of the ILO and the legislative framework on a country-basis as well as institutional values, which together with identified HRM functions, provide a cohesive modality for HR practices within organisations.

## ABSTRAK (OORSIG)

Menslike Hulpbron Bestuur (MHB) stelsels is 'n kern komponent van elke organisasie en omsluit modelle, praktyke, uitgangspunte en ander hoofaspekte, wat 'n invloed het op die effektiwiteit en relevansie van dienslewering en uitsette wat aan verbruikers gelewer word. Die gepaardgaande suksesfaktore asook onvermoë van MHB stelsels het uiteindelik 'n masiewe impak op die organisasie.

Die eksperimentele werk wat onderneem is, het ten doel om die impak van Menslike Hulpbron (MH) modelle, MH vaardighede en transformerende leierskap op die prestasies, tevredenheid en persepsies van personeel vas te stel. Ondermeer, is 'n ontleding gedoen om die bekwaamhede van MH praktisyns te identifiseer. Die studie en bevindings het verder ten doel om MH departemente van hulp te wees met die oorweging van transformerende leierskap en die verbetering van MH modelle en vaardighede, relatief tot die vereistes in die hoër onderwys (HO) sektor. Suid-Afrika ervaar uitdagings met betrekking tot MHB stelsels in hoër onderwys. Om die onmiddellike behoeftes van bestaande organisasies aan te spreek, word 'n hersiening van huidige praktyke en modelle vereis.

Die primêre doel van die studie was om ondersoek in te stel na die MHB stelsels wat in hoër onderwys instansies in Suid-Afrika gebruik word. Bykomend, is transformerende leierskap modelle en vaardighede binne die HO sektor in Suid Afrika ondersoek. Die fokus van die studie is om te bepaal hoe hierdie aspekte die sosiale geregtigheid agenda van die land en "the International Labour Organisation (ILO)" kan bevorder.

'n Gevalle studie benadering by wyse van 'n vergelykende studie van MHB stelsels is onderneem by twee universiteite in die Oos-Kaap van Suid-Afrika. 'n Gemengde metodiese benadering is gevolg in die studie. Die eerste fase het 'n benadering van in-diepte kwalitatiewe data versameling behels. Dit is opgevolg deur middel van 'n kwantitatiewe data versameling proses.

Die resultate van die studie het aangedui dat daar 'n behoefte is vir 'n relevante, plaaslike MHB Model wat die behoeftes kan aanspreek van Suid-Afrikaanse

universiteite en ander sektore in Suid-Afrika. Die huidige curriculum wat toegepas word vir die opleiding van MH praktisyns het hersiening nodig om te verseker dat die inhoud relevant is om gradueerdes voor te berei vir die werkplek. Bykomend, uitvoerende bestuurder in die algemeen en MHB kapasiteit vereis aandag en 'n henuwe fokus op MHB ontwikkeling en uitbreiding van kapasiteit. Die kapasiteit van uitvoerende bestuur van universiteite is die sleutel aspek vir die bevordering van verandering en transformasie. Ondermeer, die studie het 'n behoefte opgelewer vir MHB navorsing met spesifieke fokus op MH praktyk en effektiwiteit, asook die posisionering van MHB binne die milieu van Suid-Afrikaanse wetgewing. Dit is geïdentifiseer as 'n kardinale aspek. Ten slotte, die posisionering van MH moet aangespreek word in terme van strukturele integrasie en om kapasiteit te skep vir besluitneming.

Die aanbevelings versoek dat die regulerings instansie, "the South African Regulatory Value Aligned (SARVA)" die MHB Model aanwend in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks; waar dit oorweging kan gee aan veranderlike faktore wat kan lei tot effektiewe MH praktyke. Die verwagting is dat die model sal dien as 'n skakel tussen die organisasie, die strategie, uitkomst, waardes in terme van integrasie met die vereistes van die ILO, the land se wetgewende raamwerk asook die behoeftes van individuele rolspelers.

'n Oorsprong van hierdie studie is die ontwikkeling van die "SARVA" MHB Model. Dit lewer 'n sleutel bydrae, wat gebruik kan word oor verskillende sektore en industrieë in Suid-Afrika en binne die Suider-Afrika Ontwikkelings Gemeenskap streek. Die model kan aangewend word in 'n globale konteks vanweë die feit dat dit voldoen aan die voorskrifte van die ILO en wetgewende raamwerk op 'n nasionale basis. Die organisatoriese waardes tesame met geïdentifiseerde MHB funksies verskaf 'n platform vir geïntegreerde MH praktyke in organisasies.



## LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Overview of HRM Development .....	29
Table 2.2: Adapted from Aikenar (2014) The Schools' Approaches of HRM.....	51
Table 2.3: Adapted from Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2013:14) .....	54
Table 2.4: Professional Registration.....	58
Table 3.1: Racial Classification of Universities Pre-1994 .....	84
Table 3.2: South African University Classification System .....	87
Table 4.1: Focus Group Questions and Research Objective Alignment .....	133
Table 5.1: Age Profile of Respondents.....	143
Table 5.2: Number of Years Working at the Institution .....	143
Table 5.3: Occupational Category of Respondents .....	144
Table 5.4: Rating in Terms of Overall Compliance .....	152
Table 5.5: Compliance as a Priority .....	157
Table 5.6: Complexity of HR .....	173
Table 5.7: Level of Trust in the HR Department in Making Decisions Based on Policy and Law.....	179
Table 5.8: Evaluation of the HR Departments' Model and Systems.....	183
Table 5.9: Rating the Level of Institutional Trust in Respondent's Organisations...	188
Table 5.10: The Leadership Built a Coalition that Will Pave the Way for Change ..	190
Table 5.11: Efforts to Remove Obstacles Impeding a New Vision for Change.....	194

Table 5.12: Awareness of an Effort to Create a Vision and Strategic Plan to Guide the Change Process.....	198
Table 6.1: Attributes Pertaining to the Qualitative Research Sample .....	203
Table 6.2: Summary of Research Objective and Correlation of Questions .....	204

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Concept of knowledge management: Adapted from Lapina, Maurane and Starineca, 2014 .....	30
Figure 2.2: SABPP HR Competency Model (SABPP, 2013).....	62
Figure 3.1: Structural Hr Considerations (Source: Shrm:2017).....	90
Figure 3.2: Transformative Leadership Model (Source: Shields, 2010).....	104
Figure 4.1: History of the Development of Mixed Methods Research (Adapted from Cameron 2015) .....	117
Figure 4.2: Methodological Choice-Adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012).....	119
Figure 4.3: Knowledge Claims, Strategies of Inquiry, and Methods Leading to Approaches and the Design Process .....	120
Figure 4.4: The role of HR within an Institutional Setting (Society for Human Resources Management) .....	126
Figure 4.5: RU HR Management Structure .....	127
Figure 4.6: Governance Structure for the HR Department .....	128
Figure 4.7: NMU HR Management Structure .....	129
Figure 4.8: NMU Governance Structure for the HR Department .....	129
Figure 5.1: Evaluating the Importance of an HR Model.....	146
Figure 5.2: Importance of an HR Plan .....	159
Figure 5.3: Frequency of Developing an HR Plan .....	161
Figure 5.4: Monitoring of HR Plan .....	162

Figure 5.5: Importance of HR Practitioners' Currency on Changes to Legislation..	166
Figure 5.6: The Importance of Effective HR Practices in Your Institution .....	177
Figure 5.7: Rating of HR Departments Understanding of Stakeholder Needs.....	186
Figure 5.8: Has Leadership Communicated the Urgency of the Need for Change? .....	193
Figure 5.9: The Existence of a Vision and Strategic Plan to Guide the Change Process .....	196
Figure 7.1: The South African Regulatory Value Aligned HRM Model .....	282

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCEA	Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997 (as amended)
CCMA	Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CHE	Council for Higher Education
COIDA	Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act No 130 of 1993
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EC	Eastern Cape
EE	Employment Equity
EEA	Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998 (as amended)
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
ESA	Employment Services Act
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HR	Human Resource(s)
HRM	Human Resource Management
IPM	Institute of Personnel Management
IA	Immigration Act No 13 of 2002
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IT	Information Technology
KPA	Key Performance Area
LRA	Labour Relations Act No 66 Of 1995 (as amended)
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NEDLAC	National Economic Development and Labour Council
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
OD	Organisational Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic, Co-operation and Development
OHSACT	Occupational Health and Safety Act No 85 of 1993
PQM	Programme Qualification Mix
PWC	Price Waterhouse Coopers
RU	Rhodes University
SABPP	South African Board for Personnel Practice

SADC	Southern African Development Community
SARA	South African Rewards Association
SARVA	South African Regulatory Value Aligned
SAPA	South African Payroll Association
SAPSE	South African Post-Secondary Education
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDA	Skills Development Act No 97 of 1998
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
UIF	Unemployment Insurance Fund No 32 of 2003
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USAF	Universities South Africa

## CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
ABSTRACT .....	v
ABSTRAK (OORSIG).....	vii
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xiii
CONTENTS .....	xv
CHAPTER ONE .....	1
Introduction and Background to the Study .....	1
1.1 Introduction .....	1
1.1.1 HR Systems.....	2
1.1.2 Social Justice: Humanising HRM Practice .....	3
1.2. Background .....	3
1.3 Research Focus.....	4
1.3.1 Research Problem .....	5
1.3.2 Research Aim .....	5
1.3.3 Research Objectives.....	6
1.3.4 Research Questions.....	6
1.3.5 Proposition.....	7
1.3.6 Delimitation of the Study.....	7
1.4 Research Methodology.....	7

1.4.1 Quantitative Research.....	8
1.4.2 Qualitative Research .....	8
<b>1.4.2.1 Quantitative data collection</b> .....	8
1.4.3 Data Collection Methods .....	9
1.4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups.....	9
1.4.3.2 Questionnaire .....	9
1.4.3.3 Contextual Document Analysis .....	10
1.4.4 Data Analysis.....	10
1.4.5 Ethical Undertakings .....	11
1.5 Merit of the Research and its Proposed Contribution.....	12
1.6 The Conceptual Framework, Theoretical Framework and Literature Review .....	12
1.6.1 Grounded Theory: A conceptual framework and the Theoretical Framework .....	12
1.7 Literature Review .....	13
1.7.1 HR Models.....	13
1.7.2 The University and its Key Role in Society .....	15
1.7.3 The HR Function and Challenges in Higher Education .....	16
1.7.4 HR Professionalism .....	19
1.7.5 Transformative Leadership .....	19
1.8. Research Protocol .....	21
1.9 Summary .....	22
<b>CHAPTER TWO.....</b>	<b>23</b>
Theoretical Framework of HR Management .....	23
2.1 Overview and Presentation of the Literature Review .....	23



2.2 An Overview of Human Resources Management .....	23
2.2.1 The Development of HRM .....	26
2.3 Strategic HRM .....	31
2.3.1 Locating HR in a Global Context.....	32
2.3.2 Comparative HRM Approaches.....	33
2.3.2.1. HRM in Europe .....	34
2.3.2.2 HRM in the USA.....	35
2.3.2.3 HRM in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region: Special Emphasis on South Africa .....	36
2.3.2.4 HRM in South Africa .....	39
2.4 An Overview of HR Models .....	41
2.4.1 HRM Model Typologies: Hard and Soft Approaches.....	42
2.4.2 Common HR Models .....	45
2.4.2.1 Job Demands Resources Model .....	45
2.4.2.2 Ulrich Model.....	45
2.4.2.3 Value-added Roles Model .....	46
2.4.2.4 Harvard Model .....	47
2.4.2.5 Guest Model.....	48
2.4.2.6 The Michigan Model .....	49
2.4.2.7 Normative Model .....	50
2.5 HR Competencies, Qualifications, Professional Membership and Ethics .....	51
2.5.1 HR Competencies.....	51

2.5.2 HR Qualifications.....	55
2.5.3 Professional Membership Bodies .....	56
2.5.3.1 Institute for People Management .....	56
2.5.3.2 South African Board for Personnel Practice .....	57
2.5.3.3 Industrial Relations Association of South Africa .....	57
2.5.3.4 South African Rewards Association .....	57
2.5.3.5 South African Payroll Association .....	58
2.5.3.6 HR Ethics .....	59
2.6 The Impact of HRM Advancements on SA HRM .....	61
2.6.1 SABPP HR Standards .....	61
2.7 Conclusion.....	63
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>65</b>
HR Management in the Higher Education Sector.....	65
3.1 Introduction .....	65
3.2 Factors Impacting on Social Justice Imperatives in Universities.....	65
3.3 Re-visioning HR in the HE Sector.....	66
3.4 Demands on HR in the HE Sector.....	68
3.5 The International Framework with Regard to Social Justice .....	69
3.5.1 The Decent Work Agenda, SA Constitution and Social Justice .....	70
3.5.2 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 .....	72
3.5.3 The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA as amended).....	72
3.5.4 The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA) .....	73
3.5.5 The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA) .....	74

3.5.6 The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (SDA).....	75
3.5.7 Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Disease Act (COIDA) 130 of 1993 as amended by the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 61 of 1997 .....	76
3.5.8 The Employment Services Act, No 4 of 2014 (ESA).....	77
3.5.9 Unemployment Insurance Act 63 of 2001 as amended by the Unemployment Insurance Amendments Act of 2003 .....	77
3.5.10 The Immigration Act 13 of 2002 .....	78
3.5.11 The Occupational Health, Safety and Environment Act (OHS Act) .....	78
3.6 HRM Systems and a Transformative Social Justice Agenda .....	78
3.7 The Development of Universities.....	81
3.7.1 The Origin of Universities.....	81
3.7.2 The Role of Universities .....	81
3.8 History of Universities in South Africa Pre-1994.....	82
3.8.1 The Impact of Race and the Classification of Universities in SA .....	83
3.9 The Re-Organisation of the Higher Education System in South Africa Post 1994 .....	84
3.9.1 The New Governance Model .....	85
3.9.2 Transformation and Consolidation of Universities .....	86
3.9.3 Universities Identified For The Study.....	89
<b>3.9.3.1 RHODES UNIVERSITY .....</b>	<b>90</b>
<b>3.9.3.2 NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY .....</b>	<b>91</b>
3.10 Challenges Facing HR Departments in Higher Education .....	92
3.10.1 Transformation Issues.....	93
3.10.2 Employment Equity Targets.....	94
3.10.3 Remuneration Parity and Conditions of Service .....	95
3.10.4 Organisational Culture .....	95
3.10.5 HR Models in South African Universities .....	96

3.11 Role of HR in Advancing Transformation .....	96
3.11.1 HR Planning Processes .....	98
3.11.1.1 Internal and External Reporting.....	98
3.12 Transformative Leadership: A New Leadership Model for Advancing Institutional Change	99
3.12.1 Leadership in Universities .....	101
3.12.2 Transformative Leadership .....	102
3.12.3 Leadership and Governance Challenges in Universities .....	106
3.13 HR Strategy and Planning.....	108
3.14 Summary .....	109
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>110</b>
Research Methodology .....	110
4.1 Introduction and Overview .....	110
4.2 Purpose of the Study.....	110
4.2.1 Proposition.....	110
4.3 Objectives of this Study .....	110
4.4 The Conceptual Framework.....	111
4.5 Selecting the Conceptual Framework .....	112
4.6 Methodological Framework of the Study .....	113
4.6.1 Grounded Theory.....	113
4.6.2 Characteristics of Grounded Theory.....	115
4.7 Mixed Method Study .....	116
4.7.1 Designing the Study: Critical Elements .....	119

4.7.2 Strategies of Inquiry in a Mixed Method Research Design.....	121
4.7.3 Quantitative Research Design.....	122
4.7.4 Qualitative Research Design .....	122
4.7.5 Case study: Comparative method.....	124
4.7.6 Rationale for Using a Case Study Methodology.....	126
4.8 Research Setting and Structure .....	127
4.9 Methodological Rationale for using a Sequential Explanatory Research Design .....	130
4.10 Data Collection.....	130
4.10.1 Phase 1: Focus Group Sessions .....	131
4.10.1.1 Instrument: Semi-structured Focus Group Discussions.....	131
4.10.1.2 Reason for Using Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews.....	132
4.10.1.3 Qualitative Data Collection Instrument: Semi-structured Interviews and Discussion .....	132
4.10.2 Phase 2: Quantitative Data Collection .....	134
4.10.2.1 Quantitative Data Collection Instrument.....	135
4.10.2.2 Participant Sample .....	135
4.10.2.3 Contextual Document Analysis .....	136
4.10.3 Recording of Data .....	136
4.11 Data Analysis: Organisation, Analysis and Interpretation of the Data .....	136
4.12 Ethical Considerations of the Study .....	137
4.12.1 Participants Interest and Well-being .....	138
4.12.2 Consent .....	138
4.12.3 Voluntary Participation .....	139
4.12.4 Confidentiality and Privacy .....	139

4.13 Reliability and Validity.....	139
4.13.1 Reliability.....	140
4.13.2 Validity .....	140
4.14 Limitations, Relevance and Usefulness of the Study .....	141
4.15 Conclusion.....	141
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Presentation of the Findings: The Results and Discussion of the Quantitative Outcomes of the Study .....</b>	<b>142</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	142
5.2 Sample Population and Distribution of Questionnaire.....	142
5.3 Analysis of The Responses .....	143
5.3.1 Demographic information.....	143
5.3.1.1 Age Profile of Respondents.....	143
5.3.1.2 Number of Years Working at The Institution .....	143
5.3.1.3 Occupational Category.....	144
5.4 Section 1: HR Model.....	144
5.4.1 Use of an HR Model .....	144
5.4.2 The Importance of an HR Model.....	144
5.4.3 Evaluating the Importance of an HR Model.....	146
5.4.4 The Benefit of an HR Model for Effective Institutional Planning Practices .....	148
5.4.5 HR Models in Tertiary Institutions in South Africa.....	149
5.5 Section 2: Legislation and Compliance.....	150
5.5.1 The HR Departments’ Adherence to Legislation.....	150

5.5.2 Evaluating the HR Departments' Compliance.....	152
5.5.3 HR Department Meeting Compliance Needs.....	153
5.5.4 HR Practitioners' Aptitude to Interpret Legislation .....	155
<b>5.5.5 Compliance as a Priority of the HR Department .....</b>	<b>157</b>
5.6 Section 3: HR Planning .....	158
5.6.1 The HR Plan.....	158
5.6.2 Alignment Between the HR Plan and the Institutional Strategic Plan.....	158
5.6.3 Importance of an HR Plan .....	159
5.6.4 Development of an HR Plan .....	160
5.6.5 Monitoring Progress of the HR Plan.....	162
5.7 Section 4: HR Competencies .....	164
5.7.1 Are HR Practitioners' Appropriately Qualified? .....	164
5.7.2 Are HR Practitioners Focussed on Employee Needs? .....	164
5.7.3 Importance of HR Practitioners' to Keep Updated on Legislation Changes .....	165
5.7.4 HR Practitioners' Knowledge of the HR Sub-Fields.....	167
5.7.5 The Relevance of HR Curricula to Meet the Needs of Developing HR Practitioners' at an Undergraduate Level.....	168
5.8 Section 5: HR Delivery and Orientation .....	170
5.8.1 The HR Structure.....	170
5.8.2 The HR Function on Employee Needs.....	170
5.8.3 Complexity of HR.....	173
5.8.4 HR Practitioners' Focus on Employee Needs .....	174
5.8.5 The Adequacy of HR Systems.....	175
5.8.6 The Importance of Effective HR Practices.....	177
5.9 Section 6: Institutional Justice .....	179
5.9.1 Trust in The HR Department in Decision-making Based on Policy and Law .....	179
5.9.2 HR Policies, Procedures and Processes and Equitable Employment Practices.....	181
5.9.3 HR Model and Systems to Advance Institutional and Social Justice Imperatives.....	183
5.9.4 HR Departments Understanding of Stakeholder Needs/Objectives.....	185

5.9.5 Locating HR Department within the National Legislative Framework.....	187
5.9.6 Level of Institutional Trust in Your Organisation .....	188
5.10 Section 7: Transformative Leadership .....	190
5.10.1 Role of Leadership in Advancing a Coalition to Facilitating Change .....	190
5.10.2 Leadership and Communication of a Change Strategy .....	192
5.10.3 Role of Leadership in Communicating the Need for Change .....	192
5.10.4 Eradicating Impediments in Envisioning Change .....	194
5.10.5 Awareness of the Vision and Strategic Plan for Change Processes .....	196
5.10.6 Awareness of Efforts Related to Planning for Change Processes .....	198
5.11 Conclusion.....	199
<b>CHAPTER SIX .....</b>	<b>202</b>
Presentation of the findings: The Results and Discussion of the Qualitative Outcomes of the Study .....	202
6.1 Introduction .....	202
6.2 Research Setting .....	202
6.3 Participant Profile .....	202
6.4 Analysis of Data.....	203
6.5 Data Collection Instrument.....	203
6.6 Layout and Presentation of Data Analysis Findings.....	203
6.7 Presentation of Findings .....	205
6.7.1 Research Objective 1: Discussion of Findings .....	205
6.7.1.1 Question 2: Does the HR division use an integrated HR management model? .....	205
6.7.1.2 Question 3: Does the HR Division have a Strategic Plan? .....	215



6.7.1.3 Question 10: Is a New Approach Needed, if so, What Should be the Focus Areas? .....	218
6.7.1.4 Question 11: Does the Strategy of the HR Division Meet the Imperatives of National Policy and Legislative Frameworks? .....	223
6.7.2 Research Objective 2: Discussion of Findings .....	227
6.7.2.1 Question 4: Theory and HR Knowledge .....	228
6.7.2.2 Question 5: The Importance of HR Capabilities.....	230
6.7.2.3 Question 6: A Compliance-based Approach? .....	232
6.7.2.4 Question 7 HR Practitioners’ Understanding of Legislation .....	233
6.7.2.5 Question 8: Problem Solving.....	234
6.7.2.6 Question 9: HR Practitioners Experience .....	236
6.7.3 Research Objective 3: Discussion of Findings .....	237
6.7.3.1. Question 12: Ethical Leadership .....	237
6.7.3.2 Question 17: Leadership and Ethics.....	243
6.7.4 Research Objective 4: Discussion of Findings .....	245
6.7.4.1 Question 13: Key Factors Impacting on People Management Practices .....	245
6.7.4.2 Question 14: Effective People Management Practices.....	249
6.7.4.3 Question 15 Management and Stakeholder Relations .....	252
6.7.5 Research Objective 5: Discussion of Findings .....	255
6.7.5.1 Question 1: HR Practices in a Complex Higher Education System.....	255
6.7.5.2 Question 16: The need for Change .....	258

6.8. Summary of Findings for the Research Objectives .....	261
6.8.1 Summary of Findings for Research Objective One .....	261
6.8.2 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Two .....	262
6.8.3 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Three .....	263
6.8.4 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Four .....	264
6.8.5 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Five .....	265
6.9. Conclusion .....	267
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN .....</b>	<b>268</b>
Recommendations and Conclusions .....	268
7.1 Introduction .....	268
7.2 Overview of Study .....	268
7.3 Findings .....	269
7.3.1 From the Literature .....	269
7.3.2 From the Quantitative Research .....	271
7.3.3 From the Qualitative Research .....	273
7.3.4 Findings as they Pertain to the Proposition .....	275
7.4 Recommendations .....	275
7.4.1. The HR Plan .....	275
7.4.2 HR Model .....	276
7.4.3 HRM Development and Capacity Building .....	277
7.4.4 Institutional leadership .....	279
7.4.5 Localised HRM Research .....	279
7.4.6 Effective HR Systems and Practices .....	279
7.4.7 Location of HRM within the South African Legislative Milieu .....	280
7.4.8 Employee Engagement .....	280
7.4.9. Positioning HRM .....	280
7.5 Development of an HR Model .....	281

7.5.1 Explanation of the Model.....	283
7.6 Research Limitations.....	285
7.7 Conclusion.....	285
REFERENCES.....	287
APPENDIX 1.....	320
The Purpose of Key Labour Legislation.....	320
APPENDIX 2.....	323
The Quantitative Questionnaire.....	323
APPENDIX 3.....	341
The Qualitative Focus Group Questionnaire.....	341

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction and Background to the Study

#### 1.1 Introduction

Human Resource Management (HRM) is the term used to describe formal systems devised for the management of people within an organisation (Encyclopedia of Business Management Terms, 2018). HRM has taken centre-stage in its fundamental reconfiguration. HRM is now being recognised for its strategic value and role in management (Sajeevanie, 2015). The depth of the HRM function, all its related activities and the range of its impact, is receiving attention globally. This cognition is rapidly entrenched and explored by HRM practitioners and academics, with the global realisation of the importance of the centrality of people, their skills and their knowledge, for institutional success (Sajeevanie, 2015).

The need to understand, plan for and effect, relevant and efficient people management practices is emerging internationally. Emerging questions in Human Resource (HR) addresses the dynamic state of the profession and seeks to address the need for changes related to effective HR service delivery (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004, Schultz, 2010, Ulrich, 1997). HRM is seemingly nestled in a state of transition. The HR function also has a critical, strategic and operational role to play in identifying and promoting aspects of transformation (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004, Cascio, 1995). The HR function has a critical role to play in promoting and upholding employee motivation at all operational levels (Buller and McEvoy, 2012, Kochan, 2004, Schultz, 2010). In addition, the HRM function has a key role in advancing and maintaining social justice and humanisation of the workplace, through advocating for organisational justice within organisations (Van der Walt, Le Roux and Govindjee, 2012).

Ulrich, Younger, Brockbank and Ulrich (2012) attest to the emergence of sub-themes within the realm of strategic HRM, which marked yet another moniker in its evolution. These sub-themes included contingency perspectives and fit; shifting from a focus on managing people to creating opportunities for strategic contributions; elaborating HR system components and structure; expanding the scope of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM); achieving HR implementation and execution, measuring outcomes of SHRM and evaluating methodological issues (Ulrich et al., 2012). This is

true of organisations in higher education (HE) as these important themes contribute to larger transformation imperatives. The workplace is an important medium, which represents a microcosm of wider society highlighting the need to meet the constituents' requirements in a diverse society (Zinn and Rodgers, 2012).

Much has been written about the impact of the HRM function in the transition from an administrative function to an important central strategic function. The strategic priorities for HR leaders have remained constant in that they are still related to people. Succession planning imperatives, the development of leadership capability, attraction and retention of staff as well as the undertaking of cost-benefit analyses are key tasks associated with the HR function (Finlan, Selter and Watkins, 2016). The issues that beset the HRM role and function continue unabated. The HR function plays an important role in every organisation, yet is facing a predicament of loss of trust and legitimacy among its stakeholders (Kochan, 2004, O'Brien and Linehan, 2014, Popescu, 2016).

This loss of trust and legitimacy can be attributed to various factors, including the increasing demands placed on the HR department and the challenges they face to meet the needs of the workforce (Kochan, 2004, Schultz, 2010). This study sets out to explore how the HRM function is operationalised in universities in South Africa and its role and impact on key aspects that challenge the HE sector. On a broader level, the study examines the core capabilities required in the HR function, the planning processes, its alignment to the larger institutional strategy and the models utilised.

### **1.1.1 HR Systems**

HRM is historically guided by management theories and international practices. John R. Commons first coined the term human resource in his book titled 'The Distribution of Wealth' in 1893 (Popescu, 2016). With the evolution of time HR departments increasingly face critical challenges including the evolution from a small administrative to becoming a central and complex function which is integral to the effective functioning of organisations. It is however difficult to pinpoint the contributory factors. It is commonly understood; however, that the HR function should not be compromised as this would impact on the ability to deliver on the multiple demands placed on the function by multiple stakeholders which include staff, organs of state and unions.

### **1.1.2 Social Justice: Humanising HRM Practice**

The equitable treatment of employees is linked to social justice, which is embodied in and promoted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) which is gaining prominence in South African workplaces (Van der Walt et al., 2012). The ILO defines social justice as the need to protect and promote the fair treatment of employees in the workplace. The ILO argues for a correlation between the fair treatment of employees and an improvement in employee motivation and morale (International Labour Organisation, 2003). There is increasing emphasis on treating people fairly. Fair and equal treatment is, significantly, enshrined in the Constitution of South Africa. This is further demonstrated by the need for transparency. Social justice, it is believed, leads to a humanised workplace practice, which may lead to enhanced productivity among employees. It has a strong correlation with employee satisfaction. The HR function and system is a central agent in advancing social justice, which is associated with transformation and organisational justice (Van der Walt et al., 2012).

Social justice is a key theme in the South African labour field. Important foci areas relate to redress and equality. Social justice in the South African workplace largely addresses the betterment of working conditions and greater involvement by employees, with regard to decisions affecting their employment (Pillay, 2017, Van der Walt et al., 2012). HR plays an important leading yet moderating role in the organisation's ability to deliver on these important imperatives. This is done by the partnering of the HR function with the leadership of the organisation to ensure that advancement in social justice is upheld. Social justice is an important dimension of this study as HR departments in universities are tasked with ensuring transformation goals are adhered to. Examples of these include the Employment Equity targets, developmental opportunities open to previously disadvantaged employees and the eradication of unfair discrimination and harassment.

### **1.2. Background**

HR systems are under fire in South Africa, due to a range of contributing factors which include competing demands from labour, sectoral demands and challenges, and changing organisational dynamics. Given the dire challenges impacting on HRM in

South Africa and globally, the researcher sought to locate the study in the higher education sector in order to investigate and contribute solutions to current issues. The focus of the study is on the HRM function and associated systems and processes in universities in South Africa. The levers advancing social justice and thereby driving institutional compliance on South African labour matters, HR models and HR competencies will be explored, as will the need for transformational leadership in universities.

### **1.3 Research Focus**

This study undertook a comparison of the HR systems as applied in two universities in the Eastern Cape (EC). The universities are Rhodes University (RU), in Grahamstown and Nelson Mandela University (NMU), in Port Elizabeth. RU is a traditional university, while NMU is a comprehensive university. Bunting and Cloete (2010), set out the three categories of universities as espoused by the HE policy framework. They describe universities as institutions which offer 'basic formative degrees such as the BA and BSc and professional undergraduate degrees such as BSc. (Eng.) and MBCHB'. These institutions additionally offer postgraduate qualifications, which include honours, masters and doctoral degrees. Universities of Technology are described as those institutions which focus on the provision of vocational or career oriented undergraduate diplomas. In addition, a limited number of masters and doctoral programmes may be offered. Finally, Comprehensive Universities are defined as those institutions which offer a mix of programmes, representative of those offered at both traditional universities and universities of technology (Bunting and Cloete, 2010).

It is for this reason, that RU, a traditional university and the NMU, a comprehensive university, were identified as suitable entities for this comparative study. RU and The NMU are public universities located in the EC of South Africa. RU is described as a small university, with a student headcount of under 20 000. The NMU is classified as a medium comprehensive university as its student enrolment is between 20 000 to 29 999 (Bunting and Cloete, 2010, uniRank, 2017). It was determined by the Researcher that an in-depth, comparative analysis was required. The in-depth analysis was required in order to understand the HR systems with respect to the research questions, aims and objectives of this study.

### **1.3.1 Research Problem**

The increasing complexity of HRM is a global phenomenon, as will be explored in the literature. The dynamic state of the discipline requires a critical review of what is required to address the issues and stabilise the function. The HRM functions in universities are folding under the pressure of competing demands, policy requirements, compliance related pressures and a fast faced environment. HR practitioners in the HE sector feel under threat and experience enormous pressure (HESA, 2013). This results in an inability to meet the competing demands timeously, and HR practitioners face burnout due to the high levels of stress experienced in their areas of work. This study sought to determine whether HR management functions in HE meet the needs of employees. Other dimensions which impact on HRM are HR models, HR competencies and transformational leadership. These dimensions will be investigated in the study. It is envisaged that the recommendations will provide meaningful guidance to HR practitioners in HE on how to advance their critical role in promoting efficient service delivery as well as organisational justice and transformational agendas, through relevant and effective, HR strategies and processes. Recommendations on how to create a balance between the administrative and strategic aspects of HR functions will then be made, based on the empirical findings emanating from the study.

Senior HR managers in the HE sector indicate that an administratively heavy approach is currently being used by HR departments and agree that strategic, long-term solutions need to be found (USAf, 2017). The differentiated approaches, structures and models used by HR departments in the sector have also been highlighted (Schultz, 2010). Furthermore, the capability of current HR structures, models and the capability of staff to provide effective HR services are a concern. It is envisaged that the recommendations of this study will provide meaningful guidance to universities on how to advance their role in promoting organisational justice and transformational agendas, through relevant and effective HR management systems, strategies and processes.

### **1.3.2 Research Aim**

The primary aim of this study was to examine the HRM systems used in selected higher education institutions in South Africa. In addition, transformative leadership



models and competencies within HR in the HE sector within South Africa were explored. The focus of this study is on how these aspects advance the social justice agenda of both the country and the ILO. This research study seeks to contribute to the HRM led transformation in universities. This exploratory work sought to ascertain the impact of HR models, HR competencies and transformative leadership, on employee performance, satisfaction and perception. Further, an analysis of the HR competencies required were identified. This study and its findings is intended to assist HR departments in their consideration of the need for transformational leadership, HR models and HR competencies that are relevant to the requirements of the HE sector. The findings will be used to inform new and relevant HRM strategies, structures and related processes.

### **1.3.3 Research Objectives**

This investigation was pursued through the following objectives related to the HR function in universities:

- To ascertain if universities use HR models that are relevant and effective to employees' needs.
- To determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified and are equipped with relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level.
- To evaluate the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector.
- To establish if social justice principles are incorporated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of higher education HR demands and requirements.
- To understand the challenges facing HR departments in higher education.

### **1.3.4 Research Questions**

The research objectives will be pursued further through the following sub-questions related to HR management systems in universities in South Africa:

- Do higher education institutions use relevant and effective HR models?
- Are HR practitioners appropriately qualified?

- Do HR practitioners possess the necessary competencies to provide relevant and effective HR delivery in HE?
- What impact does transformative leadership have on the delivery of HR in HE?
- Is social justice a key theme in HR service delivery in HE?
- Are HR models focused on employee needs?

The data collected will be analysed to evaluate the current leadership, HR models, HR systems, strategies and processes.

### **1.3.5 Proposition**

The study purports a null proposition (N0), in that it deems that HR models, HR competencies and transformative leadership have no impact on HRM systems and processes in universities in South Africa.

### **1.3.6 Delimitation of the Study**

The study is limited to two universities in South Africa. The findings and recommendations are pertinent to HR related challenges facing the sector.

## **1.4 Research Methodology**

The research methodology is set out in Chapter four, wherein the research approach undertaken is set out in a comprehensive manner. This takes the form of a case study, which through a combination of methods, deals with contemporary events and uses a mixed methods approach incorporating both qualitative and quantitative research data collection techniques and analysis. This approach enabled the Researcher to gain diverse and detailed data and allows for the triangulation of such data. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011), state that a mixed method research design is meaningful for the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative research methods within a single study. Saunders, Lewis and Thorhnull (2009), mention that it is important not to rely solely on quantitative producing data, but to utilise more qualitative data in case studies such as the study under consideration (Saunders et al., 2009). Both qualitative and quantitative methods will be used to this effect.

### **1.4.1 Quantitative Research**

Participant responses in qualitative research are semi-structured and differ from quantitative studies that posit fixed questions and require fixed responses. Burns and Grove (2005) offer a description of quantitative research as being structured and objective, while using a systematic procedure, which uses numerical data to gain insights into particular phenomena (Burns and Grove, 2005). Saunders and Stumpf (2016), describe this type of study as focusing on specific, narrow questions which are used to gather quantifiable data for large numbers of participants. This method enables data collection to be undertaken in an objective and impartial manner. SurveyMonkey, an online survey software tool, was used to analyse the quantitative data in this study. To this end, the quantitative research method included the development, distribution and analysis of questionnaires. In addition, a document analysis was undertaken. A brief overview of data collection techniques is set out below.

### **1.4.2 Qualitative Research**

The qualitative research methods used included direct observation of HR Practitioners and related processes, focus groups and systematic interviewing. Semi-structured interviews in a focus group setting were used to gather qualitative data that should be analysed inductively (Bodgan and Buiklen, 2003). Bryman (2008), sets out that qualitative research places an emphasis on individuals' perceptions of what is important and how they view their work environment. This is done through in-depth investigations of individuals and their environment (Bryman, 2008). With this in mind, it is envisaged that this method of data collection will provide rich insights into HRM practices. Creswell and Plano-Clark (2011), suggests that the presentation of data must be sensitive to the nuances of what people say and to the contexts in which their actions take place. Considering this, qualitative research is less generalised.

#### ***1.4.2.1 Quantitative data collection***

Ninety carefully selected interviewees, forty-five from each university, were identified from senior management, administrative, academic, technical and other categories of staff. The numbers were chosen proportionately so that the balance of opinions would be equally distributed. These interviewees were invited to participate in a quantitative

online survey-monkey questionnaire. The online questionnaire allows for intermittent completion and saving at each stage of the questionnaire, for later completion. The questionnaire asked for initial demographic information, followed by a series of questions about the participants' views on the HR management of the respective institutions, where they were employed. Of the ninety participants, who began the online survey, sixty completed the survey in full.

### **1.4.3 Data Collection Methods**

#### *1.4.3.1 Semi-structured Interviews and Focus Groups*

The primary sources of data were semi-structured interviews in a focus group setting. This qualitative technique, which was embedded in a mixed methods study, provided authentic and reliable data from the focus group sessions in the selected universities. As several participants were the Researcher's subordinates, the services of a skilled and trained Research Assistant were utilised for ethical reasons. This was done to combat the possibility of participant intimidation, researcher bias or bi-party collusion, as there was a need for face-to-face conversations and interviews with staff members of the two universities.

The use of semi-structured questionnaires provided respondents with an opportunity to express themselves freely, while the focus groups allowed for a wide range of staff members from various departments to debate and express their opinions and feelings openly. This gave participants' freedom to share their answers in the way they wanted to, without restriction. In this specific research study, open ended questions presented respondents with an opportunity to wrestle with and advise on issues related to a range of HRM related challenges.

All interviews were conducted over a three-week period. The duration of the interviews was approximately two hours long and these were conducted in a conversational style. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Data analysis followed the initial interview process.

#### *1.4.3.2 Questionnaire*

A questionnaire was developed and distributed to participants. The questionnaire was divided into seven sections. The sections were based on the following themes:

- HR Model.

- Legislation and Compliance.
- HR Planning.
- HR Competencies.
- HR Delivery and Systems.
- Institutional Justice.
- Transformative Leadership.

Each theme comprised 5 to 6 short questions. SurveyMonkey, an online tool was used to distribute the questionnaires and collate the data.

#### *1.4.3.3 Contextual Document Analysis*

A secondary data analysis was conducted using material available from the HR departments of the NMU and RU. This data source provided detailed information on HRM systems, HR models and HR planning processes. This data source was readily available from both institutions and provided insight into the approaches used for planning purposes with respect to the above-mentioned areas. The documents that were reviewed included HR strategic plans, annual operating plans, HR organograms, archival records and HR submissions, which were contained in institutional reports submitted to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET).

#### **1.4.4 Data Analysis**

The nature of the study, along with its research objectives, usually determines the type and amount of data collected. In the context of this research project, the quality and knowledge of the interviewees and the quantitative dimensions of the responses are integral to the findings of the study. As supported by Hair Jr, Celsi, Mone, Samouel and Page (2011), qualitative data was obtained through the use of focus groups and personal interviews and quantitative data was gathered using structured questionnaires or observation guides (Hair Jr et al., 2011).

Pope, Ziebland and Mays (2000), suggest that the vast amount of data generated from qualitative research techniques, including transcribed recordings of interviews and related fieldnotes, must undergo an analytical process through the use of variant content analysis techniques. Field notes were written during and between sessions. Data analysis followed the sessions. The data was coded and clustered into themes

for interpretation. To make content analysis a reality, the textual data had to be presented in a manner so organised as to allow the Researcher to apply inductive reasoning for data analysis. A database of case study observations was created and maintained.

A hypertext programme was used for categorising the results relative to each interview question from the qualitative data, as part of the co-coding process. A matrix was designed to link questions to data generated from each respondent. The structure of the matrix included a list of the questions on the far-left column, in vertical arrangement. The data generated was captured horizontally in various columns to present the data in an organised, coherent manner. Using the data that was organised into a matrix, an iterative and progressive approach was used to analyse the data. The research data was broken up into different units, which was analysed and a series of recursive patterns were sought and traced to their sources.

The data from the questionnaires was coded and extrapolated onto an Excel spreadsheet under different themes.

The study utilised a mixed method approach with an emphasis toward qualitative data collection. A purposive sampling method was undertaken. As a result, statistical models could not be used.

#### **1.4.5 Ethical Undertakings**

The researcher ensured that all participants would partake in the study on a voluntary basis. Accordingly, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants in the research study. The researcher made a commitment to minimise the risk of harm to any participant. The researcher upheld the anonymity and confidentiality of participants. Participants in the study were always afforded the opportunity to withdraw at any time of the data collection process. The researcher undertook to re-iterate to participants that they may withdraw from the study at any time during the data collection process without providing a reason. The researcher ensured that no deceptive practices were allowed. A Research Assistant was utilised for the collection of data. This was necessary, as the Researcher was known to many of the participants

as she had been employed at one of the universities and is currently employed by the other.

### **1.5 Merit of the Research and its Proposed Contribution**

The research study is intended to contribute to HR related empirical studies in universities in South Africa. The research findings which emanate from this study will be relevant to other universities in the sector. This findings would apply to traditional universities, comprehensive universities and universities of technology. This would be applicable to both previously advantaged and previously historically disadvantaged universities. Aspects of the study can be generalised to other sectors in South Africa. The study provides important insights into current HR management practices within universities.

It is envisioned that the study will make a valuable contribution to the advancement of localised conceptualisation and development of theoretical contributions in HRM and related fields. Further contributions will include the value added from a policy and practice basis in South Africa and beyond, drawing on ILO prescripts, country specific regulations and HRM theory. As the study is broad and undertakes an analysis of legal, sociological, management and public management dimensions, it is anticipated that the thrust of the study will glean key insights to foster trans-disciplinary insights and areas of collaboration.

### **1.6 The Conceptual Framework, Theoretical Framework and Literature Review**

#### **1.6.1 Grounded Theory: A conceptual framework and the Theoretical Framework**

It was envisaged that utilising grounded theory like approach as a conceptual framework would provide a systematic structure for the collection and analysis of data within the ambit of this study. As grounded theory is a qualitative research approach, which uses inductive analysis as the principal technique for identifying patterns and themes emerging from the data (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004), it was identified as being appropriate for the study, given the large body of literature which provides the theoretical framework. It was thus useful for the data to be categorised into themes for further handling and analysis (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011). As described by Bowen and Ostroff (2004), grounded theory uses sensitising concepts to provide a

theoretical foundation for the development of an emerging theory. Grounded theory, therefore, provided a sound conceptual framework that linked different concepts and allowed for the emergence of a primary theory, as corroborated by (Seibold, 2002). This conceptual framework allowed for the emergence of key insights to be considered. It further provided a sound basis for the conceptualisation, organisation and analysis of data as it emerged during the study with a view to organise the emerging insights in a methodical manner, thereby allowing for insights to be gleaned from the study. While grounded theory provided the conceptual framework, the theoretical framework which was drawn upon to guide the study included HRM systems and models. HRM systems and models are clearly identified, explored and critiqued in part one of the literature review, as set out in Chapter 2. Accordingly, the chapter is titled 'Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of HR Management'. The chapter also provides and an analytical summary of HR compliance and the role of HR in advancing social justice.

## **1.7 Literature Review**

### **1.7.1 HR Models**

Carbury and Cross (2013), advocate that HR must be carefully managed and guided by a relevant HR model. The authors purport that an effective model requires HR professionals to be knowledgeable about business strategy and integral strategic management partners. HR are an asset and must be considered so, as opposed to being viewed as a cost (Carbury and Cross, 2013). This is reinforced by numerous contributors who posit that future organisational survival will be dependent on organisational flexibility to adapt to change, implement effective processes and enhance competencies; all indicative of an inseparable link between change and learning (Badat and Sayed, 2009, Barber, Donnelly, Rizvi and Summers, 2013, Buller and McEvoy, 2012).

Popescu (2016), indicates that relevant HR models require HR practitioners to be close to the business and the employees they service. HR practitioners are also required to be flexible in the application of systems, the interpretation of rules and to be open to suggestions for improvement (Popescu, 2016). According to Walters (2009), this provides a platform for the HR function, related policies, practices and the HR professional to be evaluated (Walters, 2009). Given the importance of the function,



a relevant and standardised approach is required, which makes a compelling case for HR to be acknowledged and accorded the status of a profession (Van Rensburg, 2011).

A strong HRM system is required for optimal performance. The characteristics of a strong system include the need for high levels of consistency and agreement. In addition, an organisational climate that supports HR implementation is required (Kumar and Mishra, 2011, Popescu, 2016). The overall effectiveness of HR functions, HR and line managers' perceptions of the HR function and the identification of competency gaps are important aspects that should be evaluated (Becker, Huselid, Ulrich, 2001). Bowen and Ostroff (2004), outline three aspects in a 'logical model of HR effectiveness'. These include the need for actual HR practices, effectiveness of these HR practices and their effective implementation (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). Guest and Conway (2011), provide input on the need for strong HR indicators and outcomes with objectives being clearly stipulated. Institutional line managers and HR practitioners must understand these outcomes and work collaboratively toward them. This is indicative of a stakeholder oriented approach to HR (Guest and Conway, 2011).

Organisational justice is gaining prominence and is concerned with the 'rights, dignity and voice for working men and women' (Baldwin, 2006). The ILO, promotes social justice in the workplace as the key principle it seeks to promote. THE ILO has a strong focus on social justice in the workplace and advocates for the fair treatment of employees in the workplace in order to improve employee motivation and morale (International Labour Organisation, 2003). There is a strong correlation between organisational justice and social justice in the workplace which are both focused on the fair, ethical treatment of employees based on respect. This indicates global recognition for a different approach to people in paid employment (Baldwin 2006:95). This means that decisions affecting and impacting on employees need to undergo a rigorous consultative process with stakeholders.

The employment relationship should be managed in a manner that advances the social justice and humanistic mandates of the ILO and The Constitution of South Africa (NEDLAC, 2010). Legislation provides a guideline for organisations to manage their people (Naves, 2002).

### **1.7.2 The University and its Key Role in Society**

Wilhelm von Humboldt's 1810 memorandum led to the establishment of the University of Berlin. Significantly, the memorandum outlined three basic principles upon which the University of Berlin was established; that is of 'unity of research and teaching, freedom of teaching and academic self-governance'. Another prolific contributor to the role and function of the university is that of Henry Newman in 1852. His seminal piece entitled 'The Idea of a University', espoused the significance of mutual education as being central to how one generation both forms and informs another. There is no doubt that the western university model has been successful and largely grounded on Humboldt and Newman's seminal works (Boulton and Lucas, 2011). The fundamental purpose of universities is to be 'socially responsible and seek to improve the common good' is indicative of the need for universities to uphold their fundamental function and purpose with the 'social relevance to their ambient population' (Boulton et al., 2011).

Universities have played an important role since the inception of organised learning initiatives in society. Universities are organised structures that are the centre of the organisation of teaching and learning. They provide the facility, staff and curriculum content for students (Anderson, 2010). The oldest European university is the University of Bologna, established in 1088, which is situated in Italy, while the University of Timbuktu is recognised as the first university in Africa. The University of Timbuktu (modern day Mali), was established in the 12th century as a centre for Islamic teaching (Birnbaum, 2015). The oldest Eastern university was Nalanda in Eastern India, currently known as Bihar. Nalanda was a centre for Sanskrit, medicine, public health and economics (Buncombe, 2010). This demonstrates that the quest for a formalised system and structure related to the provision of knowledge is neither a new concept nor is it particular to any region (Birnbaum, 2015).

Universities play a central role in social change and the related development processes, producing skilled labour and research in accordance with economic requirements (Brennan, Kind and Lebau, 2004). The university plays an important role in being the nexus between development of learning potential and active social and economic citizenry. To deliver on its multifaceted roles, universities require a skilled labour force (Brennan et al., 2004). As elaborated upon by Amos, Ristow and Ristow

(2004) and Moloto, Given, Brink and Nel. (2014), the HR function contributes individually and collectively to the organisation's strategic objectives and maintains its strategic advantage.

The role of the university is one that is enmeshed in the external context and associated prevailing conditions, which affect and impact on the university (Badat and Sayed, 2009). The role of the university, argued Badat et al. (2009), is multi-fold and includes the production of highly educated workers, providing equal access to opportunity and success for students and laying the foundation for critical and democratic citizenry. This was evident during the 2015 and 2016 student protests, referred to #FeesMustfall. This led to national protest action which resulted in universities becoming embroiled in often violent student protests who demanded free education at tertiary institutions. Badat (2016) explicates that the crisis which characterised the #FeesMustfall was built on economic factors. This included the inadequate funding of higher education, declining state subsidisation of universities and the inadequate funding for academically deserving students. This resulted in universities becoming a hotbed of active student activism.

In addition, universities provide a platform for informed social commentary, critique and public engagement, creating opportunities for engaged scholarship Badat et al. (2009).

### **1.7.3 The HR Function and Challenges in Higher Education**

Moloto et al. (2014), reflect on the period post 1994, the year of South Africa's first democratic elections, when there was concerted drive to eradicate discriminatory policies and practices to advance the need for embracing diversity. People are an important component of an organisation's success (Amos et al., 2004). The management of individuals within institutions must be done in a methodical manner, and falls under the domain of the HRM function, which is tasked with the sourcing and managing of labour. An effective HRM system is required, in order to formulate and implement relevant HRM strategies, policies and procedures (Amos et al., 2004). The ability of the HR function to do this in a meaningful and value adding manner is often under the spotlight (Amos et al., 2004). This can be seen in two spheres, described as strategic execution and operational output (Ulrich, 1997). Strategic execution is the

ability of the human resources function to support and deliver on the larger business strategy of an organisation, while operationally, a significant administrative role needs to be fulfilled (Ulrich, 1997). HR functions strive to create a balance between the strategic and operational aspects. Mapesela and Strydom (2004) and Schulz (2010), advance that a rethink of how HR delivers on its changing mandate through a new orientation on strategic matters which is required.

The emerging questions in HR globally, address the dynamic state in which the profession finds itself and seeks to address the need for changes related to effective HR service delivery (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004, Schultz, 2010, Ulrich, 1997). This study therefore, focused on three critical aspects regarding HR management in HE and explored the related impact of these on HR management practices. The focus of the study therefore addresses how HR models, HR competencies and transformational leadership affect and impact on the HR function. As indicated by Kochan (2004), Schultz (2010) and Buller and McEvoy (2012), HR is caught in a state of transition and has a critical role to play in promoting and upholding employee motivation, at all operational levels. The HR function includes advancing and maintaining social justice, humanisation and organisational justice, which are critical themes that contribute to the larger transformation imperatives of higher education (Buller and McEvoy, 2012, Kochan, 2004, Schultz, 2010). The HR function clearly has a critical role to play in identifying and promoting aspects of transformation (Buller and McEvoy, 2012, Kochan, 2004, Schultz, 2010).

The Higher Education Act, 1997 (as amended) and the University Statutes, give guidance to the operations of universities. These provide statutory guidelines for the sector within the macro-context of South Africa. Universities need to conform to different legislative statutes which include those under the auspices of the DHET, Department of Labour and South African Revenue Services (Govender, 2013). Apart from the aforementioned statutory requirements, other changes (including mergers and the restructuring of the DHET as well as Immigration Laws) have impacted on universities (Govender, 2013).

Post democracy initiatives are high on the transformational agenda. South African universities are under pressure to transform and critically rethink current HR practices

(Govender, 2013, Schultz, 2010). HR departments should be focusing on management and leadership capability, its capacity to operate in an international environment and the development of relevant HR strategies (Govender, 2013). Schultz (2010), similarly suggests that demands placed on HR departments in the higher education sector, require HR to respond to identified needs and call for HR to be guided by relevant national frameworks and legislation.

Brault and Beckwith (2003,) cited in Weinecker (2008), identify three key factors as driving forces for the HR function in HE if it seeks to move toward a more strategic function. These are; decreasing budgets, greater levels of accountability for specific outcomes and increasing levels of complexity for HR practitioners. This requires a rethink of the role of HR and how HR professionals need to develop and advance their competencies in a changing environment (Weinacker, 2008).

The absence of a common model for use by learning organisations in the HE sector raises concern. Discussions among senior managers from learning organisations in the sector indicate that while HR models may be used in some organisations, they appear not to be fully able to satisfy the needs of HR-related matters in the higher education sector (HESA, 2013). The concerns raised include the ability of HR to meet the increasingly complex demands of the higher education sector, the development of relevant competence among HR practitioners and the range of skills required, to meet micro and macro demands (HESA, 2013). Human Resources Directors describe the HR function in the South African HE environment as challenging. This is indicative of difficulties experienced by the HR leadership in the HE sector with particular focus on the relevance of HR functions and how they are structured and aligned to the needs of employees (HESA, 2013). These factors are coming under scrutiny as they are being questioned by higher education employees themselves. A preliminary analysis of the HR systems in HE institutions, indicates that a common administrative approach is being used across institutions. While a standardised approach to recruitment, employee relations, management information and remuneration functions is used, the HR competencies required to give effect to these outputs are under question (HESA, 2013, Schultz, 2010).

Universities are organisations that have different occupational categories, namely academic and professional, administrative and support services staff. The mixed modality of staff adds to the complexity of effective HR management, as the requirements of both these groups differ (Govender, 2013). Other facets which require solutions include concerns about limited supply and demand of experienced academics; an ageing academic workforce; limited promotion opportunities for professional staff; higher levels of turnover, increasing workloads and demands for better remuneration (Govender, 2013, Schultz, 2010).

#### **1.7.4 HR Professionalism**

O'Brien and Linehan (2014), indicate that the issue of professional structures and behavioural constraints often adversely impacts on the HR practitioners' ability to effect and uphold the significant self-discipline required. The range of activities require the HR practitioner to be objective, emotionally detached, able to sift through fact and value judgements (O'Brien and Linehan, 2014). It must be acknowledged, as iterated by O'Brien and Linehan (2014), that the HR practitioner requires a complex set of skills, which are required to meet the needs of multiple stakeholders. They aptly suggest that the vast current complexities and intricacies which characterise HRM are not supported by contemporary models as those espoused by Ulrich and his peers (O'Brien and Linehan, 2014).

#### **1.7.5 Transformative Leadership**

In the HE sector, HR reforms are focused on a humanising agenda and require a continuous process of change for their future success. Van Wart and Dicke (2016: 13), point out that such change is inextricably linked to transformative leadership, as leaders play a critical role in the definition of visions and in motivating employees to achieve these. Unless leaders convince those around them that change is not only necessary but also inevitable and understand the demand to meet the ever growing challenges and possess the ability to drive and implement such processes, it is extremely difficult for them to be effective and transformative (Van Wart and Dicke, 2016). 5

In an era of rampant globalisation and relentless competition over human, financial and intellectual resources, most African higher education institutions are at varying

degrees of reforming (Van Wart and Dicke, 2016). These changes include but are not limited to, elevating and upgrading functions duties and responsibilities at all levels of HE institutions, in an effort to achieve wide ranging visions and missions of academic excellence. In addition, increased research outputs and solid community outreach are other objectives which are strived for. Within the HR environment, the humanisation of the management process is the sine-quo-non of ultimate success (Van Wart and Dicke, 2016).

Just over the past decade and into the new complexities of the millennium, research interest in leadership, especially transformative leadership, has gradually moved away from focus on traits, styles and situations, towards one that conceives of leadership as an interactive and complex process (Alvy and Robbins, 2005). This, of course, is in line with the new complexities inherent in organisational and other structures at institutional and organisational settings internationally (Alvy et al., 2005).

Within this context, the key issue at hand is the leadership onus within the complexity of human and organisational relationships. This means that leadership relationships are inextricably linked with all other relationships. The latter relationships shape and are shaped by leadership. It is within this context that leadership and leaders face the ongoing and ever-increasing challenges of complexity, diversity and ambiguity associated with the leadership environment. Thus, the necessity for a multi-faceted approach to new leadership challenges become evident (Heller, 2002).

A careful study of both the classical and contemporary theories of leadership, especially in its transformative form, shows that the importance of leadership in its “purest form” as a driver of organisational success, has been diluted somewhat, by the characteristics of the environment that shapes it, or is shaped by the thinking and actions of leaders. There is thus, a need to acknowledge that the massive literature on leadership as a concept keeps changing. It could be argued that each theory is intuitively and cognitively appealing. As circumstances change internationally and locally, new attitudes, propositions and ideas on the nature, types and essence of leadership surface. The main agreement amongst theorists and practitioners, however, is that transformative leadership based on quality and effectiveness is a

necessity for positive change and excellence. The present research aspires to contribute towards a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Caldwell, Dixon, Floyd, Chaudoin, Post and Cheokas (2012), defines transformative leadership as a standard of ethical leadership which upholds the needs of employees and society as a central component. It infuses values based leadership to meet the multi-dimensional needs of stakeholders and society. Shields and Grant (2010), clarify the difference between transformative leadership theory and the theories of transactional or transformational leadership, through an evaluation of the utilisation of transactional theory, in assisting educational leaders in facilitating educational and social change. Transformative leadership, they argue, analyses issues related to social justice and democracy; while offering an appraisal of unjust practices and is concerned with individual and public good (Shields et al., 2010).

In a study by The Centre for Institutional and Social Change, Sturm (2011), positions the need for transformative leadership to address deeply ingrained structural inequality. Sturm (2011), rightly suggests that transformative leadership speaks to multi-level institutional challenges, which impact intra-organisationally and adversely affect different stakeholder groups. These include collective vision, collaboration, systems orientation, re-visioning of the institution and intra-organisational communication (Sturm, 2011).

### **1.8. Research Protocol**

The presentation of this study encompasses seven chapters. Chapter one is the introductory chapter, which provides an overview and background of the study. Due to the vast literature reviewed and the expansive nature of the study, it is presented over two chapters. The first section, presented in Chapter two is entitled 'Conceptual and Theoretical Framework of HR Management'. The second section is presented in Chapter three, entitled 'The Role of HRM in the Higher Education Sector'. This section further addresses the critical analysis of the development of universities in South Africa, HR transformation, its challenges and transformational leadership. Chapter four provides the detail of the research method undertaken in the study. Chapter five presents the findings of and discussion relating to the quantitative data collection while Chapter six sets out the qualitative data collection, findings and discussion. The



concluding chapter summarises the study and makes recommendations for practice and further research.

### **1.9 Summary**

This chapter highlighted the problem statement and set out the research objectives of the study. It provided a contextual overview of the study. The key themes to be covered in the literature review were set out. Further, the research methodology and the framework for the presentation of the study were given. The following chapter, sets out the first part of the comprehensive literature review of the study. It presents the conceptual framework of the HRM function.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Theoretical Framework of HR Management**

‘All HR practices have an ethical foundation. HR deals with the practical consequences of human behaviour’.

(Johnson, 2003)

#### **2.1 Overview and Presentation of the Literature Review**

In the previous chapter, the general overview and introduction to the study was presented. This chapter sets out the theoretical framework of the HRM function. The Researcher read relevant literature, theoretical underpinnings and seminal works related to the study. The literature review for the study is therefore expansive and covered many themes. For ease of comprehension, the literature review is offered in two parts. As indicated, the first part is entitled the ‘Theoretical Framework of HR Management’ and includes an analytical overview of HR compliance and the role of HR in advancing social justice.

The development of HRM and the relevant theoretical underpinnings are set out in this chapter. A global and localised overview of HR models is provided. A summary of HR models, strategic HRM, HR models in South African universities, comparative approaches to HRM, HR competencies, HR qualifications, professional membership and HR ethics are further presented in this chapter. HRM compliance within a legal framework, the dichotomy of HRM challenges in the university context and the role of transformative leadership in advancing social justice in universities are explored in the next chapter. Chapter three also addresses the contextual milieu of the HE landscape in South Africa, with the purpose of providing a comprehensive context to HRM systems in higher education is provided.

#### **2.2 An Overview of Human Resources Management**

Coyle-Shapiro, Hoque, Kessler, Pepper, Richardson and Walter (2013), define HRM as the process of analysis and management involved in facilitating the HR needs in an organisation to deliver on its strategic outcomes. HRM covers a vast array of

activities and shows a huge range of variations across occupations; organisational levels; business units, institutions and industries (Boxall, Prucell and Wright, 2007). HRM is an essential function in organisations and involves managing activities related to the employment relationship. The employment relationship has three parties; the employee, employer and the state (Boxall, 2012). The objectives of HRM are:

- To ensure that the organisation can achieve success through people.
- To increase organisational effectiveness and capability.
- To be concerned with the rights and needs of people in organisations through the exercise of social responsibility.

The State's role is to implement, advise on and monitor, adherence to legislation. The employment relationship is described as one that is managed in a manner that optimises and rewards individual employees' contributions to the organisation (Carbury and Cross, 2013, Linderbaum and Levy, 2010). Chadwick (2005) and Bagga and Srivastava (2014), describe strategic HRM as an organisational, system-level approach, which focuses on organisational performance. As HRM decisions have a long-term impact on the organisation, sound approaches need to be used. To do this, a balance of strategic and operational HRM is required, with HR upholding its role of enforcer of policies and maintaining accountability (Bagga and Srivastava, 2014, Chadwick, 2005).

Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2013:13), highlight the need for effective employee management practices. They iterate however, that although there are no globally accepted professional standards, HR is considered the most arduous, complicated, confusing and critical mission that managers face. Four reasons are provided (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013):

- HR policies apply to complex, conflictual and culturally dependent human behaviour.
- Various HR policy instruments and practices exist.
- It is challenging to assess the success or lack thereof of HR policies, programmes and plans.

- The perception of many managers is that people management is merely common sense.

The management of the individual employee is guided by organisational policies and practices (Linderbaum and Levy, 2010). It is acknowledged that HRM is focused on the employee and policies and procedures are developed in accordance with statutory legislation in mind (Armstrong, 2009, Beardwell and Claydon, 2007). The HR function, is the enforcer of policies, procedures and statutory compliance. The history of organised labour is a long one, which has been influenced and shaped by different ideologies and trends. It is acknowledged that HRM is focused on the employee, with policies and procedures being developed in accordance with statutory requirements in mind (Armstrong, 2009, Beardwell and Claydon, 2007).

HRM practices have an undisputed impact on organisations, and effective HRM practices are essential. HRM mistakes that institutions should avoid include hiring the wrong person for a specific post, high staff turnover, employees not performing well, inefficient job interviews, court cases because of workplace disputes and unsafe working conditions (Dessler, 1981, Dessler, 2013). Meisinger (2005) and Schroeder (2012), agree that employee satisfaction is linked to the individual employee's experience in the workplace as employees are guided by HR policies and procedures prior to joining the organisation. These include the recruitment and selection process, contracting and remuneration process, development and maintenance. It is thus imperative that the needs of employees be considered in different ways (Meisinger, 2005, Schroeder, 2012).

HRM issues affect industries and sectors across the globe and have far-reaching implications on the employer-employee relationship. It is important, therefore, to briefly trace the historical basis and evolution of the employment relationship, which has been shaped and characterised by significant changes since the formal organisation of labour (Linderbaum and Levy, 2010). The history of organised labour is intriguing and has been influenced and shaped by different ideologies, trends and historical events (Linderbaum and Levy, 2010). A brief overview of key developments in this area is discussed to facilitate an understanding of labour related practices.

### **2.2.1 The Development of HRM**

The 1800's were characterised by significant changes including mass production and mechanisation (Nayab, 2011). This period is referred to as the Industrial Revolution and was also the start of a formalised system of work for payment, where the co-ordination of labour supply in factories required a system to pay workers. This contractual relationship has shifted significantly over time. The migration from an agricultural and cottage industry economic system heralded fundamental change, wherein the exchange of labour for payment, saw the birth of industrialisation (Nayab, 2011).

The period of industrialisation was characterised by the mass production and reproduction of labour (Nayab, 2011). During this period, the impact of the work environment on the mental and physical abilities of employees was highlighted (Nayab, 2011). The Industrial Revolution in the 19<sup>th</sup> century introduced less favourable working conditions, which included but were not limited to, unhygienic and unsuitable working conditions and large numbers of employees, including children, being accommodated within a factory area (Carbury and Cross, 2013). In addition, the cramped conditions were often conducive to the outbreak of diseases. This led to the need for more humanitarian working conditions (Carbury and Cross, 2013).

This period was characterised by the mass production of labour through a highly stratified system, which required a systematic method and ultimately led to the creation of the first administrative approach to work (Kaufman, 2014). This created a basis for the advent of People Management as a field of practice, as the supply of labour to factories required a systemic approach to the co-ordination and management of workers for activities such as the remuneration of workers in accordance with the provisions of the Factory Acts of the 1840's (Aikaterini, 2014).

The concept of International Labour Standards originated during the Industrial Revolution. This served as an inducement for the creation of International Human Rights and International Labour Standards (Aikaterini, 2014). As a result, the ILO was established in 1919 (International Labour Organisation, 2003). The aim of the ILO was to promote social justice. International Labour Standards are enforced through a multi-level international system, which is implemented at country level in member states

through national law (International Labour Organisation, 2003). While the initial intent of the ILO was to address the abolishment of forced labour and regulate the conditions of employment with respect to children, long working hours and cramped conditions, which were conducive for the outbreak of disease; injury and death were also addressed (Carbury and Cross, 2013).

The formal history of HRM emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe and the United States of America, (USA) when the plight of women and children in the workplace gained attention and welfare officers were employed to address these concerns (Coyle-Shapiro, Hoque, Kessler, Pepper, Richardson and Walter, 2013). Rowntree and Cadbury, were the leaders in the employment of welfare officers whose responsibility was to address and monitor the working conditions of employees (Aikaterini, 2014). A notable shift toward trade unionism occurred in or around 1914. The emergence of formal recruitment campaigns led to an increase in trade unionism which sought to address adverse working conditions. A shift then occurred in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, signifying a move toward humanitarian working conditions. This led to a focus on the development of a systematic approach to job design, employment systems and remuneration (Carbury and Cross, 2013).

In 1916, William F Taylor espoused a scientific management theory, which gave rise to the foundation for modern HRM practice (Aikaterini, 2014). Psychological and physiological well-being of the individual employee gained momentum in the 1920's. The impact of the workplace environment and practices on individual employees were starting to propel advancement in employment practices. In or around the 1920' s, the management of labour took on a more innovative direction (Brewster and Scullion, 1997). The period between the 1920's to 1930's saw a shift wherein labour managers were employed to handle matters related to pay, absenteeism, recruitment and dismissal of workers (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013), further enhancing the development of HRM practices.

The early 21<sup>st</sup> century was characterised by a focus on the development of a systematic approach to job design, employment systems and remuneration practices, thereby signifying a shift toward trade unionism which occurred in or around 1914 (Carbury and Cross, 2013). With the emergence of formal recruitment campaigns,

trade unionism was also on the increase. The outbreak of World War I resulted in significant numbers of women entering the workplace indicating a new position by way of the division of labour (Carbury and Cross, 2013).

The 1940's led to the transition of personnel administration which saw pay, absenteeism, recruitment, dismissal and worker well-being, being assimilated within the HRM practice (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013). The 1950's witnessed the emergence of HRM as a management theory. This was championed by Dicker in his seminal work and shortly thereafter by McGregor (Syed and Kramar, 2012). Thereafter, the 1950's, according to Darien, (as quoted in Losey et. al., 2005), saw HR executives being increasingly concerned with union related matters (Losey et al., 2005).

The impact of workplace environment and practices on the psychological and physiological well-being of the individual employee gained momentum in the 1920's and carried on into the 1960's. The 1960's saw the emergence of Human Capital Theory as a foundation for education in the workplace, whereby employees were trained to meet organisational needs (Cunningham, 2004). The 1980's and 1990's saw the growth of the HR function into an administrative function. The 21<sup>st</sup> century has placed demands for a new orientation of the HR function to provide tactical leadership and demands integration with wider planning institutional processes (Fenwick, 2005). The increasing awareness of people being central to the success of firms led to the transition from personnel administration to personnel management in the 1970's and 1980's. The 1980's and 1990's era witnessed the growth of the HR function into an administrative function (Fenwick, 2005).

Lapina, Maurane and Starineca (2014) indicate that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was defined as the industrial society, with the end of it being known as the information society. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is now characterised as a knowledge society and this change is referred to as the knowledge economy. The new economy, claim the authors, requires organisations to be flatter, with fewer levels of hierarchy and a dispersion of authority and decision-making, with a highly stratified workforce with differing needs (Lapiņa et al., 2014). The workforce now comprises a diverse mix of younger and older workers, with millennials (those who entered the workplace at or since the year 2000), making up more than half the workforce (Schwartz et al., 2016). Millennials, it is claimed, have

high expectations for a gratifying, focused work experience. In addition, ongoing learning and development opportunities, and dynamic career progression are core requirements for millennials (Schwartz, Bohdal-Spiegelhoff, Gretczko, 2016).

A Price-Waterhouse Coopers (PWC) Report (2011) focused on millennials in the workplace (Price Waterhouse Coopers, 2011). The Report indicates that the millennial generation of employees are characterised by talent and dynamism although these employees are in significant demand, they in turn, have high expectations from their employers. The fundamental issue, states the report, is that millennials are vastly different to the generations that have come before them. PWC advise that there is a need for business leaders and HR to collaboratively ensure that they understand the millennial generation. Business needs to structure and package employment offers appropriately; understand and assist millennials with their personal and professional developmental requirements; ensure consistent and frequent feedback; provide the right balance of flexibility with well-articulated outcomes and instructions, provide learning and advancement opportunities on a quicker basis and prepare for higher staff turnover (PWC, 2011). The 21st century has placed demands for a new orientation of the HR function to provide tactical leadership and demands integration with wider planning institutional processes (Fenwick, 2005, Ulrich, 2016). Table 2.1 illustrates the development of HR practices from the 1800's to the current period.

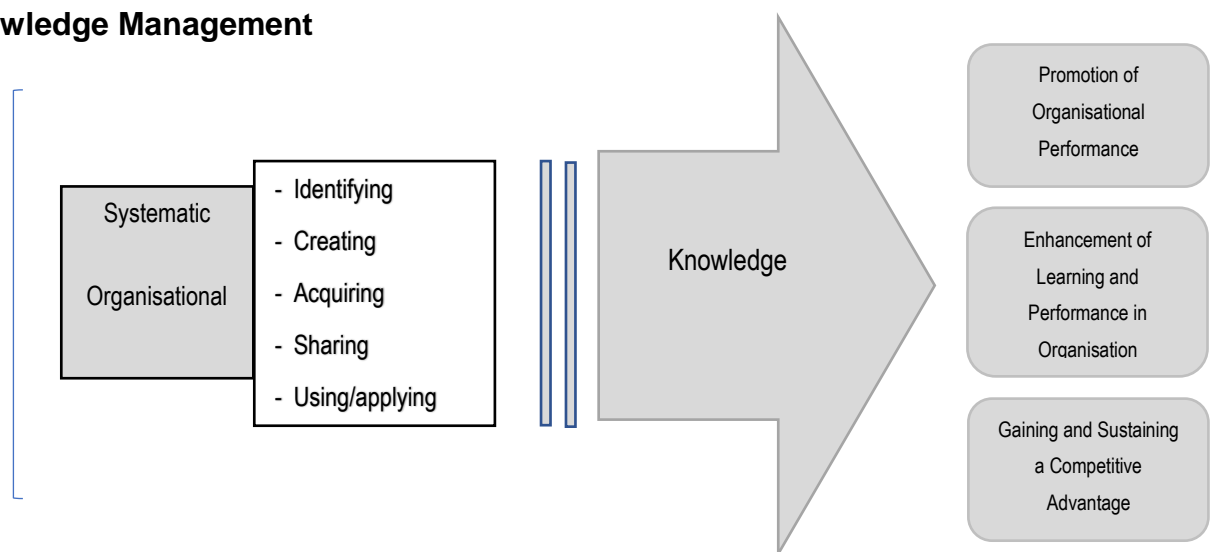
PERIOD	FOCUS	MANAGEMENT TITLE
1920-1930's	Employee Welfare	Welfare Officer
1940's	Personnel Administration	Welfare Officer/Manager
1950's	Emergence of Management Theory	Personnel Officer/Manager
1980's-1990's	Personnel Administration to HR Management	HR Manager
2000's	Strategic Management	HR Chief People Officer

*Table 2.1: Overview of HRM Development*



The HR function has been through tremendous change; shaped by various important factors outlined above, however, the evolution of HRM has not been concluded. It is increasingly becoming evident that a re-visitation of the HR role and purpose is unfolding, which is a global phenomenon in the HRM field. Lapina et al (2014), as indicated in Figure 2.1, advise that the economy of the new millennium requires knowledge to be viewed as an asset and to be ‘valued, developed and managed’. The diagram indicates that knowledge management is embedded within a systemic organisational process and through the process of knowledge identification; creation; acquisition; sharing, application and capturing, can contribute meaningfully to specific organisational outputs. These outputs are identified as the promotion of organisational performance, enhancement of learning and performance, as well as ensuring competitive advantage (Lapiņa et al., 2014).

### Knowledge Management



*Figure 2.1: Concept of knowledge management: Adapted from Lapina, Maurane and Starineca, 2014*

Globalisation is strongly correlated with unprecedented advances in technology and has had a radical impact on HRM (Cania, 2014). The interplay between the organisation and its people is catapulted into a new era by the knowledge economy, where the ability to produce goods and give effect to good service have seen an evolution. In today's knowledge economy, the inherent ability, competency and knowledge have become prized possessions (Cania, 2014). This has placed

demands on the HR function and HR Practitioners to be more agile, technological savvy and aware of global trends and places.

### **2.3 Strategic HRM**

The simplest depiction of the strategic HR model is a relationship between a firm's HR architecture and its performance.

Interestingly, Becker et al. (2001), emphatically describe the HR system as being the fundamental strategic asset of an organisation (Becker and Huselid, 2006). The HR system, they argue, offers greatest enhancement when aligned to the strategic plan.

They therefore advise that 'strategic HRM' is focused on organisational rather than individual performance, emphasising the role of HRM systems as solutions to business problems (Becker and Huselid, 2006). Cania (2014), indicates that strategic HRM aims to improve organisational performance through people management. Importantly, it defines how the organisation's goals will be achieved through people by means of HR strategies and integrated HR policies and practices (Cania, 2014), thereby highlighting the strategic positioning of the HR function.

The evolution of Personnel Management to HRM is addressed by Aikaterini (2014: 18), who sets out that the field of HRM emphasises the need for HR to be aligned to the institutional or corporate strategy. In addition, the author sets out the role of the HR specialist to assist with the achievement of institutional objectives of efficiency and equity (Aikaterini, 2014). The operationalisation of strategic HRM approaches requires the development and implementation of a range of coherent policies, the aim of which, should be aligned to and support, the efforts of the employees of an organisation (Baird and Meshoulam, 1988, Huselid, Jackson and Schuler, 1997). Huselid et al. (1997), indicate the need for employees' collective knowledge, skills and abilities to be considered and utilised effectively, to support and give effect to meeting the goals of its institutional priorities. It comes back to understanding the different levels of dynamics that exist in an organisation and creating a sustainable equilibrium among the different parts (Huselid et al., 1997). This interplay of demands and exchanges often places demands on the HR department, which becomes the central nexus in the play between organisational demands and challenges.

### **2.3.1 Locating HR in a Global Context**

It is in such contexts that innovative, advanced and pioneering practices are developed or not. In this debate that advances research, planning, theory and practical policies, the first element is the process and influence of globalisation, its financial, economic and technological realities and imperatives (Campos e Cunha, Morgado and Brewster, 2002). Under such circumstances globalisation can only be understood and analysed in its totality, where historical; cultural; financial; economic imperatives, institutional and national realities, shape the present configuration of individuals; groups, organisations and nations (Bhagwati, 2007, Campos e Cunha et al., 2002).

As in every sphere of study and the creation of knowledge, human resources management and development have gone through a wide variety of types, and forms that are shaped by international, national and organisational trends, which sometimes have to face unwanted travel through the unknown. (Brewster, 2003, Buckley and Caple, 2009). Technologies change, so to, do human behaviours and power relations in society, communities and universities throughout the world. These realities may mean that nationally-based and shaped HRM structures and systems of necessity come head to head with both the problems and challenges of the international markets. HRM has to make choices between rapid or slow change to adaptation and to effect change in one way or another (Campos e Cunha et al., 2002, Lacity and Willcocks, 2012). During this process, knowledge, learning, skills and especially new insights, tend to be more successful if they adopt new and innovative strategic agendas, coupled with tactical innovations to new practices and initiatives leading HR to greater effectiveness and efficiency (Peng and Pleggenkuhle-Miles, 2009).

Global organisations, including tertiary institutions, learn from each other and all attempt to follow the examples of the 'best performers' by optimising their strengths and minimising their weaknesses, through new ideas either borrowed from the steps and lessons of 'new public management', or new ideas, strategies and experiences of international companies and on certain occasions, even competitors (Willcocks and Griffiths, 2014). As globalisation processes and trends continue, HR leadership and practitioners in all sectors face several serious challenges and pressures imposed by

the ever-changing environments facing them across the globe. Hence, the need for improving their capabilities to the full, to enable them to compete nationally and internationally. Such competition leads to the creation of national and international forums of knowledge sharing and transfer initiatives (North, 2010). Such initiatives also lead occasionally to co-operative and coordinating efforts at national, regional and international levels, that lead not only to sharing and acquiring important capability-enhancing skills, but also to gaining new and advanced organisational values and a sense of coherence (Rugman and Collinson, 2012).

Yavuz (2009), rightly pinpoints the fact that HRM practices, i.e. policies, practice and procedures, vary in effectiveness from one culture to another. Yavuz (2009) also quotes earlier important contributions by Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) and Budhwar and Debrah (2000), highlighting the fact that developing countries have adopted Western management theories and practices on the basis of success, as evidenced by Western organisations (Yavuz, 2009). Research during the first years of the new millennium consistently showed that transferring HRM policies and practices across countries could be challenging due to the obstacles related to countries' cultural and institutional environment (Myloni, Harzing and Mirza, 2004). This brings to the fore the debate on the efficacy of adopting HRM models and practices from other global regions which may not consider the local context, history, cultural nuances and practices of the organisation and the country it is located in. This may result in difficulties being experienced due to a mismatch of key dimensions which should be considered.

### **2.3.2 Comparative HRM Approaches**

Although each country's circumstances are different, there is considerable benefit to be gained from learning about different countries HRM practices, which refers to the differentiated HRM practices between countries (Brewster et al., 2011). The authors elaborate that within a socio-cultural context, the United States of America (USA), United Kingdom (UK) and Netherlands are individualistic cultures, while South-East Asian countries have a collectivist orientation. This has an impact on hierarchical power relations and related structures. Further, masculinity versus femininity have an impact on how people socialise and interact. For illustrative purposes, Japan, USA and Venezuela, have a dominant masculine culture while the Netherlands and

Sweden, have a feminine cultural orientation, evidenced in the prioritisation of quality of work life and relationships (Brewster et al., 2011). Gill (1999), sets out that Japanese HRM is closely related to hard HRM versions, with a focus on “the intensification of the work process, a diminution of worker autonomy employee influence through close surveillance”. HRM, argues Gill and Meyer (2011), creates a balance between soft and hard realities, with the trend toward an increasing focus on the contractual nature of the relationship between employee and employer; thereby establishing joint self-interest being pursued by both parties.

Differences in HRM practices in Korea, Japan and China, can be attributed due to the timing and the ‘pace of economic growth, unemployment trends and the impact of the Asian Crisis’. Rowley, Benson and Warner (2004), indicate the role of the state as being an important proponent for the HRM changes. They cite Chinese legislative change and economic reform, Japanese bureaucratic control and Korean governmental involvement as impacting on changes (Rowley et al., 2004). Crane and Matten (2016: 28), highlight that businesses in Europe are regulated to comply with business ethics while in developing countries like Africa and Latin America, the third sector, made up of non-governmental organisations (NGO’s), play an instrumental role in monitoring business ethics (Crane and Matten, 2016).

#### *2.3.2.1. HRM in Europe*

HRM in Europe has been a topical issue, wherein members of the European Union have indicated that factors related to aging workforces, psychological contractual issues, competitive recruitment drives are some of the challenges faced by European organisations (Scholz and Muller, 2010). The authors raise the intricacies related to the implementation of a homogenous set of HR strategies in Europe. Some of the complexity can be attributed to the country specific particularities that exist (Scholz and Muller, 2010).

Boselie and Brewster (2013:18), attest that European based critical thinkers in strategic HRM are focused on a wider set of stakeholders, which are characteristic of the continent. Another factor agreed to by Caldwell (2004); Kelly (2004), Gooderham and Nordhaug (2010) and Scholz and Muller (2010), is the impact of extraneous

macro-level challenges, which include the socio-cultural traditions and customs, legislative structures and institutional factors, on each country.

The convergence debate is upheld by a study cited in Scholz and Muller (2010), in which a study of seven participating European countries: Denmark; France; Germany; the Netherlands; Spain, Sweden and the UK, indicated a convergence of HRM practices. Brewster and Scullion (1997), in Gooderham and Nordhaug (2010: 12), is cited as stating that the USA based HRM model was not universally generalisable. This resulted in the development of a European HRM model by Brewster (Brewster and Scullion, 1997).

Scholz and Muller (2010), indicate that European HR functions do not enjoy the same level of autonomy as USA based firms' HR departments. Secondly, European HRM are conventionally less 'exposed to market processes'. Another level of distinction is that HRM in Europe are more focused on a collective or group approach as opposed to individuals, as seen in USA HR practices. Stakeholders in Europe play a more pivotal role in Europe than those in the USA and finally, labour market politics is more regulated in Europe (Scholz and Muller, 2010). Boselie and Brewster (2013), state that the European based critical thinkers espouse that strategic human resource management has a larger focus on a wider range of stakeholders. This, they posit, is representative of a continental trend (Boselie and Brewster, 2013).

#### *2.3.2.2 HRM in the USA*

Strategic HRM originated in the USA and was made popular by the Michigan and Harvard models. Scholz and Muller (2010), acknowledge that HRM has been heavily influenced by USA based practices and trends. The migration of these practices to other parts of the world is commonly accepted, notwithstanding the restrictions of cultural or national constraints. Another interesting fact posited by the authors, is the ability of different states in the US to adopt homogenous HRM practices, a trend that detracts from the experiences of European countries (Scholz and Muller, 2010). Brewster et al. (2011) and Gooderham and Nordhaug (2011), suggest that North American HRM is prescriptive as it is aligned to the performance of the organisation (Brewster et al., 2011, Gooderham and Nordhaug, 2011).

### *2.3.2.3 HRM in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Region: Special Emphasis on South Africa*

In the sub-Saharan African context, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) refers to a group of 15 member-states. The SADC was formed under the auspices of political and economic liberation of Southern Africa. These states include Angola; Botswana; Democratic Republic of Congo; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritius; Mozambique; Namibia; Seychelles; South Africa; Swaziland; Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. A gap in the international comparative literature on the topic, is noted and is indicative of the fact that Africa has been the least researched (Adeleye, 2011). The cultural and linguistic diversity that exists in the African context is illustrative of the former European colonisation of the continent (Adeleye, 2011).

Walters (2009) suggests that the HR function in South African organisations is required to partner with the executive portfolio heads at a strategic level, in order to be responsive to the need to attract, develop and retain skills, in a labour market characterised by skills shortages. This is reinforced by Bonninelli and Meyer (2004), who state that in addition to labour shortages, South African organisations must consider changes in union relationships, strategic priorities and business. They suggest the need for South African organisations to meet these changes by utilising proactive and effective change management and HR initiatives (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004). Walters (2009), mentions the need for the HR function to be proactive within the important role that the HR function plays in organisations and to effect required changes in the HR function (Walters, 2009). This ties in with Abbot et al. (2013), who espouse the need for HR practices to be linked to HR development.

Agyepong, Fugar Tuuli (2010), indicate that HRM policies are reflective of an organisations' people management practices. He believes that the factors outlined in existing HRM models, especially the Harvard and Warwick models, influence HRM policy development and practice. This falls within the political; socio-economic; technological, environmental and legal domains, as well as what the Harvard Model describes as the organisational situational domain. These models were, however, developed in the North American and European contexts. There are queries pertaining to the relevance of these models and fitness for purpose in developing countries (Agyepong et al., 2010).

It is common cause that HR models are influenced by their contexts, thereby indicating the importance of localised factors that will impact on HRM systems and decisions. Kamoche et al. (2004), assert that 'mainstream literature' has not critically addressed the associated HRM problems and challenges in Africa. Instead, they aver, HRM in Africa has been awkwardly wedged between East and West paradigms, without recognising local paradigms that may have an important bearing on managerial practices (Kamoche et al., 2004). An example would be the concept of Ubuntu (Lutz, 2009). Ubuntu is an Nguni African term, which can be translated to mean "I am what I am because of who we all are". The concept of Ubuntu was popularised by Nelson Mandela and Bishop Tutu. It espouses the qualities of human virtue, which include compassion; humanity and human kindness to others. It is steeped in African philosophy. It is also infused into African management practices and the social structure and philosophy. This is a profound and fundamental deviation from Western management theory and practice, which is focused on individualism and the maximisation of profit (Lutz, 2009).

Yavuz (2009), rightly advises that HRM practices, i.e. policies, practice and procedures vary in effectiveness from one culture to another and goes on to cite Kanungo and Jaeger (1990) and Budhwar and Debrah (2000), who highlight that developing countries have adopted Western management theories and practices based on success as evidenced by Western organisations. They highlight the dangers of such a practice which may not be suitable to organisations that do not embrace Western cultures. Yavuz (2009), citing research conducted by Myloni, et al. (2004), found that research consistently showed that transferring HRM policies and practices across countries could be challenging due to the obstacles related to those countries' cultural and institutional environment.

Adeleye (2011), citing Horwitz (2004:462), as well as Kamoche (2004), believes that even with extensive literature in the field of HRM, much emphasis remains on the West's industrialised countries and the East's emerging economies, whilst there is a shortage of empirical based studies on HRM in African countries. The proliferation of HRM practices from the West have been influenced by the perception of such models being considered 'best practice models', which promote high performance and high



commitment work practices. The author argues against the adoption of these HRM practices by African firms, on the basis that they are not suitable or advantageous from a cultural realist perspective (Adeleye, 2011).

Horwitz et al. (2004), suggest that HRM practices must be discussed in relation to both the global and local context. Boselie and Brewster (2013), outline the fact that regulatory differences exist between societies, but so does geography, education systems, attitudes towards women and labour markets (Boselie and Brewster, 2013, Croucher et al., 2012). HRM does not occur in isolation but within a socio-cultural, legal and political, economic and technological context (Syed and Kramar, 2012).

The isolation of the country for decades, because of apartheid, resulted in South Africa developing its own practices. Alternatively, in multi-national corporations, which had a footprint in South Africa, implementing HRM practices from the West, particularly the UK and the USA was the norm. Within a legal and political context, country specific laws, policies and standards provide a framework. As advanced by Syed and Kramar (2012:19), the state and legislature have an impact on employment practices in a country. These further impact on localised labour market trends and focus on the impact of global integration which have affected changes in the 'economic and institutional contexts of HRM' (Syed and Kramar, 2012:13).

Within the global response to apartheid and its atrocities, there were many attempts to exclude and impose restrictions on South Africa. Despite various efforts, however, South Africa was never completely excluded or isolated from the international arena. Some of the sanctions on the country included efforts undertaken by the United Nations General Assembly and their member states:

- Cessation of diplomatic, trade and transport relations in 1962.
- Suspension of cultural, educational and sporting exchanges in 1968.
- Establishment of the Centre Against Apartheid in 1976.
- Arms embargo in 1977.
- International Year of Mobilisation for Sanctions against South Africa in 1982.

Despite many efforts by the United Nations (UN) to impose mandatory social and economic sanctions on South Africa, it was not successful, as a few of its core members did not support its efforts to cut ties with South Africa (SA History, 2017). These UN member countries included the UK, USA and France (SA History, 2017). This connection may have contributed to the utilisation of HR practices, particularly common to the UK and USA being used in South Africa.

#### *2.3.2.4 HRM in South Africa*

The history of South African labour relations stretches as far back as the period before the discovery of gold and diamonds. During this period, the economy existed largely as an agrarian one, with the main economic activity being agriculture. Various legislation governed the relationship between the employer and farm workers (Finnemore, 2013). One particular legislation at the time was the Master and Servants Act 15 of 1856. Under this legislation, the employment relationship was regarded as being a “Master and Servant” relationship. Theoretically, the aforesaid Act applied to all races, but in practice, the laws were applicable only to unskilled work, most of which were performed by black people (Finnemore 2013:25).

The discovery of gold and diamonds during the Gold and Diamond Rush marked a migration of workers to the Witwatersrand, Kimberley and Pilgrims Rest, leading to the industrialisation of the South African economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Horwitz et al., 2004, McGreggo, Deker, Budeli-Memakonele, Germishys, Manamela, Manamela and Tshoose, 2015). Because South Africa did not have a sufficiently skilled labour force in the mines, on the one hand there were the unskilled black African mine workers who offered their services cheaply. On the other hand, there were skilled, mainly white mine workers who offered their labour. The division of race along social lines was by then firmly entrenched in the workplace (Horwitz et al., 2004, McGregor et al., 2015).

Conflict over territory, racial segregation and a highly stratified approach to the division of labour along racial lines was further firmly entrenched in 1948. The National Party legalised the system of apartheid in this year. During the apartheid period, industrial relations were characterised by racial discrimination; conflict; union repression, cheap labour policies and an authoritarian management style (Webster, 2015). These discriminatory practices led to the entrenchment of the migrant labour system; division

of labour, patriarchal workplaces and a range of abuses, which may have included bullying, intimidation and harassment in workplaces (Webster, 2015). The 1970's witnessed a shift related to a decline in an adequately educated population, to achieve economic growth (Simkins, 2016).

The legacy of apartheid created deep ravines in the South African society, the impact of which, is still experienced in a post-apartheid society. These were foregrounded by Acts such as the Industrial Conciliation Act and Bantu Education Act. In the 1970's, the Wiehahn Commission undertook an investigation into the status of labour law. The commission made recommendations based on 'organisational rights, right to fair labour practices and social protection amongst others'. This was further extensively addressed in the post-apartheid transitional period, where many new and improved legislative reforms were introduced. Post-apartheid South Africa observed a new direction in terms of promoting opportunities for institutions to settle disputes and to ensure workplace fairness (Webster, 2015). The Interim Constitution of South Africa introduced a range of rehabilitative initiatives, which included legislative efforts to prohibit discriminatory practices in the workplace. The principles of justice are firmly enshrined in the Constitution and monitored by state agencies including the Department of Labour and the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA).

The formation of a Government of National Unity in 1994, created the need for an overhaul of people management practices to reflect changes in the Labour environment. A range of laws such as the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (as amended), Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (as amended), Skills Development Act 97 of 1998, and the Occupational Health and Safety Act 85 of 1993, were introduced to advance redress of measures toward the creation of a free and fair society, in which all citizens could participate in socio-economic and political activities. A fervent commitment to effective, fair and transparent labour practices was demonstrated.

Amid much political change, the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) was formed. NEDLAC is a statutory body which brings together 'organised business, labour and the State' (Horwitz et al., 2004). NEDLAC was established through an Act of Parliament in 1994. It is funded by the Department of Labour and

focuses on four chambers. These chambers are the labour market chamber, the trade and industry chamber, the development chamber and the public finance and monetary chamber. Three current challenges for NEDLAC include sustainable economic growth, greater social equity and increased participation (Horwitz et al., 2004). Most importantly, NEDLAC emphasised that the employment relationship should also be managed in a manner that advances the organisational justice and humanistic mandates of the ILO and the Constitution of South Africa (International Labour Organisation, 2011, Horwitz et al., 2004).

## **2.4 An Overview of HR Models**

The previous section dealt with a brief history of labour related developments in South Africa, which gave rise to a deeply ingrained commitment toward the upholding of fair and equal labour, HR and workplace practices. The following section will present an overview of HRM practices by locating HR systems and practices within a global context.

It is commonly known and understood that HR models in different and diverse sectors and environments are influenced by particular contexts (Peng and Pleggenkuhle-Miles, 2009). As explained by Bana (2008), the employment relationship has been influenced and shaped by different models and processes over a period of time (Bana, 2008). Literature on the evolution of employment management in countries other than the UK and USA, is very scant. Buller and McEvoy (2012), advocate the need for effective HR models with knowledgeable HR professionals, who know about business strategy and who will play the role of integral strategic management partners. Notably, origins and changes in HRM theories and practices, have been driven by broader changes within the social, economic, political and institutional context. HRM theories have a legacy of being developed by management schools in the USA and the UK and have been adopted by other regions (Syed and Kramar, 2012). A heavy leaning towards the USA and UK based influence, therefore, has an impact on the use of these HRM theories in other countries (Syed and Kramar, 2012). They further advocate the need for policies and practices to be contextualised. In addition to organisational demands for efficiency and drive for quality, HRM owes its momentum to technological development, changing values and to increased workforce diversity (Van Buren, Greenwood and Sheehan, 2011).

The HR system is also referred to as the HR model, HR delivery or operating model. In essence, it refers to the HR organisational structure, roles in the structure, capabilities or competencies required in the structure, related processes in the structure and other secondary aspects, including technology, governance and evaluation (CIPD, 2015). HRM systems are comprised of the central HRM philosophies, HRM policies, HRM practices and the technological and social processes, which advance institutional HRM practices (Jackson, Schuler and Jiang, 2014). The difference between ideologies, policies, and practices in HRM is argued from a systems perspective, with principles of the HR system being the central points of managerial influence. In summary then, it is the HR system that gives effect to strategic institutional imperatives (Jackson et al., 2014).

Sikora and Ferris (2014), indicate that although HR professionals aspire to play a strategic role in their institutions, their focus on cost containment and increasing efficiency is misplaced. It is, they argue, too mundane to suggest a strategic orientation. An interesting observation is that they highlight the need for line managers and HR to share accountability for the performance of the workforce (Sikora and Ferris, 2014).

#### **2.4.1 HRM Model Typologies: Hard and Soft Approaches**

Amongst the pioneer writers on HR, Guest, (1997), Legge (1995), and Truss (1999), agreed that there are 'hard and soft HRM perspectives' when defining HRM (Guest, 1997, Legge, 1995, Truss, Gratton, Ope-Hailley, McGovern and Stiles, 1997). A number of others through empirical research, much later agreed with this viewpoint (Yavuz, 2009). These are based on different views of 'human nature and managerial control strategies' (Truss et al., 1997). The development of a conceptual HR model commenced in the 1980's. The first model, the Michigan Model, was developed in 1984. The Harvard Model followed closely, having also been developed during 1984. The Michigan and Harvard models were the foundation of future HRM models (Guest and Conway, 2011, Guest, 1989, Guest, 1997, Legge, 1995, Purcell and Sisson, 1990). The aim of these models were to provide a guide on HR best practice and associated outcomes for HR functions, notably, origins and changes in HRM theories and practices have been driven by broader changes in social, economic, political and institutional context (Guest and Conway, 2011).

Buller and McEvoy (2012), encourage the need for effective HR models with knowledgeable HR professionals who know about business strategy and who will play the role of integral strategic management partners. Typically, HR models are indicative of the type of policies, practices and processes used by organisations. HR models are largely categorised into hard and soft models (Legge, 1995, Truss et al., 1997, Yavuz, 2009, Buller and McEvoy, 2012). HRM models are indicative of the type of policies, practices and processes used by organisations.

There are two distinct types of HR models that can be identified, hard and soft HRM models. These are based on different views of 'human nature and managerial control strategies' (Truss et al., 1997 and Gratton et.al 2011). The soft approach has its roots in the human-relations school, wherein the emphasis is on communication, motivation and leadership (Popescu, 2016). The openness and transparency of engagement with employees ensures that employees are aware of and included in, decisions related to their employment and well-being (Popescu, 2016). Hard HRM models view employees as a means to achieving an organisation's goals. The hard HRM approach is referred to as utilitarian instrumentalism (Legge, 1995). The central tenet is the need for the 'close integration of human resource policies, systems and activities with business strategy'. Hard models are focused on profit, while soft models place an emphasis on a humanised approach to HRM. The hard model sees HR as a key driver of production wherein employees are viewed as a means of production and are considered a true cost (Legge, 1995). The HR system is, however, ultimately designed to optimise employee performance and support the organisational goals. The hard approach, where employees are viewed and managed as resources (Carbury and Cross, 2013, Saha, 2013, Yavuz, 2009), is further described as one which:

- Views employees as a resource to be used to achieve organisational goals.
- Places a value on employees to make a meaningful contribution to the business strategy.
- Views employees as a means to achieving an organisation's goals, with a focus on stringent and inflexible HR systems that drive strategic objectives.
- Employees are considered a passive resource and a quantitative approach is used to managing human resources.

A soft model approach places value on employees and sees them as a source of competitive advantage, where through investing in employees, they become more motivated and productive (Van Buren et al., 2011). The same authors posit that soft models perceive employees as 'creative, proactive and worthy of development'. Yavuz (2009) quotes Jackson (2002) and Simmons (2006), who offer a description of the soft approach in HRM, which views people through a developmental lens (Yavuz, 2009). They suggest that the soft approach aims to invest in people through developmental initiatives to engender greater employee effort and commitment to the organisation (Yavuz, 2009). The soft HRM approach has also been described as developmental humanism (Legge, 1995). It is characterised by:

- The importance of integrating HR policies with business objectives.
- Emphasises treating employees as valued assets and a source of competitive advantage through their commitment, adaptability and high-quality skill and performance.
- Employees are seen to be pro-active and are encouraged to participate in production rather than to passively contribute to the production process.
- Emphasises employee development and engendering trust.
- Commitment is encouraged through communication, leadership and motivation.

Legge (1995), summarises the characteristics of the soft HRM approach as being focused on the "human" element in HRM, a position expanded considerably by Jackson and Mathis (2012), on their related book on Human Resource Management. The duality and paradox of HR is cleverly addressed by O'Brien and Linehan (2014). The authors refer to the divergent demands from a multiplicity of stakeholders. It is the role of the HR profession to consider and cater for these demands within the context of the larger strategic needs of the organisation. The HR professional is tasked with ensuring that the equilibrium in the organisation is maintained, from workforce planning; competency mapping, training and developing needs being catered for, to the delivery of business targets, which may include profits and growth of the business (O'Brien and Linehan, 2014). An overview of common HR models is presented below.

## 2.4.2 Common HR Models

### 2.4.2.1 Job Demands Resources Model

The Job Demands Resources Model is described by Bakker (2005), as focusing on job characteristics that have significant influence on employee well-being, which may manifest into job strain, burnout and low levels of engagement. The model has been built on both theory and practical research and is based on the calculated assumption, that every job is characterised by a variety of risk factors that are specific to a wide variety of occupational categories (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004).

The job demands are associated with several individual; group; social, psychological and/or organisational aspects of the profession. These demand serious efforts at different levels as well a specific range of skills which are needed. During the workplace process, there are possibilities of personal, psychological or other costs, associated with emotional and/or work pressure related realities (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti and Schaufeli, 2009). Job resources on the other hand, are related to organisational; personal; psychological, social and/or physical aspects of the workplace, that are instrumental in enhancing the opportunities for personal, professional and organisational growth and reducing the job demand. They on most occasions lead to better functionality, knowledge enhancement and personal and organisational development (Bakker et al., 2005). The existence of the two areas are fundamental to either contributing to strain, or motivation, in the respective cases (Bakker and Bal, 2010).

### 2.4.2.2 Ulrich Model

The Ulrich Model, also referred to as the Value-Proposition Model (VPM), was developed by Ulrich and Brockbank in 2005. According to Weinacker (2008), the development of the VPM was based on the Strategic Human Resources Management Model, originally created by McMann in 1992. The VPM assess HR within the context of the environment within which it operates. Significant focus is placed on the theories, choices and actions available to the HR professional 'to enhance value in the form of energy' to the flow of work, performance, information and people within the organisation (Weinacker, 2008). The key emphasis of this model is on the need for HR to deliver on strategic and administrative activities (Cooper, 2015). The fundamental aspect is the shared services centre, which consolidates administrative



and specialist roles and activities into a centralised model. A critical aspect of the Ulrich Model is the role of the HR Business Partner (Cooper, 2015).

According to Ulrich (1997), the originator of the theory and one of its key exponents, HR leaders contribute to the shaping of business and the achievement of strategic results. He wrote that four principal roles must be fulfilled to support a HR model, which would reflect the repositioning of the HR function. These are the roles of strategic partner, administrative expert, employee champion and change agent, which require a new range of competencies. He advanced the belief that employees are taking a more involved approach regarding decision-making processes that impact on them and require transparency of such transactions. This has an impact in how they (employees), evaluate and respond in their loyalty and commitment to the organisation (Ulrich, 1997). The Ulrich model addresses the need for HR to deliver on strategic and administrative activities. A key characteristic of this model is the suitability to larger, matrix type organisations (Cooper, 2015).

#### *2.4.2.3 Value-added Roles Model*

Brault and Beckwith (2003), developed a model called the Value-Added Roles Model, for use in higher education. The model was developed from Ulrich's Value Proposition Model. Four categories were classified as being of importance; provision of skilled staff, enhancing organisational effectiveness, motivating performance and finally the design and implementation of effective processes. Brault and Beckwith (2003), proposed that the adoption of a value-added HR paradigm requires certain supporting structures to be in place to ensure successful implementation of the model. This includes a redefinition of HR roles; the development of HR competencies, implementation of new approaches and an accountability based on outcomes (Brault and Beckwith, 2003). Losey et.al., however, questioned the relevance of a value-proposition model and the application of its divergent elements (Losey et al., 2005). On the other hand, it has been pointed out that there was no empirical research conducted on the applicability or impact of this approach in higher education (Weinacker, 2008).

#### 2.4.2.4 Harvard Model

Referred to as a soft model, the Harvard Model focused on four policies for effective HR management, which are employee influence, HR flow, reward systems and work systems (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills and Walton (1984); Guest, 1989). The Harvard Model was developed by Beer et al. (1984), and Guest (1989), with a focus on multi-stakeholder interests, relevance of situational factors and the long-term impact of HR policies and practices. The model was referred to as developmental humanism (Legge, 1995). The Harvard Model focused on the same four policies for effective HR management, employee influence; human resource flow, reward systems and work systems. These were, however, expanded to include the following:

- Organisational job design.
- Policy formulation and implementation.
- Management of change.
- Recruitment, selection and socialisation.
- Appraisal training and development.
- Manpower flows.
- Reward systems and communication systems.

This model is premised on policy choices and its impact on HR outcomes of commitment, competence and cost-effectiveness. The long-term benefits include well-being of individual staff members, organisational effectiveness and greater societal well-being. The system's focus was on a comprehensive and strategic HR system (Agyepong, Fugar, Tuuli, 2010). Armstrong (2009), has written that personnel management challenges can be addressed through the vision embraced by general managers, with respect to how employees are involved in the organisation. The link between HR and general managers is emphasised. An important aspect of the Harvard Model is the need for the role that line managers are expected to play (Beer, Spector, Lawrence, Mills and Walton, 1984). Beer et al (1984), stressed the role of line managers who in their view, should assume additional accountability for ensuring the 'alignment of competitive strategy and personnel policies'. In addition, they advocate that line managers should also have the ability to set policies that impact on the development of personnel activities (Beer et al., 1984, Agyepong et al., 2010).

Boselie and Brewster (2013), suggest that the Harvard Model be revised with theoretical highlights and applied insights, to take cognisance of changes over the last twenty years. They use the example of stakeholder interest to suggest that broad underpinnings espoused by Beer et al. in 1984 be considered. This is with specific reference to multiple stakeholder interests, situational dynamics and consideration of long-term effects. They argue that an averment from the original model is not required, but that contemporary HRM research and practices, need to be considered (Boselie and Brewster, 2013).

Institutions, which utilise an open systems model, receive input from the environment and transforms these into outputs (Ulrich et al., 2012). According to Ulrich et al. (2012), the correlation between employee attitude and productivity is important. A favourable employee attitude leads to employees finding meaning in their work resulting in a demonstration of enhanced competence, commitment and contribution. Price (2007), indicates that this UK based model, is based on the correlation between employee behaviour and commitment to strategic management goals. Classified as utilitarian, the employee relationship is between the employee and the employer organisation. As a soft model, the role of trade unions is not highly valued (Price, 2007).

#### *2.4.2.5 Guest Model*

The Guest Model is premised on the need for relevant policy choices to impact on 'HR commitment, competence and cost-effectiveness' (Guest, 1989). The long-term benefits include well-being of individual staff members, organisational effectiveness and greater societal well-being. The Guest Model added more policy areas in addition to the four identified by the Harvard Model (Guest, 1989). Guest and Conway (2011), suggest that four key questions be considered and answered before further advancement in the HRM field takes place. The questions include; how the measuring of HRM practices and systems takes place, which practices or combinations of practices, have the most impact on performance; what are the conditions under which certain HRM practices make positive differences and how is the existence of HR practices (content), and the effectiveness of their implementation process, established (Guest and Conway, 2011).

#### *2.4.2.6 The Michigan Model*

The 1980s witnessed the development of the Matching or Michigan Model (Legge, 2005). Unveiled in 1984, it was closely followed by the Harvard Model that same year. The Michigan Model was formulated by Fombrun and his colleagues and has been described as a hard model. Legge (2005), has explained that the Michigan Model is referred to as utilitarian instrumentalism and as HRM, thus defining the difference between this approach and the Harvard Model. The Model is significantly based on the principles of the combination of quality, excellence in sales and services, high staff/labour productivity and ultimately high rates of profitability. These principles represent the fundamental tenets of the mission and vision of organisations utilising the principles of the model (Legge, 2005). Paauwe, (2004) indicated clearly that the Michigan Model followers' key focus is economic development through profit instead of emphasis on human moral and ethical values (Paauwe, 2004). This means that the proponents and followers of this model did not pay much attention to the human element in HRM, but their key interest was the management of resources through business and financial success (Legge, 2005).

Wright and Snell (2005), expanded on the issue, connecting the model with re-organisation patterns, out-sourcing services and frequent staff dismissals, which according to Boselie, Brewster and Paauwe (2009), are instrumental in increasing the economic value of an organisation (Boselie et al., 2009, Wright and Snell, 2005). The initial bases of the model as outlined by Fombrun (1984), concentrated on HRM strategies and their attachment to an overall business strategy. It has been written that when HRM strategies 'fit' the business strategy, company performance is mostly positive (Huselid et al., 1997, Fombrun, 1984).

The alignment of strategic 'fit' with individual HRM practices creates a successful functional system and elevates organisational performance, especially in the short and medium term (Delery and Doty, 1996). It can be gauged that as a top-down approach, the Michigan Model is substantially different from the Harvard Model, both in theory and practice (Brewster, 1995, Brewster, 1999, Paauwe and Boselie, 2003). The influence of a number of significant external factors, however, such as international and local competition; the changes in the labour markets; technological advances; national and international laws and conventions, wars and changes in societal values,

have somehow brought the concrete application of their principles closer (Brewster and Mayrhofer, 2012). Legge (2005), critiqued the model as being too focused on the economic value in lieu of moral values, thereby making it a hard model.

#### *2.4.2.7 Normative Model*

The key characteristic of normative HRM is that there is 'a clear and direct relationship between institutional strategy and HRM'. Gill (1999), advises that normative HRM is characterised by two common themes. The first is that HR policies should be aligned to strategic business planning and are important for influencing a fitting organisational culture. The second aspect is that HR, as a valuable source can advance competitive advantage, which can be effectively managed or leveraged through inculcating a culture of commitment, through the development of appropriate policies (Gill, 1999, Legge, 1995). The normative perspective of HR is rooted on the conceptual understanding of 'soft' and 'hard' HRM, as exemplified above in relation to the Harvard and Michigan Models and their particularities, finding their realisation in the workplace (Mello, 2006, Torrington et al., 2005). In this sense the normative model despite a number of similarities, also has differences, when compared to the descriptive and analytical models (Schuler and Jackson, 2008).

The similarities lie in the reality that many of the important elements of the HRM models have common roots in the understanding of behaviourism-based theories, that deal with issues of leadership, organisational team work, motivation and key performance area (KPA) (Schuler and Jackson, 2008). Gill (1999), wrote that normative HRM is characterised by two common themes. The first is that HR policies should be aligned to strategic business planning, which is important for positively influencing 'appropriate organisational culture'. The second aspect is that HR is a valuable source of 'competitive advantage', which is effectively managed through 'policies that promote commitment' (Gill, 1999, Legge, 1995). The key characteristic of normative HRM is that there is a clearly structured relationship between the institutional strategy and HRM strategy.

Gill (1999:3), critiques that this linear approach to HR debases its strategic function. The contradictions in utilising a hybrid approach are brought to the fore by Gill (1999), who cites Keenoy (1990) and Legge, (1995:3), who highlight the discord that the two

contradictory approaches create (Gill, 1999). They advance that the rhetoric posited, make strategic oriented action challenging and that the inherent contradictions present a discord, between advancing the interests of an organisations ‘valued assets’, its employees and the hard cost or expenditure related factors (Gill, 1999).

Table 2.2 identifies a variety of the best known and applied or utilised models existing at present with their hard or soft classification models, their origins and key proponents, their key characteristics, and their literature sources.

SCHOOLS	YEAR	APPROACH
The Michigan School	1984	It puts in the foreground the coherence of internal HR practices and the congruence between HRM practices and organisational strategy.
The Harvard Model	1984	Is based on the belief that the problems of historical Personnel Management can be solved only “when general managers develop a view point of how they wish to see employees involved in and developed by the enterprise, and of what HRM policies and practices may achieve those goals” (Armstrong, 2006)
The Guest Model	1987	HRM differs from Personnel Management for the following four reasons: It integrates human resources into strategic management; The perspective is unitary with the focus on individual; It works better in such organisations which have an “organic” structure; The emphasis is on a full and positive utilization of HR (Bratton and Gold, 2003)
Ulrich Model	2005	The fundamental aspect of this model is the shared services centre, which consolidates administrative and specialist roles and activities into a centralised model. A critical aspect of the Ulrich Model is the role of the HR Business Partner.

*Table 2.2: Adapted from Aikenar (2014) The Schools' Approaches of HRM.*

## **2.5 HR Competencies, Qualifications, Professional Membership and Ethics**

### **2.5.1 HR Competencies**

HR professionals require a wide range of competencies to meet both current and emerging organisational challenges. HR professionals need to pursue learning and

professional development initiatives throughout their career, to maximise their contributions to the organisations they serve (Losey et al., 2005). The traditional roles of HR professionals being responsible for designing HRM policies in relation to a business plan, the transacting of the applicable policies into daily processes and procedures, with employees being the beneficiaries of these policies has fundamentally changed. The new HRM system, has resulted in HR professionals being critical players in business planning processes, while supervisors and managers grapple with and are required to interpret policies and the implementation thereof. Employees, particularly high performers, are actively involved in negotiating their contracts of employment and related employment conditions (Jackson et al., 2014). HR practitioners give effect to human capital development and the related correlation and impact on quality of life (Abbot, 2011).

HR professionals help to maximise shareholder returns through the use of HR practices. To give effect to HR practices, a range of relevant competencies are required (Abbott, 2011). The development of critical HR competencies are integral to promote transformation in universities (Schultz, 2010). Competencies are defined as behaviours, which establish excellent performance in a particular work context (Mangaleswaran, 2015). New competencies required by HR professionals include the need to adopt a research-based approach to solutions; the consideration of supply and demand trends, scenario plans and the development and implementation of HR policies and procedures to meet identified requirements (Schultz, 2010). Jackson et al. (2014), correctly indicate that the HRM system is characterised by an interdependence between three key elements; HR professionals, line managers and the targeted employees. They further set out the roles that each element plays in the 'HR Triad relationship' as espoused by Jackson and Schuler (2003), (Jackson et al., 2014). Huselid et al. (1997), as well as Becker et al. (2006), submit that HR managers are more adept at technical or operational HR activities, as opposed to the executive strategy. They advocate the need for further research on 'the common body of knowledge'; skills, competencies and behaviours needed to be effective workforce strategy matters, which apply to HR and line management roles (Huselid et al., 1997). Boninelli et al (2004) and Schultz (2010), advocate that HR managers are under stress to fulfil the dual mandate of functional and strategic leadership and therefore require

a range of managerial, strategic and HR specific competencies (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004, Schultz, 2010).

Much has been written about the strategic HR function. De Silva (2012), attests that a strong correlation exists between institutions with efficient HRM policies and practices and strategic decision-making, which is strongly influenced by strategy and structure. De Silva (2012), also considers the transitional nature of what was the 'personnel management function', reinforcing the marginalisation of the function in terms of its management activities and hierarchy over the last twenty years and attributes the shift from personnel function to HR management, to a more strategic orientation and the delivery of management objectives (De Silva, 2012). The need to build relevant competency capability is now a strategic imperative of the South African Board for Personnel Practice (SABPP). The SABPP has developed a range of competencies and HR standards for HR practitioners. A targeted approach to elevate HR competencies should enhance delivery of HRM and support to the wider organisation.

Generalist HRM competencies include a combination of business dynamics; systems; processes; project management; change management, knowledge management and research skills (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004, Burchell, 2002, Govender, 2013, Ulrich, 1997). The capability to effectively work in the different sub-areas requires in-depth knowledge, adequate training and experience in a specific sub-field. According to Govender (2013), specialisation in a specific sub-discipline of HR, requires that an HR manager enhance their knowledge in that discipline, over and above the generalist HR knowledge and skills he/she would ordinarily have. Fundamentally, HR managers utilise three essential instruments in their work. These instruments are policies, programmes and plans (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013). A brief overview is presented in Table 2.3.



<b>POLICIES</b>	Local sets of rules or codes, used to co-ordinate people management activities
<b>PROGRAMMES</b>	Interventions designed to achieve specific objectives such as a change programme following a merger or redundancy programme
<b>PLANS</b>	Specific instruments or tools

*Table 2.3: Adapted from Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2013:14)*

In a pioneering contribution Burchell (2002), describes the following as specific HR competencies required to enhance HR management capability:

- Change management, to ensure a proactive, anticipatory role in managing organisational change as opposed to a reactive role.
- Knowledge of strategic roles and functions, to promote a better understanding of the strategic roles in HR management.
- E-Technology in HR, to promote self-service and simplify HR administration.
- Effective HR administration, to ensure on-going and efficient HR administrative systems are implemented and maintained.

Coyle-Shapiro et al. (2013:13), highlight the need for the HR practitioner to develop many skills required for the understanding of employee behaviour and actions; development of theory and tools, the ability to plan for and react to changes. They advance that a combination of social disciplines, including, but not limited to economics, industrial relations and organisational behaviour are required. They indicate that HR policy is fundamentally multi-disciplinary in nature, conjecturing that the capability to recognise and develop HR policies is not a 'trivial intellectual task' (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013).

Effort needs to be made to avoid the long-term effects of incorrect HR decisions and practices (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013). These incorrect applications can be avoided through planning and implementing relevant and well-researched HR practices. Any

shift in the HRM approaches used, requires a re-assessment of the HR competencies that will be required to support this change. The different areas of HR impact on each other, therefore no HR policy can be analysed in a silo (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013).

The Deloitte Human Capital Trends Report (2016), indicates that many HR organisations recognise the need for upskilling the abilities, competencies and experience of their teams (Deloitte, 2016). The diversification of the workforce due to globalisation, requires a reorientation toward inclusivity from an organisational dynamic perspective. In addition, digital technological advancements require innovative practices for digital HR considerations. Agility in dealing with the fast pace of change, is another consideration that businesses need to be apprised of and finally, the very nature of the employer-employee relationship has changed. Employees are mobile and are in charge of their employment contracts; the latter being remunerative and social in nature (Deloitte, 2016).

### **2.5.2 HR Qualifications**

The Oxford Dictionary's definition of a profession is used by Van Rensburg (2009:83), which is defined as a "basic aspect of work, which involves mastery over a body of knowledge and skills". Additionally, it is a vocation where one is in service to others, formal learning is assumed, alongside a cognition of ethics, integrity and the promotion of public good. A social contract between the profession and society must be in place (Van Rensburg, 2009).

Turning to Goosen (2011:37), one finds that tertiary institutions may neglect to deliberate on the needs of industry, thereby falling short on training graduates in specific tasks (Goosen, 2011). She opines the need for institutions to deliberate and meet the needs of both the individual learner and the organisation. In the academic milieu, institutions and departments in universities in most African countries have changed the titles of their courses from Personnel Management or Personnel Administration to HRM. This has also applied to the names of faculties and departments. The content of the courses, however, have not been reviewed or changed to match the requirements of the HRM model. Moreover, there has not been a serious effort to re-orient or disseminate the HRM knowledge and competencies of the teaching staff (Goosen, 2011).

The National Diploma in HRM is a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 6 qualification. (The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Qualification number is ID 90674). The qualification requires 360 minimum credits. An extract of the purpose of the qualification is provided hereunder. It is noteworthy that the purpose is both vague and verbose and does not provide an overview of the detail of the qualification. While the duration of a Human Resource Management Degree is 3 years, the curriculum requires revision. The relevance of the curriculum is questionable. Currently, the qualification is aimed at 'giving the learner technical, theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and workplace knowledge and skills required in their chosen occupational/vocational area' (SAQA, 2017). The curriculum currently covers these specific subject areas:

- Financial accounting.
- Business management.
- Statistics.
- Industrial and organisational psychology.
- Business law.
- Social research: Introductory methodology.
- Communication management.

The question arises as to whether it meets the needs of an evolutionary function and discipline.

### **2.5.3 Professional Membership Bodies**

Many professional membership organisations exist in South Africa. The purpose of a professional body is to provide guidance and development to HR professionals. By doing so, these bodies contribute to the overall enhancement and professionalisation of HR practices. Such membership offers expert advice and support in areas of HRM. A brief overview of the common professional bodies will be discussed in the next section.

#### *2.5.3.1 Institute for People Management*

The Institute for People Management (IPM), is a professional membership body for HR Practitioners. The IPM was established in 1945. The objective of the IPM is to

enhance people management skills and the competence of HR Professionals. The IPM is affiliated to and a founding member of the African Human Resource Confederation and the World Federation of People Management Associations. Other affiliations include being a 'sister' organisation to the Society for Human Resource Management, a USA based organisation; the Chartered Institute of People Development in the UK; the Australian Human Resources Institute in Australia. The IPM offers membership in professional; non-professional, individual and corporate categories. The IPM offers a monthly publication called People Dynamics to its members.

#### *2.5.3.2 South African Board for Personnel Practice*

The South African Board for Personnel Practice (SABPP), is another professional body for HR Practitioners in South Africa. The SABPP offers various categories for professional membership. It is also an accreditation body for universities, as recognised by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). The SABPP publishes the HR Future Magazine and the Human Capital Review.

#### *2.5.3.3 Industrial Relations Association of South Africa*

The Industrial Relations Association of South Africa, is affiliated to the International Industrial Relations Association, which is based at the ILO, in Geneva. Formed in the early 1990's the objective of the body was to provide a platform for Employee Relations Practitioners through professional membership.

#### *2.5.3.4 South African Rewards Association*

The South African Rewards Association (SARA), was established in 1997. It is a professional body. SARA has membership of approximately four hundred and thirty members, comprised of 73 individuals, and 357 corporate organisations. SARA has around four thousand individuals on their database. SARA has a presence in Gauteng; Kwa-Zulu Natal, Western Cape and Eastern Cape. A newsletter is disseminated at least every 2 months and newflashes go out in-between an event and other industry-type updates. Professional development courses are offered in the following categories; Global Remuneration Practitioner courses (and the associated global certification); Minimum Rewards Standards; Sales Compensation, Total Cost to Company and Tax workshops and GR2 made easy with Excel workshops. In addition,

an Employee Benefits and Tax workshop is held annually. An annual conference is held in Gauteng each year in late October or early November.

#### 2.5.3.5 South African Payroll Association

The South African Payroll Association (SAPA), was established as a professional body in 1999. The SAPA website sets out the goal of the institution as that of promoting excellence in the payroll profession. Members receive newsletters, regular seminars and workshops are held, in addition to an annual conference. There are various categories for membership. SAPA is the Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) professional body for payroll. Members must adhere to the SAPA Code of Ethics.

There are no entry requirements for entrants into the field of HRM as an employee. The practice has been that individuals with an interest in HR or in recent times, any undergraduate qualification could enter the discipline. Professional bodies therefore have a very important role to play in the setting of minimum requirements, offering specialisation in the different fields of HR, monitoring performance and upholding codes of conduct, for practitioners in a specific HR field. Table 2.4 offers a summary of the areas of professional development and related qualifications.

AREA	MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS	PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATIONS	
Recruitment	None	APSO	SABPP/IPM
HR Information	None	None	
Employee Relations	LLM	None	
Organisational Development	Hons Industrial/Organisational Psychology	None	
Training and Development	Skills Development Facilitator Training	None	
Remuneration and Benefits	None	SARA	
EAP/Wellness	Counselling Psychology or related	None	

Table 2.4: Professional Registration

### 2.5.3.6 HR Ethics

The application of HRM requires the exercise of social responsibility. Van Aswegen and Engelbrecht (2009), reinforce the need for HR practitioners to uphold ethical behaviour as they discharge their administrative, monitoring and compliance responsibilities (Van Aswegen and Engelbrecht, 2009). HRM must be concerned with the interests and well-being of employees and act ethically, regarding the needs of people in the organisation and community. Schoeman (2017) highlights the important role that HR plays in setting and maintaining ethical culture in three critical aspects; ethical standards, ethical awareness and operational ethics (Schoeman, 2017). This is indicative of the central role that HR plays in advancing ethical behaviours. HR has a critical role in advancing an ethical institutional culture and creating an ethical workplace for their employees (Schoeman, 2017).

Macey et al (2009), reveal that peers and supervisors, unfair HR practices, low employment security, inappropriate performance standards and lack of resources contribute to employees leaving jobs. Employees want to feel valued and cared for and employee well-being is a joint responsibility between the line manager and HR (Hill et al., 2008). This could alleviate role ambiguity, role conflict and fluctuations in role over-load or under-load. This demonstrates the role of HR in ensuring a fair and equitable workplace and environment. The importance of ethics is demonstrated in the UK, where adherence to ethical conduct in business practice and HR practices is prioritised. This was reinforced by the European Union in 2000, when it committed to endorse companies that committed to the demonstrated practice of commitment and respect for human and trade union rights (Rose, 2007).

Rose (2007) and Markoulli et al (2017), reveal that the core aspects of ethics, values, and morals have increased in complexity and are open to interpretation in a post-modern era. The importance of ethics, values and morals and their embeddedness in HRM is highlighted. The importance of these are ascribed to the impact that HRM has on individuals' lives. Individuals' and their families' livelihoods, starting with employment; remuneration, discipline and work-life harmony and balance are impacted (Markoulli et al., 2017, Rose, 2007).

While ethics can be viewed from a micro-perspective, various global initiatives have sought to address ethics throughout the world. An example of this is 'The Global Compact', a code of good practice developed by the United Nations and launched in July 2000. The Global Compact, encouraged institutions to implement nine human rights values into their business strategies. A core focus is on stakeholders' needs. Another global endeavour is the Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (International Labour Organisation, 2003). Launched in 1998 by the ILO, the focus is on the eradication of forced labour; eradication of child labour, freedom of association and the right to work in environments that are free from discrimination (International Labour Organisation, 2003). Another global initiative is the Guidelines for Multinational Corporations, developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In this initiative, behavioural principles related to employment and industrial relations; environmental impact; combating bribery; consumer interests; science and technology, competition and taxation are addressed (Rose, 2007). Despite global or local ethical standards being adopted or aspired toward within organisations, the HR manager has an important role to play in cultivating and sustaining such endeavours (Brewster et al., 2007). The HR managers' role in inculcating and sustaining an ethical culture is stressed by Brewster et al., as follows:

- Nurturing of an ethical organisational culture.
- Recruitment of staff who set the tone of the organisation and uphold its values and ethical climate.
- Resolution of ethical conflict when it occurs.
- Dealing with the aftermath of an ethical conflict.

As seen from the discussion above, it can be said that the role of HR is often underestimated and under-valued in its ability to maintain and advance ethical principles. Because HRM has a tremendous impact on individuals' lives in terms of their livelihoods, the entire cycle of employment, beginning with the appointment, remuneration, discipline and work-life harmony and balance, there should be more recognition and support for HR managers in their quest for maintaining ethical standards in the workplace (Brewster et al., 2007). Lutz (2009), laments the need for

ethical management practices on a global level. This re-enforces the need to focus on ethical management practices.

## **2.6 The Impact of HRM Advancements on SA HRM**

The advancements in HRM both locally and internationally, indicate the critical role that HR plays in institutions. Despite this critical role, the value of HR is often contested (Lawler and Mohrman, 2003). The reasons for this contestation vary. Lawler and Mohrman (2003), posit that 'in developed countries', organisations exhibit a high level of dependency on their human capital for their competitive advantage. This dependency attests to the critical position of HR in organisations (Lawler and Mohrman, 2003). The growing consensus that effective human capital management is critical to an organisation's success is further echoed by Jackson et al. (2003), who maintains that this should be no different for either South African organisations or organisations in other developing countries (Jackson et al., 2003).

A fundamental question is that of determining if HR contributes to the development of strategy. The work of Coyle-Shapiro et al., (2013:13) indicates that the consequence of ensuring correct HR policies, programmes and plans and how they relate to three essential questions, with regard to the role of HR and its role in the organisation (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013). Lawler and Boudreau (2009), indicate that the corporate HR function has been positioned to advance it being a strategic partner (Lawler and Boudreau, 2009). Findings from their longitudinal study of large corporations, however, suggested that HRM is not a strategic partner yet and that little or no movement towards it becoming one has occurred (Lawler and Boudreau, 2009). Interestingly, Lawler and Boudreau (2009), provide clear guidelines for the development of HR practitioners. These guidelines include the development of talent in HRM; creation of corporate centres of excellence, development of the right metrics and analytics and a good understanding of how human capital management impacts business results (Lawler and Boudreau, 2009).

### **2.6.1 SABPP HR Standards**

The development of relevant HR skills for HR practitioners is the focus of the Human Resources Standards, developed by the SABPP in 2013. The HR Standards offer a guideline for the development of HR skills, providing a targeted developmental path



for junior and senior HR practitioners (SABPP, 2013). The SABPP is currently lobbying for the professional registration of HR practitioners, because of the essential role that HR practitioners play in an organisation.

The SABPP has developed HR Standards for HR practitioners in South Africa. The SABPP Report (2013), highlights the transformation of the role of the HR function and gives detailed insight on the recently released HR Competency Framework for HR Professionals, which campaigns for the need to adequately train HR managers to fulfil the important roles of co-ordination and custodianship of the HR function. Figure 2.2 provides an illustration of the SABPP Model.

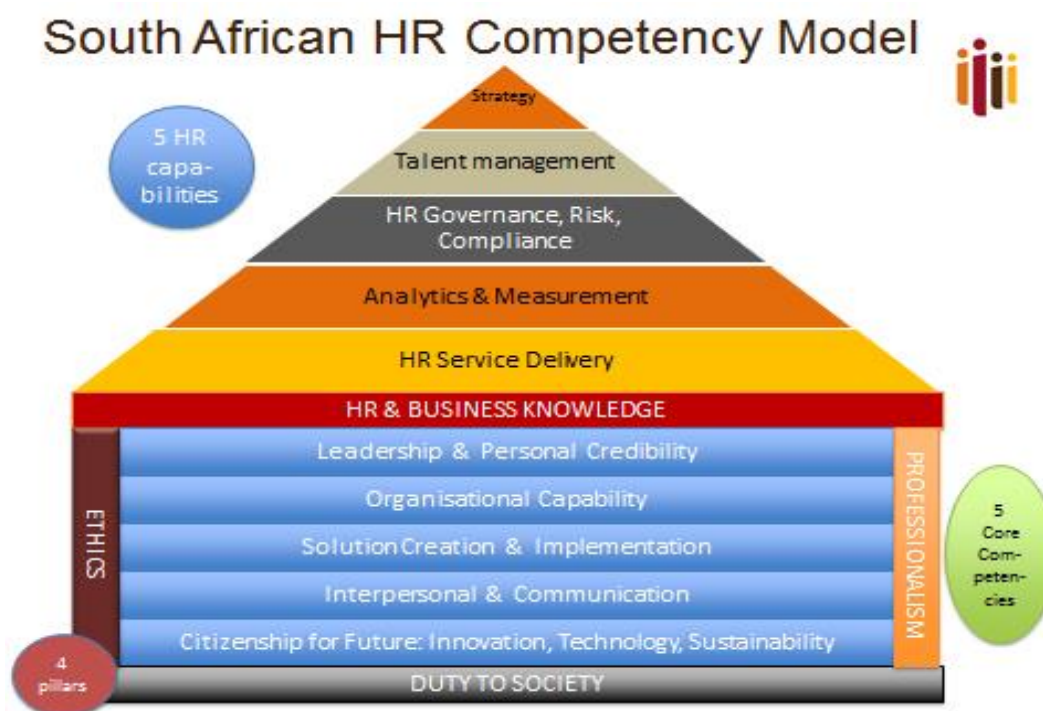


Figure 2.2: SABPP HR Competency Model (SABPP, 2013)

The development of relevant HR skills for HR practitioners is the focus of the HR Standards, developed by the SABPP in 2013 (SABPP, 2013). The HR Standards offer a guideline for the development of HR skills, providing a targeted developmental path for junior and senior HR practitioners (SABPP, 2013). Schutte, Barkhuizen and Der Sluis, (2015), acknowledge the development of a competency model by the SABPP in 2012. While the aim of the model is to guide the professional conduct of HR

professionals in South Africa, the need for empirical validation of the model is highlighted (Schutte et al., 2015).

As rightly pointed out by Abbott (2011), the socio-economic role of HR in society and the duty of HR professionals is to deliver a high level of HR work. Both interconnect at the societal level. It is necessary for HR professionals, as custodians, to be aware of and comply with, the relevant labour legislation and codes of good practice. HR curricula, falls short of enabling HR practitioners with the knowledge to implement suitable action plans and strategies (Abbott, 2011). Given the call for professional registration of HR practitioners by the SABPP, and the context-specific requirements of the higher education environment, a targeted development approach and plan must be embarked upon, to ensure relevant capacitation of HR practitioners in HE and to ensure that an employee-focused model is properly implemented and supported (Abbott et al., 2013).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

This chapter set out the conceptual framework pertaining to the HRM function. A range of pertinent literature, key theoretical underpinnings and seminal works were referred to.

In summary, HR practitioners play a critical role in meeting organisational and employee requirements. In the case of universities, this compliance is two-fold; internally from a policy and governance perspective and externally from a legislative compliance perspective. The HRM function places significant demands on the individuals who work in HR. The university environment has a unique range of factors that place contextual demands on the HRM system. Institutional, stakeholder, legislative and client demands are a limited number of demands placed on the HR system. Institutional support is a pre-requisite to the effective function and delivery of the portfolio. The multiplicity of demands, ongoing stakeholder engagements, annual deliverables and daily operations amidst a complex committee structure, requires careful planning and execution. An inherent aspect of this is the monitoring, evaluation and review of the HR system, policies and processes, which make the delivery of outcomes possible. A sound foundation sets out a defined path to achieving outcomes. The HR department requires a good grounding from a structural, capability and

planning perspective. Seemingly, the HR function is in a maintenance and enhancement phase, wherein research, innovation and meeting the needs of a dynamic workforce and line functionaries are the broad over-arching objectives.

The next chapter undertakes an analytical overview of the role of HRM in the HE sector. Chapter three is titled 'HRM in the HE Sector' and includes a critical analysis of the development of universities in South Africa, HR transformation its challenges and transformational leadership.

## CHAPTER THREE

### HR Management in the Higher Education Sector

#### 3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, the theoretical framework of HRM was set out. This chapter examines the social justice imperatives in universities, the legislative frameworks that HR departments need to work with, and the challenges facing HR departments. This chapter of the literature review contextualises the purpose of universities and offers a brief overview of universities. It then provides a succinct outline of the historical development of universities in South Africa and addresses issues of equity, social justice and transformation that universities are contending with. It concludes with the role of the HR function in addressing these important imperatives.

#### 3.2 Factors Impacting on Social Justice Imperatives in Universities

The HE landscape has faced significant change over the last decade as it underwent transformation. University mergers were part of this process of transformation. This process of transformation resulted in several merged institutions, which were posited as a redress of the historical legacies of apartheid and a means to advance transformation (Arnolds et al., 2013, Dominguez-Whitehead, 2011, Du Toit, 2014). The most significant of merger related changes, is the transformation of HE, which resulted in the re-design of institutions of higher learning, the provision of services and the expansion of student access to tertiary education (HESA, 2012, Le Grange, 2011).

Changes in the HE environment have contributed to the current challenges being experienced by HR departments (Schultz, 2010). The re-organisation of the South African HE landscape placed immense strain on HR departments, which were expected to consolidate different HR systems and policies into a single administrative system (Govender, 2013). This process of re-organisation has had far reaching implications for the HR functions of merged institutions as discussed below. Notwithstanding the significant evolution facing HR as a discipline, the key role of the function has remained constant, in its having oversight in terms of initiating and controlling all major activities, as aptly described by Kumar and Mishra (2011). There is common recognition that HR departments in the sector are under pressure to deliver

within an increasingly legislated and competitive environment (Kumar and Mishra, 2011).

While Mapesela and Strydom (2004), believed that ‘the South African higher education system was critically subjected to a radical transformation with the purpose of reversing inequities due to the practices of the former regime’ (Mapesela and Strydom, 2004), Jack, (2007) and Le Grange, (2011), have pinpointed that the HE system has been going through a tempestuous change (Jack, 2007, Le Grange, 2011). This is indicative of the tenuous nature of HE at present. Silima (2016), sets out the ambit of networked, holistic or third-party governance, which is relevant to public management and which is the centre of a multitude of relationships encompassing a range of issues, from the citizen, state and society. The painful past histories of the people of South Africa, their present needs and initiatives linked to redress, are inextricably linked to universities. This is evidenced from a research perspective, the advisory roles that universities play in terms of advancing public good and the attempts to change access to universities for both students and employees (Silima, 2016).

Soudien (2013), addressed the issue of transformation and indicated that it is about a shift in the way teaching and learning occurs in an institution and the movement of it, from one state to another. This is indicative of a greater definition of transformation, above that of demographic changes to the workforce, increase in research outputs and high-level skills production for the economy. He asserts the need for transformation to be supported, which is only possible with the effort of those who are employed in this facet of the university. In addition, transformative change in HE is needed to contribute to the development of a transparent, democratic, society in a post-apartheid era; thereby, emphasising the need for a socially-aware electorate. This will lead to closing the gap in the historical dispensation relating to inequality, the wealth gap and the existing polarisation and divergence that exists (Soudien, 2013).

### **3.3 Re-visioning HR in the HE Sector**

Badat (2011), called out for a ‘re-imagining of the future’. He emphasised the need to forge new ways of conducting affairs, the development of new identities with a critical focus on social justice and human dignity. This, he advised, must be undertaken on a basis that is elevated from the obsession with race (Badat, 2011). This position was

advanced a decade earlier by Cloete and Bunting (2013), who advocated the principle that institutional missions and plans needed to support national developmental goals, which is a rigorously transformative approach (Cloete and Bunting, 2013).

In the micro-environment and in relation to the above, Macey et al., (2009), have stressed the need for balance between intrinsic motivation and a supportive work environment, to minimise the possibility of frustration, dissatisfaction and psychological withdrawal. This demonstrates the important role of HR in establishing and supporting an environment that puts the individual employee first. Employees expect more than good remuneration, indicating that the experiences of employees in the workplace are also important (Macey et al., 2009).

HR practitioners in the educational sector are pressured to provide a range of services able to meet the shifting needs associated with the function and structures that lie within their duties and responsibilities. With reference to the demands placed on HR departments, Schultz (2010), calls for responsiveness to the needs of the sector, while being guided by relevant national frameworks and legislation. The HR function is the centre of considering; planning for, implementing and managing transformation-related change processes. This means that the HR function is the custodian of many policies and processes in the university. It is also the nexus between a myriad group of internal and external stakeholders. Therefore, informing oneself of the context, the different stakeholder groups internally, meeting and setting up relationships with external stakeholders, which include but are not limited to, the Department of Labour, Education, Training and Development Practices (ETDP) Seta, Department of Home Affairs, the CCMA and other professional bodies is a priority (Martin and Roodt, 2008, Van Vuuren and Eiselen, 2006, Zulu and Parumasur, 2009).

As suggested by Schultz (2010), the capacity, structure, knowledge and HR model are issues that have also been raised intermittently on various platforms. According to discussions among senior HR leaders in the sector, other contributing factors that pose challenges for HR practitioners include delivering on objectives related to the national transformational agenda; the attraction and retention of qualified and experienced staff; the management, development and promotion of staff, irrelevant

and outdated HR policies and practices (HESA, 2013). Concern about the technical and behavioural capability of HR practitioners was also discussed (HESA, 2013).

A fundamental problem, which contributes to stress amongst HR practitioners in the HE sector, is the capability of HR to provide essential and effective support to HE institutions (HESA, 2013). Traditional HRM systems in HE dealt with compensation; training and development; performance management; recruitment, selection and employee relations Kemper (2001), in Arslan, Adkemer and Karsli (2013). As suggested by Govender (2013), there has been a shift towards delivering on the needs of the changing environment. This leads to the requirement to look at the capability of HR professionals in HE (Govender, 2013). The changing HE macro-environment, particularly within the merged environment, calls into question the relevance of the current approach to developing HR strategies, procedures and practices (Schultz, 2010).

### **3.4 Demands on HR in the HE Sector**

In addition to Brockbank, Ulrich and Beatty (1999), Schultz (2010), reinforce the need for HR professionals to master the required competencies that enables mastery of HR theories; terminology; rationale, policies and procedures (Brockbank et al., 1999, Schultz, 2010). Ramlall (2009), highlights the need for effective HR competencies, which will provide specific performance objectives and focuses on the increasing emphasis on the link between HR competencies and HR effectiveness. In addition, HE institutions display strategic plans and are focused on delivering on core mandates, but often fall short on developing a cohesive culture. This, according to Ramlall (2009), results in incongruent methods of practices, process and systems, which all impact in often heterogeneous sub-cultures on the leadership and passageways of HE institutions.

De Lange and Olivier (2008), argue that there is a disjuncture in the way people are managed in HE. They make the case for nurturing of employees as the benefits impact on the individual, the organisation and the larger society (De Lange and Olivier, 2008). Prinsloo and Louw (2006), advocate for universities to address 'what it is to be human'. This, it is argued, must reflect in university policies; practices, management and interpersonal interactions. The role of HR in facilitating humane practices is further

discussed. Employees should be 'nurtured and developed in order to be retained'. The shift to a more humanised orientation, indicate a fundamental shift from an administrative to an employee-focused model. It is important to note that employees who are satisfied are committed to the jobs and organisations and are more likely to be retained by an organisation (Prinsloo and Louw, 2006). According to Paauwe and Boselie (2005) in Buller et al. (2012), the 'attitudes, behaviours and intentions of employees,' are influenced by outcomes related to HR processes (Buller and McEvoy, 2012). The awareness and understanding of historical issues are important factors that leadership must recognise and embrace in order to advance transformative change efforts (Miller et al., 2011).

There is a lack of understanding about HRM and related practices. This, together with the absence of globally accepted professional standards, and the divergent abundance of HR tools, procedures and plans, make HRM ambiguous and complex (Coyle-Shapiro et al., 2013). Kaufman (2012), recommends that HR research should be focused on substantive aspects of the discipline and should move away from regurgitated content. He proposed the need for developing an economics framework to guide HR practices, having done so, however, is critical of the lack of progress in this regard (Kaufman, 2012). While HR departments continue to face challenges associated with service delivery on a range of issues, positive developments have also taken place. HR departments deliver on compliance requirements, on the maintenance of employee records and other key services.

### **3.5 The International Framework with Regard to Social Justice**

The Decent Work Agenda, as promoted by the ILO at an international level, advances the need for fair and ethical treatment of people in the workplace (International Labour Organisation, 2011). The concept of decent work is founded on the principles of 'personal dignity, family stability, peace in the communities, democracies that deliver for people and economic growth that expands opportunities for productive jobs and enterprise development' (International Labour Organisation, 2014). Work is a daily activity, which gives socio economic direction to society (Rapatsa, 2014).

The ILO was created in 1919, as part of the Treaty of Versailles that ended World War I, to reflect the belief that universal and lasting peace can be accomplished only if it is



based on social justice (Servais, 2011). The Constitution of the ILO contained ideas tested within the International Association for Labour Legislation, founded in Basel in 1901. Campaign for the establishment of an international organisation dealing with labour issues began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, led by two industrialists, Robert Owen and Daniel Legrand (Servais, 2011). Particularly, Daniel Le Grand intensified this idea to a significant extent by putting it together systematically throughout the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century (International Labour Organisation, 2017). He continuously appealed to the European government for its development (International Labour Organisation, 2017). Le Grand believed that industrial Europe needed to address and regulate matters but that this needed to be undertaken on a collective basis, by interested countries, in Europe. He engaged on the issue of international labour law being the solution to advancing moral and material well-being to the working class (International Labour Organisation, 2017).

During this period, there was keen appreciation of the importance of social justice in securing peace, against a background of exploitation of workers in the industrialised nations of that time. There was also increasing understanding of the world's economic interdependence and the need for co-operation to obtain similarity of working conditions in countries competing for markets (Servais, 2011). As economic problems were considered more as problems relating to labour, the earlier attempts were greatly directed towards improving the conditions of workers. Labour was the pivot of the whole economic system and “the sole constituent of value”. Whereas the League of Nations and other international agencies, had either failed to bring positive results, or could not stand the onslaught of the Second World War, the ILO alone has survived and has achieved remarkable results. In 1946, the ILO became the first specialised agency of the UN (Ghébali, 2011, Van Daele, 2008).

### **3.5.1 The Decent Work Agenda, SA Constitution and Social Justice**

This section looks at the international agenda for ‘decent work’, and the location of HR within a legal framework. In so doing, the legislative compliance requirements pertaining to HRM in South African universities are discussed. In the 1970’s, the Wiehahn Commission undertook an investigation into the status of labour law. The Commission made recommendations based on ‘organisational rights, right to fair labour practices and social protection amongst others’. This was further extensively

addressed in the post-apartheid transitional period, where several new and improved legislative reforms were introduced. The Constitution of South Africa guarantees the right to fair labour practices. This guarantee is upheld and enforced by the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA) and various Codes of Good Practice. The role of the courts and tribunals such as the Labour Court and the CCMA is to uphold, deliberate and give effect to fair employment practices (CCMA, 2014). This demonstrates the importance of protecting the rights of workers and ensures that the fair treatment of workers is considered a priority. The fundamental objective of labour law upholds South Africa's transformative constitutional agenda in accordance with Section 23 of the Constitution (Rapatsa, 2014). Section 23 'guarantees every worker the protection against unfair labour practices'.

The early years post-democracy, saw the emergence of various legislative changes in a country battered and scarred by the depravation caused by Apartheid. Apartheid was entrenched as a socio-economic and political order upheld by laws which deeply entrenched separate development for the different race groups in South Africa. As elucidated by Rapatsa (2014), the Constitution and the LRA, introduced unprecedented changes pertaining to safeguarding workers' rights. He explains the attempts that led to the review of poor work practices and related needs to address the social security of workers (Rapatsa, 2014).

In an effort towards reparation, a progressive range of labour legislation was introduced post-1994 (Rapatsa, 2014). The legislation was developed and implemented to redress socio-economic and political issues of the apartheid era (Rapatsa, 2014). These include but are not limited to, The Constitution of South Africa; BCEA; LRA; Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998 (EEA); Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (SDA); Skills Development Levies Act 9 of 1999 (SDLA); Occupational Health and Safety Act No 85 of 1993 (OHSA); Immigration Act 13 of 2002 (IA); Employment Services Act (ESA), Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act No 130 of 1993 (COIDA) and the Unemployment Insurance Fund Act No 32 of 2003 (UIF). These will be discussed in greater detail in the next section.

### **3.5.2 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996**

The adoption of the South African Constitution on 8 May 1996 was one of the turning points in the history of the struggle for democracy in this country. It is a product of remarkably detailed and inclusive negotiations that were carried out with an acute awareness of the injustices of the country's non-democratic past. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, was drawn up by the Parliament elected in 1994 in the first non-racial elections. It was approved by the Constitutional Court on 4 December 1996, signed into law by President Nelson Mandela on 10 December 1996 at Sharpeville, Vereeniging and took effect on 4 February 1997. This came two years after the first democratic election (1994), of the President of the Republic of South Africa. Public submissions amounted to a staggering number of 1,753,424 were made to the Constitutional Assembly during its inclusive drafting process.

The Constitution of South Africa provides the legal foundation for the existence of the Republic, sets out the rights and duties of its citizens and defines the structure of the government. It incorporates an extensive Bill of Rights that forbids discrimination on the grounds of race; gender; pregnancy; marital status; ethnic or social origin; colour; sexual orientation; age; disability; religion; conscience; belief, culture, language and birth. It is the supreme law of the country of South Africa and no other law or government action can supersede the provisions of the Constitution. It is widely regarded as the most progressive constitution in the world, with a Bill of Rights second to none. There are numerous laws, regulations and policies governing the employment relationship, which HR professionals must understand and navigate, to help ensure institutions avoid costly fines and other penalties, including the potential harm to the organisation's reputation. These are discussed in the following section.

### **3.5.3 The Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA as amended)**

The purpose and objectives of the LRA are spelt out in Section 1 as to advance economic development; social justice; labour, peace and the democratisation of the workplace. The Act sets out to achieve this by fulfilling the primary objectives of the Act, which are:

- To give effect to and regulate, the fundamental rights conferred by section 27 of the Constitution.
- To give effect to the obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organisation.
- To provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions, employers and employers' organisations can:
  - Collectively bargain to determine wages, terms and conditions of employment and other matters of mutual interest.
  - Formulate industrial policy.
- To promote orderly collective bargaining and collective bargaining at sectoral level.
- To promote employee participation in decision-making in the workplace and the effective resolution of labour disputes.

The emphasis in the LRA is clearly on collective labour law as opposed to individual labour law.

#### **3.5.4 The Basic Conditions of Employment Act 75 of 1997 (BCEA)**

The BCEA, adopted by Parliament on 26 November 1997, is another pillar of South Africa's labour legislative dispensation. It first came into effect in December 1998, repealing both the BCEA of 1983 and the Wage Act of 1957. Subsequent amendments to this Act occurred on 1 August 2002 following the enactment of the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act 11 of 2002. Recently, other significant amendments were introduced by the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act 20 of 2013 which came into operation on 1 September 2014.

Section 2 of the BCEA declares that the purpose of this Act is to give effect to the right to fair labour practices referred to in section 23(1) of the Constitution by establishing and making provisions for the regulation of basic conditions of employment, thereby complying with the obligations of the Republic, as a member state of the ILO (Van Niekerk, 2015). In addition, the BCEA seeks to advance economic development and social justice by establishing and enforcing the minimum conditions of employment and stipulating circumstances under which these basic conditions may be varied (Van Niekerk 2015:101).

Like the LRA, the BCEA applies to both the public and private sector (South African Government, 2013). The Act applies to all employees and employers, except members of the National Defence Force; the National Intelligence Agency of the South African Secret Service, unpaid volunteers working for an organisation with a charitable purpose and persons employed on vessels at sea (South African Government, 2013). Other categories of employees excluded from the application of some of the provisions of the BCEA include senior managerial employees, (defined as employees who have the authority to hire, discipline and dismiss other employees and represent the employer internally and externally. Those who earn more than the prescribed threshold (BCEA), sales persons who travel to the premises of customers and regulate their own hours of work and those who work less than 24 hours a month for an employer, are exempted from the provisions governing hours of work (South African Government, 2013).

The BCEA regulates various issues regarding conditions of employment. In summary, Chapter one of this Act relates to definitions and the purpose and application of the Act; Chapter two regulates working time; Chapter three deals with leave entitlement; Chapter four sets out the particulars of employment and remuneration; Chapter five deals with termination of employment; Chapters six and seven regulate child labour and forced-labour prohibition; Chapter eight deals with sectoral determination; Chapter nine deals with employment condition commission. Chapter ten deals with monitoring, enforcement and legal proceedings and Chapter eleven contains general provisions (South African Government, 2013).

### **3.5.5 The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA)**

The constitutional equality set out in section nine of the constitution forms the backdrop of the EEA as a measure of achieving equity in the work place. This Act gives effect to principles set out in the ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention 111 (Van Niekerk, 2015). In fact, the purpose of this Act is set out in section two as: “Promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; as well as; obliging designated employers” (Under Section 12 of the EEA 55 of 1998). The EEA stipulates that a designated employer refers to employers with 50 or more employees; employers with fewer than 50 employees, but with an annual turn-over equal to or above that of a small business;

and all municipalities and organs of state to implement affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups” (S 4(2)) of the EEA 55 of 1998. Designated groups mean black people, women, and people with disabilities, to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.

Although the EEA was introduced in 1998 to replace unfair labour practice as the main source of equity in the workplace (Van Niekerk, 2015), some provisions in the Act came into full operation later. The unfair discrimination provisions set out in chapter two of this Act came into operation on 9 August 1999 and all the other chapters took effect thereafter on 1 December 1999 (Du Plessis: *A Practical Guide to Labour Law* 87). In 2013, significant amendments were introduced by the Employment Equity Amendment Act 47 of 2013 which subsequently took effect on 1 August 2014 (Du Plessis, 2006). The Labour Appeal Court in *Crown Chickens (Pty) t/a Rocklands Poultry v Kapp and others* [2002] 6 BLLR 493 LAC par 35), hailed this Act as one of the most significant pieces of labour legislation passed after 1994 aimed at redressing the imbalances of the past.

### **3.5.6 The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (SDA)**

The high levels of unemployment, low levels of investment in the South African labour market; conspicuous disparities in income distribution, inequality of opportunity as a result of apartheid and poverty are all factors that led to the promulgation of the SDA in 1998 (Brown, 2004). These factors among others created a severe shortage in the supply of skilled staff and therefore caused a serious impediment to the competitiveness of industry in South Africa. The primary purposes of SDA are spelt out in section 2 (1). The aim of the SDA is to ‘improve the skills of the South African workforce to improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility’ (Brown, 2004). In addition, the SDA seeks to progress productivity in the workplace and the competitiveness of employers and to:

- Promote self-employment and improve the delivery of social services.
- Increase the levels of investment in education and training in the labour market and to increase the return on that investment.
- Encourage employers to use the workplace as an active learning environment.
- Provide employees with the opportunities to acquire new skills.
- Provide opportunities for new entrants to the labour market to gain work experience.
- Encourage workers to participate in learning programmes.
- Improve the employment prospects of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and to redress those disadvantages through training and education.
- Ensure the quality of learning in and for the workplace.

### **3.5.7 Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Disease Act (COIDA) 130 of 1993 as amended by the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act 61 of 1997**

Through the prescriptions of the COIDA, a process was implemented by government, which provides for the payment of compensation. The aim of the COIDA is to provide for compensation in the case of disablement caused by occupational injuries and diseases, sustained or contracted by employees during their employment, or death resulting from such injuries and diseases and to provide for matters connected therewith. If workers die because of an injury on duty, their dependents will also be entitled to claim compensation. Employers that registered their employees are protected against civil claims in this regard. The COIDA basically prevents employees covered by the act from suing their employers for damages in terms of common law. Anyone who employs one or more workers must register with the Compensation Fund and pay annual assessment fees. COIDA is administered by a Compensation Commissioner. Hence section 91 (5) of COIDA provides that a person affected or aggrieved by a decision of the Compensation Commissioner may lodge an appeal to the Labour Court.

Claims for employees employed in the mining and building industries must be referred to the relevant mutual associations. Claims by employees working for individually liable employers must be referred to the employer. They include employees of the state, parliament, the provincial authorities and local authorities which have been exempted from making payments to the compensation fund. Notably, the COIDA was amended in 1997 and repealed the Workmen's Compensation Act. Unlike the old Workmen's Compensation Act, COIDA covers most employees, not only those who earn less than a certain amount.

### **3.5.8 The Employment Services Act, No 4 of 2014 (ESA)**

The ESA came into effect on 9 August 2015. The purpose of ESA is to establish productivity within South Africa, decrease levels of unemployment, and provide for the training of unskilled workers. The Act, inter alia, aims to:

- Provide for public employment services.
- Provide for the establishment of schemes to promote the employment of young work seekers and other vulnerable persons.
- Provide for schemes to assist employees in distressed companies to retain employment.
- Facilitate the employment of foreign nationals in a manner that is consistent with the objects of the Act and the Immigration Act No. 13 of 2002.
- Provide for the registration and regulation of private employment agencies.
- Provide for the establishment of the Employment Services Board, of Productivity South Africa, and Supported Employment Enterprises.

### **3.5.9 Unemployment Insurance Act 63 of 2001 as amended by the Unemployment Insurance Amendments Act of 2003**

This Act came into operation on 1 April 2002 and governs the unemployment insurance system in South Africa. The purpose of the Act was to establish an Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) to which employers and employees contribute and from which, employees who become unemployed or are unable to work because of maternity, adoption leave or illness, or their beneficiaries, can benefit. They are calculated from the date of unemployment. In this regard, the UIF seeks to alleviate



some of the harmful economic and social effects of unemployment by giving short-term relief to workers when they become unemployed.

#### **3.5.10 The Immigration Act 13 of 2002**

The Immigration Act is responsible for regulating foreign employment in the Republic of South Africa. This Act lays out the rules and regulations for admission of foreigners into South Africa, their residence in South Africa and their departure from South Africa, as well as the ability of foreigners to work within the Republic. The Immigration Regulations were improved in May 2014, which brought many changes in relation to work visas. The employment of foreigners is also regulated by The Employment Services Act 4 of 2014 (ESA), which came into effect in August 2015 and was introduced to promote employment, while simultaneously, decreasing the unemployment rates within the Republic. The ESA aims to support the employment of foreigners, which is consistent with the provisions set out in the Immigration Act.

#### **3.5.11 The Occupational Health, Safety and Environment Act (OHS Act)**

The basic premise of the OHS Act is that the Employer must safeguard, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of their employees and others who may be affected by the work activity. It covers General Administrative Regulations, Facilities Regulations, Environmental Regulations, General Safety Regulations, Lead Regulations, Hazardous Chemical Substances Regulations, Asbestos Regulations, and regulations pertaining to Hazardous Biological Agents. A summary of the discussion is encapsulated in Appendix 1.

### **3.6 HRM Systems and a Transformative Social Justice Agenda**

Given the fact that social justice at all levels and sectors of society has been the foundation stone of post-1994 South Africa it is evident that HR practitioners are a vital cog in the creation of an organisational culture that respects everyone and applies all policies correctly, honestly and transparently. This requires HR practitioners to actively participate and support professional elevation and development to effect cooperation; collaboration, synergy and common purpose throughout the organisational spectrum. This builds supportive relationships between leadership, management and all employees (Schultz and Van der Walt, 2015, Warnich Carrel, Elbert and Hatfield, 2015).

Eminent scholars including Schuler and Jackson (2008); Hall, Pilbeam and Corbridge (2012:22-23), submit that the HRM function plays a pivotal role in delivering and advancing core aspects of the organisation. These include attending to staff needs in terms of job security; salary payments; annual increments; HR administration issues, workplace conflict and employee motivation to name a few. Additionally, the needs of line managers; the headcount, contractual commitments and adherence to legislative requirements, amid growing pressure on budgets are supported. Finally, the requirements from executive management, in terms of efficient HR delivery, include rapid turnaround times and effective systems and processes (Hall et al., 2012, Schuler and Jackson, 2008).

The need to focus on ethical workplace practices has been highlighted by the ILO and NEDLAC and is the unquestionable constitutional priority of the South African political and administrative terrains. HR practitioners are ethically and professionally obligated to abide by the principles of fairness; transparency; mutual respect, equality and human and professional dignity that elevate Ubuntu into a living life reality of applied social and professional justice. Although social justice has been the constitutional foundation upon which all common and labour law are based, it means very little if it is not implemented in the workplace. Social justice as the epitome of honest and professional HR, means an inclusive culture; respect for the human and professional rights of everyone, promotion and defence of gender equality and discovering the common features of collegiality and fairness.

In terms of organisational and social justice in general, the ILO and NEDLAC commissioned a draft Decent Work: Country Programme for South Africa, for the period 2010 to 2014 (NEDLAC, 2010). The document was developed as an impetus to continue the work of the Constitution of South Africa, which advances the 'protection of rights to equality; rights to equal treatment and protection against unfair discrimination; rights to human dignity, freedom of expression and association; *rights to fair labour practices* and rights of access to social security including social assistance' (NEDLAC, 2010). The employment relationship can therefore be understood to be a tri-party relationship; between the employee, employer and the state represented by statutory frameworks and the country's citizens (Nel et al., 2005).

Organisational justice in this sense, is not only related to restorative justice attempting to remedy the injustices of the past, but also to social justice, because the organisational and social behaviour of practitioners, will be shaped by existing both in the workplace and society at large (Nel et al., 2005).

Bhorat and Goga (2013), utilising the Oaxaca-Blinder decomposition, to analyse wage discrimination in the workplace during the period 2001-2007, discovered that the gender wage gap was still evident, although women were not discriminated against as before, it still existed. Discrimination especially against African women still existed at the time the existing wage gap was unexplained by more than 70 percent. The final conclusions of the research showed conclusively that males in general received fair payment, while this was not the case with women. Their finding showed that there was a significant causal relationship between union membership, family responsibility, or the type of work performed and the salary and wages scales (Bhorat and Goga, 2013). Steyn and Jackson (2015), have shown through the dissection of realities of 1740 employees from 29 private and public-sector entities, that male employees enjoyed comparatively higher salaries than females, despite no significant differences in levels of training, professional bodies' membership or relevant work experience (Steyn and Jackson, 2015). Similar findings have been produced in South Africa and elsewhere (Burger and Jaftha, 2006; Burger and Yu, 2007; Munasinghe et al.; 2008, Shambrook, Roberts and Triscari, 2011, Solberg, 2004).

Zinn and Rodgers (2012), highlight the need for a re-humanisation of South African society, because of its fractured and tortured past. The political system of Apartheid sought to inculcate and preserve a segmented society along racial lines. South Africa is an extremely diverse society, where co-operation, respect and openness are required to ensure harmonious functioning. This is seen when people give of themselves in times of disaster as well as in daily activities, when people look beyond themselves and determine how they can contribute to lighten the load of others (Zinn and Rodgers, 2012).

### **3.7 The Development of Universities**

The term university has its origin in the Latin phrase 'universitas magistrorum et scholarium', meaning a community of teachers and scholars. In general terms, the philosophy of the university seems to have not gone through radical changes at least in the holistic, scholastic sense, dealing with its key aims and objectives.

#### **3.7.1 The Origin of Universities**

The university is itself a microcosm of society (Lowe and Yasyhara, 2013). It is a centre where different facets of the organisation intersect. The organisation of teaching and learning has evolved from an elitist medieval organisation, which was open to a select group of individuals, to include staff, students, an extensive network of associates, partner institutions and other parties including communities. An offering of a small mix of study programmes, to a global proliferation of universities, offering expansive study course options has been the reality of history (Lowe and Yasyhara, 2013).

#### **3.7.2 The Role of Universities**

Badat and Sayed (2009), describe the role of universities and their location within specific contexts and conditions, thereby suggesting local, national, continental and global conditions, which must be considered. In so doing, universities engage globally on collaborative projects and advance a support-based approach to generating knowledge. It is a known fact that universities are not totally independent institutions from a research development and knowledge sharing perspective. They are considered to be important national assets and sources of new knowledge and innovative thinking (Badat and Sayed, 2009). The global scene requires universities to re-think the correlation between their relevance and their mission (Boulton and Lucas, 2011).

Boulton and Lucas (2011), also agree that universities make important contributions to society by creating and passing on valuable knowledge and ideas. They speak to the complex nature of the university, which is the pinnacle of economic, social, cultural and practical functions that are valued by society. Inherent in this, is the generation of new ideas and questioning, that a society may grapple with, indicative of the sui generis nature of universities, which is to preserve, transmit and advance knowledge. In addition, Bolton et al. (2011) highlight the greater emphasis on academics' ability to

research, thereby marking a transition from teaching orientations to include new teaching and research orientations. Universities are struggling to balance the demands of relevance and efficiency (Boulton and Lucas, 2011).

Cloete and Maassen (2015:13) indicate that universities in Sub-Saharan Africa are heavily influenced by different forces and policy influences. Information on higher education institutions indicate that effective implementation of a range of governance functions, namely decision-making with the accreditation of institutions, policy advice to governance and strategic planning for the institutions and the HE sector (Cloete and Maassen, 2015).

The most acute challenges facing the reconfiguration of HE continue to be the social justice imperatives of equity and redress, according to The Transformation in Higher Education Discussion Paper (CHE, 2015). Universities in South Africa have a turbulent history, which must be considered in relation to its colonial past. The paper further asserts that transformation in learning institutions extends beyond meeting demographic targets in the student population. They infer that enhanced research outputs and contributing to the skills production for the economy are the other areas that require attention. These elements are instrumental in enhancing the transformative role that HE can play in a democratic society (CHE, 2015).

### **3.8 History of Universities in South Africa Pre-1994**

A retrospective look at the South African university system during apartheid, illustrates that universities, like other state entities, were used to effectively promote the rancid principles of apartheid (Bunting, 2006). Universities were characterised by a regimented and differentiated system of state funding and control (Bunting, 2006). The apartheid government's core policy of separate education and how this was used to promote its segregationist race-based policies, categorised universities according to the race and language of its intended student body, namely Indian, African, Coloured and White universities (Bunting, 2002). White universities were further classified into English and Afrikaans language medium institutions (Bunting, 2002). Bunting (2006), provides an overview of the racial topography of South African universities which was dismantled during the post-apartheid restructuring of higher education. The radical re-

organisation also introduced a new funding formula, which funds individual researchers and not departments, as was previously the case (Bunting, 2006).

### **3.8.1 The Impact of Race and the Classification of Universities in SA**

The first university in South Africa was the University of Cape Town, which was founded in 1829. In 1820, English immigrants established the founding institution which would eventually become Rhodes University in 1904, in Grahamstown, EC. In 1895, the School of Mines University was established. This was re-named the University of Witwatersrand in 1922. The University of South Africa (UNISA) had affiliate branch colleges in Natal, Pretoria, Potchefstroom and Orange Free State. In the 1930's these became known as the University of Natal, University of Pretoria, University of Potchefstroom and University of Orange Free State respectively. All were known as 'white universities' (Reddy, 2004). The University of Durban Westville was established in 1972 in Natal, for Indian scholars. It replaced the University College for Indians, which had been established in 1961 on Salisbury Island and required scholars to travel to and from the island by ferry (Govinden, 2011, Vahed, 2014). The University College of the Western Cape was founded in 1959. It was affiliated to UNISA and provided limited training for Coloured scholars. University status was granted in 1970. The institution is now known as the University of Western Cape (Reddy, 2004). The University of Fort Hare is the oldest historically black university in South Africa. It was established in 1916 and was known as the South African Native College. Famous alumni include Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, and Mangosuthu Buthelezi (Strydom, 2016).

The University of Zululand was established to cater for isi-Zulu and Swazi speakers, the University of the North, for Sotho, Tswana, Venda, Tsonga and Ndebele speakers and tribes. Bantustan universities were created in the (former independent homelands), Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda (Reddy, 2004). Table 3.1 indicates the historical classification of universities pre-1994.

RACIAL CLASSIFICATION	UNIVERSITY	ESTABLISHED	
WHITE	UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN	1829	
	UNIVERSITY OF STELLENBOSCH	1918	
	RHODES UNIVERSITY	1904	
	UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND	1896	
	RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY	1968	
	UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA	1908	
	ORANGE FREE STATE UNIVERSITY	1968	
	UNIVERSITY OF POTCHEFSTROOM	1869	
	BLACK AFRICAN  INDIAN COLOURED	UNIVERSITY OF TRANSKEI	1977
		UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE	1917
UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN- WESTVILLE		1972	
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE		1954	
		1959	

*Table 3.1: Racial Classification of Universities Pre-1994*

### 3.9 The Re-Organisation of the Higher Education System in South Africa Post 1994

The HE landscape has faced significant change over the last decade as it underwent significant transformation. Previously, the higher education landscape had been formulated in accordance with the Bantu Education Act in 1954 and the Extension of the University Education Act in 1959. Vast changes were heralded in by the new dispensation that came into power in 1994 (Badat and Sayed, 2009). The restructuring of the HE system was to redress the historical legacies of apartheid and the need for transformation of the South African HE system. Subsequent changes had a profound and lasting impact on tertiary institutions. The effort to equalise the provision of services and expand access to tertiary education for students of all races, was the primary objective. The transformation of HE resulted in the re-design of HEI's

resulting in several merged institutions. This posited a redress of the historical legacies of apartheid and advanced transformation (Badat and Sayed, 2009).

The White Paper of 1997 set out the strategy of consolidating the fragmented higher education system. The underlying philosophy was to ensure that higher education would be the bedrock of social transformation. This was to be done by opening access to all universities, increase students and staff, break down racial barriers, and create a homogenous higher education system (Reddy, 2004). The restructuring of the higher education system was evidenced by the transition of a deeply racially divided system to a semi-autonomous and representative system (CHE, 2015).

The premise of these differentiated models was to entrench and uphold the Apartheid government's ideological position of separate development, even at a post-school education level. Accordingly, the State Control Model was characterised by HE institutions having had low levels of administrative autonomy, and the size and shape pertaining to student enrolment was determined by government regulations. In contrast, the Market Model allowed for a significant amount of administrative autonomy and provided for the size and shape relating to student enrolment to be determined by the programme offering and student uptake of courses (Bunting et al., 2010).

### **3.9.1 The New Governance Model**

In the 1997 White Paper titled 'A programme for the Transformation of Higher Education', the re-organisation of the sector was clearly articulated (Bunting et al., 2010). The White Paper set out the model of governance for the public higher education system. It set out a critical deviation from the previous models utilised by the former Apartheid government, which were the following:

- The State Control Model which was utilised for historically black institution.
- The Market Model which was utilised for the white institutions.

The Steering Model was advocated in the White Paper, which sought to give HE institutions greater administrative autonomy and thereby set out a new governance framework for these institutions (Bunting et al., 2010). Bunting et al. (2010), indicate that the major driver of this model is the role of government which is to:



- Set the national higher education goals.
- Determine the broad goals of individual institutions.
- Monitor the performance of the system and individual institution performance in accordance with the above.

Despite the assertion that the HE system has gone through a tempestuous change Hall et al. (2001), the fact is that HE is focused on people. Success of HE institutions is dependent on the quality of the research and faculty, of these organisations, as well as their ability to raise funds for the institution and deliver a quality education to students (Finlan et al., 2016).

### **3.9.2 Transformation and Consolidation of Universities**

The Council for Higher Education (CHE) defines a merger as the combination of one or more separate institutions into a single entity with a single governing body, where the assets, liabilities and responsibilities of the former institutions are transferred to the single new entity (CHE, 2001). The objective of the merger of institutions was to consolidate the variant functioning of different institutions. Within this ambit of change, thirty-four Universities and Technikons were reduced to a total of twenty-three. These merged institutions are categorised as traditional universities, universities of technology or comprehensive universities.

Dr Rolf Stumpf, who guided the CHE, highlights the findings of the 1996 National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) report, closely followed by the 1997 White Paper on Higher Education Transformation, the promulgation of the Higher Education Act, No. 101 of 1997, establishment of the CHE, the Higher Education Quality Committee in 1998, a new higher education management information system which was implemented in 1999 (CHE, 2015). In addition, the Size and Shape Report, released in 2002, proposed a range of institutional mergers and configurations. The period 2003 to 2004 produced three important policy initiatives, namely the obligatory enrolment planning by higher education institutions, a system for the mix of programmes and qualifications per university and the South African Post-Secondary Education system (CHE, 2015).

Schultz (2010), refers to the merger process as a difficult process of restructuring, which resulted in the merging of thirty-four HE institutions and the creation of twenty-three universities. This was done through an arduous merger process, which witnessed the emergence of a new classification system. The re-organisation of the higher education landscape resulted in the set-up of eleven traditional universities, six comprehensive universities and six universities of technology (Schultz, 2010). Three new universities have also been established in the Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and Gauteng respectively (Simkins, 2016). The Universities are categorised according to programmes they offer (Simkins, 2016). The post-merger environment has seen much change, disquiet and a dearth of appropriate higher education management experience. The National Department of Education introduced the merger of institutions of higher learning in 2004. Table 3.2 sets out classification of universities post-merger.

<b>TRADITIONAL UNIVERSITIES</b>	<b>COMPREHENSIVE UNIVERSITIES</b>	<b>UNIVERSITIES OF TECHNOLOGY</b>
Rhodes University	University of Johannesburg	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
North-West University	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University	Central University of Technology
University of Cape Town	University of South Africa	Durban University of Technology
University of Fort Hare	University of Venda	Mangosuthu University of Technology
University of the Free State	University of Zululand	Tshwane University of Technology
University of KwaZulu-Natal	Walter Sisulu University	Vaal University of Technology
University of Limpopo		Sol Plaatjie University of Mpumalanga
University of Pretoria		
University of Stellenbosch		
University of the Western Cape		
University of the Witwatersrand		
Sefako Makgatho University		

*Table 3.2: South African University Classification System*

Cloete and Maassen (2015:5), provide an overview of the transitional path that universities have undertaken. They advance that universities need to fulfil a principal position in the role of a knowledge institution in order to create a linkage between research, education and innovation; more focused institutional strategies, enhanced professional leadership and management capability (Cloete and Maassen, 2015). The radical re-structuring, however, has not been the panacea for addressing historic challenges (Cloete and Maassen, 2015).

The changes in academic staff roles must be considered within the limited human resources environment (Simkins, 2016:98). One of the most overwhelming issues that institutions faced is that of restructuring. The cost of institutional restructuring, job insecurity and its impact on job performance must be prioritised, as it has significant impact on employees (CHE, 2015, Saunders and Stumpf, 2016). The impact of a new organisational and staffing structure as a result of institutional restructuring must be carefully planned for, as it was one of the most contentious issues that needed to be dealt with. A methodical approach involves the development of a new strategic plan that will be accepted by staff. This is a difficult situation, as the planning does not follow a particular structure. It is difficult to get the buy-in from academic staff members who have their own inhibitions about their role and job security. Saunders and Stumpf (2016), warn against a new structure being created around certain individuals and / or personal and vested academic interests being catered to.

Saunders and Stumpf (2016), point out that the academic leadership requires commitment and pro-active support for a sustainable change perspective, on the basis that when an academic accepts a leadership post in an institution, they need to meet the requirements expected of them and deliver on the allocated obligations. They advise that these individuals, migrating from an academic post to an administrative or academic leadership post, take time to settle into their roles, engage with experienced administrative staff and work toward establishing a sound foundation for achievement of goals and transformation imperatives (Saunders and Stumpf, 2016).

### 3.9.3 Universities Identified For The Study

Two universities were identified for the case study. Both universities are located in the Eastern Cape and face similar challenges in terms of staff attraction, retention, turnover, remuneration and HR challenges.

Due to the nature of the multi-site location of the NMU, and the single campus location of RU, a purposive sampling approach was used. Goodrick (2014) suggests that a limited number of cases make for a more comprehensive 'in-depth' study. He advances that larger numbers of cases do not correlate with more depth (Goodrick, 2014).

RU is a traditional university, located in Grahamstown. It is a single campus university, established in 1904 and was until recently, the smallest established university in South Africa, with six faculties. These are the Faculty of Humanities; Faculty of Commerce; Faculty of Education; Faculty of Law, Faculty of Science and Faculty of Pharmacy. The student enrolment as at 2016 was approximately seven thousand three hundred students.

NMU, (formerly Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) has five campuses is in Port Elizabeth, with a campus in Gorge in the Western Cape. The NMU was born from a merger between the University of Port Elizabeth, Port Elizabeth Technikon and Vista University. In 2017, the university underwent a re-branding exercise, to become the Nelson Mandela University. With seven faculties, namely, the Faculties of Arts; Education; Law; Business and Economic Sciences; Science, Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology and Health Sciences. The NMU operates within a multi-campus university model. The NMU is a comprehensive university, offering a broad range of programme-qualification mix. The student enrolment as at 2016 was approximately twenty-seven thousand students.

The impact of lean HR Management focusses on five key areas (Frackleton, Girbig, Jaquemont an Singh, 2014). These are:

- Building and sustaining the transformation team.
- Designing the new organisation structure.

- Monitoring the changes being implemented.
- Integrating lean management into talent systems.
- Strengthening lean leadership.

Figure 4.5 indicates the integral structural consideration of HR within the organisation. the span of control and impact of HR is therefore far-reaching (SHRM, 2017).

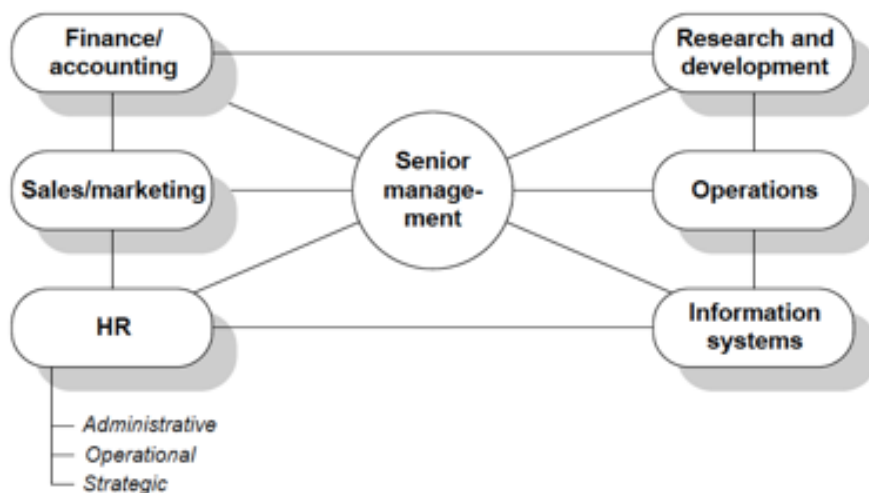


Figure 3.1: Structural Hr Considerations (Source: SHRM: 2017)

Ulrich and Reynolds (2010), of the Michigan Ross School of Business attest that the structure and functionality of organisations are important, as the roles, rules and routines are guided by them. Roles are indicative of the reporting hierarchy and accountability, while policies indicate the rules to be followed and routines are reflected in workplace process and cultures (Ulrich and Reynolds, 2010). A brief overview of the RU and NMU is provided.

### 3.9.3.1 RHODES UNIVERSITY

RU was established in 1904. The university is situated in the rural town of Grahamstown. It is ranked as a medium size institution with an enrolment range of seven thousand to seven thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine students (uniRank,

2017). A range of courses and programmes are offered. The focus is on bachelor, master and doctoral degrees. RU has the following faculties:

- Commerce.
- Education.
- Humanities.
- Law.
- Pharmacy.
- Science.

### **3.9.3.2 NELSON MANDELA UNIVERSITY**

NMU, (previously known as Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University), was established in 2005. The NMU is in in the city of Port Elizabeth, with various campuses around the city and one campus in the Western Cape. The NMU is categorised as a large university with an enrolment range of between twenty thousand to twenty-four thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine students (unirank, 2017). A range of courses and programs including certificates, diplomas, associate or foundation degrees are offered. Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees are also offered. The following faculties are found at NMU:

- Business and economic science.
- Education.
- Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology.
- Health science.
- Marine science.
- Science.
- Law.

The HR Department at both universities are headed by a Director who is responsible for the strategic and operational output of the function. The requirement for appointment as head of the hr department is a minimum of a Master's degree and relevant HR experience at a senior management level.

The location, proximity and the classification of the universities were critical factors in identifying RU and NMU for the study. The challenges faced by public universities are

similar across the sector. This is verified by the HR Directors who meet twice annually to share insights and challenges in their community of practice.

### **3.10 Challenges Facing HR Departments in Higher Education**

The DHET identify critical HR themes related to HE goals. These included the need for research and innovation; quality assurance and internationalisation; the anticipation of future human capacity related to development of a capable skills cadre, the need to address issues of equity, wellness and institutional culture and re-vitalisation of the academic profession, while enhancing institutional effectiveness and capabilities needed by HR (Bunting and Cloete, 2010).

The HRM function in HE has seen the re-positioning of HR professionals' in a way that requires their direct involvement. This involvement extends to core functions such as recruitment and hiring of faculty-based and other employees. The implication of this illustrative example indicates the increase in the volume related to the task which requires HR professionals activities (Jenkins and Jarret, 2014). Jenkins and Jarret (2014: p. 1), correctly indicate that the HE HR manager constantly confronts a multitude of 'emotionally charged, legally complex, politically explosive issues that often garner the attention of students, parents and the media. It is a high impact, stressful job'.

Finlan et al. (2016), refer to progressive HR leaders in HE, who are exploring and finding ways to develop new capabilities in HR. These changes are important as they enable HR teams to focus on institutional priorities and enhance their business partnerships. They indicate that HR leaders are increasingly focused on ways to rationalise, mechanise, and restructure routine HR service delivery (Finlan et al., 2016). These include:

- Leveraging the HR technology to drive more automation, reduce manual work and improve the customer experience.
- Evaluating alternative sourcing options for HR services that require expertise that does not exist in the institution.
- Improving talent management systems.

- Processes to build capabilities of management and HR staff.

The study by Finlan et al. (2016), indicates that higher education is focused on people and the success of HE institutions is dependent on the excellence of the research faculty. They further indicate that these organisations use their ability to grow funds for the organisation and provide an excellent education for students. It has therefore become incumbent upon the HR department to be uncompromising in their efforts to procure, improve and maintain quality talent. The survey further indicated that the strategic objectives for HR leaders are associated with people, the development of succession planning and leadership advancement. Moreover, attraction and retention of skilled professional talent; developing capabilities, improving engagement and controlling benefit costs are all other priorities for HR leaders (Finlan et al., 2016). Successful higher education institutions in South Africa are perceived to be those where the role and responsibilities of HR departments are clearly defined, smooth recruitment and selection processes are in place and where the department is led by leaders, who possess very strong personal, interpersonal and intellectual capabilities (Ngcamu, 2014).

The HR departments in higher education institutions may be faced with difficulties when attempting to implement change, due to the relatively “new” nature of the function (Edgley-Pyshorn and Huisman, 2011). This results in first having to justify their position, worth and capabilities, prior to attempting to gain a buy-in of academic departments in order to implement a culture change in their departments (Edgley-Pyshorn and Huisman, 2011). This is consistent with arguments by Gordon and Whitchurch (2007), who opine that HR operations in institutions are constrained in scope and many key areas require mandatory approval and authorisation. As a result, theoretical impediments prevent HR departments from performing their core functions effectively and at the required level (Gordon and Whitchurch, 2007).

### **3.10.1 Transformation Issues**

The paper on Transformation in Higher Education (2015:2) acknowledges the changes evidenced in the higher education environment due to restructuring of the sector and the vast distance still needing to be covered, to completely obliterate the inequalities



still inherent in the system (CHE, 2015). The paper goes on to uphold the fact that HE is a central facilitator for developmental change for wider societal transformation. It further argues that the concerns raised by important constituencies when this role is not fulfilled must be addressed through a frank and objective reflective lens. This is particularly important within the purview of the knowledge economy and society (CHE, 2015).

### **3.10.2 Employment Equity Targets**

Given South Africa's history of segregation, transformation of the higher education sector refers "to the removal of any institutional, social, material and intellectual barriers in the way of creating a more equal, inclusive and socially just higher education system" (USAf, 2015:2). Transformation has effectively in practice become synonymous with shifting the demographics of staff and students to reflect the proportions of the broader population, which is a black majority, which has been a huge university management concern. Progress or lack of progress is measured and monitored in mandatory employment equity reports to the DHET. These imperatives and other legislative requirements set out in this section, have placed increasing demands for reporting accountability from Universities. Compliance is further monitored by spot checks that new recruits are in fact from designated groups. Strategically, however, transformation spans all crucial aspects including authority; management and leadership; student access and throughput; staff diversity; institutional cultures; teaching and learning; research and knowledge systems, institutional equity and the political economy of HE funding (CHE, 2015). While there are many noteworthy attempts to tackle transformation driven by academics; managers, students and leaders, the overall state of change is still uneven, contradictory and complex (CHE, 2015).

The NMU and RU have constituted Employment Equity (EE) Committees. It was established that the EE Committee at both universities hold meetings on a quarterly basis. At RU, a 5-year Employment Equity Plan was developed for the period 2015 to 2020, setting out quantitative and qualitative goals. The NMU confirmed through an email to the Researcher that the university had an EE Plan. Efforts to obtain a copy of the EE Plan from the EE Manager were unsuccessful. Both the NMU and RU adhere to the compliance requirement to submit an EE Plan to the Department of Labour. A

document analysis indicated that both universities have an Employment Equity Policy. Issues pertaining to institutional culture; remuneration parity; post-retirement contracts, development and promotion opportunities are some of the matters that require attention.

### **3.10.3 Remuneration Parity and Conditions of Service**

Compensation is an umbrella term which refers to remuneration or earnings. This area of HR is increasing in complexity. There is an increasing demand for remuneration to be higher and more relevant to the needs of employees (Govender, 2013). The experience of employees in the workplace encompass more than remuneration and benefits received. There is a need to balance the intrinsic motivation of the employee with the supportive work environment provided for, by the employer. This minimises the possibility of frustration, dissatisfaction and psychological withdrawal, thereby highlighting the important role of HR in establishing and supporting an environment that positions individuals first. Employees want to feel valued and cared for amid the issues of role ambiguity, role conflict and fluctuation in role over-load and under-utilisation. This demonstrates the role of HR in ensuring a fair and equitable workplace and environment. The HR function, in order to meet the needs of a changing workforce, must take cognisance of the need to create an integrated approach to remuneration, workforce planning and employee relations (Govender, 2013). Universities experience challenges regarding issues of pay parity and differentiated conditions of service. The historical application of past pay practices has characterised differentiated pay practices in universities.

### **3.10.4 Organisational Culture**

Organisational culture is an infinite term, proclaims Pandey (2014). This is attributed to the inability to cogently define what organisational culture is (Pandey, 2014). Despite the challenges linked to defining organisational culture, Singh (2010) indicates a strong correlation between HR practices and organisational culture. A strong link between the two results in greater efficiency within the organisation. Issues pertaining to institutional culture are synonymous with the range of challenges facing universities in SA. Culture is not cauterised from individuals' and the entity they are associated with. It is inextricably embedded in the nexus between individuals and the organisation. A key result of the study undertaken by Singh (2010), is that

organisational culture is greatly influenced by HRM practices utilised by an organisation.

Collective organisational culture is determined by such relations that are shaped by a multiplicity of factors, such as internal and external politics; policies; core values, hierarchies and a wide variety of bureaucratic barriers (Wright and Pandey, 2009, Yukl, 2010). Within such an environment, a fair, creative, direct and innovative leader through commitment, plans, debates, decides and implements policies, rules and regulations with confidence and precision, thus elevating performance levels to new heights through this process (Kouzes and Posner, 2007).

### **3.10.5 HR Models in South African Universities**

A study by Finlan et al. (2016), indicates that HR plays a central role in achieving the institution's HRM objectives. This is described as the engine room that advances the talent agenda and provides the structure required to achieve these objectives, as well as the organisations vision and mission.

### **3.11 Role of HR in Advancing Transformation**

The role of the Institutional Forum has been revisited in the Higher Education Act (as amended). The rationale for this is that transformation efforts, despite being a priority, have not demonstrated the rate of transformation related change that was expected. The nature of the organisation requires a significant degree of consultation over a range of policy and other imperatives. Rose (2007), addresses the role that stakeholders play in organisations and advises that the different facets that make up an organisation should be consulted when decisions are made. This is important, as the myriad of relationships represent rights and responsibilities (Rose, 2007).

Universities are by their very nature highly consultative. The advantage of this consultative framework, characteristic to HE, is that key constituencies are given an opportunity to deliberate upon and give input to matters that directly influence and impact on them. Policies and processes are usually undertaken through a consultative framework with stakeholders and affected parties. A possible limitation of this consultative framework is that it can provide an opportunity for one group to lobby for its own interests, thereby creating dissonance from an organisational justice

perspective (CCMA, 2014). The different constituencies include a myriad of departments, faculties and stakeholders, who are in a constant state of transformation. Of these constituencies, trade unions are an integral component. Trade unions in HE are an entrenched aspect of university operations. Trade union organisations have played a pivotal role in the South African economy. Mwilima (2008), wrote that South African trade unions adopted a 'social movement' role prior to 1994, transitioning to an institutionalised functional role thereafter. The role of the trade union is to promote and monitor employee rights (Mwilima, 2008) .

According to Mwilima (2008), trade unions played an important role in liberating previous colonised countries in Africa. After independence and the end of apartheid in South Africa, trade unions transitioned into the role of developmental partners. In the contemporary South African workplace, the focus of trade unions is currently on the negotiation of remuneration, associated benefits and in general, the improved living conditions of union members. These trade unions liaise directly with the HR department and are critical partners in transformation; equity, remuneration and conditions of service related issues and concerns (Mwilima, 2008). The higher education environment has vibrant labour organisations, which represent the rights of workers in the sector (Van der Walt et al., 2012). Their focus is generally on procedural, distributive and interactional justice, underpinned by the philosophy of natural justice (Van der Walt et al., 2012).

Barber et.al. (2013), speak to efforts related to the deep, radical urgent transformation that is required in higher education. They advise that the models of higher education which were used globally during the 20<sup>th</sup> century are no longer effective. They clearly point out that university's administration and service function staff ensure that the 'vast, complex' organisations run smoothly. They further correctly state that the professional services provided by administrative staff is as important and valued as academic staff (Barber et al., 2013).

Badat and Sayed (2009), illustrate the background to the inherited education system which was powerfully shaped by race, class, gender, institutional and geographical inequalities. They set out the Constitutional imperative for the right to basic education. They also set out the Constitutional commitment to 'values of human dignity, the

achievement of equality, and the advancement of non-sexism and non-racialism and the human rights and freedoms that the Bill of Rights proclaims'. They argue that adhering to the Constitution, laws and policies present, renewed commitment in advancing 'educational and social transformation and development'. It also then expands beyond the perception that the main objective of education is the development of skills and promotion of economic growth. They point out that a more fruitful view of education is needed, namely that of its citizenship and humanising roles (Badat and Sayed, 2009).

It is important to understand the role of HR in universities from a historical perspective, in order to consider and evaluate its role in advancing transformative change. Weinecker (2008), cites Triplett (1997), who sets out the background to the development of HR as a function in universities. The 1940s and 1950s saw a deviation from the traditional methods of appointing and paying university staff. It is an observation, as put forward by Triplett (1997) in Weinecker (2008), that many functions relating to staff employment and payment were handled by Deans or Faculty Chairpersons.

### **3.11.1 HR Planning Processes**

The NMU, has an Institutional Development Plan in place, whilst RU does not. The plan is a key requirement of DHET and sets out the objectives for the year.

#### *3.11.1.1 Internal and External Reporting*

The HR function is the centre of most employers' efforts to identify, hire and retain the right people needed to execute its strategy and achieve its goals. The HR function is a key player within the institution's compliance structure as well. To this end, the HR function is required to prepare and submit reports both internally and externally. In higher education, the HR function's representative is part of the committee administration structure, often having a seat on Council, Senate and the Institutional Forum. In addition, the head of HR often has a central role to play in the setting of the agenda and contribution to the HR Remuneration Committee, a sub-committee of Council. The HR function additionally prepares and submit reports to the Department of Labour and relevant SETA's.

Lawler and Mohrman (2003), (in Weinecker 2008), indicated that the transition of a value-added approach of the HR service delivery function requires defining HRM differently (Weinacker, 2008). They correctly pointed out that for an HR function to adopt a value-added methodology, a re-configuration of HR functions, re-definition of HR competencies and a new approach to inculcating a combination of approaches to give effect to significant, institution wide change is required (Weinacker, 2008).

### **3.12 Transformative Leadership: A New Leadership Model for Advancing Institutional Change**

The DHET has over the years set up several Commissions chaired by prominent academics, to study the issue of transformation at universities. This prompted the then Minister of Higher Education to provide the class nature of transformation when he acknowledged the need to confront intensely interconnected contestations of class, race and gender inequalities. He placed the duty of performance on the HE system (Nzimande, 2010).

In early 2013 the Higher Education Minister set up a Ministerial Oversight Committee on the Transformation of South African Universities to tackle the up-to-now slow transformation in South Africa's tertiary education system. The first report to come out of this committee was The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions, known as the "Soudien Report" (Soudien, 2013). The Soudien Report, described transformation in the country's higher education system as "painfully slow", particularly in terms of racism and sexism, while redress was sluggish. It also found disjuncture between policy and the real-life experiences of students and staff, particularly in learning; teaching; curriculum and languages, residence life and governance (Zide, 2013). This Report made several recommendations some of which are summarised hereunder:

- Monitoring the implementation of transformation policies in institutions requires a permanent oversight committee to be established.
- A review of the size and composition should be undertaken with the intent of achieving a balance between external and internal members.

- Earmarked funds should be provided to HE institutions and matched by institutional funding for the staff development of Black academics and researchers.
- A portion of the earmarked funds should be dedicated for academic development purposes, with a special emphasis on curriculum development initiatives.
- An annual training event to induct council members on the role, functions and performance of councils should be implemented.
- Ensure Ministerial and institutional support for the support and mentoring of new staff members upon their entry into academia.
- Review remuneration packages for entry level professional staff members.
- Institutional efforts should be made to link post-retirement contracts with support female and black academics in permanent positions. Stringent criteria are required for this and it should be undertaken in exceptional cases only, if linked to staff development posts; or if the ability of the institution to fulfil its core academic mission and deliver its programmes appears to be compromised.
- It is recommended that institutional councils should develop a clear transformation framework, including transformation indicators, accompanied by targets. This should form the basis of the vice-chancellor's performance contract.
- Vice-chancellors are to be held directly responsible for the attainment of employment equity targets and this should be part of the Vice-chancellors' performance management contract.
- Council should take direct responsibility for monitoring employment equity by establishing an employment equity sub-committee, chaired by an external member of Council.
- In view of the absence of a general transformation plan in the majority of institutions in the country, it is recommended that institutions develop a transformation charter for themselves, which could serve as a guideline and an accounting instrument for change applicable to everybody who forms part of an institution.
- The Committee recommends that every institution, via its council, establishes an Office of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman would need to be independent

of the institution and would receive and deal with all complaints relating to discrimination within that institution.

As nothing concrete was heard of the work of the previous committee, the then Minister increased its composition from seven to 10 members. This occurred after the Higher Education Amendment Act gave the Minister more powers to intervene in matters of transformation at an institutional level (Mabuza, 2017). The National Development Plan has set up an extended highly transformational vision for 2030 (National Planning Commission, 2014).

### **3.12.1 Leadership in Universities**

There is an abundance of leadership theories dealing with all sectors of society and social life. This because it is common cause that leadership plays an important role in ensuring that organisations achieve their set objectives. Among the myriad of leadership theories that abound, organisations need to carefully consider which will be the most suitable for their needs. It has been said in general terms that leadership can contribute to the transformation of all aspects of the African continent especially in the efforts to achieve human and economic development, as a possible resolution to the proliferation of conflict and socio-political transformation (Mwambazambi and Banza, 2014). Miller et al. (2011), have pinpointed the need for 'communities to explore alternative leadership ideologies, actors, venues' to facilitate social and academic changes in communities'. It has been assessed that while the forces behind change have been operating for decades in universities, the pace of change continues to be accelerate, demanding an insightful balance between management imperatives on the one hand and academic values on the other (Van Niekerk, 2015).

Caldwell et al. (2012) offer a definition of transformative leadership as a standard of ethical leadership, which upholds the needs of employees and society as a central tenet. It infuses values-based leadership to meet the multi-dimensional needs of stakeholders and society. They wrote that transformative leadership emerged amid a call for a new type of ethical leadership. The basic premise, argue the authors, is the need for leaders who can inculcate principles orientated to engendering the trust of employees and society at large. It can be said that definitions and conceptualisations of leadership both in mainstream, popular and academic literature abound throughout



the world. It is universally accepted that transformative leadership is a critical component of the good governance landscape and a key variable that ensures enhanced management capacity and performance, in both public and private sector organisations (Caldwell et al., 2012).

McDowelle (2009), attributes the advent of transformational leadership to James Burns, and believes that HE institutions are moving into an era in which change will be one of the few constants, if not the only one. The institutions that best understand how to control and manage change will be those best placed to prosper. Macgregor defined transformational leadership as the engagement of one or more persons in a manner that gives to a challenge higher levels of morality (McGregor et al., 2015). McDowelle (2009), citing Northouse (2007), Fisher (1983) and Nahavandi (2003), uses Gandhi's unwavering commitment to a transformative moral vision. The author also sets out that transformational leadership and transformative leadership are terms that are used interchangeably in modern literature (McDowelle, 2009).

Rooted initially in the American literary tradition, the concept of transformational leadership was expanded in its various forms by Burns, who initially equated leadership with the relentless efforts by leaders and 'followers' commonly attempting to reach the highest level of motivation and morality (Sarros, Cooper and Santora, 2008). It must be noted, that the analysis was principally, but not exclusively, the vision and mission calling of the leader and led to direct motivation for excellence in the line of duties and responsibilities, of those around him/her that was seen as the key characteristic of transformational leadership (Harms and Credé, 2010).

### **3.12.2 Transformative Leadership**

Transformational leadership within an organisation, including a university, denotes a relationship between leaders and others having a common vision for change that is achieved through dedication to unity of planning and action (Zhang et al., 2011). Accordingly, Bass and Avolio (1993), (as cited in McDowelle 2009), expound transformational leadership as being directly linked to the feelings and emotions of both followers and leaders. They also present key elements of the concept of transformational leadership which include idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration.

Such a common vision is instrumental in cementing staff morale, commitment and dedication through processes, structures and functions that elevate job performance to higher levels and cements a common organisational identity (Burke et al., 2007, Webber, 2008). This, together with the leader's actions rooted in ability and personality inspires work towards common goals and actions, through continuous motivation founded on a "give and take" relationship. It is work rooted on the commitment to the benefit of the organisation of the team (Burke et al., 2007, Webber, 2008). What is considered as an 'advancement' of Burns' pioneering effort was based on a more psychological treatment of the phenomenon, emphasising the impact of leaders on 'followers' and concentrated on issues of admiration, trust and respect of followers towards leaders (Wang and Howell, 2012). Charisma is treated as a key issue in motivating and influencing followers, providing them with individual intellectual stimulation that leads to organisational success (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002). This charisma is said to be instrumental in followers being inspired and stimulated to raise their performance levels, especially in complex organisations such as universities, because their leaders inspire them with their thinking and actions (Nielsen and Daniels, 2012).

Bass' 'transformational leadership theory' that was developed in the mid-1980's utilised psychological measurements dealing directly and indirectly, with the impact and influence of leaders on human behaviour in organisations (Zhu, Newman, Miao and Hooke, 2013). What really led subordinates' respect, loyalty and commitment to the leader, accompanied better performance, inspiration and common organisational identity (Zhu et al., 2013). This because the leader is elevated into a role model, inspires and motivates, cares for the welfare and seeks achievements for the followers, through the efforts to transform them into moral, creative and innovative individuals and groups (Dvir, Eden, Avolio and Shamir, 2002). An explanation on the difference between transformative leadership theory and the theories of transactional or transformational leadership is offered by Shields (2010). An evaluation of the utilisation of transactional theory in assisting educational leaders in facilitating educational and social change, is also addressed. Transformative leadership, she argues, analyses issues related to social justice and democracy while offering an

appraisal of unjust practices and is concerned with individual and public good (Shields, 2010).



*Figure 3.2: Transformative Leadership Model (Source: Shields, 2010)*

As shown in Figure 3.1, transformative leadership has aspects of 6 leadership perspectives, these being transformational leadership; charismatic leadership; level 5 leadership; principle-centred leadership, servant leadership and covenantal leadership (Shields, 2010). The six key elements of transformative leadership are personable relationship building ability; humility and resolve; values and principle adherence; service to stakeholders, meaningful contribution and synergistic change orientation.

Empirical research has shown that there have been cases where transformational leadership is not necessarily the only factor for an ethical, high performance work

environment, where positive behaviour on the part of the workforce is rooted solely by their own motivation. Given the fact that such cases are rare, transformational leadership has a major positive impact (Dirks and Skarlicki, 2004:31-40). This reality is enhanced through continuous commitment, communication, clarity and commitment, that have positive effects on employees (Dirks and Skarlicki, 2004). These are further enhanced through solid organisational structures and widely accepted working conditions (Braun, Peus, Weisweiler and Frey, 2013). The Centre for Institutional and Social Change positions the need for transformative leadership to address deeply ingrained structural inequality (Sturm, 2011). Transformative leadership is advanced, speaks to multi-level institutional challenges, which impact intra-organisationally and adversely affects different stakeholder groups (Sturm, 2011).

Universities have been part of a knowledge enterprise that has gone through major changes in the last twenty years because of the technological advances as well the effects of rampant globalisation. Within this context transformative leadership accompanied by the commitment, dedication, skills and support of their stakeholders and role players, lead organisations in an effective, efficient and ultimately successful change management process. It can be understood that HR is a vital cog of such a process. Bennis and Nanus (2007:3) wrote that transformative leaders commit people to action, convert followers into leaders wherein leaders become change agents (Bennis and Nanus, 2007).

It can be understood that transformational leadership affects organisational culture and outcomes that are rooted on interaction, power relations, behavioural patterns, attitudes and beliefs but above all, the direct and indirect relations of individuals with organisational processes functions and structures (Schein, 2010). In this process, such a leader not only inspires confidence, but also takes risks not to divide but to create and cement confidence in the organisational values, through persuasion and a shared vision (Sarros et al., 2008). It is on this basis that transformational leadership was explored in this study.

The results of such processes are in most cases high levels of intrinsic satisfaction in the organisation as well as elevation of work commitment and ethics (Daft and Marcic,

2009). Motivation of an inspirational nature flowing throughout the organisational pyramid lead in most cases to the transformation of missions and visions into achievable goals and realities (Wright and Pandey, 2009). In summary, Caldwell et al. (2012), advise that although transformative leadership is aspirational, the qualities of abiding by and promoting ethical principles and commitment to integrity based on transformative leadership are well-intentioned ideas. This can profoundly influence people and society and produce exceptional results (Caldwell et al., 2012).

### **3.12.3 Leadership and Governance Challenges in Universities**

The university staffing structure is made up of academic staff; support services employees and senior management. Academic staff provides services to the central academic activity of teaching and learning, research and community engagement while support staff provide administrative and operational services within the university. The senior management cohort are the university administrators, tasked with strategic and operational decision-making powers. Saunders and Stumpf (2016:2) extol the fact that academic leadership in South African higher education institutions has increasing challenges and complexity within a rapidly changing global reality. They outline the challenges associated with power in the academy, indicating that heads of departments were appointed with due consideration of their unique tenure in a discipline, wielded extra-ordinary control of staff and departmental activities. This was usually the case for an extended period-usually till retirement or death (Saunders and Stumpf, 2016).

Criticism is levelled against academic leadership (Saunders and Stumpf, 2016). Institutional leadership, by way of contributing to the overall goals of the organisation, requires incumbents of these posts to master the detail of the assigned responsibilities over the period of the contract. Other associated responsibilities include developing and adopting a vision with outcomes, and an effective plan of action. Academic managers and leaders (Deans and HOD's), they argue, abdicate their responsibilities in providing leadership on employee management processes. Without a rethink of their role university HR departments will continue to be beleaguered. This will impact on the ability of HR to address and implement key HR strategies, frameworks and processes (Saunders and Stumpf, 2016).

Although significant criticism on the ability of HR to deliver on the needs of the sector are often raised, positive HR-related services should be recognised (Govender, 2013). These include the good administrative protocols that are observed by HR departments to adhere to legislative requirements, including but not limited to, the submission of EE Plans and Reports, Workplace Skills Plans and Affirmative Action processes. Govender (2013) proposes that managers at universities need to be fully engaged and integrate the sub-disciplines of HR, to enable the considered and relevant development of HR solutions to meet institutional demands. This once again highlights the broadening of relevant skills that HR Practitioners in HE requires, in order to deal with HRM challenges that universities face. The leadership structures of universities are prescribed by the Higher Education Act, 101 of 1997 as amended. The internal and external stakeholders are made up of employees, students, suppliers, interest groups and other role players (Sibiya, 2017). The leadership structure in universities are guided by the Institutional Statute of each university. The Higher Education Act 101 of 1997 (as amended), defines the categories of management as either 'Executive Management or 'Senior Management'.

Miller et al. (2011) state that inculcated practices that are resident and perpetuated in institutions have a deeply negative impact on the humanity of a person. They assert that if this is not addressed, there will be a continuation of disparagement. The authors believe that Freire's ideological perspective and associated practices of 'humility and faith' offer a contextual discourse and basis for people to become advocates for social transformation, thereby becoming authentic agents for change, advancing humanised ways of doing things (Miller et al., 2011). Badat (2012, p.1) opines that 'leadership must be earned through ethical conduct; impeccable integrity; visionary endeavour; selfless public service; perseverance and commitment to people and responsibilities'. He advances that the absence of integrity, would prohibit principled conduct. As a result, there would be no prospect of winning trust, inspiring and uniting people around a vision. In addition, there would be a lack of effective communication and an absence of ethical and responsible leadership (Badat, 2012).

More than two decades ago, South Africa entered a new era of democracy. The initial euphoria has been tempered by the hard work that followed in transforming and rebuilding the major social institutions of the country, to address the vast challenges

of inequality, poverty and the need for economic growth (Badat, 2012). HE remains, as it was then, central to the projects of modernisation, transformation and renewal in the country, just as it too is subject to those same forces. In that propitious year of 1994, Beck wrote that, 'the more societies are modernised, the more agents acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and to change them in that way' (Badat, 2012). What he was pointing to is the importance in a democracy of developing the ability to reflect on and analyse policy and to influence the interventions that are designed to bring about a healthy and productive society. Not only is higher education important in and of itself, but it is a barometer of societal content or discontent, as academics and students are perhaps the freest agents in democratic societies to think, reflect and act (Badat, 2012). It is apposite at this juncture, therefore, to take stock of higher education in South Africa; to reflect on its achievements, its shortcomings, its contradictions and its various roles and purposes, and to apply the wisdom of hindsight, such that we may look forward more clearly to a re-imagined future.

### **3.13 HR Strategy and Planning**

Finlan, et al. (2016), pinpoint that an organisational HR strategy can improve the performance of universities HR departments. HR strategy should be focussed on specific discussions such as data inclusive processes, clearly articulated goals and an awareness of trends and buzzwords (Finlan et al., 2016). A plan and strategy are the two essential elements that contribute to the organisation's objectives (Grobler et al., 2010). The strategy is the road map and offers an action plan linked to the achievement of results. They advise that the two strategies be considered as indivisible from each other (Grobler et al., 2010). Kearns (2010) is of the view that the strategy of an organisation outlines the long-term intent by the organisation and sets out that it is inextricably linked to the HR strategy. Ulrich et al. (2012), further upheld that an efficient HR organisation strategy should give effect to an 'effective modus operandi'. This would extend to the 'ethos, principles, values and objectives of the organisation', which should be collectively embedded in the HR strategy (Kearns, 2010). As supported by Ulrich et al. (2012), HRM must be integrated within the organisation. The basis for this is that it is an integral part of the success of the organisation (Pillay, 2017, Ulrich et al., 2012).

### **3.14 Summary**

This chapter set out the final segment of the comprehensive literature review. This section of the literature review considered the analytical overview of HR compliance and the role of HR in advancing social justice. An analysis of the impact of a transformational social justice agenda on HRM systems, rules and regulations in South Africa and internationally, discriminatory practices and the role of HR in redressing this were also considered. The role and contribution of universities in a contemporary society was considered. The history of universities in South Africa pre- and post-1994 and their challenges was then covered, followed by the role of HR in advancing transformation. The chapter concluded with an insight into leadership required in universities. The next chapter covers the research methodology utilised in this study.

The literature indicated that while the role and purpose of universities in South Africa were shaped by the history of the country and political ideologies, contemporary events continue to make demands and influence current shifts within these institutions. These include but are not limited to internal and external equity, social justice and transformation related matters. This chapter located these critical aspects in relation to the role of the HR function's need to meet these important imperatives.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Research Methodology

#### 4.1 Introduction and Overview

This chapter describes the research methodology used in this study, the methods of data collection and analysis of the results including how the results were interpreted. Accordingly, Leedy and Ormrod (2010:12), agree with Babbie and Mouton (2001:74) that research methodology refers to the researcher's general approach in carrying out the research project. It further provides information on the philosophy underpinning the study; the research strategy; the methods of data collection; the sampling techniques, the patterns of data analysis as well as issues of reliability and validity.

#### 4.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the research is to contribute to the transformation and development of HRM systems in universities in South Africa. The exploratory nature of the study sought to evaluate the impact of HR models, HR competencies and transformative leadership, on the delivery of services to employees, the capability of HR practitioners and social justice respectively in selected HEI's. Further, an analytical evaluation of the HR competencies required was undertaken. It is envisaged that the study will contribute to the limited literature on the field of HR in South Africa.

##### 4.2.1 Proposition

The study purports a null **proposition** (N0), in that it deems that HR models, HR competencies and transformative leadership have no impact on HRM systems and processes in universities in South Africa.

#### 4.3 Objectives of this Study

The following objectives related to the HR function in universities will be explored:

- To ascertain if universities use HR models that are relevant and effective to employees' needs.
- To determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified with relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level.

- To evaluate the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector.
- To establish if social justice principles are incorporated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of HE HR demands and requirements.
- To understand the challenges facing HR departments in higher education.

#### **4.4 The Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework lays down the rationale, the approach taken, and the method used to conceptually frame and structure the study.

The purpose of the conceptual framework is to display an understanding of theories and concepts which are relevant to the area of research and the broader, related areas of knowledge whilst analysing the data and collating the results. The difference between the conceptual and theoretical framework is offered as follows. According to Abend (2013), a theoretical framework is a combination of concepts, relevant definitions and refer to relevant scholarly literature and existing theory which are utilised within the scope of a study.

Ravitch and Riggan (2016:42-44) explain the importance of the conceptual framework in a research study, which requires an appropriate structure and approach to deliver on its objectives. They advise that many researchers' individual curiosity, subject, investigation related questions, relevant literature, setting and other important factors, which give effect to a research study, can become fragmented. This fragmentation can result in an under, or poorly developed, research study. The need for a methodical way of considering and articulating the subject under study, therefore, requires careful consideration. This is where a relevant conceptual framework plays a critical role. The authors stressed the importance of the conceptual framework for the success of the research study (Ravitch and Riggan, 2016), as structure by narrowing the scope of the applicable data. This is done through focusing on specific variables and defining the specific framework. A framework is useful in determining the parameters of the data collection by identifying specific variables and refining the researcher's approach taken during the data analysis and interpretation phase (Ravitch and Riggan, 2016).

Although the framework is not readily embedded in the literature, it remains a significant aspect of the research study (Abend, 2013). The relevant framework often emerges after considerable engagement with relevant course readings and research studies, which lead to an understanding of theories and analytic models, pertinent to the research problem under investigation (Abend, 2013). It is this process of interrogation that led to the researcher identifying grounded theory as the most suitable conceptual framework for the study.

#### **4.5 Selecting the Conceptual Framework**

When selecting the conceptual framework for this research study, the following factors were taken into consideration:

- Grounded theory allows for theory to be inductively generated through the systematic application of a set of methods (Allan, 2003);
- The method of coding which allows for common themes to emerge and be identified (Cho and Lee, 2014);
- The process of identifying common words and phrases which forms the basis of coding (Allan, 2003, Cho and Lee, 2014).

In accordance with the above, the appropriateness, ease of application and explanatory power were considered, as these as proposed by Abend (2013), are the 3 important aspects for the selection of a framework. On the basis that the purpose of framework is to strengthen a study, care must be taken to ensure that it connects the researcher to existing knowledge (Abend, 2013). Guided by a relevant theory, a basis is created for the hypotheses and subsequent choice of research methods. In addition, articulating the theoretical assumptions of the research study, forces one to address questions related to why (rationale) and how (methodology) of the study. Ultimately this allows for the transition from the description of a phenomenon being observed, to generalising about diverse facets of that phenomenon (Abend, 2013). This is done through a series of steps which require careful consideration and planning. It is this methodical approach which allows for the theory to emerge that was important for choosing grounded theory as the framework for this study.

Anderson and Shattuck (2012); Maxwell (2012) and Maxwell and Loomis (2003:253) all advise that the conceptual framework comprises of theory relating to the phenomena under study. This in turn informs and has considerable impact on the research. Having a theory helps one identify the limits to those generalisations. This is done through specifying the key variables that influence a phenomenon of interest, highlighting the need to closely examine the differences between the key variables and their related factors (Anderson and Shattuck, 2012, Maxwell, 2012, Maxwell and Loomis, 2003). Given the depth of the study, and the need to evaluate the connection and impact between the variables, grounded theory was considered and chosen, as the research had no preconceived opinion of what the findings of the study would be or what theory would emerge from the data.

A distinction between the literature search and conceptual framework exists. Machi and McEvoy (2016), set out the criteria for a quality literature review, these being procedure, disposition and reflection. Engaging in the review of literature is the initial phase, which leads one to a theoretical framework (Machi and McEvoy, 2016), which is set out in Chapter 2 of this study. The latter is substantially more focused and refined and creates a link between the formal theory and topical research in a boarder manner (Ravitch and Riggan, 2016). The conceptual framework guides the ways in which you think about collecting, analysing, describing and interpreting data, thereby guiding the ways in which it is collected, analysed, described and interpreted (Ravitch and Riggan, 2016). This is an important aspect of this study, given the voluminous literature review undertaken.

## **4.6 Methodological Framework of the Study**

### **4.6.1 Grounded Theory**

Selecting the most appropriate research method is one of the most difficult problems facing any researcher. A doctoral student is no exception. Grounded theory is presented here as one method of choice as it is detailed, rigorous and systematic, yet it permits flexibility and freedom. The motivation and characteristics of grounded theory will be explored below.

Grounded theory is a methodological approach that allows for theory to be shaped and emerge through the analysis of data. This is commonly described as a method of

content analysis with the aim of categorising (conceptualising) key issues from the data (Allan, 2003, Glaser, 2012, Heydarian, 2015). Initially developed by Campbell and Fiske in 1959, it was further developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (Cho and Lee, 2014, Douglas, 2003). After Glaser and Strauss' introduction of grounded theory, it developed in several directions with variations (Tan, 2010).

The main objective of grounded theory is to 'develop' a deeper understanding that can be derived from 'a systematic analysis of data' (Douglas, 2003). It is on this basis that grounded theory was identified as the most suitable conceptual framework for this study. Gregory (2010) and Yin (1994) in Allan (2003), indicates that grounded theory within a case study approach is useful to analyse contemporary data when the 'boundaries between phenomena and contexts' are not clearly demarcated (Allan, 2003).

Four different grounded theory models have been identified (Fernandez, 2012):

- Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1978). The key characteristics include concurrent data collection and analysis which allows for the development of systematic codes and data sets. The key feature of this method is the ongoing comparative analysis during all phases of the study, leading to the development of theory.
- Qualitative data analysis sometimes referred to as the Straussian grounded theory refers to the development of a theory through a methodical application of analysis. Straussian grounded theory is characterised by thorough planning and specified levels of analysis.
- The constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2000) refers to the data that is created through joint interpretation of the interviewer and the participant(s).
- The Feminist Grounded Theory was originally developed for nurses with the aim of allowing the voices of women to be articulated (Wuest, 1995).

Douglas (2003) identifies three categories of data that emerge in grounded theory. These are field data, interview data (notes, recordings, transcripts) and existing literature and artefacts, which emerge to provide insight into phenomena. This is referred to as the generation of grounded theory through field observations; interviews, meetings and inspection of documentation, providing the basis for the data to be coded

in order to identify key threads. This may be done in the following ways: Micro-Analysis Coding, Key Point Coding and Emerging Theory Coding (Douglas, 2003).

As a method, theory is inductively generated through the systematic application of a set of techniques pertaining to data analysis (Allan, 2003). This is undertaken through a form of coding which is applied to data, from which common themes are identified (Cho and Lee, 2014). This offers opportunities for ongoing insights to be gleaned from the data. It is not a static process and allows the researcher to grapple with the data and findings and to enhance or undertake further analysis. According to Allan (2003), the researcher then identifies common words and codes. The identification of key words and phrases forms the basis of coding (Allan, 2003, Cho and Lee, 2014). The method of simultaneously collecting the data and analysing it for emerging themes and the concurrent development of theory on an ongoing basis made the choice of grounded theory in its classic form, the preferred choice.

#### **4.6.2 Characteristics of Grounded Theory**

The primary feature of grounded theory is the constant comparison of data with emerging categories, theoretical sampling of data with emerging categories and theoretical sampling of different groups, to maximise the similarities and differences of information (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). This makes it a popular choice among contemporary researchers as the aim of grounded theory is commonly understood to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction, which is grounded in the views of the study participants (Starks and Brown Trinidad, 2007). This also means that researcher bias and interference in the analysis of the data is limited. Grounded theory comprises not only several stages of data collection, but also the enhancement and inter-relationship of categories of data (Corbin et al., 2014).

The research design and methods refer to the data collection techniques and tools used in the collection of data in this study. Harwell (2011), refers to the importance of identifying the research design to be used in a study, as it sets out the key features of the approaches that will be used. These often refer to the qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods technique that will be utilised. The author agrees that despite the type of research design to be undertaken, it will involve the collection of data, be it numerical, words, gesticulations, which will offer insights into the area(s) of study

(Harwell, 2011). There are four key aspects that need to be considered in research design (Douglas, 2003, Harwell, 2011).

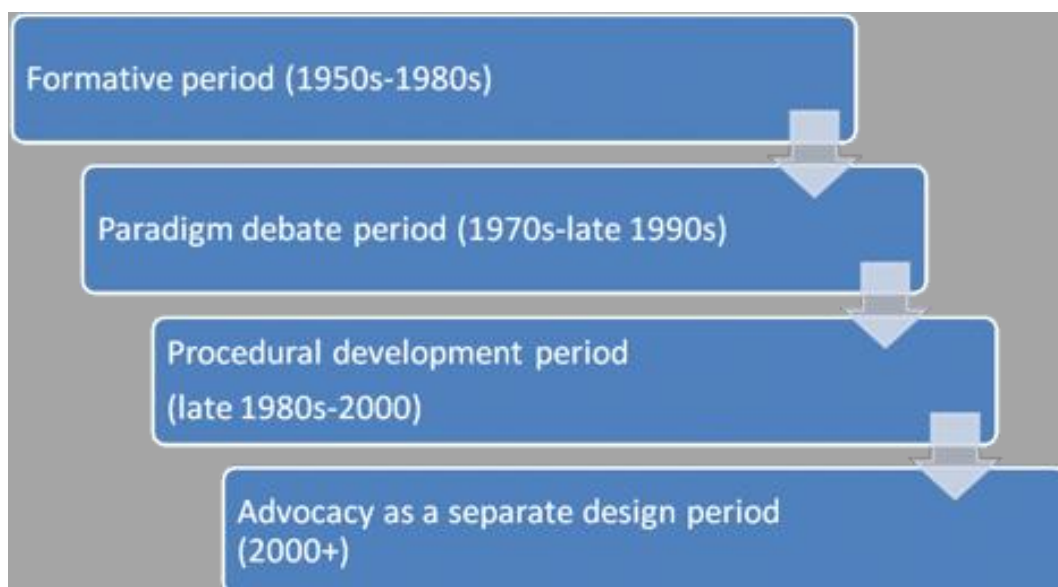
- Epistemology: what informs the research.
- Philosophy underpinning the methodology: e.g. post-positivism, constructivism, pragmatism, advocacy/participatory.
- Methodology: research design methodology.
- Techniques: data collection.

In this study, the above were carefully considered, in order to ensure the appropriate research design was used.

#### **4.7 Mixed Method Study**

Tashakkori and Creswell (2007), Cameron (2015) and Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), define mixed methods as research which involves the collection, analysis of data, integration of the findings and drawing of conclusions from both qualitative and quantitative methods. Mixed method studies integrate qualitative and quantitative data and findings (Creswell, 2013). This is the major characteristic of mixed-methods as it combines qualitative and quantitative approaches by including both qualitative and quantitative data in a single research study (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2009). This is done by joining quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative methods deal with broad numeric trends while qualitative data deal with detailed descriptions of views (Gay et al., 2009).

This study utilised a mixed method data collection approach. A determination was made that a mixed method approach for the study was the most suitable given that a comparative study was undertaken. It was decided that a mixed method approach would be beneficial for the objectives of the study. The rationale for this was to ensure adequate triangulation took place. O’Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl (2010) and Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003:5), describe the advent of mixed methodology as ‘neither the traditionalist (quantitatively oriented researchers), nor the revolutionaries (qualitatively oriented researchers). They go on to describe mixed method designs as combining ‘the qualitative and quantitative approaches in the research methodology of a single study or multi-phased study’ (O’Cathain et al., 2010, Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003).



*Figure 4.1: History of the Development of Mixed Methods Research (Adapted from Cameron 2015)*

There is a strong correlation between data collection and analysis. Due to the scope of the study, a mixed methodology was decided upon. The rationale being, to ensure that themes could be explored in greater detail. This is one of many benefits of utilising a multi strategy research approach (Bryman, 2008). Feilzer (2010), indicates that exponents of mixed methods research try to achieve an integration of quantitative and qualitative research strategies, thereby disallowing an orientation toward either strategy. While there are many arguments for and against qualitative and quantitative research methods, advocates for both methods promote the advantages for their method of choice (Bryman, 2008, Feilzer, 2010).

Mixed methods as a research method is the newest, having emerged after the established quantitative and qualitative methods (Lincoln and Guba, 2000, Sale et al., 2002). As described by Teddlie and Tashakkori (2003) the advent of mixed methodology was characterised by 'the pragmatist position', posited as a counter argument to the incompatibility thesis' and the appearance of several seminal works which were aimed at 'establishing mixed methods as a separate field'. There are four



justifications for the use of mixed research methods (Collins, Onwuegbuzie and Sutton, 2006). These are:

- The experience of participants.
- The relevance of instruments used.
- The legitimacy of the process.
- The validity of the data.

A good alternative to the choice of either qualitative or quantitative research methods, is the use of both methods in a methodology called mixed methods. In other words, the fundamental principle of mixed methods research is that the research reaps the advantages of the use of quantitative and qualitative methods that have complementary strengths and do not have overlapping weaknesses (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). This type of research is also referred to as multi-methods research. As DeCuir-Gunby (2008) advises, the combination of methods requires careful consideration of the inherent aspects of each method. This is reinforced by Bergman (2008) and Teddlie et al. (2003:11), who suggests that mixed method research studies should utilise qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis techniques in parallel or sequential phases.

Creswell (2013) explains that integration plays an important role in synthesising data and the associated aspects of triangulation, correlation and explanation. Mixed method research has been referred to as 'multi-method, integrated, hybrid and combined' (Creswell and Clark, 2007, Driscoll, Appiah-Yeboah, Salib and Rupert, 2007). This is further explained by Bryman (2008) and O'Cathain et al. (2010), who expound on the minutiae of integration of the data sets. If this is not done, then the two data sets would remain entirely separate, with little integration between them, thereby disallowing inferences to be drawn from the data sets (Bryman, 2008, O'Cathain et al., 2010).

Mixed method research designs offer a nuanced approach to an integrative process. The use of a mixed method approach offers deeper insights into phenomenon. A mixed method approach offers the following key aspects, which are core

characteristics of this design methodology. These include differentiation based on the prioritisation of data sets; the grouping of data and the data collection schedule(s). Lingard et al. (2008) describe the strategy for mixing methods as needing to be ‘explicit and justified’. The basic premise of using a mixed method approach is to ensure triangulation of data to gain a more expansive awareness (Lingard et al., 2008). The choice of research method is dependent on the purpose of the study. A distinguishing feature of utilising a mixed method study is that of complementarity (DeCuir-Gunby, 2008). A key feature of complementarity studies, advises DeCuir-Gunby (2008), is the use of quantitative and qualitative methods in examining ‘intersecting but different aspects of a phenomenon’. In the mixed methods approach, practical data claims and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data sequentially (Cresswell et al., 2003).

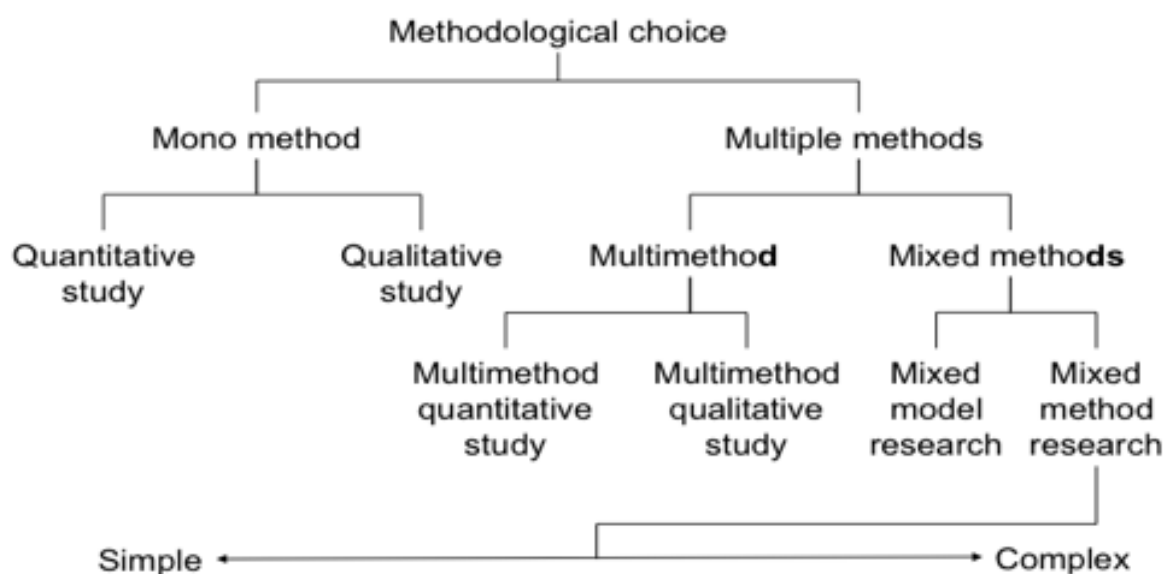


Figure 4.2: Methodological Choice-Adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012)

#### 4.7.1 Designing the Study: Critical Elements

Creswell et. al (2003) and Creswell (2013), indicate that knowledge claims, strategies and methods; which are three elements of inquiry, come together to develop different research approaches. This is illustrated in Figure 5.3, where these three elements, they posit, are used in the design of research processes (Cresswell et al., 2003). The

three elements further assist with the identification of the quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach to be used (Cresswell, 2013, Cresswell et al., 2003).

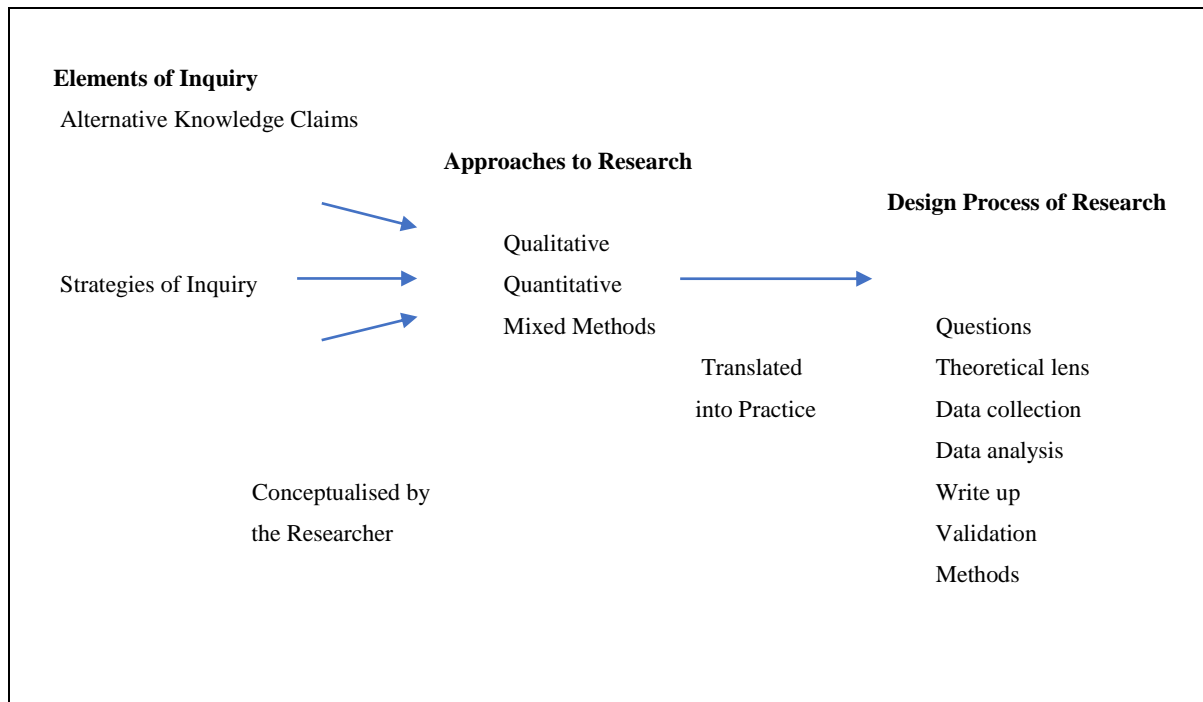


Figure 4.3: Knowledge Claims, Strategies of Inquiry, and Methods Leading to Approaches and the Design Process

(Adapted from Creswell (2003): Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches)

The broader objective of the study is to consider a development of a relevant HR model for universities. To do this, it was necessary to gain a deeper understanding of HR systems in universities. The Researcher decided on a mixed method approach given the need to triangulate data. Further, the intention of undertaking a mixed methods study is to ascertain if universities use HR models that are relevant and effective to employees' needs; determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified with relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level; evaluate the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector; establish if social justice principles are incorporated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of higher education HR demands and requirements and understand the challenges facing HR departments in higher education.

In the study, focus groups sessions were held at the NMU and RU campuses. This took the form of semi-structured interviews. In addition, a questionnaire was used to measure the relationship between the independent variable, being the HR function and its impact, efficacy and relevance on the people it impacts on (dependent variables). Guest (2013), highlights that researchers in diverse disciplines used mixed modalities by combining qualitative and quantitative methods, long before the field of mixed methods formally emerged as a typology. He further advises that mixed methods studies can be uncomplicated as it could be as simple as establishing two distinct data sets (Guest, 2013).

#### **4.7.2 Strategies of Inquiry in a Mixed Method Research Design**

The initial proponents of the mixed method approach were Campbell and Fiske and this is the least known of the research strategies (Cresswell, 2003, Cresswell, 2013). The development of this approach was an important aspect in that it sought to address the limitations inherent in both the qualitative and quantitative methods (Cresswell, 2003). The development of procedures for mixed methods strategies of inquiry led to the development of procedures to guide the collection of data. These are listed in Creswell (2003:16) as follows:

- Sequential procedures.
- Concurrent procedures.
- Transformative procedure.

The aim of sequential procedures is to expand the findings of one method with another method, which usually involves a qualitative method for exploratory purposes as a first step. This is generally followed up with a quantitative method using a larger sample. This enables the researcher to generalise results to a population. In concurrent procedures, quantitative and qualitative data converge. This method involves the collection of both data forms simultaneously. The approach results in one form of data being nested within another larger data collection procedure. This enables the analysis of different questions or levels. In a transformative procedure, the researcher uses a theoretical lens to develop a main perspective within a design. This would contain both qualitative and quantitative data. The lens would provide a framework for topics of interest and methods for collecting data and outcomes.

### **4.7.3 Quantitative Research Design**

Given the extent and purpose of the research design, questionnaires were used to collect the data. A comprehensive description is offered by Harwell (2011) who describes quantitative research methods as an endeavour that seeks to enhance objectivity, replicability, and generalisability of findings and is firmly steeped in prediction (Harwell, 2011). Quantitative data collection is based on the use of mathematical procedure to deduct reasoning and rationale, which has been described as the collection of numerical data to understand and explain a phenomenon (De Rond and Thietart, 2007, Muijs and Reynolds, 2001).

Quantitative research is primarily a deductive process used to test pre-specified concepts, constructs and hypotheses that make up a theory. This is opposite to processes using interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artefacts that are used to gather information (Yin, 2009). Burns and Grove (2005) describe quantitative research as a formal, objective and systematic process where numerical data are used to obtain information about the world. The main characteristics of a quantitative research design are primarily that the data collected is numeric (Burns and Grove, 2005). This permits data to be collected from a large sample range. Statistical analysis is used for the analysis of data. This allows for greater levels of objectivity and ensures independence from the reviewer. The use of statistical software renders for more efficient data analysis phases, as it is less time consuming. The presentation of data can be done in illustrative ways, such as graphs, charts and tables. The quantitative research approach typically employs the use of close-ended questions and numeric data (Cresswell, 2013).

### **4.7.4 Qualitative Research Design**

The primary goal of any qualitative research interviews, is to see the research topic from the perspective of the interviewees and to understand why they have that perspective. An important characteristic of qualitative research, is that it seeks to elicit what is important to individuals, as well as their interpretations of the environments in which they work, through in-depth investigations of those individuals and their environment (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). As explained by Creswell (2013) and Kumar

2011:13), qualitative research methods are more objective, meaning they provide observed effects of a program on a problem or condition.

Qualitative research tends to lead to an understanding of what is going on in organisations, in participants' own terms rather than those of the researcher (Bodgan and Buiklen, 2003, Bryman, 2008, Burgelman, 1985). Bryman (2008) suggests that the objective of qualitative research is to focus on individuals' perceptions of what is important, their interpretations of the environments within which they work, thereby highlighting the importance of individuals' interpretations of their own environments and of their own behaviour, as well that of others.

Qualitative studies are known to be interpretive, allowing deductions to be made from the feelings and thoughts that people express (Morse, 1994). The presentation of data should be cognisant of the nuances of what people say and to the contexts in which their actions take place (Burgelman, 1985). To facilitate this, the data was arranged into themes. Accordingly, an interpretivist paradigm was used to make a meaningful translation of occurrences. The objective is to understand what is going on in organisations in participants' own terms rather than those of the researcher (Burgelman, 1985).

Maxwell (2012:13) indicates the need for a valid strategy which needs to be developed in advance and then carefully implemented in designing a qualitative study. He advises that in a qualitative research design, an iterative process is followed, wherein the design is constructed and reconstructed as the researcher continually checks and assess the linkage between the different parts of the design and the impact of these on the other. He further indicates that in the design of a qualitative study, a much more iterative, hands on approach is required when compared to the design of a quantitative study (Maxwell, 2012).

Qualitative studies are more concerned about qualitative information that include words, sentences and narratives. It is therefore research with words instead of numbers (Corbin et al., 2014). This is the favoured approach for this study. It is important not to rely solely on quantitative producing data but to utilise more extensively qualitative data especially in case studies such as the present one, (Corbin

et al., 2014). A qualitative research method is more focused upon the content as a reflection of underlying phenomena and considered to be more objective, meaning that it provides information on the effects of a programme, on a problem or condition (Creswell, 1997, Kumar, 2011). According to Morse (1994), qualitative designs are emergent rather than fixed and interpretive techniques are used to translate the meaning of phenomenon.

The manner in which the data is presented should be considerate of the particularities of the factors that impact on why participants say things as well as environmental considerations. Participant responses in qualitative research are semi-structured and differ from quantitative studies that posit fixed questions and require fixed responses. The validity and reliability of information largely depends on the skill and rigor of the researcher (Allan, 2003, Kumar, 2011). Qualitative research allows the researcher to delve deeper into the data by means of different levels of analysis; through the use of different concepts and categorisation of data (Allan, 2003, Kumar, 2011). In this sense, the researcher categorises answers, debates, conversations and observations, and interprets them according to his/her own understanding of the context and realities.

The motive of the researcher underpinning the decision to choose a mixed method study with a mostly qualitative research was on the basis that such an approach would provide more richness, detail and diversification to the data and that would provide tolerance of ambiguity and contradictions. The description in the qualitative research process indicates what was done and how it was done. Further, the adherence to the identified criteria for qualitative research ensured the authenticity and trustworthiness of this research study.

#### **4.7.5 Case study: Comparative method**

According to Goodrick (2014:3), comparative studies encompass the analysis and combination of the similarities, differences and patterns across two or more cases which share a common focus or goal. He further advises that the qualities of each case be described in depth at the beginning of the study. To this end, chapter one described the setting of the two universities, which are part of the study. The author acknowledges that comparative studies are known to utilise both qualitative and quantitative data sets. This is done to enhance the 'understanding and the context of

the cases'. Goodrick (2014:3) indicates that similarities between single case comparative case studies are evident but emphasises that the latter utilises and requires 'more extensive conceptual, analytical and synthesizing work.'

The present project is a case study dealing with contemporary events. To ascertain, an understanding of HRM systems and practices in universities, which is as comprehensive as possible, a mixed method research method was used. To achieve this, both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used. A comparative case study approach was undertaken. The RU and NMU were identified as suitable case institutions. The challenges facing the HR function in universities, was discussed in chapter three. Global and national changes require an introspective evaluation of HR practices being used. Changes in the higher education environment have resulted in the development and implementation of HRM practices in ways that had not been considered previously.

The HR department has important functions to fulfil. These functions include providing a comprehensive range of services to meet the multitude of staff needs. In addition, legislative compliance requirements, development of relevant HRM policies, practices, systems and process to give effect to these, as well as the enhancement of HR practitioners' capabilities are important considerations. Figure 4.4 illustrates the role of HR within an institutional setting. The Society for Human Resources Management shows the centrality of the HR role in organisations. The golden thread in advancing institutional objectives and priorities is upheld by HR, in assisting with participating the development of the organisation's business strategy, alignment of the HR strategy to organisational strategy and provision of support for other functional areas with respect to their strategic roles (SHRM, 2017).





*Figure 4.4: The role of HR within an Institutional Setting (Society for Human Resources Management)*

Although the role and function of HR has changed, the fundamental principles that guide HR (such as managing and developing the workforce) have remained largely unchanged. The HR department is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the organisational strategy is implemented. These HR principles are upheld through important HR administrative and strategic functions in addition to the basic functions of the HR department, which include the provision of administrative support for people management, the administration of salaries and benefits and recruitment (Brewster et al., 2008). The merger of higher education institutions has placed enormous pressure for HR to rethink its contribution, relevance and effectiveness. It is for this reason that a comparative case study approach was utilised for this study.

#### **4.7.6 Rationale for Using a Case Study Methodology**

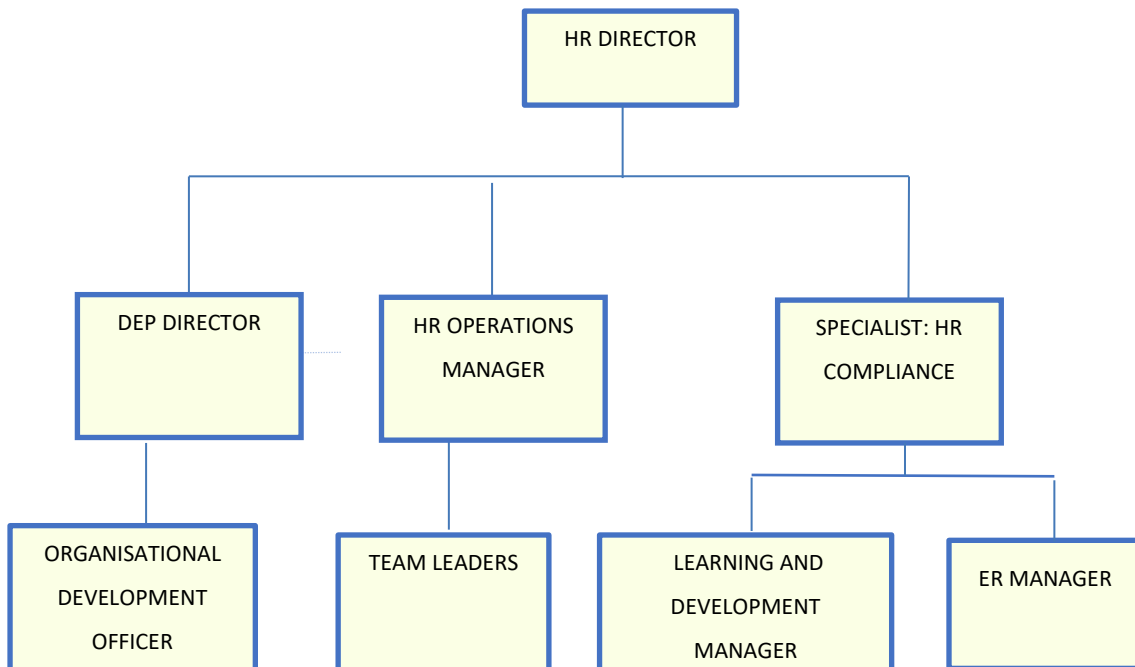
The decision to undertake a case study approach is to draw comparisons in HR approaches, systems, policies between a traditional and a comprehensive university. The location of the universities was considered when determining which universities would be included in the study. Both universities are in the EC and report into the provincial Department of Labour. In addition, the Employment Equity Inspectorate are responsible for monitoring these institutions. The researcher has worked at both universities. Both universities had established HR Departments. The HR Departments at the RU and NMU face challenges. The Researcher was interested in exploring the

challenges faced and to possibly find recommendations for the challenges facing the HR Departments.

#### 4.8 Research Setting and Structure

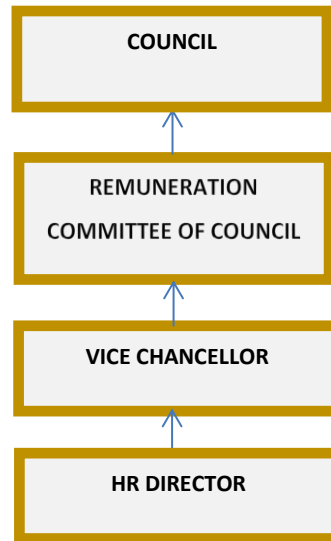
The structure and functionality of the HR functions of RU and NMU are briefly discussed. The HR Departments of both universities have HR operational plans and meet statutory compliance obligations. These include requirements as set out by the Department of Labour, South African Revenue Services and Sector Education and Training Authority requirements. The HR staff component at Rhodes University of twenty-six, is headed by an HR Director. The HR Department at RU consists of the following units:

- HR Operations: Recruitment and Talent Management.
- HR Compliance.
- Organisational Development.
- Employee Development.
- HR Remuneration and Benefits.



*Figure 4.5: RU HR Management Structure*

(Source: RU Organograms)



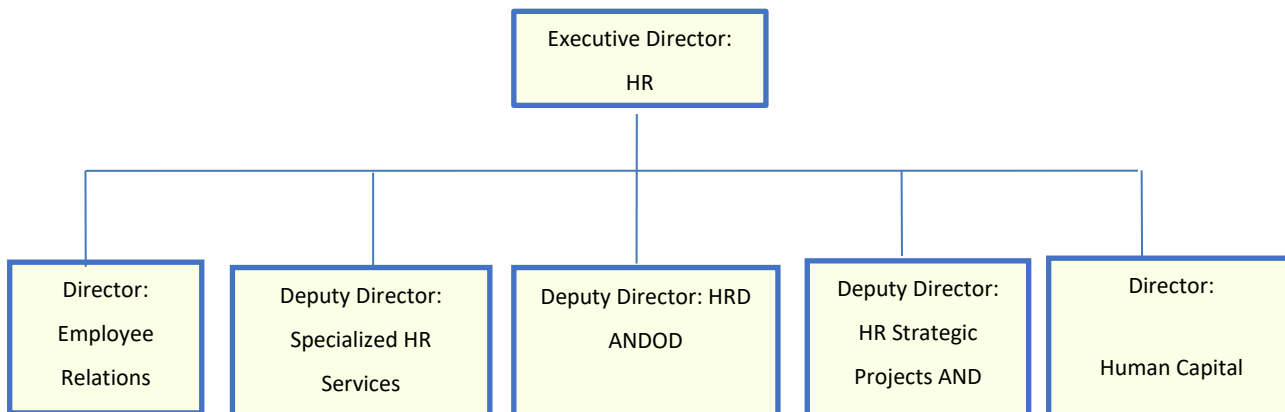
*Figure 4.6: Governance Structure for the HR Department*  
(Source: RU Organograms)

The RU structure comprises of a HR Director and Senior Managers. The structure has the following disciplines:

- HR Operations [Talent Management].
- HR Compliance.
- Learning and Development.
- Organisational Development.

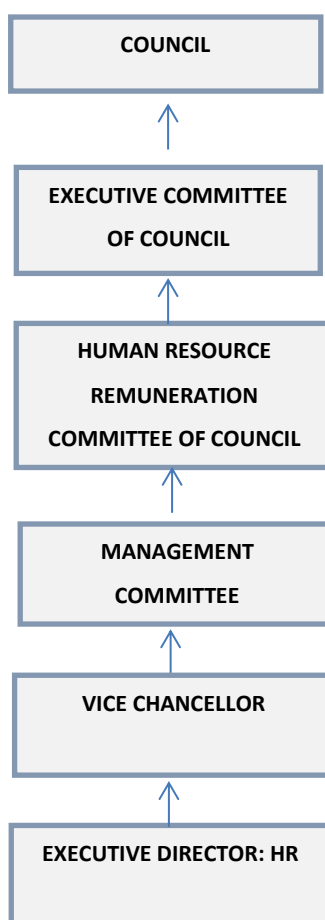
The NMU HR structure consists of 30 staff, with six units and is headed by an Executive Director of HR:

- Employee Relations.
- Human Capital Management.
- Remuneration and Budgets.
- Human Resources Development.
- Organisational Development.
- Information Systems.



*Figure 4.7: NMU HR Management Structure*

(Source: NMU Organograms)



*Figure 4.8: NMU Governance Structure for the HR Department*

(Source: NMU Organograms)

The HR governance structure at the NMU consists of the Human Resource Committee of Council. The objective of the HR Department is to:

- Provide an effective HR system.
- Ensure an effective HR Department.
- Provision of on time HR services.

#### **4.9 Methodological Rationale for using a Sequential Explanatory Research Design**

A sequential explanatory research design method was used for the study. It was used for exploratory purposes. This was followed up with a quantitative survey to enable the Researcher to generalise the results. The sequential explanatory strategy is characterised by the collection and analysis of quantitative data first, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data that builds on the results of the quantitative phase. As advised by Creswell et al. (2003), the process outlined hereunder will be followed for the sequential explanatory design. The processes entailed in the first instance, a qualitative data collection followed by quantitative data analysis and collection. Thereafter interpretation of the entire process followed. A further reason is that of development, where the results of the first method is used to develop or inform the next, subsequent method (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2008). The approach also allows for expansion, where the use of different methods is used to address different parts of a phenomenon. Finally, complementarity in this design method addresses different aspects of a particular phenomenon (Plano Clark and Creswell, 2008).

#### **4.10 Data Collection**

The data collection instruments were developed after the literature review was completed. The literature indicates gaps in HR processes and systems and a lack of appropriate HR models for African countries. There is not a vast body of literature that speaks to HR systems in Africa and South Africa. Based on this paucity of literature, a set of focus group questions were developed. Further, a questionnaire was developed based on the gaps emanating from the literature. Through a process of triangulation, the instruments were refined, with the objective of developing a range of recommendations. With this approach data is usually collected in the form of

description. Even though some of the methods used, such as interviews, are used in quantitative research the difference is that qualitative research uses non-mathematical procedures when interpreting and explaining the research (Malhotra et al., 2012).

#### **4.10.1 Phase 1: Focus Group Sessions**

The first step in the data collection process was the focus group sessions. This was followed by the distribution of the questionnaires. Both collection techniques were based on the research objectives. A total of four sessions were held overall. Two sessions were held at RU and two sessions were held at the NMU. A total of ten participants representing each university participated in each of the Focus Group Sessions held at both RU and NMU; there were therefore twenty participants in total from whom data were collected.

##### *4.10.1.1 Instrument: Semi-structured Focus Group Discussions*

The primary source of data was a semi-structured discussion. The semi-structured discussion method was used to capture respondents' perceptions regarding the HR systems at their universities. This provided authentic and reliable data. The researcher used a Research Assistant who conducted face-to-face conversations with the respondents. All interviews were conducted over a two-week period. A total of 17 questions were posed to the participants in the focus groups. The questions covered the following themes:

- HR Model.
- Legislation and Compliance.
- HR Planning.
- HR Delivery and Orientation.
- Institutional Justice.
- Leadership.

All the discussions were of a conversational style and were recorded. The data collected was thereafter transcribed and typed. Data analysis followed the initial interview process. Conducting focus group interviews requires a trained facilitator. The focus group facilitation and recording of the process combines the techniques of interviewing and direct observation (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011, Bhattacharjee, 2012). It is not only the recording of the focus group participants, but also the

observation of nuances, body language, non-verbal emotional cues (such as laughing, crying, sighing, etc.), which are also audio recorded and written into the facilitators notes (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011, Bhattacharjee, 2012). From this perspective the focus group, although facilitated, taken on aspects of direct observation field research in that the whole context of the environment, those within the environment, their behaviour and the context and manner in which they participate are observed and taken into account (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2013). The facilitator in effect becomes a non-participant observer in the group interaction; and besides recording the interaction, makes field notes, which are added into the transcript of the focus group recording (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2013). This direct observation is additionally transcribed as part of the interview/focus group process and impacts not only on what is recorded but how it is recorded, transcribed, interpreted and analysed.

#### *4.10.1.2 Reason for Using Semi-Structured Focus Group Interviews*

A semi structured questionnaire within a focus group gives the participants the opportunity to express themselves freely. Participants required freedom to answer the questions the way they wanted to and they were not restricted in any way. In this research, open-ended questions gave the respondents an opportunity to consider issues pertaining to the way they feel about a variety of problems and challenges at the work-place. They were given the opportunity to express how they feel about several issues and to address these issues.

#### *4.10.1.3 Qualitative Data Collection Instrument: Semi-structured Interviews and Discussion*

A set of questions were thematically designed to guide the discussion. A trained Research Assistant with a PhD was utilised to conduct the focus group sessions. The researcher did not participate in the discussions. The researcher was located close by to clarify questions the Research Assistant may have had. The form of interviewing technique deemed appropriate was the focus group method. This was to ensure that participants could communicate with each other about their experiences and be guided by each other in responding to the questions asked by the Research Assistant. Morgan (2012) acknowledges that the source of data in this method is the interaction of participants in the interviews. He acknowledges two goals that focus group can serve. These are, offering insights into the substantive content and the conversational

dynamics. Substantive content focuses on what was said while conversational dynamics are focused on the interactive dynamics of how it was said (Morgan, 2012). The focus groups were held first. Questionnaires were distributed thereafter.

<u>Research Objective 1: Ascertain if universities use HR models that are relevant and effective to employees' needs</u>	
Question 2	Does the HR Division use an integrated HR management model?
Question 3	Does the HR Division have a strategic plan?
Question 10	Is a new approach needed, if so, what should be the focus areas? (e.g. research based approach)
Question 11	Does the strategy of the HR Division meet the imperatives of national policy and legislative frameworks?
<u>Research Objective 2: Determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified with relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level</u>	
Question 4	Is theoretical knowledge of HR adequate?
Question 5	Do you think HR capabilities are important?
Question 6	Do you think HR should have a compliance-based approach?
Question 7	Do your HR Practitioners understand relevant legislation?
Question 8	Should HR Practitioners have the ability to solve complex problems?
Question 9	Are HR Practitioners experienced?
<u>Research Objective 3: Evaluate the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector</u>	
Question 12	Does the university adhere to ethical leadership principles?
Question 17	Has the leadership built coalition that will pave the way to change?
<u>Research Objective 4: Establish if social justice principles are incorporated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of HE HR demands and requirements</u>	
Question 13	What do you think underpin the decisions taken with regard to people management at your institution?
Question 14	Does your institution illustrate effective people management practices?
Question 15	How would you describe the relations between management and stakeholder groups at your institution?
<u>Research Objective 5: Understand the challenges facing HR departments in higher education</u>	
Question 1	Do current HR practices meet the needs of a complex higher education system?
Question 16	Is there an urgent need for change?
Question 17	Has the leadership built coalition that will pave the way to change?

*Table 4.1: Focus Group Questions and Research Objective Alignment*



The focus of the data collection, in this study, was on the substantive content. Seventeen questions were carefully developed to explore the research objectives, as represented below. The questions are clustered into themes aligned to the 5 research objectives. A purposive sampling approach was used to ensure a representative cross section of staff in the population sample.

#### **4.10.2 Phase 2: Quantitative Data Collection**

The second step in the data collection sequence was the quantitative data collection. The questionnaire, which was approved by the Ethics Clearance Committee of Stellenbosch University, was distributed to 90 employees in total. Forty-five questionnaires were distributed to employees of each of the two universities. Participants were not identified, but effort was made to include participants from all grade levels at both universities.

Surveys are considered a good vehicle for measuring unobservable data, such as people's preferences attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and factual information that respondents may find difficult or embarrassing to disclose in person (Bhattacharjee, 2012) . Due to their unobtrusive nature and the ability for the research participant to respond at their convenience, questionnaire surveys may be preferred by some respondents (Bhattacharjee, 2012). At the same time, survey research also has unique disadvantages in that it is subject to non-response bias or partial response skewing of the data results (Bhattacharjee, 2012). It is therefore imperative when analyzing survey data that results are analysed on an equitable basis (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

The questionnaires were distributed via the SurveyMonkey tool, which is an online survey tool that has been utilised extensively in social research in many academic disciplines. A cover email was compiled and forwarded to the identified participants. Participants were sent reminders to complete the questionnaires.

The online SurveyMonkey tool allows for intermittent engagement with the survey and the opportunity to save responses and return to the survey at a later stage. The initial response rate was slow and substantial number of responses were incomplete. A manual administration process was thereafter utilised due to a slow response rate.

The questionnaires were administered with the assistance of a Research Assistant. The final number of those who responded to all the survey questions in full, and for which there was valid data was sixty.

#### *4.10.2.1 Quantitative Data Collection Instrument*

The comprehensive questionnaire covering 7 sections, which was developed to ascertain respondents' views on the HRM system in their university, comprised seven sections as follows:

- Section 1: HR Model.
- Section 2: Legislation and Compliance.
- Section 3: HR Planning.
- Section 4: HR Competencies.
- Section 5: HR Delivery and Orientation.
- Section 6: Institutional Justice.
- Section 7: Transformative Leadership.

#### *4.10.2.2 Participant Sample*

A purposive sampling method was used. Palys (2008), indicates that purposive sampling involves a focused choice about how and where research is conducted, indicating that the sample will be tied to the researcher's objectives (Palys, 2008). Two types of universities were to be used in the sample; a traditional university and a comprehensive university. The purposive sampling technique is commonly used in qualitative research with a focus on case study analysis; the reasons that an identified group feels a certain way; the processes by which these attitudes are constructed and the role they play in dynamic processes within the group (Palys, 2008). In accordance with this, a criterion sampling technique was used to identify participants for the semi structured focus group sessions. In the focus group case the sample was chosen to ensure representation of different constituent groups in a University. Participant criteria:

- Two Representatives from each Trade Union.
- Two Senior Managers.
- Two HR Staff Members.
- Two Academic Members of Staff.

- Two Professional, Administrative and Support Staff.

#### *4.10.2.3 Contextual Document Analysis*

A secondary data analysis was also conducted using material available from the two institutions. It is envisaged that this data source would provide detailed information on HR models and planning processes, thereby providing in-depth understanding of training within the context of higher education. This data source was readily available and provided insight into the HR systems, approaches and processes at the two universities. The documents that were reviewed included HR documentation such as long-term HR plans, annual operating plans, archival records and HR department ministerial reports. To this end, the HR organograms were also reviewed. This data source provided detailed information on HR models and planning processes, thereby providing in-depth understanding of training within the context of higher education. This will also provide insight into the HR modelling and approaches used for planning purposes within the universities.

#### **4.10.3 Recording of Data**

The focus group sessions were recorded with the use of a digital voice recorder. The information was immediately downloaded and access to the data file was password protected. Transcription followed immediately thereafter. The data was transcribed verbatim. Thereafter, an extensive coding process was undertaken which led to the data being categorised into themes and sub-themes. A co-coding, independent process was followed.

#### **4.11 Data Analysis: Organisation, Analysis and Interpretation of the Data**

The nature of the study along with its research objectives determines the type and amount of data collected. Qualitative data can be obtained using focus groups, personal interviews, or by observing behaviour or events. In contrast, quantitative data involves gathering numerical data using structured questionnaires or observation guides to collect primary data from individuals (Hair Jr et al., 2011). As has been noted earlier in the context of the present research project, what really counts is the quality and knowledge of the interviewees and not the quantitative dimensions of the responses. Hair Jr et al. (2011) correctly state that the data collection method influences the occurrence and reliability of survey data and it is therefore fundamental

to select the most appropriate method. A database of case study observation was created and maintained. Pope, et al. (2000) suggest that the vast amount of data generated from qualitative research techniques including transcribed recordings of interviews and related field notes, must undergo an analytical process using variant content analysis techniques (Pope et al., 2000). Field notes was written during and between sessions, after which, the data was analysed, coded and clustered into themes for interpretation. To make content analysis a reality, the textual data was presented in an organised manner that allowed the Researcher to apply inductive reasoning. Once the qualitative data were analysed, the quantitative data was dealt with.

SurveyMonkey was utilised for categorising the quantitative analysis results, from the collated questionnaires, relative to each interview question. A matrix was designed to link questions to data generated from each respondent. The structure of the matrix included a list of the questions on the far-left column, in vertical arrangement. The data generated was captured horizontally in various columns to present the data in a coherent manner. Using the data which was organised into a matrix, an iterative and progressive approach was used to analyse the data. A recursive pattern was sought so that patterns can be traced. The research data was broken up into different units, which were sifted. Although a mixed method approach was used, there was a greater orientation toward qualitative data collection. A purposive sampling method was used therefore statistical models cannot be used.

#### **4.12 Ethical Considerations of the Study**

Ethics is an important consideration in any research study. It is common fact that confidentiality of participants is of major importance. Heggen and Guillemin (2012) advance that confidentiality be upheld as a continuous process during the data collection processes. It should not be restricted to the collection of signatures on a consent form at the beginning of an interview. The authors reinforce the need for 'ethical mindfulness to be practiced by researchers' during the entire research study (Heggen and Guillemin, 2012). All required ethical applications were submitted timeously to the Researcher's study institution, Stellenbosch University. Further applications were submitted to the RU and NMU, where the data was to be collected. Ethics approval for the research study was received from Stellenbosch University,

ethical approval number; SU-HSD-003386. Letters of permission to conduct research within the given universities, from the ethics committees of RU and NMU, were also received by the researcher. The research was undertaken in accordance with ethics committee requirements and due ethical consideration to the human participants in the study.

The interviews were conducted by a trained Research Assistant, to ensure that participants did not feel intimidated by the primary Researcher, whom many of the participants knew professionally and had interacted with in the past, or in their current work activities. The primary Researcher was at hand in a nearby venue to provide assistance and clarification to the Research Assistant if necessary.

#### **4.12.1 Participants Interest and Well-being**

All aspects relating to the ethical procedures and anticipated implications of the research were considered. To this end the wellbeing of participants was prioritised during each stage of the study. Participants' physical, psychological and social well-being was upheld during the research. In addition, the Researcher was especially sensitive in the protection of the rights and interests of more vulnerable participants.

#### **4.12.2 Consent**

Participants' well-informed, un-coerced contributions were required to ensure that authentic data was gathered. The Researcher sought the informed consent of participants, as an important aspect underpinning the ethical requirements of the study. It is important to strike a balance between over and under-informing participants (Gratton and Jones, 2010, Orb, Eisenhauer and Wynaden, 2001). In support of this opinion, a consent form and information page were given to participants prior to any engagement pertaining to data collection. The consent form and information page was retained by participants, who had an opportunity to withdraw or refuse to take part in the research at any point in the process. The information page outlined the objectives of the study, the identity and contact details of the Researcher, as well as the ethical clearance number and contact details of the participating institutions. The information page indicated that participation was voluntary and that participants could withdraw from the study at any time.

### **4.12.3 Voluntary Participation**

Participants were informed verbally and in writing about the aims and implications of the research project and of any other considerations which might reasonably be expected to influence their willingness to participate. This information was communicated in a language that the participants understood. Any participant who wished to withdraw from the research study at any stage could do so without an explanation. This was done to ensure that voluntary participation was upheld. Informed consent is required before proceeding with any research. In this research study, the Researcher had to ensure that all participants in the focus group and the online survey, were aware of the remit of the study, the voluntary participation and the right to withdraw participation at any stage of the data collection process.

### **4.12.4 Confidentiality and Privacy**

The anonymity of respondents was upheld. In the reporting of results, all personal identifiers were removed to protect the respondents' rights to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, the respondents were assured that all information was to be treated as strictly confidential. The Researcher was especially sensitive towards the protection of the rights and interests of more vulnerable participants. Information obtained during the research, which may reveal the identity of a participant was held confidentially unless the participant agreed to its release. Respondents were not individually identified, and confidentiality was upheld at all times during the research planning, data analysis and writing stages.

## **4.13 Reliability and Validity**

To ensure reliability, the researcher developed the research instruments in a manner that sought to eliminate ambiguity. Simple, easy to understand language was used. In addition, a pre-test was undertaken to ensure applicability of the tools. In addition, the environmental conditions and instructions were consistently applied and adhered to.

The researcher addressed the issues related to validity of the research by selecting an appropriate time scale for the study, choosing an appropriate methodology which

was aligned to the characteristics of the study. Care was also taken to not place pressure on respondents to answer in a particular way.

#### **4.13.1 Reliability**

Salkind (2009:110), refers to reliability as being dependable, consistent, stable, trustworthy, and predictable. More specifically, Delpont and Roestenburg (2011) concede that reliability deals with what is being measured. Muijs (2011) states that whenever researchers' want to measure something, there is some element of error, which he calls measurement error. Reliability refers to the extent to which test scores are free of measurement error (Muijs, 2011). Although it is rare to have perfect reliability, there are procedures to increase the reliability of measures (Delpont and Roestenburg, 2011, Muijs, 2011, Salkind, 2009). These can be summarised as follows:

- Increase the number of items or observations, i.e. the use of multiple indicators of a variable.
- Eliminate items that are unclear.
- Increase the level of measurement.
- Standardise the conditions under which the test is taken.
- Moderate the degree of difficulty of the instrument.
- Minimise the effects of external events.
- Standardise instructions.
- Maintain consistent scoring procedures.
- Use pre-tests, pilot studies and replications.

#### **4.13.2 Validity**

Validity is the primary concern of all researchers, it is the most important quality of a measured dependent variable (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011). This is because validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure accurately reflects the concept it is intended to measure, yielding scores that reflect the true variables being measured. In other words, validity refers to the soundness of the interpretation of scores from a test, the most important consideration in measurement (Cresswell and Plano-Clark, 2011). Measurement validity refers to "how well an empirical indicator and the conceptual definition of the construct that the indicator is supposed to measure fit together" (Neuman and Guggenheim, 2011). Although there are many types of

validity, authors are generally in agreement that there are a few common techniques used to assess the validity of a measuring instrument (Lacobucci and Churchill, 2010). The researcher abided by all significant guidelines that guaranteed the project data viability.

#### **4.14 Limitations, Relevance and Usefulness of the Study**

This study will be meaningful to the higher education sector, particularly for those in the human resources functions.

The Researcher worked at both universities and guarded against research bias by utilising the services of a Research Assistant in the data collection processes.

Limited literature is available on HR systems and HR models in SA. Literature on internal HR systems and models were utilised to address the gap in the literature.

#### **4.15 Conclusion**

The aims of the study, research design, setting of the study and timeline were set out in this chapter, indicating the methodology followed. The sampling design and procedures as well as the population sample and data collection methods were further discussed. In addition, the instruments by way of questionnaires and focus group questions were discussed in a comprehensive manner. A secondary data analysis has been conducted using material available from the NMU and RU.

All relevant documents were collected and reviewed with the aim of providing detailed information, including organograms, portfolio structures and planning processes, which allowed for a contextual analysis. The research methodology was presented in this chapter.

The presentation of the findings, results and discussion of the quantitative outcomes will be presented in Chapter five.



## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Presentation of the Findings: The Results and Discussion of the Quantitative Outcomes of the Study**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out the analysis, findings and discussion of the quantitative data collection pertaining to the study. The instrument of choice for the quantitative data collection was a questionnaire comprising 40 questions. The questionnaire comprised seven sections, each covering a specific theme. Section one comprised five questions with reference to the HR model. Section two had five questions, which considered legislation and compliance. HR planning was covered in five questions in section three. The theme of section four was on HR competencies, which also contained five questions. The five questions in section five focused on HR delivery and orientation. Section six had six questions, which concentrated on institutional justice and there were six questions pertaining to transformative leadership in section seven.

#### **5.2 Sample Population and Distribution of Questionnaire**

The participant sample was drawn from the NMU and RU. Ninety interviewees were selected in total from both institutions concerned. The interviewees consisted of management, technical, administrative, academic and general staff. Questionnaires were distributed via SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey is an online survey tool. The online tool allows for intermittent engagement with the survey and the opportunity to save responses and return to the survey at a later stage. The initial response rate was slow and inadequate with one participant only completing the age and gender part of the demographic questions and several others not completing the questionnaire beyond the demographic information. A large proportion of the respondents who moved beyond the demographic information, nevertheless did not complete the questionnaire in full. A manual administration process was thereafter utilised due to a slow response rate. The questionnaires were administered with the assistance of a Research Assistant. Overall, sixty fully completed responses were received.

## 5.3 Analysis of The Responses

### 5.3.1 Demographic information

#### 5.3.1.1 Age Profile of Respondents

The age profile of respondents indicated a spread from the ages of 21 to 60 (categories included those in the age ranges of 21-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59 and over 60). Most of the responses were received from employees in the 40 to 49 age categories.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
21-29	14.44%	2
30-39	33.33%	10
40-49	28.88%	26
50-59	22.22%	20
60 or older	02.22%	2
Total		60

*Table 5.1: Age Profile of Respondents*

#### 5.3.1.2 Number of Years Working at The Institution

It was interesting to note that most participants had been less than five years in their institution, however, respondents were placed in all five 'years of experience' categories (for 5-10 years, 10-15 years, 15-20 years and over 20 years).

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Below 5 Years	42.62%	25
5 To 10 Years	27.87%	17
10 To 15 Years	11.48%	7
15 To 20 Years	13.11%	8
Over 20 Years	4.92%	3
Total		60

*Table 5.2: Number of Years Working at the Institution*

### 5.3.1.3 Occupational Category

Participation from respondents in all the occupational categories is noted. The occupational categories included Senior Management; Academic; Professional, Administrative and Support Staff; Administrative, Technical and Other. The mix of responses indicate an appropriate representative sample. This ensures that all staffing categories contributed to the data collected.

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Senior Management	15.00%	9
Academic	25.00%	15
Professional, Administrative, Support Staff	16.66%	10
Administrative	26.66%	16
Technical	10.00%	6
Other	6.66%	4
Total		60

*Table 5.3: Occupational Category of Respondents*

## 5.4 Section 1: HR Model

### 5.4.1 Use of an HR Model

Question 1.1 sought to determine whether institutions used an HR Model. Thirty-six respondents (60%), indicated that an HR Model was used by their institution, whilst 24 respondents (40%), indicated that their institution did not use an HR Model. The link between HR Models and the guidance they provide to HR professionals in their area of work is highlighted by Popescu et al. (2016), who advise that HR professionals need to closely work with the employees they provide a service to (Popescu et al., 2016).

### 5.4.2 The Importance of an HR Model

Question 1.2 delved into whether respondents considered that an HR Model is important. Of all respondents, 57 (93,44%), indicated that an HR Model is important

with three (5%) respondents having indicated that a HR Model was not important. The HR Model was recognised as supporting and assisting with the delivery of the university's strategy goals. Furthermore, the HR Model was seen to create a solid bridge between the HR strategy and other key areas of HR management, such as recruitment and skills development. The HR Model provides the approach to be used for policy implementation and other matters. There was general agreement that an HR Model, was important for the creation of a strategic vision and mission. The development of an appropriate model would be linked to wider institutional processes and requirements, and needed to be relevant and in line with best practice. A respondent commented that:

*“A model can only be effective if it is developed to the needs of a context.”*

The HR Model outlines the roles and responsibilities of the HR department. Additionally, an HR model allows for the analysis of progress against plans, both for the HR department and the institution. The identification of gaps in the structure of the institution was considered an important tool in driving the responsibilities of the HR function in an institution. A HR Model served as a guide for what needed to be done and provided opportunity for deliberating on how it needed to be done, the turnaround times and how the tasks could be accomplished. An HR Model assesses and identifies skills required for effective HR operations, decision making and efficient administration. The absence of collaborative working relationships with the right partners was noted in the responses. Qualitative justification for the answers given included the following comments by respondents:

*“A Non-South African model is used. The Ulrich Model was discussed and recognised.”*

*“This is a technical question which, as someone not involved in university administration, I don't feel qualified to answer.”*

*“I think an HR Model would make processes flow easier and that there will not be repetition in roles and responsibilities.”*

The participants reinforced the views of Buller and McEvoy (2012), who highlighted the need for best practice approaches to be used, thereby advocating for alignment between HR skills and the business strategy, in order to optimise services in the area. There was recognition of the demands in HE, which required an analytical framework for studying HR management to keep up with the needs of an institution, business or organisation as well as the employees, in a flexible way. Overall, it was felt that an HR Model provides a blueprint to follow. This is necessary in an environment such as the university, which is multi-faceted. The university operates as a system with a multiplicity of players, which include employees; stakeholders, service providers and independent contractors. Within such an environment, HR governance requires consultation by way of coordinating and conferring with different stakeholders. The aim of the continuous interaction with different stakeholders is to moderate risks and indecisions arising out of the inter-collaboration. This is corroborated by Meyer at al. (2011) who state that HR practitioners are required to work intently ‘with the risk manager and risk committee’ to ensure that the overall risk management plan of the company includes HR risks’.

#### 5.4.3 Evaluating the Importance of an HR Model

The evaluation of the importance of an HR Model was examined by question 1.3.

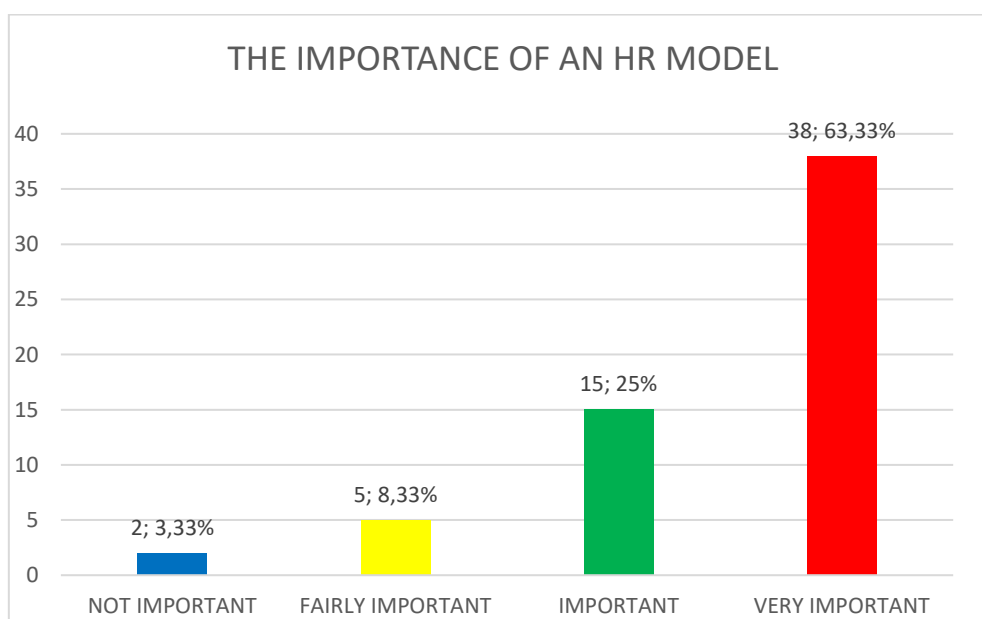


Figure 5.1: Evaluating the Importance of an HR Model

Only two respondents (3.33%), felt that an HR Model was not important. None of the respondents felt that an HR Model was only 'Slightly Important'. Five respondents (8.33%), indicated that an HR Model was 'Fairly Important', whilst 15 respondents (25%), answered that an HR Model was 'Important'. Most respondents, (63;33%), indicated that an HR Model was 'Very Important'. The HR Model was considered central to the setting of objectives, strategy implementation and demarcation of roles and responsibilities. One respondent stated:

*"It is important in evaluating the quality of HR processes which in turn enhances the quality of the University at large."*

*"HR strategy is far too abstract for many HR employees; the HR Model gives them the right guidance. HR Model in an anchor basically."*

It was felt that the HR Model provides direction to the institution within the broader socio-economic contexts in which the institution operates. Society is constantly changing; therefore, the world of work also changes. As the needs of the workplace changes, the model must be evaluated to ensure it is a good fit to the institutional requirements. It must allow for alignment of effective and relevant policies and procedures to broader macro legislative and sectoral indicators, through the application of uniform rules and regulations. There was acknowledgement that HR in any organisation is critical to the success of the organisation through efficient functioning of the HR function. The HR plan steers the department back on track when it veers from the plan and some Respondents felt that a model would help to organise the thinking of the team through the involvement of the right partners from HR and the business.

While it was acknowledged that an HR Model can exist in an abstract form without actual demonstrated implementation, the need for it to guide the HR department in their service delivery, client orientation, systems development and operational output was acknowledged. There was overall acknowledgment that an academic institution needs to present itself as being professional in terms of its administration. This is considered to be one of the important factors associated with the HR Model, as is the

strategic nature linking the organisations' HR structure and performance (Becker and Huselid, 2006).

#### **5.4.4 The Benefit of an HR Model for Effective Institutional Planning Practices**

An exploration as to whether an HR Model would be beneficial for effective institutional HR practices was delved into, in Question 1.4. Fifty-eight respondents (96,67%) indicated that an HR model would be beneficial for effective institutional HR practices while two, (3.33%) felt that it would not be beneficial. Fifty respondents provided reasons for their choice of answer. Most respondents felt that an HR Model would be beneficial for effective institutional HR practice, through the facilitation of an alignment between HR and institutional practices, thereby leading to the advancement of equitable and fair HR processes and practices. Standardised processes and procedures ensured that all cases would be addressed without bias. The adoption of USA-based models and the expectation of these to fit into the South African environment was problematic as such foreign models had limitations, when applied in SA. This is reinforced by Syed and Kramar (2012), as discussed in Chapter 2, wherein the authors re-inforce a strong orientation to USA and UK based models. Comments included:

*"I think that a South African based HR Model must be developed as there is a mismatch between what is required from a design and implementation perspective and the outcomes required. Further, workplace characteristics are unique to South African workplaces. HR is under fire everywhere in SA and foreign models and practices are not suitable".*

A common vision would enhance the relationship between stakeholders, employees and management toward the achievement of common objectives. The HE environment is changing at a fast pace and more than a modicum of efficiency from the HR function was required.

*"HR models are beneficial as they provide standards".*

Some participants felt there should be careful consideration of what type of model is needed. The alleviation of staff uncertainty and assistance with implementation of an appropriate institutional culture, which upheld institutional values, was noted.

*“Ensure that HR practices are guided according to a template.*

*Take away the 'surprise' aspects at applying HR principles”.*

It was also suggested that universities do not utilise a collective HR Model or approach regarding HR practices that needed redress.

#### **5.4.5 HR Models in Tertiary Institutions in South Africa**

Question 1.5 probed whether appropriate HR Models were used in South Africa. Fourteen respondents (23,33%), thought that there are appropriate HR Models in tertiary institutions in South Africa; whilst 46 respondents (76,67%), indicated a lack of appropriate HR Models.

#### **Insights**

Tertiary institutions still appeared to be grappling with the impact of the complex restructuring process as a result of the merger of HE institutions. Institutions complain that HR inhibits recruitment because there is no flexibility to adapt to context i.e. scarce skills recruitment. Most respondents found that there was a lack of appropriate HR models being used in the sector. Comments included:

*“No HR model has been designed for the higher education context in SA. HR departments work differently”.*

*“The models used are foreign based and do not consider South African needs. Models in place are not tough on addressing transformative agendas and the redress of past inequalities”.*

HR Models are considered deficient in assisting with the dynamics of change in the education landscape. The need for an HR Model to ensure that the work environment is effective was highlighted, as was the need for more research on HR models in tertiary institutions in South Africa. Regarding HR Models in HE institutions, it was felt that institutions needed to establish, direct and sustain high levels of professionalism and ethical conduct in HRM practice in South Africa. One respondent commented that:



*“The disarray in HR in South Africa is illustrated by staff not being in possession of the necessary and relevant qualifications and experience. I have only heard of the Ulrich model, nothing else”.*

The standardisation of HR practices to address nepotism; unfair dismissal; sexual harassment and inequality, especially regarding gender and race in the workplace, was discussed. The large number of strikes and protests in South Africa which are attributed to dissatisfied employees was raised.

*“Blacks are not getting senior positions which means the existing models are falling short in addressing the inequalities facing the country”.*

The unique nature of operations of universities imply that HR must be structurally efficient. It is important to be mindful of the challenges highlighted above, wherein it is suggested that the divergent approaches with regard to HR practices need to be addressed and streamlined. This is linked to the view of Sikora and Ferris (2014), who indicate that there is a shared responsibility between line managers and HR in terms of sharing accountability for the performance of the workforce.

## **5.5 Section 2: Legislation and Compliance**

### **5.5.1 The HR Departments' Adherence to Legislation**

Question 2.1 assessed how the HR Department adhered to legislation.

Fifty-four respondents (90%), believed their HR Department adhered to legislation. Six respondents (10%) believed their HR Department did not adhere to legislation. There was overwhelming consensus among respondents that HR adhered to government legislation pertaining to remuneration, working hours and working conditions. Respondents indicated that there was compliance with the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996); The Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 (EEA); Labour Relations Act; Basic Conditions of Employment Act; The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 (SDA); The Unemployment Insurance Act 30 of 1996, (UIF) and the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 (LRA) (this law was amended in 2002). An example of this is found in the comment of a respondent:

*“I can relate to their strict compliance to work visas as an example. Departments are informed about the employment requirements for people who are non-resident South African.”*

Issues of sexual harassment; EE reporting requirements are adhered to such as the Equity targets and recruitment strategies, which are set accordingly. Reports are sent to Department of Labour regularly. One respondent commented:

*“They work according to the law and are unapologetic about it. This gives me a sense of comfort because the law is there to protect us.”*

The general feeling was that workplace law as it applied to the employment contract needed to be complied with. Proper channels needed to be followed in hiring employees. When dealing with labour issues, leave days, standards of workplace health are important considerations which require attention. Some line managers recruited friends who know nothing about the job advertised. The following are a sample of comments in this respect:

*“Whenever a decision is taken, or something is done then legislation is looked at for example when a person is being recruited for a post, the Employment Equity Act should be considered, but I don't think that the usage of legislation is at the maximum.”*

*“My experience of our HR personnel is that they are aware of legislation, but some do not interpret and apply it correctly. So, my answer has to be both yes and no - maybe selective application of legislation”.*

Gaps and challenges which were identified included the capability of executives' and departmental heads to uphold compliance with legislation. One respondent indicated that skilled individuals of colour entered the workplace and expected to have adequately trained managers. These employees became frustrated when they had to report to line managers who were inappropriately skilled people in high level jobs. The issue of line managers' competencies to manage people was raised as a concern.

*“Universities have the most appalling line managers who pass the buck. Line managers have redundant skills, particularly among older whites who have no intention of retraining”.*

The above is supported by the view that universally, an emerging trend that is increasingly being accepted, is that the HRM function plays a pivotal role in delivering and advancing core aspects of the organisation (Hall et al., 2012, Schuler and Jackson, 2008). All staff pertaining to job security; salary payments; annual increments; HR administration issues, workplace conflict and employee motivation are under the domain of HR services (Hall et al., 2012, Schuler and Jackson, 2008). All these must adhere to often non-negotiable time frames.

### 5.5.2 Evaluating the HR Departments' Compliance

Question 2.2 surveyed how the HR Department measured in terms of overall compliance requirements.

RATING OF COMPLIANCE	RESPONSES	
VERY LOW	1,67%	1
BELOW AVERAGE	8,33%	5
AVERAGE	31,67%	19
ABOVE AVERAGE	46,67%	28
VERY HIGH	11,67%	7
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	76.67%	46

*Table 5.4: Rating in Terms of Overall Compliance*

Only one respondent (1,67%) revealed a very low overall compliance rate, whilst five respondents (8,33%) indicated that their HR Department had a below average compliance rate. Nineteen respondents, (31.67%) believed that their HR Departments have an average compliance rate. Twenty- eight respondents (46,67%) indicated an above average compliance rate, with seven respondents (11,67%) indicating a very high compliance rate. Forty-six respondents justified their answers. The law guides the HR Department and its operations. There was acknowledgment that an inability to

meet compliance requirements pose a huge legal and reputational risk. One respondent commented that:

*“I am not sure about how the HR department at my university rates with compliance requirements, but I think there is an increasing overall compliance.”*

Respondents indicated that compliance is an important aspect of the work of the HR Department, as it is responsible for employment contracts and workplace standards. The fair treatment of employees, fair remuneration packages and consistent application of rules and processes, also fall under the scope of the HR Department. This is emphasised by the SABPP (2017) who indicate that the role of HR is to drive HR governance institutionally.

However, the constraints experienced by HR Departments was raised, in terms their implementation and monitoring role. Apart from legislative regulations, the nature and structure of universities presented a quagmire that the HR executive had to navigate through. Concerns included line managers who compromised compliance. Examples included line managers who shared private information about employees among higher level and departmental colleagues which led to ineffective departmental constraints.

The transitional nature of HE and its challenges with transformation also emerged as a key theme addressed. The impact of this on HR practices in terms of addressing equity was cited. The critical role of HR in advancing the need for and requirements of HR governance to organisational leadership is addressed by the SABPP (2017). HR must ensure that successful leadership becomes synonymous with governance, and HR governance systems must be a core aspect of the institutional leadership's objectives.

### **5.5.3 HR Department Meeting Compliance Needs**

Question 2.3 refers to the HR Department meeting compliance requirements.

Most respondents (53, 88%), suggested that their HR department met compliance requirements. Only seven (11,67%) suggested their HR department did not meet compliance requirements. The employment relationship is highly regulated, and

employers are required to comply. Respondents understood the HR department's reporting framework, which included reporting through the Department of Labour to the Minister of Labour, as was the responsibility of compiling EE Reports regularly and timeously for submission. In addition, The HR department applies the EE plan and affirmative action measures. Proper legislative requirements needed to be followed in the hiring and dismissal of employees as well as the implementation of the principle of equal pay for equal work of equal value. The treatment of all employees on equal terms with respect to recruitment and selection processes was based on labour legislation. One respondents comment was:

*“Regular workshops and training are needed that offers updates to the current development in the field of law.”*

The HR Department upheld strict compliance regarding the appointment of foreign employees. Email notifications are forwarded indicating the cancellation of an appointment because of non-compliance. Decisions made by the selection committees need to be considered.

*“HR Department tries to fight against unfair discrimination at work and also unfair labour practices.”*

It was suggested that all universities should follow a national framework, which can be adapted to each university, but the overall framework should be the same according to HE standards. It was felt that there needs to be more focus on social justice imperatives which would assist to protect the rights of everyone in the workplace. This depends on the environment and how the institutional policies and government policies relate.

*“There are many policies that are updated regularly and we receive a lot of information on it. We also know that as workers we are protected. This is comforting. The issue lies with departmental managers, Deans and Heads of Departments.”*

The efficient responsiveness of HR practitioners was mentioned. While there could be delays in response, there was acknowledgement that the necessary answers eventually come through.

*“I feel that the employees who are employed in the HR department are well qualified, hence they are mindful of the relevant HR related legislation.”*

*“The HR Department’s main problem is that they do not meet compliance requirements due to inconsistency with regard to race, gender and class. It can be defined as “one institution with different rules for different employees.”*

The above findings accord with the SABPP (2017) which advances that HR governance requires that HR functions apply a design element to their operations and strategy, which need to be aligned to a governance framework. This is necessary to ensure optimal performance of the organisation’s human assets; drive financial responsibilities; mitigation of HR risks, alignment of the HR functions to that of the organisations’ and to promote HR executive’s decision-making.

#### **5.5.4 HR Practitioners’ Aptitude to Interpret Legislation**

Question 2.4 investigated if HR Practitioners’ have the necessary skills to interpret legislation. Regarding the question of the ability of HR Practitioner’s in their institution to interpret legislation, 28 respondents (46,67%) were satisfied that they could, but 32 respondents (53,33%), did not believe that the HR practitioners in their institution could interpret legislation. Respondents recognised the need for specialised legal expertise.

#### **Insights**

Senior HR practitioners were considered authoritative and knowledgeable. There was a concern that Managers, Deans and Heads of Department, did not uphold HR requirements. One respondent commented that:

*“The labour relations office is experienced in the field and provides answers when required, but otherwise there are limitations with others in the unit.”*

It was suggested that HR practitioners need to keep up to date with current legislative and field developments to ensure that it had the necessary skills and expertise to negotiate benefit packages for employees based on the budget of the institution and

with consideration of the economic conditions. While some participants felt there were several HR consultants who have the necessary skills to interpret legislation, others, need to be re-orientated into the human capital paradigm issues. There was a heavy dependency on legal experts to facilitate processes who are normally law graduates who have no HR experience. Comments included:

*“The HR people must know how to properly remunerate, administer maternity leave and benefits, deal with my injuries at work. In addition, they must know how to deal with people being bullied in the workplace and how to deal with corruption.”*

HR practitioners need to be able to interpret legislation as the inability to interpret legislation could lead to an increase in litigation and other types of redress, by way of referrals to CCMA. The approach is to be pro-active and to obtain formal legal opinions in clarifying 'grey areas'.

*“I can say that they are not able to interpret the law. The senior people in HR are able to do this.”*

The role of the HR professional is an important one in this respect as an incorrect interpretation or implementation failure may lead to problems for employer organisations.

*“Employee Relations has become complicated as employees are increasingly becoming litigious given the extensive labour laws in the country”.*

The above findings abide by the sentiments of McDade (2016) who advises that it is crucial for HR staff to take into consideration any changes to labour law, as this has an impact in the workplace (McDade, 2016).

### 5.5.5 Compliance as a Priority of the HR Department

Question 2.5 addressed how the HR Department rated compliance as a priority.

COMPLIANCE AS A PRIORITY	RESPONSES	
NOT IMPORTANT	6,67%	4
SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	3,33%	2
FAIRLY IMPORTANT	16,67%	10
IMPORTANT	33,33%	20
VERY IMPORTANT	40,00%	24
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	80,00%	48

*Table 5.5: Compliance as a Priority*

Four respondents (6,67%), rated compliance as a priority in their HR Department as 'Not Important', whilst two (3,33%), felt that it was rated as 'Slightly Important'. Ten respondents (16,67%) indicated that it was 'Fairly Important' and 20 (33,33%) rated compliance in their HR Department as being 'Important'. The largest response came from 24 respondents (40%), who felt compliance was 'Very Important' to their HR departments. Forty-Eight respondents justified their answers.

Participants felt that legislative compliance is a priority for the HR department, as it must ensure fair and equitable treatment of employees. This is supported by Meyer et. al. (2011) who raise the connection between HR risk and governance. Failure to adhere to compliance leads to litigation. Employees had channels available to them to raise feelings of unhappiness towards the HR department's way of doing things. The paperwork required by the HR department was indicative of monitoring that compliance is undertaken. The rule of law should always be upheld. One respondent's comment was:

*"Risks related to non-compliance have substantial implications. Further, the lack of compliance can lead to employees referring disputes to the CCMA. In the organisations' year plan, strategic reviews are scheduled, and compliance checks are done during*



*strategic reviews. Every department must comply with the law. No one is above the law. All necessary regulations and rules are followed from the labour department”.*

Although transformation is an imperative, the rewriting of policies need to be prioritised, especially those that upheld prejudicial practices. The flouting of statutory requirements in panels and committees by academics was raised. Participants felt that the academics in the institution refused to comply and were not held accountable as ‘protected employment is so deeply entrenched in academia’. Participants were of the view that that HR executives have an important obligation to fulfil in that of their fiduciary duties of care and sound financial management. It is interesting to note the correlation with the recommendation by Meyer et. al. (2011) that mitigation of risk, upholding HR due diligence, interfacing and supporting the role of HR committees and the implementation of fair and ethical labour practices, are core elements of sound HR governance frameworks.

## **5.6 Section 3: HR Planning**

### **5.6.1 The HR Plan**

Question 3.1 sought to determine if the HR Departments had an HR plan.

A considerable number of respondents (88,33%), indicated their HR Department had an HR Plan. A mere seven (11,67%) respondents, denoted that their HR Department did not have a HR Plan.

### **5.6.2 Alignment Between the HR Plan and the Institutional Strategic Plan**

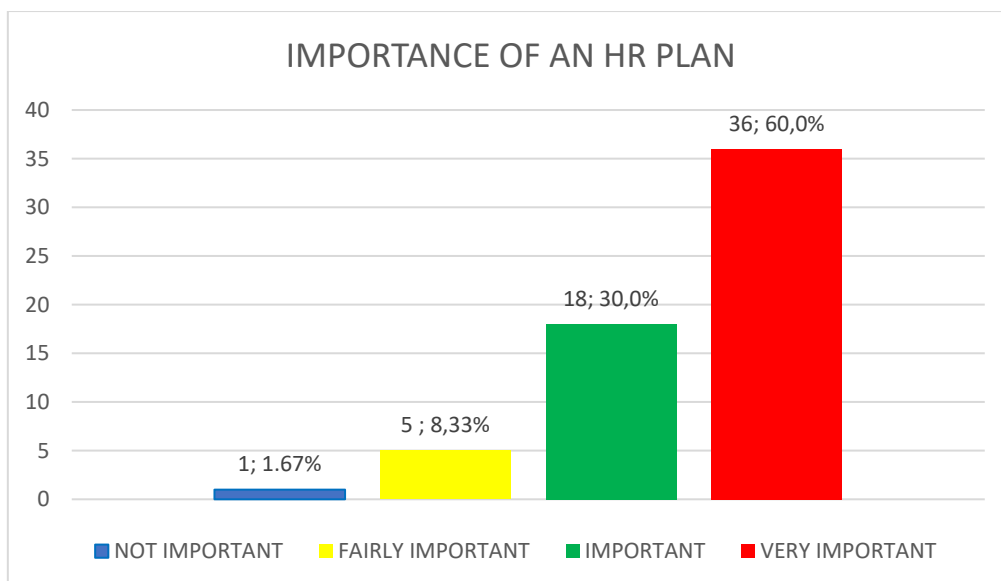
As a follow up to the previous question, the alignment of the HR Plan to the Institutional Strategic Plan, was considered. The HR Plan in accordance with the institutional strategic plan was addressed by Question 3.2. Thirty-two respondents (53,33%) answered favourably in that the HR plan of the institution was in accordance with the Institutional Strategic Plan. This was closely followed by 28 respondents (46,67%) who answered in the negative. Only slightly more Respondents indicated that there was alignment between the HR and institutional plans. The need for HR to have a strategic plan with main priorities was raised. One respondent commented that:

*“The institution that I work for does not have a strategic plan. This is a direct contravention of the HE Act. HR has a strategic plan despite the vacuum and must be commended”.*

The above is also held by Meyer et al., (2011) who set out the need for HR to be part of the institutional planning processes with clear timelines, adequate resourcing and planned appropriate planning. The need for alignment between institutional strategies and HR practices, is upheld on the basis that the application and delivery of both these institutional facets, is dependent on the ability of line managers to fulfil their roles and mandates (Meyer et al., 2011).

### 5.6.3 Importance of an HR Plan

Question 3.3 addressed how important an HR Plan is. An HR Plan was considered very important by sixty percent of those who responded.



*Figure 5.2: Importance of an HR Plan*

Only one respondent (1,67%), rated an HR Plan as being 'Not Important'. Five respondents (8.33%), felt it was 'Fairly Important', while 18 (30,00%), indicated it was

'Important'. The majority, being 36 respondents (60,00%), felt it was 'Very Important'. Fifty-Four provided reasons for their answers.

## Insights

The HR Plan ensures that appropriate HR procedures, policies and associated service delivery are provided. Institutional HR processes in the organisation are important, as it guides the key institutional decisions taken with regard to matters such as skills development, recruitment and retention. Tactical and operational processes, as well as workforce planning, need a clear demarcation of functions and allocated responsibilities. The HR Plan sets out milestones and objectives to be reached and is therefore an important marker and road map for organisational and staff development.

Majumder (2014) is of the view that HR planning is often overlooked by organisations, although it is a fundamental aspect of the process, which involves the systematic evaluation of the workforce related needs. This was upheld by responses which indicated that the absence of a plan could negatively impact the universities strategic targets as it would be difficult to determine the appropriate HR strategic objectives and priority areas. The plan must be in alignment with the priority areas. The HR Plan is only one among many plans in other departments. Together these departmental plans must strive to meet the holistic institutional strategic plan. A sample of a respondent's comment follows:

*"A plan will assist the institution in identifying and achieving its HR goals, mapping annual targets and work toward the delivering on the institutional plan. Without a plan, there will be chaos and a lot of making things up as we go along."*

## Implications

### 5.6.4 Development of an HR Plan

Question 3.4 looked at how often an HR Plan should be developed. The frequency relating to the development of an HR Plan provided interesting insights. Of the respondents who answered this question regarding the development of an HR Plan, only two (3.33%) felt it should never be done. Thirty five respondents (58,33%),

indicated that it should be an annual process, with 23 respondents (38,33%), suggesting that this should be done every 3 years.

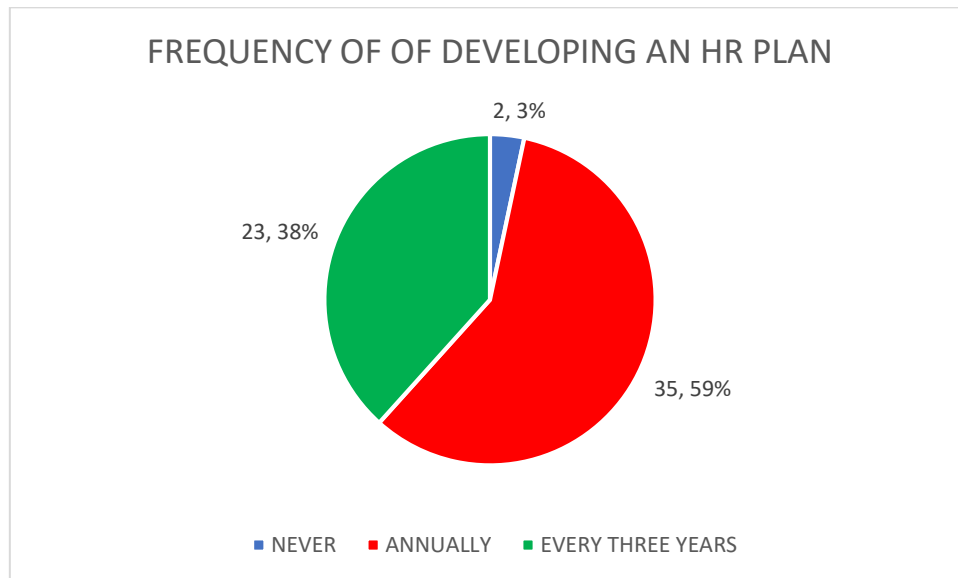


Figure 5.3: Frequency of Developing an HR Plan

### Insights

The benefit of an annual planning process is that it would seek to reinforce the targets encapsulated in the plan, prepare for changes in legislation and make provision for strategic priorities. Strategic priorities should be agreed upon annually in support of the institutional plan and objectives. A planning process was considered to be important in the evaluation of the previous year's plan. Proponents of a 3-year HR strategic plan believe that it would allow adequate time for an evaluation of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT), to measure success and failures. One respondent commented that:

*"The HR plan should be developed once, in accordance with the institutional plan, thereafter it should be reviewed, perhaps every three years, to ensure that it is still aligned to the organisational objectives."*

An appropriate general plan should reflect a 3-5 year horizon but should be revised and updated annually to reflect any sudden changes. Due to the dynamic nature of HE, many changes take place and therefore, it was felt, that an HR Plan This should be done must always be developed in accordance with the institution's change of circumstances. Implementing or setting up a new department, committee or attending to the insourcing requirements and impact, would require appropriate levels of planning. Frequent developments should therefore take place, as the HR department has the responsibility of recruiting experienced, talented staff and management for payroll, benefits and employee training programmes.

Proper HR planning is of utmost importance to ensure the avoidance of pitfalls. The importance of effective implementation and management of HR planning processes is highlighted by Majumder (2014) who advises that forecasting; inventory; audit; HR resource planning; implementation of the plan and monitoring and evaluation be aligned to the HR Plan.

### 5.6.5 Monitoring Progress of the HR Plan

The need to monitor progress of the HR Plan was considered. Question 3.5 referred to this aspect.

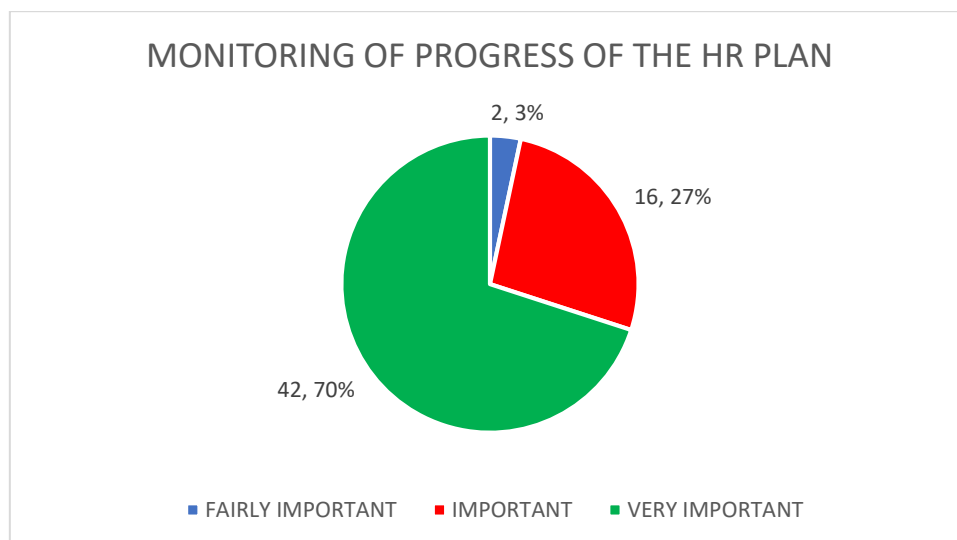


Figure 5.4: Monitoring of HR Plan

Two respondents (3.33%) felt that monitoring the HR plan was 'Fairly Important' whilst, 16 (26,67%), felt that it was 'Important'. The majority, of respondents (42, 70%), indicated that it was 'Very Important'. Fifty-three respondents provided a reason for their answer.

### **Insights**

Monitoring of the HR Plan provides an opportunity for periodic evaluation and allows for the consideration of amendments which may be necessary. It is important to monitor success, failures and incomplete projects. An HR Plan should be maintained to maximise effectiveness. Proper and organised implementation is important to understand whether the planned activities are delivering on the targets and outcomes of the plan. This is reinforced by Bratton (2007), who deliberates on the applicability of a country-specific HR strategy and practices to another country. The monitoring of targets is necessary in terms of DHET reporting requirements. It emerged that evaluation and monitoring can transform the working environment and highlight areas that require attention

Progress on a quarterly basis is very important to assess performance, relevance and to re-align project priorities accordingly. One respondent commented that:

*“You need to see whether goals have been met and if not why. It is important to see if what we are doing is still effectively achieving objectives - if not, something needs to change.”*

### **Limitations**

It was felt that changes in the HE environment evolves on an ongoing basis. This has a direct impact on individual universities, which leads to institutions being in a dynamic state of change. The resulting impact is felt on the planning processes on an institutional level and requires a planning and review on an ongoing basis. On this basis, comparative HRM practices should be used to provide explanations for trends and patterns that exist in 'cross-national HRM' as opposed to a narrative of HR practices in particular countries, as espoused by Bratton (2007). Reviews are therefore necessary. Any changes to the strategy will however impact on the relevant

areas; which may include the Programme-Qualification Mix (PQM), academic planning or financial viability plan, by way of example. As a result, such changes must be undertaken in a deliberative and systematic manner and not in an ad-hoc manner. Accordingly, such changes will also have an impact on the HR planning and processes. One comment was that:

*“HR Planning is about putting right number of people with the correct skills at the right place and time, doing the right things for which they are suited for the achievement of goals of the organisation.”*

The data, through empirical evidence, suggests that country specific legislation and contexts should guide on HR practices, which should be considered with due regard to appropriate levels of planning.

## **5.7 Section 4: HR Competencies**

### **5.7.1 Are HR Practitioners' Appropriately Qualified?**

This first question looked at the appropriateness of the HR practitioner's qualifications. Most respondents (42, 70%), indicated that HR practitioners were appropriately qualified, 18 respondents (30%), suggested that they were not appropriately qualified.

### **5.7.2 Are HR Practitioners Focussed on Employee Needs?**

Question 4.2 looked at whether HR practitioners are focused on the needs of employees within their respective institutions. Forty-three respondents (71.67%), agreed that HR practitioners were focused on employees' needs. Seventeen respondents (28%), did not agree. There was an awareness of the effort of HR practitioners trying to meet the institution's needs as they are in possession of the relevant qualifications and had minimum levels of required relevant experience. One respondent commented that:

*“The under-resourcing of HR department is a problem. It is the one department that has the most impact but is the least resourced. HR practitioners are stretched to capacity and have to service many areas in people. Universities are complex and staffing needs are complicated.”*

HR Administrators were considered to be caught up in administrative issues. One respondent referred to HR Administrators as being 'paper pushers'. It was suggested that HR Administrators should be process drivers, actively working with the departmental heads in their areas of service. Respondents believed that the knowledge and context of HR practitioners is outdated, apply limited levels of flexibility and do not always work in a cohesive fashion. It was felt that the attitude of junior HR staff was poor. The impact of stress on HR practitioners was also raised, as staff at universities face a lot of stress and unkindness. They are treated as sub-human. It is not fair that academics have elevated status and are as abusive as they are. Respondents commented that:

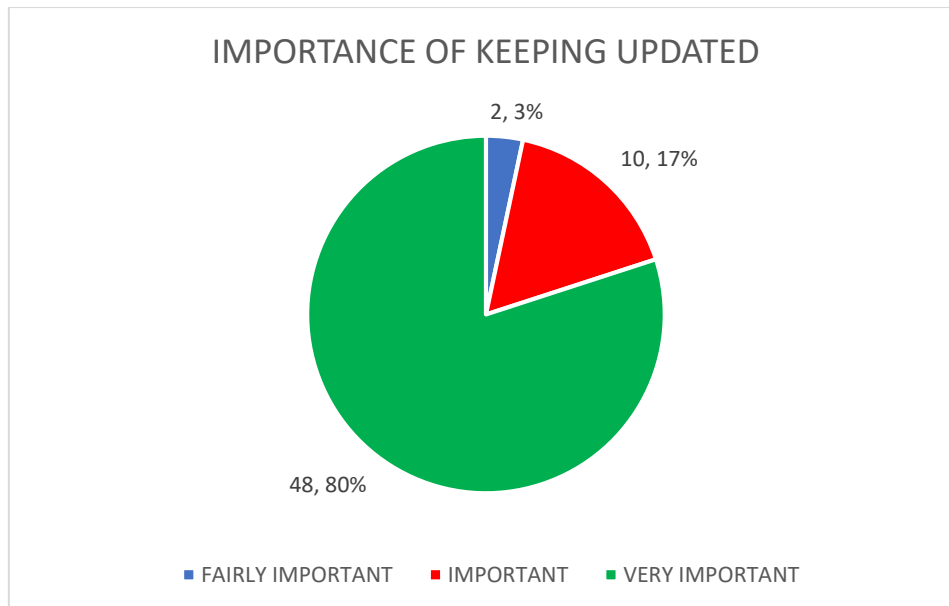
*“At NMU, the lack of interest by HR Consultants is concerning. They are not interested in up-skilling or delivering the best possible service. The others (junior staff) act as administrators and are not able to deal and refer matters way too much”.*

The need for a cogent planning strategy is based on the need for HR to have an approach that will work. This is corroborated by Majumder (2014) who is of the view that HR planning is a fundamental aspect of the aspect which is often overlooked.

### **5.7.3 Importance of HR Practitioners' to Keep Updated on Legislation Changes**

Question 4.3 enquired about the importance for HR practitioners to keep updated on changes to legislation. Only two respondents (3,33%), felt it was only 'Slightly Important' for HR practitioners to keep updated on legislative changes. The number of respondents who rated this as being important was 10 (16,67%), it is significant that an overwhelming majority of respondents, (48; 80,0%), felt it was 'Very Important' for HR practitioners' to keep updated on changes to legislation. Fifty-two respondents gave reasons for their answers.





*Figure 5.5: Importance of HR Practitioners' Currency on Changes to Legislation*

### **Benefits**

HR practitioners are required to keep updated on current trends as this has major implications on the workforce. Judicial rulings (indicating administration - Councils/CCMA) have an impact on how legislation is interpreted. This avoids any unnecessary violation of employee rights. Legal issues often change significantly through amendments and it is important for the practitioners to keep abreast of these. HR practitioners are able to obtain updates via email straight into their inboxes. In addition, university libraries possess a range of articles, books and newspapers which are easily accessible. Access to professional bodies and the literature published which may include articles, magazines and seminar material are also available.

### **Impact**

HR practitioners must be aware of the effect of decisions taken, that impact on workplace relations between employee and employer. This is important, as it is important for HR staff to keep up with trends and legislation. The wrong outdated advice may have dire consequences. Inability of the HR department to keep abreast of changes will have a negative effect on workers. One respondent commented that:

*“Laws are constantly changing, and HR practitioners must keep current. Decisions made by HR Practitioners must be in line with*

*relevant legislation in the country. Not only to keep with what's new but also to see how the legislation is changing and how it benefits its employees. Positive employee engagement has an impact on employee building”.*

The need for HR practitioners to be upskilled on legislation that changed and related amendments was raised. This was on the basis that HR have overall responsibility in ensuring correct application of legislation. This is supported by Sugden (2017) who highlights the criticality of implementing and reporting legislative changes. To this end, an example was cited of amendments to the LRA and the Higher Education Act which required consideration and needed to be implemented. The thread indicated that HR practitioners should disseminate these changes alongside other changes in HR matters to their respective departments. The implications of not doing so, was raised in regard to exposure of the institution to legal and financial risks and consequences, which could potentially include a fine or imprisonment. The important role of HR was recognised in that of its responsibility towards employees in the university. The responsibility and onus lies on HR practitioners to be aware of, understand and implement any legislative changes. This is supported by the view that compliance is driven by, and under, the responsibility of HR, as espoused by Sugden (2017).

#### **5.7.4 HR Practitioners' Knowledge of the HR Sub-Fields**

Question 4.4 looked at whether HR practitioners display adequate knowledge of the sub-fields of HR. Thirty-four respondents (56.67%), were affirmative in their view of HR practitioners' displaying adequate knowledge of the sub-fields of HR, while the remaining 26 (43,33%), indicated otherwise. There was recognition for areas of specialisation. The specialist model requires that HR practitioners in the operations field focus on generalist HR functions and the escalation of issues require specialist knowledge.

#### **Insights**

Whist HR practitioners may display enough knowledge about the different areas; they do not necessarily have all the information. They refer to the appropriate specialised person in the structure, as they are aware that they need to check up on legal and administrative issues. One interviewee commented that:

*“HR Consultants/Advisors/Practitioners know very little about integrated HR systems. This may be because the models that are used are US based and not suitable to SA.”*

Respondents felt that HR managers in the institutions are not always trained in and may have limited competencies in regard to contemporary people management practices. Some HR managers were promoted from within the institution and may not possess all the knowledge that they require in the various HR sub-fields. This was considered to be restrictive for the individuals themselves in their ability to provide appropriate levels of service and to the people they provided a service to, as the knowledge and advice given must be premised on best practice. Comments on this are given below:

*“They may have been appointed to a specific portfolio, and stayed there.”*

*“I did not know there were so many components in HR. It is interesting to know. It seems that HR has really become very complicated. Does their training cover it all?”*

It emerged that HR professionals valued best-practice; legal knowledge, logic and tried and tested processes and procedures in their line of work (Pritchard et al., 2003). It was interesting to note that users of HR systems perceived HR practitioners as valued as they fortify other institutional practices. The value added by HR practitioners was considered unique in terms of what they contributed.

#### **5.7.5 The Relevance of HR Curricula to Meet the Needs of Developing HR Practitioners’ at an Undergraduate Level**

Question 4.5 probed the relevance of HR Curricula in meeting the needs of developing HR practitioners at an undergraduate level. Twenty-two respondents (36,67%), agreed that HR curricula were adequate to meet the needs of developing HR Practitioners at an undergraduate level, whilst 38 respondents (63,33%), felt it was inadequate.

It was suggested that professional examinations and entry requirements for the HR profession should be similar to that of attorneys and accountants, thereby according practitioners professional status. It was felt that this would hold practitioners accountable and also offer them an element of security as they were often prone to risks but were not covered by a professional body. This was an interesting view and one that is supported and explored by the SABPP (2015).

What was explicit, however, was the important role of HR, which has an impact on the lives of many employees. The requirements for the job need to be taken much more seriously. One respondent commented that:

*“Internships and in-service training help graduates understand and develop the ability to handle HR activities”.*

Significant learning occurs on the job, with actual experiences and cases being handled in a workplace. It appears that retraining occurs after practitioners enter the workplace. One comment received, stated:

*“Modules on sociology, industrial/organisational psychology and legal studies are important. This is important on how social beings interact. Staff are an asset to an organisation. Sociology plays an important role in how people intersect and interact with each other”.*

The findings indicate that HR drew on entrants into the field from several cognate undergraduate disciplines, inclusive of psychology; business, education and other social sciences. This is supported by the literature, as indicated by the SHRM (2017) There is a need to use practical examples of what is happening around South Africa. Respondents indicated that new graduates in HR were largely under-prepared for the rigour of the workplace and needed support and further experiential-based training to become functional at an acceptable standard. It was stated that:

*“HR Professionals who have never studied Industrial Psychology but who have instead studied Management are not fully equipped in understanding the processes that are key in psychological assessments. Professional Registration and Continuing Professional Development emerged as being critical”.*

It was also interesting to note that the findings indicated a perception of a narrowed orientation of the discipline being taught at undergraduate level.

## **5.8 Section 5: HR Delivery and Orientation**

### **5.8.1 The HR Structure**

The resourcing of the HR structure that serviced the needs of the entire institution was looked at in question 5.1. Regarding the adequacy of the HR structure's resources to service the needs of the entire institution, 21 respondents (35%), believed that resources were adequate, while a significant majority 39 (65%), indicated that resourcing was inadequate.

#### **Insights**

Efforts are currently being made to meet the needs of the employees, but the allocation of HR resources is problematic. HR professionals ensure that new employees get the proper training, so they can excel in their position and feel good about their work. As pointed out by Brown and Carlino (2017), the aperture between the content of the degree and what is required in the actual practice of HR needs to be addressed as the need for a combination of foundational experience and skills increases.

Further, adequate resourcing is important. Some HR practitioners are unable to cope because of the lean structure and the number of portfolios that they have been allocated to. A respondent commented that:

*“One consultant is shared among different departments and faculties. The number of queries and work must be significant. There are things that don't work such as the call centre”.*

### **5.8.2 The HR Function on Employee Needs**

Question 5.2: looked at whether HR is focused on employee needs in respondent's organisations. This question triangulated and confirmed that in the majority of instances employees believed that HR practitioners were focused on employee needs in the institution where they worked. Forty-four respondents (73,33%), indicated Yes to the question, with 26,67% indicating in the negative. Fifty respondents provided reasons for their answer.

## Insights

A wide range of HR skills are required by HR professionals who assist in creating growth and development plans for employees, attend to the wellbeing of employees and ensure contractual obligations are upheld. Also, conflict and conflict resolution, is inevitable in the workplace, given the many different types of people and personalities within the university HR professionals require competence in handling and management of conflict and the resolution therein.

HR has a strong focus on advocacy as they are at the forefront in advancing equality and equal pay for all employees. The primary role of HR is to offer advice and ensure the smooth functioning of any organisation. It must liaise with unions in the organisation to ensure that employee needs are satisfied. HR professionals help build bonds between people in a workplace. These include the enhancement of cordial relationships in departments and maintaining good interpersonal relations between staff.

People and employees, to be specific, are social creatures and building connections between the members of staff will help them feel more comfortable within the workplace and boost the productivity of the team. Regarding management, it is important that communication lines are left open to answer any questions employees might have. There is no doubt as to the central role played by HR. HR focuses on employee needs and protecting and disciplining the employees. HR also has some assistance structures and development programmes for its employees. A respondent commented that:

*“But HR is only a division which support managers in the institution to manage people. They try very hard to provide an efficient service. Institutional managers however, do little to effectively lead, motivate and develop their staff. Managers who are poor people managers should be disciplined and dismissed”.*

HR oversees hiring and training of employees. HR provides different types of leave: sick leave, family leave, maternity leave, annual leave and other leave types because they understand employees have other responsibilities and leave is a form of reward. Much is being done to address the need of the employees. Employees are generally

happy with the response time to their grievances. While HR is knowledgeable about each department's needs and provides tools in that regard, a significant number of respondents indicated unhappiness with line manager responsibilities. While a lot of support was provided to employees, line managers referred everything to HR. One respondent's comment was:

*"I think my manager should be able to handle some of the issues. He refers everything, and this is very frustrating."*

A mid-level employee commented that:

*"A single employee has multiple needs that must be dealt with. Remuneration, training, counselling, leave administration, benefits matters, motivation, labour issues. That is a lot of needs that every employee must have support with".*

HR had several employee focused programmes and systems in place, to support employees, which included wellness services, crèche facilities and healthcare, provided through the campus clinic. Respondents felt that overall, HR helps to create and regulate harmonious relationships between the employer, employee and stakeholders in the institution. It was felt that employees are given a chance to voice their own opinions on factors that affect them and their teams. Exposure and communication regarding the HR plan is important, respondents believe that HR takes processes such as promotions seriously at the institution.

Participants felt that HR representatives should be available to always provide support; however, given the voluminous workloads of staff, adequate resourcing needed to be attended to. The need for the HR Division to have an open-door policy and adhere to confidentiality was maintained.

*"HR needs are very important because for HR to make employees happy, HR must also be happy and adequately equipped. I don't know how HR staff cope with what is required from them".*

While much research and discussion has concentrated on HR delivery, the resourcing of the HR structure is also an important consideration. The key enablers which allow

for an integrated approach are then made possible. According to Deloitte (2014), the leadership is responsible for the delivery of the business priorities.

### 5.8.3 Complexity of HR

Question 5.3 sought to evaluate the complexity of HR needs. There was a single response each (1,67%), for 'Very Low' and 'Low' respectively'. Nine respondents (15,00%), rated the complexity of HR needs as being 'Average', whilst 20 (33,33%), rated the complexity of HR needs as 'High' and 29 (48,33%), as 'Very High'. There was a majority agreement about the high level of complexity which exists in the HR function.

EVALUATION OF COMPLEXITY OF HR NEEDS	RESPONSES	
VERY LOW	1,67%	1
LOW	1,67%	1
AVERAGE	15,00%	9
HIGH	33,33%	20
VERY HIGH	48,33%	29
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	76,67%	46

*Table 5.6: Complexity of HR*

### Insights

HR is complex because it administers various job-related components, which can be difficult to manage. HR includes all activities in the HR lifecycle within the organisation, together with its related values. The best cultural features inform every stage of that lifecycle. Respondents believed that the internal constitution of staff is very complex. The diverse needs of staff are required to be met. Compliance, wellness and staff development are catered for. HR is grappling with a lot of structural and historical factors. The structural factors relate to transforming the culture of the institution and the historical factors involve performing HR practices that enable the redress of historical imbalances. Comments included:

*“Despite all their efforts, they are heavily criticized while the actual non-performers in the university (the managers) get away with not doing their jobs. This is grossly unfair”.*



It does not matter how good HR policies are, how good their work ethic is, what good plans and models they have. If heads of departments do not do what is expected of them and do not implement the processes and procedures as directed by HR, then the best laid plans will go awry. It was commented that:

*“It is NOT the place of HR to be responsible for daily people management. They are NOT in the departments. Managers (academic and support) behave with impunity. They should be fined for their lack of upholding HR directives”.*

Human Resources are the basic asset of an organisation and therefore it is important that the needs of HR are met. This includes adequate resourcing, recognition of its role among other factors which are required for effective operations and functioning. A response set out below:

*“Departments must work closely with one another despite the complexity to achieve primary goals”.*

The Deloitte Review Report (2014), sets out the positive link between governance and its promotion of accountability, as well as its priorities in progressing the operating model of the organisation over the longer term (Deloitte, 2014). Accordingly, the report is indicative of the pivotal role of HR in promoting cooperation through well-developed strategic and planning processes (Deloitte, 2014).

#### **5.8.4 HR Practitioners' Focus on Employee Needs**

Question 5.4 ascertained if HR Practitioners' focussed on employee needs. Of the participants who responded, 42 (72,41%), were positive about the HR response to employee's needs, while 16 (27,59%), indicated a lack of focus. Comments received indicated that respondents believed that HR attempted to focus on employee needs but that it was driven by the environment.

#### **Insights**

HR are constrained by their allocation and determine their priorities based on the resources they are allocated and not on the needs of employees. Recognition of the

high workload volume of HR functions was acknowledged. Respondents' comments included:

*"I see a group of hard working individuals. I believe that line managers are the problem. I would like to suggest that every line manger be mandated to attend a short-learning course of people management, strategy and operations".*

*"The HR practitioners meet with staff when needed. Staff must make an appointment to see them. Good policies, awareness drives, regular communications are in place. They are adequate but individual in control of the systems refuse to take responsibility in an appropriate manner".*

HR should have a website where employees can track their hours and monitor their own compliance with their employment contracts. This will ensure that individual employees take more responsibility for their actions. Efforts to engagement with employees must be prioritised. This would include ongoing communication efforts and relevant toolkits. The need for appropriate development of HR Practitioners was raised to address their confidence and deal with managers who could be belligerent and overwhelming.

### **5.8.5 The Adequacy of HR Systems**

Question 5.5 sought to determine whether HR systems are adequate in general. Thirty-one respondents (51,67%), felt that HR systems were adequate in general, however, 29 (48,33%) did not agree.

#### **Insights**

Regarding the issue of an adequate HR system, respondents indicated that employees were paid on time and questions were always answered. The general feeling from the respondents were that HR works hard to take care of employees, but that periodic ongoing training is also needed. The resourcing of HR Departments needed to be adequately addressed, as they were often the least resourced, compared to other departments. This needed to be addressed if the efficiencies and turnaround times required and insisted upon were to be met. The need for efficient HR

departments, systems and practitioners were raised consistently. This is upheld by Hirsh et al. (2017) who raises the need for HR to be responsive to the need of users to have ease of contact as well as efficient and effective responses to the queries.

*“There should be no compromise about properly resourcing HR Departments. HR Departments are extremely under-resourced. HR is the heartbeat of the organisation but is treated like the Cinderella of organisations”.*

Poor managers cause major dysfunction in the organisation, especially regarding institutional managers in an academic environment. There is also a junction between the institutional governance systems and requirements and the issue of academic freedom. Comments from respondents included the following:

*“There are always many people that need assistance, and too few people in HR. People in HR work too hard. They are like hamsters on a wheel”.*

It was felt that executives at the university needed to learn about HR as they are perceived to be obstacles to good HR systems being used, because they interfere with issues that are not in their area. Comments included:

*“Executives should undergo a compulsory training course in HR management. If they don’t, they should not manage people. It is not the work of HR to capacitate line managers. They should assist line managers.*

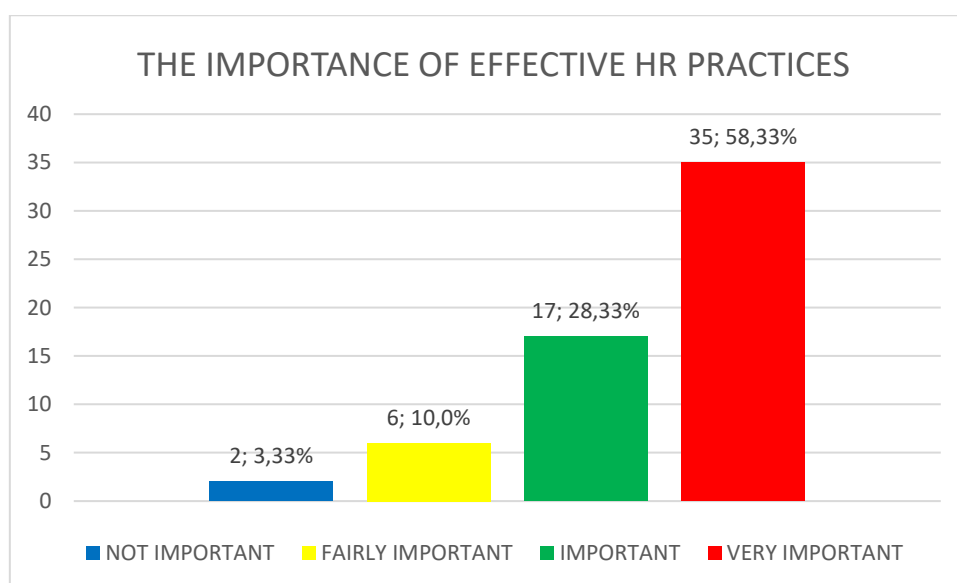
*“Other country systems are used. These are not applicable to SA workplaces. Systems that are related to the enhancement of assessments can be introduced”.*

*“At a basic level, it works but the magnitude of HR and the complex nature of it as a system is not understood in South Africa. There is a lot of new approaches. Considering the different life stages and the demands on the HR department, they make things happen. Line*

*mangers should take advice from HR and perform their people management responsibilities effectively”.*

### 5.8.6 The Importance of Effective HR Practices

Question 5.6 undertook an exploration of the importance of effective HR practices in institutions. HR practices were rated by two respondents (3,33%), as being ‘Not Important’; six respondents (10%) indicated it was ‘Fairly Important’. The rating of ‘Important’ was suggested by 17 respondents (28,33%), while 35 (58,33%), demonstrated that it was ‘Very Important’.



*Figure 5.6: The Importance of Effective HR Practices in Your Institution*

### Insights

There was recognition that HR practices addressed issues such as employee retention; leadership development, performance management and rewards and that effective practices were important. There was agreement (35,58%) that HR practices are important. Therefore, a range of effective HR practices is necessary to ensure high productivity and proper skills development in universities. This is supported by a study of the Institute for Employment Studies wherein it is reiterated that HR, its systems and processes must ensure clearly defined responsibility to support and not ‘dilute the

responsibility of line management' with respect to managing people (Hirsh et al., 2017).

The centrality of the HR function was further raised. This was raised in terms of the essential management and regulation services. HR practices must support employees as assets especially in a knowledge economy. Respondents' comments included:

*"In every organisation, people drive the organisation and people need to be properly managed and administered. The HR Department maintains harmonious relations in the institution. Although it remains a huge challenge for them".*

One respondent commented that:

*"While the university is in a transitional phase in terms of efficiency and effectiveness, HR is working hard at ensuring that HR (staff) capacity is optimised in the organisation".*

It was reinforced that employees are an asset but that they present with feelings and emotions and have actual socio-economic challenges. Therefore, administrative efficiency was important. In addition, staff will feel valued and cared for, which will enable the delivery of institutional objectives, including the provision of quality higher education, employee motivation and satisfaction.

*"The department negotiates the benefit packages for employees and the institution. It tries to attract and hire suitable candidates. It must also ensure that suitable candidates are retained. To do his, it is important to create a healthy and fair workplace".*

While disputes may arise between an employee and manager, the HR Department acts as a consultant and mediator to sort out those issues in an effective manner. They first hear the grievances of the employees. Then they come up with suitable solutions to sort them out. In other words, they take timely action and prevent things from getting out of hand.

*"The HR Department is good. We have seen a major turnaround since 2015. There is a new vision, new strategy and definite change in the*

*HR Department. If HR practices are not effective, then there is no reason for them to be in place”.*

HR practices must be effective to achieve its own goals and those of the institution.

*“HR practices affect staff morale and ability to recruit and either supports or destroys strategy”.*

## 5.9 Section 6: Institutional Justice

### 5.9.1 Trust in The HR Department in Decision-making Based on Policy and Law

The level of trust in the HR Department in decision making based on policy and law was examined in Question 6.1.

LEVEL OF TRUST IN THE HR DECISION-MAKING	RESPONSES	
VERY LOW	1,67%	1
BELOW AVERAGE	1,67%	1
AVERAGE	20,00%	12
ABOVE AVERAGE	30,00%	18
VERY HIGH	10,00%	6
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	36,67%	22

*Table 5.7: Level of Trust in the HR Department in Making Decisions Based on Policy and Law*

A single respondent (1.67%), rated their level of trust as ‘Very Low’ and another as ‘Below Average’ in the HR department, regarding decisions based on policy and law. Twelve respondents (20%), indicated an ‘Average’ rating, while 18 (30%), assented to an ‘Above Average’ and six (10%) agreed to a ‘Very High’ rating.

## Insights

It was implicit that a very high level of trust is placed in the HR function. In addition, it was anticipated that decisions are based on sound principles and integrity. A good working environment is one of the benefits that employees can expect from an efficient human resource team who are efficient and professional.

*“I think there is a lot of attempt that goes into meeting the needs-I notice that they research a lot. However, the university where I work had a largely non-compliant HR department. It seems that new management is trying to bring the department into a compliance space. A lot of work is being undertaken.”*

It is important to have highly skilled professionals in HR. One respondent commented that:

*“I am comforted that they have high regard of my best interests as an employee of the organisation. Past experiences have helped me to trust our HR Department. HR are the custodians of policies and all decisions should be guided by policies and law”.*

It was felt that intermittently, the senior management of the university needed to conduct performance management discussions in every department, to ensure that departments were being well run. Decisions based on policy and law are acceptable, however, it is just an application of what is regarded as being essential. A respondent commented that:

*“Employees are either consulted or represented by unions in sittings. Everything the HR department does must be compatible with the policy and law”.*

There are many acts which have been amended and HR needs to inform the university and employees about these changes. It was felt that there is insufficient HR-legal personnel to monitor the implementation of these important changes. It was suggested that HR practitioners undergo ongoing training, to avoid complacency in their positions. One comment was that:

*“The inability to make decisions, primarily based on institutional policy, national policy and law is the basis for mistrust between the*

*HR department and trade unions as well as between line management and employees”.*

### **5.9.2 HR Policies, Procedures and Processes and Equitable Employment Practices**

Question 6.2 probed whether HR policies, procedures and processes met the need for equitable employment practices. Most responses received (40; 66.67%), indicated that HR policies, procedures and processes meet the need for equitable employment practices, while 20 (33,33%) indicated that they did not. In respondents’ comments transformation was raised as a core function of the HR department. HR was responsible for the elimination of discriminatory practices.

#### **Insights**

Regular meetings were held with all stakeholders and complaints that emanated from these meetings are attended to, indicating the use of a people-oriented leadership style. Executives do not always have the same agenda regarding transformation and change. It was felt that as HR were often the reporting officers to external bodies, they became caught up in a deluge of conflicting demands. People of colour found old policies and procedures discriminatory which should be reviewed. New staff may feel the environment unwelcoming and unsupportive of change. These issues should be addressed. One respondent commented that:

*“They need to remedy the inequalities that occurred pre-1994 by treating everyone equally. This is an important consideration for our HR Dept. As mentioned earlier, our HR Department is guided by the Employment Equity Act and compliance is a priority”.*

HR was seen to uphold good employment practices pertaining to recruitment, selection and development. Although policies were seen to be fair in their content, the implementation by line managers was considered another matter. Equity and transformation were considered priority areas. There was a strong belief that fairness of processes was linked to transformational change. A respondent commented that:

*“We come from the painful historical past based on race exclusions. These exclusions permeated through to the labour market where job segregation was sanctioned to exclude black people, women and*



*people with disabilities in order to deny them the opportunity to fully participate and contribute in the labour market.”*

Fair and just policies, procedures and processes promote equality in the workplace with particular emphasis on transformation is required given the historical injustices pre-1994. This is also prevalent in private sector companies. Further comments received included the following:

*“Policies should be regularly reviewed to reflect the changes in law. Not all employers and employees are content, but everyone will always reach a point of compromise. They provide for good employee working conditions and good remuneration”.*

*“If employees do not come to work on time, miss work and other deadlines for their assessments, they need to be held responsible. The procedure that need to be followed is providing written warnings, signed by HR and employee”.*

*“My union gives us updates on what is happening. Not all of them meet the needs. There are some, more especially those relating to conditions of employment, that are a bit discriminatory e.g., maternity leave and retirement age of Academic and Support staff.”*

Transformation was still a problem with few blacks in higher positions. This was seen to be a stumbling block to the advancement of transformation and promoting fairness among staff. HR was focused on affirmative action and sought to implement policies that were aligned to equitable employment practices.

*“No one can deny that our labour market still suffers from the impact of the apartheid race exclusion legislation. It is important to highlight those HR policies, procedures and processes that are designed to contribute towards the restoration of human dignity and also address the persisting inequalities experienced by the majority of South Africans as a result of Apartheid laws that were in place prior to our democracy.”*

The above findings demonstrate the important role that HR policies have in terms of being defined as ‘systems of codified decisions’ which are developed by organisations in the provision of support regarding HR administration and management (Memon, Panhwar and Rohra, 2010). HR policies and related practices and systems are devolved from legislation, which is indicative of the role of HR in advancing social justice imperatives which often include transformation, access and promotion to name a few aspects.

### 5.9.3 HR Model and Systems to Advance Institutional and Social Justice Imperatives

Question 6.3 examined how evaluation of the HR Department’s model and systems would advance the themes of institutional and social justice imperatives. Regarding an evaluation of the HR Department’s model and systems to advance the themes of institutional and social justice imperatives, eight respondents (13,33%), believed it to be very low and two respondents (3,33), low evaluation. Eleven respondents (18,33%,) rated it as being average. A high rating was given by 22 respondents (36,67%) and a very high rating by 17 (28,33%).

EVALUATION OF HR DEPARTMENTS MODEL AND SYSTEMS		
	RESPONSES	
VERY LOW	13,33%	8
LOW	3,33%	2
AVERAGE	18,33%	11
HIGH	36,67%	22
VERY HIGH	28,33%	17
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	60.00%	36

*Table 5.8: Evaluation of the HR Departments’ Model and Systems*

The elimination of unfair discrimination by applying the laws of equity is mandatory in the promotion of equality in employment. To this end, effective policies and processes are prioritised. The HR Department is constantly reviewing and enhancing policies and practices. One respondent commented:

*“I believe that our HR model is derived from aspects from institutional and social justice”.*

The HR department plays a key role in making sure discrimination is eradicated. HR is required to set up appropriate models and systems to advance the themes of institutional and social justice objectives.

*“The HR Department is sincere and committed to institutional justice, representing both the university and employee needs. There are processes that allow for employee rights to be attended to. South Africa's history has led to marginalised groups. All groups should be treated equitably but transformation must be an imperative”.*

The HR model and systems should enhance the performance of individual employees while providing a secure environment for development.

*“The quest for institutional and social justice must be championed by council and the executive, not the HR department. RU does not have a common definition of individual and social justice. Our council has old white men who worked in the apartheid era and perpetuate that thinking in current SA. This is a recipe for disaster”.*

Effective organisational development interventions together with HRM systems was seen as being critical. They are core in change management and organisational transformation towards democracy and equity. A role-based model would be ideal and that involve unions in the development of policies.

*“In SA, OD is not as developed as it is in other countries. So, all university HR departments should have an OD component. They could always do better. I am not sure about CCMA data etc. There is a need to inform and education line managers, but also to ensure staff know what they should and should not do”.*

As mentioned earlier, it emerged that while institutional model and systems may be developed, it would remain ineffective without the just and fair implementation and adherence. This is reinforced by the right of every employee to fair administrative processes. HR ensure fair, transparent and equitable employment practices; however,

the challenge is that staff do not embrace the values and guiding principles as these values are not present or visible in leadership circles. This reality underpins the need to adhere to and uphold the rule of natural justice. Examples cited included Section 23 of the Constitution which refers to the right to fair labour practices. Section ten refers to the right to dignity.

*“The HR department is a vital function in any institution or corporation they it should be leading the way in terms of policies procedures, compliance, guidance and strategic vision and mission”.*

Social justice emerged as a critical theme, as did the role of the HR function is advancing this as a priority. It was strongly advocated as a foundation for national stability and global prosperity, equal opportunity, solidarity and respect for human rights. These are essential to unlocking the full productive potential of nations and people. Social justice is based on the concepts of human rights and equality. HR Department models must seek to promote the latter. HR has an important role and their systems and processes will either promote or delay social justice imperatives. This is aligned to the provisions of the ILO (2003), which has been discussed in Chapter 2, part 1 of the literature review, wherein the international body advocates for fair and equitable treatment of all employees in workplaces.

#### **5.9.4 HR Departments Understanding of Stakeholder Needs/Objectives**

Question 6.4 looked at how the HR Departments understanding of stakeholder needs and objectives were considered by respondents.

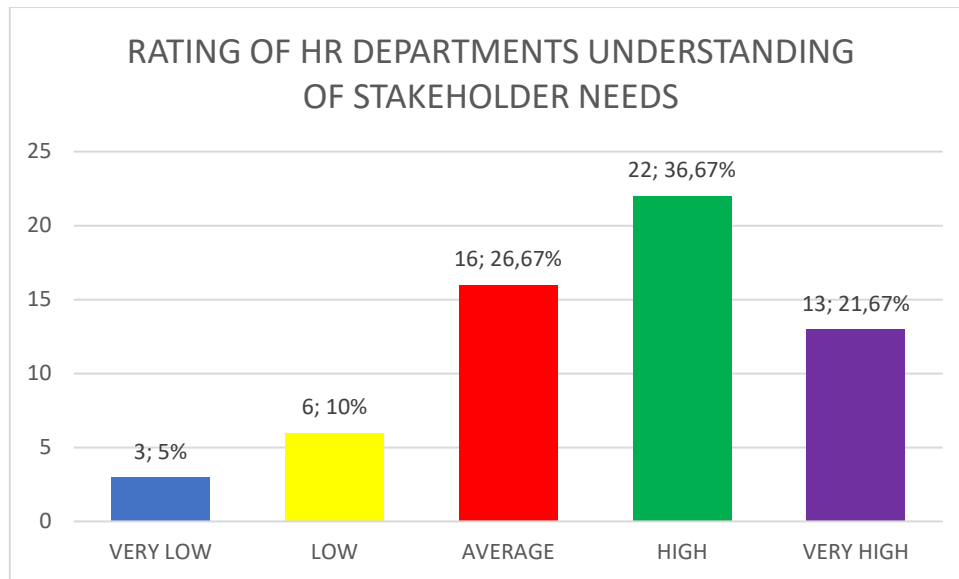


Figure 5.7: Rating of HR Departments Understanding of Stakeholder Needs

Pertaining to the rating of the HR Department's understanding of stakeholder needs/objectives, a 'Very Low' indicator was put forth by three respondents (5%), six (10%), indicated a rating of 'Low'. A score of 'Average' was given by 16 respondents (26,67%) and 22 (36,67%) 'High', with 13 (21,67%) giving a rating of 'Very High'. Thirty-nine respondents provided reasons for their answers.

### Insights

Engagement of stakeholders is important for advancing institutional effectiveness. This is often undertaken by an effective leadership. Negligence and lack of empathy on the part of the leadership were raised as concerns. One respondent commented that:

*"HR promotes a culture of ethical and transformational leadership with an objective to lead, motivate, develop, inspire and encourage staff at all levels. The law is based on the Constitution and HR bases their policies on this. This is dependent on the hierarchy model of the company".*

Stakeholders are a necessary support component of any organisations. Regular meetings with stakeholders were considered important in facilitating understanding between the university and its stakeholders. It was felt that operational requirements

did not allow HR ample time to discuss strategic objectives with all stakeholders/HOD/departments, however, it is highly important that HR and line managers understand stakeholder needs.

#### **5.9.5 Locating HR Department within the National Legislative Framework**

Question 6.5 established how the HR Department work was embedded in the Country's legislative framework. There was significant agreement from 56 respondents (93,33%), that the HR Department works within the country's legislative framework. Only four respondents (6,67%) were not in agreement.

Reasons for their answers were provided by 22 respondents, most of whom indicated that there was an adherence to the country's legislative processes, indicating that HR upheld legislation effectively.

#### **Insights**

There was acknowledgement that HR practitioners worked in accordance with the law to ensure minimal disputes with bargaining councils, CCMA, Labour Court, Labour Appeal Court and the Constitution of South Africa. There was some criticism levied regarding unclear compliance with employment equity.

*"I believe that the Rhodes HR department works in line with the Constitution of the Republic."*

An overwhelming number of respondents (93,33%) stated that HR Departments played a key role in giving effect to the legislative prescripts. It was consistently reinforced that HR plays an integral role in advancing the requirements of applicable laws. In the South African context, legislation has historically played a significantly adverse role in racializing and thereby perpetuating negative conditions for black workers. It must be noted that significant redress has been achieved with the advent of Constitution based labour policies, which are usually driven by HR. It must be noted however, that respondents' raised issues with interpretation matters.

### 5.9.6 Level of Institutional Trust in Your Organisation

Question 6.6 sought to ascertain the level of trust that employees had in the organisation they worked for. Respondents generally rated their level of trust as less than desirable, with 'Very Low' accounting for 13 respondents (21,67%), 14 respondents (23,33%) 'Low', and 21, (35,00%), 'Average'. Nine respondents (15,00%), rated their level of trust 'High' and three (5,00%) 'Very High'. Due to the historical past and slow pace of transformation, institutional trust is generally low.

THE LEVEL OF TRUST IN YOUR ORGANISATION	RESPONSES	
VERY LOW	21,67%	13
LOW	23,33%	14
AVERAGE	35,00%	21
HIGH	15,00%	9
VERY HIGH	5,00%	3
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	68,33%	41

*Table 5.9: Rating the Level of Institutional Trust in Respondent's Organisations*

#### Insights

Universities are considered untransformed spaces where apartheid era practices are still practiced quietly. Indications of polarised agendas and constituencies based on race and class were evident. It was strongly suggested that a contributing factor to the status quo is the issue of leadership capability at the executive management level. Executive managers were tasked with introducing and upholding change, viz. in transformational form. A leadership that did not demonstrate adequate competence in transformational leadership were considered outdated and out of touch with relevant trends. The top/executive management are viewed as a problem in the university, in that they do little for workers. There is little trust in the VC and DVC's. One respondent commented that:

*“The after effects of the student protest action were highlighted. The shock of the rampage which reverberated through the sector and the abuse of staff members were iterated. Many felt that the top management did not have the capability to deal with the protests.”*

During the #FeesMustFall protests, employees felt that students’ needs were prioritised over needs and safety of employees. This was on the basis that employee safety, productivity and unrestricted movement and access were adversely impacted. During the #FeesMustFall campaign, individual bias, particularly pertaining to race and gender emerged. Pre- and post-merger related issues were still prevalent.

*“Line managers and others are not held accountable for obvious bias and unjust treatment of selected employees. HR should not be part of this prejudice. Institutional trust is key because it holds a dynamic relationship between an individual employee and organisation or institution. At the university, it would appear trust levels are at an all-time low. Possibly, this might be from the trade unions point of view. Complaints about incompetence are not taken seriously.”*

Employees were generally happy with the work processes and the manner in which the university handled complaints and settles disputes. Affected individuals were bitter, but it was felt that issues of misconduct needed to be addressed.

*“Staff are qualified with accurate experience or skill for their positions at work. Employees are trustworthy and patriotic of the organisation.”*

The lack of trust was attributed to the culture in the institutions. It was felt that senior/executive level employees often applied power from an official/formal position instead of from a position of trust associated with solid leadership principles.

*“It can be seen from the size of committees-more people in a committee create the image it is a good, trustworthy decision-which is not true. Recently there were student protests supported by significant numbers of staff. There would not have been protests if there was a high level of institutional trust.”*



This tallies with Kim et al. (2015) who raises the issue of the correlation between organisational justice and employees' perceptions. They advise that a positive employee perception of distributive, procedural and interactional justice will have a positive outcome in terms of employee satisfaction, commitment, trust and retention (Kim et al., 2015).

## 5.10 Section 7: Transformative Leadership

### 5.10.1 Role of Leadership in Advancing a Coalition to Facilitating Change

Question 7.1 asked if the organisational leadership built a coalition that will pave the way for change. Respondents generally either strongly disagreed or disagreed (30; 50% in total), that their respective organisations built a coalition for change and almost a third were not sure. Only a small minority of respondents felt that any coalition for change was in place or being built within their institution (5; 20% in total).

THE ORGANISATION BUILT A COALITION FOR CHANGE		
	RESPONSES	
STRONGLY DISAGREE	25,00%	15
DISAGREE	25,00%	15
UNSURE	30,00%	18
AGREE	15,00%	9
STRONGLY AGREE	5,00%	3
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	73,33%	44

*Table 5.10: The Leadership Built a Coalition that Will Pave the Way for Change*

Leadership, communication and transformation were the key themes that emerged from the respondents' comments. The issue was raised regarding the practice of leadership operating in a vacuum. The opinion was raised that the leadership must consist of different representative groups from diverse backgrounds, to foster and inculcate creative thinking, because they want to hire the most experienced and talented individuals, who will provide for greater success of the institution. It was incumbent upon the leadership to focus on the needs of the institution and work as a

team, to address and implement pro-active measures, to support the institutional plan.

A respondent commented that:

*“There is no willingness to engage in deep, system-related change. Further there is no ability to facilitate such change at the leadership level”.*

Transformation remained a thorny issue across universities. Respondents felt there was little evidence of transformative action but a lot of talk.

*“There has been a lack of cognition and understanding of the gaps and needs. Therefore, it’s not really been explicitly taken care of. There is a willingness now, but the right competencies and abilities are not in place”.*

It was felt that the #FeesMustFall protests had an adverse impact in some universities and brought the need for change to the fore in others. While some progress had been made, a lot of this has been eroded.

*“A lot of the gains were broken down. Race issues emerged. This highlighted the superficiality of the change efforts. A lot of work now has to be done. This happens in pockets. It is not done widely enough, among both Professional, Academic and Support Services and Academic staff”.*

Management seems to be a complex set of feuding parties. There is no sense of a coalition. Management also do not seem to have much idea of paving the way. One gets the sense that we are lurching from one crisis to another. Comment provided below:

*“There is a lot of distrust between workers and the top management. In the top management, they just take care of themselves. I still think that women and people of equity still need to be catered for. No strong leadership in place to drive the required changes. The type and level of engagements do not seem to point to this. This is indicative of mistrust. Little is done in terms of advancing change which is needed to address racism etc.”*

The above is indicative that the need for universities to acquire, develop and retain leadership that is adaptive to the needs of a shifting socio-political and economic landscape. This was demonstrated by the #FeesMustFall student protest action. This gives effect to the concept of shared leadership, which is adaptive to the context and issues that emerge, and must become the mainstay of campuses (Kezar and Holcombe, 2017).

### **5.10.2 Leadership and Communication of a Change Strategy**

Question 7.2 probed if leadership planned and implemented a communication strategy of the vision for change. Most participants (38, 63.33%), indicated that in their institution they felt there had been no communication strategy of the vision for change. Participants indicated that communication was not negotiable. Effective communication channels included departmental communication channels, emails, meetings, workshops, internal communiques and policy changes.

#### **Insights**

The need for communication strategies was raised. It was noted that a communication strategy is very important and allowed for effective work performance, messaging, transparency, consultation. One respondent commented that:

*“If there is a strategy then nobody knows it: one gets the sense that we are lurching from one crisis to another”.*

Communication efforts required prioritisation. It was felt that the talk was strong and appropriate but translation of this into action was merely satisfactory. One comment was that:

*“We know there is no communication strategy, although communication generally has improved”.*

It was felt that little communication takes place although these are often some of the most effective structures to advance change.

### **5.10.3 Role of Leadership in Communicating the Need for Change**

Question 7.3 addressed the question as to whether leadership communicated the urgency about the need for change.

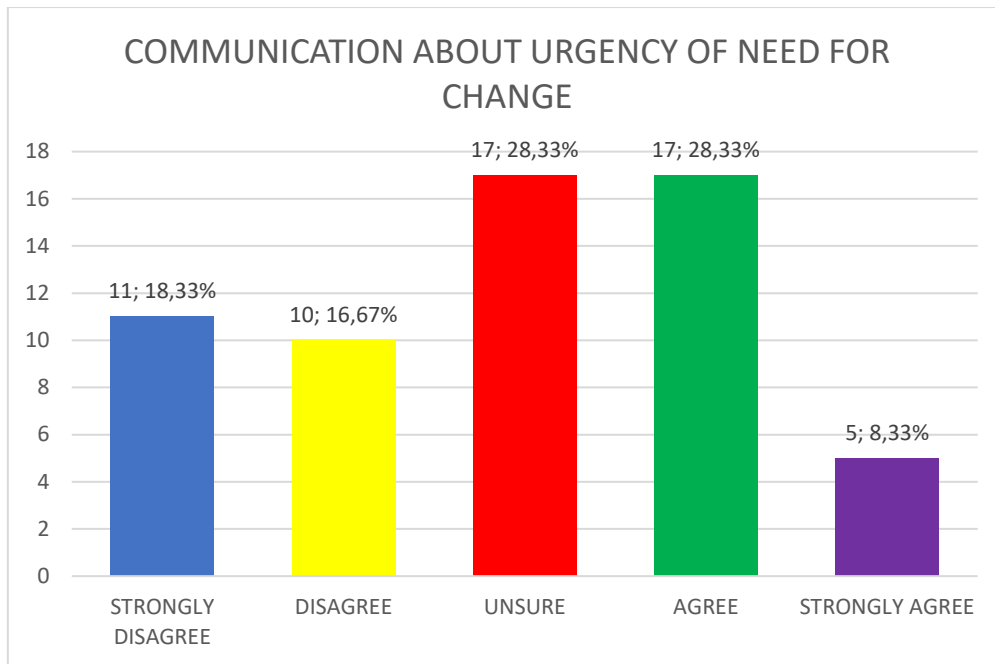


Figure 5.8: Has Leadership Communicated the Urgency of the Need for Change?

There were responses across the spectrum of choices but 17 participants (28,33%), were unsure. An equal number agreed that the urgency of the need for change had been communicated.

### Insights

The need for an institutional plan to provide guidance to departmental alignment toward a common goal surfaced. Aligned to this was the need for performance management and award systems which recognise high levels of performance and act as a motivator. The need for a well-articulated vision and mission statement to align the organisational objectives with the spirit of democracy and humanity (Ubuntu) was required. Regarding 'Vision 2020', there was little evidence of the implementation thereof. Divergent conversations and discussions that were taking place was a concern.

The urgent need for change was a key issue, as respondents felt that there was planning, which was not implemented into strategy and action. An alarming lack of awareness and experience in the top management level of the university often comes to the fore and leadership effectiveness is concerning. There was strong

acknowledgement of the need for change, but not much done to reflect the urgency and commitment to advancing change. A respondent commented that:

*“Workshops should be conducted horizontally and vertically announcing organisational strategy change. This is not done. The leadership seem happy with the status quo. Student leadership and #FeesMustFall protests have played a great role in this.”*

The need for change preparedness is linked to the agility of the university to meet the changing nature of such organisations. Accordingly, Rose (2014) in Hao and Yazdanifard (2015) identify change management as a method to deal with change at an individual or organisational level; thereby reinforcing the ability to successfully navigate change which sets institutions apart in that it can improve its competitive position and maintain it.

#### 5.10.4 Eradicating Impediments in Envisioning Change

Question 7.4 ascertained whether there been efforts to remove obstacles impeding a new vision for change. Almost half of respondents (28; 46,67%), were unsure as to whether there had been efforts made to remove obstacles that impeded a new vision for change, with 12 Respondents (20%), strongly disagreeing that any efforts had been made.

EFFORTS TO REMOVE OBSTACLES IMPEDING VISION FOR CHANGE		
	RESPONSES	
STRONGLY DISAGREE	20,00%	12
DISAGREE	15,00%	9
UNSURE	46,67%	28
AGREE	16,67%	10
STRONGLY AGREE	1,67%	1
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	58,33%	35

Table 5.11: Efforts to Remove Obstacles Impeding a New Vision for Change

## Insights

Respondents' who provided reasons for their choice of answer indicated that concerted effort was required by universities to ensure a new change agenda. In this respect, the Council, Executive, Manco and all Committees, needed to be committed to change.

The feedback included a perception about a lack of transformation on Council structures where committees. This was rationalised by the comment as follows:

*“My university has people who are in retirement and outdated in their thinking.”*

The lack of transformation at the level of these integral structures, was important to demonstrate a commitment to change. This was seen to be an effort to retain the status quo at the cost of change, transformation and social justice. A respondent commented that:

*“Concerted efforts are made to protect the status quo. Change is not on the agenda. People from designated groups come in at high levels and leave due to the mismatch in their values, ethics and that of the institution.”*

There was an indication that black employees still experience discrimination. Thus, while early retirement packages were offered to older staff members above a certain age to clear up traditional tendencies and old cultures in the organisation, this appeared to skew demographic profiles rather than enhance diversity. Comments included:

*“The HR Strategic plan helps leaders instil better ways for dealing with change with employees.”*

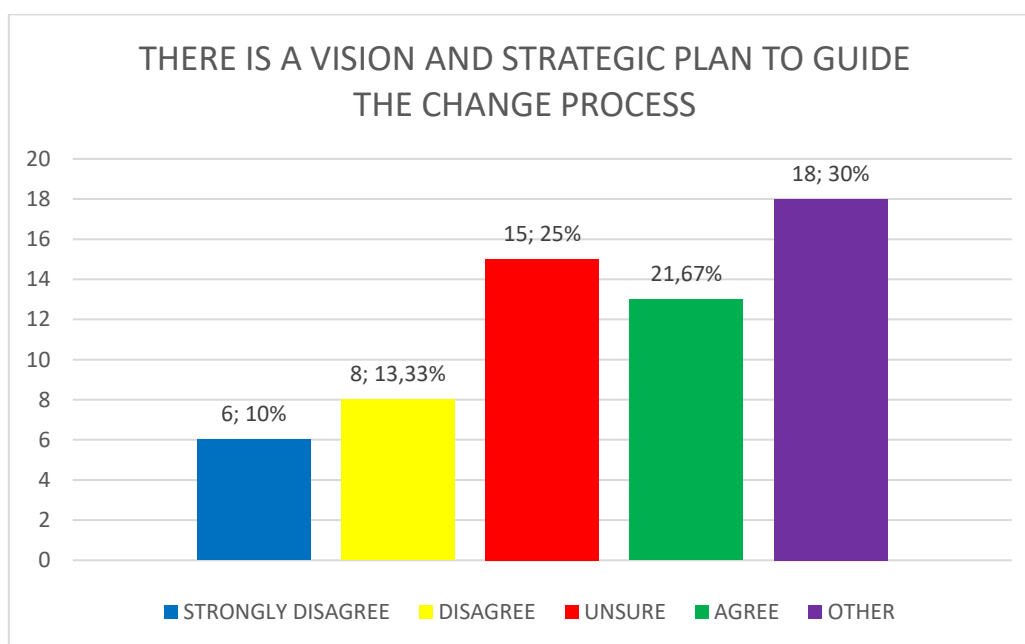
There was acknowledgement that relevant structures were needed in universities in order to advance change. This is promoted by the SABPP (2017), with regard to the issue of organisations being responsive to the need to 'learn, innovate, perform and adapt' to external challenges. As indicated by the literature, structural efficiency must be supported by relevant considered leadership structures which jointly, should facilitate shared leadership with the university.

Concern was expressed with regard to the perception that were instances of a complete mismatch of some executives and directors to the posts they held. This exacerbated the slow rate of change in universities.

*“People look to leadership for change. Staff have demonstrated that we don’t have a leadership with one voice in their understanding of the challenge.”*

#### 5.10.5 Awareness of the Vision and Strategic Plan for Change Processes

Question 7.5 asked employees whether they agreed that there was a vision and strategic plan to guide the change process in their institution.



*Figure 5.9: The Existence of a Vision and Strategic Plan to Guide the Change Process*

Eighteen respondents (30%), could not give any specific answer to this question chose ‘Other’ as their response, whilst 15 (25%), were unsure and 13 (21,67%), felt there was a vision and plan in place. Eight (13,33%), and 6 (10%), either disagreed or strongly disagreed, respectively.

## Insights

Amendments on policies and rules were posted as alerts electronically. Some meeting decisions were minuted and circulated to relevant staff members. A respondent commented that:

*“There has been effort to create a Vision 2020 document with steps to achieve that. Every member of the organisation has a written vision and the strategic plan for the change process.”*

The institution wants to attract the most qualified and experienced individual and still retain the suitable staff. One respondent who was unsure about a vision and a strategic plan for change commented that:

*“Incompetent executive at the university. Nothing is changing, everything has been the same since my first year in the institution”.*

There was a feeling that there was a lot of discussions but little action was undertaken. It was however evident, that Respondents from RU held the Executive management team responsible and felt let down in this regard.

*“There has been an effort to create a vision through countless imbizos but no strategic plan has emerged. There is not a shared vision driving this institution. Our upcoming transformation summit could be seen as a strategic plan”*

RU Respondents indicated there was a lack of vision for advancing change in the institution.



### 5.10.6 Awareness of Efforts Related to Planning for Change Processes

Question 7.6 asked the participants: Are You Aware of an Effort to Create a Vision and Strategic Plan to Guide the Change Process?

THERE IS AN EFFORT TO CREATE A VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN	RESPONSES	
STRONGLY DISAGREE	11,67%	7
DISAGREE	11,67%	7
UNSURE	28,33%	17
AGREE	16,67%	10
STRONGLY AGREE	5,00%	3
CAN YOU JUSTIFY YOUR ANSWER?	26,67%	16

*Table 5.12: Awareness of an Effort to Create a Vision and Strategic Plan to Guide the Change Process*

Many respondents (17; 28,33%), were unsure and 10 respondents (16,67%), agreed that efforts to create a vision and strategic plan had been made. Equal numbers (7; 11.67%) either disagreed or strongly disagreed that an effort had been made and only three respondents strongly agreed that efforts had been made to create a vision and strategic plan.

#### Insights

General responses indicated that there was no institutional plan, no vision, no strategic plan for advancing change at RU.

*“Executive managers are on a gravy train. A change in performance of the university is urgently needed.”*

The NMU’s Vision 2020 strategic plan focused on a number of change projects. Most employees in the university were aware of the document. Other responses included:

*“As a member of the organisation I have the written document. There have not been enough engagements on the subject.”*

At the RU, there was acknowledgement that there was no Institutional Development Plan in place. Therefore, there was no related activity across the institution. There was

agreement that there is need for a plan to be put into practice and monitored. One respondent commented that:

*“One gets the impression that management hopes that an imbizo (or transformation summit) will magically conjure up a plan that they can then implement.”*

## **5.11 Conclusion**

Broadly, feedback from participants were that they had limited knowledge regarding the HR function. This is concerning, as the HR department is the one function that provides a service to every employee. The findings indicate that there is not enough common information regarding HRM. Whilst every employee utilised and were beneficiaries of HR services, the functioning of the portfolio, the depth of the discipline and how it was organised and managed were largely unknown. This is indicative of the need for continuous communication.

The resourcing of HR functions drew attention from participants who felt that HR Departments were currently under-resourced. This impacting negatively on the service delivery and demands from users in universities. There was agreement that better resourcing be allocated to the HR functions in both universities.

Different approaches were used by the two universities for the recruitment of HR practitioners. The findings highlight the need for a comprehensive recruitment and selection methodology to be developed for the selection of HR practitioners for the sector.

The need for changes to HR curricula was brought to the fore with a call for more relevant content to be considered to ensure that HR practitioners graduated with qualifications which were relevant to the needs of a twenty first century workplace. Different approaches were used by the two universities for the recruitment of HR practitioners. The findings highlight the need for a comprehensive recruitment and selection methodology to be developed for the selection of HR practitioners for the sector.

Participants did not demonstrate an understanding of HR Models, what these entail and the importance of it.

The common factors, which emerged from participants' contributions to the questions included that the role of the HR practitioners had changed significantly and there was increased complexity. The need for changes to HR curricula was brought to the fore with a call for more relevant content to be considered to ensure that HR practitioners graduated with qualifications which were relevant to the needs of a twenty first century workplace.

The findings indicated that both universities need to inculcate a culture of performance. There was no segmentation in terms of any particular group needing to enhance performance. The overall recommendation was that HR practitioners, academics and line managers all needed to cohere to an improved performance culture. This was considered to be an important factor in advancing a quality approach to performance.

There was a strong call a new leadership style among the executive management was prominent in both universities. It emerged that a new, effective leadership style is necessary for the delivery of key outcomes facing university management. It would also be an important factor in advancing change and being able to steer and deal with dynamic change which is a characteristic in universities.

There is a need for ongoing communication with regard to change. Another issue that emerged with regards to change is the need for all facets of the university to prepare for and be open to change processes. It was evident that universities are required to be open to and need to be at the forefront of addressing changes in the world of work.

The key differences between the RU and NMU included the governance framework and structure in the respective universities. While the NMU has a strong adherence to governance protocols, there is a distinct lack of adherence at RU. This is evidenced by the outdated policies and regulatory documents.

Another difference is that of the leadership style used at the two universities. The leadership style is more developed and defined at the NMU. The NMU has a strong ethics and value-based culture, with adherence of the NMU values being

demonstrated and displayed. The leadership style at RU is laissez-faire or laid back. There is no demonstration or communication of the values that the employees and management of RU adhere to.

The results and discussion of the quantitative outcomes of the study were presented in this chapter. The results and discussions of the qualitative aspect of the study are set out in Chapter six.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Presentation of the findings: The Results and Discussion of the Qualitative Outcomes of the Study**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis and discussions of the qualitative aspect of this mixed methods study. The data for the study was collected in two phases; a quantitative data collection and analysis which was presented in the preceding chapter, followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. This chapter gives the results of the qualitative data analysis and a discussion of the findings.

#### **6.2 Research Setting**

The data collection took place at two universities. These were RU and NMU. It was considered important to compare the HR systems utilised in universities in South Africa and to utilise two higher education institutions.

#### **6.3 Participant Profile**

A total of 20 respondents participated in the semi structured interviews that were the basis of the focus groups. Male and female employees were represented in the sample. The categories of employees interviewed included academic; human resources; senior management; middle management; professional; semi-skilled; technical, union representatives and unskilled employees. Participants from each category were represented in both focus groups and an equal number of participants participated from each university. Five attributes of the participants were identified: Gender; universities; levels, employment status and education (Table 6.1).

Attribute	Values
Gender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Male</li> <li>• Female</li> </ul>
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RU</li> <li>• NMU</li> </ul>
Levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACADEMIC</li> <li>• Unskilled</li> <li>• Semi-Skilled</li> <li>• HR</li> <li>• Technical</li> <li>• Admin</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACADEMIC</li> <li>• Senior Management</li> <li>• Middle Management</li> <li>• Unions</li> </ul>
Employment status	Employees
Education	Postgrad, Undergrad, Matric, Grade 8

Table 6.1: Attributes Pertaining to the Qualitative Research Sample

#### 6.4 Analysis of Data

Focus group sessions were recorded by the research associate, with the use of a voice recorder and subsequently transcribed. Thereafter, an initial review of the data was undertaken, followed by a second and third level of data analysis, which involved the researcher combing through the data to identify themes and subthemes, identify what is working in the institutions, and what where the challenges. The third phase of data analysis involved independent coding through a qualitative analysis software programme (NVIVO V8).

#### 6.5 Data Collection Instrument

A set of seventeen questions were developed for the semi-structured focus group sessions. The questions were developed in accordance with the research aims and objectives (Appendix 3). These were organised according to the five research objectives of the study.

#### 6.6 Layout and Presentation of Data Analysis Findings

The data is presented in accordance with the research objectives of the study. This layout facilitates a more coherent flow of the analysis of the data collection. The questions were clustered according to the research objective(s) they were aligned to.

Table 6.2 offers an illustration of the research objectives of the study and the related cluster of questions, to be discussed.

Research Objective 1	To ascertain if universities used HR models that are relevant and effective to employees' needs.	Question 2 Question 3 Question 10 Question 11
Research Objective 2	To determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified and are equipped with relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level.	Question 4 Question 5 Question 6 Question 7 Question 8 Question 9
Research Objective 3	To evaluate the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector.	Question 12 Question 17
Research Objective 4	To establish if social justice principles are incorporated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of higher education HR demands and requirements.	Question 13 Question 14 Question 15
Research Objective 5	To understand the challenges facing HR departments in higher education.	Question 1 Question 16

Table 6.2: Summary of Research Objective and Correlation of Questions

The findings are presented with the commencement of a discussion of the main theme and sub-themes which emerged for each question in the focus group interviews is followed by a summary of responses in a table form. The table illustrates the overview of respondents, number of data sources and respective number of references was presented.

## 6.7 Presentation of Findings

### 6.7.1 Research Objective 1: Discussion of Findings

The first research objective of the study sought to ascertain if universities used HR models which were relevant and effective to employees' needs. As rightly indicated by Finlan et al. (2016), South African universities uphold their autonomy as provided for by the HE Act. The characteristic autonomy of universities is reflected in the HR models and related practices (Horwitz et al., 2004). The literature reviewed further indicated a dearth of established HR models for the South African and larger SADEC regions and the prevalent use of European and North American based HR models in African organisations. Within this background, the first research objective sought to ascertain if universities used relevant and effective HR models.

To investigate this, four questions were designed for the focus group sessions. Question 2 probed if universities used integrated HR models. Question 3 sought to establish if the HR departments had a strategic plan. Question 10 explored whether new focused approaches were needed while Question 11 sought to determine if the strategies used by the HR Divisions delivered on the imperatives of national policy and legislative frameworks. The questions relate to aspects of effective HR practice, viz. an integrated HR model, an HR strategic plan, the need for new HR approaches and the HR modalities located within a national policy and legislative milieu. The findings related to research objective one are presented in the following sub-sections.

#### *6.7.1.1 Question 2: Does the HR division use an integrated HR management model?*

The aim of this question was to establish if integrated HR management models were used by the RU and NMU HR departments. An integrated HR management model refers to a comprehensive HRM system, which has clearly identified policies, practices and approaches.

##### *6.7.1.1.1 HR Model*

While the Ulrich model had been used at NMU its efficacy and relevance were questioned. It was indicated that an attempt at implementation of the Ulrich Model had been unsuccessful. Aspects of the Ulrich Model, with particular reference to partnering with line management and playing an advisory and support function in terms of administration, policy matters and problem-solving were articulated. There was



agreement that was felt that HR needs to be a strategic business partner as HR staff administrate, advise on policies and solve problems.

Participants indicated that a very informed and a solid HR system was the foundation of institutional success. Apart from the model the need for top management to develop the appropriate levels of capability in order to lead the institution effectively was raised at RU. A compliance embedded model was used at RU. Criticism levied at the Ulrich model suggests that HR functionality and interface with the larger system: it was felt that all key players in the institution needed to be capacitated to understand their function as line managers, academics and employees. Accountability is important to ensure that effective decision making is upheld within the institution at all levels. It was stated that:

*“There is a limit to the Dave Ulrich model. There is nothing beyond it. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t.” [Participant NMU: AD]*

Support divisions provide value to the overall optimal functioning of the entire university. At both universities there was common agreement that support divisions were de-valued. At RU there is a need for a paradigm shift to advance transformation at the university. The Constitution of South Africa guides the manner in which every persons’ rights are protected and ensures that decisions were taken accordingly. Universities must adhere to prescripts of the Constitution, related legislation and what is set out in the respective institutional statutes. It is the HR function which is tasked with the enforcement of policies, procedures and statutory compliance (Armstrong, 2009, Beardwell and Claydon, 2007).

#### *6.7.1.1.2 Integrated Management Model*

Institutional integrated management play a crucial role in the contribution to and delivery of the strategic institutional objectives of universities. Participants at both universities raised the need for coherence in the HR structure; extending to the capability of staff; effective policies, good processes and procedures and the need to be relevant to dynamic changing needs. The range of HR activities require a wide range of skills and capabilities. The multiple internal and external reporting frameworks require universities to successfully deliver on a wide-range of requirements.

RU is a single location campus which uses a centralised HR model. There was concerted effort to create cohesion in the HR department at RU. HR practices and administratively heavy HR processes had been used at the university. Business process re-engineering efforts were underway. Innovative and best practice methods were highlighted as being a necessity. The HR Department had a strategic plan that advanced an integrated approach, as indicated by the comment below.

*“The HR Division plays a strategic function. However, inefficient management of the university indicates that the RU is in a major crisis.” [Participant RU: CP].*

HR is focused on meeting the needs of its users in the university but these requirements are far too many. An integrated management model includes the development and management of an institutional policy framework; implementation of effective management practices; good institutional leadership; clearly identified roles and responsibilities, assistance with clearly defined governance protocols and the ongoing measurement of respective policies as process. The monitoring and reporting on processes and the correlated delivery of results was an important factor.

### **Limitations**

NMU participants indicated that there was a lack of HR coherence in conjunction with the university. Contributing factors included a lack of understanding of HR as a discipline, line managers lacked people management skills and were limited in their ability to apply policies. At RU the lack of an institutional reporting framework emerged as a cause for concern. The university faced finance, governance and transformation-related challenges. Frustrations with the executive leadership were expressed. At NMU, a good reporting framework is in place. Decisions and resolutions by committees including Executive Management are accessible. Overall, at both universities, there was agreement that an integrated reporting framework should be used.

#### *6.7.1.1.3 Accessible, Inter-related Data Systems*

Data drives decision-making, assists with projections and scenario-planning. Data analytics is a key component which underpins HR forecasting and planning. Validated

data is a necessity in all organisations. At both universities data management systems are necessary for effective HR decision making planning and projects. There is an understanding of the role of data and employees are demanding that data must drive business decisions. Data driven decision-making is indicative of a new orientation for HR in universities in South Africa. To give effect to this, HR functions must have good and effective data management systems: a new orientation for HR in universities.

While accessible and inter-related data systems were recognised as being an important component of HR, there was consensus among both focus groups that significant change was needed in this area as data management and storage is an important factor in a changing environment. It emerged that data underpinned effective decision making in the HR space, a competency that was critical for HR practitioners. Decision making based on valid and empirical data is required to ensure that HR is taken seriously. This highlighted the transitioning nature of HR. It was stated that:

*“Data management systems should be accessible and inter-related. The most practical way of breaking silos is to have an integrated system.” [Participant NMU: EK]*

The need to modernise the information technology (IT) infrastructure is critical at RU. The university's IT system is outdated. Of interest is the fact that independent data management systems are used, which mean that unlike the NMU, systems operate independently. No single data management system is used. Integrated data management within the HR sub-system indicates that information is easily available. It was stated that:

*“Managers and staff find that Protea is an outdated system. It falls short on what a cutting-edge institution requires. Different systems are used for HR, Finance and Registration purposes.” [Participant RU: HS]*

Capelli (2017) indicates that data has always been a core component of HR systems and decision making but advises that much store has been placed on the soft aspects of HR. At NMU, extensive business process engineering efforts have been undertaken. The universities strategic plan, Vision 2020, lists modernisation of infrastructure including IT as a priority.

#### 6.7.1.1.4 Interpersonal Skills, Respect and Team Cohesion

Participants at both universities raised the importance of sensitivity which HR staff needed to demonstrate when dealing with employee's needs. The demands placed on the HR department and the way people interacted with HR staff often left much to be desired as they were often dehumanised. Institutional culture is a key challenge in universities in South Africa. Fragmented institutional cultures are a phenomenon that contributes to conflict on a large scale in universities. This impacts on advancing transformation and results in fragmented institutions. Inter and intra-personal and departmental conflict are indicative of this. HR practitioners are at the forefront of dealing with these types of conflict as they are offered the first line of referral. HR practitioners therefore require good interpersonal skills and conflict management abilities.

Team cohesion and institutional capability are important organisational requirements for the advancement of institutional good and related performance. To this end, institutional cohesion, stability and collaboration are essential aspects required to build the institutional culture at both NMU and RU. At both universities the inconsistent application of policies and processes among academics, professional and other support staff is a problem. It was stated that:

*“HR does not enjoy status and respect. Academics say that HR do not give standard answers to their questions and issues. It is a fact that different HR Practitioners may give different answers but this is often because of the context or case.” [Participant NMU: MD]*

*“We have a member of top management, who have been academics with little senior management experience. If we have that kind of leadership, then we know we are in trouble. Common sense and concordant leadership competencies are missing”. [Participant RU: DB]*

The transformation of the academic staff profile is a key component which promotes conflict within universities. The reason for this is the tension that exists in the large number of previously advantaged employees in the academe and the need to ensure adequate representation of under-represented groups. The status quo is indicative of

untransformed institutions which is considered to be a contributing factor to the breakdown of cohesion at both universities. It was stated that:

*“We need to build an instructional culture and move away from mere rhetoric. Certain departments have initiatives but if you ask staff members what the institutional culture is they don’t know.”*

*[Participant: NMU: BM]*

The divide between academics and support staff is palpable. Creating a new institutional culture is dependent on the willingness of academics to forgo the perception of an 'otherness' and the hierarchical positioning that sets them apart from professional, administrative and support staff. HR bore the brunt for the shortcomings of weak and ineffective line management. There is appreciation for the expansive nature and scope of the HRM function. There is agreement that respect should be reciprocal in universities. A core set of values guides interactions as is the case with the NMU which upholds five core values. Academics at NMU had unreasonable expectations; demonstrated by academics making unreasonable demands on the HR division.

The need for performance management and its correlation with productivity was appreciated at NMU. Performance management was well implemented for senior managers and executives. At NMU, poor performance is effectively dealt with. The emphasis is demonstrated by its performance management system for executives and other members of staff. The performance management is reward based. The Vice Chancellor showed decisive leadership in this regard. RU does not have a performance management system in place for staff or executive management. The performance of executives is not monitored. The 'Code of Good Practice on Performance Management' was referred to and there was agreement that employees, irrespective of status in terms of academic or professional, administrative or support staff categorisation, must adhere to and fulfil their contractual obligations.

Departments working independently emerged as another concern. Senior managers in universities deliberately prevented institutional cohesion by inculcating and upholding a silo orientation. Overall, institutional cohesion was considered to present a challenge at both universities. The role of academics needs to be addressed within

a system that is too flexible to the contractual obligations placed on academics. The flexibility referred to is the issue of 'academic freedom' which is used in ways that are sometimes contradictory to the university's vision, mission or intent.

#### 6.7.1.1.5 – a. Academics as a Cause of Conflict

At both institutions Academics did not follow institutional policies and requirements. This resulted in conflict within the universities and contributed to the perception that academic staff are difficult to work with. It was stated that:

*“Academics behave like prima donna’s. They do not understand HR and its processes.” [Participant NMU: SH]*

*“While HR tries to be at the forefront, championing change, it is difficult if line managers and academics are pulling the other way.” [Participant RU: SD]*

This was premised on the common comment that Senate is responsible for and the decision-maker on all matters. It was felt that the role of Senate, its scope of work and authority need to be clarified as it was the committee that deliberated on academic matters. To gain insight into the function of Senate, a perusal of university websites was undertaken. To this end, a perusal of the Stellenbosch University website indicates that the Senate of a public higher education institution is accountable to the Council of the university for the 'academic and research functions'. It is further obliged to undertake other functions that may be assigned to it by the Council (Stellenbosch University, 2018).

It was stated that:

*“It feels like its Academics vs HR in universities. Academics also have a problem about HR terminology. This must shift.” [Participant NMU: JG]*

Another Respondent indicated:

*“Academics do not see the value and importance of the HR. The default position from academics is that HR does not know what it is doing because they do not get the answers they want.” [Participant NMU: SP]*

The conflict which characterised academic-professional and support staff relations surfaced at the focus group sessions at both universities. There was a common thread that academics had their own way. It was stated that:

*“The segmentation of academic and support staff is deeply entrenched. It can be concluded that a significant disconnect between Top Management and the operational areas exists.” [Participant RU: SvdM]*

Academics come from an academic background and do not always have the necessary skills to perform the management function in relation to direct reports in a complex environment. Academics are referred to as conservative and appear to lack an understanding of HR processes. The challenge at both universities was that of academics' understanding and acknowledging their employment contract with the university. This was far more pervasive at RU, where academics often felt that they were not employees of the university and could behave as they saw fit. The need for performance contracts and the monitoring of academics' behaviour emerged as firm recommendations at both universities.

At RU, the autonomy enjoyed by academics was concerning. Academics were not accountable to Heads of Departments. Effective line management functions are absent. As a result, conduct and performance is not monitored. Further, Deans report into Faculty, which are a nebulous structure. The 'collegial' model used at RU is considered to be a smokescreen wherein individuals maintain the old guard. Critical academic leadership posts are not advertised. It was stated that:

*“Academics believe they are a law unto themselves. When Rhodes academics move to other institutions, they are not able to cope. HR tries to enforce legislative requirements. No other university is run like RU.” [Participant RU: CP]*

The need for HR practitioners to stand their ground with academics and senior managers was touted as being important. This was needed to reinforce the role of HR practitioners as advisors and experts at both universities. It was stated that:

*“Academics have limited understanding of HR. Academics do not consider themselves as part of the institutional team but rather as a superior group.” [Participant NMU: MD]*

This approach to the appointment of academic leaders is different to the transparent, application process utilised by the NMU. It was stated that:

*“Dean and HOD posts are not advertised for individuals to apply and compete for appointment”. [Participant RU: VJ]*

The NMU had a performance management structure in place. Employees were aware of what they needed to do within a legislative and policy framework. Compared to RU, employees at the NMU were accountable. At both universities, relevant and appropriate skilled and qualified persons needed to be appointed. It raises the issue of the need to transform the academics’ overall representation at universities, to be reflective of a changing student and staff profile, and to create a new way of building cohesion in universities. This is reflected in the work of Wright and Pandey (2009) and Yukl (2010) who advise on the coalescing role that core values, hierarchies and other barriers have on the institutional culture of organisations.

#### *6.7.1.1.5 – b. HR Ethics*

At NMU, it was felt that HR consultants need to demonstrate assertiveness. At RU, there are clearly defined roles and job descriptions in HR. Integration and planning needed to be prioritised. Teamwork was noted as an important component which meaningfully impacted on the ability of HR to provide an effective service to the university. It was stated that:

*“There is rhetoric about joint decision making among a few individuals” [Participant RU: RN]*

HR staff at both universities demonstrated theoretical knowledge but lacked research and interpretation skills. This is recognised as being a fundamental requirement of HR. Gaps in communication, roles, expectations between employees and HR, emerged as other significant themes at both universities. The formation of business partnerships, as well as the role and re-positioning of HR were important to enhance business



partnerships between the university divisions and academic departments. Some participants feel that too many expectations were placed on the HR Division.

The need for HR to be solution driven and customer oriented emerged at both universities. There was overall agreement that HR staff needed to know their duties and responsibilities in any environment. Routine administrative tasks such as minute taking, distribution of files, scheduling interviewed, making travel arrangements, were among some of the routine tasks that HR Practitioners' undertook. There was concern that HR practitioners were too focused on these aspects and neglected the higher-level tasks. This correlates with the central role occupied by HR in servicing the needs of employees and the wider institution requires a broad range of competencies that are required to meet current and future institutional challenges (Losey et al., 2005).

At RU, the need for an induction programme for HR staff was recommended. This was based on the premise that the role of the HR practitioners is administrative and that there were considerable changes in HR. It was suggested that an HR induction programme would assist staff who were associated with the previous dispensation becoming upskilled in promoting and adhering to the new HR approach.

#### *6.7.1.1.5 – c. Ethics, Integrity and Conduct*

The correlation between compliance and ethics was recognised by most participants in the semi-structured focus group sessions. Participants were forthright in their views that HR needs to be uncompromising in their integrity. It was suggested that policies can be compromised from an ecological perspective, thereby creating an environment of unethical conduct. HR therefore has a central role to play in this respect and they need to consider and maintain ethics, integrity and conduct.

*“I think that HR at Rhodes adheres to ethical principles. This is comforting” [Participant RU: VJ]*

Participants at the NMU felt that work ethic of HR staff was poor. There was consensus that HR needed dynamic staff. It was stated that:

*“Need for clear ethical leadership behaviour and priorities to be identified and demonstrated.” [Participant RU: SvdM]*

The HR function must uphold a high level of ethical orientation and conduct. HR plays a critical role in promoting workforce fairness and equitable workplace practices. This is discussed by Rose (2007), who advises that commitment and respect for human and trade union rights are important factors. The pivotal role of HR in advancing an ethical culture was advanced on 3 levels; ethical standards, awareness and operations (Schoeman, 2017).

#### *6.7.1.1.6 HR Orientation*

The core function of HR is to provide a service to its clients. At both universities, interactions and working with HR is considered to be good; while it was acknowledged that HR and management did not always agree on matters, the important role of HR was acknowledged. The general perception was that line managers have unrealistic expectations of HR, which in some cases, led to a devolution of responsibilities. At RU, it was felt that line managers sought to reinforce their own needs and ways of thinking rather than what was needed institutionally, thereby creating a fundamental challenge for the HR function, which must be solution driven. It was stated that:

*“HR should be a centre of excellence in its diversity and in its understanding of the theory behind it and should be able to demonstrate this within a complex HE environment.” [Participant RU: US]*

The above reiterates the critical, strategic and operational role played by HR in identifying and promoting aspects of transformation (Boninelli and Meyer, 2004, Cascio, 1995).

#### *6.7.1.2 Question 3: Does the HR Division have a Strategic Plan?*

This question investigated if the two universities had an institutional strategic plan.

##### *6.7.1.2.1 HR Strategic Plan*

The HR Department is a strategic business partner. The scope of work has far reaching consequences on people and on the organisation. HR therefore, needed to be included on the executive structure of the university. HR fulfils an important institutional role. This is illustrated by the fundamental functional role that HR has in the management of employees in the university. It was stated that:

*“HR provides a very high-level service to the university. They deal with very complex matters and issues, are able to provide information on the staffing components of all areas of the university, yet, does not have a seat on the Executive.” [Participant RU: HS]*

RU does not have an Institutional Development Plan (IDP). An HR plan is in place with strategic goals and priorities that are clearly set out. It was notable that the absence of a strategic plan did not prohibit the creation of a divisional strategic plan and the ultimate delivery on divisional and institutional outcomes. In addition, there is agreement that the vision and mission play a critical role in advancing the delivery of institutional objectives. This emerged as a factor at both universities. The lack of an IDP at RU is disconcerting, as the governance frameworks of universities require the development of an institutional plan. The link between the organisational and HR strategies is discussed by Kearns (2010). According to Kearns, the long-term strategy is clearly outlined by what is planned for in the immediate future. The need for strategic priorities were clearly articulated by participants at both universities. Clearly articulated strategic priorities and plans are necessary, for effective delivery of HR objectives.

At NMU, there was a call for HR to be a strategic business partner. Aside from the Ulrich Model's business partner model, it was felt that HR was pivotal in advancing the needs of the institution through the provision of advice, support and the implementation and monitoring of policies. This is verified through emerging consensus in HR literature, which maintains that the most effective HR departments are those that add value by playing a business partnership role (Lawler and Mohrman, 2003). It was stated that:

*“A concerted way of working toward strategic HR priorities is required. The strategic priorities in the division must align to the institutional plan. However, we cannot always say in the absence of an institutional plan one cannot have a divisional strategic plan.”*  
[Participant RU: US]

#### 6.7.1.2.1 HR Structure

The institutional positioning of HR is an important factor which ensures that an effective HR model, policies and systems become critical factors in facilitating

institutional success. Structural positioning is a critical part of successful HR delivery. HR participation in the executive structure emerged as a strong sentiment at both universities.

Efforts are underway at RU to clean up institutional structures and titling conventions. At the NMU, frustration was expressed regarding the capability of HR practitioners. At RU, HR is not part of the top management structure of the university. Participants indicated that this was a critical priority which needed to be addressed, as top management made decisions which appeared to be misinformed and contradictory to what was required. It was stated that:

*“The HR span of control is broad at the university, the decision taken by the Top Management structure HR is instructed to implement the decision. There is no HR Committee of Council as exists in other universities where HR matters are tabled for consideration and approval.” [Participant RU: SD]*

At NMU, there was acknowledgement of the HR representation and participation at the executive management level of the university. The alignment between structure, positioning and decision making requires review. It was stated that:

*“HR effectiveness is dependent upon and dictated by the institutional structures. So, we cannot say HR is not effective, if the structure is ineffective. In terms of capacity, why do we really need more staff members?” [Participant NMU: BM]*

A different approach to meeting the needs of the institution and staff is required at the NMU. It would appear that the decentralisation of HR may be an option in meeting the needs of the comprehensive institution with diverse staffing needs. This is indicative of the agility needed in the application of HR systems and processes. The NMU had adequate and well-resourced structures with appropriately trained people. It was apparent that RU did not. Planning at an institutional level was not taking place at RU. The findings are corroborated by Losey et al., (2005:71) who advise that HR practitioners are critical players in planning processes. To this end, the relationship between institutions with efficient HRM policies, and practices and considered decision-making is strongly persuaded by strategy and structure (De Silva, 2012).

#### 6.7.1.2.2 HR Policies

Policies offer the university a framework to operate within. The policy framework utilised by universities are therefore important. The proper implementation of HR policies is a critical success factor; however, the starting point is to have relevant and updated policies in place. Line managers must be familiar with the content and scope of policies and are required to implement them accordingly. It was stated that:

*“It’s a problem when lower levels of staff know and understand the policies better than HR staff. We have an issue of a semi-skilled person reading and explaining a particular section of the recruitment policy to the HR Consultant.” [Participant NMU: AD]*

Line management must accept responsibility for implementation of HR policies and practices. Policy development is important and must be well researched.

*“HR has strong guidelines in terms of frameworks, policies. We are guided by those. We are developing experience in adopting theoretical and compliance-based approaches.” [Participant SvdM: RU]*

#### 6.7.1.3 Question 10: Is a New Approach Needed, if so, What Should be the Focus Areas?

Question ten investigated the need for a new HR approach and what it should focus on. The need for cultural change, valuing employees, recognition for HR as a business partner and the need to regain focus on the people element, emerged as key considerations.

##### 6.7.1.3.1 Cultural Change

The issue of institutional culture was discussed at length. It emerged that both universities experienced challenges with the entrenched culture. The culture of holding onto positions and knowledge indicated that internal gatekeeping was a common occurrence. This phenomenon prevented assimilation of new employees or employees who had developed new skills, from advancing within the institution. This indicated the need to be responsive to and reflective of the changing needs both within and external to, the university.

Further to the issue of transformation at universities, it emerged that although policies sought to attract members of designated groups, the institutional climate was not conducive to change. Furthermore, the turnover of designated group employees was raised as a concern. It came to the fore that race played a role in some employees experiencing and feeling diminished levels of self-worth. There also appeared to be limited opportunities to train and advance employees of designated groups at NMU. Ultimately, participants from both universities were in agreement that transformation, while often spoken about in terms of demography, is also about the climate, culture and issues of gender.

The need for cultural change was raised as an important priority. It was maintained that Academics had little regard for institutional policies, processes or for other members of staff who were their colleagues. There was some resistance to rebuilding a new institutional culture from some academics, administrators and middle management. There is the sense of rhetoric about joint decision making among a few individuals, its actions and response to mandates. It was difficult for staff to identify the institutional culture of the university. It was stated that:

*“The culture must be clearly defined in order to amend current practices. To understand why things are done in a particular way, we need to understand it, define it”. [Participant RU: CP]*

Ongoing backlash arises as a result of a mix of policies and politics.

*“While HR tries to be forefront, championing change, it is difficult if academics are pulling the other way”. [Participant NMU: AJ]*

There was consensus that cultural change is required and that employees should be valued. It is incumbent to refer to Burnes, Hughes and By (2016) who advise that there is a strong correlation between institutional leadership and change.

#### *6.7.1.3.2 Employee Value Proposition*

It was felt that the employee value proposition is of utmost importance and effort must be made in trying to understand and cater to the needs of the workforce. It was acknowledged that universities comprise a multitude of diverse groups and the multi-generational and occupational level needs of the workforce need to be carefully

considered at all times. Employees want to feel valued and cared for and employee well-being is a joint responsibility between the line manager and HR (Hill et al., 2008, Rose, 2007). This places onerous demands on the HR functions and its systems in the sector. There is much circumspection about the abilities of line managers to understand and cater to the needs of diverse employees at both universities. It was stated that:

*“HR must have a strategic place at the table. Working in silos negatively impacts the value-chain leading to fragmentation, de-valuation and will ultimately be demoralising”.*

At RU, much of the leadership came from an academic background and did not appear to have the skills to manage in a complex environment. It was stated that:

*“HR strategies should align to the institutional strategies. Take performance management systems-they are too politicised. Employees need to recognise that they are just that-employees with a contract”. [Participant NMU: SH]*

Further, the collegial system of appointments which did not allow for an application process for academic leadership posts, was raised as an issue which needed redress. This system was upheld notwithstanding the need for fair affirmative action as set out in the EEA. It was stated that:

*“In terms of capacity, there are real issues in this regard that should be addressed. There is an issue of the division being understaffed, more people need to be employed with the relevant skills that are required”. [Participant NMU: MD]*

*“The power play between Academics and HR administrators need to be addressed”. [Participant NMU: SP]*

This is indicative of an organisational culture that embraces the principles of Ubuntu and capacity building, which are fundamental for workplace competitiveness and equity (Govender, 2013, Horwitz et al., 2004).

### 6.7.1.3.3 Humanistic Business Practices

The application of humanistic business practices, with an emphasis on diversity and multi-culturalism in the workplace were identified as important in order to regain focus on the management of people. This view is reinforced by Buller and McEvoy (2012) and Kochan (2004) that the HR function must be at the forefront of advancing and maintaining social justice, humanisation and organisational justice imperatives. An effective HR function is dependent upon and dictated to by institutional structures. Institutional structures therefore need to be reviewed for effectiveness and relevance. Managing the performance of managers will drive accountability. This will assist with prioritisation of effective human resources systems, processes and management. It was stated that:

*“We slavishly follow procedures or if we do have the knowledge, we keep it to ourselves, in the sense that I come with particular experiences so that defines who I am, instead of contributing to say we are a diverse group of people”. [Participant RU: US]*

### 6.7.1.3.4 HR Tenure, Knowledge and Skills

HR staff are required to possess relevant tenure, knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the organisation. The qualifications of HR practitioners are an important indicator of success. Skills audits, ongoing training and the updating of related knowledge require attention. It was agreed that regular skills audits were important to ensure that the right people were appointed into positions, and that they had to possess the right skills. It was stated that:

*“Skills audits are important. Researchers should be used in finding solutions. The power play between Academics and HR administrators need to be addressed”. [Participant: NMU: SP]*

*“HR is dynamic discipline. HR practitioners need to be on the ball. Comparing HR staff at NMU to the corporate sector shows that they lag behind. The practical and best-practice experience their counterparts in the private sector possess is missing”. [Participant: NMU: SP]*



The WSP is compiled annually in accordance with the provisions required by the Skills Development Act. Opportunities for re-training and up-skilling therefore existed at both universities. The method of appointment for HR practitioners at RU comprised both an interview and an assessment process. At NMU, concern was raised regarding the appointment process of HR practitioners, which was based on a straight forward interview process. It was felt that this was too simplistic a process for a highly complex function within the university. It was stated that:

*“The current appointment process for HR practitioners needs to be amended to ensure the demonstration of ability and experience is looked at. We have people in HR who know nothing about HR and have degrees in PR or other fields”. [Participant NMU: SD]*

This ensured that a skills assessment was undertaken to indicate the ability of the candidate to work within the HR function. The need for professionalism is upheld by the need for professional HR. This is advised by the SABPP, who advise that this indicates that status is accorded to HR Practitioners (Abbott, Goosen and Coetzee, 2013). The need for up-liftment of skills is a current issue in South Africa, which many professional bodies including the SABPP, SARA and IPM, offering Continuing Professional Development and ongoing education and specific updates acknowledge. The need for ongoing skills audits and appropriate updates is upheld by Abbott (2011:84). The socio-economic role of HR in society and the duty of HR practitioners to deliver a high level of HR work requires relevant skills and appropriate knowledge.

The need for appropriately skilled and qualified staff was agreed upon at both universities. Targeted development plan for HR practitioners must be embarked upon, to ensure relevant capacitation of HR practitioners in higher education and to ensure that an employee-focused model is properly implemented and supported (Abbott et al., 2013).

There was consensus at both universities that universities were complicated organisations, by virtue of their structures and governance systems. Mapesela and Strydom (2004) and Schulz (2010) espouse that HRM and its related systems and functions need a new orientation with a focus on strategic imperatives.

The role of academics was questioned by several participants, as were the reasonableness of academics' expectations. The cost of incorrect or mismatched appointments would have far-reaching consequences.

#### *6.7.1.4 Question 11: Does the Strategy of the HR Division Meet the Imperatives of National Policy and Legislative Frameworks?*

This question explored whether there was alignment between the HR Division's strategy and national policy and legislative frameworks. Focus groups at both universities indicated that legislative compliance requirements were met.

##### *6.7.1.4.1 Legislative Compliance: EE and Labour Relations*

Given South Africa's history Employment Equity is an important issue. The EE Act (EEA) and amendments are sufficiently implemented. RU and NMU complied with the provisions of the EEA, have EE Plans in place. Both universities complied with the EEA, had an EE Plan and submitted prescribed annual reports. In addition, it must be noted that EE committees are in place at both universities.

A perusal of documents indicated that the following EE imperatives at both universities were undertaken: EE Reporting; Monitoring and Implementation Functions; Data Management; Identification of barriers that inhibit EE; Reviews of Policy and Procedure, Training and development of people from designated groups. Respondents felt that the Labour Relations Act (LRA) amendments were sufficiently implemented. These amendments introduced major changes for employer organisations. It was stated that:

*“Due regard must be given to achieving targets in a constructive way. Implementation of developmental measures and an understanding of the more significant issues within the institution are prioritised by HR.”*  
[Participant RU: US]

The lived experience of staff left much to be desired at both universities. It was stated that:

*“Adherence to EE and the Basic Conditions of Employment Acts is important. However, this requires sensitivity. The environment can be*

*hostile to beneficiaries of transformation targets and efforts.”*

*[Participant RU: US]*

One respondent indicated:

*“I have experienced a lot of racism. Social justice issues have become a black issue. I was told “you can tell your people that this is how it is going to be. Social justice issues have become a black thing”.*

*[Participant NMU: BM]*

The need to focus on development and succession planning, was articulated. It was clear that there was a need for HR to assist with all succession planning requirements, over and above legislative requirements, which are constantly changing. Universities are grappling with transformation related matters, including, but not limited to, access, staff profiles, curriculum issues and calls for de-colonisation of universities.

#### *6.7.1.4.2 Accountability and Governance*

HR must guide, advise and provide technical support. The HR department cannot and should not be solely responsible for the HR management function in faculties and departments. HR and academic and line managers must work closely and collaboratively. The governance, accountability and KPA's require attention at RU. At NMU, the appropriate and required governance and accountability requirements are stringently adhered to. It was stated that:

*“The HR practitioners are the first line of call in all matters- be it simple or complex issues. The current group of HR practitioners do not have the skill-set. They are merely Administrators.” [Participant NMU: MD]*

At NMU, the disjuncture between the core function of what HR is required and mandated to do, and the institutional knowledge and understanding of what it does, needs to be addressed. There was consensus for the need for fair adherence to policy needs to be upheld in universities. In addition, the need for line management to accept responsibility for implementation of HR policies and practices was upheld. Issues of accountability, monitoring and evaluation were raised by participants as a concern which requires attention. Generally, the King IV Code and other important prescripts highlight the need for institutions to adhere to the above. This accords with Deloitte

(2016), which makes explicit the King IV provision that corporate governance should be concerned with ethical leadership; attitude; mind-set and behaviour with the focus on transparency and targeted, well-considered disclosures.

#### *6.7.1.4.3 Innovation*

There appeared to be a reticence among academic line managers to be flexible and innovative in the application of HR policies and practices. Academic managers were deemed to lack innovation in upholding their line management responsibilities. Systemic practices are overturned and a new way of doing things, both strategically and operationally, is required. The need to be ‘flexible with rigidity’; and the changing nature and demands of the legislative requirements is acknowledged.

#### *6.7.1.4.4 Compliance-based Good Practice*

HR should embrace a compliance-based approach. Compliance is a necessity and institutions do not have a choice on whether to comply with legislation or not. It was stated that:

*“Understanding legislation and implementation is a pre-requisite. If employees say they are unaware, then HR must communicate about the changes. HR must be pro-active in their engagement with stakeholders”. [Participant NMU: BM]*

In accordance with the Section 198 changes both universities had completed the respective tasks. In addition, recent changes to the Labour Relations Act amendments, required conversion of temporary contracts to permanent contracts. It was stated that:

*“We may be legally compliant, but the country, province, community requires more. The creation of responsible citizenship and responsible resources for our country must be highlighted. As an institution of higher learning, a good practice system must be considered”. [Participant NMU: AR]*

The LRA amendments indicated the need for context-specific requirements of the higher education environment. There is evidence of this being adequately dealt with.

#### 6.7.1.4.5 A Practice-based HR Approach

Ad-hoc approaches in HR are inconsequential in the need for alignment in relation to the institutional needs. Appropriate HR practices are necessary to advance institutional imperatives, as set out in the strategic plan. The need for appropriately skilled HR practitioners is discussed elsewhere in this chapter and is critically important to ensure best practice approaches are used. At both universities, it was felt that the HR practitioners were the first line of call on all matters; whether simple or complex.

The need for research-based HR approaches emerged as a significant factor suggesting that HR personnel should be motivated self-starters with the ability to conduct research and find solutions to challenges. The utilisation of practices from other sectors needed to be changed, as HR solutions specific to the sector need to be developed. There was agreement that a combination of a sound theory basis, relevant practical experience and a research-based approach would be beneficial. It was stated that:

*“Research is an integral component. It has to start somewhere. Data sitting somewhere and not being effectively used is of no value to us.”*  
[Participant RU: SvdM]

It was felt that from a strategic perspective, research was also an important factor. At NMU, the view was that institutionally it was expected that research is only undertaken by academics. The need for a review of how HR is perceived, came to the fore at both universities. The literature indicates the importance of the transition that HR is undergoing. The practice at RU was thought of as being more considered and research orientated. It was stated that:

*“Complex matters are researched, and a development angle is used. This is evidenced in the manner in which new projects are introduced”.* [Participant RU: LN]

The need for a well-developed and relevant HR function is espoused by Burma (2014) who iterates the important role played by the HR function. In addition, the approach to identifying and dealing with priorities were confused as were ‘the control of market’, requirements of finance and short-term profitability, surveillance of competitors and

the possibility of recruiting a well-educated labour under advantageous conditions. Many factors are found in the idea of “strategy of human resources”. This is supported by Govender (2013), who highlights the need for research-based solutions in order to meet specific, clearly identified requirements.

#### *6.7.1.4.6 Languages*

Language is an important means of communication in any society and organisation; more so in South Africa. Language can either be an important medium or it can be an inhibitor, to effective communication. South Africa is a multi-lingual society with eleven official languages; and many more languages are spoken among different minority groups, which have no official recognition. In terms of access to policies, practices, reminders and access to the university community, language must be used wisely. In terms of access to information, provincial languages need to be considered for the translation of policies. At the NMU it was felt that policies should be translated into at least 3 different languages to facilitate employees’ engagement and understanding of policies. It was stated that:

*“NMU is insourcing 800 employees. Most of them are in lower levels. There is no effort to communicate with them using different languages”. [Participant NMU: BM]*

At RU, there was evidence of important HR policies and information being translated into isi-Xhosa. The findings are supported by Dirks and Sharlicki (2004:138) who advise that the continuous, communication has a positive effect on employees. This is necessary to ensure that appropriate efforts are undertaken to ensure understanding of and application of the policy.

### **6.7.2 Research Objective 2: Discussion of Findings**

The second research objective sought to determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified with the relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level. HR is a complex function, which required a nuanced set of skills to deliver upon the institutional requirements. Five questions were related to research objective 2. These questions are four, five, six, seven, eight and nine.

#### *6.7.2.1 Question 4: Theory and HR Knowledge*

This question examined what embedded knowledge was required for HR practitioners to be effective in their roles. The qualification for HR, according to SAQA (2017) sets out the foundation for ‘technical, theoretical knowledge, practical knowledge and workplace knowledge and skill.’ The key theme and sub-themes, number of sources and number of comments pertaining to Question four are discussed in this section.

##### *6.7.2.1.1 Institutional Value-aligned Appointments*

The appointment of HR staff, must be aligned with institutional values to ensure a common purpose between the ethos upheld by the university and the staff employed, to give effect to the people management component. The importance of institutional support for HR was highlighted. The lack of respect and devalued status of HR at the RU and NMU is indicative of the sector. HR processes are excessively monitored within universities. HR should be trusted to implement its policies and processes.

##### *6.7.2.1.2 Complexities*

HR practices and procedures are irrelevant to the needs of staff, as they have become redundant. The dynamic nature, characteristic of HR, was emphasised, as was the need for a concerted effort in keeping abreast of changes/updates legislatively and within the HR field. There is acknowledgement of the need for a re-think of the traditional HRM competencies in a contemporary institution of higher education. The need to establish relevant HR competencies, is required to contribute to solutions within the context of complex issues faced by merged higher education institutions (Schultz, 2010).

It emerged during the focus group that in order to meet the needs of a complex environment, a rethink of HR systems is required. There was acknowledgement that there are limited HR models which are specific to the South African environment. The literature indicates that HR models are transposed largely from the US and Europe and are not relevant to the needs of the South African context. Consideration must be given to the macro factors which include the political scenarios, labour organisations and the contested space they operate within, economic indicators and the impact of these on institutions. The HR department is the nexus between these variables and how they become operationalised in the organisation. As articulated by Bush and

West-Bunham (1994), there is a need to accord fitness for purpose and growth in excellence, as well as senior management competencies across organisations.

#### 6.7.2.1.3 HR Policies

Policy implementation is of critical importance which highlighted the need for substantive and relevant policies. Line managers have a pivotal role to play in the implementation of the policies. At NMU, all managers were responsible and understood their role in upholding and implementing policies. The capacity to do this effectively was raised at the NMU focus group, but there was no grey area in respect of responsibility, indicating good structures being in place.

The need for concordant knowledge of HR policies was raised. The implementation and upholding of best HR practice was not the sole responsibility of the HR department. Related policies, processes, procedures and the implementation and monitoring of these, were under the responsibility of the HR function, but all line functions were responsible for HR at the universities. This tallies with the position that organisations need to adopt specific HR policies and practices for different strategies and that in order to be effective, an organisation's HR policies must be consistent with other aspects of the organisation (Burma, 2014). Related to the HR policies, it was recommended that there should be an alignment to common framework, relevant knowledge and requirement for more in-depth knowledge. Appropriate HR policies and practices can elicit employee behaviours that are consistent with an organisation's strategy (Rose et al., 2006).

It was stated that:

*“We need people with relevant and up to date experience in HR. If you've worked at Deloitte or Citi Bank 15 years ago, that knowledge/experience is irrelevant here and now. Practical, theoretical knowledge and the latest developments in the HR space are needed”. [Participant RU: CP]*



#### 6.7.2.1.4 Staff Development Opportunities

At RU, there was acknowledgement of the new skills development strategy, which focuses on redress, promotion and advancement opportunities, for all levels of employees at the institution. The needs of the university community are considered to be complex and diverse - this was acknowledged and appreciated. As indicated in the quotation below, it is necessary for HR staff to be experts in their areas of work. It was stated that:

*“HR staff need to be generalists and knowledgeable in all areas”.*

*[Participant RU: TN]*

*“HR is indeed very complex. An example is the matter of Affirmative Action where adverts stipulate precise requirements which creates expectations where people from all races apply. This indicates a problematic process, as applicants cannot be excluded during the shortlisting process”. [Participant NMU: TB]*

At NMU, concerns were raised about the lack of staff development initiatives. Lower levels staff were unhappy about the kind of developmental opportunities provided. Consideration should be given to the provision of relevant developmental programmes for staff. This accords with Burma (2014), who refers to the need for plans to be implemented for employees, which should be based on an organisation’s present potential, development trend and strategic targets. HRM should aim to use the present HR strategy astutely, which refers to the quality and quantity of the HRM needs (Akyüz and Gore, 2001).

#### 6.7.2.2 Question 5: The Importance of HR Capabilities

This question probed the importance of HR capabilities, which sought to ascertain if participants considered the HR capabilities as important or if basic administrative knowledge was sufficient. The key theme and sub-themes, number of sources and number of comments are discussed in this section.

##### 6.7.2.2.1 Sectoral Alignment

Many approaches are used in the practice of HR in universities. While soft and hard HR models are well known and utilised in organisations globally, hybridisation of these

models has occurred in universities in South Africa. The alignment between HR and institutional systems, the strategic role of HR and the critical role that HR plays institutionally were recognised. Alignment of HR practices between institutions is recommended. Collaboration between institutions lead to sharing of information and best practice trends, which ultimately benefit the university.

The requirement for on-going upliftment was recognised at both universities. It was felt that HR practitioners require knowledge in all areas. Further, they are required to keep up to date with legislative updates, codes of good practice and relevant best practice. Concern regarding the HR practitioners' ability to deal with complex matters was raised, as there is significant referral to higher level managers in HR and ongoing support is needed. The findings pertaining to this question are reinforced by Finlan et al. (2016), who advance that while South African universities are considered autonomous by the provisions of the Higher Education Act, the challenges faced by universities are common. It is therefore advantageous for a holistic approach to be considered regarding HR solutions for the sector.

#### *6.7.2.2.2 Managing Disruptions*

There was acknowledgement that challenges faced by the sector were highly disruptive. It was felt that a policy and appropriately aligned processes and systems were necessary. The need for policy revision was raised as an issue which needed to be addressed. An example cited was the need for a policy and process on disruptions.

All institutions were severely impacted by the #FeesMustFall protests which had an adverse impact on the HE sector. The after-effects are still being felt with regard to income, staff and the shutting down of universities. At RU, a crisis-management approach was used during the #FeesMustFall campaign. The institution was not prepared for the upheavals related to the protest action. At the NMU, the #FeesMustFall, and aligned to that, the in-sourcing of groups of staff, including technicians, which were previously outsourced, created many challenges for HR. It was stated that:

*“The protest action of 2015-2016 brought the constitutional rights of every individual to the fore” [Participant RU: UJ]*

This viewpoint corresponds with Sturm (2011), who sets out to explain the input of transformative leadership to multi-level institutional challenges and suggests that this has an intra-organisation impact.

#### *6.7.2.2.3 Institutional Policies*

Given the changing nature of HE and legislation, there is a need for regular review of policies. Institutional culture, monitoring and evaluation, policy frameworks have a pivotal role to play in institutional transformation efforts. At NMU, a good policy repository was in place, policies were updated, and the system was easy to navigate. There was criticism, however, regarding communication of these policies to all staff. Institutionally, there was an absence of a policy management system at RU. This was not in place in the Registrar's Division. The absence of an institutional policy repository could be the cause of outdated and irrelevant institutional policies.

#### *6.7.2.3 Question 6: A Compliance-based Approach?*

At RU, a compliance-based orientation has been utilised for the past 2 years while NMU had subscribed to the Ulrich Model. At RU, the policies, practices and approaches were based on South African legislation. Participants from NMU indicated that the Ulrich Model had been ascribed to but had not been fully implementable. It was stated that:

*“The Employment Equity Act, the Employment Equity Plan and reporting is upheld. The recent changes to the Labour Relations Act amendments, required conversion of temporary contracts to permanent contracts, in accordance with the Section 198 changes. This had been done. We are complying.” [Participant NMU: EK]*

The feeling was that compliance was necessary as it was a key responsibility from an institutional perspective. There was agreement that legal compliance was important, especially in light of the spirit of the law, however, more needed to be done, viz. social justice commitments needed to be addressed and fulfilled. The recognition of a compliance-based approach was understood by participants.

The literature review in chapter 2 located HRM in South Africa within the heavy legislative framework. Compliance to the labour legislative framework is a necessity.

The HR function is the custodian of such compliance driven initiatives. Whilst this may be case, an analysis of the capacity of HR practitioners to undertake this important task is required. It is important that the appropriate capability be considered at all material times, as the risk of non-compliance can have severe ramifications.

#### *6.7.2.3.1 Aligning Regulatory Compliance and Institutional Needs*

The need to balance national compliance requirements with institutional needs was highlighted at both universities. It was agreed that the need for clear and relevant HR policies would enable HR Practitioners to be more efficient nationally. The role of line managers in policy implementation was highlighted. At NMU, it was suggested that leadership in all employees should be recognised instead of all expectations being placed on a leader, which lead to resentment when they don't deliver. It was stated that:

*“We need to look at whether we are fulfilling social responsibility as an institution. We have to meet the needs of our communities, our stakeholders, our staff”. [Participant NMU:AR]*

Regarding the need to balance national requirements for compliance with institutional needs; implementation of policy; limits creativity; the link with ethics integrity and conduct and need to go beyond compliance emerged as critical discussion themes. It was incumbent upon the university to engage stakeholders on matters of good governance through ongoing discussions with stakeholders. At NMU, participants expressed concern about the possibility of compliance potentially limiting creativity.

#### *6.7.2.4 Question 7 HR Practitioners' Understanding of Legislation*

##### *6.7.2.4.1 Complacency and Lack of Training*

The issue of complacency was raised as a key characteristic in HE when compared to other sectors. Participants acknowledged the generous opportunities that were available to staff of universities with regard to enhancing qualifications and enhancing their skills and knowledge. It was felt that not many HR practitioners took up such opportunities.

There was recognition that the heads of HR in HE are required to hold at least a Masters' degree, while an undergraduate qualification is required in the private sector.

An interesting discussion debated the need for higher level qualifications as opposed to extensive experience. It emerged that some HR employees at the NMU were in possession of undergraduate qualifications in disciplines that were not cognate to HRM and without the commensurate HR experience. This raised the issue of the core requirements that were required for HR practitioners.

There need for individual employees to keep abreast of changes in the discipline as well as legislative changes and emerging trends and practices was raised. The need for skills enhancement and updating of discipline-specific knowledge as a priority is re-iterated by Bush and West-Burnham (1994). This is a key requirement for ensuring best practice is upheld and practiced.

#### *6.7.2.4.2 Decision Making*

The unwillingness of line managers to make decisions emerged as a concern. Line managers referred upward for a decision to be taken. The lack of accountability was cited as an institutional practice at both universities. The Higher Education Act sets out in detail the limitations to university autonomy. Universities are required to adhere to the prescripts of the Act. The degree of autonomy is upheld through an elaborate reporting and governance framework. Delegations of authority are detailed therein. This is an important component which gives structure and limits institutional autonomy. It was stated that:

*“People don’t like taking responsibility for decision making.”*

*[Participant RU: SD]*

#### *6.7.2.5 Question 8: Problem Solving*

The ability of HR Practitioners to solve complex problems was explored in this question. The findings are presented next.

##### *6.7.2.5.1 HR Communication*

Communication is an ongoing necessity. Care must be taken to ensure that all users (employees), in institutions receive clear and updated information. The issue of language is important, as SA is a multi-lingual society. The need to provide simpler guidelines related to policies is a factor that needs to be considered, as policies are considered complex and not easily understood. More effort seems to be a key

requirement for HR Departments. The anticipated benefits include accessibility to information, ongoing consultation, updating constituencies on projects and enhancing transparency and openness.

Awareness and communication of the HR plan is important: on the basis that the identification of priority areas underpins the operational objectives, thereby providing a strategic framework. Participants at both universities indicated that lack of transparency and communication were matters that needed to be concentrated on. The need for improved communication and transparency emerged at the NMU. There was a call for open communication at all times. It was stated that:

*“There should be some communication about change(s) happening informing employees that a person is not available for whatever.”*  
[Participant NMU: TN]

*“The communication across the system is very poor. One assumes that there is an understanding of what is to be done and who is going to do it. Alongside this is the important issue of accountability”.*  
[Participant RU: US]

Continuous commitment, communication, and clarity and commitment, that have positive effects on employees must be upheld to ensure healthy levels of employee engagement (Dirks and Skarlicki, 2004).

#### *6.7.2.5.1 Interference*

At both universities, the need for effective line managers was raised as a critical need. There was a concern about the perceived interference on HR matters by senior managers. This was raised as a cause for concern. It was interesting to note that participants felt strongly about the need for HR to play a ‘third party’ role and therein emerged the strong suggestion that HR must have control over its function. It was felt that legislative frameworks and university structures offered considerable monitoring. Participants at the NMU, indicated concern about the capability of line managers to give effect to good people management which was needed in a large institution.

#### *6.7.2.5.2 Capacity of the HR function*

The resourcing of HR requires significant investment as the HR division has significant impact on the institution. It is important, therefore, that appropriate resourcing is allocated. HR, should have the best technology, adequate resources and relevant tools. The structure of HR and the employment of employees with the correct skills was deemed a priority and a critical success factor to deliver on the needs of the university. It was stated that:

*“Little is invested in the HR Department and HR system although HR is as important as Finance. Adequate resourcing to demonstrate that your employees are valued is important”. [Participant NMU: JG]*

An Adecco White Paper (2015) refers to the need to clear the ‘ghost of misperception’ regarding the categorisation of HR as a cost-centre rather than a revenue-generating centre. This, is attributed to a ‘quirk in accounting terminology’. Profit/benefit of the function can be determined by actually applying a value to benefits accrued from implementation of interventions, advice and support provided to departments (ADECCO, 2015).

#### *6.7.2.5.3 HR Practitioners’ Performance*

HR practitioners must take ownership of their performance. HR staff at the practitioner level should be capable of giving support and advice; they must take ownership of their own development, to demonstrate knowledge in the key areas. From a reporting perspective, both HR Divisions tabled relevant reports.

#### *6.7.2.6 Question 9: HR Practitioners Experience*

This question explored the experience of HR practitioners. The literature review indicated the dynamic nature of the HR function. Commensurate with these changes, is the need for the development of relevant competencies to meet the need for a relevant and effective function.

##### *6.7.2.6.1 Institutional Understanding and Knowledge of HR Practice*

HR practitioners at NMU and their counterparts at RU are comfortable with an administrative role. Ownership of processes by HR practitioners is limited. There is a heavy reliance on higher level managers despite significant latitude in the role.

#### 6.7.2.6.2 *Development of HR Practitioners*

The development of HR practitioners is a key issue for consideration. The need for ongoing sessions and workshops for HR staff was established. The developmental opportunities offered to HR Practitioners at RU was acknowledged. RU participants agree that while staff development is important, HR practitioners need to build experience by working from lower to higher level positions. It was stated that:

*“Training and development opportunities are provided to staff in HR e.g. workshops on the LRA amendments were held in 2015. This shows a commitment to empowering practitioners. We go to sessions [organised through the department and in our management meetings where we talk about issues that are happening. Constant training and development opportunities are provided.” [Participant RU: SD]*

### **6.7.3 Research Objective 3: Discussion of Findings**

The third research objective evaluated the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector. Questions twelve and seventeen explored this.

#### 6.7.3.1. *Question 12: Ethical Leadership*

Question 12 examined the adherence to ethical leadership principles.

##### 6.7.3.1.1 *Values-based Leadership*

A vacuum in ethics, leadership, counter policing and lack of opportunities for creativity arose as key issues among participants. A few participants expressed their frustration about the perceived limited ability of leadership to traverse the needs of a contemporary university within a contemporary time was questioned. Some time was spent on discussions wherein participants deliberated as to whether leadership should be concerned with monitoring adherence to policies or is inspirational leadership was required. Participants indicated that there did not appear to a strong leadership cohort which inspired staff and indicated the need for adaptive leadership. The need for creative agility is touted by Caldwell et al. (2012) who calls for a new level of ethical leadership with a central focus on employee’s needs, thereby suggesting transformative leadership as an option. The low morale of staff was recognised as being an outcome of almost 2 years of protest action on campuses. This period, it



was indicated, was fraught with contestations and the taking of sides, often polarising communities within universities.

It was stated that:

*“The university tries to promote a culture of ethical leadership, but the challenge is that the values are not visible. It is difficult for the staff to embrace the values if they are not sure what the values are.”*

*[Participant RU: HS]*

The NMU has clearly articulated values while RU does not. The former runs rigorous programmes on values acculturation and the values foregrounds interactions, performance expectations and the transformation imperatives at the university. This, it was suggested by members of the focus group, provided a blueprint of sorts for institutional culture.

At RU, the collegial model for academics was considered to be paramount as a principle which seemed to be well known among participants. Notwithstanding the collegial model, the role of academics in upholding institutional values was raised as a concern at RU. While RU did not have a succinct set of institutional values, some divisions had a set of values which guided their practice. It was stated that:

*“At NMU, I do not think we have leaders that one can emulate, follow or learn from”. [Participant NMU: SP]*

Participants felt that unions sometimes defaulted to race-based fault lines which led to past raced-based practices being upheld. This perpetuated discriminatory practices, and hampered transformation. The autonomous leadership style used by RU executive management results in significant conflict within the institution, as there was an exclusion of senior managers and lack of engagement as well as a flawed committee structure. The NMU on the other hand, by its appointment process of executives, governance frameworks and internal committee processes, is in a better position; as the leadership engages with others in the institution. However, some participants at NMU argued that there was fraught in-fighting amongst the leadership. It was stated that:

*“I don’t think that everyone in the university displays ethical leadership principles. You can see this in the way they manage the university. I*

*don't think that there is ethics in the way decisions are made at certain levels in the institution". [Participant RU: CP]*

At RU, it was felt that the leadership in any institution sets the tone for engagement and partnerships. Ethics among the leadership cohort emerged as a critical indicator. While there was agreement about the need to ensure policy and legislative compliance, a participant at the NMU wondered if this had the potential to limit creativity. It was stated that:

*"The university must be mindful about how people are managing. It should not be about policing people but rather about managing them appropriately. In this respect, line managers need to fulfil their role".*  
*[Participant NMU: TN]*

#### 6.7.3.1.2 Diversity

The issue of institutional culture emerged as a critical is a critical theme in terms of diversity. Participants in both focus groups indicated that policies were developed and implemented with the objective of attract members of designated groups, the organisational climate was not conducive to the attraction and retention of such staff. Transformation presents a key challenge at both universities.

A trade union representative expressed that black staff do not feel welcomed by their white counterparts. This was attributed to the unwillingness of some employees in universities to cohere and overcome perceptions about other groups of people. At both universities the need to eradicate historical practices was agreed upon. At both universities, it was also felt that institutional culture and associated practices requires attention. There was overall recognition of transformation related challenges which included the issue of staff grappling with defining and understanding what transformation is. At both institutions, there was agreement that humanistic people practices were required although there was a veneer that all is well. The lack of proper monitoring and relevant instruments and processes highlight the need for a change process. It was stated that:

*“Until there is acknowledgement of the need for change, a delusional sense that RU is one of the best universities in the country will prevail.”*

*[Participant RU: VJ]*

The contemporary labour and HE environment requires a certain degree of dynamism and flexibility regarding HRM practices.

#### *6.7.3.1.3 Social Justice and Sustainability*

The history and nature of HE is deeply rooted in the segregationist past of the country. Historical discrepancies need to be addressed and require a social justice orientation. Both institutions were grappling with social justice imperatives. At NMU, the matter of social justice was brought to the fore during the insourcing of workers.

There was overall agreement that social justice initiatives, sustainability and transformation must be prioritised. It was made explicit that the HR Division needed to care for people and needed to be able to defend the decisions undertaken in the best interests of employees, in accordance with policies or according to legislative requirements.

There was little understanding about the different sets of standards and conditions for academic staff. Examples cited included those of academics not needing to apply for leave, not needing to present themselves at their offices daily, of having the freedom to express their views about the university, students or any other aspect they were unhappy about, on social media. Grogan (2014) has written extensively on the issue of differentiated treatment of employees and its implications in terms of discriminatory practice. These practices should be addressed.

The issue of academic freedom was raised by participants at both universities. At RU, participants raised concerns about the historically differentiated approaches applied to the management of academic and support staff. It was stated that:

*“In the ecological model of leadership, the exosphere is vital. If the system (the exosphere) can be corrupted through the policies, and that on its own can have its own ethical implications about how things are done. Social justice-giving back to people, because you need buy-*

*in from the community you are operating within.” [Participant NMU: BM]*

With regard to social justice, RU had conditions of service that were widely disparate and still had not been resolved due to Council members not being in support of redress. The issues raised are indicative of a sector which is still grappling with transformation. This is where legislative compliance can have a meaningful impact in ensuring institutional change is addressed. Issues of transformation are contentious issues at both NMU and RU. The EE Plan of RU sets out transformation related objectives. It was not possible to determine the planned EE imperatives at the NMU as this information was not forthcoming. It was stated that:

*“The highest offices get involved to thwart disciplinary action against white staff. The same high offices get involved and demand action when a black staff member is even suspected of misconduct.”*  
[Participant RU: GD]

Issues of race and gender were profound at RU. An example was given regarding the rigour demanded of disciplinary processes regarding black staff, and concerted effort is expounded on ensuring that white staff are not disciplined. A Respondent used the following example:

*The public High Court judgement which implicated an Executive who attempted to unduly influence a disciplinary matter regarding racism was seen in poor light. [Participant RU: VJ]*

At RU, race and legacy issues between university employees and the town prevailed. RU and Grahamstown have a deep colonial past that are inextricably linked.

At NMU, issues pertaining to race created a chasm that is seen as unethical. Issues raised included that of post-retirement contracts being selective and not in favour of employees of colour. Further, racism is an issue of concern as black staff do not feel accepted. Persons of colour experience racism as a serious problem; as it becomes one of acceptance. At NMU, the lack of transformation led to frustration and inconsistencies impacting decisions, wherein institutional decisions are made by an untransformed body. It was stated that:

*“It’s seems that different languages are spoken to different audiences. There is no authenticity, no consistency with how things are done. It is frustrating”. [Participant NMU: BM]*

Individual and institutional justice is an important anchor for every institution, as justice can never be obviated or diminished. It was stated that:

*“As an academic I experienced racism from Management and colleagues in my department. I came to the realisation that I am actually black not merely a person. My colour is seen to be what defines me” [NMU Participant: BM]*

The perception of a mass exodus of designated group members and limited opportunities to train affirmative action candidates were discussed in detail. The universities were still grappling with these issues.

*“I want to come back to the issue of a culture change. It is often said that we have always done things in this way in the past and we will always do it in this way. This must change”. [Participant: RU: GD]*

The findings reinforce the need for the HE system, characterised by race, class, gender, institutional and geographical inequalities to be addressed. This is supported by the work of Badat and Sayed (2009) who call for a systematic reshaping of the sector to abide by the values of human dignity, the achievement of equality, and the advancement of non-sexism and non-racialism and the human rights and freedoms that the Bill of Rights proclaims.

#### *6.7.3.1.4 Unethical Academic Practice(s)*

The role and unreasonable expectations of academics was questioned by several participants. Plagiarism, false qualifications and bullying were some ethical issues that require redress. The critical themes which emerged included the need for ethical and value-based leadership including the disconnection between leadership and others. The need for proactive rather than reactive leadership, the relationship between union and HR, the perception of a skewed employer-management orientation was also discussed.

### 6.7.3.2 Question 17: Leadership and Ethics

Question 17 focused on whether the leadership has built collaborative partnerships that would pave the way for change. The key theme and sub-themes, number of sources and number of comments are discussed in this section.

#### 6.7.3.2.1 Leadership-driven Change

Both groups indicated the need for leadership in a time beset by challenges. There appeared to be an urgent need for strong, engaging leaders who could navigate the universities through extra-ordinary times of change. There is a need for engaging leaders who demand results from their managers and who can deliver on their own mandates. The external context of HRM is crucial because HR practices, in any country, are socially embedded in their wider, institutional, external contexts (Farnham, Leisink, Hondeghem, Horton, Anderson and Vandenbeebe, 2010).

It was felt that the executive at RU did not have the strategic ability to utilise opportunities provided by a consultative forum of strategic institutional representatives. There was consensus among the participants that effective leadership was predominantly demonstrated by support divisions. It was iterated that directors and unions that drive such initiatives and that the academic project drives the academic matters. It was stated that:

*“A committee is convened in times of crisis and works effectively as with the recent industrial action. A Strike Management Committee was convened. This demonstrates that a collaborative approach is necessary”. [Participant RU: US]*

Failure of management to deliver a strategic plan was considered a grave problem at RU. It was felt that the inability of the leadership of the university to deliver a strategic plan was symptomatic of deeper issues. It was suggested that the university bring in an outside company to assist the leadership to do their work.

At the NMU, it emerged that the leadership had taken a pro-active approach to advancing change. However, this had reached a stage where the rate of change was considered slow and limited. As indicated by the comment below, issues such as workplace bullying was not addressed. It was stated that:

*“A lot has been done by the leadership, but I can safely say we are not where we used to be. There is no trust. We have given too much authority to leadership, assuming that the leadership should also be driving change”. [Participant NMU: BM]*

At NMU there was acknowledgement of a plan of action to deliver on key outcomes. It was stated that:

*“Top management is unable to deal with critical issues. They [Top Management] need to do a reflection. They need to consider that things are not as they used to be”. [RU Participant: SvdM]*

The findings indicate the need for university leadership to demonstrate decisiveness and courage in a trying time. Participants echoes the need for a common vision and for the leadership to steer the organisations toward this common purpose. This transparent and coherent approach is what participants indicated was lacking at both universities. This is an important factor, however, and is echoed by Zhang et al. (2011) who indicates that leaders and others must have a dedicated, common vision for change.

#### *6.7.3.2.2 An Integrated Change Approach*

Change was considered a constant reality to be achieved and the need for this was considered a moral issue. The leadership needed to change. This is a critical endeavour for the leadership of the institution. Efforts to advance progressive changes to the institutional culture was perceived as a superficial attempt at the NMU. Deeply ingrained practices and ‘covert attempts to disable transformation’ at the institution needed redress. It was stated that:

*“The need to recognise that the academic project cannot manage the university is the responsibility of the senior management appointees. An integrated approach is a needed priority where risk management, sustainability issues and stakeholder management are considered together”. [Participant NMU: SH]*

Participants at the RU focus group were scathing about the need for change being ignored by the leadership of the university. It was felt that the leadership had a

responsibility to address and facilitate the necessary change, as indicated below. It was stated that:

*“The need for change must be acknowledged. There is a false sense that RU is one of the best universities in the country.” [Participant RU: CP]*

The need for change is acknowledged as a moral issue. Arduous, long-winded, change processes are unhelpful and difficult to navigate. The delivery of HR service, in accordance with valuing people and the streamlining of HR processes are priorities. It was stated that:

*“Change should not be a legislated issue, but rather a moral issue. This requires policies to be aligned to the relative legislation. Managers state they are attempting change because the law dictates it.” [Participant NMU: SH]*

The need for change in South Africa is particularly embedded within the historical legacies unique to the country. The need for the social justice, humanisation and organisational justice in organisations is important to the larger transformation imperatives in HE. This requires a team of trans-disciplinary professionals to combine their efforts. HR is an important component in the social justice and humanisation of practice efforts (Buller and McEvoy, 2012, Kochan, 2004, Schultz, 2010).

#### **6.7.4 Research Objective 4: Discussion of Findings**

Research objective 4 explored whether social justice principles are integrated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of HE HR demands and requirements. This question pursued the decisions underpinning people management practices.

##### *6.7.4.1 Question 13: Key Factors Impacting on People Management Practices*

People management practices, it was expressed, are devolved from the institutional plan and the governance structures of universities. It was argued that universities should be at the forefront of leading change as institutions of higher learning are at the forefront of advancing public good. Universities need to have good governance



structures, which are intended to ensure accountability and good governance at all times. It was interesting to note the influence of entrenched institutional cultures and how it impacted on the governance structures at the different institutions.

#### *6.7.4.1.1 Governance and Institutional Compliance*

The need for good governance and institutional compliance by managers and employees were regarded as fundamental basic requirements. A sound foundation gave rise to sound institutional practices. The NMU had a good committee and governance structure in accordance with the HE Act but lacked good implementation of legislative requirements. The administrative autonomy of universities is set out in the paper by Bunting et al. (2010) which outlined the new governance and set the national higher education goals. It is interesting to note the adapted implementation of these principles. Participants at the NMU indicated that there appeared to be basic compliance, but that the depth of implementation remained a challenge. It was stated that:

*“We have good structures, but there are implementation gaps. With a limited system, we should have the solutions. In corporate entities, there are limits. You either do it this way or you face the consequences. You get fired or are held to account.” [Participant NMU: AD]*

The DHET prescribed fundamental requirements was discussed in terms of institutional governance reporting frameworks. From the interviews, it was demonstrated that these differed between universities. It was felt that university councils needed to be held accountable for the lack of compliance.

There was agreement that changes in the world of work needed to be addressed at NMU. This was supported by the following statement:

*“We do not have strong guidelines in terms of frameworks and policies. A strong orientation in this respect is starting to emerge and is guided by our experience in dealing with such situations, backed up with the theoretical knowledge-and the compliance too.” [Participant RU, SD]*

Ineffective policies give rise to increased risk for institutions, which must be mitigated. This is reflected in the type of institutional policies, processes and procedures developed and utilised. To change this around, sound transformative governance principles are required. Zulu and Parumasur (2009), highlight the fact that organisations must guide against being characterised by ineffective and poor governance.

#### *6.7.4.1.2 Constitutional Alignment*

There is a common understanding of the role of legislation regarding people management practices. Legislation must be respected and upheld at all times. The constitution as the supreme law of the land, provides the protection of the rights of every person. There is concern about how councils were allowed to uphold unethical practices. It was stated that:

*“In terms of the institution and its statutes and its regulations etc., it’s a very tenuous situation because it depends on who is taking the decisions and on the context”. [Participant RU: US]*

It was felt that to a certain degree, decisions taken undermined the prescripts of the Constitution. This deviates from the work of those who argued that adherence to the Constitution and other legislation are indicative of a pledge to the advancement of educational and social transformation and development (Badat and Sayed, 2009).

#### *6.7.4.1.3 Leadership Ethics and Experience*

At RU, there seemed to be a sense of fatigue about the leadership, ethics and accountability. It was stated that:

*“It talks to the leadership style, the ethics and the personal values of such a person. But if you look at another area, another manager takes a decision, people are happy, and they agree, and they embrace the decision. That’s my experience at the university”. [Participant RU: CP]*

At NMU, it was felt that there is a thin line between compliance and ethics. It was stated that:

*“They may be unintentionally compromising their integrity. From an ecological perspective, policies can be compromised and create an environment of unethical conduct”. [Participant NMU: BM]*

It was felt that leaders amongst the different levels of staff are not recognised. There should be recognition for inculcating leadership capabilities throughout the institution. At RU, the top management, except for one, came through the ranks at the university. The experience of the leadership was considered a contributing factor which impacted on decisions taken at RU. In this respect, a very elementary approach to decision-making was undertaken, thereby underscoring a limited approach which is devoid of proper consideration. It was stated that:

*“Employees are patient at universities, unlike other sectors. They are extremely tolerant of the shortcomings of executive managers. With EM’s like the ones we have, there would have been strikes and shutdowns if this were another industry”. [Participant LN: RU]*

At RU there was much consternation regarding the manner in which people were placed in higher level positions, prior to 2015. Individuals were earmarked for promotion and advancement opportunities without these posts being advertised. The implication of this is that individuals were given an opportunity to and did not compete for opportunities. It was stated that:

*“Having worked with HR and Unions, you should be mindful that if you adhere to the policies and legislation, you would be unpopular. Academics ask you to compromise your values, your ethics, and if you hold firm to your beliefs, etc., then you are labelled”. [Participant SP: RU]*

Executive Management has a role to play in ensuring terms of efficient HR delivery which include rapid turnaround times and effective systems and processes that are devoid of discrimination (Hall et al., 2012, Schuler and Jackson, 2008).

#### *6.7.4.1.4 Just Administrative Action*

Administrative justice must underpin decision-making. At RU, it was incredibly difficult to get Council to address inequalities in the deeply entrenched practices. This is

attributed to the composition of Council, which included a high number of white males. The most marginalised, which were the unskilled and semi-skilled workers, were still treated poorly, despite many efforts to remedy this. It was stated that:

*“Lower level workers do not have group life benefits. They are treated abysmally and have to retire when they turn 60. In an untransformed staff structure at RU, it is even difficult to remedy this. Council members themselves have become a blockage”. [RU Participant: CP]*

It is interesting to note that EEA was introduced to eradicate unfair labour practice as a source of equity in the workplace, but has not been upheld (Van Niekerk, 2015). It then raises the question about enforcement of legislation.

#### *6.7.4.1.5 Theoretical Knowledge*

Theoretical HR knowledge is necessary; however, this required practical experience as well in order to create and provide an efficient HR function and associated services. The fast paced world of work has a direct impact on organisational behaviour which has a direct correlation on organisational dynamics. Participants indicated that HR consultants often seemed overwhelmed when they joined the universities. This led to a discussion on the preparedness of HR practitioners to meet the needs of organisations. It was suggested that HR undergraduate programmes may need to be reviewed for its relevance. It was stated that:

*“The advice given to departments etc. is very important. Pro-active advice must be given. This can only occur if HR consultants are experienced in their areas of work”. [Participant: NMU: AD]*

#### *6.7.4.2 Question 14: Effective People Management Practices*

##### *6.7.4.2.1 Management Style*

The dichotomy of support and academic functions demonstrate that decision making is undertaken in isolation. Strong, visible and ethical leadership is required to bridge the divide. Relevant experience, fair adherence to policies, administrative justice and good management skills are all required. The management style at RU needs to change. The flexible, ad-hoc approach to decision making and delivery of outcomes

requires close monitoring and review. There is need for transparency in both the strategic and operational functioning of the university. It was stated that:

*“The motto of the university is that support staff are only there to support the academic project. Even at the Top Management level there is the Academic and Support side. But it does boil down to only one person who is not even our VC”. [Participant RU: TN]*

HR employees are often overworked and overwhelmed because they not only have to undertake their own work but need to fulfil the management role and pick up where line managers drop the ball. While HRM is increasingly becoming recognised for its strategic value and role in management and acknowledgement, there must be overall cognition of the need to understand, plan and effect relevant and efficient people management practices (Sajeevanie, 2015).

#### *6.7.4.2.2 Comparison with Corporate Entities*

The need for universities to find solutions to impediments is recognised. Higher education lagged behind their counterparts in the private sector in terms of their management practices. The practices used are more relevant and in line with legislative requirements. It was stated that:

*“There are limits in corporate entities. Employees are expected to follow policy and procedure or face the consequences. Dismissals and accountability are upheld”. [NMU Participant: SN]*

#### *6.7.4.2.3 Lack of Motivation and Incentive*

The need for effective management models received considerable attention during discussions at both universities. A respondent who was a member of the ‘Middle Management Forum’ and the ‘Steering Committee’ of RU, indicated that #FeesMustFall had shown that academic and support staff have a different agenda, and there was evidence of this, thereby suggesting that there could be lack of cohesion among groups, which should be addressed. It was stated that:

*“For all the groups of stakeholders in the institution, it is highly tenuous at the moment. It is on extremely shaky ground”. [Participant RU: CP]*

#### 6.7.4.2.4 HR and Union Relations

Stakeholders play a critical role in organisations in South Africa. It is good practice to consult the multiple stakeholders that represent employees in the organisation. The relationship between the unions and HR are known to be tenuous and concern was expressed about the power that unions had in universities.

At RU, significant progress had been made by HR in terms of eradicating practices which historically marginalised the union which had a significant number of semi and unskilled employees as their constituency base. It was stated that:

*“An example of achieving our strategic goals is the signing of a new Recognition Agreement with our Unions. Previously the Recognition Agreement was discriminatory”.*

*[Participant: RU: TB]*

*It was not constitutional, in that it did not allow for freedom of association. The new Recognition Agreement recognised the need for Freedom of Association in terms of employees belonging to a union of their choice, and this was revisited”.* *[Participant: RU: CP]*

The NMU appeared to be characterised by high conflict with unions. At NMU, it was felt that a certain union had become engaged in politicking based on race, which was a concerning factor, thereby blurring the lines of objectivity. It was stated that:

*“The relationship between unions and university management is not good. But another issue is the racial politics that unions engage in.”*

*[Participant NMU. SH]*

The HR function has a central role to play in managing relations between different stakeholder functions. This is due to the nature of the function and the many compliance related matters it must attend to. There are also different contextual matters that must always be attended to. This is echoed by Farnham (2010) who advised that various factors impact on the HRM and associated practices requiring change. The HR function, in order to meet the needs of a changing workforce, must take cognisance of the need to create an integrated approach (Govender, 2013)

#### 6.7.4.2.5 Line Management Responsibilities

There was agreement that responsible leadership is required. Leaders who manage, inspire and advance others are required. Inspirational leaders who can be followed, at this time, were considered few and far between. It was stated that:

*“In 2015, I wrote to the VC indicating that no leadership was being shown. I requested a broader stakeholder coalition meeting. That was the first time ever that it happened”. [Participant: RU: US]*

It was felt that employees raised their issues with HR rather than going to their managers.

*“I don’t think that line managers are being trained as people managers” [Participant: RU: SD]*

Avoidance, comparison between management styles, comparison with corporate entities were key themes. The focus on solutions and *student focus* was another theme. Other key themes included a lack of motivation and incentive, poor relationship with unions and responsibilities of line management.

#### 6.7.4.3 Question 15 Management and Stakeholder Relations

The lack of motivation, incentives and poor relationship with unions emerged as sub-themes.

##### 6.7.4.3.1 Leadership

At the NMU, participants felt there was too much emphasis on leadership. The need for continuous conversation with stakeholders is not happening. The crucial implementers, the line managers are not able to implement these policies, as they are unfamiliar with the requirements. It was stated that:

*“At this particular juncture, we are operating from a competitive basis. There’s a disjuncture when 1 person in a department/faculty is deemed to have excellent performance, but the department /faculty performs poorly. For the dean to perform excellently, people must have also excelled. Something is remiss with that”. [Participant: NMU: BM]*

The need for accountability pertaining to the responsibilities of line management was set out. It was stated that:

*“Ethical leadership requires the institution to focus on motivating people. If you are going to have a transparent process as mentioned earlier, then academics and HOD’s need to be held accountable, as do all the other sectors, through HR. And the corollary to that is that the HR Director position be put into an Executive Management Structure – which is not the case”. [Participant RU: RvN]*

A further concern was the under-representation of women in leadership. This referred to the few women in executive positions and on Council. While this was a concern at both universities, the NMU has two women in leadership positions at the deputy vice-chancellor level.

#### *6.7.4.3.2 Stakeholder Engagement*

Good governance requires consultation with stakeholders. At NMU, participants indicated that the relationship with students pre #FeesMustFall, was satisfactory. While the relationship became strained during the protest action, it was recognised that the management did an excellent job. Although parents had called for the police and army, university management understood the climate and the history of the country and decided to shut down the university. In comparison to other universities, the situation was managed well. It was stated that:

*“Sometimes processes are just here to rubber stamp. The only thing I can do is make sure that the minutes note that I don’t agree. I can report to my constituency that I raised my concern, I did not agree, but the decision was taken. It is not only a union issue, it is also happening on the leadership level, where you put your point across and it is nullified”. [Participant NMU: BM]*

The issue of stakeholder engagement and stakeholders consisting of management emerged respectively. It was raised by one person that a top-down approach was adopted while another two felt there was an unwillingness to change. The relationship between unions and university management was not good at the NMU. Unions needed to consider the financial position and sustainability of the university before making



demands. Line managers indicated that they often divert these matters to HR, for problem-solving rather than dealing with these matters. It was stated that:

*“At NMU, people attend conferences, but don’t share what they learn.*

*Some people in the institution do know the legislation, some don’t.”*

*[Participant: NMU: BM]*

The need for sensitivity regarding the content of information must always be considered. Consultation is about the exchange of views as a two-way process and not merely information sharing. Planning and decision-making are central tenets for successful universities. It must be noted that communication, consultation, clarity and openness are fundamental components in the decision-making processes of universities (Butt, 2013).

#### *6.7.4.3.4 Review of Committee Structure(s)*

There was acknowledgment of the importance of the committee structure system at universities, in terms of what is required to satisfy DHET requirements. RU is undertaking a review of its committee structures to bring it line with good governance stipulations. The adoption of King IV has introduced a new, critical reflection of the way things are done at the university. There is little or no information regarding the terms of reference and composition of most committee structures. It was stated that:

*“The top structure needs to change. Major decisions regarding people in the Top Management are endorsed by themselves. No resolutions are noted”. [Participant RU: HS]*

RU does not have an HR Committee of Council; however, a ‘Remuneration Committee’ was in place. Further, HR is not part of the executive structure, although the head of HR post was deemed to be an executive management post. This was unlike NMU which had an HR and Remuneration Committee of Council and the HR executive was part of the executive management structure. Employees felt that the university undermined the role and undervalued the scope of function of the HR division at the university through the lack of representation on critical institutional structures. It was stated that:

*“Since 2016, EE, Skills Development and a Protest Management Committee have been implemented. This is encouraging as we are*

*seeing a new commitment and the introduction of a new way of doing things, based on transparency, consultation”. [Participant RU: US]*

At NMU, the committee structures and their composition are well administered by the Registrar’s division. Clear terms of reference were available. It was further indicated that a clear difference can be determined if an unpopular individual in a certain area took a decision, there would be a reaction from certain staff members, due to the identity of the decision maker. Institutional structures, the matching of individuals to jobs and the required competencies of those jobs, required attention. It was asked:

*“Does the current organisational structure still hold relevance? At what point does that get tackled head on?” [Participant: NMU: UJ]*

### **6.7.5 Research Objective 5: Discussion of Findings**

The final research objective of the study examined the challenges facing HR departments in higher education.

#### *6.7.5.1 Question 1: HR Practices in a Complex Higher Education System*

This question sought to evaluate the HR practices used by universities in terms of their relevance. This question interrogated whether current HR practices met the needs of a complex higher education system. There was general agreement as to the complexity of the HE system, of which the pre-1994 and post-1994 complexities foreground the current challenges facing the sector. The equity perspective, is informed by macro changes, legal changes, which have been introduced by government, the HE Act and issues of restructuring HE.

##### *6.7.5.1.1 Role Adaptation*

The workings of HE and the role of the HR environment and its complexities must be understood. This is necessary in order to prepare for and ensure that HR practices are adapted to meet the needs within a changing environment. The change of roles and increased complexity indicate recognition of the complexities of HR and the HE system. There was cognition too, of the slow pace of transformation at both universities. The need for transformation was important due to the pre-1994

segregation laws which characterised South Africa. The institutional profiles in terms of the staff complement reflect this.

#### *6.7.5.1.2 Roles and Expectations of HR*

It was expressed by a few participants that HR Practitioners are often drawn from the corporate sector and as a result do not understand the complexity of HE. HR processes were considered to be overcomplicated processes which some managers perceived as being redundant as these were considered to be ‘cumbersome and increasingly irrelevant’. This was indicative of the gap of understanding between users of HR processes and the complexity of HRM. There was agreement however, that streamlined HR processes would benefit all staff. It was stated that:

*“Many of our managers come from an academic background or through the system. They don’t always understand people management processes.” [Participant: AR: NMU]*

At NMU, animosity that prevailed during the #FeesMustFall protest period is still felt at the university. In addition, some felt that a lot of victimisation occurred during the protests. This resulted in deep levels of fragmentation and contestation between different groups of staff. HR is often central to providing information and bridging the gap in terms of sharing of information. It was stated that:

*“Whites indicated that such issues do not affect them. The black people were saying you need to rally behind the students. The white people were saying you are wasting our time, let our kids come and study.” [Participant: NMU: BM]*

It was felt that HR has to clean up much of the time. When line managers created problems with staff, HR had to intervene. It often degenerates into a blame game and managers are not held accountable for the problems they create with staff. HE is a central facilitator for developmental change and is a necessity for societal transformation (CHE, 2015).

#### *6.7.5.1.3 Reactivity vs Pro-activity*

The HR function must be agile, anticipate and plan for changes. This was considered an important and necessary skill. There was concern that HR functions were not able

to pro-actively plan for change. Reasons included the inability to do so; lack of capability and lack of institutional or executive support. It was stated that:

*“During protest action, it emerged that the Top Management were aware of issues with the Sexual Harassment Policy. Nothing was done and then became reactive when the student protest action began. We can’t do that as individual functions and departments when we have so little support from executives”. [Participant RU: US]*

A key consideration related to the capabilities for enhancing institutional development and institutional transformation, is the need for HR functions to develop organisational capabilities. This is supported by Schultz (2010) who indicates the need to develop critical HR competencies to facilitate transformation in universities.

It was stated that:

*“It is a fact that different HR Practitioners may give different answers, but this is often because of the context or case.” [Participant NMU: MD]*

#### *6.7.5.1.4 Academic Needs*

There was acknowledgement that academics exercised a certain ownership around knowledge creation. However, while their importance in terms of contributing to the creation and dissemination of knowledge was recognised, there was agreement that academics demonstrated a lack of awareness for within systems and within established policies and processes. Academic independence is seen to be central and other administrative functions are considered subservient. The need for sensitive engagement when interacting with different sectors within the university, e.g. academics was raised as a concern as there appeared to be tension with academics who impeded transformation efforts. This resulted in undermining efforts toward a cohesive and unified corporate identity.

#### *6.7.5.1.5 Change Management*

The need for effective change management approaches was raised at both universities. The nature of the changing environment that universities found themselves in required a concerted team effort and appropriate plans to be

implemented. It was expressed that university leadership do not possess cutting-edge skills required to lead universities through periods of change. It was stated that:

*“Universities must set an example of good practice. We are creating the responsible citizenship and responsible resources for our country. We should be at the forefront of leading change.” [Participant: NMU: AR]*

The need for universities to be open to change was agreed upon. There was consensus over the need for all individuals in the university to be mindful of the need for change and that management and employees need to embrace it.

*“The NMU is on the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of merger. It’s been through pre-merger, merger, then post-merger phase, which now includes the transition to Nelson Mandela University. The merger took place, but transformation did not.” [Participant: NMU: BM]*

Barber et al. (2013) refer to the need for radical transformation in the HE sector, emphasising the need for administrative staff to be valued. It was stated that:

*“Universities are at the helm of research, trying to find solutions to impediments. However, we are stuck with old systems that serve little purpose”. [Participant: RU: SvdM]*

#### 6.7.5.2 Question 16: The need for Change

This question enquired about the need for change at universities.

##### 6.7.5.2.1 Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation

There was consensus that the university needed to inculcate a culture of performance linked to accountability, monitoring and evaluation. Institution change required identifiable drivers and custodians. The advancement of change needed to be monitored and senior managers need to account for their successes and failures. The performance of senior employees would be tracked and monitored. It was stated that:

*“In corporate entities, there are limits. Managers and employees face the consequences. They are held to account. In universities, people are always looking for loopholes to look at alternatives as a way of circumventing processes”. [Participant: NMU: AR]*

#### 6.7.5.2.2 Crisis Management

At NMU session, the management of the #FeesMustFall crisis predicated much discussion. The protest action led to a total disruption of the university. Classes, operations and the academic calendar were disrupted. Access to the university was made difficult and students and staff were caught up in the violent protests. Participants indicated that these factors created divisions among the leadership team on how the protest action should have been handled. From a student and staff perspective, it unfortunately brought out elements of a race issue, with parents of white students taking the university to court and staff became polarised in their support of or against the #FeesMustFall movement.

*“The relationship with students pre #FeesMustFall, was ok. I think the management handled the situation very well. The situation mixed policies and politics. The management did an excellent job. Parents had called for the police and army. The university management understood the climate and the history of the country. In comparison to other universities, the situation was managed well”. [Participant: NMU: SH]*

At the NMU, VC was away on a leave of absence during this critical time and the acting VC faced significant criticism on the way the protest action was handled. Participants acknowledged the magnitude of the crisis and indicated that there was little appreciation for the efforts and strides taken by the Acting VC. Instead of recognising the leadership skill of the Acting DVC, a woman, much criticism was levelled against her. It was stated that:

*“The university is still largely white male, and part of the boom generation, which will exit the system, also brings with it another dynamic, that of leaving of gap of skills in the academic area. The HR Model from a development perspective, is limiting”.*

*[Participant: NMU: BM]*

It was felt that the race-related issues at NMU required urgent change management as matters had taken an unnecessary turn.

#### 6.7.5.2.3 Need to Build Instructional Culture and New Leadership

The leadership style, the ethics and the personal values of leaders were discussed. It was agreed that leadership should take responsibility and be accountable. The need for a new leadership style was raised. Where skills were obsolete and irrelevant, new leadership is needed. The protest action in 2015 revealed the lack of an inclusive leadership to navigate the university during the crisis. It was clear that the structure of the university needed to be re-considered in terms of its appropriateness to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century university. Recommendations included the need to advance bold leadership. The institutional climate is not conducive to retaining people and needed redress or else it would resemble filling the proverbial bucket with holes. It was stated that:

*“We have actually given too much authority to leadership, assuming that the leadership should also be driving change.” [Participant NMU: BM]*

#### 6.7.5.2.4 Strategic planning

There was common agreement that a unified global-vision and mission is required. This would assist in the university being focused on the delivery of its strategic objectives. The need for periodic reviews to be conducted was raised. It was stated that:

*“There was a feeling that lack of efficiency in respect of communication was a major problem, that individuals played the blame game. There is a need for proper processes and procedures to be implemented”. [Participant: RU. TB]*

The need for effective line functions was raised as an important factor. Line managers needed rigorous upskilling in HR matters. The lack of this awareness and capability led to gaps in information and a heavy reliance on the HR Division to provide support to employees. The line function must work to support and be aligned to the priorities and in so doing, must strategically execute their functions in a manner that supports larger institutional business strategies. The HR function strives to generate a balance between the strategic and operational requirements (Ulrich, 1997). The lack of information led to HR not being able to provide relevant support and advice. The lack

of accountability was cited as an institutional practice as individuals avoided taking responsibility for decision-making. The world of work is dynamic and changing fast. Technology and Human Resources are two aspects that are constantly changing. It was stated that:

*“It is important to contextualise the difficulties that existed in the university. One is around leadership, who holds the power. What are the values that should prevail in the institution, especially when it comes to position and perceptions with regards to academics, their roles etc. and the support divisions.” [Participant: RU: US]*

## **6.8. Summary of Findings for the Research Objectives**

### **6.8.1 Summary of Findings for Research Objective One**

The aim of this research objective was to ascertain if universities used HR models that are relevant and effective to employees' needs.

Alignment between the HR and institutional strategy was considered a priority, and by way of extension, alignment to the vision and mission of the university was deemed to be important. The creation of strategic priorities elicited the most comments while lack of integration and communication were considered areas for redress and it was suggested that integration and planning were not a priority.

There is a need to retain employees with critical skill sets within universities (Samuel and Chipunza, 2013). While this includes academics, the resistance to advancing a positive institutional environment and cohesion rather than fragmentation, requires urgent attention at both universities. There was consensus among participants' that cultural change is required and that employees should be valued.

The institutional culture at both NMU and RU was considered to be fragmented. Birds (2015), speaks to the nexus between 'professional identity and organisational culture' in the university environment, and sets out the transitional nature of roles, responsibilities and relationships that exist within it, over time.



There is a need for well-grounded and systematic policy and governance frameworks. It is incumbent to refer to Burnes, et al. (2016), who advise that there is a strong correlation between institutional leadership and change.

De la Rey (2015) refers to the purpose of re-visioning and re-structuring of the HE system, which was to advance joint authority over HEI-established programmes and address discrimination, representation and equal access, in a transparent democratic society. The need for well-grounded and systematic policy and governance frameworks are raised by Birds (2015), whilst De Silva (2012), highlights the need for consistency between alignment of the institution's business strategy and the institution's values.

Regarding communication at the institutional level, there was overwhelming consensus on the need for on-going communication. Both universities had well-resourced marketing and communication departments and budgets. This appeared however, to be oriented/focused on the communication of institutional matters. The departmental/divisional entities' communication, appear to be the responsibility of the individual departmental functions. The academic staff component present challenges in universities.

RU does not have proper processes from an employment contractual management perspective. In addition, management and accountability in terms of performance were absent. This was attributed to the collegial model used at RU. Participants indicated that this was merely a smokescreen to uphold the past practices based on discriminatory and protectionist agendas. The appointment of a new Registrar was made with a mandate to overhaul outdated and irrelevant practices.

### **6.8.2 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Two**

- This research objective sought to determine if HR practitioners are appropriately qualified and equipped with relevant competencies and knowledge required to support HRM outcomes at an institutional level. The themes that emerged were:
- The need for appointments to be aligned with institutional values.

- Appointments to be knowledge driven.
- The complexity and need for refocus on the present and opportunities for development of staff emerged.
- Communication and performance management needed attention.

### **6.8.3 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Three**

Research objective three evaluated the impact of transformative leadership on HR systems in the sector. The impact of these 'irregular' appointments had far reaching consequences for the institution currently. Ethical leadership and values based leadership were discussed as being necessities at both institutions. Ethical leadership emerged during the discussion as being fundamental in developing and upholding effective people management decisions.

At RU, participants were scathing of the lack of transformation and change efforts. The dismay at the institution not having a strategic plan was significant. Participants at both universities agreed that advancing institutional change was important. It was interesting to note that employees felt let down by the institution in terms of creating workplaces free of discrimination. The need for effective leadership to drive change was articulated as being an urgent need. At both institutions, participants indicated that humanistic people practices are required.

It was generally felt that little advancement had taken place in terms of institutional culture at both universities. As a result, it was clear that institutional cultural imperatives needed urgent attention and prioritisation at both universities. This is supported by Habib (2016) who reflects upon the state of racially fragmented and untransformed student and staff bodies with the South African HE institutions to meet the challenges of being responsive to both the national agenda and international competitiveness (Habib, 2016). There is an intricate link between change and organisational leadership, indicative of the need for effective planning and commitment at the leadership level (Burnes et al., 2016).

#### 6.8.4 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Four

The objective was to establish if social justice principles are incorporated into existing HR functions to meet the new context of higher education HR demands and requirements. The historical legacy of separate development, racism and discriminatory practices emerged as social justice principles which required redress. It was evident that both institutions were grappling with the need to address fundamental issues and that the HR function was tasked to deal with these. As a result, the HR function had a formidable task within an environment that was not supportive of such efforts.

The nature of universities made the commensurate change and transformation efforts highly contentious. At RU, participants were scathing of the lack of transformation and change efforts. The dismay at the institution not having a strategic plan was significant. Participants at both universities agreed on the importance of advancing institutional change. It was interesting to note that employees felt let down by the institution in terms of creating workplaces free of discrimination. Regarding effective people management practices, it emerged that there was a deficit of appropriate skills among line managers. The university was required to come together to find solutions in a focused manner, aligned and held together by a common strategy. Ethical leadership, good governance and compliance were highlighted during discussions. There was general agreement about the need for strong guidelines, frameworks and policies to be in place to inculcate and foster good governance. Compliance was essential to ensure ethical leadership was in place.

Communication during the #FeesMustFall protests was considered dismal and ineffective, adding to the chaos and agitation among staff members. It appeared that the #FeesMustFall protest brought forth many underlying issues and deepened the fragmentation between management, academics, professional and support services staff. The recurrent issue of academic leadership was raised once again, with the recommendation that relevant training be provided; a concern at both universities.

Benefits, effective and visible recruitment, conditions of service and career development and advancement opportunities are named as critical requirements to attract and retain academic staff (Dubosc and Kelo, 2011).

Habib (2016) proclaims that the task of universities in South Africa is the need to uphold two fundamental principles pertaining to the 'executive and strategic operations'. The first principle is as set out in the South African Constitution, which makes reference to the role of public institutions in addressing past inequalities inherited from apartheid. The other is as set out in the declaration of significant universities. Habib (2016) reinforces the need for the executive of the university to enhance both primacies concurrently.

### **6.8.5 Summary of Findings for Research Objective Five**

This objective focused on understanding the challenges facing HR departments in higher education. Both focus groups acknowledged the urgent need for change.

Accountability monitoring and evaluation, crisis management, internal management and skills audit emerged as the first themes. The need to build a culture of performance, the need to build instructional culture, new leadership and not having consultants i.e. work should be done internally, are other key themes. Further, a review of structure, policies, strategic planning and a unified vision and mission were raised as themes. It was also felt that the university needs to address changes in the world of work. This was acutely felt at RU where there was a lack of effective leadership and proper governance procedures in place.

There was an awareness of the dynamism that characterised the nature of work in universities, which had a direct impact on the roles and increasing complexities in the HE environment. There was consensus among both focus groups, for universities to inculcate a culture of performance. There was a perception that a significant degree of latitude was granted to employees at universities, which was detrimental to the overall functioning of the university. At NMU, a performance management system was in place for executive managers. Performance was linked to a monetary value. RU did not have a performance management system for executives. There was no evidence of management meetings, resolutions or accountability.

There was agreement that a new leadership style was needed. It was felt that contemporary workplace trends and practices were not clearly understood by senior managers. This was far more evident in the RU focus group, where a tangible and pervasive sense of frustration was evident, regarding the current leadership cohort. At NMU, there was a sense of excitement about the change in leadership, which would be heralded by the incoming Vice Chancellor.

The need to transition from a dependency on consultants to supplementary utilisation was discussed. It was felt that the required capabilities were dependent on effective structures and appropriate skills. For these to be considered and addressed, it was necessary for a periodic review of the structures as well skill audits to be conducted. The NMU has good governance structures. The institutional policy repository is well maintained by the Registrar's Division. There was evidence of policies being updated on a regular basis. Executive management committee meetings and extended management committee meetings are held regularly. The meetings are appropriately recorded and minuted. There is a clear identification of the senior and executive management structure, thereby ensuring tracking and accountability. This is explained by O'Brien and Linehan (2014) who advocated that HR practitioners contribute to the effectual management of the employment relationship which remains 'controversial territory'.

Fair and ethical practices were raised as non-negotiable requirements. The lack of transformation and the issues created in that respect was explored further. The similarity lay in the perception of unethical practices in academia being perpetuated. There was consensus at both institutions that fair adherence to policies needed to be upheld. The literature reinforces the need for relevant policy development which provides input on ethics, which employees should internalise (Valentine and Godkin, 2016, Valentine, Greller and Richtermeyer, 2006). A strong connection between employees and organisations is forged when the latter demonstrate and give effect to ethical principles (Valentine and Godkin, 2016, Valentine et al., 2006).

## 6.9. Conclusion

The lack of cohesion in the university was raised as a challenge by participants at both universities. Team cohesion and institutional capability were considered important organisational requirements to advance institutional good and its performance. To this end, institutional cohesion, stability and collaboration were essential aspects required to build the institutional culture at both NMU and RU. The issue of cohesion has emerged as a critical theme during the focus group sessions at both universities. The need for collaborative effort and partnerships to give effect to HR priorities was considered as a desired outcome as HRM has far reaching consequences on the entire institution. This is supported by Lawler et al. (2003; 2009), who highlight the value added by HR departments through playing a business partnership role (Lawler and Boudreau, 2009, Lawler and Mohrman, 2003).

The findings are commensurate with Becker et al. (2006) and Cania, (2014) who advance that there should be alignment between the HR management system and the institutional strategic plan, the purpose of which, is to ensure the most effective institutional and people performance (Becker and Huselid, 2006, Cania, 2014). This is reinforced by Schultz (2010) who agrees that demands placed on HR departments in the higher education sector demand that HR responds to identified needs and call for HR to be guided by relevant national frameworks and legislation (Schultz, 2010).

A recurring theme was that of the role that academics played in undermining HR and institutional requirements, which participants felt contributed to dysfunctionality. An effective policy framework emerged as an important aspect for proper institutional functioning, as it was felt that managers and employees would be aware of the requirements and expectations from the universities. Participants raised issues regarding policy adherence, HR capability, ethics and conduct. The need for a compliance-based HR approach was unanimously agreed upon. It was noted that in order to uphold a compliance-based approach in HR, the commensurate skills in interpreting legislation was required.

This ends the data analysis covered in Chapters five and six which results were triangulated giving a basis to record recommendations and conclusions in Chapter seven.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Recommendations and Conclusions

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study as set out in the previous chapters. The findings recommendations and conclusions are set out below.

#### 7.2 Overview of Study

Chapter one set out the remit and a brief introduction to the study. The background, research focus of the study and the research methodology, were briefly discussed thereafter. This was followed by the merits of the research; its proposed contribution and the conceptual framework. A brief introduction to the literature and the research protocol followed.

Chapters two and three set out the literature review for the study, which was vast. The limited literature on the HR models and systems for the SADC/sub-Saharan Africa region resulted in an expansive literature review. Chapter two set out the theoretical framework of the HRM function, which entailed an overview and development of HRM. Strategic HRM was discussed with an overview of HR models; followed by an analysis of HR models in South African universities. HR competencies; qualifications, professional membership and ethics, were presented thereafter. The impact of HRM advancements in the South African context concluded Chapter two. The second part of the literature review was set out in Chapter three and commenced with an analytical overview of HR compliance. The role of HR in advancing social justice was presented. Social justice imperatives in universities, re-visioning HR in the HE sector and the demands on HR in the HE sector were discussed. A discussion on the international framework regarding social justice, HRM systems and a transformative social justice agenda were addressed.

Thereafter, an analysis of the development of universities in South Africa; HR transformation, the related challenges and transformational leadership, were discussed in Chapter four. The development of universities and history of universities in South Africa pre-1994 and the reorganisation of the HE system in South Africa post-1994 were discussed. Challenges facing HR departments in HE; the role of HR in

advancing transformation, transformative leadership and leadership in universities was then covered. The chapter concluded with an overview of the HR strategy and planning.

Chapter four presented the research methodology undertaken for the study. The purpose and objectives of the study; a discussion of the conceptual/theoretical framework and a presentation of the mixed methods undertaken was explained. The design elements; the research setting, rational and data collection were presented. The chapter further set out the data analysis process; the ethical considerations of the study as well as the reliability and validity of the study. The limitations, relevance and usefulness of the study formed the concluding section of chapter four.

The first part of the analysis, discussion and findings followed, in chapter five, where the presentation and discussion of the quantitative outcomes of the study were set out. In chapter six, the qualitative outcomes and discussion were presented. Finally, this chapter sets out the summary of the findings and recommendations of the study.

## **7.3 Findings**

### **7.3.1 From the Literature**

The literature indicates that the field of HRM has been beset by many challenges. Central to this is the move from the traditional administrative role to the strategic role it currently occupies in contemporary organisations. The impact of this is the onerous impact it has had on the HR function. The onerous impact refers to the need to balance the multiplicity of demands placed on the function, from the pre-employment phase, to the contracting phase, moving to the employee engagement process phase and including the HR processes regarding terminations.

Other contributory factors to the current challenges facing the HRM function including the need for repositioning the HRM function, was raised as a critical issue. The positioning of the HRM function in terms of its strategic position and the need for interacting at and providing advice and input at the strategic level need to be considered. The value add of the HR function should not be diminished or limited.



Further, the need for the skills and expertise of HR professionals to be enhanced to meet the changing needs of HRM to deliver a good service to employees and to meet the organisational needs emerged strongly.

The review of curricula to be responsive to the changing needs of HRM was also came to the fore. This is not surprising in the higher education context, given that re-curriculation is a key theme and an area of priority in many universities.

The increasing pressure placed on the HRM function from a legislative compliance perspective requires attention. The literature in Chapter 2 gave an overview of the myriad laws that need to be considered in matters pertaining to the employment relationship. In this chapter, the ILO principles which are devolved and have an impact on a localised country basis, was set out.

The mismatch between HRM models and the current needs of the workplace as well as the changing needs of the HE sector also came to the fore. The theoretical framework as set out in chapter 2 indicated the various models and theories that give effect to HRM practice in South Africa. It is disconcerting to note the lack of a localised model(s) which is could consider specific contextual based factors. This would be an important consideration in the analysis of the relevance of the international models which are used in South Africa. The key questions relating to the relevance of these include, but are not limited to, as indicated above, the unique contextual factors, which may consider the historical background and associated legacies of South Africa, the past and current policy milieu, the labour movement (historical formation, contribution to the struggle, structure and emerging factionalism), socio-economic factors, intra-organisational factors. The literature clearly indicated a gap in the adoption of extraneous models. A key question to consider is how the current challenges facing the HR function and HR practitioners on an international basis are exacerbated with the local context when there is no HR model to guide the HR practice, processes and systems.

The link between HRM systems, values and leadership was another factor that was considered. The nexus between these aspects/variables are inextricable, as each is

influenced by and will impact on the other. The literature indicates that a good balance must be maintained to ensure optimal functioning at an organisational level.

The limited literature pertaining to HR systems in sub-Saharan Africa must be noted. While literature on aspects of HRM was located, the dearth of contributions to the field of HR system in South Africa and in the SADC region, was evident. There is a large body of literature and a heavy reliance on international literature on HRM. This is indicative of the need for more empirical research on HRM to be produced locally.

### **7.3.2 From the Quantitative Research**

The need for a relevant HR Model emerged as a key finding. The need for a HRM Model and the effective utilisation therein was agreed upon in terms of its central role in linking the HRM strategy to the institutional strategy. This linkage was considered important in the advancement, setting and finalisation of institutional objectives. It was noted that there needed to be a strong link between the two.

It was also interesting to note that an effective HR model was considered central to and should be used for, effective planning at an institutional level. This is indicative for the need for a cohesive planning approach to be undertaken with regard to planning for HR at an institutional level, but that the plan needs to be operationalised through the use of an appropriate model. There was agreement that a key limitation was the lack of an applicable, relevant, South African based HR Model.

The quantitative data indicated that with regards to legislative compliance, it was felt that the HR departments were committed to giving effect to legal requirements. It was clear that employees expected the HR function to deliver on this important responsibility. Concern was raised about the line and academic managers' ability to comply with legislation. This indicates the need for all managers to have an understanding and awareness of HR policies, processes and procedures. The capacitation of line managers to ensure effective people management was another factor that came to the fore.

In addition, the alignment of institutional and HR practice was considered important, highlighting to need for a 'golden thread' to run through the organisation, in order to

ensure that the most important resources, an organisation's employees, are considered at all times. The divergence that exists between institutional and HR practices can have far-reaching implications for the organisation.

Of interest, was that HR Professionals were considered to have limited capacity to interpret legislation, although it was considered an important skill. Given the heavily legislated labour environment, it is important for all HR Professionals to understand and be able to interpret legislation at a basic level. However, it was acknowledged that the HR function placed a high priority on legislative compliance. The requirement of HR Professionals to keep abreast of legislative changes and changes in the sub-fields in HR was considered necessary.

The alignment between the HR Plan and Institutional Plan was highlighted as being important to ensure a cohesive strategic alignment. HR planning was considered a priority as it provided guidance on the objectives to be set and worked toward. There was agreement that an HR Plan should be developed and monitored.

The issue of HR re-curriculation by way of review was raised on the basis that new graduates appeared to be unprepared for the complex HRM related issues and systems that exist in universities.

The importance of adequately resourcing the HR structure was emphasised, as HR is considered to be a key management function with a strategic role and thrust. Linked to this is the fact that HRM was inextricably linked to institutional development and the repositioning of HR is recommended.

The complex nature of HR deemed the updating of skills a necessity in order to ensure relevant delivery of service in the different areas of the university.

Communication as a fundamental requirement and in terms of it needing to be ongoing priority, was recommended. In relation to communication, it was felt that communication efforts with users of HR systems need to be enhanced.

Overall, it was felt that efficacy of HR practices could be improved. This included the administrative practices and institutional contextual factors were areas that could be improved.

A large portion of respondents indicated that HR had overview and responsibility for ensuring equitable employment conditions for employees. In this respect, HR policies, procedures and processes need to be prioritised at all times. Similarly, institutional trust was important to maintain employee motivation, engagement and retention. On the issue of leadership, it was felt that executive leaders need to take the central position on transformational matters. Change management, relevant strategies and communication of these need to be upheld.

### **7.3.3 From the Qualitative Research**

Due to the vast findings that emanated from the qualitative data, the findings were grouped into themes according to the research objectives. Regarding the first research objective, critical themes that emerged included the need for better alignment between HR and institutional strategy, which was highlighted as a priority. This is similar to the qualitative finding. At both institutions, institutional culture was considered fragmented. This was also reflected in the quantitative findings. The governance, accountability and KPA's were considered problematic at RU, while at the NMU, they were not. Academic staff were considered uncooperative, which led to fractious relations with other groups in the universities. The value placed on academic staff was seen to be undermine the contributions made by support staff.

In research objective two, the need for alignment with the institutional values; enhancement of transformation and the need for ongoing communication were emphasised, as was the need for appropriately skilled HR professionals. The need for alignment between the HR practices and the institutional values was highlighted. This alignment is required to enhance strategic and organisational cohesion.

Enhancement of transformation goals was touted as needing prioritisation. As transformation is a key aspect of national and institutional imperatives, progress against such goals needed to be measured.

It must be noted that the #FeesMustFall protests brought to the fore a range of issues. Related to this was the need for access, the need to review financial models. However, it also raised important considerations in terms of the risks that employees were exposed to. It also brought into the open an underlying tension which has existed between academics and support services staff in universities. The need for ongoing communication was emphasised. Sporadic information was considered as being lacking in efforts to keep employees updated. A communication plan should be implemented to ensure continuity of information.

In respect of research objective three, ethics, leadership, fair and ethical practices and the need for change emerged as key themes. At both universities, the need for ethical leadership to develop and uphold effective people management decisions came to the fore. This was linked to the need to inculcate, uphold and promote fair and ethical practices. Other themes emerging from the fourth research objective included governance, compliance and good policy frameworks, which need implementation. There was agreement that governance and compliance were institutional mainstays and these should be guided by good policies and applicable frameworks.

Key themes in research objective 5, included accountability; monitoring and evaluation; crisis management; institutional vision and mission and the need for skills audits. A performance culture is needed to build institutional culture. New leadership; structure; policies; strategic planning processes emerged as key issues. The importance of having appropriately skilled HR practitioners was discussed and agreed to. The need for HR practitioners to be skilled in their area of work was discussed at NMU. Both universities agreed that there was a new orientation or complexity in the area of HR that was not fully appreciated. The strategic role that HR held was undervalued and was a concern among the different focus groups. The need for ongoing upskilling was raised as a priority. Current HR staff need to be upskilled in order to understand the need for their own personal development, to ensure relevance and knowledge about changes in the HR field and related matters.

Overall, there was a collective understanding of the challenges facing HR in universities and the need for the development of a new model was recognised. It was noted that positive changes in the HR structure are required to address the perceived

dysfunctionality in the system. It emerged that HR was devalued to the extent that the HR head did not have an executive representation. Similarly, there was a need for accountability from executives in the wider system. Finally, the need for well-articulated and monitored KPA's and transparency around decision-making was raised.

### **7.3.4 Findings as they Pertain to the Proposition**

The study purported a null proposition (N0), in that it deemed that HR models, HR competencies and transformative leadership had no impact on HRM systems and processes in universities in South Africa. The findings of the study indicate that although there are models in place, these differed between the institutions in respect of structure and implementation. Transformative leadership remains a work in progress. To some extent, in both institutions under study, the HRM systems and processes in place were functioning autonomously; and separately from the transformative leadership and governance envisioned. Competencies still need to be built upon to afford the HR practitioners, within the institutions, the opportunity to engage fully with the transformative leadership processes envisioned for the profession, the institutions under study, and the country. Currently therefore the proposition that the HR models, HR competencies and transformative leadership has no impact on the HRM systems and processes in universities in South Africa stands.

The new knowledge introduced include the need to review the professional status of HR. Another important consideration is the need to review the HR curricula to ensure it is relevant and applicable to the contemporary South African university.

## **7.4 Recommendations**

### **7.4.1. The HR Plan**

The development and communication of an HR Plan is vitally important. The HR plan should be flexible to allow for contextual changes within the organisation and for external changes that need to be considered. Failure to be fluid could increase risk for the organisation. The review of the HR Plan is a continuous process, which should include clearly defined metrics. Progress of the HR Plan should be monitored at six-monthly intervals to gauge the levels of success and identify the challenges and

shortfalls. The monitoring of progress on the HR Plan should not only be theoretical. Adjusting the activities and ascertaining actual delivery or non-delivery, of the objectives is necessary to ensure that the plan is working and is aligned to the organisation's strategic plan.

There is a dichotomy between planning and implementation of the HR Plan, which is the most difficult aspect. Hence, monitoring provides reports on the progress of the HR Plan. If no monitoring and evaluation takes place, the HR system will be chaotic.

#### **7.4.2 HR Model**

The findings indicate that there is a lack of a common HR model being utilised. It is significant to note the lack of a South African model has contributed to the lack of a common model being utilised. It was felt that institutions needed to establish, direct and sustain high levels of professionalism and ethical conduct in HRM practice in SA.

While the need for a relevant HRM Model was touted, the need for contextual factors to be considered, emerged as a priority. It is proposed that a legislative based HRM Model which can be used for the SADC/sub-Saharan Africa region is required. The model should align with a central HRM and institutional development function and imperatives.

It was recommended that universities should follow a national framework, which can be adapted to each university, with the overall framework aligning to the standards of the Department of Higher Education.

In South Africa, a focus on social justice imperatives is essential in the need to protect the rights of everyone in the workplace. Kamoche, Debrah, Horwitz and Muuka (2004), indicate that HR models are predisposed to specific backgrounds and speaks to the need for consideration of localised elements that impact upon HRM systems.

The need for an infusion of principles of the soft approach to be included into a model was raised. In the South African context, this could be adhered to/inculcated through institutional values, the strategy and a commitment to give effect to effective workplace practices.

The Constitution provides a sound foundation to which all other legislation must adhere. The country's legislative framework provides a comprehensive guideline to employees and employer organisations. This needs to be considered within the realm of HR practices.

### **7.4.3 HR Curricula Review**

The findings indicate that changes to the curricula be considered. The need for curriculum review is becoming an urgent necessity as the current curricula does not equip entrants into the field with knowledge that prepares them for the job. This indicates a gap between graduation and readiness with regard to preparedness for doing the job. At an undergraduate level, assessment methodologies, the interpretation and application of legislation, having commensurate financial skills and research skills are not a priority. These gaps should be addressed to facilitate a common change to HR curricula. This should be a uniform change in the curricula driven at a national level. This would further promote standardisation of HR curricula and accreditation and site visits from a quality assurance body would be important.

Professional registration is recommended for HR practitioners. This recommendation is made on the basis of the impact of HR decisions on employees. The pre-certification or legislated professional registration is therefore recommended for HR practitioners. This should include a professional examination for HR professionals entering the field.

It is interesting to note from the literature review that the HR function has undergone a transformation. The HR function has transitioned from an administrative function to developed to become a cutting edge, transdisciplinary discipline. However, the curriculum has not kept up with changes required. Current HR curricula are lacking the multi-disciplinarian orientation at the undergraduate level.

### **7.4.3 HRM Development and Capacity Building**

It was felt that HR practitioners need to undergo training in empathy and decision-making skills in order to develop competencies to deal with psycho-social issues. HR practitioners are problem solvers but are limited in providing such solutions, as they are devalued by managers in universities.



The need for HR practitioners to be respected was reinforced. HR must have a strategic system in place, to appropriately address the need to transfer skills and competencies, in order to ensure fluidity in operations in particular functional areas (Milhem, Abushamsieh and Perez Arostegui, 2014). The dynamic nature of HRM requires ongoing skilling of HR professionals.

HR professional development must be encouraged. Life-long learning or ongoing professional development initiatives should be part of the activities that HR practitioners should consider. This is a key requirement to ensure that practitioners in the field are knowledgeable and are able to meet the ongoing changes in their areas of work. This will enable HR practitioners to be effective in the discharging of their roles and will ensure rigour in the development of relevant skills to meet the needs of the institution.

HR practitioners are required to possess knowledge of the sub-field of the discipline as the function deals with a wide-range of factors which include social justice issues, imbalance of skills, and transformation. These are limited aspects which require a more nuanced level of skills and expertise.

HR plays an important role in advancing the legal and social justice imperatives and embedding the prescript of law, this is corroborated by Pritchard et al. (2003). This highlights the knowledge and skills required for the daily professional practice of HR.

A balance of HRM theory and practice is required, with a focus on experiential learning. This can be implemented through the practice of completing vacation work, within HR departments, enabling for an opportunity to see and record how HR works. Further, assessments and mentorships should become a component of the curriculum. The experiential component in undergraduate HR curricula is required to provide a solid foundation. A comprehensive internship program to bridge the gap between theory and work experience before graduation is recommended, as a prelude to professional registration.

#### **7.4.4 Institutional leadership**

Leading change is a complex matter and requires commitment and champions at the highest level. There needs to be an active communication campaign in this regard. Leadership development needs attention as leaders require a range of skills to advance and implement sustainable change efforts. HE requires new leadership to meet challenges which include volatile financial environment, expanding international partners, more accountability, a new business model, related technologies and diversity (SABPP, 2017).

Gender disparity is a historical legacy in South Africa. This is also true of women in leadership positions in HE in South Africa. The need for gender-representation in leadership positions needs redress as there is a disproportionate number of women in leadership, despite significant advances being made by women who have attained higher level qualifications and acquired management experience. Targeted strategies are needed to address the transformational targets to address the dismal number of women in senior leadership positions in universities.

#### **7.4.5 Localised HRM Research**

The study indicated the lack of contextualised HRM systems and practices that could guide South African organisations. This was indicative of the need for localised research which would be generalisable to the SADC region. This will assist with the alleviation of South African and SADC HRM-related challenges and requirements. The mismatch between research and practice is a concern. It prohibits the development of solution-based proposals that speak to localised challenges. The utilisation of international systems which have little or no relevance to the South African situation requires redress.

#### **7.4.6 Effective HR Systems and Practices**

The need for critical reviews of practices and processes emerged. The need for relevant and effective HRM practices is evident. Linked to this is the need for HR to be innovative and utilise appropriate HR processes and tools. A critical review requires appropriate research, design and development capability. In addition, project management; financial skills; report writing; excellent leadership skills and high levels of integrity and trust were raised as important competencies. An adequate HR system

has a good correlation to effective HR practices in the institution. This is important for the advancement of institutional and social justice efforts. The issue of organisational justice is linked to the three core pillars of justice which include distributive justice, procedural justice and interactional justice (Kim et al., 2015, Matlala, 2011). Matlala (2011), reinforces the need for these important pillars to be considered in the promotion of employees' perceptions of fairness, especially in regard the measurement of their performance. The need for proper institutional procedures, interpersonal relations and fair treatment of employees, will have a positive impact on job satisfaction (Matlala, 2011).

#### **7.4.7 Location of HRM within the South African Legislative Milieu**

The need for HRM practices to be aligned to South African legislative practices was raised. There was cognition of the Constitution of South Africa and the related legislative frameworks which provide an overarching framework for HRM in South Africa. The need for ongoing stakeholder engagement was raised as was the need for conflict management and resolution capability. The HR department must ensure that decisions are based on policy and law. In this respect, it is important for policies to be aligned to legislation. The need for effective HR policies which set out the procedures, ethical standards and regulatory principles which guide institutional practices is espoused by Barbeito (2004) in Gachie (2011).

#### **7.4.8 Employee Engagement**

There is a need for continuous communication to keep employees informed. Ongoing communication efforts needs to be infused into departmental meetings. In addition, employee engagement was important and suggestions of this taking place through online surveys and emails were raised. HR must ensure that stakeholders are kept informed of important activities, policies and any changes that may be important. It was noted that participants indicated that new, innovative creative communication strategies are required to meet the needs of a multi-stakeholder environment as is the case in HE.

#### **7.4.9. Positioning HRM**

The need for HR to be part of the executive team was raised. This was considered an important requirement to ensure HR participation at the highest level of decision-

making. Given the direct and overall impact of HR decisions, there is a critical need for the heads of HR functions to be recognised at all levels.

With regard to resourcing the HR structure, the need to integrate OD as a core functional area in HR emerged. This was on the basis that institutional development was a fundamental aspect of the HR function. The review of staffing of HR departments is recommended as the HR practitioner to staff ratio is burdensome and unrealistic. The need for an adequate structure and enhancing headcount in HR was raised on the basis that HR departments are unreasonably understaffed. It was felt that HR needed to be better resourced to offer a comprehensive service to its most important asset, its employees.

HR Practitioners' focus on employees needs brought forth the recommendation for executive portfolio holders to drive effective implementation of HR practices and thereby lessen the dependency on HR. That would allow HR practitioners to adequately service their areas in an effective manner and limit the over-compensation for ineffective departmental and faculty managers. This is reinforced by the Deloitte Review Report which indicates that the HR and institutional leadership 'sets the tone' at the executive level (Deloitte, 2014).

### **7.5 Development of an HR Model**

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data brought to the fore important findings and recommendations. A careful analysis of these important contributions led to the development of a HR Model for South Africa. The South African Regulatory Value Aligned HRM Model is depicted on the following page.



Figure 7.1: The South African Regulatory Value Aligned HRM Model

### **7.5.1 Explanation of the Model**

The literature demonstrated that HR practices are embedded within international and national frameworks. The findings of the qualitative and quantitative data indicate that the ILO, Constitution of South Africa and a myriad of other legislation deem these prescripts a necessity.

The overarching framework of the macro-global factors must be considered with emphasis on the international framework. This is based on the ILO and its regulations. As a member state, South Africa is compelled to ascribe to the principles of the ILO, with particular reference to aligning to and fulfilling the obligations of decent work and fair and ethical practices. The literature outlined the importance of the ILO and the decent work agenda. As South Africa is a partner to the ILO and therefore consideration and adherence to the ILO prescripts is required.

At a country level, the Constitution is the supreme law of the land and all legislation must be aligned to it. The supremacy of the Constitution ensures that all legislation must promote the values as espoused by the Constitution. South Africa has a myriad of labour legislation which are firmly embedded in the Constitution. The South African Regulatory Value Aligned HRM Model proposes that HRM strategies and processes must ensure Constitutional and regulatory alignment while considering critical internal organisational factors.

South Africa has a myriad of labour legislation. The literature listed numerous Acts which require adherence and compliance. The latter was re-inforced in the findings of the focus group interviews, with specific emphasis on the EEA, LRA and the various requirements related to reporting specifications. The literature indicated the need for social justice and the role that the HR function plays in advancing and embedding redress initiatives. It is necessary to point out that such legislation was implemented to advance redress.

The issue of HR capabilities was raised in both the qualitative and quantitative data. The complex nature of the function requires that HR practitioners embark on the process on continuous development. This is linked to the need to advance and uphold institutional developmental outcomes, adequate capability in the different HRM sub-

functions. Of particular emphasis should be the development of relevant legal knowledge; financial capability; research and development ability; conflict management and resolution skills; effective leadership skills; a strong orientation based on integrity, values and trust. Both the qualitative and quantitative data indicated that HR knowledge in the various sub-disciplines is important, as HR practitioners are 'at the forefront of dealing with conflict and are often the first line in referral.

Core competencies must be supplemented by other capabilities which include effective communication skills, knowledge of training and development and education, good financial and analytical capability among others.

It is further recommended that institutional values; HR principles; contextual factors; innovation; analytics; dashboards and tracking and quality assurance and monitoring, provide the basis which will underpin all facets and interaction within the relevant HRM function. This is recommended on the basis that while policy prescripts and functional processes are important, the internal institutional environment must be conducive to ensure balance. Therefore, the values ascribed to and adhered to by the institution, the HR principles as set out in the HR strategy and particular contextual factors need to be considered. Further, the internal quality assurance procedures must be adhered to at all times. This must be subjected to monitoring and evaluation procedures.

The findings indicate the need for an effective HR system and practices which will give effect to good people management processes. The findings indicate that the lack of an effective HR system and practices will result in institutional chaos. To this end, it is proposed that the HRM structure's functional areas include:

- Talent Management (Recruitment, On-boarding, Administration, Payroll).
- Total Rewards Management (Remuneration and Benefits).
- Legislative Compliance (Employee Relations, Employment Equity, Skills Development, Occupational Health and Safety).
- Employee Enhancement (Assessments, Career Enhancement, Learning and Development, Employee Assistance Programmes and Wellness, Workforce Planning).

There is a basic ontological assumption that each country's context in terms of the unique socio-economic and political characteristics need to be considered as it impacts/influences HRM practices within localised contexts. In this respect, it is necessary to keep abreast of national influences which may impact on the internal institutional environment. This may include trends, patterns and changes in the labour, policy, legislative, economic spheres.

At an organisational level, institutional values are a good anchor for upholding and embedding HRM practices. Effective HRM principles are required to ensure good people management practices. Contextual factors, such as sectoral factors and socioeconomic factors must be considered and will impact on the HRM strategy. Good data is the bedrock of effective people management decisions. Data analytics provide the quantitative information which is required to implement conceptual frameworks and strategies. Data is the 'nuts and bolts' which will guide implementation of projects and processes. HRM policies, processes and practices require constant quality assurance and monitoring. This is an essential component to ensure the efficacy of HRM procedures in organisations. The failure to quality assure and monitor this important function could have far reaching consequences.

## **7.6 Research Limitations**

Future opportunities for research could address HR systems in other sectors or localities.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

This study explored challenges impacting on HRM systems in universities in South Africa. The findings indicate the need for a relevant HRM model for South Africa, changes to HRM curricula as well as the need for capacity building. Other key findings include the need for effective executive management and need for localised HRM research. The dynamic state of HRM in South Africa requires a critical review of current practices and the implementation of an effective, localised model to address challenges and limitations being experienced.

In summary, the findings of the study indicate that higher education institutions do not use relevant and effective HR models. The HRM curricula requires review to ensure



that HR practitioners are appropriately qualified. HR practitioners do not possess the competencies required to provide relevant and effective HR delivery in HE. In this respect, a new competency framework is recommended for HR Practitioners. Transformative leadership has a significant impact on the delivery of HR in HE. Institutionally, transformative leadership must be championed by executive managers. However, the HR function is at the forefront of leading transformative change initiatives. The findings indicate that social justice is a key theme in HR service delivery in HE. Current HR models do not focus on employee needs. The South African Regulatory Value Aligned HRM Model is proposed for use in the South African context.

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**APPENDIX 1****The Purpose of Key Labour Legislation**

## Summary of Acts

LEGISLATION	SUMMARY/PURPOSE
The Constitution	<p>The supremacy of the Constitution espouses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms.</li> <li>(b) Non-racialism and non-sexism.</li> <li>(c) Supremacy of the constitution and the rule of law.</li> <li>(d) Universal adult suffrage, a national common voters roll, regular elections and a multi-party system of democratic government, to ensure accountability, responsiveness and openness.</li> </ul>
Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA)	<p>To give effect to the right to fair labour practices referred to in section 23(1) of the Constitution by establishing and making provision for the regulation of basic conditions of employment; and thereby to comply with the obligations of the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organisation; and to provide for matters connected therewith.</p>
Labour Relations Act (LRA)	<p>The purpose of this Act<sup>1</sup> is to advance economic development, social justice, labour peace and the democratisation of the workplace by fulfilling the primary objects of this Act, which are-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) to give effect to and regulate the fundamental rights conferred by section 27 of the Constitution; <sup>2</sup></li> <li>(b) to give effect to obligations incurred by the Republic as a member state of the International Labour Organisation;</li> <li>(c) to provide a framework within which employees and their trade unions, employers and employers' organisations can- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) collectively bargain to determine wages, terms and conditions of employment and other matters of mutual interest; and</li> <li>(ii) formulate industrial policy; and</li> </ul> </li> <li>(d) to promote- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) orderly collective bargaining;</li> <li>(ii) collective bargaining at sectoral level;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	(iii) employee participation in decision-making in the workplace; and (iv) the effective resolution of labour disputes.
Employment Equity Act (EEA)	Summary of the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998, issued in terms of Section 25(1) implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and levels in the workforce.
Skills Development Act (SDA)	To develop the skills of the South African workforce and to improve the quality of life of workers and their prospects of work. To improve productivity in the workplace and the competitiveness of employers and to promote self-employment.
Skills Development Levies Act (SDLA)	Addresses the supply of skilled staff which is a serious obstacle to the competitiveness of industry in South Africa. The levy grant scheme aims to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force resulting in improvements in employability and productivity.
Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA)	The Occupational Health and Safety Act aims to provide for the health and safety of persons at work and for the health and safety of persons in connection with the activities of persons at work and to establish an advisory council for occupational health and safety.
Immigration Act (IA)	The Immigration Act, No. 13 of 2002 provides for the regulation of admission of people and their departure from the Republic. The Regulations provides more information on the processes to be followed when applying for a visa / permit.
Employment Services Act (ESA)	The Act aims to establish productivity within South Africa by decreasing the levels of unemployment and by training unskilled workers. It further addresses the matter of the employment of migrants and foreign nationals. A secondary focus of the Act is that of providing for schemes to assist employees of enterprises in distress to retain employment, rather than being retrenched.
Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA)	To provide for compensation for disablement caused by occupational injuries or diseases sustained or contracted by employees in the course of their employment, or for death resulting from such injuries or diseases; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF)	The Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) gives short-term relief to workers when they become unemployed or are unable to work because of maternity, adoption leave, or illness. It also provides relief to the dependents of a deceased contributor
South African Qualifications Authority Act (SAQA Act).	To provide for the development and implementation of a National Qualifications Framework and for this purpose to establish the South African Qualifications Authority; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **The Quantitative Questionnaire**

#### **COVERING LETTER FOR QUESTIONNAIRE**

Title of Questionnaire

Dear Respondent

This questionnaire forms part of PhD research entitled 'A case study analysis of Human Resource Management Systems in Higher Education, South Africa for a PhD degree at the University of Stellenbosch. You have been selected by a sampling strategy from the population of Rhodes University. Hence, I invite you to take part in this survey.

The aim of this study is to investigate current human resources practices at Rhodes University. The findings of this study will be used to understand challenges and opportunities to improve human resource management practices in the higher education sector.

You are kindly requested to complete this survey questionnaire, comprising 7 sections as honestly and frankly as possible and according to your personal views and experience. No foreseeable risks are associated with the completion of the questionnaire, which is for research purposes only. The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

You are not required to indicate your name or organisation and your anonymity will be ensured; however, indication of your age, gender, occupation position etcetera will contribute to a more comprehensive analysis. All information obtained from this questionnaire will be used for research purposes only and will remain confidential. Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you have the right to omit any question if so desired, or to withdraw from answering this survey without penalty at any stage. After the completion of the study, an electronic summary of the findings of the research will be made available to you on request.

Permission to undertake this survey has been granted by Rhodes University and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Stellenbosch. If you have a research-related enquiries, they can be addressed directly to me or my supervisor. My contact details are 083 959 2753, e-mail: [govenderloshni@yahoo.com](mailto:govenderloshni@yahoo.com) and my supervisor can be reached at -----, School of Public Leadership, Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Stellenbosch, e-mail: [mantzar@sociologist.com](mailto:mantzar@sociologist.com).

By completing the questionnaire, you imply that you have agreed to participate in this research.

Please return the completed questionnaire to [govenderloshni@yahoo.com](mailto:govenderloshni@yahoo.com) before ----  
-----.

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

<b>AGE</b>		
<b>ACADEMIC QUALIFICATION</b>		
<i>TICK APPROPRIATE CATEGORY</i>		
<b>POSITION</b>		
<b>SENIOR MANAGEMENT</b>		
<b>ACADEMIC</b>		
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE</b>		
<b>TECHNICAL</b>		
<b>OTHER</b>		
<b>YEARS WORKING AT THE INSTITUTION</b>		

### SECTION 1: HR MODEL

1.1: Does your institution have an HR Model that is used?

<b>YES</b>		<b>NO</b>	
------------	--	-----------	--

1.2: Do you think that an HR Model is important?

<b>YES</b>		<b>NO</b>	
------------	--	-----------	--

1.2.1 Can you justify your answer?

1.3. How would you evaluate the importance of a HR Model?

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>NOT IMPORTANT</b>	<b>SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT</b>	<b>FAIRLY IMPORTANT</b>	<b>IMPORTANT</b>	<b>VERY IMPORTANT</b>



1.3.1 Can you justify your answer?

1.4. Do you think that an HR Model will be beneficial for effective institutional HR practices?

YES		NO	
-----	--	----	--

1.4.1 Can you provide the reasons?

1.5 Do you think there are appropriate HR Models in tertiary institutions in South Africa?

YES		NO	
-----	--	----	--

1.5.1 Can you elaborate on your answer?

**SECTION 2: LEGISLATION AND COMPLIANCE**

2.1 Does your HR Department adhere to legislation?

YES		NO	
-----	--	----	--

2.1.1 Can you provide some examples?

2.2 How does your HR Department rate in terms of overall compliance requirements?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

2.2.1 Can you elaborate on this point?

2.3 Do you think your HR Department meets compliance requirements?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

2.3.1 Can you provide some examples?

2.4 Do you think that the HR practitioners in your institution have the necessary skills to interpret legislation?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

2.4.1 If NO can you provide the reasons?

2.5 Can you rate compliance as a priority in your HR Department?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

2.5.1 Can you justify your answer?

**SECTION 3: HR PLANNING**

3.1 Does your HR Department have an HR Plan?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

3.2 Is the HR Plan in accordance with the Institutional Strategic Plan?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

3.2.1 If NO what are the key reasons?

3.3 How important is an HR Plan?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

3.3.1 Please provide the reasons

3.4 How often should an HR Plan be developed?

1	2	3
NEVER	ANNUALLY	EVERY 3 YEARS

3.4.1 Please provide the reasons

3.5 How important is it to monitor progress of the HR Plan?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

3.5.1 Please provide reasons for your answer

---

**SECTION 4: HR COMPETENCIES**

4.1 Are HR Practitioners appropriately qualified?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

4.2 Are HR practitioners focused on employee needs?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

4.2.1 If NOT what do you think is the reason and what is missing?

---

4.3 How important do you think it is for HR Practitioners keep updated on changes to legislation?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

4.3.1 Please provide the reasons

4.4 Do HR Practitioners display adequate knowledge of the 7 sub-fields of HR?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

4.4.1 If NOT what do you think is the reason and what is missing?

4.5 Do you think HR curricula are adequate to meet the needs of developing HR practitioners at an undergraduate level?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

4.5.1 Provide the reasons for your answer

**SECTION 5: HR DELIVERY AND ORIENTATION**

5.1 Do you think the HR structure is adequately resourced to service the needs of the entire the institution?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

5.2 Is HR focused on employee needs in your organisation?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

5.2.1 Can you justify your answer?

5.3 How do you evaluate the complexity of HR needs at your institution

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

5.3.1 Can you justify your answer?



5.4 Do you think HR systems are adequate in general?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

5.4.1 Can you justify your answer?

5.5 How do you rate the importance of an effective HR practices in your institution?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

5.5.1 Provide the reasons for your answer

**SECTION 6: INSTITUTIONAL JUSTICE**

6.1 What level of trust do have in the HR Department in making decisions based on policy and law?

1	2	3	4	5
VERY LOW	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	VERY HIGH

6.1.1 Can you justify your answer?

---



---

6.2 Do you believe that HR policies, procedures and processes meet the need for equitable employment practices?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

6.2.1 Provide reasons for your answer

6.3 How would you evaluate the HR Departments model and systems to advance the themes

of individual and social justice imperatives?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

6.3.1 Can you justify your answer

6.4 How would you rate the HR Department's understanding of stakeholder needs/objectives?

1	2	3	4	5
NOT IMPORTANT	SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT

6.4.1 Can you justify your answer?

6.5 Does the HR Department work within the country’s legislative framework?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

6.5.1 If NO what are the key reasons?

6.6 How would you rate the level of institutional trust in your organisation?

1	2	3	4	5
VERY LOW	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	VERY HIGH

6.6.1 Can you justify your answer?

**SECTION 7: TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP**

7.1. The leadership has built coalition that will pave the way to change

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

7.1.1 Can you justify your answer?

7.2 Has leadership planned and implemented a communication strategy of the vision for change?

YES		NO
-----	--	----

7.2.1 Can you justify your answer?

7.3 Has leadership communicated the urgency about the need for change?

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

7.3.1 Can you justify your answer?

7.4 Have there been efforts to remove obstacles impeding a new vision for change?

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

7.4.1 Can you justify your answer?

7.5 Has there been an effort to create a vision and strategic plan to guide the change process?

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

7.5.1 Can you justify your answer?

7.6 Are you aware of an effort to create a vision and strategic plan to guide the change process?

1	2	3	4	5
STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	UNSURE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE

7.6.1 Can you justify your answer?

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THANK YOU.

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## APPENDIX 3

### The Qualitative Focus Group Questionnaire

#### LETTER REQUESTING PARTICIPATION IN A FOCUS GROUP SESSION

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study. I, Loshni Govender, am conducting as part of my research as a PhD student A case study analysis of Human Resource Management Systems in Higher Education, South Africa at the University of Stellenbosch. Permission for the study has been granted by the School of Public Leadership and the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, University of Stellenbosch. I have purposefully identified you as a possible participant because of your valuable experience and expertise related to my research topic.

I would like to provide you with more information about this research project and what your involvement would entail if you agree to take part. The importance of human resource practices in higher education is substantial and well documented.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 60 minutes in length and will take place in a mutually agreed upon location at a time convenient to you. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences.

With your kind permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate collection of accurate information and later transcribed for analysis. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any publication resulting from this study and any identifying information will be omitted from the report. However, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained on a password protected computer for 12 months in my locked office. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 083 959 2753 or by e-mail at [govenderloshni@yahoo.com](mailto:govenderloshni@yahoo.com).

I look forward to speaking with you very much and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will request you to sign the consent form, which follows on the next page.

Yours sincerely

\_\_\_\_\_

Loshni Govender



## **FOCUS GROUP / INTERVIEW ASSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT**

I \_\_\_\_\_ grant consent/assent that the information I share during the group discussions (focus group interviews) may be used by the research, Loshni Govender, for research purposes. I am aware that the group discussions will be digitally recorded and grant consent/assent for these recordings, provided that my privacy will be protected. I undertake not to divulge any information that is shared in group discussions to any person outside the group in order to maintain confidentiality.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Name: Loshni S Govender

Researcher Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Focus Group Questions

1. Do current HR practices meet the needs of a complex higher education system?
2. Does the HR Division use an integrated HR management model?
3. Does the HR Division have a strategic plan?
4. Is theoretical knowledge of HR adequate?
5. Do you think HR capabilities are important?
6. Do you think HR should have a compliance-based approach?
7. Do you HR Practitioners in your university understand relevant legislation?
8. Should HR Practitioners have the ability to solve complex problems?
9. Are HR Practitioners experienced?
10. Is a new approach needed, if so, what should be the focus areas? (e.g. research based approach)
11. Does the strategy of the HR Division meet the imperatives of national policy and legislative frameworks?
12. Does the university adhere to ethical leadership principles?
13. What do you think underpin the decisions taken with regard to people management at your institution?
14. Does your institution illustrate effective people management practices?
15. How would you describe the relations between management and stakeholder groups at your institution? Provide reasons
16. Is there an urgent need for change?
17. Has the leadership built coalition that will pave the way to change?

Anja Morris-Paxton & Associates  
Research Support Services  
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19 February 2018

Re: Qualitative Data Comparative Coding for the study entitled: A Case Study Analysis of Human Resource Management Systems in Higher Education, South Africa

To Whom It May Concern,

The qualitative data contained in Chapter Six of this study, was independently comparatively coded (co-coded) using NVivo\*8 software. The source documentation for the independent coding were the original facilitator transcripts. Comparative coding revealed that all data were original sources and that the codes extracted matched the original extraction taken from the focus-group interview schedules.

There was no internal bias found on the comparison with the manual coding. Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anja Morris-Paxton'.

Dr Anja Morris-Paxton BS. MSc. MA. PGCE. PhD

Anja Morris-Paxton & Associates

Research Support Services

SARS Tax No 0843368150

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19 February 2018

Re: Quantitative Data for the study entitled: A Case Study Analysis of Human Resource Management Systems in Higher Education, South Africa

To Whom It May Concern,

In the process of providing research support services for the above-mentioned study I have checked the correctness of the information provided. The quantitative data contained in Chapter Five of this study, was taken directly from closed question, yes/no and Likert-scale opinion questions, related to the field of the study and entered into an automated survey system by the study participants. The output, including the numbers of responses, and percentage of responses to each question was generated by the automated system and provides purely descriptive data.

The nature of the study neither required, nor generated, further descriptive or inferential statistical analysis and output. The descriptive quantitative analysis as far as can be ascertained, is correct and accurate, as generated by a commonly well-utilised data collection tool (survey-monkey). I am confident that the data output provided, is a true and accurate reflection of the opinions of the study participants.

Regards,

Dr Anja Morris-Paxton BS. MSc. MA. PGCE. PhD

