

INTEGRATION OF STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT FOR EFFICIENCY IN UGANDA PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

The paper explores the status quo of strategic human resource management and its perceived role to alleviate inefficient management in Uganda public universities. A close-ended questionnaire was administered to top and middle level university managers (n = 101) to establish the status quo of strategic human resource management practices and the perceived role it can play to alleviate inefficient management at Makerere and Kyambogo. The results of the study indicate that strategic human resource management practices are barely practiced in Uganda public universities. The results also reveal that top and middle level managers have a strong conviction that integration of strategic human resource management practices can alleviate inefficient management in Uganda public universities. The paper concludes that due to rapid changes emanating from globalisation, knowledge based economy, technological revolution and reduced funding of higher education from governments, public universities in Uganda need to adopt strategic human resource management to improve their efficiency.

Keywords- Efficiency, public universities, strategic human resource management, Uganda

Introduction

Public universities in Uganda every passing year, steadily continue to drift away from being capable of spearheading the desired socio-economic transformation in the country (Halvorsen, 2016). Yet, quality university education, research and innovation are widely acknowledged as catalyst of national development and improvement of people's quality of life (Kasule, Wesselink, Omid & Martin, 2015). Moreover, it is incontestable that universities globally, regardless of context should be centres of excellence where knowledge is not only acquired but also disseminated to those who require it, through high quality teaching and learning, research and innovation, and knowledge transfer partnerships (Ogbogu, 2013). Rapid changes emanating from globalisation, knowledge based economy and technological revolution require universities to re-think about how they operate so as to remain relevant in the 21st century (Squiccirini & Loikkanen, 2018).

In the context of Uganda, some of the things that universities need to address include but not limited to cost reduction e.g., by ensuring that staff salaries and allowances do not take a huge portion of the available funds (Kyaligonza, Kimoga & Nabayego, 2015). This state of affair must urgently be mitigated as it compromises adequate funding of other university core activities such as: teaching, research, innovation and infrastructure development and maintenance. It is incontestable that more than ever before, the academic profession in higher education calls for vibrant human resource management. This is based on the premise that issues such as: heavy workload; teaching in more than one university (moonlighting); very high student numbers; difficulty in finding funding for professional development etc., requires new ways of action which strategic human resource management could provide (see e.g. Deuren, 2013; Mouton & Wildschut, 2015). Thus, the need to embrace strategic human resource management as one of the ways to alleviate inefficient management in Uganda public universities cannot be overstated. Accordingly, this paper examines the status quo of strategic human resource management and the perceived role it can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda universities.

Theoretical framework

It is undisputable that the globalised competitive business era focuses on formulation and execution of strategic human resource management practices and its significant effect on the financial performance of the organisation (Khatoon, Amin & Hossain, 2013). This is based on the belief that strategic human resource management deal with implementing strategic change and growing the knowledge and skill base of the institution to ensure that it can meet its mission and vision as well as compete efficiently and/or meet its mandate at all times (Cania, 2014). It is indisputable that in the contemporary world of work, human resource is more important than other resources in the institution. This is based on the premise that it is people who use other resources in the institution to realise the set objectives (Gabcanova, 2011). However, it is vital to note that if the human resource is not managed strategically e.g., by ensuring that at all times the institution has the right number of employees with the right knowledge, skills, values and orientations they need to work, management inefficiency is inevitable (Burma, 2014). It is irrefutable that organisations which treat their employees as resource capital instead of cost centre do make employees feel more committed, satisfied and involved, and therefore they are likely to stay in the organisation (Vui-Yee, 2015).

Put differently, surplus or deficit of employees in terms of numbers and/or limited knowledge, skills, values and orientations is unquestionably catastrophic to the institution. For instance, at Kyambogo University- the second largest public university in Uganda, there are more non-teaching staff than teaching staff. Consequently, the University merely struggles to conduct its core tasks e.g. teaching, research and innovation. Azikuru, Onen & Ezati (2017) assert that effective staffing would raise the quality of teaching in universities such as Kyambogo, other factors held constant. Similarly, Rwothumio, Musaazi & Orodho (2016) advance that universities should be staffed with competent academic staff whose key result areas include but not limited to: effective teaching, research, publications, and community service. This is premised on the presumption that in a rapidly changing competitive environment, human resources are one important source of competitive advantage (see e.g. Caliskan, 2010).

In the mind of Armstrong (2006, p. 31), strategic human resource management is seen as tool that: 'supplies a perspective on the way critical issues or success factors related to people can be addressed, and strategic decisions are made that have a major and long-term impact on the behaviour and success of the organization'. Accordingly, it is considered prudent for universities to consider embracing strategic human resource management so that they can be able to generate strategic capability by ensuring that they have the skilled, committed and well-motivated employees they need to achieve their mission and vision as well as sustained competitive advantage. This is in line with Asiiimwe & Steyn (2013) assertion that there is a global emphasis to improve the ability of universities to cope with the challenges of the 21st century. For example, the dwindling public funding and the need to widen access to higher education and to simultaneously maintain or even enhance the quality of teaching, research and innovation (Mayer et al, 2011).

It is unquestionable that institutions of higher learning regardless of context, have to adopt modern corporate business models (e.g. strategic human resource management) to thrive and not merely struggle to survive (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008). Through strategic human resource management, institutions are able to coordinate various activities and utilise opportunities optimally. Leave alone, preventing potential threats to the organisation (Gilani, Zadeh & Saderi, 2012). This is supported by Salaman, Stroeay & Billsberry (2005) who avow that policy makers at government level have drawn upon the idea of strategic human resource management in order to promote 'high performance workplaces' and 'human capital management'. In the same line of thinking, Sani (2012) espouses the view that strategic human resource management practices, either individually or as a system, are associated with higher levels of performance. This concurs with Shahnaei & Long (2014) study, which established that performance of the International University in Iran has key relationship with human resource functions of recruitment, training, compensation and performance appraisal. This is buttressed by Caliskan (2010) affirmation that human resource systems can contribute to sustained competitive advantage through facilitating the development of competencies that are institution specific.

Waganjo, Mukulu & Kahiri (2012) affirm that effective human resource management strategy systematically organises all individual human resource management measures to directly influence employee attitude and behaviour in a way that leads business to achieve its competitive strategy. This is in accord with Allui & Sahni (2016) assertion that high performing business organisations practice strategic human resource management. The foregoing authors observe that although many institutions have noted the importance of some elements of strategic human resource management, few have practiced the elements on a frequent basis. Accordingly, in their study (Allui & Sahni, 2016), explored the integration of institutional strategies to human resource management by examining the strategic human

resource management practices in universities in Saudi. They found out that Saudi higher education is facing major problems surrounding the development of human capital, especially of the faculty members and needs to devote more attention to strategic human resource management practices.

Allui & Sahni (2016) study also established that the employee recruitment and selection process is largely inadequate and needs effective attention. Leave alone, performance appraisal and compensation system which does not guarantee a highly motivated core of staff. This paper espouses the mind of Allui & Sahni (2016) that there is a huge gap in both conceptual and/or empirical studies on strategic human resource management in higher education, more so in the Arab and African world which need to be addressed. Drape, Rudd, Lopez & Radford (2016) avow that the main issue surrounding higher education in Sub-Sahara Africa is the poor quality of higher education institutions. The foregoing authors further affirm that the quality of the higher education is affected by the lack of adequate funding and effective management. The finding of Drape et al. (2016) call for higher education institution managers to employee specific strategies e.g. strategic human resource management to mitigate the numerous challenges that render higher education institutions inefficient. This is accentuated by the fact that strategic human resource management can be used to achieve the overall strategic aims of an institution regardless of context (Caliskan, 2010).

Universities in Sub-Sahara Africa should look to expand opportunities available for potential students to include relevant vocational occupations in their region (Drape et al, 2016). These opportunities should include but not limited to: expanding education to become interdisciplinary while improving the current learning environments to help motivate students (Drape et al. 2016). This therefore call for a paradigm shift in the current management practices which are considered obsolete and embrace contemporary management practices such as strategic human resource management. Why should this be the case? Empirical studies e.g. of Gurbuz & Mert (2011) from a sample of Turkey's Top 500 firms-2007 reveal that strategic human resource management has direct and positive effects on financial/market performance and operational performance. This is in accord with Pikturaitė & Jagminas (2010) who advance that strategic human resource management conception has linkages with development and expansion of knowledge economy, learning organizations, life-long learning and being one of the most important public organisations management aspects.

Strategic human resource management nurture team learning behaviour among the diverse workforce of an institution to develop learning institutions and sustaining emotionally intelligent knowledge workers (Khalaf & Rasli, 2011). Research indicates that strategic human resource management practices bring higher levels of organisational performance in Singapore (Wan, Kok & Ong, 2002). Accordingly, university managers ought to embrace strategic human resource management to enable them manage the diverse workforce in their universities better. Moreover, a critical function for a university manager in a strategic planning role is to build the institution's human resources as a source of sustained competitive advantage (Mitchell, Obeidat & Bray, 2013). Strategic human resource management is crucial in all organisations particularly public organisations universities being no exception, where it facilitates those who work in the public service in adapting to the changing role of the government (Muraga, 2015). Similarly, Sherafati & Mohammadi (2014) assert that human resource strategy leads to human resource effectiveness because of enriching organisational performance. This concurs with Darwisha, Singhb & Mohamed (2013) assertion that careful recruitment and selection, training and internal career opportunities have a positive impact on reducing employee turnover.

Higher education in Africa is undergoing a transformation shaped by massive expansion, which has implications for every facet of the sector, with consequent implications that range from quality to funding, from governance to employment (Teferra, 2014). For instance, Nabayego & Itaaga (2014) affirm that most of the university education graduates are not practical enough to turn their local environmental resources into gainful work and effective contribution to national development and attribute this to lack of internal and external efficiency of university education in Uganda. Accordingly, pragmatic measures need to be taken in order to address the issue of inefficiency in Uganda public universities. The rapidly changing global business environment calls for high knowledge-driven human resource managers, to function effectively as strategic business partners (Pourkiani, Salajeghe & Ranjbar, 2011). However, no empirical study has been done to establish the extent university managers in Uganda, more so in public universities are functioning effectively as strategic business partners. Yet, the universities in question severely face challenges including but not limited to: lack of clear human resource policies and guidelines; heavy workload of academics; rapid increase in student numbers; ban on recruitment in government universities; retirement of experienced professors etc. Accordingly, the study is set to answer the ensuing questions: (i) what is the status quo of strategic human resource management in Uganda public universities; and (ii) what are the perceptions of top and

middle level university managers regarding the role strategic human resource management can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities?

Methods

A quantitative exploratory research design was used to establish the status quo of strategic human resource management practices in Uganda public universities: case of Makerere and Kyambogo. The method was considered appropriate because it provides insights in a situation where little or nothing is known (Kumar, 2011).

Context and participants

The study was conducted at Makerere and Kyambogo which are the two flagship universities in Uganda. Makerere University in its strategic plan, seeks to leverage the institution's capability to boost governance, financing and human resources development to support its mission in line with national, regional and international trends (Makerere University Strategic Plan 2008/2009 – 2018/2019). Meanwhile, Kyambogo University strategic plan focuses on improving: teaching and learning; research, innovation and knowledge generation; physical infrastructure, facilities and ICT development; institutional development; and strategic marketing (Kyambogo University Strategic Plan 2012/13-2022/23). These two public universities were selected because they have the biggest number of staff, students and academic programmes. In addition, they have very good strategic plans, thus, it was presumed that the views of the top and middle level managers of the two universities would give a relatively fair picture regarding the status quo of strategic human resource management in their universities and the role strategic human resource management can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities.

Study sample

The study involved top and middle level managers from Makerere University (n = 61) and Kyambogo University (n = 42). It was presumed that by virtue of their duties, they possess key information which can be used to determine the status quo of strategic human resource management and the role it can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. This sampling technique is considered appropriate because it uses the judgment of an expert in selecting information-rich cases or it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind (Kumar, 2011).

Instrument

The university top and middle level managers responded to a close-ended questionnaire comprising of seven strategic human resource management domains and the associated attributes developed based on the works of several authors e.g. Allui & Sahni (2016); Caliskan (2010); Darwisha et al. (2013); Muraga (2015); and Shahnaei & Long (2014) along a Five-Point Likert scale. The scale was defined as follows: <1.4 is strong disagreement; 1.5 to 2.4 is disagreement; 2.5 to 3.4 is undecided; 3.5 to 4.4 is agreement; and 4.5 to 5.0 is strong agreement. The questionnaire was designed to find out the extent strategic human resource management is being practiced (status quo) and the perceived role it can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. Out of the 140 questionnaires administered to the sample population, 103 questionnaires were returned and after screening for missing data, 101 were considered usable. This represents a 72% per cent response rate, which in social science research is acceptable since the study results can fairly be generalised to the sample population (Kumar, 2011).

Results

Status quo of strategic human resource management in Uganda public universities

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and describe the participants' responses regarding the status quo of strategic human resource management in Uganda public universities: case of Makerere and Kyambogo (*see Table 1*).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics regarding the Status of strategic human resource management in Uganda public universities: case of Makerere and Kyambogo (n=101)

Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (St.D) (Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree).

Strategic human resource management domains	M	St.D
Human Resource Strategy and Organisation		
My University performs HR audit to ensure that it has the right quality and quantity of staff needed to achieve its strategic goals and objectives.	2.22	1.22
My University has and follows a Strategic Human Resource Plan to attract and retain the most qualified staff.	2.15	1.12
<i>Aggregated mean for HR Strategy and Organisation</i>	2.18	
Strategic Recruitment and Selection of Staff		
My University timely fills vacant posts so as to avoid staff shortage.	1.83	1.14
My University's recruitment and selection is competitive enough.	3.36	1.24
My University's orientation and socialization is competitive enough.	2.17	0.98
My University applies comprehensive tests to recruit a diverse workforce.	2.64	1.30
My University executes selection procedure on the basis of 'person job-fit'.	2.94	1.19
My University performs background checks before giving a job offer to the applicant.	2.40	1.19
<i>Aggregated mean for Strategic Recruitment and Selection of Staff</i>	2.55	
Strategic Training and Development		
My University carries out Training Needs Assessment (TNA) programmes to inform training of staff.	1.96	1.11
My University organises formal and informal training programmes to develop contemporary skills and knowledge of staff at department/section levels.	2.39	1.27
My University Training and Development policy gives priority in investing in younger staff.	2.40	1.23
<i>Aggregated mean for Strategic Training and Development</i>	2.25	
Strategic Performance Management		
My University executes transparent performance appraisal system with strategic congruence quantifiable results	2.18	1.16
My University ensures that staff set performance goals.	2.04	1.10
My University ensures that continuous formal monitoring of employee performance is a strategic issue.	2.07	1.08
My University ensures that continuous informal monitoring of employee performance is a	1.86	0.98

strategic issue.		
My University provides staff with positive feedback about their performance.	1.97	0.95
My University provide staff with negative feedback and/or punishment about their performance	2.10	1.64
<i>Aggregated mean for Strategic Performance Management</i>	2.03	
Strategic Rewards		
My University provides competitive pay (monetary) package to its employees.	2.21	1.26
My University has a performance-based payment method	1.93	1.19
My University has comprehensive incentive plans based on staff's contribution to University's goals and objectives.	1.98	1.15
My University adequately provides competitive non-monetary rewards.	2.29	1.11
<i>Aggregated mean for Strategic Rewards</i>	2.10	
Staff Participation in Management		
My University adequately involve staff in decision making to ensure the strategic gain.	2.70	1.23
My University practices an open door policy.	2.70	1.06
At my University, the principle of autonomy of staff in respective functional area is a key strategic issue.	2.33	1.14
At my University staff have the opportunities to suggest improvements in the way things are executed.	2.85	1.14
<i>Aggregated mean for Staff Participation in Management</i>	2.64	
Staff retention		
My University has relatively a high staff turnover rate.	2.45	1.32
Minimising and/or eliminating staff turnover is a strategic issue at my University	2.11	1.04
<i>Aggregated mean for Staff Separation</i>	2.28	

The study results reveal that Makerere and Kyambogo do not have an adequate human resource strategy. As such, the universities in question hardly have the right quality and quantity of staff needed to achieve their strategic goals and objectives. It is also exposed that Makerere and Kyambogo do not have and/or follow strategic human resource plan to attract and retain the most qualified staff (*see Table 1*). This means that these institutions are bottom heavy where most staff are in junior positions e.g. Assistant lecturers and lecturers and grossly lack senior academics at professorial level to provide academic and professional leadership in teaching, research and innovation. Meanwhile, when it comes to strategic recruitment and selection of staff, the result discloses that Makerere and Kyambogo: do not timely fill vacant posts so as to avoid staff shortage; recruitment and selection, orientation and socialisation is not comprehensive enough; do not apply comprehensive tests to recruit a diverse workforce; do not execute selection procedure on the basis of 'person job-fit'; and do not adequately perform background checks before giving a job offer

to the applicant (*see Table 1*). This finding speaks volume regarding why both Makerere and Kyambogo have perennial huge teaching staff deficit and appointment of people who fail to perform according to the stakeholders' expectations.

The study results further expose that Makerere and Kyambogo do not sufficiently do strategic training and development. For instance, carrying out training needs assessment to inform training of staff, organising formal and informal training programmes to develop contemporary skills and knowledge of staff at department/section levels, and having a training and development policy that gives priority to invest in younger staff (*see Table 1*). This finding therefore imply that Makerere and Kyambogo will continue to severely lack staff at senior level e.g. professors if they do not nurture young staff who have many years to serve the university and the potential to climb the academic career ladder and instead invest in old staff who are left with few years to retire and limited time to climb the academic career ladder.

Regarding the aspect of strategic performance management, results show that majority of the respondents expressed that Makerere and Kyambogo do not sufficiently: execute transparent performance appraisal system with strategic congruence quantifiable results; ensure that staff set performance goals; ensure that continuous formal monitoring of employee performance is a strategic issue; ensure that continuous informal monitoring of employee performance is a strategic issue; provide staff with positive feedback about their performance; and provide staff with negative feedback and/or punishment about their performance (*see Table 1*). This therefore mean that effective and efficient university operation is barely possible when no due effort is made to strategically manage staff's performance.

Concerning the aspect of strategic rewards, results depict that Makerere and Kyambogo do not: provide competitive pay package (monetary) to its employees; have a performance-based payment method; have comprehensive incentive plans based on staff's contribution to University's goals and objectives; and provide competitive non-monetary rewards (*see Table 1*). Hence, this finding implies that public universities in Uganda e.g. Makerere and Kyambogo, it is and/or will continue to be extremely difficult to attract high caliber academics at professorial levels. When it comes to staff participation in management as a strategic issue, the study results portray that Makerere and Kyambogo do not adequately involve staff in decision making to ensure the strategic gain, which in turn could enable the institution to attain its vision and mission. Results also indicate that the universities in question hardly practice an open door policy. In addition, the results also indicate that both Makerere and Kyambogo do not adequately take the principle of autonomy of staff in respective functional area as a key strategic issue. Leave alone, giving the staff opportunity to suggest improvements in the way things are executed (*see Table 1*). This therefore meant that Makerere and Kyambogo capacity to come up with viable innovation is limited. Meanwhile, regarding staff retention, results indicate that Makerere and Kyambogo relatively have high staff turnover rate. The results further indicate that the aforementioned universities do not take minimisation and/or elimination of staff turnover as a strategic issue (*see Table 1*). The implication of this finding is that perpetual shortage of competent staff at doctoral and professorial levels at Makerere and Kyambogo to effectively execute the core university tasks is inexorable.

Role of strategic human resource management towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities as perceived by top and middle university managers

Descriptive statistics were employed to summarise and describe the participants' responses regarding the role strategic human resource management can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities: case of Makerere and Kyambogo (*see Table 2*).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics regarding the perceived role of strategic human resource management towards efficiency in Uganda public universities (n=101)

Mean (M) and Standard Deviation (Std) (Scale: 1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree).

Perceived contribution of strategic human resource management on efficiency in Uganda public universities	M	Std
Human resource strategy and organization can ensure that a public university in Uganda has only staff deemed as assets and not liabilities.	3.71	1.19

Strategic selection and recruitment of staff can ensure that a public university in Uganda offer jobs to the most talented and competent individuals.	4.06	0.97
Strategic training and development programmes can ensure that a public university in Uganda all the times have a workforce with the right and contemporary knowledge and skills.	4.61	1.11
Strategic performance management system can ensure that a public university in Uganda finds out the competence gaps and needs of its staff in a timely manner	4.05	0.93
Strategic performance management system can ensure that a public university in Uganda addresses the competence gaps and needs of its staff in a timely manner.	4.80	0.87
Strategic financial and non-financial rewarding is vital if a public university in Uganda want to attract, retain and utilise the most talented and competent individuals.	4.52	1.12
Staff participation in the management of a public university in Uganda affairs can act as a catalyst to obtain peak performance from staff.	4.30	1.13
Favourable physical and social working condition is a prerequisite to realise effectiveness at a public university in Uganda.	4.00	1.22

The study results reveal that majority of respondents agreed that human resource strategy and organisation can ensure that Makerere and Kyambogo have only staff deemed as assets and not liabilities. The results also indicate that majority of respondents agreed that public universities in Uganda e.g. Makerere and Kyambogo through strategic selection and recruitment of staff, offering of jobs to the most talented and competent individuals they can have the right quality of human resource to execute university tasks (*see Table 2*). Meanwhile, a huge number of respondents strongly agreed that strategic training and development programmes can ensure that universities such as Makerere and Kyambogo at all times have a workforce with the right and contemporary knowledge and skills. The study results also indicate that majority of the respondents agreed that strategic performance management system can ensure that public universities in Uganda find out the competence gaps and needs of their staff in a timely manner (*see Table 2*). Results of the present study further reveal that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that strategic performance management system can ensure that public universities in Uganda address the competence gaps and needs of their staff in a timely manner (*see Table 2*).

Furthermore, most of the university top and middle level managers involved in the study, strongly agreed that strategic financial and non-financial rewards are key if public universities in Uganda want to attract, retain and utilise the most talented and competent individuals capable of enabling the universities to achieve their vision, mission, and goals (*see Table 2*). The study results also show that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that staff participation in the management of public university affairs in Uganda can act as a catalyst to obtain peak performance from staff (*see Table 2*). The results further reveal that majority of the university top and middle level managers agreed that favourable physical and social working condition is a prerequisite to realise efficiency in public universities in Uganda (*see Table 2*). The results herein therefore mean that university top and middle level managers have a strongly conviction that strategic human resource management can alleviate the gross wastefulness in public universities in Uganda.

Discussion

The findings herein have revealed that Makerere and Kyambogo- the first and second largest public universities in Uganda respectively, do not practice strategic human resource management. This finding is in agreement with Allui & Sahni (2016) assertion that Saudi higher education is facing major problems surrounding the development of human capital, especially of the faculty members and needs to devote more attention to strategic human resource management practices. The results also indicated that majority of the top and middle level university managers strongly believe that strategic human resource management can be panacea to gross inefficiency in public

universities in Uganda, other factors remaining constant. Moreover, Kyaligonza et al. (2015) ascertain that public universities in Uganda urgently need to reduce the amount of funds that cover staff salaries and allowances, which greatly compromise efficient execution of core activities such as: teaching, research, innovation, infrastructure development and maintenance. Consequently, the universities in question are incapacitated from being capable of spearheading the desired socio-economic transformation in the country (Kasule et al. 2015).

The paper espouses the mind of the top and middle level university managers involved in this study that the role strategic human resource management could play in improving efficiency in Uganda public universities is incontestable. This is buttressed by Armstrong (2006, p. 31) who argues that 'strategic human resource management is tool by which critical issues or success factors related to people can be addressed, and strategic decisions made that have a major and long-term impact on the behaviour and success of the organisation.' Public universities in Uganda in this competitive global based knowledge economy era cannot afford to operate haphazardly if they want to be and/or remain relevant in the 21st century. This is in line with Gilani, Zadeh & Saderi (2012) affirmation that through strategic human resource management, institutions are able to coordinate various activities and utilise opportunities optimally as well as preventing potential threats the institution may face.

It is hereby advanced that if public universities e.g. Makerere and Kyambogo adopt strategic human resource management, they could not only save unnecessary expenditure on paying huge salary and wage bill to unwanted staff but will also be able to employ multi-skilled staff who would perform a variety of university tasks efficiently. Consequently, the saved money could then be used to adequately fund other university core activities such as: teaching, research, innovation and infrastructure development and maintenance. This is in line with Gurbuz & Mert (2011) assertion that strategic human resource management has direct and positive effects on financial/market performance and operational performance. Similarly, the results herein are in congruence with Pikturnaite & Jagminas (2010) avowal that strategic human resource management is linked to development and expansion of knowledge economy, learning organizations, life-long learning and being one of the most important public organisations management aspects.

Universities regardless of context are labour intensive, they need adequate high caliber staff to provide high quality university service to a variety of stakeholders. Accordingly, it is undeniable that university managers in public universities such as Makerere and Kyambogo need to embrace the ideology of doing more with less and at all times avoid wastage of resources through strategic human resource management. This is based on the premise that strategic human resource management systematically organises all individual human resource management measures to directly influence employee attitude and behavior in a way that leads the institution to achieve its competitive strategy (Waganjo, Mukulu & Kahiri, 2012).

Limitations and suggestions for future research

One of the key limitations of the present study is that it only employed a quantitative research design through across-sectional questionnaire survey to establish the status quo of strategic human resource management and the perceived role it can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. It did not use qualitative research design and tools such as interviews or focus group discussions that could yield rich information to explain the state of affairs surrounding the status quo of strategic human resource management in Uganda public universities. Leave alone to elucidate how exactly strategic human resource management can play a significant role towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. Nonetheless, this paper makes a significant contribution towards our understanding of the status quo of strategic human resource management and the perceived role it can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. Thus, form a basis for further research to be conducted so as to overcome factors that impede integration of strategic human resource management in Uganda public universities for efficient service delivery.

Conclusion

The present study set out to establish the status quo of strategic human resource management and the perceived role it can play towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. The results herein reveal that strategic human resource management is barely practiced in Uganda public universities e.g. Makerere and Kyambogo. The aforementioned universities still operate using the administrative structure instituted during the colonial era i.e. before 1962. Consequently, the universities in question have people whose services are obsolete. Moreover, a contemporary university is expected to use more of automation in services such as student admission, teaching, examination management, and institutional financial management among other things. The findings also show that

majority of the university top and middle level managers have a strong conviction that strategic human resource management can play a significant role towards improving efficiency in Uganda public universities. Therefore, it is fair to infer that if public universities in Uganda want to get out of their perennial financial predicament, integrating strategic human resource management in their management is rule of thumb. This is based on the supposition that strategic human resource management practices bring higher levels of institutional performance. Accordingly, public universities in Uganda are implored to follow suit if they want to thrive and not merely struggle to survive in the ever changing higher education environment. Leave alone being able to significantly act as catalyst for socio-economic transformation desired in developing countries such as Uganda.

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