Human Resource Management Practices by Small and Medium Size Hotels in Central Ayawaso Metropolitan Area

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Abstract

Small and medium size industries may not function well without proper human resource management practices. They have important role to play in ensuring worker performance and positive organizational outcomes. This study sought to investigate the human resource management practices among small and medium hotels in the area of recruitment and selection. A cross-sectional survey design was used for the study and data were obtained from sixty mangers of small and medium size hotels in the Ayawaso Central Sub-metro of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, using questionnaires. The study established that managers mainly recruit by word-of-mouth. They did not use sophisticated recruitment strategies, and selection was mainly done through practical tests and interviews among others. In a nutshell, the hotels used HRM practices that were cost effective and less time consuming instead of the available sophisticated HRM practices.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Recruitment and Selection, Small and Medium Size Hotels

1.0 Introduction

The progress of every organization depends on the human resource practices adopted by the organization. Small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) cannot function well without proper human resource practices. There are so many human resource management practices common to SMEs and this research looks at specific human resource function of recruitment and selection which would be evaluated in details.

Human resource is inherent in all organizations, whether big or small business, or industrial firm, a government, a university, a club, a military establishment or any organization, which seeks to achieve results through people (Eduful, 2002). The objective, therefore, is to maintain the relationship in such a way that at any given time, the firm has the right kind of people at the right place, rendering most economical and useful services, thereby contributing to the sustenance and growth of the enterprise as a whole. In fact, they are the centre of every organization.

Extensive attention has been given to the role small businesses play to facilitate global economic development in recent years Verheaul and Thunrik (2000). Every day, around the globe hundreds of thousands of men and women start new small businesses and these entrepreneurial activities make major contributions to worldwide economic growth. Many nations have perceived the role SMEs play as the engine of growth to the development of their countries and Ghana is no exception. Many governments in recent years have turned their attention to selectively targeted policies for growth. In Ghana, SMEs constitute the vast majority of firms and generate income and have a substantial share of both overall employment and output which directly affect poverty reduction.

There is no single, uniformly acceptable, definition of a small firm (storey, 1994). The definition of 'small and 'medium' business varies per country and largely depends o the criteria for determining 'small' and what qualifies as a 'business'. Again, firms differ in their levels of capitalisation, sales and employment. Hence, the most common criteria used to differentiate between a 'large' organisation and a 'small' one is the size of its labour force, sales revenue, total value of assets and the value of owner's equity.

In Ghana, generally this target group is defined as Micro enterprises: those employing up to 5 persons with fixed assets not exceeding the value of $10,000; Small enterprises: those employing between 6 and 29 persons with fixed assets of $100,000 and Medium enterprises: those employing between 30 and 99 persons with fixed assets of up $1 million. For the purpose of this research, the researcher used the number of employees of the enterprises as the criteria for the hotel. Hence, a Small and Medium Sizes hotel as used in this research means those hotels that employ between 6 to 99 persons.

One of the growing sectors of our economy is tourism which has the hotel industry under its umbrella. A hotel is a place where all who conduct themselves properly and who being able and ready to pay for their entertainment, accommodation and other services including the boarding like a temporary home. It is home away from home where all the modern amenities and facilities are available on a payment basis. It is also considered to be a place

where tourists stop, cease to be travellers, and become customers. The definition presented by hotel operators to authorities of the National Recovery Administration in Washington is found to be a more comprehensive definition. The definition states that "primarily and fundamentally", a hotel is an establishment which supplies boarding and lodging not engaged in inter – state commerce (or so related that the regulation of one involve the control of others. (Ghana Tourist Board Directory, 1998)

A hotel can also loosely be defined as an enterprise that caters for the specific needs of people when they are away from the place of residence. It is an establishment which offers accommodation, food, drink and other facilities to travellers (tourists, customers, guests). Hagan (1998) in a paper presented at the International conference on Professionalism in the hospitality industry at the National Theatre in Accra defined hotel as "any premises that have rooms to offer for sale to visitors complete with support services like a restaurant, drinking place and other facilities which satisfy the basic human physiological needs". The hotel industry is diverse enough for people to work in different areas of interest and still be employed within the hotel industry. This trend is not just in Ghana, but global. Modern hotels provide refined services to their guests. These services necessitated application of management principles in the hotel industry and hotel professionals realized the instrumentality of these principles in managing the hotel industry.

The basic proposition is that small firms frequently fail to tackle effectively impediments which threaten their current operation and frustrate attainment of higher levels of output and employment. In order to implement a successful business strategy to eliminate this challenge, organizations must ensure that they have the right people capable of delivering the strategy. Human resources are the most valuable assets of any organization. It plays a major part in the overall success of the organization and there is, therefore, the need to ensure the effective management of human resources in order to achieve organization objectives.

Banuako (1991) refers to human resource as the skills, talents, abilities, knowledge, energy, intelligence and the capabilities of the people to learn. It is the proper utilization of these assets for the achievement of the goals of the organization that is referred to as "management". Human resource plays a major part in the overall success of the organization. Mathis and Jackson (1994) pointed out that the management of people at work is one of the primary keys to organizational success. Every organization needs to plan, organize, direct and control the affairs of the organization in order to achieve its corporate goals. It is human beings who do all these things mentioned above. Therefore, if we do not have the right calibre of people to perform these functions, things would go wrong in the organization. Tracey (1994) defines Human Resources Management as the organization function that focuses on the effective management, direction and utilization of people both the people who manage, produce, market and sells the products and services of an organization and those who support their original activities. It deals with the human element in the organization – people as individuals and groups, their recruitment, selection, assignment, motivation, empowerment, compensation, utilization services, training, development, safety, promotion, termination and retirement.

It is important that issues relating to human resource management are given serious attention and well taken care of in every organization. It is, therefore, necessary to investigate the use of HRM practices by SMEs, to better understand its importance and possibly compensate for difficulties they may encounter in the formalization of these practices. The aim of this research was to investigate the employment of best practices of recruitment and selection by SMEs. However, the researcher used Hotels and Guest Houses in the Central Ayawaso Sub-metropolitan Area of Greater Accra as a research location of this research work.

An effective human resources practice by SMEs has the potential to help boost their growth. It is common to associate SMEs with poverty in terms of resources, putting them at a disadvantage having regard to large enterprises. With SMEs, HRM is more modestly practiced and sometimes even without any professional expertise. The lack of expertise in HRM is the source of the low number of initiatives regarding the establishment of procedures called HR in smaller businesses. The latter prefer using law enforcement or simply imitating the practices set up in other organizations. These issues pose a constant challenge to SMEs.

Although considerable research has been devoted to human resource management policies in big organizations, little attention has been paid to SMEs. Shortcomings in definition and measurement in current and past research suggest the need for further validation of HRM practices in small firms, and a more careful definition of what is meant by SMEs in hotel industry. This study, therefore, sought to address the gap by evaluating recruitment and selection practices by SMEs in the hotel industry in the Central Ayawaso Sub-metropolitan area.

The aim of the study was to evaluate the practices of SMES in recruitment and selection procedures.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Research design specifies the ways in which data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed. The study utilized a cross-sectional survey research design of which purpose was to evaluate the human resource management practices of SMEs in the hotel industry in the Ayawaso Central Sub-metro area. In a cross-sectional survey, the researcher selects a sample of respondents from a population and administers a standardized questionnaire to them. The questionnaire is a data collection technique by which people respond to a set of standard questions in a pre-determined way. They are used to make inferences about a large group of people based on data drawn from a small sample of the population (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). A survey research helps to obtain descriptive features of the target population in relation to the identified variables.

Gravetter and Forzano (2006) point out that surveys and questionnaires are used extensively in the behavioural sciences as relatively efficient ways to gather large amounts of information. By presenting people with a few carefully constructed questions, it is possible to obtain self reported answers about attitudes, opinions, personal characteristics and behaviours.

Notwithstanding the advantages that survey method has, it has been observed that standardization of the questions to be responded to means the loss of unique experiences of respondents which can affect the quality of the data. Survey research tends to have low response rates and other errors such as response biases and non-response biases. Further, it is difficult to analyze open-ended questions when using survey methods of data collection.

As is done in this study, these problems were overcome by carefully designing the questionnaire; also the researcher personally administered and retrieved the questionnaire to ensure a higher rate of return. Again, the personal interaction yielded a higher response rate, as the respondents are taken through the questionnaire and clarifications made where necessary. The questionnaires were administered to both managers and owner-managers and the researcher made sure that the respondents understood the questions.

2.2 Research Location

The research was conducted to evaluate the recruitment and selection procedures of SMEs in the hotel industry. The study was conducted in the Ayawaso Central Sub-metropolitan Area of the Greater Accra Region. The location forms part of Accra East and is made up of suburbs of Kotobabi, Pig Farm, Alajo, Caprice, Kpehe, part of New Town, part of Nima, and Kokomlemle. It shares boundaries with East Ayawaso, Osu Clottey, West Ayawaso and Okaikoi North.

It is a densely populated area with a lot of SMEs especially hotels, Guest houses and small scale printing houses and the popular known Mallam Atta market. The area was selected because of its dense population and brisk small business activities by both Ghanaian and foreigners.

2.3 Study Population

The population is the group to whom the researcher would like to generalize the results of the study. The research was conducted in Accra municipality, precisely Ayawaso sub-metropolitan area, the Assembly was contacted and the names and locations of about 100 small and medium size hotels were supplied. The target population for the study comprised all managers or owner-managers of the hotels/Guest house numbering about 100. This consisted of both owner-managers and managers. By definition, 'owner-managers' are the owners of the hotels/Guest house who manage it themselves and 'managers' are those who have been hired to manage the hotel for the owners.

2.4 Sampling size / Sampling Method

The choice of a sample whose statistics reflect that of the population parameters was used in the survey research. The accessible population from which the sample was drawn (sampling frame) comprised all the managers or owner-managers of hotels/ Guest houses numbering about 100 in the study location. The sample for the study comprised 60 respondents from a total population of 100.The sample was made up of 40 owner-managers and 20 managers. In order to get a meaningful impact on the subject, simple random sample method and stratified was used to select 60 managers and owner-managers from the population to form the sample size. This was to ensure that every hotel/Guest house is given the equal chance for its member to be selected and included in the sample. The respondents consisted of either a manager or owner-manager from each hotel. The reason for choosing the respondents was based on the fact that they are internal stakeholders who are abreast with the internal situation in term of the effectiveness of human resource functions that are practiced there.

The research method that was used for the study was quantitative study approach. The study adopted the probability sampling method of stratified and simple random sampling to draw respondents for the study. It is a sampling technique in which the probability of the selection of each respondent is known and the sample drawn may be regarded as representative of the population been studied (Ofori, & Dumpson, 2011). Again, the choice of simple random sampling is a fair way to select a sample and reasonable to generalize the results from the sample back to the population. Table 1 show the sample size of 60 for the study which was randomly selected from a total population of 100 hotels. In this study, hotels (55) and guest (45) houses was the basis of stratification. In both cases of hotels and the guest houses, the owner- managers were more than the number of the managers.

The stratum for hotels was divided into managers and owner-managers. Twenty (20) respondents were randomly selected from the owner-managers strata and ten (10) respondents from that of the managers. The strata for guest houses were again divided in owner-managers and managers. The simple random sampling was used to select twenty (20) owner-managers and ten (10) managers to respond to research instrument. Table 1 show the sample size for the study which was randomly selected from accessible population of 55 hotels and 45 guest houses.

2.5 Data Collection Instrument

Research instruments are the direct means or tools used by a researcher or obtain information for a study. A self-developed questionnaire was employed to collect the data for the study. Questionnaire and interview schedule are research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents. The questionnaire enabled the researcher obtain a substantive grasp of empirical data on the study.

The questionnaire was designed for Employers or owner-managers and managers. It consisted of thirty-nine (39) items. It was made up of seven (3) parts. The first part asked of firms details. In part two of questionnaire respondents were also asked personal background information, regarding age, sex, educational level and work experience. The remaining part of the questionnaire looked at the HR practice addressed in the research. Respondents were asked work-related information regarding recruitment and selection issues and to what extent are they practiced by the hotels. In all, thirty four (33) close-ended questions were used and six (6) have open-ended questions.

2.6 Sources of Data

2.6.1 Primary Data
The data required for the study was basically primary and secondary data. The primary data source was collected through the design and administration of questionnaires which was critically analyzed. The analytical approach was used in the data analysis in a quantitative method by means of tables and percentages based on the finding from the analysis.

2.6.2 Secondary Data
The secondary source of data was taken from articles such as journals, existing books, reports magazines etc. The primary sources tended to be the output of conducting the survey research. The primary data was through the administering of questionnaire to gain first-hand information from sixty (60) respondents. They were requested to complete written questionnaires.

2.7 Data Collection Method

The data was collected by the researcher. Set of 60 questionnaires were administered to hotels/guests houses with one questionnaire each. Each respondent selected was given the rationale behind the study and was also assured of confidentiality after which instrument was given out.

2.8 Data Handling

The process of data handling involve numbering completed questionnaires, editing and classifications of field variables, creating of group frequency distribution as well as tabulation of data. For easy identifications, all completed questions were serially numbered. The responses were carefully checked to ensure their accuracy, relevance and appropriateness.

2.9 Pre-testing

The pre-testing of the questionnaire can reveal ambiguities, poorly worded questions that cannot be understood (Frankel & Wallen, 2000). To assess the validity and reliability of the questionnaires items, the questionnaire guide was pre-tested on three (3) hotels. The respondents had the same characteristics as in the main study. The questionnaire was pre-tested in order to ascertain and detect any ambiguities and poorly constructed and even those that were irrelevant. From the responses, remarks and comments received on the pre-testing, the entire questionnaire was refined and improved upon to take care of the observed shortcomings, enhanced the validity, and made the questions easier to answer and more response-friendly.

2.10 Data Analysis

Data collected from the respondents were analyzed by the use of Statistical Products and Service Solution (SPSS) software. This was used as the researcher deemed it the most appropriate given its versatility and considering the nature of the data collected. The process involved tabulation, description and interpretation of field data for simple variable.
The SPSS is software that has the incredible capabilities and flexibilities of analyzing huge data within seconds and generating an unlimited gamut of simple and sophisticated statistical results, including simple frequency distribution tables, percentages, cumulative frequencies, and other distributions.
In analyzing the collected data, tables, percentages and frequencies were used to analyze responses to each item on the questionnaire. The charts were used as graphical illustrations of the relationship among the various items of the frequencies distribution tables.

3. Results and discussion

Table 2 shows the distribution of selected background characteristics of respondents. These variables include age, sex, education, hotel classification, duration of service, and acquisition of position. The age distribution of respondents indicates that 53.3 percent were aged 41 to 50 while fewer respondents (10%) were aged 31 to 40.
In terms of sex distribution of respondents, 66.7 percent were males while 33.3 percent were females. Also, about 53 percent had secondary education while about 7 percent had basic education. The percentage distributions also show that 86.6 percent were managers of budget hotels while about 7 percent were managers of 1-star hotels. With regard to duration of service in management position, 40 percent spent 1 to 3 years in management positions while a few (3.3%) spent less than one year in management position.

Further, it is indicated that 43.3% of the respondents were founders of their hotels while 26.7 percent were employed into their current position.
In summary, 53.3 percent of the managers were aged 41 to 50; a majority were males while 66.7 percent also had secondary education. Also, 86.6 percent were managers of budget hotels and 26.7% managers served in management position for 1 to 3 years while a frequency of 26 (43.3%) managers were managing hotels founded by them.
3.3 Recruitment and Selection
Table 3 presents results in relation to the recruitment process. Table 3 shows 96.2 percent of the managers did not recruit from professional associations while the remaining 4 percent did. Also, 92.6 percent did not recruit from private employment agencies while the remaining 7 percent did. The table shows that 96 percent did not recruit from educational institutions. Also, 93 percent did not recruit from professional organisations while the remaining 7 percent did. Again, 92.2 percent indicated they did not recruit from news paper advertisements. Besides, 96.3 percent of the respondents did not recruit from trade and professional journal advertisements while the remaining 4 percent did. In addition, 90.0 percent did not recruit from unions while 10 percent did. The table also shows 77.8 percent did not recruit from internal notice boards/memos. It was evident that a majority of 86 percent of the respondents recruited by word-of-mouth.

Table 4 exhibits the results relating to the selection process. The table indicates that 64 percent of the managers selected their employees by assessment of application letters to new recruits. It was evident from Table 4 that 95 percent selected by assessment of qualifications/experience while only 5 percent was not doing that. Also, 63 percent of the respondents confirmed selecting their employees by investigating from previous employers while approximately 37.5 percent did not necessarily do that. From the table, it can be found that 62.5 percent selected their employees by practical tests. Furthermore, 96.0 percent selected their employees by conducting interviews. It is clear that 67 percent did not select their employees by referees' report during the selection process. Besides,

70.8 percent did not select their employees by written test while only 29 percent did so. In answering question on medical examination, 66.7 percent did not select their employees by medical examination results.

 Respondents were further asked to indicate their recruitment and selection practices. The details have been provided in Table 5. As shown in Table 5, 60 percent of the managers had written job description for positions while 40 percent had not. Eighty percent (80.0%) of the respondents reported that they did not require applicants to fill application forms when employed. Also, 76.7 percent of the managers required applicants to submit application letters for selection. In addition, 63.3 percent required their new staff to take medical examinations after selection has been done. Moreover, from the table, the results depict that 53.3 percent of the managers provided their new staff with appointment letters.

Table 5 also shows that 83.3 percent of the managers who provided appointment letters included duties and responsibilities in the letters. Only 75 percent included job titles in their appointment letters while the remaining 25 percent did not. Similarly, 75.0 percent included salaries and benefits in their appointment letters for new recruits. Further, 79.2 percent included SSNIT contributions in their appointment letters and are ready to pay to the government. The results also show that 54.2% and 79.2% of the respondents did not include leave entitlements and probationary periods in their appointment letters respectively.

 In summary, 60 percent of the managers had written job descriptions for positions, required applicants to submit application letters, required new staff to take medical examinations and provided new staff with appointment letters, but did not require applicants to fill application forms. Also, the majority of the managers who provided appointment letters included duties and responsibilities, job titles, salaries and benefits, SSNIT contributions and probationary periods, but the majority did not include leave entitlements in the appointment letters.

Respondents were asked questions on training and development. Table 6 presents results in relation to training and development. The table indicates that 26 (43.3%) of the managers reported that they sometimes provide training and development programmes for their employees while about 3 percent reported that they rarely provide training and development programmes for their employees. Further, 73.3 percent of the managers reported that they determined training needs of employees through job evaluation while 10 percent reported that it was determined through skill test.

Discussion

 With regard to recruitment and selection practices, generally the managers did not recruit from professional associations, private employment agencies, educational institutions, professional organisations, news paper advertisements, trade and professional journal advertisements, unions as well as internal notice boards/memos. These sources of recruitment are comparatively quite expensive and time consuming, and may be the major reason why a majority of the managers refrained from using them. However, a large majority of the managers recruited by word-of-mouth. According to Byars and Rue (2000), the main aim of the recruitment and selection process is to obtain a number of quality employees at a minimum cost to satisfy the human resource needs of an organization. This could perhaps be the reason why a majority of the employers or owner-managers preferred to recruit by word-of-mouth which is one of the most cost effective ways of recruitment a manager could ever use. Furthermore, a large majority of the owner-managers selected their employees by assessment of their application letters, assessment of qualifications/experience, investigation from previous employers, practical tests and interviews. However, a majority of the managers did not use referees' report, written test, and medical examination results. Actually, selection of new staff involves choosing the applicants who have the qualification to perform the job and in selecting these employees, small businesses normally attempt to obtain individuals whose capacities and skills complement those of the owner or manager.

4 Overview of the Study

The study investigated the human resource practices by Small and Medium hotels in the Ayawaso Central metropolitan area of the Greater Accra Region. The practice investigated was recruitment and selection.
The study sought answers to the following question:
- What recruitment and selection practices are used by SMEs?

A sample of 60 employers and managers of 60 hotels were selected out of a population of 100 hotels/Guest houses in the study location. A quota of 40 and 20 respondents was given to owner-managers and manager respectively

4.1 Summary Findings

The general objective of the study was to evaluate the human resource management practices of small and medium hotels. This was done by using questionnaire to obtain data from sixty owner-managers and manager of small and medium scale hotels/Guest houses in the Ayawaso Central Sub-metro of the Greater Accra Region.

- From the background characteristics, it was found that the managers were aged 41 to 50,   and the majority were male who have attained secondary education and were managing budget hotels.

- Concerning recruitment and selection practices, the managers did not recruit from   professional associations, private employment agencies, educational institutions, professional organisations, news paper advertisements, trade and professional journal advertisements, unions or internal notice boards/memos. They recruited by word-of-mouth. They also selected their employees by assessment of their application letters, assessment of qualifications/experience, investigation from previous employers, and conduct of practical tests and interviews. They did not select by referees' report, written test and by medical examination results.

- The majority of managers had written job description for positions, required applicants to submit application letters, required new staff to take medical examinations, and provided new staff with appointment letters. However, they did not require applicants to fill application forms. Managers who provided appointment letters included duties and responsibilities, job titles, salaries and benefits, SSNIT contributions and probationary periods, but did not include leave entitlements in the appointment letters.

4.2 Conclusions

On the basis of the findings from the study, it could be concluded that:

1.   The human resource management practices of the hotels principally comprised traditional human resource management practices that were cost effective and less time consuming instead of the available sophisticated human resource management practices used by other organisations.
2.   The managers of the hotels recruited by word-of-mouth.

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Table 1: Composition of the sample

Category	Position	No. of Population	No. of Respondents
Hotels	Owner-managers Managers	35 20	20 10
Guest houses	Owner-managers 30 Managers	20 15	10
Total		**100**	**60**

Source: Fieldwork survey 2012

Table 2
Background Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Age		
20-30	8	13.3
31-40	6	10.0
41-50	32	53.3
51+	14	23.4
Sex		
Male	40	66.7
Female	20	33.3
Education		
Basic	4	6.7
Secondary	32	53.3
Tertiary	24	40.0
Hotel classification		
Budget	52	86.6
1 star	4	6.7
2 star	4	6.7
Duration of service		
< 1 year	2	3.3
1-3 years	24	40.0
4-6 years	20	33.3
7+ years	14	23.4
Acquisition of position		
Employed	16	26.7
Inherited	18	30.0
Founded	26	43.3

Table 3

 The Recruitment Practices Used by Respondents

	N= 60	
Statement	Yes	No
	(%)	(%)
Do you recruit from professional associations	3.7	96.3
Do you recruit from private employment agencies	7.4	92.6
Do you recruit from educational institutions	3.8	96.2
Do you recruit from professional organisations	7.4	92.6
Do you recruit from news paper advertisements	7.8	92.2
Do you recruit from trade and professional journal	3.7	96.3
Do you recruit from unions	10.0	90.0
Do you recruit from internal notice boards/memos	22.2	77.8
Do you recruit by word-of-mouth	85.7	14.3

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Table 4

The Selection Practices of the SMEs

	N= 60	
Statement	Yes	No
	(%)	(%)
Do you select by assessment of application letters	64.0	36.0
Do you select by assessment of qualifications	95.2	4.8
Do you select by investigation from previous employers	62.5	37.5
Do you select by practical test	62.5	37.5
Do you select by interviews	96.0	4.0
Do you select by referees' report	33.3	66.7
Do you select by written test	29.2	70.8
Do you select by medical examination results	33.3	66.7

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

Table 5
General issues on recruitment and selection

	N= 60	
Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
Do you have written job description for positions	60.0	40.0
Do you require applicants to fill application forms	20.0	80.0
Do you require applicants to submit application letters	76.7	23.3
Do you require new staff to take medical examinations	63.3	36.7
Do you provide new staff with appointment letters	53.3	46.7
Do you include duties and responsibilities in appointment letter	83.3	16.7
Do you include job titles in the appointment letter	75.0	25.0
Do you include salaries and benefits in the appointment letter	75.0	25.0
Do you include SSNIT contributions in the appointment letter	79.2	20.8
Do you include leave entitlements in the appointment letter	45.8	54.2
Do you include probationary periods in the appointment letter	79.2	20.8

Source: Fieldwork, 2012

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