

HR and Management Challenges for South Africa in the Context of Workplace Diversity

Pieter S. Nel* and Andries J. du Plessis**

The perceptions of HR personnel form the primary thrust of this paper to identify future trends regarding culture and workplace diversity for businesses in South Africa. The literature review revealed that culture, and diversity influence organisations significantly. This research reports on empirical results of the perceptions of South African HR personnel to identify and prioritise their competencies, including business practises for 2002 and trends for 2010. All registered HR personnel with the Institute of People Management in South Africa were included and 1640 questionnaires were distributed, resulting in 207 useable responses. Suggestions include identified future competencies and capabilities for HR personnel as well as culture and workplace diversity issues. To remain competitive in Southern Africa, organisations therefore need to link diversity and culture to the needs of the diverse workforces of Southern Africa.

Field of research: Human Resource Management, Employment Relations, Workforce Diversity, Change Management, and Cultural diversity.

1. Introduction

Business executives across the globe know that the current rate of change necessitates being abreast of changing business conditions to remain competitive and prosper. The identification of change trends is consequently important and the involvement of various role players would significantly impact on attempts to identify such trends. For the past decade businesses have certainly been facing more challenges, including the need to change the way it does business, than ever before. Diversity and change also constantly require diligent management. For a number of years therefore, the buzzword, and almost a cliché, has been that human resources (HR) are any business' most important assets. To gain and maintain a competitive advantage management must therefore treasure its human resources. To sustain a competitive advantage business therefore not only relies on technology, patents or strategic position, but also on how they manage their workforce.

Dawson (2003,15) also outlines a range of change "triggers" to which organisations must respond to in order to survive. These factors are, amongst others, laws and regulations (for example, legislation on age discrimination), globalisation of markets and the internationalisation of business reacting to major political and social events. (An example in this regard is the Tsunami in the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day in 2004).

* Dr. Pieter S. Nel, Professor of Human Resources Management, Unitec Business School, Unitec New Zealand, E-mail: pnel@unitec.ac.nz,

** Dr Andries J. du Plessis, Senior Lecturer, Unitec Business School, Unitec New Zealand. E-mail: aduplessis@unitec.ac.nz,

Adapting to change, however, occurs in many forms and is necessary to remain competitive.

Globalisation is also a reality and implies that the world is freeing itself from national boundaries and is really becoming a boundaryless world. The increased movement across borders of people, products, services and capital are also some of the driving forces behind the globalisation processes. The boundaries between industries and nations are therefore increasingly becoming blurred in the global boundaryless village. In some parts of the world, however, globalisation has accelerated from a regional base and not from a particular country's endeavours only. Since the formation of SADC (Southern African Development Community) in 1992 it has always been critical to identify ways and means to enhance regional cooperation and development between states to advance the economic well being of its peoples, which currently totals more than 200 million. South Africa, as the powerhouse in this region, could play a major role in improving the prosperity of all the people in SADC and Sub-Sahara Africa (SSA) in order to speed up its globalisation process (Hough, 1999).

Southern Africa probably has the greatest potential to spearhead the new African Renaissance for the African continent. This Renaissance would lead to regeneration and creating space for people in particular to express and develop their talents and to harness the energies of the member states. South African issues impacting on SADC in particular, to help determine its future are according to Hough (1999,20-21) Political stability, peace and security; transformation to market-based economies; resource endowment; good infrastructure and development of capital and money markets. Barker (2003) also holds the view that the region cannot prosper and grow if inter-state cooperation lacks and if globalisation based on a regional context is not a future focus.

A recent initiative to enhance cooperation in Africa has been the formation of a new organisation on the African continent. The new partnership for African development (Nepad) was formed in July 2001 by the following countries: Egypt, Algeria, South Africa, Nigeria and Senegal. The heads of State of these countries also endorsed its formation. Nepad operates as an umbrella organisation and has the following primary socio-economic objectives for Africa, which currently includes most countries on the Continent. Firstly, eradicate poverty; secondly, place African countries both individually and collectively on a path of sustainable growth and development; thirdly, to halt the marginalisation of Africa in the globalisation process and enhance its full and beneficial integration into the global economy; and fourthly, to accelerate the empowerment of women (Nepad website, www.nepad.org).

It is clear that these initiatives are of critical importance for South Africa to dovetail its efforts to participate in and lead the African Renaissance. It would necessitate close cooperation between itself, SADC and Nepad to enhance South Africa's economic development and future well being.

The current efforts of the new South Africa's journey towards the African Renaissance ideal can however also be approached and contextualised from an alternative perspective. Instead of the normal management future perspective analysis, the using of HR managers' perspectives and responses could lead to improving management and leadership in the Southern Africa context from a fresh approach.

This paper specifically focuses on South African HR personnel (also interchangeably referred to as HR practitioners or HR managers) responses to identify and prioritise business issues in 2002 as well as their views on trends for 2010 onwards. The research includes a literature review, which is first undertaken based on the research of various authors such as Dawson, 2003; Hankin, 2005; Jackson, 2002; Kane, 2001 and Lipiec, 2001. The value of this research would be to provide indications for future cooperation and progress in Sub-Sahara Africa and particularly the SADC region in terms of South Africa's HR managers' contribution to identify competencies and future trends for business management.

2. A review of the literature

The general roles expected of HR managers and functional line managers are not dissimilar in most economies and cultural environments around the world (Kane, 2001; Lipiec, 2001 and Wright, 2005). The role of HR managers in particular are also interdependent in regard to the role of line management, because attempts to either be practising HR or only line management would result in organisations being in danger of becoming dysfunctional or even perish. HR personnel, but particularly HR managers and other levels of line management should therefore cooperate closely to utilise their expertise through mutual support to remain competitive in the current and future business world to avoid the risk of failure. Ignoring the particular relationships between these functions can therefore result in serious negative consequences for an organisation or even a country.

HR manager interaction should occur constantly with all line managers in organisations and should cover various facets of a business' activities. First and foremost are the competencies of HR personnel which should also be at a high level to meet the challenges of businesses in terms of their core functions. Secondly, the focus is on the complex aspects of change, diversity and intercultural management in organisations which affect all areas of its functioning. Thirdly, is the actual business focus and approach required of all categories of management in organisations, including HR personnel, to be au fait with management in general. These aspects as they relate to the role of HR management are first discussed. Thereafter the empirical analysis results of the survey encompassing the aforementioned aspects is analysed and compared in the South African context in particular. The impact and relationship with Southern Africa countries in general regarding management and leadership to enhance competitiveness is also discussed.

It is also clear that, change, diversity management, customised learning for the individual performance of organisations' employees, awareness of due diligence and the influence of government on the South African business environment is becoming critical for the future competitiveness of businesses (Barker 2003; Swanepoel et al., 2003 and Du Plessis, 2006). Global pressure on organisations in South Africa therefore necessitates changes to stay competitive. Diverse workforces are also a reality in South Africa. These and related aspects are reviewed in the following sections of this paper.

2.1 HR personnel competencies and capabilities for the future

In the past, HR managers concentrated primarily on transactional and traditional activities. These activities are still necessary, but high-level capabilities and management skills to support management and goal achievement to be competitive are essential to be effective in future.

In terms of the literature the following are regarded as essential competencies of human resources professionals for the future (Dawson, 2003; Glade, 2002 and Jayne, 2002). First, HR managers must be actively involved in managing organisational change proactively. Secondly, a better understanding of what it means to be strategic in human resources is essential for the future. Thirdly, more knowledge about e-human resources technology, employee self-service, e-recruiting, e-learning and e-performance measures. Fourthly, human resources professionals must keep doing the basic human resources administration as well as it was in the past, but also improve it dramatically if they wish to retain employees in the current international employment environment. Adler, 2003; Birchfield, 2002; Harvey, 2005 and Swanepoel, 2003 furthermore point out that attention should also be paid to the following: Encourage continuous education and training; ensure open communication channels; foreign language capability; higher level computer literacy; knowledge of intellectual capital resources; experience in key business areas; specialised HR knowledge; line management experience; social responsibility and enhance teamwork.

The research of Lipiec (2001) in particular focussed on the role of HR professionals for the next decade (namely 2010+) based on a survey of human resources practitioners. The results revealed that a greater emphasis could be placed on the strategic role of human resources management, teamwork, general management, international and multi-cultural management as well as change management by setting up forums for problem solving, generating discussion, new ideas and experimenting with new ways of doing things. A major development regarding future human resource staff requirement according to Grigg (2003,30) is to determine the value of the various human resources functions as they impact on adding value to the organisation. Dahmen (2002) and Ison & Barton (2003) also state that effective human resources management and

the bottom line are not strange animals to each other as they need to be linked to deliver to the bottom line.

Linda Gratton of London Business School in an interview with Burton (2003) emphasised that three major challenges that face HR professionals in organisations to provide maximum contributions to the leadership and bottom line in future, namely: First, HR managers need to become more vocal and influential in the boardroom alongside the financial and marketing directors. Secondly, quantitative skills such as the measurement of human worth and the understanding of organisational structure and dynamics need to be increased for HR managers to provide effective service in organisations. Thirdly, HR managers need to develop a new set of skills and competencies around visioning, systems thinking, organisational development and change management.

HR professionals should also take a strategic lead in combining their capabilities and competencies to enhance global management, culture change and intellectual capital in organisations. The additional contemporary competencies and capabilities of HR personnel such as taking on high level line management responsibility, adding value, proving direct support via strategic HRM inputs and so on should also not be lost sight of either (Becker et al., 2001; Mayrhofer & Brewster, 2005; Ruona & Gibson, 2004 and Schuler & Jackson, 2005).

Although the competencies of HR personnel is often reviewed and researched at the international level, multi-nationals and global organisations still need to observe the regional context to accommodate local culture and customs of employees who are employed in those organisations. This is essential as often the practice of HR at the local level and within a particular local context is vastly different from the international context. Research sometimes do not adequately reflect flaws contained in general deductions made, based on international studies, which are then presumed to be applicable at the regional level, but in practise this may not be the case at all.

The competencies and capabilities required by HR managers are clear from the above discussion, but an emphasis on change and culture is equally important which also needs to be effectively managed to achieve the objectives of an organisation.

2.2 Change and culture

Change and organisational development across international boundaries have necessitated a rethink of the shape and the nature of organisations. Human nature such as culture, habits, tradition and frames of reference are factors to bear in mind before any organisation can implement any change or do organisational development. Graetz et al. (2002) support this by saying that the problem is not in finding consensus about the presence of change but in finding agreement on just about everything else. The

underpinning force for change must thus be established before proceeding with the implementation of change.

According to Du Plessis (2004) the anticipated changes in the business environment in a future South Africa are of great concern to management as well. The role of human resource departments in organisational development and the management of cultural changes, to stay globally competitive are therefore critical to manage this process carefully.

2.3 Managing cultures and change in a diverse workforce

An important role that the HR manager can play is recognising the knowledge, experience, skills and the contributions of employees during the change process. It can also be said that managing a diverse workforce is the ability to effectively use the talents of people from various backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and cultures (Du Plessis, 2006).

Concepts of people in organisations, an understanding of the way people are and are seen and how they see themselves in an organisation are fundamental to effective change management of different cultures. To move from a local mind to a more global view of the business and its operations, the manager must have inter-cultural skills (Jackson, 2002). Knowledge and anticipation of change is critical for HR managers in ensuring the success of business ventures and is therefore an important strategic HR tool as well, which can support innovative behaviour to enhance competitive performance. Effective change can, however, not take place without effective diversity management either.

Culture is regarded as the communicable knowledge for humans to cope within a particular environment that is passed on for future generations. Nel et al (2004) endorse this and state that the congruence between culture, strategy and managerial style is important because it facilitates organisational efficiency. Cultural diversity is also generally known as ethnicity. Tradition and culture cannot be separated from each other where tradition is the transfer of culture from one generation to the next. Booysen et al (2003) is of the opinion that there is a definite lack of cultural awareness in South Africa and that only 24% of the businesses have implemented diversity management programmes.

Diversity management involves a fundamental change in attitude and behaviour and is perceived by organisations as a competitive advantage as well as a strategic necessity to survive in a globally diverse environment according to Dadoo et al (2001) and Ngambi (2003) due to the diverse profile of the world's labour force. By way of an example it must be noted that affirmative action and employment equity are legally enforced in South African organisations by means of labour legislation. HR personnel should therefore be competent to deal with the application of legislative issues of this nature in the workplace as well.

It is clear that diversity has become an increasingly important factor in organisations as the workforce has become more diverse. South Africa has a diverse workforce because some also come from overseas countries or from neighbouring countries such as Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Botswana and others.

The third group of issues which impacts on managers and how they deal with change in the broader business environment from HR managers' perspectives, are discussed in the next section.

2.4 Businesses and change in the broader environment

Businesses know that the rate of change and the accompanying necessity to be abreast of changing business conditions is critical for organisations to compete and prosper globally and therefore spurs renewal in management and organisation practises (Weiss, 2002).

It is acknowledged that a wide range of trends and innovations have influenced the theory and practice of management in recent years, but that relatively little attention has been paid to the source(s) of these trends. Furthermore, factors such as the expansion of global and regional trade as well as competition and changing customer demands, suggests that organisations are compelled to adapt to changes in order to effectively compete in global markets (Barker, 2003 and Hough, 1999).

Changes in the business environment, such as increased competition globally and regionally are often noted as catalysts for some organisations to have adapted or to have profited from these changes. De Cieri & Holland (2006) and Wright (2005), for example, cites two benefits reported by particular organisations as a result of instituting virtual workplaces: Access to global markets without the expense of sending headquarters staff overseas, and environmental benefits through reduced commuting mileage by employees. On a cautionary note it must be borne in mind that not all international solutions are suitable for the solution of local problems, but must be adapted.

Adler (2003) furthermore states that changes in the broader business environment are affecting nearly every aspect of how businesses manage themselves. Various forces affecting HR like the development of technology is perhaps the most significant in terms of its impact on managing organisations in the future to keep up with change. Furthermore, change management, diversity management and the complexities of HR managers' jobs also influence of businesses measurably. These trends are also supported by other researchers who point out that HR and management in Southern Africa needs be more aware of the customs and the ethnic contexts to be successful (Burton, 2003, Burchell 2001 and Swanepoel et al 2003, Du Plessis, Beaver, Nel, 2006).

A further complication in the South African context in particular is a concern regarding the impact of AIDS (McDonald, 2005). Some years ago, Vinassa

(2002,4) and more recently Du Plessis (2005) emphasised the necessity that organisations must deal with AIDS as a serious force shaping the future, since it is now not only a human resources driven issue in organisations like the mining industry, but should be central to national strategy as well. It is now acknowledged as one of the most important strategic issues facing South African business and certainly most Southern Africa countries as well. The current situation highlighted by the Medical Research Council's President Prof. Tony Mbewu (2005) is to state that only 2.8% of the natural causes of death could be related to AIDS in South Africa was incorrect. It should be closer to 29.8% of all the natural deaths in the country. AIDS deaths could cause a reduction in GDP of between 0.3% and 0.6% including a decline of 1.3% in population growth over the next decade. Other estimates by Mbewu are that the national HIV prevalence rate is approximately 25%.

In terms of the skills shortage, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and political instability in the Southern Africa context it is clear that the future business environment in South Africa is uncertain. Organisations should, however, position themselves to be competent and globally competitive as well. The fast changing world and globalisation clearly impacts on organisations' staffing which makes various demands on HR personnel to ensure that an organisation remains effective over time.

The analysis of the results of the survey is presented in the following sections, after the research methodology is discussed.

3. Research methodology and data collection

A very comprehensive HRM questionnaire covering 358 items to identify HRM and management trends was jointly compiled in Australia and New Zealand by their respective human resources associations in 1994. The final section of the said questionnaire sought to obtain demographic information from respondents. The same questionnaire was used with permission by the researcher for an identical survey in South Africa to identify current and future trends, which includes a 10 year long view of the future. Only minor editorial modifications were made to it. Due to the magnitude of the survey only a small section is analysed and reported upon in this paper.

The questionnaire was distributed to 100% of the paid-up members of the Institute of People Management (IPM) in South Africa. It resulted in 1,640 questionnaires being mailed to organisations throughout South Africa employing registered HR personnel. The response cut-off date was the end of March 2003 to accept as many views as possible during a 4-month period of responding.

The response is significant as 207 useable questionnaires were returned, which represent a 12.5% response rate for data analysis purposes. The overall profile of the respondents in terms of organisation size is also representative of South African businesses as well as the types of economic

activity being represented. It lends credence to comparisons of their perceptions in terms of the HR profession's representative organisational profile and therefore their perception of the future as well.

The respondents had to identify and separately rank significant changes from provided lists of various categories in the questionnaire, in terms of the current situation, and then for 2010 as well. Examples of aspects covered in the questionnaire were as follows:

- Increased national/international competition
- Influence of business environment on business e.g. legislation
- Employee values, goals and expectations towards organisations
- Cross border application of employee rights
- Effect of culture, change and organization development on organisations
- Globalisation of the economy and breakdown of trade barriers
- International experience requirements of human resources (HR) managers
- Implications for HR management in terms of workforce entrants

Ongoing analysis of the results, which were received, is still taking place, since the magnitude of the survey is such that various analyses of sub-sets are possible and have indeed been reported in various papers over and above the current papers' focus.

3.1 Demographic profile of respondents

The completed questionnaires received from respondents were subjected to verification for accuracy before responses were collated and treated statistically using the SPSS program. The statistical analysis was used to obtain responses in terms of the various questions vis-à-vis organisation size, occupation of respondent etc. Results were recorded to reflect the percentage of all respondents selecting a particular alternative for a particular organisation size, occupation and industry. The various demographic results are presented in the tables below.

In terms of the information presented in Table I it is clear that the profile of the respondents is spread over a wide spectrum of HR activities. Each respondent had to be registered with the IPM to qualify to give his/her views as a respondent to the questionnaire questions.

Table 1: Profile of respondents by profession

Profession	South African profile
Human resources (officer to director of HR)	67.99%
Business (line managers to CEO)	11.43%
Consultants	9.14%
Academic (all tertiary educational institutions)	7.43%
Other	4.00%
TOTAL	100%

The total 67.99% of the respondents who are directly involved in human resources are comprised as follows: Human resources managers or executives (43.42%), human resource officers (14.29%), human resources practitioners (10.14% which includes training and development practitioners). The rest are senior line managers, 11.43%, consultants (9.14) and academics 7.43% and other human resource activities, which represent 4.00%. This provides a range of perspectives, which lends credibility to key parts of the survey findings.

The survey participants also came from different sized organisations. It is accepted conventional wisdom that the bigger organisations have a more organised and sophisticated approach to HR management. The size of the organisations represented by the number of employees employed in 2002 is presented in Table II.

Table II: Profile of respondents by organisation size

Number of employees in organisation	South African profile
Fewer than 10	2.5%
10 – 49	6.2%
50 – 99	8.1%
100 – 499	15.7%
500 or more	67.5%
TOTAL	100%

A total of 67.5% of the participants represent organisations, which employed more than 500 people and almost 16% employed between 100 and 499 employees. Thus, more than 83% of the participants represented organisations that employed more than 100 people, which certainly present high-power influence regarding South African business and economic activities.

In Table III the spread of participation per industry sector is shown. The bulk of the participants come from the manufacturing sector (20.75%) and the business, insurance and financial services representation (15.09%). Others, which represent quite a large response, include government departments, consultants that in all total 25.16%.

Table III: Profile of the respondents by industry sector

Sector	South African profile
Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing	5.66%
Mining and quarrying	4,40%
Manufacturing	20.75%
Electricity, gas and water	8.81%
Wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels	5.66%
Transport, storage and communication	5.66%
Business, insurance and financial services	15.09%
Community, social and personal service	8.81%
Other	25.16%

3.2 Confidence in the results in terms of the respondents' view

The following question was posed in the background and demographic section of the questionnaire: "How confident are you of your human resources vision for the future?" A total of 72.28% of the respondents (N = 207) were confident, 22.27% were somewhat confident and only 5.45% were not confident of their human resources vision for the future. This carries significant weight regarding the results of the survey's future value and forecasting significance.

Issues which have been identified via the research investigation and which are also probably important for future HR and management relationships with Southern Africa countries as well are discussed in the following sections.

4. Analysis and discussion of the research results

In this section the results of the empirical analysis are discussed in terms of the major categories which were identified and reviewed in the literature.

The percentage figures in each column of the tables represent the number of respondents who identified the items in terms of current impacts (that being 2002) and future (that being 2010), which is then compared in the sections discussed below.

4.1 Competencies of HR personnel in South Africa

The results analysis in this section addresses the competencies that would enhance HR personnel's jobs in a national and international setting. Competencies and activities are presented in Table IV.

Table IV: Competencies and activities of HR personnel in South Africa

	2002	2010	% change
	%	%	2002-2010
External relations	32.20	48.51	16.31
Ethics and integrity	30.24	66.01	35.77
Employee/employer communication	23.65	70.26	46.61
Foreign language	18.78	78.61	59.83
International experience	7.96	27.75	19.79

External relations

With regard to external relations i.e. actively promoting positive relations between an organisation and external constituencies (for example communities and stakeholders and international organisations) there was an increase of 16.31% from 2002 to 2010 (32.20% to 48.51%). It is therefore deduced that the external relations will have a higher influence on an organisation in the future as a competency of HR personnel. In the Southern Africa context it is also clear that HR personnel see a major increase in their task to operate beyond the boundaries of their organisations to improve relations which could apply across borders as well.

Ethics and integrity

The results suggest that organisations ought to adhere to high standards of ethics and integrity in all human resources and business related matters throughout culture and organisational changes. From 2002 it is anticipated to increase by 35.77% being 30.24% in 2002 and 66.01% in 2010. This result clearly indicates that HR personnel anticipated a dramatic shift to be more aware of ethics and integrity in the practice of HR as well as competencies in the functioning of businesses in 2010 onwards. The effect thereof would in future probably greatly influence relationships and doing business in Southern Africa countries, since reputation of an organisation and ethics go hand in hand (Schultz, 2004). This may prove to be a difficult challenge due to the different approaches to what ethics and integrity constitutes in various cultures in South Africa.

Employee and employer communication

HR personnel's ability and skill to act as brokers to enhance the communication between employers and employees is essential in any organisation which are specific competencies they need to possess. Effective communication in a business is paramount in all areas and functions to be to its advantage. From the responses it is clear that respondents believe that appropriate communication will ensure that employees understand the future business directions, challenges, and identifying of business issues better than was previously the case.

A total of 70.26% of the respondents indicated that employee and manager communications would be a high priority in 2010. Only 23.65% of the respondents were satisfied with the situation in 2002. This is an enormous increase of 46.61%. It can be deduced that past experiences of HR practitioners (respondents) confirm the importance of good communication channels in an organisation.

In the context of diversity and cross cultural management not only in SA but also in the Southern Africa context as well, it is expected that good communication is a difficult objective to achieve. This was also pointed out by Jackson (2002) as a major future issue to be enhanced to the benefit of organisations.

Foreign language capability

The response was 18.68% for 2002 and 78.61% for 2010 in terms of foreign language capability. The 2002 result should be seen in the context of South Africa's current Constitution in that 11 official languages are acknowledged as being domestic. It may therefore be deduced that it would be quite hard to enter into a situation of being skilled in foreign languages with the current situation of so many languages in South Africa. There is limited communality in the Southern Africa region with other languages apart from English which is spoken in most of the previous British colonies.

There is, however, a clear indication in terms of the 2010 results that HR personnel in future in the Southern Africa context urgently need to enhance their capability to understand or speak a foreign language in the Southern Africa context such as Portuguese. It needs to be enhanced if cooperation and prosperity through businesses is to be promoted. The same would apply to business managers wishing to capitalise on businesses opportunities beyond the Southern African region in terms of global markets.

International experience

The response was 7.9% for 2002 and 27.75% for 2010. The overall economic situation in terms of globalisation of South Africa businesses therefore seems to indicate that HR professionals need to have international experience in future. This is a clear indication that respondents believe that in the future HR personnel should enhance their competencies in terms of international experience. This links up with the observations of Barker (2003) that globalisation is anticipated to increase significantly in future as was discussed elsewhere in this paper. It thus acts as a prerequisite to enhance doing business in a global context to meet management and business challenges as well as in a regional context in Southern Africa countries.

It is, however, surprising that the respondents presented a relatively low preference in this regard. It may be that an inward focus still applies and transition to globalisation in terms of the experience for HR practitioners is relatively low. This could lead to a difficult situation to manage employees

effectively in a regional context by the end of this decade, if South African businesses wish to improve cooperation in the Southern Africa region as well but that HR personnel lack adequate international experience.

4.2 People and relationship issues in the business environment in South Africa

The results of this part of the analysis focus on people and relationship issues that would enhance HR personnel's effectiveness jobs in a national and international setting and are presented in Table V.

Table V: Results of people and relationship issues in the business environment in South Africa

	2002	2010	% change
	%	%	2002-2010
Culture, change and organisation development	30.88	65.35	34.47
Employee participation and empowerment	33.83	61.78	27.95
Equal Employment Opportunity	70.79	82.45	11.66

Culture, change and organisational development

The results of respondents' preference indicated 30.88% for 2002 and a response of 65.35% for 2010. In terms of the responses relating to culture change, and organisational development, it can be deduced that with the major labour legislation changes in South Africa the respondents anticipated major changes. The Employment Equity Act of 1998 is a pertinent example in this regard which has major implications for businesses. A large increase of 34.47% is anticipated by the respondents to 2010. This is more than double in terms of the forecasted period and it can be deduced that with the new labour legislation in South Africa that the respondents anticipate tremendous changes to continue.

It seems that the results also support the fact that cultural issues and change is of great concern to the respondents. Management and their roles will undoubtedly also need to change from 2002 to 2010 and the manager of 2010 will have to be able to cope with and carefully guide staff through culture changes, particularly in the relationship context with SADC countries (Barker, 2003 and Mbigi, 1997). To capitalise on future relations and cross border ventures in the Southern Africa region in terms of culture and diversity would be very challenging for all organisations wishing to expand their business beyond the borders of South Africa.

The respondents therefore believe that managers have vision and judgement to implement these changes smoothly. This is very important for

relationships between South Africa and Southern Africa countries as culture/change is at the heart of future transformation and cooperation between countries in this region. The diverse workforce in organisations and understanding how they see themselves in an organisation are fundamental to effective change management of different cultures. From the results it could be deduced that HR managers ought to have inter-cultural skills to do their job well and be sensitive to any diversity issues.

Employee participation and empowerment

Respondents clearly acknowledge employee participation to expand with a response of 61.78% for 2010 see it as being important in the managing and implementation of change. It appears from the response of 33.83% for 2002 that employee participation and empowerment was already acknowledged because democracy in the work place was legislatively in place via the various labour acts in South Africa at that time, but that it was not widespread in organisations.

It is deduced that respondents believe that South Africa's legislative environment would be such that it would encourage employees to participate more in the businesses activities in future in view of the full application of industrial democracy during the last decade (Nel et al, 2005 and Barker, 2003). This is however a good sign for the future in South Africa, since vastly different cultures and employee participation approaches currently exist.

Cascio and Aguinis (2005) also confirm that a large and growing number of organisations now realise that they need to emphasise workplace democracy in order to achieve their vision. This involves breaking down barriers, sharing information, using a collaborative approach to problem solving and orienting employees toward continuous learning and developing.

Equal employment opportunity

It is an important HR personnel priority up to 2010 with a response of 82.45%, and represents an 11.66% increase over the 2002 figure. This is very important for a country such as South Africa that experienced major political and social changes during the last decade in its efforts to reform itself from the apartheid era. This emphasises the continued requirement for maintaining an equitable workplace, and the strong focus on redressing past imbalances as far as race was concerned in particular.

In 1998 the Employment Equity Act set out, inter alia, to eliminate unfair discrimination in employment practices, and promote a diverse workforce who would broadly be representative of South Africa's population (Nel et al, 2005 and Tinarelli, 2000). The Employment Equity Act (EEA) is important because in terms of its stipulations, auditing started in 2004, regarding employment ratios in organisations to represent the population comprehensively. The EEA is clearly still a very important issue affecting

the HR profession in South Africa in 2010. The nature of the results of these issues to normalise the South African society both politically and economically would certainly impact on South Africa for a long time to come. Diligent efforts to normalise society and present equal opportunities for all its peoples therefore seem to remain at the forefront of HR personnel's perceptions of the future.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The foci for the analysis of the research results in this article were firstly, HR personnel capabilities and competencies; and secondly, people and relationship issues which included culture, change and diversity. The two foci reflect the 2002 situation including forecasted trends for 2010. This focus provided various angles regarding the perceptions of HR personnel in terms of how they perceive themselves and the future business environment for South Africa with implications for the Sub-Saharan Africa region as well.

From the analysis of the responses it is clear that the requirements for the HR profession's role and capabilities are changing rapidly. Diverse workforces are a reality in South Africa and largely impact on businesses. The role of culture and change also clearly impact directly on current and future business activities in South Africa and the region as well. Various interventions could be applicable in order to enhance HR personnel's support to improve delivery in organisations. Examples in this regard are: Participation in short courses presented by various bodies such as universities and professional organisations like the Institute of People Management of South Africa. Large multi-national organisations could also play a role to enhance skills for staff and HR personnel via their local operations in South Africa. These support structures could also be synchronised with bordering countries' educational and professional bodies to up-skill the capabilities and competencies to meet the challenges of the next decade.

Should HR personnel be competent and have all the required capabilities they could serve as catalysts to create a platform to accelerate economic prosperity in the Sub-Saharan Africa region, which is currently sorely needed. The fact that workplace diversity equality also features very high on the priority list in South African businesses makes it very attractive to venture into Africa, which was previously not the case.

It is concluded that the results of the research as well as the literature review reported on in this article clearly indicate the significant influence of HR practitioners at all levels in organisations. Their role in managerial activity is also paramount to the effective management of businesses from 2010 onwards in Southern Africa in particular and Sub-Saharan Africa in general, in terms of the analysis.

References

- Adler, P. S. 2003. Making the HR Outsourcing Decision. *MIT Sloan Management Review*. Vol 45 No1 pp 53-61.
- Barker, F.H. 2003. The South African Labour Market. 4th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaiks.
- Becker, B.E., Huselid, M.A. & Ulrich, D. 2001. The HR Scorecard: Linking People, Strategy and Performance. Boston, Harvard Business School Press.
- Birchfield, R. 2002. Future Trends For Human Resources. *Management*. Vol 49 No 9 pp 20.
- Booyesen, L., Nkomo, S. & Beaty, D. 2003. A best practice model for building a valuing diversity culture. *Management Today*. Vol 19 No 1 pp 33-36.
- Burchell, N. 2002. *1994 to 2010: Future directions for HR in New Zealand*. New Zealand: Unitec. Available at: http://www/hrinz.org.nz/info/hot_stuff/conference/noel_burchell.asp
Date accessed: 15 November 2005.
- Burchell, N. 2001. *2000 to 2010: Future directions for HR in New Zealand*, Presentation to the annual conference of the Human Resources Institute of New Zealand, Wellington, September.
- Burton, L. 2003. The Next Big Thing. *People Dynamics*. Vol 21 No 2 pp 22-23.
- Cascio, W. F., & Aguinis, H. 2005. Applied psychology in human resource management (6th ed). New Jersey. Pearson. Prentice Hall.
- Dadoo, Y., Ghyoot, V., Lephoko, D. & Lubbe, G. 2001. Multicultural sensitivity for managers. Tsebanang Group: South Africa.
- Dahmen, C. 2002. The recipe for HR success, *Management*. Vol 49 No 10 pp 29.
- Dawson, P. 2003. Understanding organizational change. The contemporary experience of people at work. London: Sage Publications.
- Dessler, G., Griffiths, J., Lloyod-Walker, B. 2004. Human Resource Management (2nd ed). Australia. Pearson Prentice Hall Ltd.
- De Ceri & Holland 2006. Contemporary issues in human resource development: An Australian perspective. Australia. Pearson Prentice Hall Ltd.

- Du Plessis, A. J. 2006. Human Resource's role in future priorities and current capabilities. *The International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management*. Vol 6 No 1 pp 69-78.
- Du Plessis, A. J., Beaver, B., Nel, P.S. 2006. Closing the gap between current capabilities and future requirements in human resource management in New Zealand: some empirical evidence. *Journal of Global Business and Technology*. Vol 2 No1 Spring: 33-47.
- Du Plessis, W. 2005. The social responsibility of the South African mining companies dealing with HIV/AIDS employees. Unpublished thesis. University of North-West
- Du Plessis, A.J. 2004. *Conflict during the changing process: Human resources' role in 2002 and in 2010*. IFSAM 7th World Congress, 5-7 July, Goteborg, Sweden.
- Erasmus, B.J. & Van Dyk, P.S. 2003. Training Management in South Africa. 3rd edition. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Glade, B. 2002. Emerging trends in HR: A view from a big place. *Human Resources*. Vol 7 No 1 pp 14-15.
- Graetz, F., Rimmer, M., Lawrence, A. & Smith, A. 2002. Managing organisational change. Milton, Qld.: John Wiley & Sons Australia.
- Grigg, V. 2003. Linking HR to shareholder value. *Employment Review, Australia*. Vol 1No 1 pp 30-31.
- Hankin, H. 2005. The new workforce. New York: Amacon.
- Harvey, W. 2005. What values are important to New Zealand HR people? *Human Resources*. Vol 10 No 5 pp18.
- Hofstede, G. H. 1991. Cultures and organisations: Software of the mind. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Hough, J. 1999. How competitive is Southern Africa? *Management Today*, July, Vol 15 No 6 pp20-25.
- Ison, J. & Barton, P. 2003. Future Fillips. *Employment Review*. (Australia). Vol 1 No 1 pp 34-35.
- Jackson, T. 2002. International HRM, a cross cultural approach. London, Sage Publications Ltd.
- Jayne, V. 2002. At the crossroads. Is Human Resource Management on the right tract? And where exactly is it headed? *Management* Vol. 49 No 3 pp 26- 30.

- Kane, B. 2001. *HRM and trends in management: Travelling a well-worn path?* New Zealand: Auckland. Paper presented to 15th Annual ANZAM Conference. 6-8 Dec.
- Lipiec, J. 2001. Human Resource Management Perspective at the turn of the Century. *Public Personnel Management*. Vol 30 No 2 pp 137-45.
- Mbigi, L. 1997. The African dream in management. Randburg, SA: Knowledge Resources.
- McDonald, L. 2005. HIV/AIDS treatment for employees – where are we? *People Dynamics*. Vol 23 No 4 pp 24-25.
- Mayrhofer, W. & Brewster, C. 2005. European Human Resource Management: Researching Developments over Time. *The International Review of Management Studies*. Vol 16 No 1 pp 36-62.
- Medical Research Council. 2005. *AIDS causes up to 0.6% drop in SA GDP*. Speech by Prof. Tony Mbewu. March. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Nel, P.S., van Dyk, P.S., Haasbroek, G.D, Schultz, H.B, Sono, T. & Werner, A. 2004. Human resources management. 6th ed. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Nel, P.S., Swanepoel, B.J, Kirsten, M., Erasmus, B.J. & Tsabadi, M.J. 2005. South African employment relations: Theory and Practice. 5th ed. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- Nepad. 2001. *Primary objectives of Nepad*. Available at: <http://www.nepad.org> Date accessed: 11 January 2006.
- Ngambi, H. 2003. Managing diversity. In: P.J. Smit & G.J. de J. Cronje (eds). Management principles: A contemporary edition for Africa. 3rd ed. Kenwyn: Juta & Co.
- Parmenter, D. 2002. How HR Adds Value. *New Zealand Management*. Vol 49 No 10 pp 36-37.
- Ruona, W. & Gibson, S. 2004. The making of twenty-first-century HR: An analysis of the convergence of HRM, HRD, and OD. *Human Resources Management, Spring*, Vol 43 No 1 pp 49-66.
- Schuler, R.S. & Jackson, S.E. 2005. A Quarter-Century Review of Human Resource Management in the U.S.: The Growth in Importance of the International Perspective. *International Review of Management Studies*. Vol 16 No 1 pp 11-35.
- Schultz, H. 2004. *Reputation management*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press. Available at:

<http://www.oup.com/za/resources/booksites> Date accessed: 29 November 2005.

Swanepoel, B.J.(ed), Erasmus, B.J., van Wyk, M. & Schenk, H. 2003. South African Human Resources Management. Theory and Practice. 3rd ed. Cape Town: Juta.

Tinarelli, S. 2000. Employers' guide to the Employment Equity Act. Pretoria: Van Schaiks.

Vinassa, A. 2002. Measure, monitor and manage. *People Dynamics*. June/July, Vol.20, No.5, pp.4-5.

Weiss, W.H. 2002. Managing in a changing world. *Supervision*, 63(7):4-17.

Wright, P.M., Snell, S.A. & Dyer, L. 2005. New models of strategic HRM in a global context. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. 16(6): 875-81.