Scenario Building: A Practical Tool for Strategic Thinking and Management of Human Resources

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ABSTRACT

Any entity poised to make impact and to be relevant in the present-day dynamic business environment must plan strategically. Management must paint scenarios, anticipate the environment and be proactive or forward-looking, set realistic objectives and develop strategies and plan of action to achieve those objectives. The paper provides model practical steps in identifying issues at their initial stages and provides steps in dealing with them.

The study develops a scenario building model and applies to issues in Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) in Ghana.

Theoretically, strategic planning and its related concepts such as environmental scanning, issues management, strategic human resources management and scenario building and its related concepts forms the theoretical base for this study.

The findings indicated that the organizational structure, existence of formal issues management and environmental scanning system influences the use of scenario building and strategic management.

The outcomes, or possible scenarios generated in this study could be applied to similar institutions and management of issues at the corporate level and at the national level to reduce “the fire-fighting” approach of solving problems.

Key Words

Scenario Building, strategic thinking, environmental scanning, issues management
1.0. INTRODUCTION

Human Resource scholars and professionals have maintained that practical steps and process should be put in place to discover problems in their initial stages, before they affect organizations. Otherwise, these problems can evolve into issues, possibly crises, which may be critical to the organizations’ survival (J. Grunig & Repper, 1992; Lauzen, 1995b; Stoffels, 1994). By carefully observing and scanning their environment, organizations can identify problems early so that they can be proactive in managing them.

How do people and organizations plan for their future when they do not know what will happen? Schwartz (1991) maintained that managers would be able to build a profound and realistic confidence on the outcomes of their choices when they had a good understanding of uncertainty in the unpredictable world. To have confidence, according to him, the managers should look ahead and think about uncertainties by asking questions such as what challenges they could have or how others would respond to the actions they take.

Forward-looking managers should seek answers for more important questions such as “What will we do if a particular event happens?” Georganzas and Acar (1995) maintained that scenarios provided a “multiple perspective” for those who think about strategies. Scenario building is a process that is used for strategic planning in management, providing possible future options for an organization and helping the organization to better understand its environment.

This study investigated and articulates role for human resource in strategic management with focus on Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) in Ghana and developed an instrument for its implementation.

2.0. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Theoretical framework underpins the study are strategic planning and its related concepts such as environmental scanning, issues management and scenario building. This subsection reviews the related literature in this direction identify the gap in knowledge the this study fills.

2.1. Strategic Planning (SP)

Young (2003) defined strategic planning as ‘a formal yet flexible process to determine where an organisation is currently and where it should be in the future. The substantive issues are however, the same; they focus on making plans and taking actions today for the future prosperity and competitiveness of a firm in its environment with the optimal use of available resources. According to Ilesamammi (2011), strategic planning refers to the formulation and implementation of plans and the carrying out of activities relating to the matters which are of vital, pervasive or continuing importance to the organization. In short, it implies a set of activities related to the formulation and implementation of strategies to achieve organizational objectives. McNamara (2008) identifies some of the major activities that are common to all strategic planning processes as conducting a strategic
analysis; setting the strategic direction, action planning that is, carefully laying out how the strategic goals will be accomplished.

The importance of strategic planning to any organization cannot be overemphasized. Thompson et al (2004) buttress it further stating that the central thrust of strategic planning is undertaking moves to strengthen the company’s long term competitive position and financial performance.

Based upon the discussion to this point there is a fairly common denominator or consensus of the authors that strategic planning is a process whereby an organization looks at its resources and the environment, and tries to determine where the organization should be going in the near future (three to five years typically). However, there are related concepts when it comes to strategic planning and people end up using them interchangeably.

These authors failed to provide a model of strategic planning and the planning process. This gap in knowledge will be answered in this study.

2.2. Related Concepts in Strategic Planning
In discussing strategic planning, one comes across a number of related concepts, key among which are long-range planning, strategic thinking, operational planning and strategic management. It would therefore not be out of place to look at these concepts briefly.

2.2.1 Strategic Planning and Long-Range Planning
The distinction between the two terms lies in the differences in assumptions placed on the organisational environment.

Long-range planning refers to the formulation of a plan for accomplishing a goal over a period of several years. It is based on the assumption that present knowledge about future environmental conditions impacting on an organisation is adequately reliable to guarantee the implementation of the plan during its life span.

Strategic planning, by contrast, means that an organisation must take long-term decisions that will enable it to respond to a dynamic, or constantly changing business environment. The key idea is that the business environment is always changing and will continue to change. This assumption contrasts with the relatively stable environment assumed for long-range planning.

2.2.2 Strategic Planning and Strategic Thinking
Strategic planning deals with how an organisation will achieve its vision. It is basically about gathering and analysing information about the present with a view to determining an organisation’s future short-term and long-term goals and the formulation of an action plan to achieve those goals.

Strategic thinking on the other hand, is basically a synthesis of information aimed at producing a profile of what an organisation wants to become in future for example, ten years ahead. It reflects on the purpose of the organisation, and seeks an understanding of the organizational environment,
especially of the forces that impact the achievement of that purpose. It aims at creativity in developing measures to effectively respond to those forces.

2.2.3 Strategic Planning and Operational Planning

Strategic planning is the process of determining an organisation’s long-term future direction. It includes analysing the organisation’s environmental opportunities and threats, strengths and weaknesses, formulating overall objectives and deciding on means to accomplish those objectives. Strategic planning is the responsibility of top management.

Operational planning by contrast is making detailed decisions about specific goals and the means of implementing the strategic plan. It is short-term and normally covers a period of one year. Operational plans are prepared by first-line managers in consultation with middle-level managers to support the implementation of the strategic plan.

Thus, the key to the distinction between strategic planning and operational planning lies in their differences in terms of time frame, scope, and management hierarchy.

In building scenarios and planning strategically, knowledge of the environment is key ingredient.

2.3. Environmental Scanning

The term was first used by Aguilar (1967) and has been used by management scholars mostly referring to corporations’ competitive, economic, and technical environment. He described environmental scanning as the process in which organizations look for information about events and relationships in the environment; the knowledge of environment can help management map the organization’s future. Stoffels (1994) asserted that conditions such as external turbulence, observable signals, distinguishable consequences, plausible anticipation, and commitment to adaptation require environmental scanning. The organization should pay attention to the issues at every stage of their development, from emergence to dissipation. Furthermore, environmental scanning allows managers to detect topics and problems before issues evolve into crises and to monitor them when they initially arise. Directly related to environmental scanning is the need to put a system or a process in place to manage issues at their initial stage.

2.4. Issues Management

Chase (1984) defined issues management as “the capacity to understand, mobilize, coordinate, and direct all strategic and policy planning functions, and all public affairs skills, toward achievement of one objective: meaningful participation in creation of public policy that affects personal and institutional destiny” (pp. 1-2).

The concept and function of issues management emerged in the past century as management of large corporations made a strategic approach to the government, asking for public policies that are
beneficial for their organizations (Heath, 1997). According to Heath and Nelson (1986), it was not until the mid-1970s, when Chase (1984) created the term, that “issues management” was function have monitored issues, improved business strategies and plans, expanded their operations, and recognized as a specialized area in organizations. Since then, organizations with a sophisticated issues management communicated in ways intended to build and strengthen relationships.

Issues management also is the process whereby organizations use information collected to know and understand organizational environment and to interact effectively with their environment (Wartick & Rude, 1986). Ewing (1987) maintained that issues management would contribute to early intervention of issues development and allow organizations to participate in the issues development process effectively. Organizations without issues management functions often wait passively until they find themselves being able to do nothing about the issues at the end of the .Issues management is a necessary foundation for scenario building.

2.5. Scenario Building

Scenario building has enjoyed a rich, though somewhat chequered, history over the past thirty years or so, in business, government and the military. The use of the term ‘scenario’ in the context of future studies is generally accredited to Leo Rosten, drawing upon his Hollywood background, when suggesting to a group of physicists, who were hunting for a name for hypothetical alternative descriptions of how satellites might behave, that ‘scenario’ was a more dignified expression than ‘screenplay’. The term was taken up, with much enthusiasm, by the legendary Herman Kahn when working at the RAND Corporation in the 1950’s on US military studies. No paper on scenario building or planning would be complete without mention of the pioneer work performed by Royal Dutch/Shell during the 1970’s and thereafter.

A scenario approach involves developing future environmental situations and describing the path from any given present situation to future situations.

Scenario building is an instrument that assists decision-makers by providing a context for planning and programming, lowering the level of uncertainty and raising the level of knowledge in relation to the consequences of actions which have been taken, or are going to be taken, in the present.

. Scenarios are a synthesis of the different paths (events and actors strategies) that lead to a possible future.
3.0. STUDY METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method was used. The study explored the research questions using several qualitative methods for two reasons. First, a key principle of the scenario-building process is the requirement that several methods of information gathering be used, such as document analysis and interviews. Second, the triangulation of methods ensures the thoroughness and rigorousness of the study. The methods employed in this study included) face-to-face, semi-structured interview, open ended interview, semi-structured telephone interview, group interviews, document review and analysis, review of newspapers captions on GPHA, Radio and TV news monitoring and environmental scanning within a framework of a case study.

Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) was used as a case study because of the size of the organization, the number of HR staff, the organizational structure, its mandate in terms of the law, geographical coverage, current issues in the media and from the public in Ghana, among others. The Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) was established under Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority Law, 1986 (PNDC Law 160). The Authority is mandated to plan, build, develop, manage, operate and control ports in Ghana.

It is the national port authority of Ghana, responsible for the governance, maintenance and operation of the ports of Ghana.

The Authority main office is in Tema, and offices are maintained in Tema, Takoradi and Ougadougou, Burkina Faso. The Authority is facilitating in the development of Inland Port to facilitate cargo handling and transshipment activity in the interior with regard to agricultural products and international inland trade.

The study used action research in that, the researcher worked with participants in of the case organization for six months to develop the scenarios.

Significant amount of the data were collected through fieldwork-interaction with four main departmental heads and line managers (Strategic Planning, Operations, Marketing and Finance) with major focus on Administration Department staff. The interview, focus group discussion, etc were conducted in the organizational setting where participants worked (Agar, 1986) mostly in their offices, conference rooms or Staff Club Houses of the organization depending on the location that serve as the best option.

Five different questionnaires were designed for five categories of people; four for the case organization and one set for the HR practitioners outside the case organization.
Respondents were selected by purposive sampling method based on their schedules whether it involves strategic planning.

The presentation of qualitative data was analyzed using structured narrative and content analysis, figures, etc. to represent the findings.

Based on the methodology adopted and the scenario building process, an 8-step scenario building model was developed and adopted for the study as indicated in figure 1.
1. Task Analysis
Time Scale, Geographic Range, SWOT Analysis, Goals, Strategy

2. Environmental Influence Analysis

3. Issues Analysis and Selection

4. Driving Forces and Key Stakeholder Identification
   - Identifying Stakeholders
     - Basic trends
   - Problem area for the selected issues management
     - Review of environmental scanning results

5. Scenario Plot and Component Identification

6. Scenario Draft and Feedback

7. Final Scenario Development and Interpretation

8. Consequence Analysis Strategies Development

Figure 1: A model Scenario Building Process
4.0. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The eight (8)-step scenario building process developed was adopted for the study. These are the findings of the study based on the model developed:

**Step 1: Task Analysis**

The first step examined the present situation of Ghana Ports and Harbours Authority (GPHA) and identified the organization’s main problem areas for the future. This step included defining the time and geographic scope and analyzed the company’s existing goal, strategies, and corporate identity as well as its strengths and weaknesses. During individual and group interview, participants identified and expanded on the goals, strategies and corporate identity of the Company.

**Step 2: Environmental Influence Analysis**

The analysis of major stakeholders and basic trends help understand and assess the external influencing factors and the interrelationships among those influencers. The participants were asked to identify the stakeholder groups and some of the trends that they thought were influential in the environment. They identified eight (8) factors. Through environmental scanning and review of relevant documents, general social trends, such as economics and consumer trends, the eight issues were supported. The environmental factors and analysis are discussed below:

*Unstable exchange Rate:* Participants indicated that the unstable and most of the time falling of the Ghana Cedis against most of the major currencies especially the US dollar affect their operations. This was due to the fact that they deal with an international market, all their rates are quoted in US dollars and payment made in Ghana Cedi equivalent. Since Ghana cedi keeps on falling against US Dollar, it affects the cost of their stakeholders especially importers, exporters and shipping agencies/owners doing business with them. In addition, the company also buys capital items and equipment outside Ghana for their operations, hence more Ghana cedis exchanged for less US dollars for capital asset.

*Shippers*

Owners of vessels and their agents bring a lot of business to GPHA. If there is a major problem affecting owners of ship or the maritime industry in general, GPHA will be out of business.

Their operations determine the continuous operation of GPHA.

*Politics:* Participants were unanimous of the fact that the future direction of GPHA will depend to a large extent which party win elections in Ghana. This is because the president appoints the three directors responsible for the day to day administration of the organization; the Director General and the two Directors of the Tema and Takoradi Ports. From experience, according to the participants and review of relevant documents in 2000 and 2009 when there was a change of party in government, major changes took place after the election.
The Oil Industry

The emerging oil industry in Ghana is having profound effects on the operations of GPHA notably the Takoradi Port. Review of document from 2007 to date indicated that major HR issues such as recruitment, training and retraining, technology, infrastructure expansion especially for the Takoradi Branch have been as a result of the emerging oil industry and its associated need for services of the Port.

Technology: New technology has changed the way business operates in many ways. The Internet introduced new marketing and distribution channels through websites. Access to consumers and collection of information has become easy.

These were the major external environments that affect GPHA according to the respondents of which GPHA has little or no control over them. To be able to get to specific issue, there was the need to analyse internal issues that GPHA needed to attend to. A list of such issues from different sources such as focus group discussion, one on one face to face interview among others are effective tools that were used.

Step 3: Issue Analysis and Selection

At this stage, the issues that the organization face were identified through environmental scanning. Most critical issues were selected considering overall strategy and external environmental changes. The factors that influence the organization and the selected issues were grouped for analysis.

A review of publications in the national newspapers, Ghana Shipping Review Magazine, The Port Today Magazine published by GPHA, GPHA Hand Books, GPHA Corporate Plan and Annual Reports, Ministry of Transport website, Shippers Authority website and trade journals, academic journals, Ghana Maritime Authority Reports and periodicals and industry newsletters, and online documents.

Twenty (20) issues were identified but nine and are discussed below because they emerged from different sources and prominent among them:

Training and Development

Participants indicated that the organization is unable to support most of them to be trained in areas of interest.

Job Evaluation/Classification

Another issue that came up strongly during interview with the HR department was the need to evaluate jobs of the various positions; skill set needed, experience and job knowledge so that clear job classification could be made. When this is done, based on skills, job knowledge, experience and
qualification the required compensation could be given. Job evaluation is assessing the relative worth of jobs to other jobs.

Need for Expansion work at the Ports

As pointed out earlier, participants consistently mentioned the need for expansion work at the two Ports to enable bigger vessels to dock and to attract a lot of businesses, increase revenue thereby giving management the opportunity to negotiate for improved conditions of service as one of the major issues the company faces.

Pollution at the Ports

Various forms of environmental pollution was one of the issues GPHA is currently managing on lower level but the impact could be greater in the near future. Various forms of hazardous waste pollute the ports and Ghana coastline. Although there are Naval and Police patrols along the shores, not meaningful progress has been made according to participants at focus group discussion. The consequence of this is for the organization to spend millions of Ghana Cedis to reduce its impact.

Occupational Health and Safety

Closely related to pollution is Occupational Health and Safety issue. There is the perception that safety is the work of the health and safety officers. During interview with staff from the administration and HR department, it was abundantly clear of the gross disregard for health and safety regulations. According to them, there are enough information on the safety practices in and around the ports.

Water supply for the vessels

Water supply to the Ports for operations was seen as one of the issues GPHA is currently facing and will have to work at it to reduce the impact in the future. The vessels use millions of cubic tons of fresh water daily and also the operations at the Ports. GPHA buys water from Ghana Water Company but this source is not reliable. There were instances where Ghana Water Company is unable to supply water to the Ports for over two weeks and GPHA is supposed to depend on their water reservoir which is not able to sustain them.

Staff access to HR Policy

This was among the three top HR issues that came up frequently. All levels of staff; junior staff, senior staff and union leaders saw it as a major issue the organization need to do something about it immediately. They agreed that it exist but they have no access to it to make reference to. As part of the strategic management of organizations, organizations develop policies, manuals, etc to give direction to all those who have a role to play in achieving those objectives. Good corporate governance demands that board and management make their intentions in the form of corporate
strategies, policies and strategic plans known to all those involved which includes staff. Thus availability of HR policy/manual to all staff is basic, some participants reiterated.

**Salaries and Benefits**

Salaries and benefits of staff for management to attract and retain key staff was one of the current issues affecting the organization. According to them, GPHA enjoys good image in the country as employer of choice in the past but the situation has deteriorated over the years as compensation package does not commensurate with the growth of the business and the cost of living.

They mentioned other non-cash benefits such as canteen and entertainment which was to be part of their benefit.

**Technology:** Several changes resulting from new technology such as GCNET, Mobiship, online payment, etc. were discussed. The Internet and e-commerce have significant impact on the way GPHA operates. Companies do not only have an additional marketing and distribution channel, but they are also able to observe new players whose business models are based on their websites. The way information is gathered and analyzed generally, port operations, goods clearing system, payment system, tracking, surveillance and security issues has been changed by technology. It has also revolutionized communication with and among consumers. Consumers are now able to share complaints about the Port and its services online: e-mails, corporate activist websites, discussion groups and chartrooms. This provides opportunities and challenges for GPHA.

In selecting an issue for further analysis, it was extremely difficult to single out one issue as independent and more outstanding. Based on this comprehensive review, two issues were selected for the scenario building. These were

- Training and Development
- Occupational Health and Safety at the Ports

**Issue One: Staff Training and Development**

**Step 4: Driving Force and Key Stakeholder Identification**

This step is the ranking of the key decision factors and the driving forces of change on the basis of two criteria:

The degree of importance for the success of the focal issue or key decision identified in step one. The degree of uncertainty surrounding those factors or trends.
The Local Union

The Local Union has the requisite resources and are capable based on the role they play to lobby management or influence management to formulate new policy. They also assist in selection for training, identify training needs and educate their members on training and development policy.

The HR/Administration Department and Heads of Departments

Influence budgetary allocations for training and development especially Finance Department, identify training and development needs, evaluate jobs and skill sets needed to help in the planning, make the staff training and development policy known to the staff and play critical role in selection of training, learning and development beneficiaries.

Step 5: Scenario Plot and Component Identification

Primary scenario topics and initial scenario themes based principally on the environmental scanning and the focused group discussion with key stakeholders were developed. Analysis of the environmental factors and the degree of involvement of the identified stakeholders were seriously considered in developing the scenario plot. The GPHA Local Union Leaders and Heads of Department of HR/Administration, Finance, Operations were identified as the most important key factors; other factors were combined into scenario plots to project future scenarios.

The uncertainties, trends, driving forces, and the key stakeholders’ behavior were combined and created initial scenario theme. Five (5) possible initial scenario plots were identified. Two scenarios were developed among the five scenario plots. The five (5) possible plots are summarized in Figure 2.
The first situation, maintaining the status quo and following the training policy in place would not have significant influence on GPHA staff and developing the human resource base of the company. This is because the current situation has not yielded much result according to the Union Leaders. On the other hand, providing training on cost–sharing basis or providing training based on need of the services on percentage cost sharing basis without any firm policy to ensure effective implementation will be just as the first two yielding no significant/tangible results. These two can be used as an ad hoc policy or to close the gap in the current policy while comprehensive policy with all the stakeholders are designed for effective implementation. Scenario was developed for preparing a new training policy to reflect on current situation.

The second scenario option, increasing training budget to allow for more people to benefit is a stop-gap measure between developing the policy and solving the current training and development deficit of the GPHA. The two plots of which scenario were developed were:

- Increasing training budget to allow more people to benefit
- Developing a new training policy to reflect current situation

**Step 6: Scenario Draft and Feedback**

A draft of scenario was developed from the plots structured at the previous step. Two scenarios were developed for two situations GPHA was facing:
• Developing a new training policy to reflect current situation
• Increasing training budget to allow more people to benefit

All driving forces and environmental influencers were considered to develop a story line and generate situations for each scenario. The draft scenario was sent to key stakeholders for their comment and feedback.

Overall, participants determined that the scenarios were sound and accurately and depicted the situation with a thorough review of related components.

Step 7: Final Scenario Development and Interpretation

Consistency and plausibility of the scenarios were checked with consultation with the heads of HR/Admin and Strategic planning. The draft was revised based on the previous step by incorporating the feedback from the HR and Strategic Planning Departments. Feedback was not receive from most of them and the few that came consented to what was sent to them.

The two scenarios were developed as follows:

Scenario 1: Complete Overhauling: Developing a new Training Policy to Reflect the Current Situation

Training help improve the skills, knowledge, abilities and competencies of employees. The ultimate objective, however, is to help improve both individual and organizational performance. The current training policy of GPHA assumes that the organization is solely responsible for training the employees for formal and informal training. It was feasible when most of the training were conducted in-house and participants were selected by their supervisors or the training department based on the training needs of the organization. The cost associated with the training was borne by GPHA. With the rapid changes in technology, production of oil in commercial quantities in Ghana, changing trends in the Ghanaian and international labour market, superior customer care services demanded by customers, etc, there has been an increasing need for employees to acquire training in various fields.

A critical examination of the training policy indicates that it contains most of the essential elements of training and development. It outlined the objectives of the policy, spelt out the measures for training and development needs identification, methods of training implementation, types of training, and methods of training and development evaluation. The policy made provision for career development and links it to career progression in the organization. However, it falls short of cost implications and funding arrangements, new trends in technology, the current development needs of GPHA and if GPHA is unable to bear the total cost of training, the obligations of the beneficiaries of the training.
Scenario 2: New wine in old wineskins; increasing training budget to allow more people to benefit

Management and Union leaders agree that budget for training is not enough. While several alternatives could be looked at aimed at making the training and development policy to reflect on modern trends and to meet the human resource needs of GPHA, with the current budgetary allocation for training and development, no meaningful impact could be made.

Union leaders have had series of discussions with management aimed at impressing on management to sponsor more employees to benefit from training and development to boost the capacity of the staff.

Beef up Budget - Get More people Trained; Increasing training budget to allow more people to benefit

Figure 2 depicts the two scenario plots.

Management acknowledge the fact that the training budget is not enough to adequately train the requisite number of staff to meet the training and developmental needs of GPHA. Local Union Leaders are also worried about the number of staff who complained year after year of inability of the organization to train them especially formal academic trainings leading to award of higher degrees.

To be able to attract and retain competent staff and meet demands of customers, government and stakeholders, management and the Union agrees that increasing the training budget will go a long way in training more people on regular basis, motivate staff and drastically reduce the negative perception some staff have about selection of training beneficiaries.

Step 8: Consequence Analysis and Strategies Development

This step poses the fundamental question of how the task, issue or decision identified at step one looks in the light of the scenarios constructed. What are the strategic implications?

How can the strategy or decision be adapted to make it more robust? In this way, step eight enables decision-makers to turn scenarios into strategy.

Opportunities and risks for GPHA were assessed in terms of strategy development based on the two scenarios for the first issue. The main issues that the company need to consider in developing human resource strategies include:

- HR/Administration Department need to constantly consult Local Union and Departmental Heads on Training and Development issues
- GPHA need to conduct Staff Training and Development Needs to have a training and development matrix for each staff in the short, medium and long term per the company’s strategic plan and HR strategy
- Conduct Job Evaluation and Analysis detailing out skills, knowledge and experience needed and
relative value of each job to the others

- Assess Cost implications of rolling out training to meet the training and development needs identified
- Develop HR strategic plan incorporating all the above
- Management presents the detailed plan to the board for approval or incorporate it into the organization’s Strategic Plan document

The HR department has the responsibility in developing the strategies for the Board of Directors to approve. The Local Union and the various heads of departments especially Finance needs to provide vital information to HR. The heads of departments are responsible for departmental goals and they need the calibre of staff (knowledge, skill set and experience) needed to accomplish the goals.

The various departments could send a memorandum to the HR on the training and cost based on information obtained from staff of the department. The Local Union could also be of help whiles Ghana Employers Association (GEA) could also be consulted on some of these issues. The overall quality of final scenarios was evaluated for their relevance to users, internal consistency, archetype of themes and stableness.

Second Issue Selected: Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) is one of the current issues that affect every staff, users of the Ports (Freight Forwarders, Shippers, importers, exporter, transporters) and in fact anybody who uses the Ports facilities.

In developing the scenario, steps one (1) to step three (3) followed the same process as issue one since it is the same company and the study for both issues were done at the same time. The steps would have been evaluated again if the time and or the company or location of the company was different. Thus, time, company/institution in question or the location would have brought about different factors

Step 4: Driving Forces and Key Stakeholder Identification

Four basic driving forces and 14 key influencing factors were identified as follows:

Management/Government

- Control over the Port operations
- Development and implementation of policies and programmes
- Interest on occupational health and safety issues affects the customers
Ghana Institute of freight forwarders/Ghana Shippers Authority

- Lobbying GPA management to implement health and Safety policy
- Usage of the Port facilities by their members
- Deeply interested in Occupational Health and Safety as it affects their work
- Generate a lot of revenue to GPHA so they are one of the key GPHA clients and voice carries a lot of weight. They have the resources and capacity to effectively lobby.

Ghana Maritime Authority (GMA)

GMA has the responsibility for monitoring, regulating and coordinating all maritime activities.
Ensure safe, secure and efficient shipping operations and protection of maritime environment from pollution from ships.
Enforces OHS regulations at the ports and ensure safe and working environment per their mandate.
GMA recommendations will force GPHA management to attach the needed seriousness to ensure safe, secure and efficient working environment for staff and clients using the Ports facilities.

Oil and Gas companies

The oil and gas companies are also one of the key stakeholders in the Port business especially the Takoradi Port. Their influence is depicted in figure 3.

Figure 3: The influence of the oil and Gas Companies
Review of sources mainly through industry magazines, unpublished research work and GPHA newsletters attested to these. These factors were combined and developed into scenario plots in Step 6.

**Step 5: Scenario Plot and Component Identification**

The Government and Ghana Maritime Authority were identified as the most important key factors. Other factors were Oil and Gas companies such as Tullow Ghana Ltd and Kosmos Energy BV. The Ministry of Transport also has the mandate to monitor the operations of Ports in the country. The Ministry was identified as the main influencing factor.

According to the Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Welfare, the Government of Ghana would soon establish an authority on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) to police and implement draft National Occupational Safety and Health Policy (NOSHP) being prepared by the government. According to him, NHOSP is expected to serve as a model guideline for adoption across all major sectors of the economy to ensure safe and healthy workplace programmes.

Oil and gas companies are the main stakeholders which champion health and safety issues at the ports and advocate for written Occupational Health and Safety policy and some of them are willing to provide financial and logistical support to meet international best practices.

There were also other advocates such as Ghana Institute of Freight Forwarders (GIFF) whose work is directly affected by the OHS issues. Due to their number and being a key customer of GPHA, GIFF is one of the influencing stakeholders which can lobby GPHA to implement OHS policy.

Uncertainties, trends, driving forces, and the stakeholder’s behavior were combined to get an initial scenario theme.

Five possible themes were developed out of which two were developed into scenarios:
The five possible themes/plots are depicted in figure 4.

Figure 4: Scenario Plots for OSH

Plot 1: Maintaining the Status Quo

The current situation at GPHA where a number of OSH policies appears to be available in a piecemeal manner resulting in duplication in some areas and gaps in others does not ensure strict adherence. The consequence is that activities are carried out at the Ports without adherence to Occupational Health and Safety procedures. There is no codified legislation in the country which can take care of basic OSH issues at the Ports in Ghana.

GPHA provide medical services but concentrate on curative health. This current system will inevitably yield the current result at best and worse result when there is deficiency.

Educating staff and stakeholders on OSH issues according to the participants will not yield much result. This option was not considered to develop scenarios based on the foregoing reasons.

On the Government's proposed OHS Authority, nobody knows when the state will implement that since there have been a lot of ‘government is going to do…’ in the system and most of such statement do not see the light of the day. They remain in the ‘pipeline ‘and ‘tunnel’. Obviously, that was not a good option. The last one on educating the people has produced the current result which is not acceptable by all. Thus, scenarios were not developed for the three options but for the other two:

- Liaise with Oil and Gas Companies to formulate and implement international OSH best practices
• Employ more Safety Officers to police the Ports.

**Step 6: Scenario Draft and Feedback**

A draft of the scenarios were developed from the plots and sent to the relevant departments of the Authority and other stakeholders for their feedback.

The story lines were developed for each scenario based on the identified driving forces and influencers. Generally, the scenarios were considered accurate, plausible and realistic. The HR and Security Departments delve briefly into the content of the scenarios.

**Step 7: Final Scenario Development and Interpretation**

The scenarios developed were:

*Scenario 1: People matter, every institution matters on OHS Issues; Liaise with Oil and Gas Companies to formulate and implement International OHS best practices*

Since the discovery of oil and gas in commercial quantities in Ghana in 2007 and subsequent production, Oil and Gas production and servicing companies’ activities occupies a large proportion of Port and harbours activities especially the Port of Takoradi. Since the companies involved are international companies operating in many countries for quite some time, health and safety issues are dear to their operations. Most of them are prepared to ensure that international OSH minimum standards are maintained at the Ports.

Tullow Ghana Limited, the Operator of the Jubilee Field could be the main partner in this regard since they have the needed expertise and the financial capacity. They have developed and implemented piecemeal policies in this direction and called on institutions. Some of the oil companies’ Environment, Health and Safety (EHS) policies reviewed were so comprehensive and covers most aspect but due to the fact that they do not have the mandate of GPHA, they are silent on their implementation.

The benefits of this option are that:

• It will cost GPHA less in the design and implementation since the companies will swallow large portion of the financial implications

• The needed expertise in OSH will be available since there are industry EHS experts with experience across the world from the various oil and gas companies which will complement the local expertise.

• The broad-based nature of such policy will incorporate all varied views and industry technicalities.

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Scenario 2: Where persuasion fails, force must be applied: Employment of more Safety Officers to enforce OHS Standards

This scenario proposes that the Management of GPHA should employ more EHS Officers to police the activities of users of the Port facilities and GPHA staff on the field and in the offices. Management also believe that although the initial cost seems to be high, it will reduce the overall cost of accidents and cost associated with EHS issues at the Ports eventually. It will also create employment for EHS professionals and also make EHS issue an integral part of GPHA operations and when such policing continues people will also develop ‘safety culture’ which is generally poor in Ghana.

The HR department hinted that it is important to consider the cost implications in terms of compensation package and overall implications on HR planning of GPHA. It is evident that in Ghana this is one of the most workable options since laws, regulations and systems don’t normally work unless the police power is applied. The Union Leaders and GIFF members were highly in favour of this approach.

Step 8: Consequence Analysis and Strategies Development

Based on the scenarios developed and assessing the risks and opportunities associated with these, the following strategies are suggested for GPHA, HR department and other stakeholders:

- Provision should be made on the cost implications of developing the policy, implementing and monitoring.
- Staff should be sensitized to be conscious on OSH issues regardless of their expertise.
- GPHA need to develop OHS policy in collaboration with all stakeholders and make it known through training, orientations and integrating it in GPHA operations.
- Routine OSH inspection of the Ports and GPHA Offices should be added to the operation monitoring of GPHA.
- The Administration and HR department need to lead the crusade of improving the OSH issues in both Takoradi and Tema Harbours.
  - Cooperation will cement the relationship between the various stakeholders.

5.0. CONCLUSION

Human Resource practitioners have been told to think and act strategically, often without knowing how to.

Human resource practitioners can participate in and contribute to strategic management through scenario building in at least two possible ways. First, human resource practitioners can join a scenario-planning team and provide information about issues and staff. The scenario-building process is based on identifying basic trends and uncertainties and help management compensate for the usual
errors in decision making. Environmental scanning, one of the most important activities of HRM, is basically identical to the step that identifies environmental factors and uncertainties in scenario building.

Second, HR professionals can build scenarios derived from research, such as staff surveys, interviews, and environmental scanning. HR professionals can generate scenarios that help their organizations to be knowledgeable and sensitive about and get prepared for possible future.

The study contributes to the body of knowledge in human resource management by providing one possible process that human resource management can contribute to strategic management. This study articulate why it is necessary for human resources practitioners to have a longer-term, broader perspective beyond being specialists with technical expertise.

The scenario-building process is based on factors in the environment that may have consequences on the growth, and even survival, of an organization. The study incorporates the processes of scenario building, issues management, and environmental scanning and explain how these concepts are closely related in HRM.

Scenario building is a helpful instrument for strategic thinking to examine comprehensive future options and develop optimal strategies for decision making. The study provides a practical model of scenario building as well as a step-by step procedure for its implementation. Practitioners who want to try this method may use the model proposed in their practice depending on the organization, time and location.

From the findings and foregoing discussions, the following conclusions can be drawn:

The structure of an organization’s reporting relationship influences how strategic thinking and management of human resources can be implemented.

An organization with a formal environmental scanning function is more likely to employ scenario building and use it effectively than an organization that does not conduct environmental scanning. Scenario building forces and institutionalizes strategic thinking in human resource
REFERENCES


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