

**THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN
SUPPORTING THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE
ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT
OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS**

by

Sibusiso Desmond Chibi

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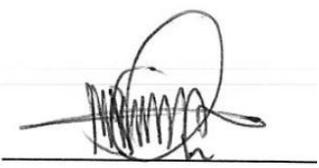
Supervisor: Ms C Alers

June 2017

DECLARATION

I declare that THE ROLE OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN SUPPORTING THE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMMES BRANCH OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

Mr SD Chibi : 
Date : 14 June 2017
Student number : 4384-688-2
Degree : Master of Public Administration

DEDICATION

This research paper is dedicated to my parents, the late Ms Lina Manjeta Magagula and, Mr Amos Fanyane Chibi, my fiancé Mmantsha Kola and children, siblings, Vusi (late), Bongane, Sithembiso, Thembeni, Lungile, Ruth, Wellcome, and my cousins for giving me a reason to advance my career in a quest to make them proud. Special thanks to my grandparents, Solomon Magugu Chibi, the late Emely Elliate Sono, Makhabane Vangile Mkhabela and Jonas Magagula for instilling the sense that discipline breeds success. Lastly, sincere gratitude to the Mbuzini Community and all teachers who nurtured my educational career (Messer's BW Matfonsi, L Ntuli, BR Ngcane, LP Kubhayi, MP Shabangu, MJ Mabuza, MK Mahlalela and MS Mahlalela "Chief Mlambo II"). My friends, Vusi Cosmos Shabalala, Masotja Nkentjane, Vusi Maliba, Themba and Thulane Mavabaza Mahlalela.

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SUMMARY

The study employed a quantitative research method, which is descriptive in nature, to determine the role of Human Resource Management in supporting the strategic objectives of the Department of Environmental Affairs. This interest was explored with particular reference to the Environmental Programmes branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs. Data was gathered from senior, middle and junior managers through self-administered questionnaires and it was then analysed using statistical methods and graphs. The findings reveal that the role of Human Resource Management in supporting the strategic objectives of the Department of Environmental Affairs is not efficiently elevated or viewed to have any influence on the desired goals of the Department of Environmental Affairs. As a result, the Human Resource Management component is not considered a strategic partner. Furthermore, the senior, middle and junior managers know very little about the Human Resource Management strategy and there exists a lack of emphasis on the development and implementation of joint strategic human resource management plans between the managers and the Human Resource Management component.

KEY TERMS

Department of Environmental Affairs; First line managers; Human Resource Management; Human Resource Strategy; Organisational Strategy; Strategic Human Resource Management; Strategic Human Resource Management Models; Strategic Management; Strategic Plan; Strategic Planning

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACRONYM / ABBREVIATION	DESCRIPTION
CEMS	College of Economic and Management Sciences
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
DEAT	Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism
HR	Human Resources
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
PRC	Presidential Review Commission
PSA	Public Service Act of 1994, as amended by Act 30 of 2007
PSR	Public Service Regulations of 2001, as amended on 1 March 2013
SHRM	Strategic Human Resource Management
UNISA	University of South Africa
WPHRM	White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service
WPTPS	White Paper on Transformation of the Public Service

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Changes in technology, shifting social values, along with globalisation are all transforming the role of human resource management (HRM) in public organisations. Traditionally, HR managers were exclusively responsible for the management of employment contracts. Nowadays, however, HRM increasingly serves as a strategic partner in driving organisational performance. Senior, middle and junior managers thus need to recognise HRM's significance in supporting the objectives of an organisation (Lussier, 2008:239; Mullins & Christy, 2011:13). According to Lussier (2008:240), the economic, social and political turmoil of recent years has sparked a renewed approach in strategic organisational planning, including in strategic human resource management (SHRM). The acknowledgement of effective SHRM is therefore progressively more important for effective, efficient and economical public sector performance. Accordingly, public managers need to rethink the role of HRM in supporting their organisations' strategic objectives by paying attention to service delivery on the one hand and the needs of public officials on the other (Daft & Marcic, 2013:189, 311).

With regard to the Department of Environmental Affairs (hereafter DEA), the organisational strategy cannot be formulated or implemented without a well-defined HR strategy. The organisational and HR strategy should be symbiotically aligned in order to ensure effective service delivery (Nel et al., 2004:524). The alignment between the HR strategy and the overall organisational strategy is no longer solely the function of the HR manager, but rather an all-inclusive function involving the senior, middle and junior managers within an organisation. All the management levels within the DEA are thus required to enforce the integration and implementation of these two strategies.

This chapter provides a general overview to the study, including the background and motivation for the study, the research problem, research questions as well as the purpose and objectives of the study. The study's significance also gets touched on. A preliminary literature review precedes the research methodology section. Thereafter, the scope of the research receives attention before this introductory chapter concludes with a detailed layout of the dissertation's chapters. Before proceeding to the background and motivation for the research, the researcher deemed it necessary to provide definitions of key concepts used regularly in this study. This approach enlightened the researcher, enabling him to gain the necessary knowledge and insight into the main arguments of relevant public administration scholars and researchers vis-à-vis the complex role of HRM.

1.2 Definition of concepts

The definitions below provide focused meanings of the key concepts used in this study:

Human resource management is, for the purpose of this study, defined as an integrated process that comprises all the main activities carried out by certain individuals and groups as part of their duties in order to achieve HR and institutional objectives of an organisation (Daft & Marcic, 2013:31; Griffin, 2012:6).

A *strategic plan* is a grand outline of an organisation's current situation as well as the future situation that the organisation intends to attain at a specified time. It mainly provides a set of milestones for resource allocation, priorities and action steps necessary to reach strategic goals (Lussier, 2008:127; Daft & Marcic, 2013:38).

A *human resource strategy* is a comprehensive plan linked to a variety of HR functional areas aimed at accomplishing both organisational and HR goals. It consists of principles for managing staff through HR policies and practices, such as, recruitment, reward and recognition, compensation, performance management, employee relations and training. In the interest of this study, HR strategy is defined as a focused approach in managing employees in the public sector with a view to achieving a competitive advantage within the rapidly changing work environment (Griffin, 2012:208).

An *organisational strategy* is a clearly defined approach on how an organisation needs to change over time in order to be able to deliver its strategic objectives in line with its mandate. Organisational strategy is based on sets of smaller, actionable plans (Mullins & Christy, 2011:338).

Strategic human resource management is defined as a fundamental approach for the design and application of formal HR systems and procedures to elevate the effective and efficient use of human capital talent to reach public sector strategic goals (Daft & Marcic, 2013:311).

Strategic management is the adoption of a wide range management techniques, such as organisational redesign, process re-engineering and enhanced performance management, in order to improve the levels of accountability and organisational performance reporting in the public sector (WPHRM, 1997:7).

With these key concepts clarified, the chapter now turns to the background and motivation for studying the role of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of a public organisation.

1.3 Background and motivation

Following the dawn of democracy in 1994 and the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, Parliament enacted a number of legislative frameworks in order to entrench the new dispensation. Among such frameworks was the Labour Relations Act 6 of 2014, as amended, and the Public Service Act 30 of 2007, as amended. These Acts were passed in an attempt to transform the public service towards a people-centred and responsive public service. In this context, it became critical for HRM to be recognised as strategic partner (WPHRM, 1997:7).

In 1995, the South African government produced a document called the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS). WPTPS sought to establish a policy framework to guide the introduction and implementation of new policies and legislation aimed at improving public service delivery. Resulting from a list of recommendations, a commission

of enquiry was established to look into the state of the public service with regard to the effectiveness HRM practices. In 1998, a Presidential Review Commission (PRC) was established. The report revealed that public service organisations unduly consider HRM as a strategic priority. In addition, public sector organisations were assessed as lacking the capacity to strengthen effective implementation of HRM strategies. Furthermore, it was found that public organisations do not take into account the role of the HR function in supporting the strategic objectives of the organisation. A need was identified to develop and implement HR strategies that are linked to the strategic plan of an organisation to improve the proper utilisation of human resources. An effective HR strategy that sets a framework for the functions and strategic operations of HRM had to be developed (PRC, 1998).

Complementing the legislation adopted after 1994 as well as the findings of the PRC, public administration literature on HRM reveals that organisational success depends more on employee information, creativity, knowledge and service, rather than on production machinery. Accordingly, it is critical that public organisations effectively manage their HR practices (Daft & Marcic, 2013:189-316). However, it should be noted that managing human resources can be a complex challenge due to the constantly changing legal and regulatory environment. It behoves management, therefore, to keep abreast of issues that might have legal consequences to employment practices. Consequently, there exists a never-ending need for constant adjustments in HRM approaches and practical applications in order to build and maintain a current understating of SHRM in the public service (WPHRM, 1997:7-8).

Public sector organisations need to align the broader HRM function with the rest of strategic elements within the organisation in order to successfully deal with the potential negative effects of undesirable but preventable events, such as employee burnout, turnover intention, skills shortage and any other uncertainties (De Cieri & Dowling, 2012:15). It is against this background that this study attempts to provide a framework to address the recognition of HRM as a strategic partner at the DEA. What then are this study's problem statement and research questions?

1.4 Problem statement and research questions

This study focuses on the role of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. The overall problem may be stated as follows:

A lack of emphasis on the development and implementation of joint SHRM plans between the HRM department and senior, middle and junior managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA, undermines HRM's role in supporting the DEA's strategic objectives.

The research problem is then subdivided into the following sub-problems:

- It is not known how the HRM component influences the achievement of the strategic objectives of the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch.

- It appears unclear how the HRM component may be repositioned to effectively perform its role as a strategic business partner at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch.
- It seems mysterious how to go about establishing joint strategic plans between the HRM component and first line managers at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch.

The study asked a variety of questions in its pursuit of answers to the research problem. According to Maree (2010:3), good research questions should possess different features. Among other things, good research questions must be concise but clear, timely, theory-rich, self-explanatory and grammatically correct. Every effort was undertaken to incorporate said features into the study's research questions:

- How can the HRM component be repositioned such that it can effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch?
- How may joint strategic plans be established between the HRM component and first line managers at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch? (The question was posed to senior managers – levels 13 to 15.)
- What are the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch? (The question was put to middle managers – levels 11 and 12.)
- In what ways can the HRM component influence the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? (The question was presented to junior managers – levels 9 and 10.)

As indicated within brackets above, and in order to secure the most effective solutions for the identified research problem, the research questions were pitched at appropriate occupational management levels of the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch. Further supplementary questions were added to the above main research questions:

- What are the main components of SHRM at the DEA?
- How can HRM strategies be developed and implemented at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?

What, then, were the purpose and objectives of the study, or even the rationale behind all the questions just tabulated?

1.5 Purpose and objectives

This study entails an in-depth study of the strategic role of HRM in public service organisations with particular focus on the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. The general purpose of this study is to explore ways whereby the DEA can improve effective its HRM as

well as how HRM can influence the strategic objectives of the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch. The main research objective is to determine and analyse how the HRM component can be repositioned such that it effectively performs its role as strategic partner of the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch. Further objectives are listed as follows:

- To determine and analyse how to establish joint strategic plans between the HRM component and first line managers at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch.
- To evaluate minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.
- To determine and analyse how the HRM component can influence the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

1.6 Significance of the study

Informed by research discussions around the transition of the HRM field from a mere administrative support function into an active strategic partner, the present study seeks to build a knowledge base on the importance recognising HRM as a strategic partner at the DEA. Such recognition will most likely encourage senior, middle and junior managers to take into account HRM's strategic role in pursuance of the DEA's objectives.

In addition, the reputation of the public sector evolves based on the manner in which HRM practices get applied within the work environment (Chuang, Jackson & Jiang, 2013:1638). Accordingly, it is worth studying the issues and challenges that relate to HRM since employees are the most valuable assets that drives public service delivery.

1.7 Preliminary literature review

In this preliminary literature review, focus turns very briefly to SHRM in general, then to HRM within the public sector more broadly, and finally to the DEA's own HRM strategy. Chapter 2 undertakes a more detailed literature review. As stated above, it is critical that HRM gets recognition as a strategic partner that contributes effectively to the achievement of organisational goals within the public sector. The success of public sector organisations relies mostly on competent public officials. Accordingly, it is necessary to clarify the meaning and significance of SHRM in supporting organisational strategic objectives.

1.7.1 Strategic human resource management

According to Subba (2012:77), the need for HRM to support organisational strategy led to the advancement of the concept of SHRM in the public sector. The main drive behind this development was to integrate the HRM function into the strategic plans and priorities of public sector organisations. The concept of strategic HR planning consequently evolved and gained popularity within the HRM field (PSR, 2012:15). All this means investing time and money into the development and implementation of effective HR strategies. To date in the public service, it is a compliance requirement that all government departments have a mandate to report on

HR plans plus existing relevant HR strategies and the implementation thereof (PRC, 1998). Line managers seem to recognise HRM in terms of compliance requirements and hardly ever in relation to HRM's day-to-day strategic role and partnership (van der Westhuizen, 2008:2).

The success of a HR strategic planning depends largely on how well it fits within all other business units and the overall data organisational strategy (Enz, 2011:59). The concept of 'fit' in this regard, refers to the compatibility between the HR strategy and other key managerial and business strategies (De Cieri & Dowling, 2012:3-15). This calls for joint strategic HR plans between the HR department and all other business units. It is also important that the HRM corporate strategy fit well with the business strategy in order to facilitate the execution of the HRM business plan (Enz, 2011:80; Mullins & Christy, 2011:494). However, most organisations seem to lack interest in implementing and monitoring HRM practices. This may be because many public organisations are doubtful that HRM has a positive impact on organisation performance improvement (Liu et al., 2014:430; Wright, Russell & Moliterno, 2014:356).

Pettinger (2012:176) states that HRM is more likely to be effective if it be invested within a strategic rather than an operational point of view. Linking people, strategy and performance with the strategic plan of an organisation logically provides a competitive advantage for organisational success (Mullins & Christy, 2011:496). Although organisations seem to have bought into the notion that people are valuable resources, the challenge is how to invest in them in order to make sustainable gains without losing talent to other public sector organisations. It would appear, then, that few organisations implement SHRM systems and practices that create strategic human resources with a view to improving organisational performance (Liu et al., 2014:430).

However, successful organisations have mastered the art of aligning their individual business unit strategies, including the HR strategy, with the overall organisational strategic plan. At the same time, it is generally accepted, those organisations that do not have a HR strategy in place, are doomed for failure (Walters, 2010:115). It is thus important to recognise that the HRM systems and practices of an organisation ideally reflect both the organisation's strategy and the context of how employees are being managed (Chuang, Jackson & Jiang, 2013:1638). What then is the situation within public organisations?

1.7.2 Human resources management in the public sector

Research shows that smaller organisations tend to be more effective in the utilisation of human resources due to the nature of flexibility, adaptability and improvement in implementing change (Jung, 2012:663). Within large government departments, managers play a major role in shaping the success of public organisations. This they do by implementing systems and processes by which organisations function and objectives are achieved (Oberfield, 2012:3). HRM departments must also actively partake in the realisation of organisational strategies and goals (Mullins & Christy, 2011:496; Daft & Marcic, 2013:315). It follows that the investment of both time and money into organisational practices that seek to recognise the effectiveness of HRM in supporting the strategic goals of an organisation remains critical (Wright, Russell & Moliterno, 2014:355). What then, very tersely, is the HRM situation within the DEA?

1.7.3 Human resource management strategy at the DEA

Following the 2009 national elections, several government departments were either merged or split, while others were newly established. The then Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) was dissolved into two departments, namely, the Department of Environmental Affairs as well as the Department of Tourism. Furthermore, the marine fisheries functions and other concomitant resources that formerly resided in the DEAT were moved to the newly created Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF).

The reorganisation necessitated the adoption of revised and/or new mandates for all affected departments. A high level of administrative innovations on strategies, processes, systems and procedures, including those pertaining to HRM, were adopted with the aim of ensuring continuity in public service delivery (PSR, 2012:14). The DEA reconstructed its HRM practices, policies and procedures to fit its new mandate and strategic objectives. Thus dawned the recognition of HRM as strategic partner at the DEA. Since 2012, the DEA's HR strategy derives from the strategic goal of being a public service department that requires human resources, skills and competences to deliver its services efficiently and effectively (DEA, 2014). More about the DEA's HRM strategies in Chapter 4.

1.8 Research methodology

This section introduces the research methodology employed in this study. Aspects of said methodology described here briefly will include research design, population size, research sample, data collection tools, as well as data analysis process. Chapter 3 deals in depth with this dissertation's research methodology.

1.8.1 Research design

The nature of this research project is descriptive as it aims to provide a broad overview drawn from a representative sample of a large population. As such, the study adopted the quantitative research method. The quantitative research method is fit to explain and predict issues pertaining to HRM's role in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

1.8.2 Population size

At the time of study, the Environmental Programmes branch comprised 132 potential research subjects at three managerial levels, namely, senior, middle and junior managers. It was therefore possible to divide the research population into senior managers (level 13 to 15), middle managers (levels 11 and 12) and intermediate managers (levels 9 and 10). Those included as research participants needed to have a minimum of six months' service with the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch. This exclusion criterion was necessary to ensure knowledgeable and consistent answers in the questionnaires. In addition, the decision to focus on only one branch of the DEA sought to facilitate an effective, efficient and economical management of the project.

1.8.3 Research sample

In this study, probability sampling, specifically stratified random sampling, was applied to ensure each segment of the population had equal probability of being chosen. A total of hundred and two (102) research subjects were used as a research sample. The total sample comprised of twelve (12) senior managers, forty-seven (47) middle managers and forty-three (43) junior managers. Employees from lower occupational levels were excluded because this study required answers from informed members of the population.

1.8.4 Data collection tool

Three Likert scale-type questionnaires were used to collect data, one for each management level. Each questionnaire included statements with response points ranging from 1 to 5; representing 1 as *strongly disagree*, 2 as *disagree*, 3 as *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 as *agree* and 5 as *strongly agree*. The research questionnaires were designed and finalised once the literature review had been completed. This was to ensure collection of as much relevant and necessary data for the study. Unisa's College of Economic and Management Sciences (CEMS) Research Ethics Review Committee sanctioned the final version of the questionnaire prior to its distribution.

1.8.5 Data analysis

A quantitative approach was used to analyse the data with assistance from the Microsoft Excel programme. Descriptive statistics allowed the researcher to describe and summarise the data, noting aspects such as sample size, mean, percentage and a range of scores. Graphical and numerical values are employed to present the data per management occupational level in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

It was not the purpose of the study to compare the responses from the three management levels. Each response group (senior, middle and junior managers) received a different research question to answer. However, all three management levels contributed towards reaching the main objective of the study. The responses from each group/level were thus analysed separately. Refer to Chapter 3 for more details on the research design and methodology.

1.9 Scope of the research

The research comprises a geographical as well as a hierarchical dimension.

1.9.1 Geographical dimension

The national DEA office is physically situated in the Gauteng Province in Pretoria. It was not the purpose of this study to make recommendations on a national scale. Therefore, the study focused specifically on the Environmental Programmes branch. Consequently, the findings and recommendations of this study apply specifically to the Environmental Programmes branch and the DEA.

1.9.2 Hierarchical dimension

The researcher divided the sample into subgroups using the above-mentioned occupational levels of DEA managers. To reiterate, the occupational levels were categorised into senior managers (level 13 to 15), middle managers (levels 11 and 12) and intermediate managers (levels 9 to 10) with more than six months experience in the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

1.10 Chapter Layout

This dissertation comprises eight chapters. Each chapter is now introduced in brief.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter provides a general overview of the study, including definitions of key concepts and the background and motivation for the study. Also introduced in addition to the purpose and objectives of the study are the study's research problem and research questions. A very preliminary literature review as well as a brief overview of the selected research methodology also appear. A description of the research scope precedes a layout of the dissertation's chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework for the research by providing information on HRM as a profession in general as well as on HRM in the public sector specifically. Programme evaluation of HRM practices is described before strategic planning is addressed, followed by a discussion of SHRM in the public sector. The latter discussion involves components as well as levels of SHRM. The literature review further focuses on integration between HRM and institutional performance and strategy. Thereafter follows guidelines for the development of HRM strategies. Chapter 2 then concludes with guidelines for implementing SHRM.

Chapter 3: Research design and methodology

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology used in this study. It elaborates on the population size, sampling design and sample size. Data collection tools, survey questions and statements as well as matters relating to data analysis also receive attention. The concepts reliability and validity are then defined before important ethical considerations are highlighted. The chapter concludes with a description of the limitations of the research.

Chapter 4: Case study

As mentioned above, this study drew its interest from HRM's role in supporting the strategic objectives of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA), with specific reference to the Environmental Programmes branch. Chapter 4 thus focuses on SHRM at the Environmental Programmes branch. Aspects such as different types of strategic plans at the DEA as well as the DEA's organisational structure are elaborated on. They precede descriptions of administrative and support functions, before the chapter culminates with a review of the DEA's decision-making processes.

Chapter 5: Data analysis and findings: Senior management

Chapter 5 presents analysis of the data as well as findings from the responses from the senior managers (occupational levels 13 to 15). However, as this chapter is the first of the three such research analysis and findings chapters, it seemed prudent to first present the demographic information of all the respondents at this stage. The remainder of the chapter then looks into the senior managers' responses to the questionnaire. Critical presentation of said responses proceeds with help from graphs, tables and descriptions.

Chapter 6: Data analysis and findings: Middle management

With detail demographic information provided in Chapter 5, this chapter commences straightaway with responses to the questionnaire given by middle managers (occupational levels 11 and 12). Once again, use is made of graphs, tables and descriptions.

Chapter 7: Data analysis and findings: Junior management

In its turn, Chapter 7 presents analysis of the data plus findings based on junior managers' responses (occupational levels 9 and 10). This chapter describes and illustrates the junior managers' responses to the questionnaire by using graphs, tables and descriptions.

Chapter 8: Conclusion and recommendations

In Chapter 8, the research results are summarised, followed by conclusions and recommendations informed by the data analysis and findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Study results reveal a lack of emphasis on the development and implementation of joint SHRM plans between line managers and the HRM component at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch. As a result, the HRM component tends not to be considered a strategic partner.

1.11 Summary

Chapter 1 of this dissertation provided the general overview of the background and motivation for the study into the role of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programme branch at the DEA. An outline of key concepts and definitions were discussed with due consideration given to the research purpose and objectives. The chapter presented the significance of the study, preliminary literature review, research questions, methodology and limitations of the study. An introduction of pertinent literature was attempted in this chapter, outlining the conceptual framework for the study in relation to information on HRM, SHRM and the DEA's HR strategy. Chapter 2 will undertake literature review in greater detail.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Traditionally, the HRM function was not regarded important in relation to the organisation's strategic function. It used to be seen merely as a function responsible for the management of employment contracts. Currently, however, there exists a broad consensus that HRM is a strategic function that has a significant impact on organisational performance. Literature in the fields of public administration as well as HRM now displays significant levels of commitment by both political and bureaucratic leadership to repositioning HRM as a strategic organisational function (Lussier, 2008:239). Against this background, this research project has drawn its interest on the role of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of the DEA, with particular reference to the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch. A lack of emphasis on the development and implementation of joint SHRM plans between the HRM department and line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch undermines HRM's role in supporting the DEA's strategic objectives.

In the ensuing enunciation of this study's conceptual framework, a look at the reality of HRM within the public sector precedes a review of HRM as a public sector profession. Reviews of strategic planning, SHRM in the public sector, SHRM models as well as components of SHRM will then follow a programme evaluation of HRM practices. SHRM levels as well as the integration of HRM with institutional performance and strategy also form part of the conceptual framework. The chapter then concludes with guidelines on how to both develop and implement SHRM.

2.2 Human resources management in the public sector

According to van der Westhuizen (2008:2), many HRM concepts are not practiced in the real world of work within the public sector. Apparently, line managers often do not consider advice received from HR practitioners, even when making decisions that have a significant effect on the organisation's human resources (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:212). HR managers tend not to be consulted during attempts to strengthen organisational performance. The upshot of it all is that contributions made by the HR function are disregarded in efforts aimed at the accomplishment of the organisation's strategic objectives (van der Westhuizen, 2008:12).

As a branch of public administration, public sector HRM provides formal and non-formal control measures for a variety of HR activities. As a support function, HRM provides knowledge and skills to managers to find solutions to the problems and challenges generally associated with an organisation's everyday operations (van der Westhuizen, 2008:14). It follows that HRM activities have to take place in an integrated and goal-oriented way to ensure that the objectives of the public sector are met (van der Westhuizen, 2008:21). Consequently, both line and HR managers should exercise joint responsibility concerning the consistent implementation of policies and procedures. It is therefore important to strengthen both line

managers' and HR managers' capacity to evaluate compliance with approved HRM practices. This, in turn, is likely to improve systematic planning and cooperation between line managers and HR managers within an organisation (Stredwick, 2014:82).

According to the literature consulted, public sector organisations are likely to yield the best possible public interest if appropriate HRM practices are implemented and strategically practiced (Lussier, 2008:239; Mullins & Christy, 2011:300). Although the HRM function is not profit-oriented, it has a major effect on the success of public service delivery (Stredwick, 2014:21). Section 7(3)(b) of the Public Service Act 103 of 1994, emphasises that correct methods should be followed when handling HRM practices. This can be done by aligning the HRM function with key management priorities. Van der Westhuizen (2008:9) states that there should be a proper balance between HRM and capital programmes because human resources play a major role when taking decisions on how to effectively utilise other resources. The establishment of a framework to measure the effectiveness of HRM as strategic partner, is therefore critical in this regard.

According to Maor, Gilad and Bloom (2012:585), considering HRM as a strategy-driven activity has become more significant in today's public sector organisations than was the case twenty years ago. Many theorists agree on the importance of assessing and measuring HRM in relation to organisational effectiveness. However, there is a lack of agreement on how to go about assessing and measuring said role of HRM (Jung, 2012:665). Therefore, it remains critical for HR practitioners and all other relevant stakeholders to integrate their efforts in pursuit of public sector objectives (De Cieri & Dowling, 2012:14). This approach requires the effective positioning of HRM as a management priority when determining organisational policies and procedures (van der Westhuizen, 2008:21). It is thus necessary in this connection to appreciate both what SHRM entails and why strategic planning is necessary within public organisations (Stredwick, 2014:23). First, how does HRM fare as a profession within the public sector?

2.3 Human resource management as a profession in the public sector

The recognition of HRM as a profession is gaining momentum in the field of public administration. Various countries, including South Africa, recognise HRM as a profession that has influence in accomplishing any organisation's strategic goals (van Rensburg, Basson & Carrin, 2011:1). The worldwide drive to recognise HRM as a profession is informed largely by the changing economic environment. This change is significant to the public sector because decisions that affect HR are made on a daily basis, and such decisions have a direct influence on services rendered to the public (Phosa, 2010:9).

In South Africa, there are two closely linked bodies that serve the professional needs of HR professionals, namely, (1) the South African Institute of Personnel Management, and (2) the South African Board for Personnel Practitioners. These two institutions are concerned with professional competence in the HR field both in the private and public sector, which includes, among others, appropriate knowledge and information on effective leadership and people

management (Nel et al., 2011:25). Whereas the term “profession” was once restricted to fields such as law, medicine, engineering, business and academics, it has now thankfully come to apply also to fields such as HRM (van Rensberg, Basson & Carrin, 2011:11-12). This is in line, thankfully, with Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996.

All organisations in the public sector practice HRM. Yet, to some extent, the HRM function is viewed by some as expensive and a burden on the productive workforce (Watson, 2014:117). This results from the reality that most managers, particularly line managers, do not have any formal training in HRM, but end up being responsible for the function. This is known as “dumping in the practice of HRM”, and it negatively affects the general competency in the field of HRM as a profession and further perpetuates the perceived lack of stature within the public sector (van Rensberg, Basson & Carrin, 2011:13).

In order to address the challenges experienced by HRM professionals, HRM practices need to be continually evaluated so that shortcomings and weaknesses can be corrected. Attention now turns to the evaluation of HRM programmes.

2.4 Programme evaluation of human resource management practices

It is important to ensure proper alignment between HRM programmes and other organisational strategic programmes by means of programme evaluations in order to (1) promote the recognition of HRM as profession in the public sector as well as to (2) simmer the recognition of the HRM function as a strategic partner in the public sector (Muswaba & Worku, 2012:162). The importance of programme evaluation lays in the relevance of HRM practices to organisational goals. The evaluation of HRM practices involves the reviewing of improperly or poorly implemented HR actions/steps. This effort allows for time to undertake corrective measures by means of giving instructions on how to perform tasks better (Louw, 2012:1). The evaluation of HRM practices has to be performed as an ongoing process that focuses on performance results. In addition, as Shangahaidonhi (2014:146) emphasised, the results of the evaluation of HRM practices can be a source of valuable information when making critical decisions and adjustments.

It is widely accepted that “red tape” in the public service results in authoritarian top-down hierarchic HRM decisions. However, balanced, continuous feedback on the one hand, and role clarification regarding HR practices informed by HRM programme evaluation on the other, may ease this situation (van der Westhuizen, 2008:13). The evaluation of HRM programmes can also improve the application of HRM practices when all employees within the organisation find the evaluation results acceptable (Louw, 2012:2). Regrettably, the literature on HRM shows that most evaluation results on HR interventions are kept in drawers and not publicised throughout the organisation. This form of organisational malpractice tends to yield futile results in a sense that a possible contribution towards the expansion of the knowledge base in the field of HRM becomes minimal. It is therefore critical for public organisations to publish the outcomes of HRM programme evaluations both inside and outside the organisation. This promotes organisational learning and improves HR practices and employee wellbeing through

the development and implementation of integrated solutions provided by HRM programme evaluations. When the results of the evaluation are not accessible to all employees, the organisation in its entirety compromises effective service delivery. The HR department is then merely placed in a position where it can distance itself from the values, mission and objectives of the organisation – due to on-going perceptions about its incompetency and irrelevancy towards strategic support (Shangahaidonhi, 2014:145, 151).

Line managers have a critical role to play in improving organisational performance by means of evaluating the planning of HR interventions (Louw, 2012:3). A contribution to the efficiency and effectiveness of HRM practices should therefore not only be the function of the HR department. Both HR practitioners and line managers should work together during HRM planning and programme evaluation (van der Westhuizen, 2008:4). There is, therefore, a need to develop and implement HR strategies that are linked to the strategic plan document thereby enabling the best utilisation of public officials. Hence attention now turns to strategic planning, albeit briefly.

2.5 Strategic planning

Daft and Marcic (2013:38) concur with Lussier (2008:127) that strategic planning comprises an intensive management process focused on the development of a comprehensive plan to accomplish an organisation's goals over a certain period. A strategic plan outlines decisions about resource allocation, priorities and steps necessary to reach an organisation's goals (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:2). The strategic planning process provides a platform to attend to a wide range of management concerns relating to the objectives of the public sector, as well as to HRM issues (Nel et al., 2011:164).

As valuable resource for the public sector, human resources will at all times need to lead and follow in order to accomplish goals and tasks entrenched in the strategic plan (Bryson, 2011:383). It is therefore important to strive continually for connectedness between HR planning and strategic planning. The strategic planning process should cover issues relating to HRM; these include, among others, the adoption of wide-ranging techniques, such as organisational redesign, HR planning and development, as well as outsourcing (WPHRM, 1997:17-30).

2.5.1 Why is strategic planning necessary?

Strategic planning serves as a 'game plan' for management when determining organisational objectives and milestones (Mullins & Christy, 2011:338). According to Bryson (2011:385), organisations that do not implement strategic planning will not be able to procure the right people with the necessary skills and attitude for the right positions, and as such, the organisation may not deliver on its mandate. Bryson (2011:385) places emphasis on the importance of incorporating HRM planning into the strategic planning process of the public sector if it is to sustain a competitive advantage and deliver on its mandate.

According to Jung (2012:665) public organisations face multiple and conflicting internal and external stakeholders and environmental constraints. Given such constraints, strategic planning is critical for enabling the identification of opportunities and threats in a changing environment (Nel et al., 2011:475). The key idea behind overall strategic planning is to coordinate the organisation's resources in such a way that everything in the organisation contributes to carrying out its strategy and doing so effectively (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:4). What then are the benefits to be associated with strategic planning?

2.5.2 The advantages of strategic planning

According to Ehlers and Lazenby (2010:301), it is difficult to measure the output of an organisation when its services and products are not properly planned. It only becomes possible to measure progress against achievable outcomes when a strategic plan is in place. Enz (2011:59) highlights other advantages of strategic planning.

First, formalised strategic planning provides a logical and structured means of analysing and thinking about complex organisational problems. Formal planning resolves and deals with difficulties in the workplace by providing a series of distinct steps and stages which managers can follow in complex areas (De Cieri & Dowling, 2012:3-15).

Secondly, formal planning forces managers to consider a longer term/period when determining strategic options and directions than would otherwise have been the case. Nowadays, terms of five years as the minimum period for budgets and strategic planning, have become the norm (Chuang, Jackson & Jiang, 2013:1638).

It is important to realise that the success of strategic planning depends mainly on how well it fits in with all other service delivery components of the organisation and the overall organisational strategy (Enz, 2011:59). The concept of 'fit' in this regard, refers to the compatibility between the organisational strategy and other key managerial and business strategies (De Cieri & Dowling, 2012:3-15). Organisational success will be achieved by linking people, strategies and performance needs to the organisation's strategic plan. This calls for joint strategic planning between all relevant business units. For example, marketing campaigns, operational processes and management decision should all be linked to the overall business strategy (Enz, 2011:80; Mullins & Christy, 2010:494-496).

According to Muswaba and Worku (2012:147), proper strategic management planning should seek to recognise the allocation of human resources and other supportive resources as a significant function of public service leadership. The need for HRM to support organisational strategy led to the advancement of the concept of strategic HRM within the public sector. The main idea about this development change was to integrate the HRM function into the strategic priorities of public sector organisations based on the practical reasons that all management decisions have an impact towards its human resources. The following section gives an overview of SHRM within the public sector.

2.6 Strategic human resource management in the public sector

Strategic human resource management refers to a variety of HR plans, systems, processes and management decisions all of which are concerned with managing employees' work-life in an organisation (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:2). The manner in which these plans and decisions are arrived at determines efficiency and effectiveness in the management of people at the strategic, operational and functional levels of the organisation. Therefore, it remains critical for line managers and HR professionals to develop integrative solutions that routinize an organisational ideology that will build the organisational identity and culture among its employees (van der Westhuizen, 2008:14).

According to Section 7(3)(b) of the Public Service Act 103 of 1994, HR managers are responsible for the efficient management and administration of public sector institutions. Therefore, a joint responsibility between line managers and HR managers should be properly maintained and accounted for. All SHRM practices have to take place in an integrated and goal-oriented way that supports the public interest (Nel et al., 2011:471). However, even though research on SHRM took important steps forward, there are still inadequacies that remain unattended (Mullins and Christy, 2011:495). As a result, the general discourse on the practical effects of SHRM in the public sector continues to remain an underdeveloped area. It is critical that SHRM is prioritised as a major component of strategic management that contributes effectively to the achievement of organisational goals in the public sector (Stredwick, 2014:15).

Unfortunately, current practice in the public sector reflects a poor recognition of the HR department as demonstrated by its inability to take seriously HR practitioners' factual inputs (Shangahaidonhi, 2014:144). Yet line managers cannot perform their tasks in isolation; their activities form part of HR considerations. Rather than see the HR department as an obstacle to service delivery, line managers should seek HR support in order to ensure that their decisions concerning human resources are made strategically, and that they serve the general interest of the public. Choices and plans about managing people have to be strategically informed by the strategic direction of the public sector.

Stredwick (2014:16) emphasises that the formulation of HRM strategy should not only consider the HR department but also has to connect to the entire spectrum of an organisation's functional areas, including the surrounding environment as well. SHRM is unlikely to succeed in a vacuum; it needs thorough incorporation with other disciplines given the diverse definitions of HRM. If, with support from line managers, HR professionals can show how HR interventions relate to the overall needs of the business, then HR work is likely to be aligned with what the entire organisation is aiming to accomplish (Louw, 2012:2). There is also the matter of the relationship between individual values and organisational values in relation to sustainable levels of performance in the public sector (Chuang and Hui, 2010:153-196), alongside that of the public sector's reputation and image in attracting competent public officials through SHRM (Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2012:1). It is necessary to describe various SHRM models in order to provide different perspectives on the role that the HRM function should play as a strategic partner in the public sector; this is done in the following section.

2.7 Strategic human resource management models

Literature on SHRM reflects two main models that are perceived to explore the strategic role of the HR function within institutions. They are the integrative model by Guest (1989:48-51) and the multiple model role by Bamberger and Meshoulam (2000:31-36).

2.7.1 The integrative model

The integrative model emphasises the development of mechanisms to assist institutions to enhance their internal HR capacity. According to this model, the internal stability for human capital can only be achieved through a comprehensive plan for training and development, management control and reward-effort exchange. According to the integrative model, HRM is characterised by two main dimensions, namely, acquisition and development of internal employees. This model does not oppose the external recruitment of human capital, but more emphasis rests on acquiring and developing HR capacity internally rather than to depend from the external environment for a skilled and competent workforce.

It should be noted that this model has its own advantages and disadvantages like any other approach. The budget may, for example, become a hindrance to sustain the development of internal human capital. Employees are also not bound to commit themselves to the institution for their entire lives, and can leave as they wish due to social reasons and other factors. However, it is critical for institutions to invest in their employees if they are to achieve high performance levels through positive employee behaviour. Therefore, the integrative model implies that the HR strategy should be developed in a way that will meet the needs of both the organisation and employees in order to sustain a competitive advantage (Khashane, 2014:1218).

2.7.2 Multiple role model

The multiple role model comprises a variety of dimensions that position the HR function as a competitive and professional field that has significant influence on the strategy capability of the institutions (Khashane, 2014:1219). This model defines HR professionals as champions of competitiveness in creating and implementing a HR strategy that supports and delivers the strategic objectives of the organisation.

Khashane (2014:1219-1220) stresses that employees play an important role in the success of an organisation via the following SHRM tenets, namely, functional expert, strategic partner, leader and employee advocate. He adds that consideration should not only be directed to financial and technological capital as means of competitive advantage. HRM should be integral to strategy formulation in order to assist decision makers to develop a strategic plan that caters for the needs of its human resources.

The multiple model appears to be more germane to this research project, which focuses on the role of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch. Said model sheds light on what constitutes effective HRM, and what ought to be done to position the role of HR managers as strategic partners, administrative experts, employee champions, and change agents. The identified roles are in line with contemporary trends and

thinking on HRM, especially in relation to SHRM in the public sector. This discussion leads seamlessly to the point where the study's research question arises: "*What are the main components of strategic human resource management at the DEA?*"

2.8 Components of strategic human resource management

Undue political interference in the management and operations of the HRM component, an inability to recognise the HRM component as a professional component of the organisation, as well as the perception of HRM as expensive and a burden on the organisation's workforce all may influence the HRM component in a negative way. It is therefore crucial to identify and highlight the characteristics of the components of SHRM to ensure its effective formulation, implementation and evaluation (Nel et al., 2011:480-481).

2.8.1 Formulation of HRM strategy

The HRM strategy gets formulated so as to ensure fit with the organisation's overall strategy. HRM strategy formulation generally takes place at senior management levels, notwithstanding recent calls to include wider participation from lower levels within an organisation. This phase involves deciding on an appropriate HRM strategic direction by identifying and defining the organisation's mission and goals, its opportunities and threats, in addition to its internal strengths and weaknesses. Since the HRM component is best suited to render advice on HR matters, it must thus participate in all strategic planning activities. This argument presumes of course that the HRM component possesses the necessary skills and training to make meaningful contributions towards reaching such strategic objectives. In summary, the HRM component is needed to render sound HR advice during strategic planning processes (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:212; Gamble, Thompson & Peteraf, 2013:14).

2.8.2 Implementation of HRM strategy

The process of implementing the HRM strategy serves as the action component in which the focus turns to key internal business processes (Gamble, Thompson & Peteraf, 2013:28). It is necessary for organisations to use key strategy drivers such as leadership, organisational culture, reward systems and resource allocations to ease the implementation of HRM strategy in a rapidly changing environment. Leadership, for example, is essential in creating a vision, building relations and shaping the culture of the organisation (Nel et al., 2011:313).

At this stage, all employees should have key responsibility areas built into their work plans and duty sheets, and must have been motivated to accept and implement the HRM strategies. Research indicates that positive changes can be expected in an organisation from as early as the HRM strategy formulation and implementation phases. According to van der Westhuizen (2008:3), the effective implementation of HR practices correlates with effective service delivery. Therefore, SHRM has positive effects on the accomplishment of public sector goals and its recognition as strategic partner within the public sector thus remains crucial.

2.8.3 Strategy evaluation and control

There is growing interest in the evaluation of the contribution that HR activities make to the operations of an organisation. Evaluation and control serve as the last component of the SHRM processes. It is critical that the effectiveness of the formulation and implementation components is monitored constantly in order to identify gaps and problem areas. Constant evaluation and control allow for a review of existing strategies and/or the formulation of new ones. Furthermore, those external factors that may influence the services provided by a department also need to be jointly assessed by the HRM component and senior management in order to then develop relevant action plans (Louw, 2012:2). There is a need for continuous engagement and interaction between the HR department and other programme stakeholders if the meaningful evaluation of HR programmes and strategies is to be realised. In a word, the participation of all relevant stakeholders in evaluation and control increases the chances of improved productivity and organisational performance (Gamble, Thompson & Peteraf, 2013:28).

Nyalungu (2011:54) warns that both the measuring and the evaluating of HRM practices are not always easy tasks. He noted that it is important to recognise that human resources' needs and values have transformed, and that the workforce has diversified over the past decade or so. As a result, it is important to appreciate each employee's values and contributions. This is where levels of SHRM come into play.

2.9 Levels of strategic human resource management

An organisation is not just a formal hierarchical structure with different departments and functions. It also consists of operational, management and strategic levels; all of these levels regularly take decisions that affect the organisation. Decision-making rights, the distribution and exercise of authority, as well as the rights and responsibilities of employees are all determined at the operational, management and strategic levels (Entrakin & Sott-Ladd, 2014:44). Strategic management levels entail the following:

Senior or top management is the first layer of SHRM. In the main, this level is the intellectual level where good intuition and analytical skills are required (Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:212). Top management develops a vision of the organisation that charts its long-term direction in relation to HRM. At this management level, strategic objectives are set for measuring organisational performance and the effectiveness of SHRM. It is important for top management to be sincerely committed to the SHRM process in addition to serving as an inspirational force for all employees (Gamble, Thompson & Peteraf, 2013:14). In this study, the DEA's senior managers confronted the following research question: "*How do you go about establishing joint strategic plans between the HRM component and first line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?*"

The second layer of SHRM is the middle management level. This level of management reports to top management and serves as the head of major HR components and their specialised units. Functionaries at this level serve as a liaison between top management and the rest of

the organisation from a unique standpoint. Public officials at middle management level are typically much more visible to the wider workforce than top management, but they spend a lot of their time developing and implementing strategic actions plans needed to achieve the organisational goals (Phosa, 2010:16). Important activities involved at this level include the management of the HRM component, which is responsible for regularly providing useful and informative reports to top management on HR matters. Other activities include designing, selecting and carrying out the strategic and operational plans as means of propelling the organisation towards its overall goals. The middle managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA are therefore better placed to answer the question: *“What are the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?”*

The third layer of SHRM comprises junior management plus the operational level. All organisational units are dependent on the HR department to provide services that support management and staff in their day-to-day activities. At the junior management and operational levels, the focus is on day-to-day functionality as well as HR practices that pursue the mission and goals of the HR department through activities and resources that are readily available within the organisation. Junior management HR activities include, among others, recruitment, training, employee surveys, relations, wellness, and benefits administration (Stredwick, 2014:13). In this study, the junior managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA faced the research question: “How can the HRM component influence the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?”

These three SHRM levels thus became the target population for data collection in this study. There is a broad agreement in the fields of public administration and HRM that human resources are a strategic resource that has significant influence over other resources. As a result, it is vital to integrate HRM with the institutional strategy if a competitive advantage is to be achieved and sustained. That is the point to which the following section now turns.

2.10 Integration of human resource management and institutional performance

As mentioned earlier, this section covers the influence of HRM on institutional performance. The link between HRM and institutional performance shapes the landscape of contemporary HRM (Brymer, Molloy & Gilbert, 2014:123). However, according to Nyalungu (2011:53), there is an ongoing need for HR systems that enable managers to make informed decisions. As a result, it becomes increasingly important for line managers to keep themselves abreast with new developments in the field of HRM. With regard to the DEA, a renewed emphasis on the value and effect of the HR function on operational and strategic matters comes to the fore. Managing human resources at the DEA has created new challenges for line managers. The latter thus needed to form relations with the HRM component as a strategic partner available to ease HRM related challenges. As reflected in the study’s data analysis, the DEA managers indeed possess the power to shape formal work processes such that employees work together towards a common goal (Oberfield, 2012:1).

In supporting the shift towards the link between organisational performance and HRM, the draft White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service of 2015 (2015:1-3) notes that the HRM discipline changed the traditional role of HR components from an administrative function to that of a strategic partner. However, since the traditional role of HRM appears to have no connection to employee development and organisational performance, the HR component within Public Administration as discipline, has increasingly to direct its interest towards the effect of HR development on organisational strategic programmes (Amirkhanyan, Kim & Lambright, 2013:3). Therefore, as a practical example, it is important to ensure proper alignment between HRM programmes and other strategic programmes in order to simmer the recognition of the HRM as a strategic function.

Amirkhanyan, Kim and Lambright (2013:3) submit that the HRM practices that are closely aligned with organisational strategy have significant impact on organisational performance. They state that although the HR component tends to be well-represented at top management levels, far less gets done with regard to strategic decisions and the effect thereof on human resources at lower organisational levels. They conclude that it is the responsibility of top management to acknowledge that management decisions taken at all organisational levels have a significant influence on human resources and, generally, such decisions have to be implemented by the same affected human resources.

Chapter 10 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 urges the removal of perceptions that ignore the significant value and role of HRM in the development of employees. This can be done by ensuring that management is held accountable for the implementation of HRM interventions. Recent research indicated that a high level of investment in HR practices and systems leads to increased productivity, turnover reduction and employee development. Despite this finding, organisations continue to overlook the role of HRM in supporting their strategic objectives (Alagaraja, 2013:118).

Notwithstanding the above calls to recognise HRM as strategic partner in public organisations, the alignment between individual values and organisational values, and subsequently the link between organisational performance and HRM, remain critical factors in many public organisations (Chuang & Hui, 2010:153-196). To address this challenge, the DEA's HR managers and line managers need not only be trained in HRM strategy, they must also be sophisticated in their knowledge of how capital markets and other pertinent issues of the day affect strategies as well as HRM processes within the Department. The PSA of 1994, as amended by Act 30 of 2007, and the PSR of 2001, as amended on 1 March 2013, both make provision for the development and implementation of HR strategies in the public sector. The DEA therefore requires actions and processes that are deeply embedded in fairness when implementing HR practices.

In addition, it is critical for the DEA management to ensure active participation by the HRM component in the realisation of the organisational strategy. Such an effort is likely to harness proper organisation, staffing and management of human resources (Liu et al., 2014:483). It is necessary then to look in some detail at the integration of HRM with institutional strategy.

2.11 Integration of human resource management with institutional strategy

Alagaraja (2013:118) emphasizes that there has to be a full integration of top and middle management and the operational levels in order to strengthen the relation between the HR function and the organisational performance. The HR function can provide public organisations with a sustained competitive advantage, and thus improve productivity, organisational effectiveness and financial performance. De Cieri and Dowling (2012:3-15) stress how organisations seeking a competitive advantage must focus on developing a strategic role for HRM systems. For HRM to be considered strategic, HR practices must be linked (1) to each other, (2) to the HR strategy, as well as (3) to the organisation's strategy. The achievement of a proper integration between the business of a public organisation and its HR strategies can only strengthen adaptability within a complex business environment. Overall, there are eight steps describing the role of HR managers in their efforts to execute the integration (Phosa, 2010:17).

Step 1

The first step emphasises the linkage between the mission, objectives and goal of the HR function on the one hand, and the overall strategy of the institution on the other. In addition, the HRM strategy and interventions need to align with the strategic aims and objectives of the organisation. These relations have a significant impact on the establishment of appropriate HR plans. The HR plan is then utilised to determine the number of employees, skills and competencies required to deliver on the mandate of the public sector. For this to be realised, it remains imperative for HR managers to form part of the management team that has powers to formulate the organisation's institutional strategy. The participation of HR managers will serve to determine the amount of time that human resources will need to allow for a successful integration of HR strategies with the overall organisational strategy.

Step 2

The second step places emphasis on the assessment of the current state of human resources within a given organisation or the public sector in its entirety. Three main aspects are raised as critical in this step, namely, work, workforce, and physical human resources.

As for the "*work*" concept, the need derives from the importance of assessing the value of the tasks being done within the organisation and what ought to be done vis-à-vis the core institutional strategic objectives. This effort is likely to ensure that internal work within the organisation is redirected towards the accomplishment of the grand mission and objectives of the institution with minimal loss of resources.

As far as "*workforce*" is concerned, there is a need to determine the nature of employment capacity of employees currently employed to carry out the work as well as whether a permanent or temporary type of employment is needed to carry out the work. This effort is likely to curb costs for employment and the organisation's contribution to employee benefits.

The third focus area is on the assessment of the effectiveness of the HR department towards its contribution to the organisation's strategic objectives. More effort has to turn to the

evaluation of the current strengths and weaknesses of HRM. This means that The HRM component must continuously assist and support the management of the organisation in addressing the needs of the employees. A thorough analysis of the existing HR practices, systems and procedures is necessary in order to identify gaps and so institute effective interventions towards managing human resources. This effort is likely to improve employees' commitment towards the goals and values of the organisation and their willingness to exert more efforts on behalf of the organisation.

The results obtained at this level can serve as a foundation for strategic plan for both current and future human resources and organisational growth. It is therefore critical to carry out HR audits before an organisation adopts an organisational strategy that can cater for HR needs. The effects of HRM fit to the institutional strategy is likely to be the real reward of critical performance output in the long run (Nel et al., 2011:16).

Step 3

Step 3 involves the scanning of the environmental factors surrounding the life span of the organisation, namely, technological, political, social and economic factors. The scanning of these factors has to remain a priority for determining and assessing the possibility on changes of work over a long period, workforce adaptability to change, and how the HR department can be influenced by the changes over time. Environmental scanning assists HR practitioners and top management to do HR forecasting by identifying trends that are likely to occur in the future. This serves to allow future predictions around certain areas of interest to the organisation in relation to work, labour force and HRM. It is through such effort that opportunities for future interventions can be determined and worked out, thereby dealing with possible gaps between what might happen and what should happen in the future.

Step 4

Step 4 involves proper placement of jobs and employees in a clearly defined, categorized and structured manner in order to streamline the seamless flow of work activities. The relationship between required output and the number of employees required needs to be clearly determined at this level. This is where the analysis plus projection of future HR supply and demand could be established in line with the organisation's integrated plans and objectives. As hinted before, the training and development needs of the workforce require continuous assessing by the HRM component. However, the chief focus area outlined at this level points back to an integrated HR planning approach.

Step 5

Step 5 involves the identification and selection of the best possible consolidated HR strategy that can feed from the organisational strategy. According to Nel et al (2011:16), an organisation's integrated HR strategy has to reflect the long-term direction of the HR department in support of the organisational strategy and the overall objectives. The HR strategy should be flexible enough to allow for growth, service diversification, suppliers' integration, and strategy reversal in turbulent circumstances. Furthermore, it is critical to weigh up and table the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen HR strategy in a concise

manner and in relation to any future changes. With a consolidated HR strategy document in place, clarity will prevail in relation to the role of the HRM component as strategic partner.

Step 6

Step 6 emphasises the coordination of all HR activities into an integrated action plan that will support the consolidated HR strategy. It is evident that organisations, including the public sector, operate in a dynamic environment and the changes that occur in the environment have a major impact on both the work and employees. Therefore, it is critical to ensure that the HR strategy makes provision for the right number of employees with right competencies to support the organisational plan over time. A number of important factors require attention in pursuance of the integrated HR action plan, namely:

- Leadership support.
- Development of long, medium and short-term HR objectives.
- Development of HR policy for supporting institutional strategy.
- Coordination of HR activities.
- Linking of organisational structure with both HR and institutional strategies.

Step 7

It is necessary to implement effectively all the six steps outlined above in order to ensure proper management of the HR function. Top managers in the HR department have a major role to play in this regard. The successful implementation of an HR strategy should involve the following:

- Clearly defined objectives for the HR department and its various level of activities.
- Developing an organisational structure for the HR department which will respond to the mandate of the organisation.
- Provisioning of suitable qualified human resources to deliver on the mandate of the HR department in line with the institutional mandate.
- Setting of instructions and orders to carry out the work effectively.
- Resolving any form of challenges and conflicts within and outside of the HR department.
- Enhancing levels of communication with employees and stakeholders within and outside the HR department.
- Ensuring effective planning for resources for the HR department.

Step 8

The final step in the integration of HRM with the institutional strategy involves evaluation of the effectiveness of the HR strategy. This phase should serve to determine the suitability of the strategy for future use plus its sustainability. It is critical to carry out the evaluation, before, during and after the implementation of plans. This will permit the identification of strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and threats, all of which may have a significant impact on the HR

strategy as well as the organisation. Therefore, it is important that HR planning should be an integral part of strategic planning from the initial stage of institutional planning.

It is significant to note that the major step in the integration of public HRM with institutional strategy requires public organisations to consider the need to design their organisational and HRM structures and systems in a manner that supports and fits into the institutional strategy (Way, 2001:25). Nel et al (2011:471) declare that public organisations that formulate strategies that systematically consider HR and other operational strategies are in a position to perform outstandingly better than the organisations which manage human resources as mere commodities. The integration of the HRM function into strategic management should thus receive significant recognition (Wright, Russell & Moliterno, 2014:353). The question now arises: *How may HR strategies be developed and implemented at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch?*

2.12 Guidelines for developing human resource management strategies

Guidelines for the development of an integrated HR strategy are suggested in this section, because the strategic plan should inform and support the entire HR planning process of a department. The guidelines provided in this section focus on how to properly organise staff and how to manage the HR function in the public sector, as the workplace needs to become an environment that is conducive to optimal HR performance. Furthermore, the HR function must be recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence.

As mentioned, the Public Service Regulation of 2001 (2013:8-26) provides guidelines on how to enhance the HRM capacity to perform its role as strategic partner effectively. These guidelines serve as requirements for the application of HRM to become a strategic partner at the DEA. The development of an integrated HRM strategy with different roles and responsibilities will ultimately drive the effective application of these guidelines at the DEA. The general guidelines for an integrated HRM strategy now follow.

2.12.1 Recruitment and retention strategy

The filling of vacant posts remains a challenge in the public service. This situation forced Cabinet on 08 June 2015 to set six months as the period within which any vacant position in the public sector must be filled. Flowing from Cabinet's decision, the Strategy for Reducing the Recruitment Period and Vacancy Rate in the public sector was adopted. Consistent with this strategy, all government departments are assessed annually in line with the standards set by the Forum of South African Director Generals, which serves as accounting officers within the public sector. Political heads and administrative heads of public service departments account to Parliament in this regard. This means that recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development, and performance management must all be refined and up-scaled in the HRM strategy of all government departments. Although there are no punitive measures issued to sanction non-complying departments, the following requirements contained in the Public Service Regulations (2001) guide the process:

- Make provision for the right number of competent employees to support the Department's organisational plan over time.
- Ensure that job descriptions for vacant post are in place.
- Link the processes of job evaluation, advertisement and selection in a structured/phased manner and on the basis of predetermined and agreed on priorities.
- Fill posts on a cascading basis, starting with vacant posts at senior management levels.
- Undertake all recruitment actions with a view to seek the ideal candidate with the necessary training skills, competence, potential and knowledge in relation to the requirements of the post concerned.
- Underpin recruitment by the principle of employment equity.

In order to allow skills transfer amongst competent workforce, the DEA clearly needs to implement measures to retain critical skills by ensuring that a succession plan is in place. Guidelines for retention and succession planning strategy must follow therefore.

2.12.2 Retention and succession planning strategy

In addition to recruiting competent employees, attention should also be given to the retention of competent employees with scarce or critical skills. Retention interventions should include the following, at the very least:

- Create a working environment that is conducive to job satisfaction and the retention of employees in general.
- Enhance training and development opportunities, including granting of bursaries for higher (tertiary) education where appropriate.
- Link performance management processes to programmes for staff development.
- Reward outstanding performers.
- Build career paths for top performers with potential so as to discourage them from considering alternative employment.
- Improve communication between management and employees.
- Conduct exit interviews.
- Make buy-offers for retention purposes, in keeping with Public Service Regulations.

The granting of a higher salary should be restricted to exceptional cases where it concerns the retention of employees who possess scarce/critical skills and whose performance profiles are outstanding. In such instances, the reasons for granting the higher salary must be recorded in the Department's annual report, and they should be substantive in nature.

2.12.3 Employment equity strategy

In terms of the Strategic Framework for Human Resource Planning for the Public Service (2008:20), proper representation of human resources in the public sector is one of the key issues. The above-mentioned recruitment strategy for the filling of vacant posts should thus be used to achieve representivity and disability targets in the public sector. All vacant posts

should be advertised with a view to promote the necessary representivity. That is, special attention should be given to the recruitment of suitable women at senior management services level (Commission for Employment Equity Report, 2015:5-11).

Part 1 of the overview of the Strategic Framework for Human Resource Planning for the Public Service (2008:12) states that the capacity to deliver public services lies in the knowledge and ability of public servants. For public servants to undertake their assigned responsibilities successfully and effectively, they must possess the necessary levels of skill, knowledge, experience and commitment to performing to the best of their ability. As a result, skills development is a central point in developing and implementing HR strategies in the public sector.

2.12.4 Skills development strategy

In order to comply with legislation and regulatory requirements, the Strategic Framework for Human Resource Planning for the Public Service (2008:5) stresses that all departments should apply a uniform skills audit process to measure and improve the extent of real growth in skills with the public service. The skills audit should focus on the following aspects:

Job descriptions: Job descriptions must be compiled for individual jobs to determine the competency requirements linked to individual jobs.

Competency profiles: Current competency profiles of serving employees and their competency gaps have to be determined through a needs analysis at the end of each financial year including a skills audit within a medium term plan of the public service.

Bursaries: Bursary schemes should be focused on identified scarce skills areas and those staff members who do not have first degree or equivalent qualification.

Capacity development: Capacity development for senior management services has to be introduced in terms of the public service directive on compulsory capacity development, mandatory days and minimum requirements for senior management services.

The following general guidelines have to apply for future training and development plans:

- Personal development plans for individual employees as well as their workplace skills plan must be developed as a basis for training and education activities in a specific financial year.
- Personal development plans as well as the workplace skills plan must only be compiled after conducting a proper needs analysis/skills audit. The aim of such analysis/audit is to identify and prioritise training needs. The results of performance appraisal should also inform training needs.

General requirements for a performance management strategy are explained in the following section.

2.12.5 Performance management strategy

When developing and implementing HR strategies, it needs to be confirmed with cast-iron certainty that the performance assessment processes are aimed at identifying the employees' strengths and weaknesses so as to easily implement sustainable corrective interventions,

when necessary. In addition, the assessment of development programmes needs to take the budget and the planning cycle into account. As a result, the Strategic Framework for Human Resource Planning for the Public Service (2008:5) emphasise the importance of the performance of public officials, as well as the importance of the capacity of departments to deliver services efficiently. These are critical aspects of the government's agenda for transformation and development.

Part VIII F1 of the Public Service Regulations (2013:22-23) requires that the performance of employees be continuously managed and that good performance be recognised and rewarded. The implementation of a performance management and development system as a key contributor to organisational performance and employee development is also required. Performance agreements for all levels of staff should be developed timeously with strict adherence to set evaluation dates. A further requirement is that the reasons for poor performance should be investigated and where necessary, corrective measures should subsequently be introduced.

It is critical to provide guidelines for the implementation of SHRM in order to forge strategic, managerial and operational linkages within the organisation. Guidelines that focus on the organisation of employees and the management of the HR component/function in the public sector are now elucidated.

2.13 Guidelines for implementing strategic human resource management

The White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service of 1995 presents guidelines for the implementation of SHRM. Changes envisaged in the WPTPS (1995:7-38) were formulated in the following terms: "Public HR systems continuously undergo transformation as a result of conflicting value orientations in the broader society, and these value orientations are then altered into political priorities in the form of legislation, executive orders or judicial decisions." The WPTPS conceded that the application of value changes within the public service will differ from time to time depending on the policies of the political party in power. It was clear, however, that the values mentioned in Sections 9 and 23 of the Constitution of Republic of South Africa of 1996, such as, fairness, equity, accessibility, transparency, accountability and redress, form the underlying foundation of the transformation of the public service.

More guidelines for the implementation of SHRM appear in the Public Service Regulations of 2013. In terms of Chapter 3 of the Public Service Act 103 of 1994 and the Public Service Regulations (2013:14-45), effective HRM involves (1) selection practices that are validated, (2) performance systems that have been developed to minimise rating errors, (3) compensation systems that are linked to performance, and (4) training that is evaluated to assure transfer to the job. If organisations have not yet achieved at least moderate levels of HRM effectiveness, then they lack the foundation required to implement SHRM activities successfully (Nel et al., 2011:468). Effective SHRM involves designing and implementing internally consistent HR practices that ensure that the output of an organisation's human resources contributes to the achievement of the organisation's objectives (Section 7(3) (b) of

the Public Service Act 103 of 1994). The plans and decisions for the implementation of SHRM should determine the efficiency and effectiveness with which employees at all levels of the organisation are managed.

According to Jackson, Schuler and Werner (2012:1), a thorough understanding of HR policies and practices that make up an organisation's HRM system is required for the effective management of human resources. Moreover, the link between HR systems and strategic plans helps to strengthen the in-depth understanding of how the external and organisational environments influence an organisation's HRM system. The literature in the field of HRM consistently demonstrates an empirical relationship between effective implementation of strategic HR practices and organisational performance (Wright, Russell & Moliterno, 2014:356).

2.14 Summary

This chapter outlined the theoretical framework for the study by exploring pertinent literature with regard to information on (1) human resource management, (2) strategic human resource management, and (3) strategic planning.

The main challenge facing HRM is that line managers often do not consider advice received from HR practitioners, even when making decisions that has significant effect on human resources. As a result, contributions made by the HR function appear insignificant towards the accomplishment of the organisation's strategic objectives. In order to achieve a competitive advantage it is critical to have all HRM activities taking place in an integrated and goal-oriented way linked to the overall organisational strategy. Therefore, line and HR managers should exercise joint responsibility to implement HRM practices, policies and procedures consistently. Furthermore, it is also important to strengthen the capacity of both line managers and HR managers to assess the effectiveness and congruence between HRM programmes and other organisational strategic programmes, thereby promoting the recognition of the HRM as a strategic function in the public sector. This approach is likely to improve systematic planning and integration of strategic HRM into institutional strategy.

Before applying these matters to the study's case, namely, the DEA (Chapter 4), the research design and methodology employed in this study (Chapter 3) must first be enunciated.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the research methodology used in this study is articulated in terms of the research design, population size, research sample, as well as the data collection tool, and the data analysis process followed. Reference is also made to document analysis, the concepts of reliability and validity, while ethical considerations are also addressed. The chapter concludes with descriptions of the scope and limitations of the research. The quantitative research method was chosen to explain and predict issues relating to HRM's role in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. As the dominant methodology for investigative studies in management (Mukhopadhyay & Gupta, 2014:109), quantitative research is preferred also because of its compatibility with the idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their social environment (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014:1).

3.2 Document analysis

According to Du Plooy (2014:219), document analysis refers to the various procedures involved in analysing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study. In this study, the documents originated within the domain of the DEA. The focus of the document analysis in this study (Chapter 4) was on a critical examination of the DEA's strategic plan, the DEA's organisational structure as well as the DEA's HRM strategy. The goal of the analysis was to establish whether the HRM component effectively supports the DEA's strategic objectives.

3.3 Research design

The nature of this study was descriptive because it aimed to provide a broad overview of the representative sample of a large population. Quantitative research consists of studies in which the data concerned can be analysed in terms of numbers that can be quantified or summarised (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014:2). As such, the research adopted and utilised the quantitative research methodology to investigate the broader topic of the strategic role of HRM at the DEA. Ideas formed or socially constructed by individual research subjects from interacting with their work environment at the DEA are described. Such description facilitated a deeper understanding of action within the context of HRM. Esterberg (2002:1-2) summarises the advantages of a quantitative research design in a study such as the present thus:

- Use of numbers allows greater precision in reporting the data analysis and findings.
- Microsoft Excel can be used as a powerful method of mathematical analysis.
- Study can be replicated elsewhere, given its high reliability.

3.4 Population size

The survey included all managers of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. The total population size comprised 197 research subjects at three managerial levels, namely senior public managers, middle managers and intermediate managers. It was thus possible to group the research population as follows:

- Senior public managers (levels 13 to 15)
- Middle managers (levels 11 and 12)
- Junior managers (levels 9 and 10)

Managers from the HRM component were included in the research population. The total population for the managers of the branch is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Managerial classification of Environmental Programme branch

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION	NUMBER OF SUBJECTS
Senior Managers (Levels 13 to 15)	22
Middle Managers (Levels 11 and 12)	87
Junior Managers (Levels 9 and 10)	88
Total	197

Instead of studying the entire research population, it is imperative to select a representative sample that will allow for generalisation of the findings to the entire target population. Moreover, this approach serves to manage time appropriately.

3.5 Sampling design

The formal hierarchical organisational structure of the DEA informed the sampling design. The organisational structure comprises three levels, namely, top management, middle management and junior management (operational) level. These levels dictate the amount and types of DEA decisions taken at different levels. Respondents from the following occupational levels have thus been included in the survey:

- Top management as the first layer of SHRM. This is because top management develops a vision of the organisation that charts the long-term direction in relation to HRM.

- Middle management as the second layer of SHRM. This level of management reports to top management and serves as the head of major HR components and their specialised units.
- Junior management at the operational level is the third and last level. All organisational units are dependent on the HR department to provide services that support management and staff in their day-to-day business activities.

3.6 Sample size

In this study, use of probability sampling, specifically stratified random sampling, ensured that each segment of the population had equal probability of being chosen (Tracy & Carlin, 2014:308). The research sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents seemed adequate given the total one hundred and ninety-seven (197) noted in Table 3.1. The total sample comprised twenty (20) senior managers, sixty-five (65) middle managers and sixty-five (65) junior managers. As Table 3.2 shows, these percentages are very high.

Table 3.2: Sample size based on the managerial classification

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION	SITE POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE	SAMPLE SIZE PERCENTAGE
Senior Managers (Levels 13 to 15)	22	20	91%
Middle Managers (Levels 11 and 12)	87	65	75%
Junior Managers (Levels 9 and 10)	88	65	74%
Total	197	150	76%

The sample size of 150 research subjects of the three subgroups derived from the ratio of each subgroup's size vis-à-vis the total research population (Tracy & Carlin, 2014:309). Stratified random sampling method was preferred because it has a distinct research design and a statistical advantage over others. It is more likely to yield desirable statistical properties on the research findings, which can be generalised to the broader research population. Due consideration of the sample design was an important issue for both internal and external validity of the research findings. Sampling errors, like the degree of confidence in the participants' responses, actual sample on which findings are based, and the proportion of sampled units, were reduced through the gains from stratification in terms of standard error precision (Du Plooy, 2014:110).

As mentioned before, employees from lower occupational levels were excluded from the study. This exclusion criterion was necessary to ensure knowledgeable and consistent answers in the questionnaires.

3.7 Data collection tool

A self-administered Likert scale-type questionnaire was used to collect the data. Three sets of questionnaires were developed, one for each occupational classification. In keeping with the level of required responsibility per occupational level, questions asked to each category were designed to assess the level of engagement between the HRM function and first line managers.

Questionnaires aimed at finding answers for the following research questions:

- How can the HRM component be repositioned such that it can effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch?
- How may joint strategic plans be established between the HRM component and first line managers at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch? (The question was posed to senior managers – levels 13 to 15.)
- What are the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch? (The question was put to middle managers – levels 11 and 12.)
- In what ways can the HRM component influence the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? (The question was presented to junior managers – levels 9 and 10.)

To ensure collection of all relevant and necessary data for the study, the research questionnaire was finalised only after the literature review was completed. Each questionnaire comprised *Section A: Biographical information* (four questions), *Section B: Strategic human resource management* (fifteen questions), and *Section C: Reposition the human resource management component as strategic partner* (five questions). Therefore, fifteen questions / statements in total addressed the research questions directly. Response points for each questionnaire statements ranged from 1 to 5; **1 = Strongly Disagree**, **2 = Disagree**, **3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree**, **4 = Agree**, and **5 = Strongly Agree**.

3.8 Survey questions and statements

The theoretical framework provided in Chapters 2 and 4, along with key concepts as defined, all informed the survey. Table 3.3 shows which aspects of the theoretical framework inform the research questions, as well as the questionnaire statements formulated in relation to those aspects.

Table 3.3: Theoretical framework for survey questions

LEVEL	SURVEY QUESTIONS/ STATEMENTS	THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	RESEARCH QUESTION
Junior managers	B1 to B10	Chapter 2, Section 2.11: <i>Integration of human resource management with institutional strategy</i>	How to establish joint strategic plans between the Human Resource Management component and first line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?
	C1 to C5	Chapter 4, Section 4.5: <i>Guidelines for developing and implementing HR strategies</i>	How can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?
Middle managers	B1 to B10	Chapter 2, Section 2.11: <i>Integration of human resource management with institutional strategy</i>	What are the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?
	C1 to C5	Chapter 4, Section 4.5: <i>Guidelines for developing and implementing HR strategies</i>	How can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?
Senior managers	B1 to B10	Chapter 2, Section 2.8: <i>Components of strategic human resource management</i>	How can the Human Resource Management component influence the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?
	C1 to C5	Chapter 4, Section 4.5: <i>Guidelines for developing and implementing HR strategies</i>	How can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?

As mentioned above, *Section A* of each questionnaire collected biographical information, namely, gender, age, number of years of employment at the DEA, and job/occupational level. This information affords the research a sense of the respondents' demographic profile, thereby creating a holistic picture of the phenomenon under study. Questions in *Section B* and *Section C* specifically addressed the main SHRM components at the DEA, and the development and implementation of HR strategies at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA, as well as measuring the extent to which HRM has been integrated into the DEA's institutional strategy. Refer to *Appendices F1, F2* and *F3* for the complete questionnaires.

3.9 Data analysis

There is an ethical obligation on researchers to give an accurate account of how the analysis of data was undertaken to enable further research on the topic under study. Methodologically, the use of a quantitative approach had more benefits for this study as a variety of numerical and statistical data could be drawn from the completed questionnaires (Babone, 2015:6; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014:4; Kaseke & Hosking, 2011:6). The quantitative research methodology was therefore the preferred option to enable effective and accurate assessment of the research interest. A satisfactory volume of information and data was effectively evaluated by quantifying the content of responses obtained using questionnaires.

The data analysis and findings are presented in three separate chapters in line with the three management levels of the DEA:

- Chapter 5: Data analysis and findings: Senior managers
- Chapter 6: Data analysis and findings: Middle managers
- Chapter 7: Data analysis and findings: Junior managers

3.10 Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are matters of concern in any quantitative research study. The internal reliability of the research was secured by restricting data gathering to one researcher. Secondly, the interview questionnaires were administered over time to allow sufficient time for the research subjects to complete the questionnaires. Thirdly, the data was analysed in association with a professional Unisa statistician to ensure consistency in outcomes and interpretation.

The external reliability of the study was enhanced by providing thick descriptions of the way the research was conducted. For example, details regarding participants as well as events in the field and research methods were verified and described in detail. The researcher strove to produce credible findings. The external validity of the research results is further supported by the representation of the research population as described in the above Table 3.2: *Sample size based on the managerial classification*. The validity of the study was thus ensured by preparing a comprehensive register of the data and an accurate description of the research process.

3.11 Ethical considerations

An academic study needs to uphold stringent research ethics. For instance, research participants must give their informed consent, and specialist statisticians have to sign confidentiality agreements to guarantee the anonymity of the participants as well as the confidentiality of the collected data. In this study, strict ethical norms and standards were observed. All uncertainties that could have had negative implications in relation to privacy and

confidentiality of information during the study were properly managed and addressed accordingly with all participants. The ethical considerations observed were:

- A signed approval letter was obtained from the DEA management granting the researcher permission to pursue the study within the Department and to access all relevant records. (Refer to *Appendix B* for a copy of the *Permission letter*.)
- Prospective participants were provided with an information leaflet providing them with the information needed to make an informed decision about participating in the research (Maree, 2010:41). The leaflet informed the participants that participation was voluntary in nature and that the participants could withdraw at any stage without penalty. The leaflet contained information relating to privacy and confidentiality measures. It stated that personal identifiers would be removed from research-related information and that the collected data would be destroyed permanently after five years of publication. (Refer to *Appendix C* for a copy of the *Participant Information Sheet*).
- Informed consent was obtained from each participant. Each participant agreed that he/she had read and understood the purpose of the research, and that there had been sufficient opportunity to ask for clarification. Each participant also indicated that they understood that they were free to withdraw at any time without any negative consequence. Each participant thus voluntarily agreed to complete the questionnaire. (Refer to *Appendix D* for an example of the *Consent to Participate in the Research*).
- The data kept in a password protected computer, while hard copies were locked in the researcher's office cabinet. Other than the researcher, only the supervisor had access to the data. The statistician from Unisa was made to sign statements agreeing to protect the security and confidentiality of identifiable information (Refer to *Appendix E* for a copy of the *Confidentiality Agreement with Statistician*).
- Participants were requested to sign a consent form granting the researcher permission to use the data only for academic purposes. An opportunity to clarify any uncertainties relating to participation was also granted. On 7 November 2014, prior to the invitation, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the research from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Public Administration and Management, Unisa. (Refer to *Appendix A* for a copy of the *Ethics Clearance certificate*).

3.12 Limitations of the research

This section presents the difficulties and limitations that were identified and addressed during the research process. Despite the findings and proposals made in this study, there were gaps and certain limitations that hindered the research process. It was impossible to anticipate all potential obstacles prior to conducting this study. The main limitation of the research is that the research was limited to one branch out of the eight branches of the DEA. That is say, not all branches of the DEA were included in the study. Whereas this decision was taken in the interest of rendering the study manageable and precise, the implication of this limitation is that this study's findings cannot automatically be applied to other branches of the DEA.

Even within the Environmental Programmes branch, the sample did not include lower levels; the sample was taken from managerial positions designated level 9 and above. This means that only the perspectives of those with some power within the Environmental Programmes branch are taken into account. The views of the rest of the workers, who are in the majority, and who must help realize the organisation's strategy, remain unheard.

Furthermore, the time available to investigate the research problem and to measure thoroughly the role of HRM in the DEA was constrained by the due date of the study. To limit this hindrance, the researcher drew a comprehensive study plan at the start of the research to allow ample time for the data collection phase.

Therefore, although the research objectives were achieved, the effect of this limitation is that the research findings may not be generalised to the entire branch or to the overall Department, let alone the whole public or government sector. Still, the present contribution should assist in building a knowledge base for improving the effectiveness of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives.

3.13 Summary

The research adopted and utilised the quantitative research method to explain and predict issues regarding the role of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. One of the study's main assumptions was that individuals construct meaning based on interactions with their environments. In this chapter, the methodology followed to execute the research project was explained. It covered the research design, population size, research sample, as well as the data collection tool and data analysis process used. Reference was also made to the concepts of reliability and validity of the data collection instrument, after which ethical considerations were addressed. The chapter concluded with descriptions of the limitations of the research.

The following chapter describes and illustrates the data analysis and interpretation of the research results, including any recommendations that present immediately.

CHAPTER 4: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AT THE DEA

4.1 Introduction

Literature in the public administration field stresses the importance of recognising the HRM function as a strategic function with a significant effect on the success of public organisations. As stated in the previous chapter, this study was interested in HRM's role in supporting the DEA's strategic objectives, with specific reference to the Environmental Programmes branch. A lack of emphasis on the development and implementation of joint SHRM plans between the HRM department and line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch has a potential negative impact on the role of HRM in relation to the DEA's strategic objectives.

The chapter thus focuses on two questions: (1) *To what extent is human resource management integrated with the DEA's institutional strategy?* and (2) *What are the criteria and minimum requirements for human resource management to become a strategic partner at the DEA?* It is necessary to review the general guidelines for developing and implementing HR strategies in the public sector before analysing the DEA's HRM strategy. The DEA's HRM strategy and organisational structure will thus be elaborated on for meaningful ideas and information about the position of HRM vis-à-vis the DEA's strategic objectives. The chapter also provides brief outlines of the DEA's organisational structure and the administration and supporting functions/units within the DEA. The DEA's decision-making processes will be highlighted. However, the link between organisational performance and HRM needs to be described first to provide background information on how this linkage significantly influenced the formulation of strategic role for the HR function in the public sector in general and at the DEA specifically. The DEA's HRM strategy is first.

4.2 Human resource management strategy of the DEA

Chapter Four of the Presidential Review Commission (PRC) report (1998:112-144) confirms that some public service institutions lack due consideration of the HRM function as a strategic priority during strategic planning. In terms of the PRC report (1998:2), the DEA would have needed to conduct an internal audit to review the effectiveness of the HRM function concerning its objectives, structure, function, staffing, financing, and related matters. The efforts of the DEA management should thus be directed towards the involvement of the HR component in the redevelopment of a meaningful organisational vision, mission, values and strategy.

The DEA is a national government department that derives its mandate from Chapter 2, Section 24 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996:

Everyone has the right -

1. *to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and*
2. *to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative and other measures that*

- a. *prevent pollution and ecological degradation;*
- b. *promote conservation; and*
- c. *secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.*

The DEA provides leadership in environmental management, conservation and protection towards sustainability for the benefit of South Africans and the global community. The vision of the DEA, as outlined in its Strategic Plan of 2014 (2014:13), is to work towards a prosperous and equitable society living in harmony with its natural resources. The HRM strategy of the DEA derives from the strategic goal of being a public service department that requires human resources, skills and competences to execute its mandate and to reach its vision efficiently and effectively. The DEA's HRM strategy comprises various HRM functions, i.e. recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, labour relations, and HR transformation (DEA Strategic Plan, 2014). Regrettably, the DEA's strategic plan does not make reference to the HR planning and organisational development functions, despite the fact that these two functional areas give birth to all other HRM functions.

4.3 Types of strategic plans at the DEA

According to Section 5.1.1 of the Treasury Regulations related to Strategic Planning as published in Government Gazette No. 29644 dated 20 February 2007, an accounting officer of the Department must annually prepare a strategic plan for the forthcoming Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) period. The strategic plan, which forms the basis for the accounting officer's annual reports, as required by Sections 40(1)(d) and (3) of the Public Finance Management Act 29 of 1999, is presented for approval and tabling at Parliament by the relevant Executive Authority.

The DEA's Director-General is responsible for the overall process of determining the policy imperatives that need to be taken into account during the strategic planning process. This is normally facilitated by means of a number of Management Committee planning sessions. Communicating the annual performance planning tools to directorates, and providing quality assurance and support with regard to the annual performance plan are only few of the activities included in this process. At the DEA in particular, the Chief Directorate: Business Performance is the one that convenes strategic planning sessions for the Department as well as takes overall responsibility and accountability for the content and quality of the Department's strategic plans. Types of strategic plans are:

- *Long-term plan (strategic plan):* this plan is crucial to the continued success of DEA business. It is referred to as the Medium Term Expenditure Framework and is linked to each five (5) year term of government administration. In line with Section 5.2.3 of the Treasury Regulations, the strategic plan must cover a period of at least five years and be consistent with the institution's published medium term expenditure estimates. The strategic plan of the DEA therefore highlights the way in which DEA's operations

interact to achieve long-term strategic objectives and public service delivery. As the DEA grows in size and complexity, so does its strategic plan. Parties involved in this planning process are the Executive, constituted by the Minister, Deputy Minister, Director-General (accounting officer) and Deputy Directors General. At this level, relevant national government policy priorities relating to the DEA mandate are debated and incorporated into the strategic plan (Lussier, 2008:127; Daft & Marcic, 2013:38).

- *Business plans (short-term plans)*: Short-range plans generally apply to a specific time frame wherein a particular series of operations are to be carried out, assessed, and measured. Standard short-range plans concern annual or semi-annual operations. They relate to the specifics of day-to-day operations. Parties involved in this planning process are the top management, constituted by the Director-General (Accounting Officer) and Deputy Directors General.
- *Operational plans (Annual performance plans)*: Operational plans comprise the most specific subset of strategic planning, describing the precise objectives and milestones a business unit should consider in executing each particular operation. Operational plans establish both the budgetary resources necessary for execution as well as tangible and easily assessed objectives. Parties involved in this planning process are the Chief Directors, Directors and all lower levels employees of the Department.

In line with the National Treasury's planning framework on the development of departmental plans, the DEA's strategic plan is complemented by an Annual Performance Plan. The Annual Performance Plan details the financial year's definite programmes and performance targets, including a breakdown of quarterly targets. The Director-General takes overall responsibility over the Department's Annual Performance Plan, while the section heads (Deputy Directors-General) are responsible for the annual performance plans of their respective directorates.

All these measures constitute the DEA's overall strategic trajectory, and their interaction measures the effectiveness and efficiency of the DEA's operations. A general strategic overview of the DEA can thus be obtained by looking at all these plans. It is in this context that the need for active participation by the HRM component in the realisation of the organisational strategy is vital. The following section provides a brief outline of the requirements for HRM's involvement as a strategic partner at the DEA.

4.4 Requirements for HRM to become a strategic partner at the DEA

An organisation's vision, mission, values and strategies are only meaningful if the HRM component participates in the formulation of these concepts. The involvement of the HR component will enable the translation and integration of both the HR strategy and the organisational strategy into everyday behaviour within any organisation (Mullins & Christy, 2011:496). It is thus important for the DEA to develop a consolidated HR strategy that will unpack the critical requirements of each functional area that affects HRM.

The DEA's HR strategy has to be a well-defined, comprehensive and objective policy document. Aspects like recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development, and

performance management should be included in this document. This will enable the DEA effectively to meet its HRM requirements in terms of Chapter 9 of the RSA Constitution. A *Work Skills Plan* also forms part of a comprehensive HR strategy policy document, and it must address the following aspects per financial year:

- Number of employees required,
- Competencies that those employees must possess,
- Training needs,
- Targets for the training of employees per occupational category of specific employees
- Specific plans to meet the training needs of historically disadvantaged persons, and
- Annual statistics on the appointment, training and promotion within each grade of each occupational category of historically disadvantaged persons.

4.5 Guidelines for developing and implementing HR strategies at the DEA

in order to reposition HRM as strategic partner, and in keeping with stipulations of the Public Service Regulations (2012:21-23), the DEA should apply the following principles, in addition to the above-mentioned guidelines for developing and implementing HR strategies in the public sector (DEA Strategic Plan, 2014):

- HR planning should not be regarded as purely a personnel issue; line managers should be integrally involved along with HR specialists.
- Recruitment must be underpinned by the principle of employment equity.
- HR development needs assessments should be taken into account in the budget planning cycle.
- Performance assessment processes should be aimed at identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses in order to effect sustainable corrective interventions.
- Employees' performances must be managed in a consultative, supportive and non-discriminatory manner.
- Performance management processes should link to plans for staff development.
- The mechanisms designed to improve, develop and manage performance should continuously be reviewed and assessed for effectiveness.
- All managers, including line-function managers, ought to be trained to understand the procedures of HR planning, management and development.

Against this backdrop, it becomes important to discuss the DEA's organisational structure so as to determine the coordination of its functions and the extent of the HRM support function required in supporting the DEA's organisational goals.

4.6 The DEA organisational structure

The DEA's mission is to provide leadership in environmental management, conservation and protection towards sustainability for the benefit of South Africans and the global community. One of the top priority areas of the DEA is support to local government in the areas of air quality management, waste management, coastal planning, open space planning, climate change, green economy and sustainable development. The formal hierarchical organisational structure of the DEA comprises three levels, namely, top management, middle management and junior (operational) management. These levels dictate the extent and types of decisions taken across the DEA.

Top management is made up of the Director General (Accounting Officer) and Deputy Directors General (Heads of Programmes). This level is also known as *the strategic level* since it determines decision-making rights as well as the distribution of authority and responsibilities to the lower levels. DEA's top management develops a vision of the organisation that charts its long-term direction in relation to HRM and organisational goals (DEA Strategic Plan, 2014).

Middle management level consists of Chief Directors and Directors who report to top management. Members of middle management serve as a liaison between top management and the rest of the DEA employees. They have the responsibilities of developing and implementing the strategic actions needed to accomplish the Department's goals.

The third level, labelled either junior management or the operational level, comprises Deputy Directors and Assistant Directors. Top management, middle management and other junior staff are dependent on the operational level of management for support services that sustain the day-to-day business activities of the DEA. The operational level focuses on the effective utilisation of resources to improve service delivery.

The DEA comprises seven (7) programmes in its organisational structure; six of them attend to the Department's core business, while the seventh provides administration support services. The Chief Operating officer, Chief Financial Officer and Head of Advisory Services make up the top management of each programme. They develop a vision that charts the long-term direction of their individual programme. HRM remains their core responsibility.

Middle managers report to top management and serve as the heads of specialised units within their respective programme. As liaisons between top management and the rest of the organisation, they spend their time developing and implementing strategic action plans needed to achieve the organisational goals. Important activities involved at this level include the role of designing, selecting and carrying out the best plans.

Supervisory management or operational level provides services that support the DEA management and staff in their day-to-day business activities. Operational activities include, among others, HR, finance, procurement, auditing and risk management, performance monitoring and evaluation communications and information technology (DEA Strategic Plan, 2014).

The programmes are structured as follows:

4.6.1 Programme 1: Administration and Support

The administration and support services programme serves to provide strategic leadership, centralised administration, executive support, and corporate services, while also facilitating effective cooperative governance, international relations, as well as environmental education and awareness at the DEA.

According to the public service guideline for grouping administration functions, i.e. Generic Functional Grouping to Guide the Configuration of Programme 1: Administration Function (2015:2), the DEA's success in implementing its strategic plan is mainly driven by effective internal business processes and governance mechanisms provided by the administration and support services programme. To this end, the DEA continues to implement and enhance organisational systems of quarterly performance reporting, monitoring, and evaluation. It also ensures that it continues to review and implement effective financial management, human resources, along with information and communication technology strategies which are aimed at ensuring adequate capacity to achieve immediate and long term priorities (DEA Annual Report, 2014:38-50).

4.6.2 Programme 2: Legal Authorisations, Compliance and Enforcement

The Legal Authorisations, Compliance and Enforcement programme promotes the development and implementation of enabling legal regimes and licensing/authorisation systems to ensure enforcement and compliance with environmental law (DEA Annual Report, 2014:51-54). The DEA has, over the years, facilitated the development of progressive environmental management legislation and frameworks for the entire public service. It is also responsible for the continuous evaluation and enhancement of such legislations and frameworks. Current focus is on implementation, compliance monitoring, and taking enforcement action against transgressors on environmental issues. To this effect, the Compliance and Enforcement Strategy was developed and finalised.

4.6.3 Programme 3: Oceans and Coasts

The Oceans and Coastal Management programme promotes, manages and provides strategic leadership on oceans and coastal conservation. The programme provides appropriate leadership towards ensuring that government, industry and ordinary members of the public are informed and act in a manner that will conserve our oceans and coastal environment. In recognition of limited availability of relevant and reliable information required for the effective protection, management and conservation of the ocean and coasts, the DEA also facilitates research in ocean and coastal management (DEA Annual Report, 2014:59).

4.6.4 Programme 4: Climate Change and Air Quality

The Climate Change and Air Quality programme serves to improve air and atmospheric quality, as well as to lead and support, inform, monitor and report on efficient and effective international, national and significant provincial and local responses to climate change. The

climate change policy sets out South Africa's climate change response strategy and presents the country's vision for an effective climate change response plus a long-term just transition to a climate resilient and low-carbon economy and society. According to the DEA Annual Report (2014:10), the DEA focuses on the development and implementation of mitigating factors for climate change response as a global priority.

Protecting and improving the quality and safety of the environment is an important outcome aimed at ensuring that current and future generations continue to enjoy their constitutionally enshrined right to an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being. Non-compliance with existing environmental policies and legislation is one of the key challenges the DEA seeks to address. The DEA implements initiatives aimed at closing the gap between the development of appropriate environmental legislation and compliance therewith. These, among other factors, include investigation and finalisation of reported complaints and incidents in addition to the inspection of facilities. The DEA also continues to build appropriate human resource capacity in all spheres of government to ensure compliance monitoring and enforcement (DEA Report, 2014:64).

4.6.5 Programme 5: Biodiversity and Conservation

The DEA Annual Report (2014:67) indicates that South Africa's diverse biodiversity requires effective management to ensure its ongoing protection and sustainability. The Biodiversity and Conservation programme is responsible for the regulation and management of all biodiversity, heritage, and conservation matters in a manner that facilitates sustainable economic growth and development.

The regulatory framework for biodiversity and ecosystem services is strengthened through sustainable use and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of biological resources and traditional knowledge. In response to the scourge of wildlife crime, such as the recent spate of attacks on the rhino population, the Department spearheaded the establishment of both a Biodiversity Enforcement Unit and a multi-stakeholder national Wildlife Crime Reaction Unit. This latest development was prompted by the need to increase HR capacity in an attempt to address current and future potential wildlife crimes (DEA Annual Report, 2014:10).

4.6.6 Programme 6: Environmental Sector Programmes and Projects

The DEA facilitates intergovernmental planning with the aim of enhancing the environmental sector's performance. In addition, the DEA facilitates the development and implementation of a comprehensive local government support programme. The Department also continues to work in collaboration with its key stakeholders to intensify the implementation of public environmental awareness and education programmes so that ordinary South Africans may appreciate the value and the importance of the environment as well as have an understanding of their responsibilities in the protection and conservation thereof. This programme is thus responsible for the implementation of environmental sector projects while also assisting in job creation. In line with the objectives of the report on Generic Functional Grouping to Guide the Configuration of Programme 1: Administration Function (2015:8-9), the DEA continues with

efforts to advance national environmental interests through a global sustainable development agenda to contribute towards building a better Africa and a better world.

4.6.7 Programme 7: Chemicals and Waste Management

This programme ensures that chemicals and waste management policies and legislation are implemented and enforced in compliance with chemicals and waste management authorisations, directives and agreements. It addresses challenges in the area of pollution and waste management. Through increased waste services and waste management systems, the DEA's work seeks to ensure that there is less waste disposed at landfill sites. In line with the country's constitution, the DEA directs its effort towards the implementation of an effective environmental impact assessment and management systems. The Department needs to guarantee that it is able to effectively and proactively manage, minimise and mitigate potential negative effects of development activities plus development patterns.

4.7 Administration and support functions/units of the DEA

Programme 1's functions are vital in the provision of support towards the accomplishment of the DEA's core mandate. It also helps HRM by providing functional information in regard to the development of organizational structure, job descriptions, finances, legal support services, office support, information technology and communication services.

In terms of the Generic Functional Grouping to Guide the Configuration of Administration Functions (2015:2), administration support functions are referred to as corporate management services that provide support to all functions within the DEA. Consequently, the following dedicated functions are assigned to specific support unit structures of the DEA:

- Manage the provision of strategic and operational support services, including strategic and business planning, risk management and organisational performance management.
- Provide executive secretarial support services for management meetings and specified intergovernmental meetings.
- Manage, plan and monitor effective events management functions in the Department.
- Provide effective and sound corporate and cooperative governance as well as effective management of projects implemented by third parties.
- Coordinate environment sector planning, implementation in addition to facilitating cooperative governance to improve performance.
- Provide outreach and strategic communications support, build and manage a positive image of the Minister, Deputy Minister and Department.
- Provide information technology services in the Department.
- Provide strategic and efficient human capital management services to enable the Department to achieve its objectives.

- Provide strategic environmental advisory and implementation support services to the Department's national and international environmental and sustainable development mandates.

4.8 The DEA decision-making process

To understand better the types of strategic plans and HRM levels at the DEA, it is important to discuss the decision-making processes at the Department. The decision-making process is about the control of organisational resources, including its human resources. Organisations have organisational hierarchies that assign responsibilities and powers to decision-makers within the organisation (Pauw & Wessels, 2011:23). Subba (2012:77) concurs with Griffin (2012:6) that "Public HR systems and processes continuously undergo transformation as a result of conflicting value orientations in the broader society, and these value orientations are then altered into political priorities in a form of legislation, executive orders or judicial decisions." Their arguments attest to the changes that were envisaged with the publication of the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) of 1995 whereby a need for redress in public service delivery became a policy priority of government, even affecting decision-making processes.

As a result, the DEA's operations, including its decision-making processes, have undergone a major shift in how government business is conducted (Pellissier & Kruger, 2011:3). HRM information integrity has come to be needed to add value to decision-making in order to allow the DEA to expand and maintain effective utilization of its human resources. The decision-making process in the DEA business operations is guided by the Public Service Act of 1994 as amended by Act 30 of 2007, supplemented by the Public Service Regulations. In terms of this Act, all governance powers are vested with the Executive Authority who is a political head of the department. The Accounting Officer responsible for the day-to-day administration of the DEA acts according to delegated powers from the Executive Authority who is a political head. The accounting officer also has powers to delegate further to lower levels. This is according to the new directive on public administration delegations issued by the Department of Public Service and Administration.

Like other public sector organisations, the DEA functions through an authoritarian top-down hierarchic structure. However, the democratic nature of the public sector is not ignored completely. Public officials enjoy a variety of civil rights as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The Constitution has a direct influence on the management of human resources. It serves as a directive for the effective utilization of human resources (van der Westhuizen, 2008:6). As a result, HRM knowledge and information are vital components in increasing performance wealth for public service organisations (Pellissier & Kruger, 2011:4).

4.9 Summary

This chapter outlined the HRM strategy at the DEA, decision-making processes within the DEA along with its organisational structure. It is cause for concern that the DEA lacks a consolidated HR strategy document except for the brief description outlined in its strategic plan document. Moreover, critical areas like HR planning and organisational development, which have a significant impact of on the sustainability of HRM as strategic partner, are not addressed in said strategic plan. There are also no standing guidelines on the implementation of the HR strategy cited in the strategic plan document. The current situation shows how disintegrated the HRM function is in the DEA, hence its recognition as a strategic partner is not emphasised.

CHAPTER 5: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS – SENIOR MANAGERS

5.1 Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 3, the data analysis and findings are presented in three separate chapters in keeping with the three management levels of the DEA. In other words, the present chapter undertakes data analysis and findings relating to senior managers, while Chapter 6 concerns itself with data analysis and findings pertaining to middle managers, and Chapter 7 tackles the data analysis and findings arising in relation to junior managers. Senior managers' responses are analysed ahead of middle and junior managers because senior management sets the tone for policy formulation and implementation at the DEA.

In this chapter, the demographic information obtained from the questionnaires' *Section A: Biographical Information* is presented first. Discussing the background details of all respondents from three management levels in one fell swoop will make analysis easier. The chapter thus commences by presenting the demographic variables, that is, gender, age groups, occupational levels, and years of employment of all the respondents within the Environmental Programmes branch at the DEA. Senior managers' responses to the questionnaire proper (*Section B: SHRM* and *Section C: Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner*) are then presented and analysed by means of graphs, tables and descriptions. Since the questionnaires' overall aim was to determine the role of the HRM component in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch, recommendations based on all the research findings are provided in one chapter, Chapter 8.

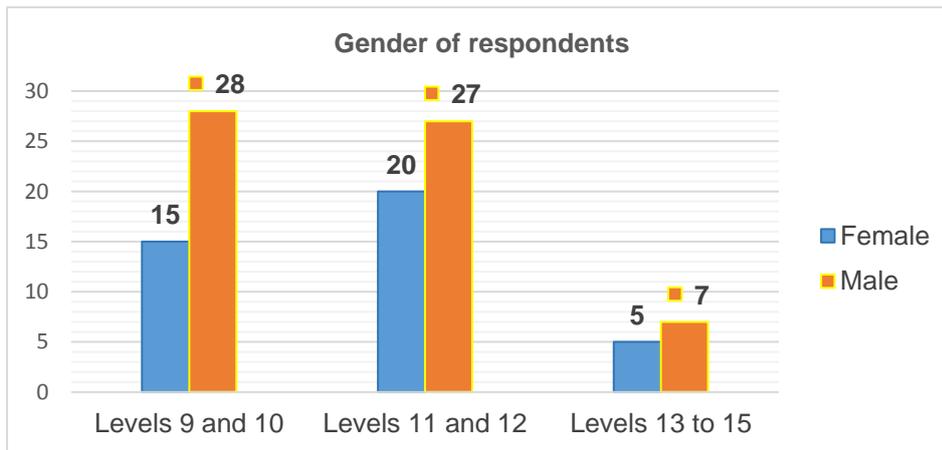
5.2 Demographic profile of all respondents

Initially, 132 questionnaires were distributed to managers between occupational levels 9 and 15 in the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Eventually, one hundred and two (102) managers completed and returned the self-administered questionnaires. Forty-three (43) of the respondents were junior managers (levels 9 and 10), forty-seven (47) were middle managers (levels 11 and 12), and twelve (12) were senior managers (levels 13 to 15). The demographic profile of the respondents is elaborated on in more detail in the following sections.

5.2.1 Gender of the respondents

The gender breakdown of this research's respondents follows. At occupational levels 9 and 10, respondents were sixty-five percent males ($n=28$) and thirty-five percent females ($n=15$). At occupational levels 11 and 12 there were fifty-seven percent males ($n=27$) and forty-three percent females ($n=20$). Respondents at occupational levels 13 to 15 were fifty-eight percent males ($n=7$) and forty-two percent females ($n=5$). The symbol n denotes the actual number of respondents in relation to the total number per category or the overall number of research participants. *Figure 5.1* and *Table 5.1* elucidate further.

Figure 5.1: Please indicate your gender (n=102)



At all the levels, males accounted for the majority of responses. Overall, sixty-one percent (n=62) of the respondents were males and thirty-nine percent (n=40) were females.

Table 5.1: Gender per response group

OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION	GENDER		TOTAL
	MALE	FEMALE	
Levels 9 and 10	28 (65%)	15 (35%)	43 (42%)
Levels 11 and 12	27 (57%)	20 (43%)	47 (46%)
Levels 13 to 15	7 (58%)	5 (42%)	12 (12%)
TOTAL	62 (61%)	40 (39%)	102 (100%)

5.2.2 Age groups of the respondents

Table 5.2 tabulates each occupational classification level per age group.

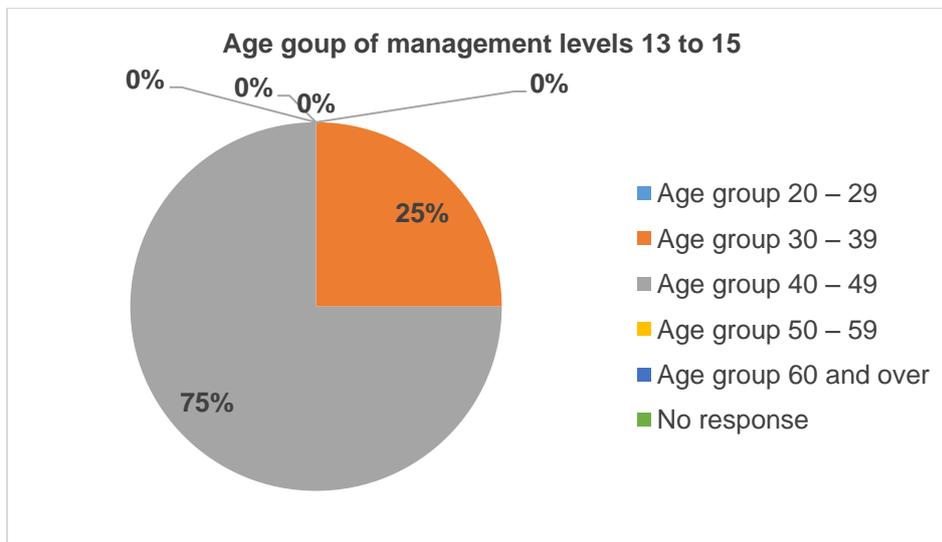
Table 5.2: Age group per response group (occupational classification level)

AGE GROUP	OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION LEVEL			TOTAL
	9 and 10	11 and 12	13 to 15	
20 – 29	14 (74%)	5 (26%)	0 (0%)	19 (19%)
30 – 39	24 (49%)	22 (45%)	3 (6%)	49 (48%)
40 – 49	3 (10%)	17 (59%)	9 (31%)	29 (28%)
50 – 59	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	0 (0%)	3 (3%)
Over 60	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
No response	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)	2 (2%)
TOTAL	43 (42%)	47 (46%)	12 (12%)	102 (100%)

As per the above table, the 30 to 39 age group provided the majority (48%) of respondents across all occupational levels ($n=49$), followed by the 40 to 49 age group at twenty-eight percent ($n=29$), and then the 20 to 29 age group at nineteen percent ($n=19$). The least represented occupational level in the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA is the 50 to 59 age group with a total of three percent ($n=3$). The age group 60 and over accounted for 0% of the responses. Two percent ($n=2$) of the respondents did not indicate their age group. The results show that the respondents between the age groups 30 and 39 had more interest to participate in the study than the rest of the age groups. Alternatively, the above could merely be an indication of the staffing ratios at the Environmental Programmes branch, if not at the entire DEA.

Because this chapter focuses on the data received from senior managers, their age spread is depicted below.

Figure 5.2: Levels 13 to 15 – Please indicate your age group



Three out of every four respondents from management levels 13 to 15 were between the ages 40 and 49, while the fourth respondent came from between 30 and 39. At the very least, the overwhelming majority of senior managers have sixteen years to reach the retirement age of sixty-five (65). From a long-term planning perspective, this implies good senior management stability in the Environmental Programmes branch at the DEA. As the next subsection shows, however, the challenge with a young workforce is its unavoidable inexperience.

5.2.3 Employment period of the respondents

Attention then turned to the duration of time for which the respondents have been employed at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch.

Table 5.3: Period of employment per response group

EMPLOYMENT PERIOD	OCCUPATIONAL CLASSIFICATION LEVEL			TOTAL
	9 and 10	11 and 12	13 to 15	
0 – 5 years	22 (43%)	25 (49%)	4 (8%)	51 (50%)
6 – 10 years	21 (44%)	20 (43%)	6 (13%)	47 (46%)
11 – 15 years	0 (0%)	1 (33%)	2 (67%)	3 (3%)
16 – 21 years	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
22 or more years	0 (0%)	1 (100%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
TOTAL	43 (42%)	47 (46%)	12 (12%)	102 (100%)

Half of the respondents ($n=51$) have been employed at the DEA for 5 years or less. Thankfully, almost as many other respondents (46%; $n=47$) accounted for the employment period between 6 and 10 years. Only one percent ($n=1$) of the respondents had been at the DEA for 22 years or more, while three percent ($n=3$) had 11 to 15 years' service with the DEA. A superficial glance at these indicators shows that the bulk of junior and middle managers are younger and therefore have ample time to gain necessary experience as well as, in due course, attendant promotions within the organisation.

of the fifty-one (51) managers who have been with the DEA for less than five years, twenty two (22) were from occupational levels 9 and 10, twenty five (25) from levels 11 and 12 and only four (4) from levels 13 to 15. With regard to respondents who have been employed for the period of 6 to 10 years, a total of forty seven (47) managers responded, with twenty one (21) from levels 9 and 10, twenty (20) from levels 11 and 12, and only six (6) from levels 13 to 15. The three (3) managers who have been employed between 11 and 15 years, comprise of one (1) from levels 10 and 12 and two (2) from levels 13 to 15. Only one (1) manager in levels 11 and 12 falls within the category of 22 years and more. Based on the respondents' years of employment and level of responsibility, it can be assumed that the respondents have sufficient knowledge and understanding of the DEA's business operations. Do the findings based on responses from occupational levels 13 to 15 (senior management) bear this claim out?

5.3 Data analysis and interpretations: Senior managers

The aim of *Section B: SHRM* of the questionnaire posed to the senior managers was to determine how to establish joint strategic plans between the HRM component and first line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch. This section thus deals with the senior managers' understanding of SHRM at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. In this connection the questionnaire presented nine (9) statements in response to which the respondents had to select a number between 1 and 5, where 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)*, 4 = *Agree*, and 5 = *Strongly Agree*.

The statements to which senior managers had to respond were as follows:

B1: HRM strategies are jointly reviewed by the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch.

B2: Co-operation between the HRM component and management is necessary to support the alignment between HR programmes and other strategic programmes.

B3: The HRM component's team members support SHRM duties and responsibilities that flow from operational demands.

B4: Although the HRM component is well-represented at top management levels, less is being done with regard to HRM at lower levels.

B5: Management is held accountable for the implementation of HRM interventions.

B6: Interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and management are sufficient.

B7: The strategic plan of the DEA highlights the way in which the HRM component and management must interact to achieve long-term strategic objectives.

B8: Continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes branch improve HRM at the DEA.

B9: The HRM component concerns itself with industrial relations, and is able to balance the DEA's practices with requirements arising from collective bargaining.

Findings relating to the above statements which were put to the senior managers are summarised below in Figure 5.3. (Refer to *Appendix F1* for the complete questionnaire.) Table 5.4 complements the summary of the responses in Figure 5.3 by adding percentages to each statement. Detailed analysis and findings of each one of the statements follows immediately after Table 5.4.

Figure 5.3: Levels 13 to 15 – Strategic human resource management

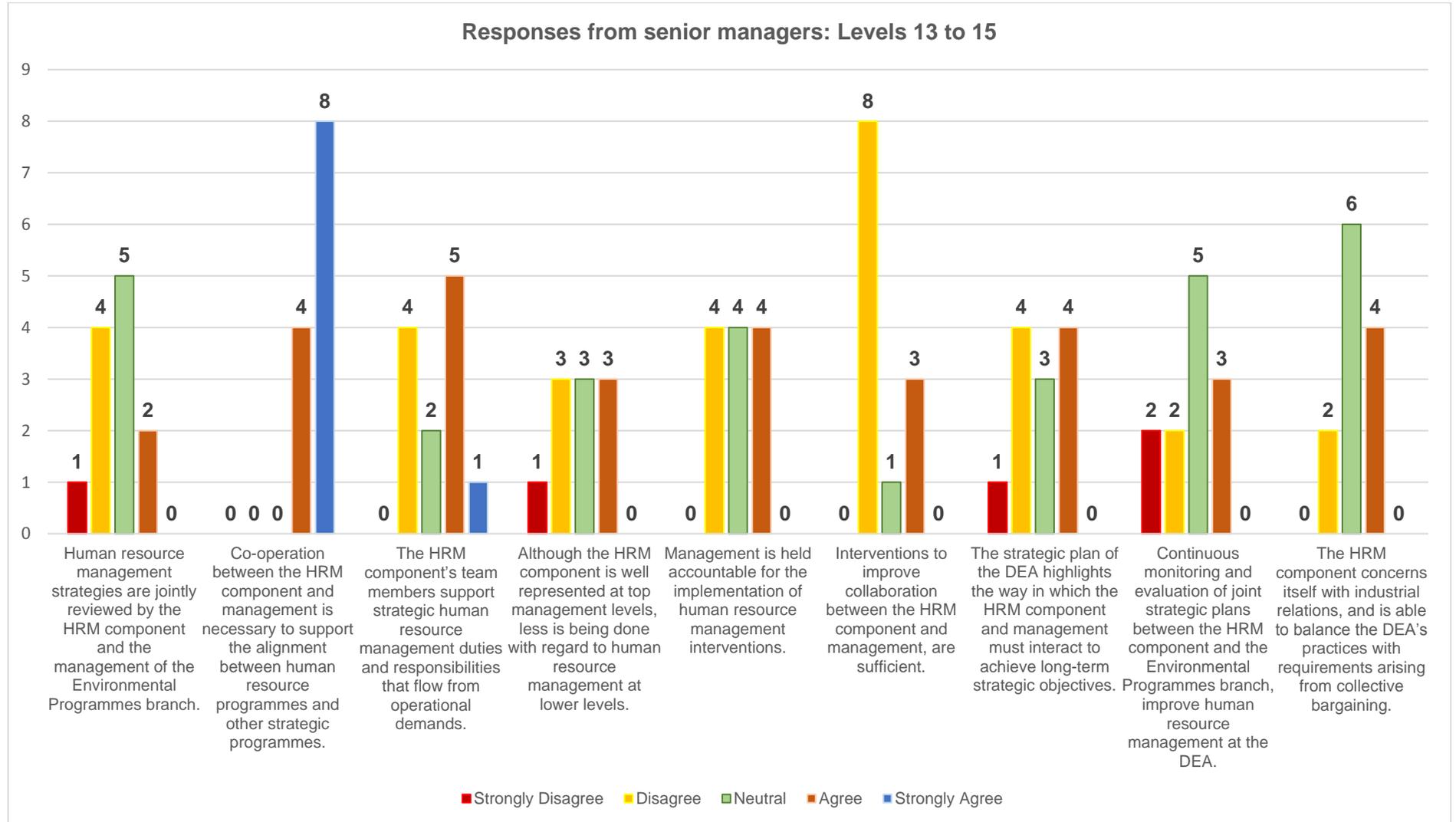


Table 5.4: Levels 13 to 15 – This section consists of general questions seeking to assess your perception on how to establish joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

NO.	STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
B1	Human resource management strategies are jointly reviewed by the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch.	1 (8%)	4 (33%)	5 (42%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
B2	Co-operation between the HRM component and management is necessary to support the alignment between human resource programmes and other strategic programmes.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (33%)	8 (67%)	12 (100%)
B3	The HRM component's team members support strategic human resource management duties and responsibilities that flow from operational demands.	0 (0%)	4 (33%)	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
B4	Although the HRM component is well represented at top management levels, less is being done with regard to human resource management at lower levels.	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	5 (42%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
B5	Management is held accountable for the implementation of human resource management interventions.	0 (0%)	4 (33%)	4 (33%)	4 (34%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
B6	Interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and management, are sufficient.	0 (0%)	8 (67%)	1 (8%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
B7	The strategic plan of the DEA highlights the way in which the HRM component and management must interact to achieve long-term strategic objectives.	1 (8%)	4 (33%)	3 (25%)	4 (34%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
B8	Continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes branch, improve human resource management at the DEA.	2 (16%)	2 (17%)	5 (42%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
B9	The HRM component concerns itself with industrial relations, and is able to balance the DEA's practices with requirements arising from collective bargaining.	0 (0%)	2 (17%)	6 (50%)	4 (33%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)

The senior managers' responses are listed as the total number of responses and the related percentages per statement B1 to B9, in Table 5.4 above. An analysis of the data as well as the findings relating to each of the nine statements follows below.

5.3.1 Reviewing HRM strategies jointly

As noted in Chapter 2 Section 2.2 (*HRM in the public sector*), it is now common cause that participating in organisational decision-making processes increases a feeling of ownership and a sense of being able to make a positive contribution toward the organisation's goals (De Cieri & Dowling, 2012:3-15). Statement B1 (*HRM strategies are jointly reviewed by the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch*) thus sought to determine whether the management of the Environmental Programmes branch reviewed HRM strategies jointly with the HRM component. If so, it may be concluded that the sense of ownership of HRM strategies is shared between the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch. This collaboration and group work will ultimately increase effective repositioning of the HRM component as a strategic partner within the Environmental Programmes branch.

With regard to the data, eight percent ($n=1$) of the respondents strongly disagreed and thirty-three percent ($n=4$) disagreed that HRM strategies are jointly reviewed by the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch, while forty-two percent ($n=5$) of the respondents remained neutral. It is notable that only seventeen percent ($n=2$) of the senior managers agreed with the statement. If forty-two percent (42%) neither agreed nor disagreed, and forty-one percent (41%) disagreed with the statement, it cannot be concluded that the management of the Environmental Programmes branch reviews HRM strategies jointly with the HRM component.

5.3.2 Aligning HR programmes with other strategic programmes

Louw (2012:2) emphasises that SHRM is unlikely to succeed in a vacuum, as it needs a thorough integration with other duties and programmes within an organisation. It is therefore critical, as stated in Chapter 2 Section 2.4 (*Programme evaluation of HRM practices*), to ensure a proper alignment between HRM programmes and other strategic programmes if the HRM component is ever to be recognised as a strategic function (Muswaba & Worku, 2012:162). Statement B2 (*Co-operation between the HRM component and management is necessary to support the alignment between HR programmes and other strategic programmes*) thus sought to determine whether senior managers realise the importance of co-operation with the HRM component.

Thirty-three percent ($n=4$) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while an overwhelming sixty-seven percent ($n=8$) agreed strongly that co-operation between management and the HRM component is necessary to support the alignment between HR programmes and other strategic programmes. It is significant that none of the respondents disagreed with the statement.

5.3.3 Supporting strategic human resource management responsibilities

As stressed in Chapter 2 Section 2.11 (*Integration of HRM with institutional strategy*), an investment of both time and money into those organisational practices which recognise the importance of HRM amid operational demands remains critical towards achieving any government department's strategic goals (Wright, Russell & Moliterno, 2014:355; Daft & Marcic, 2013:315). Consequently, Statement B3 (*The HRM component's team members support SHRM duties and responsibilities that flow from operational demands*) endeavoured to establish the level of acceptance and support from the HRM component enjoyed by the workforce with regard to their duties and responsibilities. Thirty-three percent ($n=4$) disagreed that the workforce of the HRM component supports or accepts their SHRM duties and responsibilities that flowed from operational demands, while seventeen percent ($n=2$) of the respondents remained neutral. Fortunately, forty-two percent ($n=5$) of the respondents agreed, and eight percent ($n=1$) agreed quite strongly with the statement.

5.3.4 Achieving more at lower organisational levels with effective HRM

It is important for organisations to implement essential HR activities at both managerial and operational levels to ensure that the workforce at all organisational levels is skilled and equipped to perform their duties. In addition, according to Amirkhanyan, Kim and Rambright (2013:3), management's decisions, including HRM decisions, have significant influence on operations at all organisational levels. Therefore, it remains critical for any HRM component to forge linkages with management and the workforce at different organisational levels. See Chapter 2 Section 2.10 (*Integration of HRM and institutional performance*) above for further details. By testing the senior managers' responses to Statement B4 (*Although the HRM component is well-represented at top management levels, less is being done with regard to HRM at lower levels*), the researcher aimed to locate the organisational levels at which less is being done with regard to HRM. Following such diagnosis, joint strategic plans between first line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch and the HRM component could then make provisions for better quality HRM at that particular organisational level.

The data shows that eight percent ($n=1$) of the respondents (senior managers) disagreed strongly while twenty-five percent ($n=3$) only disagreed with the notion that although the HRM component is well represented at top management levels, less is being done at lower organisational levels. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that the majority of the respondents, forty two percent ($n=5$) remained neutral (neither agreed nor disagreed) about the participation of HRM at different organisational levels, while twenty-five percent ($n=3$) agreed that less is being done with regard to HRM at lower organisational levels.

5.3.5 Enforcing accountability for the implementation of HRM interventions

As indicated in Chapter 2 Section 2.10 (*Integration of HRM and institutional performance*), effective HRM involves holding management accountable towards the achievement of HRM strategic objectives (Nel et al., 2011:468). In an attempt to measure whether management is indeed held accountable for the implementation of HRM interventions at the DEA, Statement

B5 (*Management is held accountable for the implementation of HRM interventions*) was included in the survey. It is interesting that an equal number of respondents disagreed ($n=4$), remained neutral ($n=4$), and agreed ($n=4$) with the statement.

5.3.6 Improving collaboration between the HRM component and management

Statement B6 (*Interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and management are sufficient*) sought responses with regard to the current status of collaboration between the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch, and whether the interventions meant to improve this collaboration are effective. Results show that sixty-seven percent ($n=8$) of the respondents disagreed that interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and management are sufficient, while eight percent ($n=1$) of the respondents stayed neutral. Regrettably, only twenty-five percent ($n=3$) agreed that interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch are sufficient. Despite these responses, it is imperative that there should be proper collaboration between the HRM and management when taking decisions on how to effectively utilise resources, as stated by van der Westhuizen (2008:9), and as emphasised in Section 2.12 (*Guidelines for developing HR strategies*) of Chapter 2.

5.3.7 Achieving long-term strategic objectives

Statement B7 (*The strategic plan of the DEA highlights the way in which the HRM component and management must interact to achieve long-term strategic objectives*) sought responses with regard to the objectives included in the strategic plan of the DEA, specifically guidelines on how the HRM component and management should interact to achieve the organisation's long-term strategic objectives. The overall aim with the statement was to determine whether a framework for interaction between the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch existed in the strategic plan of the DEA, as outlined in Section 4.3 (*Types of strategic plans at the DEA*) of Chapter 4. The analysis has shown that eight percent ($n=1$) of the respondents disagreed strongly while thirty-three percent ($n=4$) disagreed that the strategic plan of the DEA highlights the way in which the HRM component and management must interact. Twenty-five percent ($n=3$) of the respondents stayed neutral. Only thirty-four percent ($n=4$) of the senior managers agreed with the statement.

5.3.8 Monitoring and evaluating joint strategic plans to improve HRM

The main purpose of the questionnaire presented to senior management was to determine the role of the HRM component in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch. Statement B8 (*Continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes branch, improve human resource management at the DEA*) then sought responses with regard to whether continuous monitoring of the strategic plans by the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes truly do improve effective HRM at the DEA.

Thirty-three percent ($n=4$) of respondents disagreed (of whom sixteen percent disagreed strongly) that continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM

component and the Environmental Programmes branch improve HRM at the DEA. A significant proportion of the respondents, about forty-two percent ($n=5$), remained neutral, while twenty-five percent ($n=3$) agreed with the statement.

5.3.9 Incorporating requirements from collective bargaining

Statement B9 (*The HRM component concerns itself with industrial relations, and is able to balance the DEA’s practices with requirements arising from collective bargaining*) sought to uncover whether the HRM component is equipped and able to adapt and balance general HRM practises of the DEA with demands arising from collective bargaining.

In this instance, seventeen percent ($n=2$) of the respondents disagreed with the idea that the HRM component concerns itself with industrial relations and is therefore able to balance HRM practises of the DEA with requirements arising from collective bargaining. A significant fifty percent ($n=6$) of the respondents remained neutral. Only thirty-three percent ($n=4$) of the senior managers were confident enough to agree with the statement.

With the responses to Statements B1 to B9 presented and analysed, Question B10 can now be elaborated on.

5.3.10 Co-operation between the HRM component and management

The naïve perception of HRM as a mere cost item on an organisation’s budget leads to HRM contributions being regarded as insignificant towards the accomplishment of the organisation’s strategic objectives (van der Westhuizen, 2008:2; Van Rensberg, Basson & Carrin, 2011:12; Ehlers & Lazenby, 2010:212). Once such naïveté has been dealt with, and most other obstacles identified and removed or minimised, the HRM component can quite effectively support the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch. To determine possible hindrances, the following question was posed to the respondents: *In your daily experience, what aspects hamper smooth co-operation between the HRM component and management at the DEA?* Table 5.5 provides the senior managers’ opinions on the aspects that hamper the efficiency and effectiveness of the HRM component and management at the DEA.

Table 5.5: Levels 13 to 15 – In your daily experience, what aspects hamper smooth co-operation between the HRM component and management at the DEA? Please elaborate

NO.	COMMENT
1.	<i>“Lack of consultation on decision-making relating to restructuring”</i>
2.	<i>“Inconsistent in application of policies and collective agreements”</i>
3.	<i>“There is an improved communication, no aspects hampers”</i>
4.	<i>“No transparency in HR decision-making process HR concerned about compliance other that supporting the business strategically”</i>
5.	<i>“Coordination between Cape Town & Pretoria HR services are inconsistent due to geographical challenges”</i>
6.	No comment
7.	<i>“Lack of transparency in HR decision-making”</i>

NO.	COMMENT
8.	<i>"Poor communication between HRM and line managers limited workshops for line function on basic HR practices"</i>
9.	<i>"Delays on processes"</i>
10.	<i>"HRM operates in silos, visibility is experienced when there is a crisis. HRM operates like an entity outside DEA"</i>
11.	<i>"Lack of consultation on HR initiatives (restructuring) which amount to undue pressure and stress"</i>
12.	<i>"Uncanvassed decisions on HR practices Lack of consultation"</i>

As the above table illustrates, the effectiveness of the HRM component in supporting the achievement of the DEA's objectives requires the deliberate re-positioning of the HRM component as a strategic partner. The next section thus provides the senior managers' views on the repositioning of the HRM component as strategic partner the DEA.

5.4 Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner: responses from senior managers

Section C of the questionnaire asked of the senior managers was to determine how the HRM component could be repositioned such that it can effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch. This section thus required the senior managers' to elaborate further and in more detail on how said repositioning could unfold. Four (4) statements required responses ranging from 1 to 5 as was the case in the preceding section of the questionnaire; 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, all the way to 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The statements to which senior managers had to respond were:

C1: The HRM strategy makes provision for the right number of employees with all required competencies to support the organisational plan over time.

C2: The effectiveness of the HRM strategy is appropriately evaluated by DEA management.

C3: The main aim of the HRM component is to comply with legislation and regulatory requirements.

C4: The HRM component is recognised in terms of its day-to-day strategic role as strategic partner of the DEA.

Figure 5.4 below depicts the senior managers' responses to the four statements vis-à-vis the repositioning of the HRM component such that it can effectively perform its role as a strategic partner at the DEA's Environmental Programmes branch.

Figure 5.4: Levels 13 to 15 – Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner

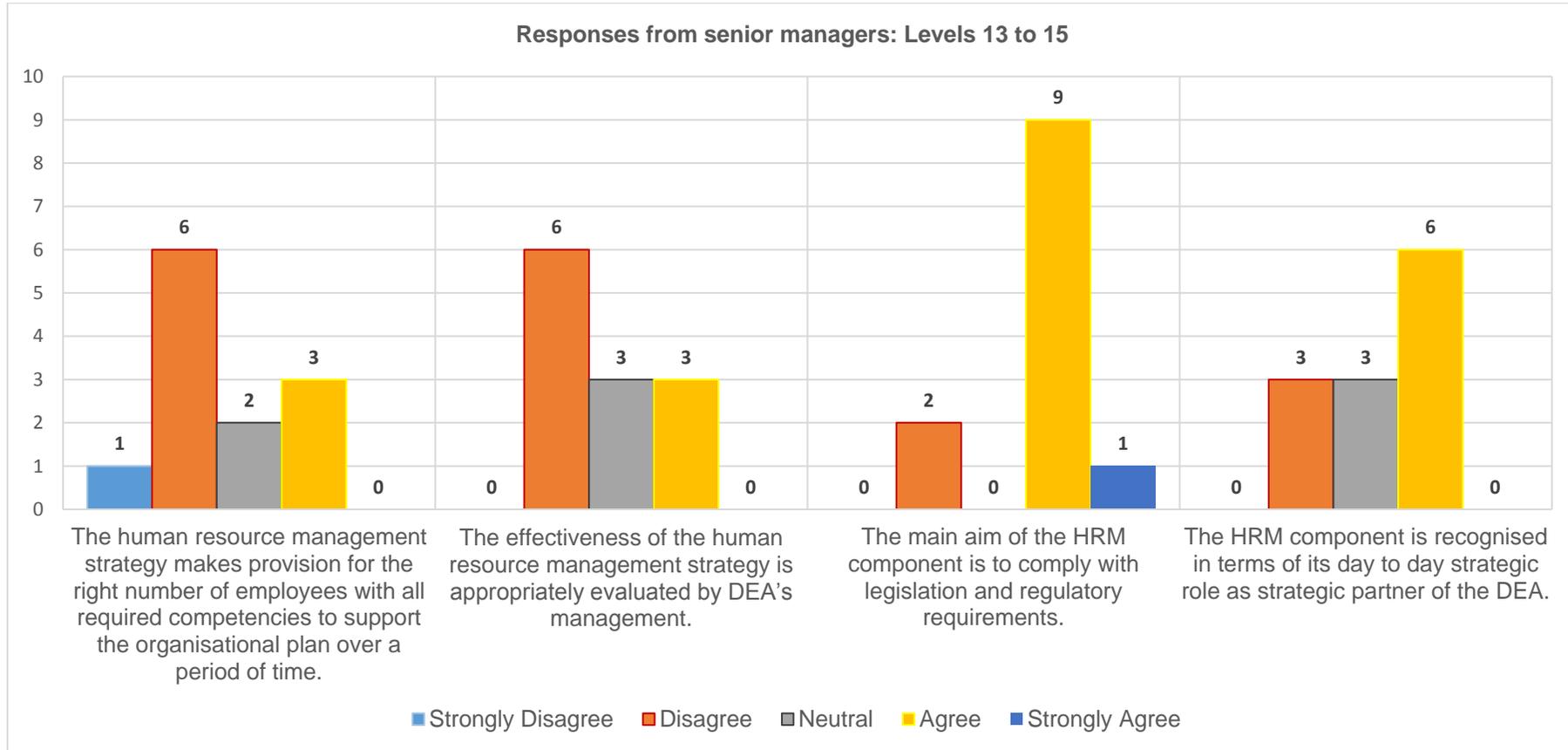


Table 5.6: Levels 13 to 15 – This section requires your opinion on how the HRM component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

NO.	STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
C1	The HRM strategy makes provision for the right number of employees with all required competencies to support the organisational plan over a period of time.	1 (8%)	6 (50%)	2 (17%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
C2	The effectiveness of the HRM strategy is appropriately evaluated by DEA management.	0 (0%)	6 (50%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)
C3	The main aim of the HRM component is to comply with legislation and regulatory requirements.	0 (0%)	2 (17%)	0 (0%)	9 (75%)	1 (8%)	12 (100%)
C4	The HRM component is recognised in terms of its day-to-day strategic role as strategic partner of the DEA.	0 (0%)	3 (25%)	3 (25%)	6 (50%)	0 (0%)	12 (100%)

The senior managers' responses on how the HRM component could be repositioned so as to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the DEA are listed as the total number of responses and related percentages per statement in Table 5.6 above. Analysis of the data as well as the findings of each of the four statements follows below.

5.4.1 Optimising human resource management strategy

Statement C1 (*The HRM strategy makes provision for the right number of employees with all required competencies to support the organisational plan over a period*) sought to determine if sufficient employees are catered for in the HRM structure and strategy. Ultimately, this statement tests whether the HRM strategy is being used to its full potential, as elaborated on in Chapter 2 Section 2.11 (*Integration of HRM with institutional strategy*).

With regard to the number of responses received, eight percent ($n=1$) of the respondents strongly disagreed and fifty percent ($n=6$) of the respondents disagreed that the HRM strategy makes provision for the right number of competent employees to support the organisational plan over time. While seventeen percent ($n=2$) of the respondents remained neutral, twenty-five percent ($n=3$) agreed with the statement that sufficient employees are catered for. The overwhelming sentiment seems to be that HRM strategy is not performing optimally.

5.4.2 Evaluating human resource management strategy

According to Chuang, Jackson and Jiang (2013:1638), the public sector mainly evolves around the manner in which HRM practices are applied, and whether they are evaluated regularly. Moreover, Daft and Marcic (2013:166) state that a lack of clearly defined HRM practices and goals is likely to impact negatively on the organisation's functioning and management. Statement C2 (*The effectiveness of the HRM strategy is appropriately evaluated by DEA management*) was thus aimed at determining whether the effectiveness of the HRM strategy is appropriately evaluated.

Results show that fifty percent ($n=6$) of the respondents disagreed with the view that the effectiveness of the HRM strategy is appropriately evaluated by the DEA management. It is notable that twenty-five percent ($n=3$) of the respondents remained neutral, while the remaining twenty-five percent ($n=3$) agreed with the statement. Based on this evidence, it has to be concluded that the DEA management does not evaluate the effectiveness of the HRM strategy in the most appropriate way possible.

5.4.3 Determining the aim of the HRM component

Statement C3 (*The main aim of the HRM component is to comply with legislation and regulatory requirements*) sought to understand the extent to which the HRM component's purpose is purely to adhere to legislation and regulatory requirements. Seventeen percent ($n=2$) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, while seventy-five percent ($n=9$) of the respondents agreed, and a measly eight percent ($n=1$) of the respondents agreed strongly that the aim of the HRM component is to comply with legislation and regulatory requirements.

5.4.4 Recognising the HRM component as strategic partner

As noted in Chapter 2 Section 2.12 (*Guidelines for developing HR strategies*), the HRM component, being a support function, can provide knowledge and skills to line managers to find solutions to problems and challenges which are associated with day-to-day organisational operations (van der Westhuizen, 2008:14). Statement C4 (*The HRM component is recognised*

in terms of its day-to-day strategic role as strategic partner of the DEA) thus tested whether the HRM component is sufficiently recognised as strategic partner by senior management. Twenty-five percent ($n=3$) of the respondents disagreed with the suggestion that the HRM component is recognised as strategic partner in everyday operations, while another twenty-five percent ($n=3$) remained neutral. The remaining fifty percent ($n=6$) of the respondents agreed the HRM component is indeed recognised as strategic partner by senior management.

With the responses to Statements C1 to C4 presented and analysed, Question C5 (*In your opinion, how can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?*) can now be elaborated on.

5.4.5 Repositioning the HRM component as strategic partner

The following Table 5.7 provides the senior managers' opinions regarding how the HRM component might be repositioned such that it effectively performs its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Table 5.7: Levels 13 to 15 – In your opinion, how can the Human Resource Management component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate.

NO.	COMMENT
1.	<i>"By understanding the business they support"</i>
2.	<i>"Interface between HR component & the branch is required from planning till evaluation of the programmes"</i>
3.	<i>"Management awareness sessions to eradicate mind-shift to override HRM decisions & policies"</i>
4.	<i>"understanding of the branch services and provide personalised or relevant service offering share the HR strategy with the branch if there is any"</i>
5.	<i>"Visibility, interactive and support to staff, particularly to lower levels"</i>
6.	<i>"HR should not serve to comply only but support the branch strategy"</i>
7.	<i>"Thoroughly orientation of HRM on goals and objectives of the branch key service delivery mandate or any other component above HR specific mandate"</i>
8.	No comment
9.	<i>"Consultation on the development & implementation of HR strategies, policies and programmes to ensure improved buy-in"</i>
10.	<i>"Constant consultation and update on HR policies, policies and procedures"</i>
11.	<i>"Integration of HR processes with those of other branches"</i>
12.	<i>"HRM has to be proactive all times, not only to act on invitation."</i>

As reflected in the above table, the respondents shared their opinions relating to the manner in which the HRM component could be repositioned to perform its role effectively as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch. The most pertinent answers include: (a)

the advice concerning an interface between the HR component and the branch from planning all the way to the evaluation of the programmes, (b) the question of integrating HR processes with those of other branches, (c) a recognition of the need for management awareness sessions, and (d) the need for better consultation on the development and implementation of HR strategies, policies and programmes to ensure improved buy-in.

5.5 Summary

As indicated in the introduction of this chapter, the data analysis and findings are presented in three separate chapters in line with the three management levels of the DEA. The findings were presented in accordance with the sequence contained in the statements included in the questionnaire posed to the senior managers, occupational levels 13 to 15. However, as this chapter is the first of the three concerned with research findings, the demographic information of all the respondents (occupational level 9 and 10, level 11 and 12, and level 13 to 15) was also presented and analysed. The following chapter will present the data and findings pertaining to middle managers' views with regard to the effectiveness of the HRM component in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch at the DEA.

CHAPTER 6: RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS – MIDDLE MANAGERS

6.1 Introduction

Following the tabulation of findings from senior managers' responses in Chapter 5, this chapter presents the findings based on responses from middle managers within the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. With regard to the middle managers, sixty-five (65) questionnaires were distributed, but only forty-seven (47) respondents completed the questionnaire. Twenty (20) of the respondents were females and twenty-seven (27) were males. With *Section A: Biographical information* reviewed in Chapter 5, this chapter delves straightaway into the middle managers' responses. The latter comprise the questionnaire's *Section B (HRM as strategic partner)* plus *Section C (Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner)*. Middle managers' responses are presented and analysed using graphs, tables and descriptions.

6.2 Data analysis and interpretations: Middle managers

Section B of the questionnaire administered to middle managers sought to determine the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch. (Refer to *Appendix F2* for the questionnaire.) This section thus deals with the middle managers' understanding of HRM as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes. All forty-seven (47) respondents at this level answered the nine (9) statements with response points ranging from 1 to 5. As before, **1** = *Strongly Disagree*, **2** = *Disagree*, **3** = *Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)*, **4** = *Agree*, and **5** = *Strongly Agree*.

Statements to which middle managers had to respond were:

B1: The mission, objectives and goals of the HRM component are linked to the overall strategy of the DEA.

B2: The HRM strategy and interventions are aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives.

B3: The HRM component continuously assists and supports the management of the Environmental Programmes branch in addressing the needs of the employees.

B4: The current state of human resources within the Environmental Programmes branch is continuously assessed by the HRM component.

B5: The DEA does not have a consolidated HR strategy document; consequently, the HRM component is not sufficiently recognised as an important strategic partner.

B6: Emphasis on developing HR capacity internally results in more effective HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch.

B7: Internal stability at the Environmental Programmes branch can only be achieved through a comprehensive plan for training and development.

B8: Full integration between top and middle management and the operational levels in the Environmental Programmes branch will strengthen the relation between the HRM component and the DEA management.

B9: External factors that may influence the services provided by the DEA are assessed jointly by the HRM component and management to develop relevant action plans.

The responses given by middle managers to each of these question statements are captured in the form of a graph (Figure 6.1) followed by representation in tabular form (Table 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Levels 11 and 12 – Human resource management as strategic partner

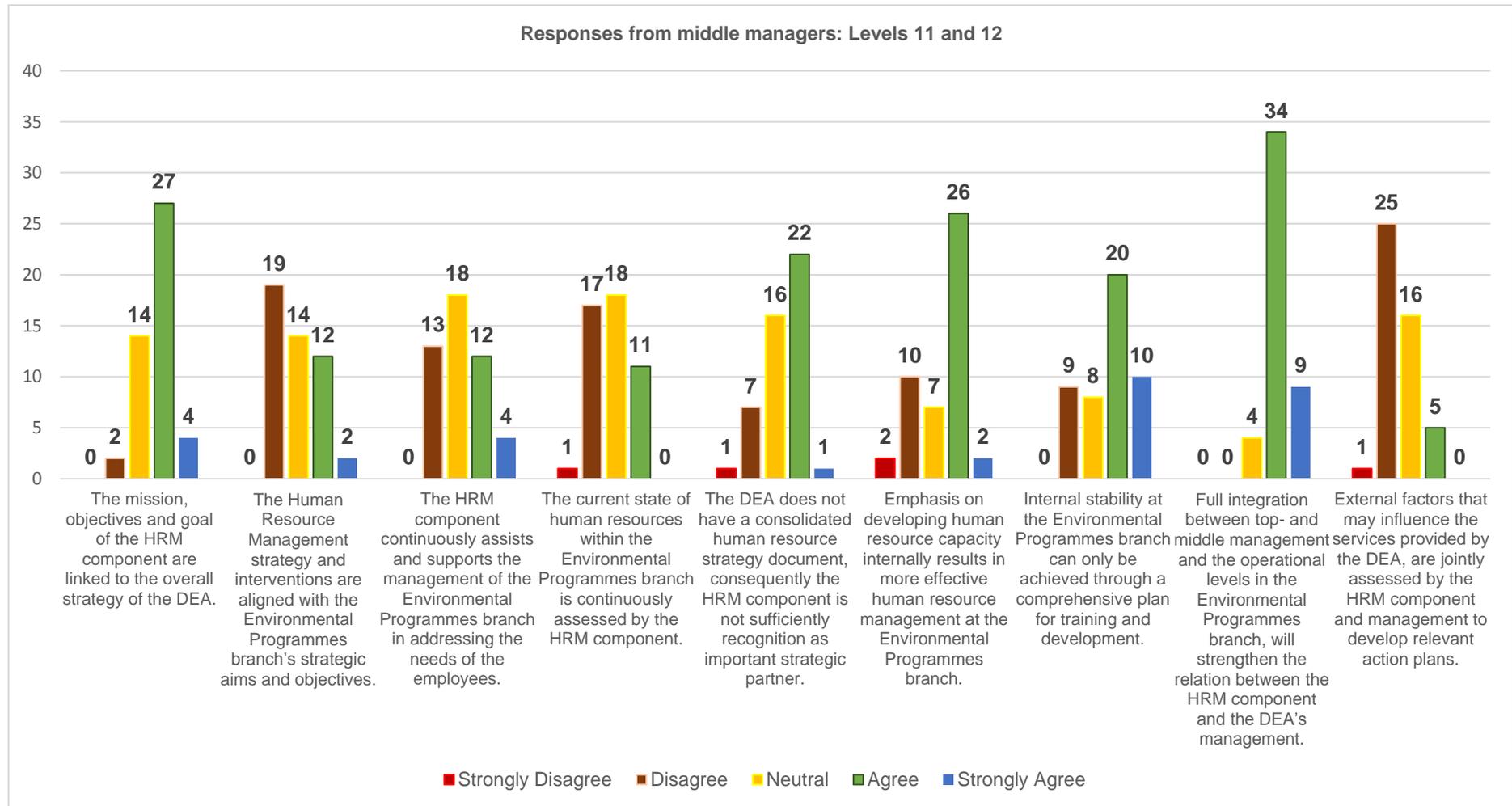


Table 6.1: Levels 11 and 12 – This section deals with your understanding of the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

NO.	STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
B1	The mission, objectives and goal of the HRM component are linked to the overall strategy of the DEA.	0 (0%)	2 (4%)	14 (30%)	27 (57%)	4 (9%)	47 (100%)
B2	The HRM strategy and interventions are aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives.	0 (0%)	19 (40%)	14 (30%)	12 (26%)	2 (4%)	47 (100%)
B3	The HRM component continuously assists and supports the management of the Environmental Programmes branch in addressing the needs of the employees.	0 (0%)	13 (28%)	18 (37%)	12 (26%)	4 (9%)	47 (100%)
B4	The current state of human resources within the Environmental Programmes branch is continuously assessed by the HRM component.	1 (3%)	17 (36%)	18 (37%)	11 (24%)	0 (0%)	47 (100%)
B5	The DEA does not have a consolidated HR strategy document; consequently the HRM component is not sufficiently recognised as an important strategic partner.	1 (3%)	7 (14%)	16 (34%)	22 (46%)	1 (3%)	47 (100%)
B6	Emphasis on developing HR capacity internally results in more effective HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch.	2 (4%)	10 (22%)	7 (14%)	26 (56%)	2 (4%)	47 (100%)
B7	Internal stability at the Environmental Programmes branch can only be achieved through a comprehensive plan for training and development.	0 (0%)	9 (19%)	8 (17%)	20 (42%)	10 (22%)	47 (100%)
B8	Full integration between top and middle management and the operational levels in the Environmental Programmes branch, will strengthen the relation between the HRM component and the DEA management.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	34 (72%)	9 (19%)	47 (100%)
B9	External factors that may influence the services provided by the DEA are assessed jointly by the HRM component and management to develop relevant action plans.	1 (3%)	25 (53%)	16 (34%)	5 (10%)	0 (0%)	47 (100%)

The middle managers' understanding of the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA, are displayed as the total number of responses and the related percentages per statement in Table 6.1 above. An analysis of the data as well as the findings of each statement follows below.

6.2.1 Linking the mission of the HRM component to DEA strategy

The relation between the mission, objectives and goals of the HR function to the overall strategy of an institution was emphasised in Chapter 2 Section 2.11 (*Integration of HRM with institutional strategy*). Consequently, Statement B1 (*The mission, objectives and goal of the HRM component are linked to the overall strategy of the DEA*) tested whether the mission of the HRM component is integrated with the overall strategy of the DEA.

Four percent ($n=2$) of the middle managers disagreed with the notion that the mission, objectives and goals of the HRM component are linked to the overall strategy of the DEA, while thirty percent ($n=14$) of the respondents stayed neutral (neither agreed nor disagreed). A significant majority of the respondents agreed with the assertion that the HRM component is linked to the overall strategy of the DEA, with fifty-seven percent ($n=27$) agreeing and nine percent ($n=4$) agreeing quite strongly.

6.2.2 Aligning HRM intervention with Environmental Programmes branch aims

Chapter 2 Section 2.4 (*Programme evaluation of HRM practices*) argued that it is important to ensure proper alignment between HRM programmes and other organisational strategic programmes by means of programme evaluations. Doing so has the value of (1) promoting the recognition of HRM as a profession in the public sector as well as (2) simmering the recognition of the HRM function as a strategic partner (Muswaba & Worku, 2012:162). Therefore, Statement B2 (*The HRM strategy and interventions are aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives*) set out to determine if a link exists between HRM interventions and the aims of the Environmental Programmes branch.

Forty percent ($n=19$) of the respondents disagreed that the HRM strategy and interventions are aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives, while thirty percent ($n=14$) of the respondents remained neutral. A meagre twenty-six percent ($n=12$) agreed and four percent ($n=2$) agreed strongly that the HRM strategy and interventions are aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives

6.2.3 Providing support to the Environmental Programmes branch

Statement B3 (*The HRM component continuously assists and supports the management of the Environmental Programmes branch in addressing the needs of the employees*) inquired of middle managers whether the HRM component regularly provides the necessary support to the management of the Environmental Programmes branch when addressing employees' needs. Twenty-eight percent ($n=13$) of the respondents disagreed with the notion. It is noteworthy that thirty-seven percent ($n=18$) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed

with the statement. Only twenty-six percent ($n=12$) agreed, with a further nine percent ($n=4$) agreeing strongly that the HRM component continuously assists and supports the management of the Environmental Programmes branch in addressing the needs of the employees.

6.2.4 Assessing the current state of human resources

Statement B4 (*The current state of human resources within the Environmental Programmes branch is continuously assessed by the HRM component*) sought to determine whether the HRM component continuously assesses the state or condition of the employees. It is significant that thirty-seven percent ($n=18$) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement. In other words, they were not prepared to commit themselves either way. Of those who committed themselves, thirty-six percent ($n=17$) of the respondents disagreed and a further three percent ($n=1$) disagreed vehemently. On the other hand, twenty-four percent ($n=11$) of middle managers agreed that the HRM component continuously assessed the current state of the Environmental Programmes branch's human resources.

6.2.5 Implementing a consolidated human resource strategy document

Statement B5 (*The DEA does not have a consolidated HR strategy document, consequently the HRM component is not sufficiently recognised as an important strategic partner*) was meant to establish whether or not the DEA has a consolidated HR strategy, which therefore is likely to impede the recognition of the HRM component as a strategic partner. In this instance, nearly half of the middle managers concurred with the view that the DEA does not have a consolidated HR strategy document, i.e. forty-six percent ($n=22$) agreeing, and three percent ($n=1$) agreeing strongly. Three percent ($n=1$) of the respondents disagreed strongly while fourteen percent ($n=7$) differed with the view that the DEA does not have a consolidated HR strategy document. A telling thirty-four percent ($n=16$) of the respondents opted to stay neutral.

6.2.6 Developing human resource capacity

Statement B6 (*Emphasis on developing HR capacity internally results in more effective HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch*) complemented Statement B4 (*The current state of HR within the Environmental Programmes branch is continuously assessed by the HRM component*) in seeking to determine whether emphasis on the development of internal HR capacity has a welcome effect on HRM. It is this study's finding that the majority of middle managers agree (56% or $n=26$) along with four percent ($n=2$) agreeing strongly that emphasis on developing HR capacity internally results in more effective HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Fourteen percent ($n=7$) of the respondents chose to sit on the fence while twenty-two percent ($n=10$) disagreed and a further four percent ($n=2$) of the respondents disagreed strongly with the claim that emphasis on developing HR capacity internally would result in more effective HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch.

6.2.7 Achieving internal stability through training and development

Statement B7 (*Internal stability at the Environmental Programmes branch can only be achieved through a comprehensive plan for training and development*) sought to establish if the middle managers are of the opinion that internal organisational stability vis-à-vis human resources can be achieved through the training and development of employees. With this statement nineteen percent ($n=9$) of the respondents disagreed, seventeen percent ($n=8$) were non-committal, forty two-percent ($n=20$) agreed, and twenty-two percent ($n=10$) agreed strongly.

6.2.8 Strengthening Human Resource Management component relations

Statement B8 (*Full integration between top and middle management and the operational levels in the Environmental Programmes branch, will strengthen the relation between the HRM component and the DEA management*) sought to establish if an integration between management levels could strengthen the relations between the HRM component and DEA management. The assumption here is that a strong and healthy relationship between top and middle management and the operational levels in the Environmental Programmes branch should contribute positively towards repositioning the HRM component as strategic partner. The Environmental Programmes branch's middle managers appear to share this view because none disagreed while only nine percent ($n=4$) abstained. An overwhelming seventy-two percent ($n=34$) agreed and nineteen percent ($n=9$) agreed strongly that full integration between top and middle management and the operational levels in the Environmental Programmes branch would strengthen relations between the HRM component and the management of the DEA.

6.2.9 Assessing external factors and developing action plans

Continuous review of the external factors like technological, political, social and economic realities surrounding an organisation must necessarily inform any internal organisational change. Statement B9 (*External factors that may influence the services provided by the DEA, are jointly assessed by the HRM component and management to develop relevant action plans*) was inspired by the argument expressed in Chapter 2 Section 2.2 (*HRM in the public sector*) that joint evaluations and reviews enhance the ability to make a positive contribution towards an organisation's goals. In addition to addressing joint evaluations and decisions, the statement also incorporated one possible output of the assessments, i.e. the development of action plans.

In this case, the majority of middle managers disagreed with the notion that the HRM component and management do jointly assess the external factors that may influence the services provided by the DEA or consider those factors when developing relevant action plans. To be precise, fifty-three percent ($n=25$) of the respondents disagreed and a further three percent ($n=1$) disagreed strongly. Remarkably, thirty-four percent ($n=16$) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, as only ten percent ($n=5$) believed that external factors are

jointly assessed by management together with the HRM component. With the responses to Statements B1 to B9 presented and analysed, Question B10 will now be elaborated on.

6.2.10 Awareness of requirements for HRM component to be a strategic partner

Question B10 was phrased thus: *In your daily experience, is the management of the HRM component aware of the need and the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?* The question sought to establish if the HRM component has a sense of the needs and imbalances currently challenging it in becoming a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Furthermore, based on their daily interaction with the HRM component, the middle managers had to reflect on the HRM component's awareness of the minimum requirements to become a role-player of note. Table 6.2 lists the respondents' views in relation to Question B10.

Table 6.2: Levels 11 and 12 – In your daily experience, is the management of the HRM component aware of the need and the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate

NO.	COMMENT
1.	No comment
2.	<i>"No, there is no consultation"</i>
3.	<i>"Yes, HRM avail itself to do presentation during management meetings"</i>
4.	No comment
5.	<i>"Yes, the challenge is HR capacity building"</i>
6.	<i>"Yes no comment"</i>
7.	No comment
8.	<i>"Don't know because is not in HRM"</i>
9.	<i>"Not sure"</i>
10.	<i>"No"</i>
11.	<i>"Not sure"</i>
12.	<i>"No, only focus mainly on HR administration issues"</i>
13.	<i>"No, much exposure is needed by HRM on the branch day to day operations"</i>
14.	<i>"Not sure"</i>
15.	<i>"Yes, HRM provides the necessary support to the branch"</i>
16.	<i>"Yes, emphasis is made on skills development and monitored. HR processes are clearly outlined and communicated"</i>
17.	<i>"Not sure, continuous improved communication on HR matters should be maintained within the branch"</i>
18.	<i>"Not sure"</i>
19.	No comment

NO.	COMMENT
20.	No comment
21.	No comment
22.	No comment
23.	No comment
24.	<i>"No, HRM provide day today admin (routine). Lacks innovation"</i>
25.	<i>"May be aware but have no power to influence management decisions due to high level interference"</i>
26.	No comment
27.	No comment
28.	<i>"Not sure, but assume are well informed about the requirements of HRM as strategic partner"</i>
29.	<i>"Yes, HRM is too prescribed but mainly characterised by biasness in decision-making"</i>
30.	No comment
31.	No comment
32.	No comment
33.	No comment
34.	No comment
35.	<i>"No, HRM offers very little to the branch, except processing administrative work"</i>
36.	<i>"No, HRM component subjects itself as an administrative function which has no direct influence on strategic issues"</i>
37.	<i>"No, HRM component is stucked in stereotype administration"</i>
38.	<i>"No, HRM component is reactive in most issues that concerns the branch"</i>
39.	<i>"No, it is limited to administration issues"</i>
40.	<i>"Yes. The assumption is that HRM management has a responsibility to discover the performance requirements of the their functional areas and act accordingly"</i>
41.	<i>"Not sure"</i>
42.	<i>"Yes, management knows what is expected"</i>
43.	No comment
44.	No comment
45.	No comment
46.	No comment
47.	No comment

A large proportion of the respondents, twenty (20) out of forty-seven (47), did not comment in response to the question. Significant, ten (10) respondents indicated that the management of the HRM component is not aware of either the need or the minimum requirements to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. An important issue raised was that the HRM component offers mainly routine administrative work of the sort that has no direct influence on strategic issues. Perceptions illustrated by responses like *"No, HRM*

offers very little to the branch, except processing administrative work” or “No, HRM component is reactive in most issues that concerns the branch” are a real cause for concern. What then are the middle managers’ views on the repositioning of HRM as strategic partner at the DEA?

6.3 Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner: responses from middle managers

Section C of the questionnaire asked the middle managers how the HRM component might be repositioned such that it effectively performs its role as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. This section thus required the middle managers to elaborate in some detail how the HRM component can be repositioned at the Environmental Programmes.

As was the case in Section B, the statements were to be answered by means of response points ranging from 1 to 5, where **1** = *Strongly Disagree*, **2** = *Disagree*, **3** = *Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)*, **4** = *Agree*, and **5** = *Strongly Agree*. The following four (4) statements that were posed to the middle managers comprised Section C:

C1: The HRM component is managed to strategically assist in the service delivery goals of the DEA.

C2: Enhanced performance management processes are linked to programmes for staff development.

C3: Performance assessment processes are aimed at identifying employees’ strengths and weaknesses in order to affect sustainable corrective interventions.

C4: The assessment of HR development needs to take the budget and the planning cycle into account.

Figure 6.2 below depicts the middle managers’ responses relating to repositioning the HRM component so that it effectively performs its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Figure 6.2: Levels 11 and 12 – Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner

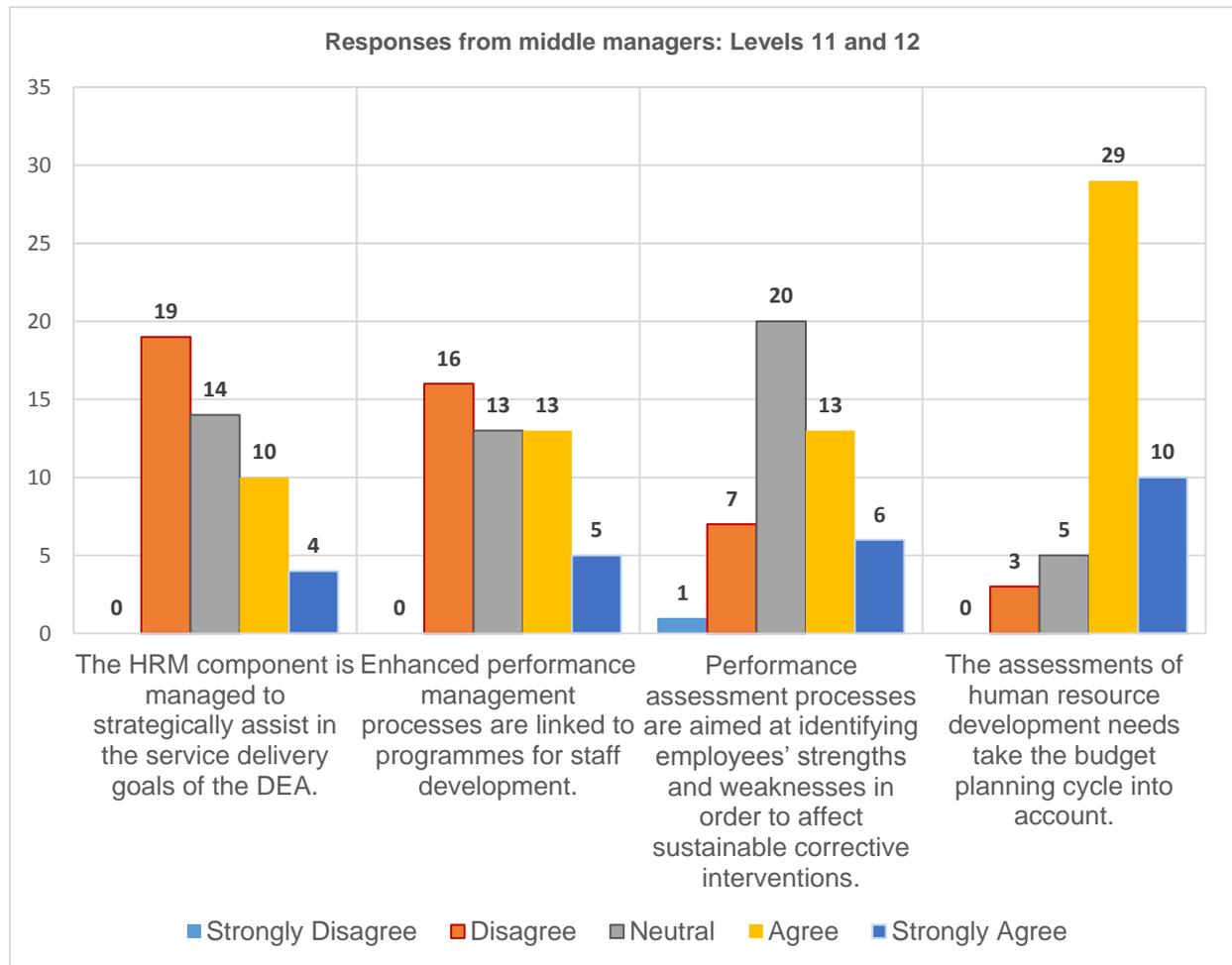


Table 6.3: Levels 11 and 12 – This section requires your opinion on how the HRM component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

NO.	STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
C1	The HRM component is managed to strategically assist in the service delivery goals of the DEA.	0 (0%)	19 (40%)	14 (30%)	10 (21%)	4 (9%)	47 (100%)
C2	Enhanced performance management processes are linked to programmes for staff development.	0 (0%)	16 (34%)	13 (28%)	13 (28%)	5 (10%)	47 (100%)
C3	Performance assessment processes are aimed at identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses in order to affect sustainable corrective interventions.	1 (2%)	7 (15%)	20 (42%)	13 (28%)	6 (13%)	47 (100%)
C4	The assessments of HR development needs take the budget and the planning cycle into account.	0 (0%)	3 (6%)	5 (11%)	29 (62%)	10 (21%)	47 (100%)

The middle managers' responses on how the HRM component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the DEA, are listed as the total number of responses and the related percentages per statement in Table 6.3 above. An analysis of the data as well as the findings of each of the nine statements follows below.

6.3.1 Assisting in the service delivery goals

Statement C1 (*The HRM component is managed to strategically assist in the service delivery goals of the DEA*) was intended to establish if the HRM component is managed in such a way that it is able to assist in achieving the service delivery goals of the DEA.

The analysis shows that forty percent ($n=19$) of the respondents disagreed with the claim that the HRM component of the DEA is able to assist in achieving the service delivery goals, while thirty percent ($n=14$) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed. However, twenty-one percent ($n=10$) of the respondents agreed and nine percent ($n=4$) strongly agreed with the statement.

6.3.2 Enhancing performance management processes

Following the condition articulated in Chapter 4 Section 4.4 (*Requirements for HRM to become a strategic partner at the DEA*) that mechanisms designed to improve, develop and manage staff performance should be continuously reviewed and assessed for effectiveness, the Statement C2 (*Enhanced performance management processes are linked to programmes for staff development*) was presented to the middle managers. The statement sought to establish if the HRM component is ensuring that the performance management processes are directly aimed at staff development. It is telling that thirty-four percent ($n=16$) of the respondents disagreed with the statement, twenty-eight percent ($n=13$) of the respondents remained neutral, and twenty-eight percent ($n=13$) of the respondents agreed, with a further ten percent ($n=5$) agreeing strongly that the performance management processes are linked to programmes for staff development.

6.3.3 Affecting sustainable corrective interventions

As indicated in Chapter 4 Section 4.4 (*Requirements for HRM to become a strategic partner at the DEA*), skills development should endeavour to establish sustainable corrective interventions that enable the employees to continuously perform their duties in an effective manner. As a result, Statement C3 (*Performance assessment processes are aimed at identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses in order to affect sustainable corrective interventions*) sought to determine whether the DEA workforce's strengths and weaknesses get identified in order to ensure sustainable corrective interventions. Tellingly, the majority of respondents, forty-two percent ($n=20$), were not persuaded in either direction. Almost a third ($n=13$) of the middle managers agreed and thirteen percent more ($n=6$) agreed strongly with the statement. Only fifteen percent ($n=7$) disagreed with the assertion that the employees' strengths and weaknesses are identified to affect sustainable corrective interventions while a further two percent ($n=1$) disagreed rather strongly.

6.3.4 Assessing of human resource development needs

Statement C4 (*The assessments of HR development needs take the budget and planning cycle into account*) aimed at establishing whether development needs assessments take the budget and planning cycle into account. With this claim six percent ($n=3$) of the respondents

disagreed, eleven percent ($n=5$) remained neutral, sixty-two percent ($n=29$) agreed, and twenty-one percent ($n=10$) agreed strongly. With the responses to Statements C1 to C4 presented, Question C5 can now be interrogated.

6.3.5 Repositioning the HRM component as strategic partner

Question C5 was phrased thus: *In your opinion, how can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?* Table 6.4 captures the respondents' opinions on how the HRM component might be repositioned to effectively perform its role as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Table 6.4: Levels 11 and 12 – In your opinion, how can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate

NO.	COMMENT
1.	<i>"Not familiar with broader mandate of HRM"</i>
2.	<i>"Continuous assessment individual performance and advise on key development needs, than to offer studies without due need analysis"</i>
3.	<i>"No opinion due to limited Public Service experience"</i>
4.	No comment
5.	<i>"Institute effective and streamlined HR processes"</i>
6.	<i>"Render branch info sessions, and establish HR monitoring & evaluation systems"</i>
7.	No comment
8.	<i>"Continuous review and assessment of HR processes & trends in public service and ensure alignment of processes to meet needs of the branch"</i>
9.	<i>"By placing a dedicated HR personnel officer to the branch to deal with HR issues at hand, this will help to integrate cohesive work relations within the branch"</i>
10.	<i>"Be present at management meetings and strategic planning sessions of the branch"</i>
11.	<i>"No opinion"</i>
12.	<i>"HRM should expose itself towards the goals and objectives of the branch"</i>
13.	<i>"Not certain of the need for repositioning. Probably this should be internalised"</i>
14.	<i>"By assessing needs, challenges, management mechanism to close gaps between management and lower levels on issues of expectations, perceptions and performance"</i>
15.	<i>"It is currently a key partner and provides strategic support"</i>
16.	<i>"Well positioned currently"</i>
17.	<i>"By deploying dedicated officials to handle HR matters within the branch, since it is a biggest branch across the provinces"</i>
18.	<i>"By understanding the mandate of the branch or order to effect a specific model for the branch in relation to HR practices, due to the diverse nature of the branch work"</i>
19.	No comment
20.	No comment
21.	No comment
22.	No comment

NO.	COMMENT
23.	No comment
24.	<i>“Not familiar with HRM mandate”</i>
25.	<i>“Integrate planning, monitoring and evaluation of HR function in the branch”</i>
26.	<i>“No familiar with broader mandate of HRM”</i>
27.	No comment
28.	<i>“Participation in the programmes of the branch on HR requirements”</i>
29.	<i>“Active participation in the annual programme of the branch”</i>
30.	No comment
31.	No comment
32.	No comment
33.	No comment
34.	No comment
35.	<i>“HRM has to assess the branch's performance in relation to HR compliance matters and provide reports”</i>
36.	<i>“HRM component's visibility in the branch planning session, not only one HR functional area but its entirety”</i>
37.	<i>“By enforcing accountability on HR matters without negative influence from management in HR decisions”</i>
38.	<i>“Taking part in the planning phase, monitoring and evaluation of HR interventions”</i>
39.	<i>“HRM component should receive lessons to comprehend the strategic objectives of the branch and expand its full support on HR matters”</i>
40.	<i>“Maintain a strong partnership on HR service delivery matters”</i>
41.	<i>“By defining terms of reference on HR matters relating to the branch”</i>
42.	<i>“By being able to perform without interference by DEA management, and have their performance assessed”</i>
43.	No comment
44.	No comment
45.	No comment
46.	No comment
47.	No comment

As the above table reflects, twenty-nine (29) of the forty-seven (47) respondents provided their opinion on how the HRM component could be repositioned so as to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch. The reality that thirty-eight percent of the middle managers who responded held no opinion about the repositioning of HRM is cause for some concern.

Of those who expressed pertinent views, the most articulate opinions are that the HRM component ought to become visible during branch planning sessions and that HRM should be well-represented. Other opinions confirmed that the continuous review and assessment of HR processes and trends ensure the alignment of the processes with the needs of the branch. Moreover, it was stated that the needs and challenges facing management need to be assessed in order to close the gaps between management and lower levels on issues of expectations, perceptions and performance.

6.4 Summary

The data analysis and findings presented in this chapter relate to the responses obtained from middle managers (levels 11 and 12) situated at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Their demographic information was presented in the preceding chapter. Forty-seven (47) respondents completed the questionnaire, of whom twenty (20) were females and twenty-seven (27) males.

With the findings relating to middle managers now concluded, the following chapter will present data analysis and findings pertaining to the junior managers' views regarding the effectiveness of the HRM component in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch. Junior managers have the responsibility to exercise direct supervision on lower levels who constitute the majority of the Environmental Programmes branch's staff complement.

CHAPTER 7: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS – JUNIOR MANAGERS

7.1 Introduction

As in the preceding chapters, the questionnaire's statement sequence is followed in the data analysis and findings relating to the junior managers in the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Sixty-five (65) questionnaires were distributed to staff at occupational levels 9 and 10. Only forty-three (43) respondents completed and returned the self-administered questionnaires. Sixty-five percent ($n=28$) of the respondents were males, while females accounted for the remaining thirty-five percent ($n=15$). The majority of the respondents fell in the 30 to 39 age group between ($n=24$), followed by 20 to 29 age group ($n=14$). Most of the respondents ($n=22$) had been employed at the DEA for only between 0 to 5 years, followed by those ($n=21$) who had been there for 6 to 10 years. A detailed presentation of these demographic profiles was made in Chapter 5 Section 5.2 (*Demographic profile of all respondents*).

7.2 Data analysis and interpretations: Junior managers

Section B (*The effect of HRM on strategic objectives*) of the questionnaire administered to junior managers was intended to establish how the HRM component influences the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. (Refer to *Appendix F3* for the questionnaire.) This section thus deals with the junior managers' understanding of HRM's effect on the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic objectives. The section's nine (9) statements were to be answered by means of response points ranging from 1 to 5, with **1** = *Strongly Disagree*, **2** = *Disagree*, **3** = *Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)*, **4** = *Agree*, and **5** = *Strongly Agree*. The statements in question are:

- B1:** The HRM component regularly participates in the DEA's strategic planning activities.
- B2:** The HRM component renders advice on HR matters when determining the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic and operational objectives
- B3:** The management of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to make meaningful contributions to the strategic objectives of the DEA.
- B4:** The staff of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to perform their duties in an effective and efficient manner.
- B5:** There is undue political interference in the management and operations of the HRM component.
- B6:** HRM decision-making is decentralised across management levels.
- B7:** The HRM component is viewed as expensive and a burden on the workforce of the DEA.
- B8:** The HRM component renders sound human resource solutions during the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic planning processes.
- B9:** The HRM component regularly provides useful and informative reports to management on human resource matters.

Figure 7.1: Levels 9 and 10 – Effect of human resource management on strategic objectives

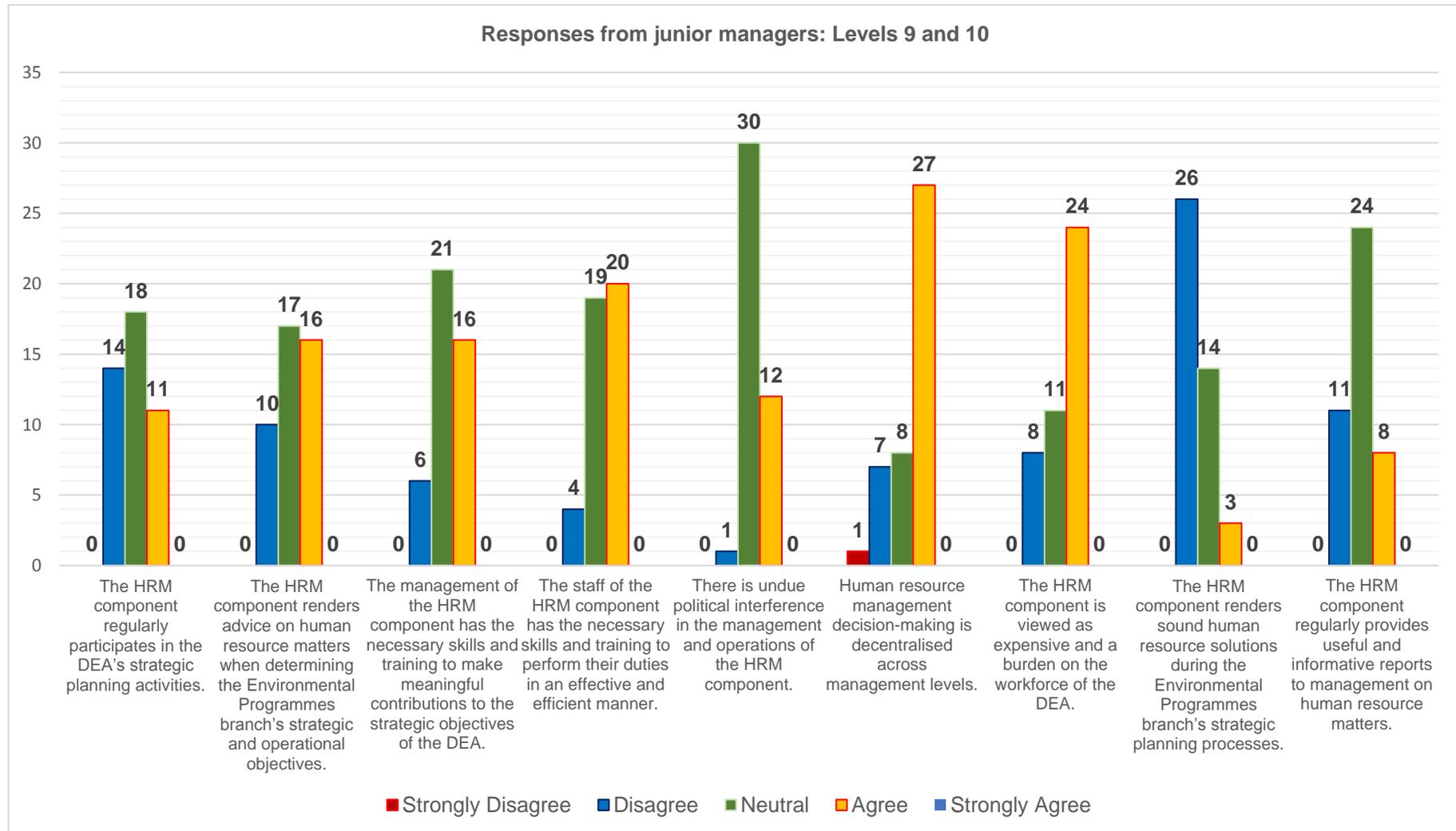


Table 7.1: Levels 9 and 10 – This section requires your opinion on how the HRM component influences the achievement of the strategic objectives of the DEA

NO.	STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	TOTAL
B1	The HRM component regularly participates in the DEA's strategic planning activities.	0 (0%)	14 (33%)	18 (41%)	11 (26%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B2	The HRM component renders advice on HR matters when determining the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic and operational objectives	0 (0%)	10 (23%)	17 (40%)	16 (37%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B3	The management of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to make meaningful contributions to the strategic objectives of the DEA.	0 (0%)	6 (14%)	21 (49%)	16 (37%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B4	The staff of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to perform their duties in an effective and efficient manner.	0 (0%)	4 (9%)	19 (44%)	20 (47%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B5	There is undue political interference in the management and operations of the HRM component.	0 (0%)	1 (2%)	30 (70%)	12 (28%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B6	HRM decision-making is decentralised across management levels.	1 (2%)	7 (16%)	8 (19%)	27 (63%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B7	The HRM component is viewed as expensive and a burden on the workforce of the DEA.	0 (0%)	8 (18%)	11 (26%)	24 (56%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B8	The HRM component renders sound human resource solutions during the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic planning processes.	0 (0%)	26 (60%)	14 (33%)	3 (7%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
B9	The HRM component regularly provides useful and informative reports to management on human resource matters.	0 (0%)	11 (26%)	24 (56%)	8 (18%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)

To complement Figure 7.1, the junior managers' responses are listed as the total number of responses and related percentages per statement in Table 7.1. An analysis of the data as well as the findings of each of the nine statements follows below.

7.2.1 Participating in strategic planning activities

As stated in Chapter 2 Section 2.5 (*Strategic planning*), it is important to continually link HR planning and strategic planning activities. According to the White Paper on Human Resource Management in the Public Service (1997:17-30), strategic planning activities should cover issues relating to organisational design as well as HR planning and development. Statement B1 (*The HRM component regularly participates in the DEA's strategic planning activities*) thus sought to determine the extent of HRM component's involvement in the strategic planning activities of the DEA.

A third ($n=14$) of the respondents disagreed that the HRM component participates regularly in the DEA's strategic planning activities. It is noteworthy if not perplexing that forty-one percent ($n=18$) of the respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, while only twenty-six percent ($n=11$) agreed that the HRM component participates regularly in strategic planning activities.

7.2.2 Rendering advice on human resource matters

Statement B2 (*The HRM component renders advice on HR matters when determining the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic and operational objectives*) was meant to determine whether the HRM component renders advice around HR matters when the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic and operational objectives are formulated.

Twenty-three percent ($n=10$) of the respondents disagreed with the notion that the HRM component renders such advice, whilst – once again! – forty percent ($n=17$) neither agreed nor disagreed. However, thirty-seven percent ($n=16$) of the junior managers agreed with the statement's assertion. It is devastating to a research project when such high numbers of respondents withhold their views regarding a particular statement. Essentially, it implies that this study cannot indubitably establish its hypotheses.

7.2.3 Holding skills and knowledge to make contributions

Chapter 2 Section 2.6 (*SHRM in the public sector*) averred that the lack of factual input by the management of HRM component is one of the major reasons for component's poor recognition. Statement B3 (*The management of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to make meaningful contributions to the strategic objectives of the DEA*) thus sought to determine if the HRM component's management possessed the necessary competences and skills to contribute towards the reaching of the objectives of the DEA.

Tellingly, forty nine percent ($n=21$) of the respondents opted for neutral, while fourteen percent ($n=6$) overtly disagreed with the notion that the HRM component's management has the requisite skills and training to make meaningful contributions to the DEA's strategic objectives. This once more renders the position of the thirty-seven percent ($n=16$) with agreed with Statement B3 practically negligible.

7.2.4 Holding skills and knowledge to perform duties

HRM is recognised as a profession that has influence in accomplishing organisations' strategic goals (van Rensburg, Basson & Carrin, 2011:1). In addition, the HRM component has a legal obligation to exercise control over the use of human resources as embedded in Section 195 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996. The staff of the HRM component therefore need to be qualified and professional in respect to their duties. Statement B4 (*The staff of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to perform their duties in an effective and efficient manner*) thus intended to learn whether the HRM component of the Environmental Programmes staff has the required qualifications to perform their duties effectively. Nine percent ($n=4$) of the respondents contradicted Statement B4, while forty-four percent ($n=19$) of the respondents were non-committal. Nonetheless, close to half ($n=20$) are persuaded that the HRM staff possesses the necessary HR expertise.

7.2.5 HRM component exposed to political interference

Statement B5 (*There is undue political interference in the management and operations of the HRM component*) sought to investigate whether political governance structures have influence on the decisions relating to HRM at the DEA. In keeping with earliest trends among this study group, the overwhelming majority of respondents, seventy percent ($n=30$), proffered neither positive nor negative sentiment. Only two percent ($n=1$) of the respondents disagreed that there is undue political interference, while twenty-eight percent ($n=12$) agreed that there is undue political interference.

7.2.6 HRM decision-making decentralised across management levels

Statement B6 (*HRM decision-making is decentralised across management levels*) sought to determine if decisions relating to human resources are decentralised at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Just under twenty percent disagreed with the statement that HRM decision-making is decentralised; sixteen percent ($n=7$) disagreed while two percent ($n=1$) expressed strong disagreement. Nineteen percent ($n=8$) of the respondents stayed neutral, and refreshing sixty-three percent ($n=27$) agreed.

7.2.7 HRM component viewed as expensive and a burden

Watson (2014:117) echoed the sentiment that the HRM component is often viewed as a burden on the workplace due to its lack of strategic insight. Statement B7 (*The HRM component is viewed as expensive and a burden on the workforce of the DEA*) was interested in the junior managers' perceptions of the HRM component's role and its influence in supporting the strategic goals of the DEA. Fifty-six percent ($n=24$) of the respondents agreed that the HRM component is viewed as expensive and a burden on the DEA workforce; eighteen percent ($n=8$) disagreed, while twenty-six percent ($n=11$) neither agreed nor disagreed.

7.2.8 Rendering sound human resource solutions

Statement B8 (*The HRM component renders sound HR solutions during the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic planning processes*) was meant to determine whether the

HRM component enjoys the platform to attend to a wide range of management concerns relating to HR issues during the branch’s strategic planning processes. Sixty percent ($n=26$) of the respondents contradicted the notion, while thirty-three percent ($n=14$) of the respondents were undecided. Regrettably only seven percent ($n=3$) believed that the HRM component proffers sound HR solutions during the Environmental Programmes branch’s strategic planning processes.

7.2.9 Reporting to management

Statement B9 (*The HRM component regularly provides useful and informative reports to management on HR matters*) dealt with the question whether the HRM component provides progress reports to management relating to HRM programmes. Twenty-six percent ($n=11$) of the respondents disagreed, an overwhelming sixty-five percent ($n=24$) were unmoved, and only eighteen percent ($n=8$) agreed with the submission that the HRM component regularly provides useful and informative reports to management on HR matters.

With the responses to Statements B1 through B9 critically presented, Question B10 can now follow.

7.2.10 Matters hindering the HRM component’s functioning and operations

Question B10 was phrased as follows: *From your experience, what matters/issues hinder the HRM component from making a meaningful contribution to the strategic objectives of the DEA?* The question was interested in the sorts of factors that junior managers believe are a hindrance to the effectiveness of the HRM component in relation to the DEA’s strategic objectives. Table 7.2 lists the respondents’ sentiments on this matter.

Table 7.2: Levels 9 and 10 – From your experience, what matters/issues hinder the HRM component from making a meaningful contribution to the strategic objectives of the DEA? Please elaborate

NO.	COMMENT
1.	No comment
2.	<i>“HRM component is disengaged with the branch, other processes are not clearly articulated i.e. Performance development plan and training”</i>
3.	<i>“HRM is dependent on other components to do their work”</i>
4.	<i>“Lack of visibility of HRM component. Quarterly awareness session should be conducted and continuous client satisfaction survey”</i>
5.	<i>“Inconsistent application of HRM practices due to senior management influence”</i>
6.	No comment
7.	<i>“HRM only provides administration support and not critical component, more priority should be done in the services it renders in order to uphold the people centric value of programme implementation”</i>
8.	No comment
9.	No comment
10.	No comment

NO.	COMMENT
11.	No comment
12.	No comment
13.	No comment
14.	No comment
15.	No comment
16.	No comment
17.	No comment
18.	No comment
19.	No comment
20.	No comment
21.	No comment
22.	No comment
23.	<i>“Unfair treatment on HR issues”</i>
24.	<i>“Lack of confidentiality”</i>
25.	<i>“Management influence on HRM decision-making”</i>
26.	No comment
27.	No comment
28.	No comment
29.	<i>“Concealment of truth”</i>
30.	<i>“Too much flexibility in policy application”</i>
31.	<i>“HRM component handles labour relations issues in an unfair manner, with prejudice and victimisation”</i>
32.	<i>“Different advice on similar HR matters”</i>
33.	<i>“Unfair labour practices”</i>
34.	<i>“Lack of creativity in advancing the face of HRM”</i>
35.	<i>“Inconsistent application of policies”</i>
36.	<i>“Bias decision-making and favouritism”</i>
37.	No comment
38.	<i>“Policies not applied consistently”</i>
39.	No comment
40.	No comment
41.	<i>“Favouritism based on management's influence”</i>
42.	<i>“Inconsistent decision-making”</i>
43.	<i>“Preferential treatment influenced by management”</i>

As indicated by “*No comment*”, the majority of the respondents (23 of 43) did not provide their views. This is in keeping with the trend already lamented above in regard to this cohort of respondents. The main negative issues raised by the rest related to the HRM component’s disconnection from the branch, as well as the need for continuous client satisfaction surveys.

Given the above findings informed by the junior managers’ responses, attention can now turn to junior managers’ views about the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the DEA’s Environmental Programmes branch.

7.3 Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner: responses from junior managers

As in the cases of the senior and middle managers, the questionnaire's Section C (Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner) had interest in how the HRM component might be repositioned so as to effectively perform its role as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. This section thus required the junior managers to elaborate in detail on how they thought the HRM component can be repositioned at the Environmental Programmes.

Statements C1 to C4 required responses in similar manner as in Section B. that is, 1 = *Strongly Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree*, 3 = *Neutral (Neither Agree nor Disagree)*, 4 = *Agree* and 5 = *Strongly Agree*. The statements in question are:

C1: Recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development and performance management must be refined and up-scaled in the HRM strategy of the DEA.

C2: The workplace needs to adopt an environment that is conducive to HR performance by consistently attending to employees' needs.

C3: The Environmental Programmes branch's strategic plan should inform and support the entire HR planning process at the DEA.

C4: The HRM component must be recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence that demonstrates expert knowledge.

Figure 7.2 below depicts the junior managers' responses relating to repositioning of the HRM component such that it can effectively perform its role as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. With regard to Statement C1, only forty-two (42) responses were received instead of the expected forty-three (43).

Figure 7.2: Levels 9 and 10 – Reposition the HRM component as strategic partner

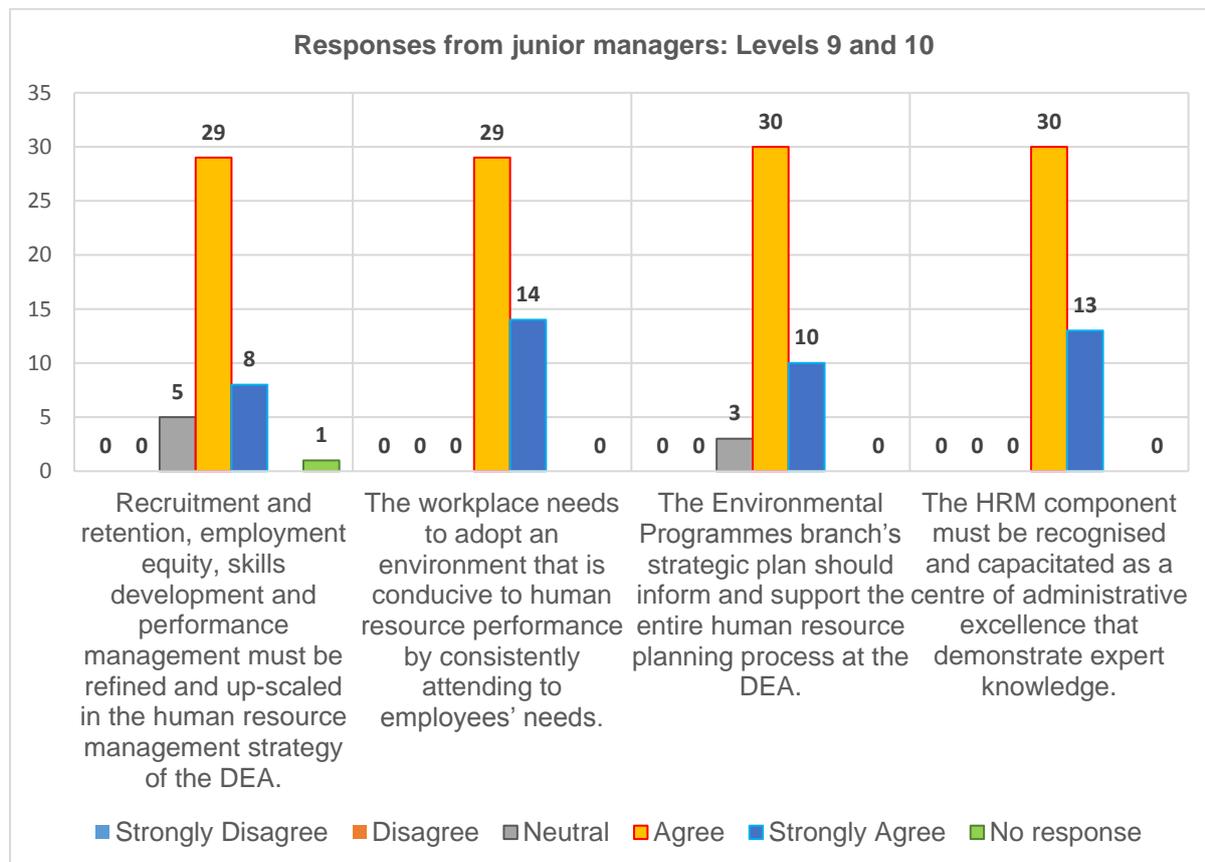


Table 7.3: Levels 9 and 10 – This section requires your opinion on how the HRM component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

NO.	STATEMENTS	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	NO RESPONSE	TOTAL
C1	Recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development and performance management must be refined and up-scaled in the HRM strategy of the DEA.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	5 (12%)	29 (67%)	8 (19%)	1 (2%)	43 (100%)
C2	The workplace needs to adopt an environment that is conducive to HR performance by consistently attending to employees' needs.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	29 (67%)	14 (33%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
C3	The Environmental Programmes branch's strategic plan should inform and support the entire HR planning process at the DEA.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	3 (7%)	30 (70%)	10 (23%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)
C4	The HRM component must be recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence that demonstrate expert knowledge.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	30 (70%)	13 (30%)	0 (0%)	43 (100%)

Junior managers' responses on how the HRM component could be repositioned such that it effectively performs its role as strategic partner at the DEA are listed as the total number of responses and the related percentages per statement in Table 7.3 above. An analysis of the data as well as the findings pertaining to each of the statements follows below.

7.3.1 Refining the HRM strategy

Keeping in mind the guidelines provided in Section 2.12 (*Guidelines for developing HR strategies*) of Chapter 2 as foundation for optimal HR performance, Statement C1 (*Recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development and performance management must be refined and up-scaled in the HRM strategy of the DEA*) was put before the junior managers. The statement sought to establish if HRM functions, like recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development and performance management, needed refining.

Only twelve percent ($n=5$) of the junior managers remained neutral, while a significant sixty-seven percent ($n=29$) agreed with Statement C1, nineteen percent ($n=8$) more agreeing strongly that recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development and performance management must be refined and up-scaled in the HRM strategy. For reasons unknown to the researcher, one respondent proffered no response. It was heartening to see the majority of respondents, eighty-six percent (86%) in total, concurring with the statement.

7.3.2 Adopting an environment conducive to HR performance

Statement C2 (*The workplace needs to adopt an environment that is conducive to HR performance by consistently attending to employees' needs*) had interest in the work environment and whether the needs of the employees are being attended to regularly. Here too, there was refreshing agreement from the respondents. Sixty-seven percent ($n=29$) agreed, while thirty-three percent ($n=14$) agreed even more strongly that the workplace needs to adopt an environment that is conducive to HR performance by consistently attending to employees' needs.

7.3.3 Inform and support the HR planning process EA

Statement C3 (*The Environmental Programmes branch's strategic plan should inform and support the entire HR planning process at the DEA*) was interested in the question whether the strategic plan of the Environmental Programmes branch truly informs and supports the DEA's HR planning processes. Results show overwhelming support for the statement; seventy percent ($n=30$) agreed and twenty-three percent ($n=10$) agreed strongly with the statement, while only seven percent ($n=3$) neither agreed nor disagreed.

7.3.4 Capacitating the HRM component

As noted in Chapter 2 Section 2.3 (*HRM as a profession in the public sector*) the effort to recognise HRM as a profession is significant because decisions that affect human resources are made on a daily basis and have a direct influence on services rendered to the public (van Rensberg, Basson & Carrin, 2011:1). Statement C4 (*The HRM component must be*

recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence that demonstrate expert knowledge) thus assessed the junior managers' views on whether the HRM component is recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence at the Environmental Programmes. All respondents agreed, with thirty percent ($n=13$) of them agreeing quite vociferously that the HRM component must be recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence knowledge. Having presented the responses to Statements C1 to C4, Question C5 can now ensue.

7.3.5 Repositioning the HRM component as strategic partner

Table 7.4 presents the junior managers' views on how the HRM component might be repositioned so that it effectively performs its role as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Table 7.4: Levels 9 and 10 – In your opinion, how can the HRM component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate.

NO.	COMMENT
1.	<i>"Every region needs to have its own Champion to address HR issues"</i>
2.	<i>"HRM staff require more training in their area of expertise in order for them to offer strategic advise"</i>
3.	<i>"By aligning HRM time-frames with the workflow of components with the branch. i.e. Courses are offered during peak time of the branch service delivery"</i>
4.	<i>"By conducting awareness sessions and client satisfaction surveys"</i>
5.	<i>"HRM need to constantly familiarise itself with the function of the Branch in order to render strategic advise"</i>
6.	No comment
7.	No comment
8.	<i>"It is well positioned"</i>
9.	No comment
10.	No comment
11.	No comment
12.	No comment
13.	No comment
14.	No comment
15.	No comment
16.	No comment
17.	No comment
18.	No comment
19.	No comment
20.	No comment
21.	No comment
22.	No comment
23.	No comment
24.	<i>Do not know</i>

NO.	COMMENT
25.	No comment
26.	No comment
27.	No comment
28.	No comment
29.	<i>“Monitoring and evaluation of HR practices and fair reporting”</i>
30.	<i>“Joint HRM planning and implementation of prescripts”</i>
31.	<i>“Held accountable on all HR matters that contradict policies”</i>
32.	<i>“Contracting on branch information sessions”</i>
33.	<i>“Fair labour practices”</i>
34.	<i>“By adopting HR planning process that invite inputs from the branch”</i>
35.	<i>“Planned roadshows on HR matters”</i>
36.	<i>“By assigning a dedicated team to deal with HR issues in the branch”</i>
37.	No comment
38.	<i>“by assessing its performance and establish corrective measures”</i>
39.	No comment
40.	<i>“Full time participation in the programme of the branch on HR issues”</i>
41.	<i>“Application of policies and participation in planning and reporting on HR issues”</i>
42.	<i>“Active and full participation of dedicated HRM members within the branch”</i>
43.	<i>“By introducing quarterly information sessions to address all HR matters in the branch and provide feedback”</i>

As reflected in the above table, nineteen (19) out of forty-three (43) respondents shared their views on how the HRM component could be repositioned as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Thus concludes the analysis and findings of the data and responses received from junior management (occupational levels 9 and 10).

7.4 Summary

In this chapter, the data analysis and research findings arising from junior managers were presented in accordance with the sequence contained in the questionnaire. The findings contained in this chapter are informed by the statements and questions presented to the junior managers affording them an opportunity to express their opinions around HRM’s effect on the organisation’s strategic objectives as well as around the repositioning of the HRM component as a strategic partner. Chapter 8 presents pertinent recommendations as they are informed by the study’s research findings.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are revisited in this final chapter of the dissertation by way of formulating conclusions and recommendations per research question. All the conclusions and recommendations derive from the research analysis and findings articulated in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Conclusions and recommendations are expressed in relation to the three management levels, in each case this is done after the realisation of the main research objective is highlighted. The dissertation concludes with possible areas of further study. Furthermore, these conclusions and recommendations will be summarised in a report and handed to the Department of Environmental Affairs.

8.2 Realisation of main research objective

This section answers the research question: *How can the HRM component be repositioned in such a way that it effectively performs its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA?* As already indicated, the ensuing conclusions and recommendations are presented per management level.

8.2.1 Recommendations from senior managers' responses

Concerning how the HRM component may be repositioned such that it can effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch, the majority of senior managers believe that the DEA currently fails to make provision within the HRM structure and strategy for the right number of competent employees to support the organisational plan. It follows, therefore, that the right number of employees with requisite competencies ought to be identified and catered for in the HRM strategy.

With regard to the statement whether *Continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes branch could improve HRM at the DEA*, the conclusion reached was that regular monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes branch are lacking at the DEA. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for the HRM component and management to more often analyse and review the HRM strategy jointly.

Thirdly, the HRM component is viewed by senior management as existing merely to reach legislated goals and objectives. There is thus a need for the HRM component to be seen to do more than just complying with legislation and regulatory requirements.

It is reassuring that most senior managers agree with the notion that the HRM component is and must be a strategic partner in the organisation's everyday operations. A senior management that recognises the potential strategic role of the HRM component is a very heartening point to take away from this research's interaction with the leadership of the Environmental Programmes branch.

8.2.2 Recommendations from middle managers' responses

How, then according to middle managers, might the HRM component be repositioned so it effectively performs its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? For this category, it emerges that the HRM component is not managed in such a way that it is able to assist in achieving the DEA's service delivery goals. It needs to be reiterated, therefore, that in order for the HRM component to follow the preferred multiple role model which will enable it to strategically assist in the realisation of service delivery goals.

Given that the majority of respondents agreed with the statement about the enhancement of performance management processes, it would appear that middle managers are indeed of the opinion that the HRM component does ensure that the DEA's performance management processes are linked to staff development programmes. This implies that performance management processes of the Environmental Programmes branch are in fact identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses, and this enables sustainable corrective interventions for staff development.

Rather troubling in this category of respondents is the observation of a high proportion of non-committal managers. Consequently, it could not be established beyond reasonable doubt whether the performance assessment processes do indeed identify employees' strengths and weaknesses so as to affect sustainable corrective interventions. In that case, the proportion of those who agreed with the statement (41%) deviated by only a percent from that of the respondents who remained. This implies that the data leaned rather weakly towards agreeing that the strengths and weaknesses of the workforce of the DEA do get identified so as to ensure sustainable corrective interventions.

Concerning the statement about the assessing of HR development needs, given the majority of the respondents who concurred with the statement, it may be deduced that the assessment of HR development needs at the DEA does indeed take the budget and planning cycle into account. This implies that the strategic planning process of the DEA is coherent with due consideration of the budget required to deliver on the mandate.

8.2.3 Recommendations from junior managers' responses

Coming to junior managers and how the HRM component might be repositioned as a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes, a definite desire was voiced that recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development, and performance management must be further developed and improved. However, this does not mean that aspects such as, recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development, and performance management, are already incorporated in the HR strategy of the DEA. It only means, rather, that there is a general notion that these HR aspects should be refined and up-scaled.

All the respondents agreed with the statement about adopting an environment that is conducive to HR performance, and the key factor in its realisation is the consistent attending to employees' needs. A responsive leadership will certainly get the most out of its employees.

Further, the majority of the respondents agreed that the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic plan should inform and support the DEA's HR planning processes. This is quite likely

a function of these managers' experience of the reality of the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic plan being indeed informed and supported by the HR planning processes. Finally, all the respondents agreed with the statement about capacitating the HRM component. Among various implications, it may reasonably be deduced that the leadership of the Environmental Programmes branch values the HRM component and, therefore, that it must be capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence.

8.3 Final conclusions and recommendations

In this section, every subsection presents conclusions and recommendations per question/statement included in the questionnaire. The same sequence is adhered to which was followed when presenting the data findings in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Likewise, the sections retains the treatment order of first senior managers, then middle managers, and finally junior managers.

8.3.1 Senior managers and the HRM component at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

With regard to jointly reviewing HRM strategies, ownership of the HRM strategies is not shared between the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch. This shows that the HRM component should engage more regularly with the management of the Environmental Programmes branch when developing HRM strategies so as to obtain their support and buy-in in the overall HRM strategies of the DEA.

Since the majority of senior managers agreed that HR programmes are aligned with other strategic programmes, it can thus be declared that the senior managers at the Environmental Programmes branch are persuaded that co-operation is necessary between the HRM component and management in order to ensure the alignment between HR programmes and other strategic programmes.

The majority of the senior managers further agreed that the SHRM responsibilities are accepted and owned by the staff. It may thus be concluded that the workforce of the HRM component accepts and supports their HRM duties and responsibilities amidst, and because of, operational demands.

Senior managers seem, on the whole, unconvinced that more gets achieved at lower organisational levels with an effective HRM. Therefore, organisational level at which less is being done in terms of HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA could not be determined. This implies that the HRM component should perhaps do more to become more visible at different organisational levels, especially at lower organisational levels.

It also could not be determined from senior managers' responses whether management does get held accountable for the implementation of HRM interventions. The real chance that the Environmental Programmes branch management is in fact not held accountable for the implementation of HRM interventions means that the DEA has not yet achieved moderate levels of HRM effectiveness due to a lack of accountability.

With regard to collaboration between the HRM component and management in the interest of the DEA's long-term objectives, senior managers' responses pointed to the need for increased

efforts to improve management interventions and group work between the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch. This can be achieved through integrating the efforts of the HRM component with key management priorities. The likely reality, then, is that interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and management do not exist and/or are not implemented effectively.

Furthermore, it emerged from senior managers' responses that the strategic plans of the DEA do not state ways whereby management and the HRM component should interact in order to achieve the DEA's long-term strategic objectives. It follows from this observation that the DEA management should redirect its efforts towards involving the HRM component in decision-making processes by designing a framework for regular interaction.

The majority of senior managers neither agreed nor disagreed that the monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plan does improve HRM at the DEA. Consequently, it needs to be ascertained whether continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans exists at the Environmental Programmes branch, and whether if at all such measures improve HRM at the DEA. Responses from senior managers do not offer much hope in this regard.

The same unflattering picture emerges in relation to the incorporation of collective bargaining requirements within HRM practices. It could not be established, then, if the HRM component has the capacity to adapt, as well as to achieve a balance between general HRM practises and demands arising from collective bargaining. This has grave implications for the HRM component since the latter's reputation depends on the manner in which HRM = practices are aligned with matters arising from collective bargaining.

Lastly, the senior managers fingered a lack of consultation and transparency in HR decision-making as a major hindrance to the realisation of smooth relations between management and the HRM component. HRM's visibility mainly when there is crisis, along with the HRM component's apparent preoccupation with compliance, also appear to irk a significant proportion of senior managers. Given some of these frustrating reasons, management sometimes ignores the HRM component's advice, and yet their decisions affect human resources.

8.3.2 Middle managers and the HRM component at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

Responses received from the middle managers about the mission, objectives and goal of the HRM component point to a vital link between HRM and the overall strategy of the DEA. Yet a significant proportion of the middle managers implied that the HRM strategy and interventions are not properly aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives. However, the involvement of the HRM component enables the translation and integration of both the HR strategy and the organisational strategy into everyday behaviour within an organisation. The link thus appears to have a significant impact on the establishment of an appropriate HR plan. It follows from this then that HR managers must form part of the management team that has powers to formulate the organisational strategy of the DEA. The participation of HR managers will help determine, among other things, the amount of time that needs to be given to human resources to facilitate a successful integration of HR strategies with the overall DEA strategy.

It could not be positively determined whether the HRM component continuously assists and supports the management of the Environmental Programmes branch in addressing the needs of the employees. It would appear that the HRM component is not sufficiently proactive in providing management support to address the needs of the employees; needless to say, this has to change. It was hardly surprising then that the majority of middle managers disagreed with the claim that there is continuous assessment of the condition or state of employees at the Environmental Programmes branch.

Middle managers' responses confirmed the existence of a consolidated HR strategy document. This augurs well for the HRM component in regard to its being recognised as an important strategic partner.

It was the opinion of the majority of middle managers that laying stress on developing HR capacity internally will result in a more effective HRM at the Environmental Programmes branch. Line managers thus need to foster the occurrence of proper HR development assessments because effective HRM and development have a bearing on the realisation of competitive organisational performance. Yet, the middle managers disagreed with the notion that the employees are continuously assessed. This discord ought to be attended to by means of HR audits if the Environmental Programmes branch is to effectively cater for its employees' needs.

Middle managers further indicated that training and development do help achieve internal stability within an organisation. It would appear then that the workplace skills plan of the DEA sufficiently establish internal stability at the Environmental Programmes branch. The HRM component's responsibility to oversee and plan training and development seems to be achieved. Moreover, middle managers' agreement with the statement concerning the strengthening of the HRM component's relations implies that the top and middle management at the Environmental Programmes branch do endeavour to integrate their efforts with those from operational levels.

Unfortunately, a significant cohort of middle managers disagreed with the view that the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch do jointly assess the external factors that may influence the services rendered by the DEA so as to develop relevant action plans. This apparent lack of collaboration during assessment processes plus lack of an integrated approach between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes management clearly hampers progress with the regard to the realisation of the DEA's strategic objectives.

Finally, the middle managers suggested that the HRM component does not participate in the formulation of the vision, mission, values and strategies of the Environmental Programmes branch. Clearly, however, the HRM component's involvement with more than just routine administrative tasks will enable the integration of both the HR strategy and Environmental Programmes branch strategy into everyday operations within the DEA, which will translate into the much-needed strategic partnership. Moreover, the respondents concurred that there is a need for the HRM component and the DEA management to establish a platform for the evaluation of HRM practices in an ongoing process that focuses on performance results.

8.3.3 Junior managers and the HRM component at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA

It is very difficult in this category to conclude much with confidence because the junior managers generally neither agreed nor disagreed with the questionnaire statements. So, for instance, it cannot be determined whether the HRM component does participate regularly in the strategic planning activities of the DEA. Reading between the lines would suggest that the junior managers are of the opinion that the HRM component needs to adopt an (annual) programme to raise its visibility and thus to earn the right to participate in the DEA's strategic planning activities.

Junior managers' responses further suggest that the HRM component does not provide advice on HR matters that might influence the strategic and operational objectives of the DEA. In this regard, the Environmental Programmes' line managers could form strong relations with the HRM component in order to ease the challenges associated with HRM.

With regard to skills and knowledge required by the HRM managers vis-à-vis the organisation's strategic objectives, junior managers' responses were non-committal. Consequently, we remain in the dark regarding whether the HRM component's management has the necessary skills and training to make meaningful contributions towards the realisation of the DEA's strategic objectives. This could imply that the contributions made by the managers of the HRM component are regarded as insignificant towards the accomplishment of the DEA's strategic objectives.

Based on the number of junior managers who agreed that decision-making relating to HRM is decentralised across management levels, it may be inferred that the HRM component has less influence in branch strategic planning processes and is still viewed as a personnel administration function rather than a professional component of the DEA. Hence, most junior managers seem persuaded about the staff of the HRM component possessing the necessary skills and training to perform their technical duties in an effective and efficient manner.

Since the majority of junior managers neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement about the HRM component being exposed to political interference, it could not be determined whether there is undue political interference in the management and operations of the HRM component.

Given the majority of junior managers who agreed that the HRM component is viewed as expensive and a burden on the workforce of the DEA, it may be recommended that HRM practitioners need to work toward shifting such a mind-set by productively participating in strategic decision-making processes. Contributing to the efficacy and effectiveness of the HRM practices should not be the responsibility of only the HRM component. Both HR practitioners and line managers should work together during HRM planning and programme evaluation to improve performance.

If junior managers' responses are to be believed, it ought to be concluded that the HRM component does not render sound HR solutions. Therefore, the HRM component should formalise its involvement in the strategic planning processes of the Environmental Programmes branch in order to be able to provide logical and structured means of analysing complex HR issues and provide sound solutions. In the same way, the HRM component needs regularly to publish informative reports the outcomes of its programmes in order to promote organisational learning and improve the knowledge base on HRM practices.

On matters hindering the HRM component's functioning and operations, here the junior managers stood in sharp contrast to the middle managers. The latter were of the opinion that the HRM component is visible during branch planning sessions and that the HRM component is well represented. However, middle and junior managers were in concurrence with regard to the sentiment that the HRM component only provides routine administration support. In addition, and troublingly, some junior managers felt that the HRM component applies policies and procedures in an inconsistent manner.

8.4 Areas of further study

The overall findings of the study show that managers know very little about the HRM strategy of the DEA. Moreover, the results reveal a lack of emphasis on the development and implementation of joint SHRM plans between line managers and the HRM component at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. HRM is not viewed to have meaningful influence in supporting the DEA's strategic objectives. As a result, the HRM component is not considered a strategic partner.

All things considered, the findings of this study have helped build a knowledge base for improving the effectiveness of HRM in supporting the strategic objectives of the DEA. It is thus hoped that both the Environmental Programmes branch and members of the HRM component will deem this study a useful foundation for more advanced reflection and action.

Furthermore, there is no reason why similar studies cannot be conducted with managers from the other branches of the DEA. This will facilitate a more meaningful generalisation of the research results. After such a step, several other government departments can also be interrogated with the aim of improving overall relations between employees and the support resources available within departments.

Another aspect worthy of further exploration could be the effect of SHRM on the behaviour and perceptions of DEA managers. Without demonstrably documenting the value and effect of SHRM on public service managers, public servants will remain undervalued as well as underutilised.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICS CLEARANCE

	
DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE	
Date: 7 November 2014	Ref #: PAM/2014/008 (Chibi) Name of applicant: Mr SD Chibi Student #: 43846882
Dear Mr Chibi	
Decision: Ethics Clearance Approval	
<hr/> Name: Mr SD Chibi, schibi@environment.gov.za , tel: 0832647053 <i>[Supervisor: Ms C Alers, 012 429 6286, alersc@unisa.ac.za]</i> Research project: Role of human resource management in supporting the strategic objectives of the environmental programmes branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs: Qualification: MPA	
<hr/> Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the Department: Public Administration and Management: Research Ethics Review Committee for the above mentioned research. Final approval is granted for the duration of the project.	
The decision will be tabled at the next College RERC meeting for notification/ratification.	
<hr/> For full approval: The application was expedited and reviewed in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics by the RERC on 3 November 2014. The proposed research may now commence with the proviso that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics.2) Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study, as well as changes in the methodology, should be communicated in writing to this Ethics Review Committee. An amended application could be requested if there are substantial changes from the existing proposal, especially if those changes affect any of the study-related risks for the research participants.3) The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study.	
Kind regards  Prof Mike van Heerden Chairperson: Research Ethics Review Committee vheerm@unisa.ac.za	 Prof RT Mpofo Acting Executive Dean: CEMS <small>University of South Africa Pretorius Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Johannesburg PO Box 392, Unisa, 0003 South Africa Telephone: +27 12 429 3111 Facsimile: +27 12 429 4150 www.unisa.ac.za</small>

APPENDIX B: PERMISSION LETTER FROM THE DEA



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Reference: DEA/2014
Enquiries: J Moepye
Telephone: 310 3763

University of South Africa
Research Ethics Committee
PRETORIA
0003

Dear Sir/Madam

APPROVAL FOR MR SD CHIBI TO CONDUCT HIS ACADEMIC STUDY RESEARCH IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

This letter serves to confirm that Mr SD Chibi (Student Number: 43846882) has been officially granted full permission to use our data sets and conduct interviews with employees of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) as part of the study requirements for the Masters of Public Administration degree at the University Of South Africa.

The DEA hereby declares that the research findings of the study will only be utilized for future research, planning and development purpose. The confidentiality and security of the research information will be preserved according to the government information security standards.

In the light of the above declaration, Mr Chibi is free to publish the research findings in his dissertation as well as research articles he will be producing for publication in journals. Your tireless assistance to Mr Chibi will be highly appreciated in this regards

Mr Joshua Moepye

Deputy Director: Learning and Development

Date: 07/03/2014

APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

2016-04-27

Title: *Role of human resource management in supporting the strategic objectives of the environmental programmes branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs*

Dear Prospective Participant

My name is Sibusiso Desmond Chibi. I am the Masters student of the College of Economics and Management Sciences at UNISA. I am inviting you to participate in a study about the role of human resource management in supporting the strategic objectives of the environmental programmes branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA). The reporting of this study will be through a dissertation paper and will be made available to the DEA after all has been cleared with UNISA.

You have been **invited to participate** in the study because of your extensive experience about the topic under study. Your views on the topic would assist me to generate a comprehensive picture of the role of human resource management in the DEA. The aim of the study is to identify gaps and to explain the role of human resource management in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

This study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a written consent form. **You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.**

You will be required to participate in an **online survey** that may last between 10 and 20 minutes. The survey will consist of a set of statements which you will be asked to rate using a Likert-scale technique ranging from 1 to 5, representing 5 = *Strongly Agree*, 4 = *Agree*, 3 = *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, 2 = *Disagree* and 1 = *Strongly Disagree*.

Your **privacy will be respected** throughout the research by not putting any pressure on you to participate in the study or disclose your private information. No one will be able to connect you to the answers you give. Soft copies of the data will be kept by the researcher in a password-protected computer, while hard copies will be locked in the researcher's office cabinet. Future use of the data will be subject to Research Ethic Review and approval, if applicable. All information will be destroyed permanently after five years by means of shredding of documents and deleting electronic information from the hard drive of the computer.

You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise. The study will not incur undue costs to you.

This study has received written approval from the Research Ethics Review Committee of the College of Economic and Management Sciences, Unisa. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher if you wish. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher about any aspect of this study, please contact Mr. Sibusiso Chibi, schibi@environment.gov.za, 012 399-8625.

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for participating in this study.

Mr. Sibusiso Desmond Chibi

APPENDIX D: CONSENT TO PARTICIPANT IN THE RESEARCH



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: S Chibi

Tel: 012 399 8625 Fax: 012 322 4832 Email: schibi@environment.gov.za

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I, _____ (name & surname), confirm that the person asking my consent to take part in this study has told me about the nature, procedure, potential benefits and anticipated inconvenience of participation.

- I have read and understood the study as explained in the information sheet.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I am aware that the findings of this study will be anonymously processed into journal publications.
- I agree to complete the questionnaire.

Participant signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX E: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT WITH STATISTICIAN



environmental affairs

Department:
Environmental Affairs
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Enquiries: S Chibi

Tel: 012 399 8625 Fax: 012 322 4832 Email: schibi@environment.gov.za

**CONFIDENTIALITY CLAUSE BETWEEN
MR SIBUSISO DESMOND CHIBI (43846882), AND
STATISTICIAN**

RESEARCH TITLE:

Role of human resource management in supporting the strategic objectives of the environmental programmes branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs

The research code of ethics mandates that confidentiality should be maintained throughout data collection, data analysis and reporting.

As a statistician, I understand that I have access to confidential information. By signing this statement, I am indicating my understanding of this responsibility and agree to the following:

- I understand that all information obtained or accessed by me in the course of my work is confidential. I agree not to divulge or otherwise make known to unauthorized persons any of this information, unless specifically authorised to do so.
- I understand that names and any other identifying information about study sites and participants are completely confidential.
- I agree to use the data solely for the purpose stipulated by the client.
- I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the data at all times and keep the data in secure, password-protected location.
- I agree to shred all hard copies of data in my possession on completion of the project. All electronic copies will be permanently deleted from the hard drive of my computer upon completion of this project.

Statistician

Date

Signature

Mr. Sibusiso Chibi
(Researcher)

Date

Signature

APPENDIX F1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR MANAGERS (LEVELS 13 TO 15)

A questionnaire to measure the role of the Human Resource Management component in supporting the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the Department of Environmental Affairs

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. This questionnaire is based on research of how the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA) can improve effective human resource management (HRM) through strategic planning. It also explores how the Human Resource Management component influences the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.
2. You have been invited to participate in this study because of your extensive experience in human resource management and strategic planning at the DEA.
3. The questionnaire has been compiled in a manner that it would take a maximum of 30 minutes to complete.
4. You are kindly requested to complete this questionnaire as honestly and completely as possible.
5. Participation is anonymous: You are not requested to disclose your identity. Your privacy will be respected and no one will be able to connect you to the answers you give.
6. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time.
7. You will not receive any payment or reward, financial or otherwise, and the study will not incur undue costs to you.
8. A copy of the final dissertation will be available in the library at the Muckleneuk Ridge Campus of the University of South Africa (Unisa), Pretoria.
9. **Section A** consists of 4 questions relating to the general demographic profile of the participants.
10. **Section B** consists of 10 questions. The first 9 questions are expressed as statements with response points ranging from 1 to 5; representing **1** as *Strongly Disagree*, **2** as *Disagree*, **3** as *Neutral* (Neither Agree nor Disagree), **4** as *Agree* and **5** as *Strongly Agree*. The last question is for more information that you need to supply.
11. **Section C** consists of 5 questions. The first 4 questions are expressed as statements with response points. The last question is for more information that you need to supply.
12. Please place a cross (X) in the appropriate box.

KINDLY COMPLETE AND RETURN THE SURVEY TO MR SD CHIBI AT SCHIBI@ENVIRONMENT.GOV.ZA, BEFORE 30 AUGUST 2016

**SECTION A:
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

Question A1: Gender

A1.1	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
A1.2	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question A2: Please indicate your age group

A2.1	20 – 29	<input type="checkbox"/>
A2.2	30 – 39	<input type="checkbox"/>
A2.3	40 – 49	<input type="checkbox"/>
A2.4	50 – 59	<input type="checkbox"/>
A2.5	60 and over	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question A3: How long have you been employed at the DEA?

A3.1	0 – 5 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
A3.2	6 – 10 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
A3.3	11 – 15 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
A3.4	16 – 21 years	<input type="checkbox"/>
A3.5	22 years and more	<input type="checkbox"/>

Question A4: Please indicate your job level

A4.1	Level 9 – 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
A4.2	Level 11 – 12	<input type="checkbox"/>
A4.3	Level 13 – 15	<input type="checkbox"/>
A4.4	Other, please specify:	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="text"/>	

**SECTION B:
STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

This section consists of general questions seeking to assess your perception on how to establish joint strategic plans between the Human Resource Management (HRM) component and first line managers at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Please indicate your choice with an **X** next to each of the statements. Also, elaborate in the space provided.

Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
B1	Human resource management strategies are jointly reviewed by the HRM component and the management of the Environmental Programmes branch.					
B2	Co-operation between the HRM component and management is necessary to support the alignment between human resource programmes and other strategic programmes.					
B3	The HRM component's team members support strategic human resource management duties and responsibilities that flow from operational demands.					
B4	Although the HRM component is well represented at top management levels, less is being done with regard to human resource management at lower levels.					
B5	Management is held accountable for the implementation of human resource management interventions.					
B6	Interventions to improve collaboration between the HRM component and management, are sufficient.					
B7	The strategic plan of the DEA highlights the way in which the HRM component and management must interact to achieve long-term strategic objectives.					
B8	Continuous monitoring and evaluation of joint strategic plans between the HRM component and the Environmental Programmes branch, improve human resource management at the DEA.					
B9	The HRM component concerns itself with industrial relations, and is able to balance the DEA's practices with requirements arising from collective bargaining.					
B10	In your daily experience, what aspects hamper smooth co-operation between the HRM component and management at the DEA? Please elaborate.					

**SECTION C:
REPOSITION THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT AS
STRATEGIC PARTNER**

This section requires your opinion on how the Human Resource Management (HRM) component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Please indicate your choice with an **X** next to each of the statements. Also, elaborate in the space provided.

Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
C1	The human resource management strategy makes provision for the right number of employees with all required competencies to support the organisational plan over a period of time.					
C2	The effectiveness of the human resource management strategy is appropriately evaluated by DEA's management.					
C3	The main aim of the HRM component is to comply with legislation and regulatory requirements.					
C4	The HRM component is recognised in terms of its day to day strategic role as strategic partner of the DEA.					
C5	In your opinion, how can the Human Resource Management component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate.					

APPENDIX F2: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MIDDLE MANAGERS (LEVELS 11 AND 12)

SECTION B: HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AS STRATEGIC PARTNER						
<p>This section deals with your understanding of the minimum requirements for the Human Resource Management (HRM) component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA). Please indicate your choice with an X next to each of the statements. Also, elaborate in the space provided.</p>						
Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
B1	The mission, objectives and goal of the HRM component are linked to the overall strategy of the DEA.					
B2	The Human Resource Management strategy and interventions are aligned with the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic aims and objectives.					
B3	The HRM component continuously assists and supports the management of the Environmental Programmes branch in addressing the needs of the employees.					
B4	The current state of human resources within the Environmental Programmes branch is continuously assessed by the HRM component.					
B5	The DEA does not have a consolidated human resource strategy document; consequently, the HRM component is not sufficiently recognition as important strategic partner.					
B6	Emphasis on developing human resource capacity internally results in more effective human resource management at the Environmental Programmes branch.					
B7	Internal stability at the Environmental Programmes branch can only be achieved through a comprehensive plan for training and development.					
B8	Full integration between top- and middle management and the operational levels in the Environmental Programmes branch, will strengthen the relation between the HRM component and the DEA's management.					
B9	External factors that may influence the services provided by the DEA, are jointly assessed by the HRM component and management to develop relevant action plans.					
B10	In your daily experience, is the management of the HRM component aware of the need and the minimum requirements for the HRM component to become a strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate.					

**SECTION C:
REPOSITION THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT AS
STRATEGIC PARTNER**

This section requires your opinion on how the Human Resource Management (HRM) component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.

Please indicate your choice with an **X** next to each of the statements. Also, elaborate in the space provided.

Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
C1	The HRM component is managed to strategically assist in the service delivery goals of the DEA.					
C2	Enhanced performance management processes are linked to programmes for staff development.					
C3	Performance assessment processes are aimed at identifying employees' strengths and weaknesses in order to affect sustainable corrective interventions.					
C4	The assessments of human resource development needs take the budget planning cycle into account.					
C5	In your opinion, how can the Human Resource Management component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate.					

APPENDIX F3: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR JUNIOR MANAGERS (LEVELS 9 AND 10)

SECTION B: THE EFFECT OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ON STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES						
<p>This section requires your opinion on how the Human Resource Management (HRM) component influences the achievement of the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the Department of Environment Affairs (DEA). Please indicate your choice with an X next to each of the statements. Also, elaborate in the space provided.</p>						
Question number	Statement	1 Strongly Disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neutral	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree
B1	The HRM component regularly participates in the DEA's strategic planning activities.					
B2	The HRM component renders advice on human resource matters when determining the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic and operational objectives.					
B3	The management of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to make meaningful contributions to the strategic objectives of the DEA.					
B4	The staff of the HRM component has the necessary skills and training to perform their duties in an effective and efficient manner.					
B5	There is undue political interference in the management and operations of the HRM component.					
B6	Human resource management decision-making is decentralised across management levels.					
B7	The HRM component is viewed as expensive and a burden on the workforce of the DEA.					
B8	The HRM component renders sound human resource solutions during the Environmental Programmes branch's strategic planning processes.					
B9	The HRM component regularly provides useful and informative reports to management on human resource matters.					
B10	From your experience, what matters/issues hinder the HRM component to make a meaningful contribution to the strategic objectives of the DEA? Please elaborate.					

SECTION C: REPOSITION THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMPONENT AS STRATEGIC PARTNER						
This section requires your opinion on how the Human Resource Management (HRM) component can be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA. Please indicate your choice with an X next to each of the statements. Also, elaborate in the space provided.						
Question number	Statement	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
C1	Recruitment and retention, employment equity, skills development and performance management must be refined and up-scaled in the human resource management strategy of the DEA.					
C2	The workplace needs to adopt an environment that is conducive to human resource performance by consistently attending to employees' needs.					
C3	The Environmental Programmes branch's strategic plan should inform and support the entire human resource planning process at the DEA.					
C4	The HRM component must be recognised and capacitated as a centre of administrative excellence that demonstrate expert knowledge.					
C5	In your opinion, how can the Human Resource Management component be repositioned to effectively perform its role as strategic partner at the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA? Please elaborate.					

Thank you for your participation and your effort towards making this study a success.

Your contribution will assist me to generate a comprehensive picture of how the Department of Environment Affairs can improve effective human resource management through strategic planning, and how the Human Resource Management component influences the strategic objectives of the Environmental Programmes branch of the DEA.