

Performance management for effective virtual work performance in the higher education sector in the Eastern Cape Province

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ABSTRACT

Theoretical and empirical work on performance management has, over the years guided human capital management practices. In recent years, known practices for effective human capital management have been challenged and thrown into disarray owing to modification of the concept of ‘workplace’ which has been virtualized in many sectors such as the higher education sector. The purpose of the study was to investigate the question: How can performance management be implemented for better performance of academics at a university selected from the Eastern Cape Province. The study was inspired by the Resource Based Theory based on the need to create unique internal capabilities among human capital for unique performance. A typical university in the Eastern Cape that has significantly virtualized was considered and data was collected through document analysis related to the study of the performance management policy of the university and interviews with eight Heads of Departments (HOD) at the University were conducted. The results showed that performance management in virtual work arrangements should arise from inspired psychological states in academics to meet certain societal needs through effective higher education. Specifically, it was found that in virtual higher education arrangements, academics and non-academics in the sector should be psychologically empowered to see the value of their independent contributions so that they become self driven for better performance. It was also found in the study that performance rewards and personalized job satisfaction and self motivation were important concepts for better performance. It is recommended that, as they virtualise, higher education institutions should promote empowerment and self driven desires to perform through effective reward structures, individual motivation systems and employee recognition systems. There was evidence that these practices have become more important in the virtual context than ever.

Keywords: Performance management, Human capital, job satisfaction, employee motivation, virtualization, digitalization, remote working.