

Chapter 25

An Evaluation of the Adoption of the Integrated Human Resource Information System in Trinidad and Tobago

Charlene M. L. Roach

The University of the West Indies – St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago

Gloria Davis-Cooper

The University of the West Indies – St. Augustine Campus, Trinidad and Tobago

ABSTRACT

The study explores factors that contributed to policy adoption of an HRIS in Trinidad and Tobago using the TOE TRIAD Model. It is significant as it contributes to the body of knowledge on innovation adoption in e-government and strategic human resource management approaches. The study is based in the Caribbean and provides insights into initiatives that developing countries are implementing within e-government in public organizations. Major findings indicated that there was a complex interaction of technological, organizational and environmental (TOE) factors which interacted. The confluence of factors produced impacts that were variable, dynamic and unpredictable. This approach in the TT public service brought about significant changes in processes and functions within human resource management. Future trends may continue and this study serves to guide policy makers in evaluating and monitoring how adoption policies are framed and future implications that may be learned as a result of this formative HRIS initiative.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic Human Resource Management helps organizations such as the Trinidad and Tobago's (TT) public service establish and implement Human Resource Management (HRM) functions and activities in order to achieve success of their organizational goals, objectives and strategic priorities. In essence, it can be seen as a platform for innovation, benchmarking and superior performance. From a policy

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framework HRM strategies can be initiated, formulated, adopted, implemented and evaluated to ensure sound HRM plans. These can be viewed at different levels of analysis to include strategic (long term), managerial (medium term) and operational (short term). The rationale behind these strategic approaches to HRM is to ensure that organizational outcomes are achieved. For the TT public service, it will encompass the macro goals of the TT government and its public service strategic plans which must be linked to its Strategic HRM approaches.

In keeping with these strategic practices in HRM as a philosophy where people's first practices have become a core concern, more organizations are harnessing technologies such as the Internet, e-mail, the World Wide Web and more importantly for this study, Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS). Such systems like the HRIS have helped to integrate and execute multiple HRM processes into a single system. By so doing, they are able to use these information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enhance HRM functions to streamline policies, programs and overall processes to meet the demands of a 21st Century workforce environment. For instance, HRIS can be used in the area of recruitment to track and monitor the number and types of applicants within an organization. Other tracking mechanisms such as statistical analyses of supply and demand can be added to enhance outcomes. The results have proven to be cost effective, accurate, and timely. Ultimately, it can account for data reduction, removal of redundancy and be accredited for faster decisions and turnaround times (Anthony, 1996; Anthony et al., 2010; Ivancevich, 2013; Noe et al., 2014).

This article focuses on evaluating a Human Resource Information System (HRIS) within the TT public service. HRIS is an integrated system used to enhance almost every HRM function to improve effectiveness and service response rates of activities that would normally take more time using traditional approaches. Such approaches where manual and mechanical techniques were adopted can no longer maintain and sustain the volume of information demands required within organizations today.

Such an adoption becomes even more relevant for the public sector context where red tape and bureaucratic layers abound. Of course, Weber's discussion of characteristics of bureaucracies in his "Ideal Type" contributes to our understanding of the benefits we glean from bureaucracies. Neutrality, uniformity of command and technical rationality are some of the hall marks of what make public sector organizations efficient. Yet, there are other drawbacks to this organizational structure which make information diffusion challenging, communications fragmented and work flows and operations delayed.

Thus, the benefits derived by this HRIS adoption are limitless. It improves timeliness and decision making processes. According to Anthony, Kacmar et al., (2010), good HR decisions are determined by good HR information which serves to buttress decision support systems. Using HRIS software, HRM managers, supervisors and other executive leaders may retrieve data as required for all HRM activities. HRIS also serves as an invaluable instrument to facilitate strategic planning and implementation. Thus, allowing organizations to have competitive outcomes through monitoring and tracking of functions that are underperforming within the HRM system. An example could be morale, attrition rates, absenteeism or labor costs (salaries and other compensations).

Overall, HRIS helps to integrate HRM activities in light of obtaining, saving, synthesizing, analyzing and managing the information flow and demands within the workplace. More commonly used HRIS software cited in the HRM literature include HRSOFT, SAP HR, PEOPLESOFT, and ORACLE HRMS (Ivancevich, 2013; Noe et al., 2014). In the context of TT's public service, the government has adopted IhRIS which is called Integrated Human Resource Information System. This local version of HRIS uses a People Soft platform. It was adopted primarily to increase the efficiencies within the HRM functions of the TT public service.

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