

## **The role of contemporary Human Resources Management with regard to the handling of the human factor in Gweru City Council.**

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### **Abstract**

*Gweru City Council, in Zimbabwe operates just like any public institution. It is headed by a chief executive officer referred to as the town clerk. Under the town clerk, are departments led by directors. The directors lead teams of officers known as section heads who in turn also lead junior officers and officers of various grades. This paper refers to all these people whose coordinated effort is to achieve organizational goals as the human factor. Just like in any other organization, the human factor is affected positively or negatively by what constitute the human resources management skills obtainable in that particular organization. Some organizations have a democratic and accommodating culture while others operate on the basis of strict rules and in some cases are state policy driven This paper assumes that the understanding and implementation of human resources management skills enshrines pertinent answers to all forms of challenges the human factor may be subjected to. Gweru City Council as a quasigovernment institute, has in recent years, been under sport light, with employees accused of various dimensions of corruption. Sources of dissatisfaction have ranged from recruitment, among the major contributing factors or sources of dissatisfaction are, recruitment, dismissals, training, promotions staff turnover automation and motivation. This paper focuses at the role of contemporary human resources management with regard to the handling of the human factor in Gweru city council. The investigation depended much on literature review and Gweru City Council was taken as a case in hand. . A comparison was Madeto establish the most practiced area, personnel management or contemporary human resources management. At least 2 randomly selected people from each of the 6 departments responded to some short questionnaires. The six departments referred to in this case are; town clerk, housing, chamber, engineering, finance and health*

**Key words;** *personnel management; human resources management; the human factor*

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## **I. DISCUSSION**

### **1.1 Introduction and literature review**

### **1.2 Personnel Management**

Before delving into much detail of this paper, the author found it prudent to distinguish personnel management from what became more pronounced as human resources management. Edwin (1961) described personnel management as a deliberate effort by the organization to ensure the existence and maintenance of worker satisfaction so that they are productive. What this explains is that personnel management is concerned with both the outer and inner effects human factor so that productivity is guaranteed. The British Institute of Personnel Management recently provided the explanation of Personnel Management as that distinct element of managing in an organisation which is anxious when it comes to the human factor/employees while they are at their workplace .The soundness of relationships or lack of it in an organisation is answered from a personnel management perspective. If on to relate to this paper, the goal of personnel management in Gweru City Council should be to unite and bring together and staff develop them into an incredibly operational force of both males and females. In this paper these men and women constitute Gweru city council employees which the organisation has consider with high regard. What personnel management explains for Gweru city council is that all the departments and other lower level clusters derive their desire to contribute if their social and human aspects are positively received by the organisation, (The society for Personnel Administration in U.S.A.)

The society for Personnel Administration in U.S.A. defines – Personnel Management is also defined as the skill of recuing, moulding and be assured of always having an effective human factor capable of achieving the reasons for which the organisation was created In line with William Spriegel et al mention that personnel management is about total development of employees and in an environment where it is working well, it is indispensable.

### **1.3 Human Resources Management**

Human Resource Management is a multidimensional area which is responsible for various management activities in an organization. Broad standalone subjects such as management and psychology are desired when working with the human factor. A good comprehension of human resources should embrace the functional aspects of such as directing and organizing. Some of the key concerns of human resources management are;

- ✓ preservation of human factor resource
- ✓ skilful combination of worker requirements and organizational goals

Aspects such as human factor planning, hiring/recruiting, occupation analysis should by no means be mistaken for any domain other than human resources management. The process followed by HRM appears to follow some sequence of analyzing manpower requirements, recruiting, training, inducting, rewarding, disciplinary action and such issues as safety precautions at work and general welfare of employees. Great minds and high profile scholars have come up with equally high profile definitions of human resources management. Edwin Flippo puts across that the key elements of HRM are planning, organizing, directing etc all put together to achieve organizational objectives. Another quote on human resources management comes from Decenzo and Robbins ( ) who put across that, Human Resources Management is concerned with the person aspect because organisations of all types depend on services from the human factor. They further mention that by increasing human factor skills and morale boosting high level production can be expected. They justified their position by indicating that what that it is that such a situation holds true for any organization be it government, ordinary business or a public institute such as Gweru City Council. Despite all the invaluable contribution by great scholars of our time and before our time, human resources management is the business of managing the human factor in an organization

### **1.4 The origins of human resources management**

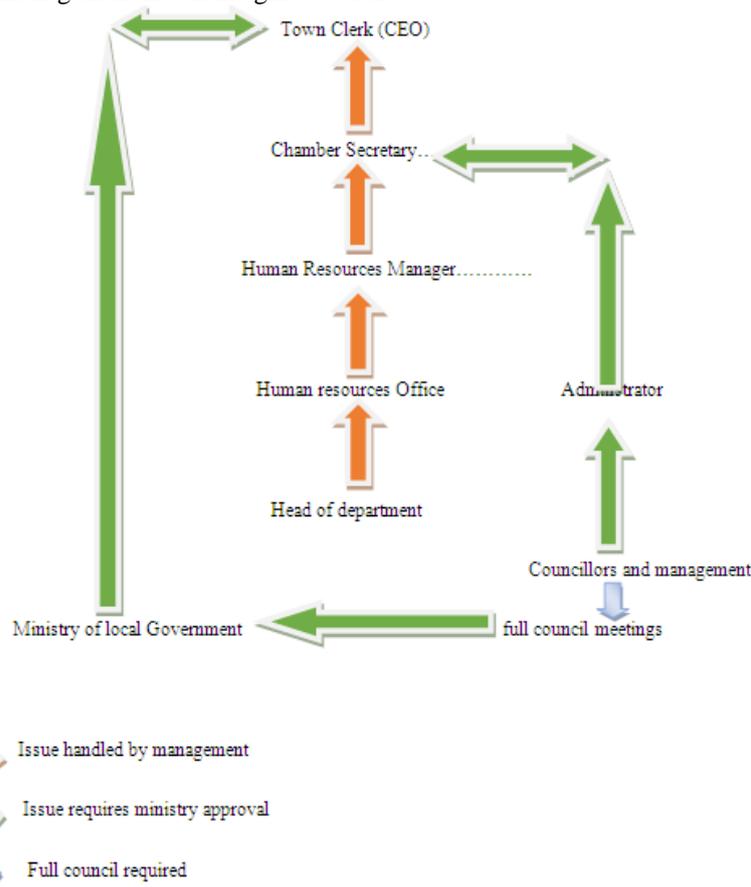
One may not of necessity talk about the difference between personnel management and human resources management because contemporary human resources has its fundamentals entrenched in personnel management. Modifications to personnel have resulted in what is today generally accepted as human resources management. Therefore it is important to note that human resources evolved from personnel management and as such separating the role played by the two can only depend on the organization or enterprise under review. Noted in this paper personnel management in its origin, does not have space for the human factor but in a very important way has room labour laws and adherence to maximum production. Under such circumstances, the leadership would expect disciplined workforces who do not question much. What this implies is that leadership is the voice of the voiceless employees. Developing employee competency and nurturing it received not much attention from personnel management. The thrust was on guarding against any form of misconduct which they would readily want to punish. This paper however did not separate the two broad terms but rather used the two interchangeably. The paper also considered human resources management a generally accepted set of tools for managing people at work. After all, the evolution of technology has accommodated both personnel management and human resources management. The terms personnel management and human resources management if implemented in a professional way can work well for the organization.

Basically we have noted that personnel management is more confined to the workforce and tasks to be achieved while human resources management is concerned with the real person in the employee. The overall functions of human resources management have been identified as;

- recruitment
- training
- placement
- inducting
- rewarding
- planning
- discipline
- health and safety

The adoption of human resources management by, in this case of Gweru City Council, is to benchmark the organisation with the most acceptable standards, human relations values, for example the recruitment of employees of value and relevance to the organization especially with regards to knowledge workers. It has also been generally observed that both personnel management and human resources management in contemporary human resources management seek to achieve organizational goals with and through people. In some cases, the approach can be haphazard or fire fighting while like while in other organisations, the process follows a properly formalized approach. Human resources management has become unique in that it is moving along with

the changing times, especially with the advent of new technology, diseases such as HIV/AIDS and Covid-19. The human resources management in can imagined as follows:



### 1.5 Human Resources Practice in Gweru City Council

Gweru City Council is a state controlled institution guided by the Minister who for good or for bad refers to an act of parliament known as the Urban Councils Act 2015. The act was promulgated on 1 November 2002. The core business of the act, apart from seeing the overall functioning of council, is to facilitate the status of local boards as boards, municipalities, towns or cities. The status of a town determines its level of local authority. The act already referred to has been found to play a pivotal role in the recruitment of senior personnel, allegations of abuse of office. The act provides for the appointment of a commission where government is not satisfied with the services by a senior official. In a case of alleged misconduct, a Gweru town clerk locked contested case (HB68-18, C1380/16)[2018]ZWBHC 68 (15 March 2018) with the then Minister of local government. However after the matter was dragged to court, the accused was found not guilty. Several other cases involving senior officials have received Ministry involvement. Once the Minister makes a decision over certain issues in council, be they of recruitment, benefits, disciplinary action, health and safety, such decisions are in other organizations the total responsibility of human resources management. What this paper is trying to portray is that, instead of relying so much on contemporary human resources management, council sometimes, council has no option other than adhere to government directives which come through the local government Minister. Gweru has 18 wards which amount to eighteencouncillors who also have a contribution to make in decisions that council come up with including those involving human resources management. Through the works council, employee representatives negotiate their way into council chambers to have workers grievances resolved. It is common knowledge that when councillors and management sometimes do not agree on an issue. In such a situation, clarification is sought from the Minister.

### 1.6 Council Policy

Recently council mooted a Gweru City Council policy which targeted about five broad areas, some of which are briefly explained in this paper. The policy was distributed to heads of departments and cascaded down to the shop floor employee. This move clearly indicates council effort and desire to employ human resources management as a tool for managing employees at work. By receiving copies of the policy, employees are empowered to know what is right and what is wrong for them.

Here is one of the concerns of the policy;

➤ recruitment and selection

The policy is coming out clear on the need to be committed to clearly defined and recruitment procedures capable of affording participating, equal chance of being selected. The recruitment policy further elaborates on the importance of the conditions under which interviews and selection can be conducted. Should the environment be tense like in an examination room or should it be flexible and accommodating. In the process, council would want to ensure that the best people for the job are considered. This approach if not interfered with in any way, is a key success factor towards human resources management. Under this section of the policy council and where necessary, council would prefer to offer the job to a person in the organization already doing the same job. The process of requesting for an employee is designed to be recommended by the head of department and approved by the Town Clerk. Emphasis is on eliminating discrimination of any nature. When recruiting from within, transparency is sought by making sure that adverts are displayed on visible points and notice boards. Over and above all, council shall advertise jobs so that all applicants externally recruited can get equal opportunity. Employment and selection will then involve the following;

1. Human Resources Manager
2. Head Of Department
3. Chamber Secretary
4. Town Clerk
5. Police Vetting
6. Medical Examination
7. Report to Council
8. Ministry of Local Government
9. Orientation by Human Resources Manager
10. Probationary period by Human Resources Management

### **1.7 Promotions**

The policy advocates for individual growth through the promotion, should need arise. Considered individuals for promotion need to have gone through probationary period and has the necessary qualifications. In any organization employees are motivated by promotion as in most cases promotion comes along with some form of reward.

### **1.8 Benefits Derived from Relying on Human Resources Management**

Where human resources is practiced is implemented, the following are some of experiences

- human factor is motivated
- the workforce is recruited and inducted fairly
- the organisation has the employee at heart
- health and safety of workers is upheld
- issues of misconduct are procedurally pursued without policed, tribal or racial bias
- there is transparency in selection
- there is continuous training which enables to keep abreast with current trends
- the functions of the general concerns of the human factor are the responsibility of the Human Resources Manager and Director

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the research were

- To explain the meanings of personnel management and human resources management.
- Assess the role played by human resources management in Gweru City Council
- Identify and explain hindrances to successful implementation of human resources management by council.
- Identify three human resources from city council policy and access the extent to which they are either favourable or not favourable
- Compare the most employed tool in council, personnel management or human resources management
- Recommend the use of contemporary use of human resources management.
- Benefits of human resources management to Gweru City Council.

## **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

This section makes clear the methodology and data analysis. This study was conducted using both qualitative methods with some fusion of quantitative especially when it came calculation of percentages used in

plotting graphs. In other words the paper followed a pragmatic approach, Saunders et al (2012). Through pragmatism, a variety of other methods such as mere observation and random encounter with council employees, it became possible to delve into the finer details of this paper. The responses from questionnaires provided key answers to the demands of this paper as much as the interviews. Documentation and data collected was examined and triangulated with responses information from other sources. The research targeted council employees as despondence. Gweru city council has six departments and only ten individuals were randomly selected from each department to provide their opinion. This way the population got to sixty. At least three people in the department were further randomly selected to come up with a sample of eighteen. Key human resources management variables such as recruiting promotion, benefits and motivation and others as provided for in the policy were assessed. The paper relied so much on literature and Gweru City Council human resources policy. In line with Best and Kahn (1993) questionnaires and interviews played a pivotal role in making this paper a cutting edge article.

**1.9 Population**

When we talk of population with regard to data or figures, it automatically does not carry the same meaning as it does in statistics. Scientifically we talk of population in terms of people, objects the term "population" has a slightly different meaning from the one given to it in ordinary speech. It need not refer only to people or to animate creatures - the population of Britain, for instance or the dog population of London. Statisticians also speak of a population of objects, or actions, or procedures, or some form of quantities including such things as the quantity of lead in urine, visits to the doctor, or surgical operations. The figures that make a population can be aggregated to generate certain required results. According to Henning (2004), population is the group of attention and focus from which the researcher would generalises the outcomes of the study. This research drew its population from Council Officials and Council Employees. Below is the tabular representation of the population under consideration.

**Table 1: Population Statistics**

EMPLOYEES	POPULATION OF EMPLOYEES PER DEPARTMENT
Town clerk department	10
Chamber secretary	10
Housing	10
Health	10
Engineering	10
Finance	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>60</b>

Source: Research Primary Data (2020)

**1.10 Sample**

According to Clarke and Cook (1994), a sample is certain portion of a population. They further illuminate the definition by indicating that the population can be thought out as a bigger population in made small in order to be manageable. A sample has the capacity the same characteristics as may be found in the bigger population.

**Table 2 Research Instruments and sampling Techniques**

Key Respondents	Research Design	Sampling Technique	Sample Size	Research Instrument (s)
Shop floor employee and middle management	Qualitative	random	3*6=18	Documentation Interviews questionnaires

Source: Research Primary Data (2020)

#### IV. RATING OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT VARIABLES IN GWERU CITY COUNCIL

Figure 1. Occupational health and safety.

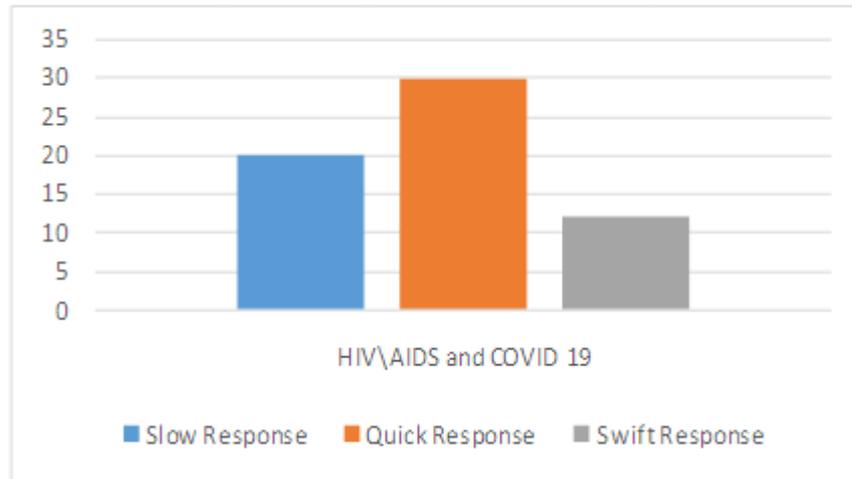


Figure 2. Promotion and transfer of the human factor in the council.

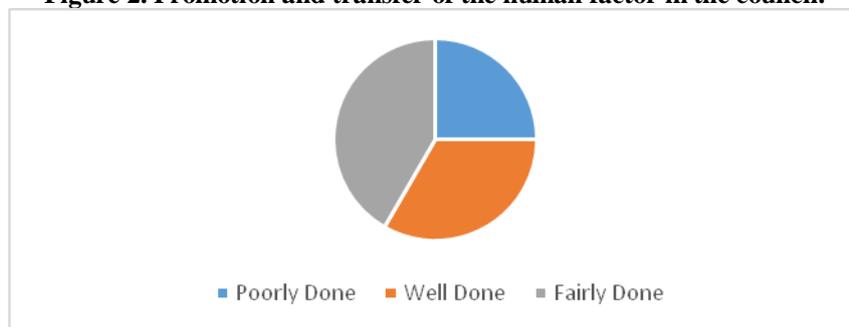
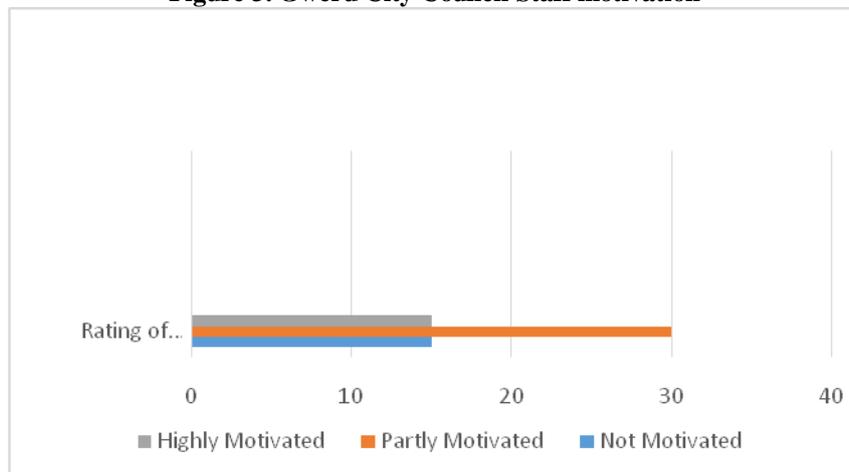
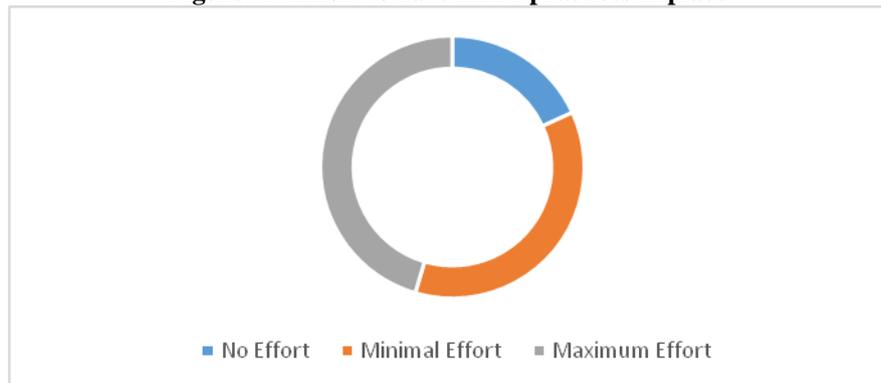


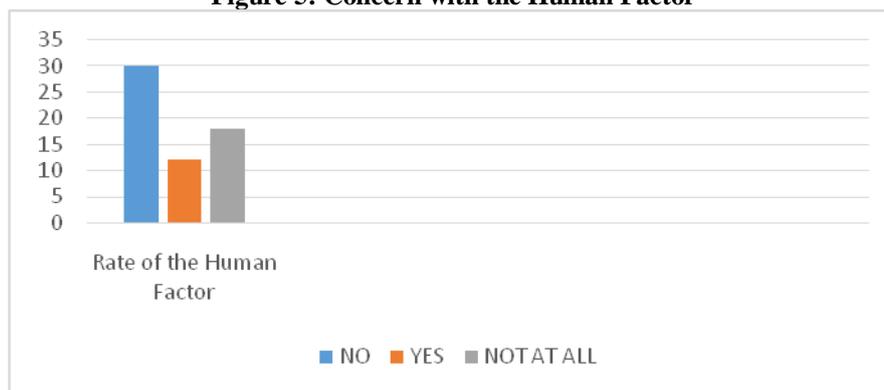
Figure 3. Gweru City Council Staff motivation



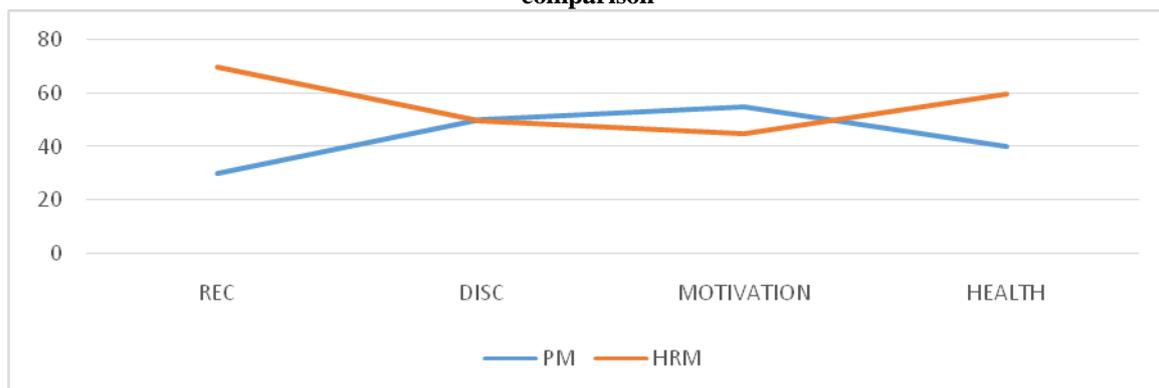
**Figure. 4 Effort to have HRM practices in place.**



**Figure 5: Concern with the Human Factor**



**Figure 6: Use of Personnel management or Human Resource Management in Gweru City Council-A comparison**



## V. DATA ANALYSIS

The paper started by presenting data as per findings. Graphs of different forms were used to cater for statistics understanding. Major focus was on the role of human resources management in Gweru City Council. . The purpose of the study was to induce the promotion of the core values of contemporary human resources management without, however disregarding state endorsed decisions. The paper aimed at achieving the following objectives;

- To explain the meanings of personnel management and human resources management.
- Assess the role played by human resources management in Gweru City Council
- Identify and explain hindrances to successful implementation of human resources management by council.
- Identify three human resources variables from city council policy and assess the extent to which they are either favourable or not favourable
- Compare the most employed tool in council, personnel management or human resources management

- Benefits of human resources management to Gweru City Council.

Table 1 indicates population used in this investigation representing active traders in the identified areas. Table 2 indicates the sample and sampling procedure used.

**Figure 1**

Indicates that respondents were of the opinion that council is quick to respond o issues of the health of its employees especially on outbreaks such as cholera, HIV/AIDS and the recent dreaded Covid-19. Employees appreciate council effort to provide protective clothing. The indication is that 50% appreciate council while the other 50% have different levels of dissatisfaction.

**Figure 2**

Respondents believe that promotions and transfers are not done totheir satisfactionand are still far from being well done. Quite a good number believe that promotions and transfers are moderately fair, a situation which is not in sync with the human resources management perspective which demands utmost transparency.

**Figure 3**

Half the employees claim to be motivated by the employer. Reasons advanced are that the motivated have rewarding grades while the other half comprising of lower level employees had complaints to be awarded different types of benefits. The situation appears to have been compounded by the organisations retention of employees back pay.

**Figure 4**

The majority of employees expressed satisfaction by Chamber Secretary Department to ensure human resources management in council. Quite a number of approaches have been tried and found workable, for example the provision of protective clothing to the police, traffic police and other sections.

**Figure 5**

Council concern for the human factor and this on the whole is attributed to poor wages and salaries. The situation is further aggravated by the harsh economic conditions the country is going through

**Figure 6**

This is the route that is followed when council is solving some of the human factor issues. The key is colour coded to indicate the environment and route under which the issue is being resolved.

## **VI. FINDINGS**

- ✓ This paper established that although council is state controlled to some extent, it practices human resources management in a slightly different way.
- ✓ Employees are afforded a platform to engage with council on some of their issues of concern.
- ✓ Council recently enunciated their human resources policy and distributed it to departments which further cascaded it all employees
- ✓ Retention of senior staff such as directors and above has been a challenge with allegations corruption levelled against them
- ✓ Resources are a challenge to Gweru City Council, hence the unequitable distribution of resources.

## **Recommendations**

The paper settled to the following recommendations;

- That the use of contemporary use of human resources management.by Gweru City will of necessity increase service delivery.
- Human resources management should be adopted at all cost as it provides a permissive and flexible working environment.
- Recruitment, selection and induction are done above board

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

This investigation concluded that as much as Gweru City Council may want to adopt contemporary human resources management, the fact that it is built on the background of community and political interests, implementation of the full demands of human resources management. Workers concerns and benefits hardly compare with private organisations, even for knowledge workers. Resources are sometimes in short supply and thus may not be shared equitably a situation that frustrates employees from other departments. Save for any other short comings the department responsible for human resources has made frantic efforts to give contemporary human resources management a place inGweru City Council. It would be naive to end the

conclusion without making reference to the unfavourable economic conditions that have ravaged the operation of not only Gweru City Council but other such institutions.

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