

Faculty of Graduate Studies

Applying a Competency-Based Human Resource Management
System to Administrative Staff at Birzeit University

By

Ali O. Nakhleh

Supervisor

Dr. Grace Khoury

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By

Ali Abdel Hakim Nakhleh

Supervisor

Dr. Grace Khoury

Approved By:

Dr. Grace Khoury

(Chairperson of supervisory committee)



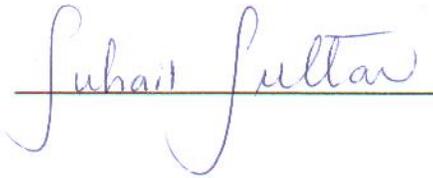
Dr. Basheer Rayes

(Member of supervisory committee)



Dr. Suhail Sultan

(Member of supervisory committee)



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Abstract

This Study is a descriptive and exploratory study as it seeks to evaluate and identify the weaknesses of current HRM system in Birzeit University and to identify the main core competencies needed to serve as a base for a competency-based HR management system, including all Birzeit University HRD functions. In order to reach these objectives, focus group, semi structured interviews and survey. Focus group was moderated by a professional and neutral moderator, whereas interviews were carried out personally in order to clarify some points and validate results from focus groups.

The findings of this study indicates that Birzeit University suffers from deficiencies in the four main HR functions, and this due to the absence of integrity between these functions and using a job description-based HRM system. There is a gap between what is mentioned in HRD's mission and its vision statements and what actually is provided to employees which causes frustration from the current system. I've concluded that current system doesn't support the University's vision, mission and culture; BZU also has no strategic plan since 2008. HRD is not included in the top level decision-making nor plays a strategic role.

This study tried to find solutions for earlier mentioned deficiencies and to develop and adopt a system which can support the integration of the main four human resource functions, improve

job satisfaction and employee retention, change the role of the HR to a new role as a strategic business unit. This study identified the main core competencies needed to adopt this system, practical implications of the competency-based system, and recommendations which serve as a road map for implementing a competency-based HR management system in BZU.

ملخص

هذه الدراسة وصفية استكشافية، تسعى لتقييم وتحديد نقاط الضعف في الوظائف الرئيسية لدائرة الموارد البشرية، والتركيز على الموظفين الإداريين في الدوائر الإدارية الرئيسية الأربعة في جامعة بيرزيت، بالإضافة إلى تحديد الكفاءات الأساسية اللازمة؛ لتكون بمثابة قاعدة للنظام القائم على الكفاءة والتنافسية، بحيث تشمل جميع وظائف ومهام دائرة الموارد البشرية. ومن أجل تحقيق هذه الأهداف، تم استعمال مجموعات بؤرية، مقابلات متخصصة (شبه منظمة)، بالإضافة إلى أسلوب الاستبانة المُحَكَّمة. وقد خضعت هذه المجموعات لإشراف وسيط محايد ذي خبرة، كما أجريت مقابلات شخصية لتوضيح بعض النقاط، والتحقق من صحة النتائج المنبثقة عن هذه المجموعات.

وتشير نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى أن جامعة بيرزيت تعاني قصوراً وضعفاً في وظائف دائرة الموارد البشرية الرئيسية الأربعة، وذلك بسبب غياب الترابط بين هذه المهام، واعتماد النظام الحالي على الوصف الوظيفي. فهناك فجوة بين ما هو مذكور في رسالة دائرة الموارد البشرية ورؤيتها، وبين ما يقدم للموظفين فعلياً، مما يسبب إحباطاً لدى الموظفين من النظام الحالي. إن النظام الحالي لا يدعم رؤية الجامعة ورسالتها وثقافتها، بالإضافة إلى أن جامعة بيرزيت تفتقر إلى خطة استراتيجية منذ العام 2008، كما أن دائرة الموارد البشرية لا تدخل في دوائر صنع القرار، ولا تلعب أي دور استراتيجي.

لقد حاولت هذه الدراسة إيجاد حلول لأوجه القصور المذكورة آنفاً، لتطوير وتبني نظام قادر على أن يدعم التكامل والترابط بين وظائف دائرة الموارد البشرية الأربعة، تحسين وتطوير الرضا والأمان الوظيفي، وتغيير دور دائرة الموارد البشرية لتصبح من الوحدات المشاركة في صنع القرار، والخطة الإستراتيجية للجامعة. كما حددت هذه الدراسة الكفاءات والمهارات الأساسية اللازمة لاعتماد هذا النظام، والآثار العملية المباشرة المترتبة على تطبيق هذا النظام المعتمد على الكفاءة. لقد وضعت هذه الدراسة توصيات عديدة؛ لتكون بمثابة خارطة طريق لتطبيق نظام تنافس الكفاءات، واعتماده كنظام لإدارة الموارد البشرية في جامعة بيرزيت.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1. Overview

Traditional job-based human resources (HR) system was all about ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, which became quickly outdated in today's dynamic environment. In the new economy of the 21st century, HR professionals are expected to know the business well enough to align human capital with business needs. If the HR function fails to make a major contribution to organizational effectiveness, Mohrman and Lawler, (1997) suggest that traditional HR activities can either be eliminated or outsourced to external service providers. Despite the current trend which relies on third-party vendors to do HR work, studies suggest that outsourcing has a limited impact on strategic HR and more importantly, competent HR professionals can positively influence organizational climate which in turn influences customer satisfaction (Mohrman and Lawler, 1997).

Nowadays HR has more a important role such as helping an organization get the best out of its workforce. A competency based HR management presents a new method for managing human capital, focuses attention on employees who do the work rather than the work done by those employees. A successful company is one in which a high-performing workforce demonstrates competencies. Human resource professionals claim that HR should stop describing jobs and tasks. Instead, HR should focus on individual characteristics that make top performers ideal. Despite its historical utility,

there is growing evidence that it may be time for many organizations to move from focus on jobs towards a focus on individuals and their competencies (Lawler and Ledford, 1992). The Change from a job-based to a competency –based approach to organizing and managing is a fundamental one that requires a change in virtually every management system in an organization (Lawler, 2009).

Human resource is the most valuable asset to any organization; people are the only greatest potential asset that an organization will acquire as it moves about its business. A company's human capital asset is "the collective sum of the attributes, life experience, knowledge, inventiveness, energy, and enthusiasm that its people choose to invest in their work" (Weatherly, 2003, P.3). Although the behavioral perspective and control theory tend to focus on managing a firm's current employees' behaviors in an effort to maximize performance, firms also focus on competency management through acquiring, developing, and utilizing employees with particular knowledge, skills, and abilities (Wright & Snell, 1991).

Since the end of the 1990s, competency-based HR management has become widespread in the US, in relation to HRD in general, leadership, selection, retention and remuneration (Dubois et al, 2004; Houtzagers, 1999). It offered employers a new technique of defining and assessing hard-to-measure traits and soft skills that make the difference between superior performers and the rest of employees. Competencies also provided basic building blocks for ensuring that all of the people processes in the organization could be fully incorporated. Competencies were proclaimed as the one common set of standards to be used for all HR functions (Houtzagers, 1999).

Birzeit University (BZU) is still using the traditional Job-based human resource management system in all HRD aspects (compensations, benefits and rewards, career tracks, recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, training and development). Using the job-based system which depends on vague job descriptions and a poorly designed interview process led to bad hires, vague performance expectations, managers who lacked fundamental coaching and teambuilding skills. Employees of HRD at BZU are spending a lot of time on routine administrative tasks and nearly every function of this department can be performed more effectively with less time. HRD functions are not integrated or at least have no good communication with each other. HRD at BZU is not included in the top level decision-making nor plays a strategic role, and it functions as a separate unit from the core business

Thus, adopting and applying a competency-based HR system will improve the performance of each HR function. Competencies enable an organization to integrate strategic HR and business plans into one seamless overarching strategy to develop people, optimize resource allocation, enhance services, and create efficiencies. Competency models are based on measurable work results and are specific to organization's culture and success factors that are more consistent than job descriptions. Competency models are more effective in describing characteristics associated with excellent individual performance. Furthermore, competency based human resource management system will improve the capability of HR employees by linking organizational core competencies to the competencies of the individual's best performance.

1.2. Research problem and purpose of the Study

Since the beginning of its establishment, Birzeit University's policy has always been to attract the best Palestinian talents to join its staff. BZU seeks to provide a challenging work environment that offers its team opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills. Although Birzeit University is an academic institution, there are 55 employees in the four administrative departments who provide administrative assistance to 872 total employees. As an observer for the situation and being an employee at the human resource department for 5 years, the researcher had the opportunity to listen to employees' complaints related to the lack of training, performing tasks that are not mentioned in their job descriptions, inequality in promotions, appraisal and compensation.

HR department at BZU doesn't play a strategic role and its functions are not integrated. Human resource department is still using the job description-based system which mainly depends on vague and sometimes not updated job descriptions. The high number of discipline issues and complaints from administrative employees raised many questions about the performance of the HRD. Birzeit University has an urgent need for a competency-based HRM system so as to move from its traditional job-based system to the competency-based (Performance) system. Adopting a competency-based human resource management system is expected to affect the performance of recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation & benefits functions which all will be based on common standards and criteria. The researcher will try to identify the main problems of the current system and provide

recommendations to solve those problems by applying a competency-based HRM system. In this research the researcher will identify and describe main core competencies required for the four administrative departments at Birzeit University

Furthermore, this study will serve as a road map for implementation, suggesting factors that make way for success and obstacles which may prevent BZU from implementing this system. In addition to identifying to what extent BZU needs to implement a competency-based human resource management system, and the benefits of using it.

1.3. Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions concerning applying the competency-based HRM system in BZU:

1. How is a competency-based HRM system different than a job-based system for Birzeit University?
2. What are the weaknesses of the current HRM system functions?
3. How will the competency-based HRM system improve HR main functions?
4. What are the key success factors to adopt the model?
5. What are the barriers to its implementation?
6. What are the major core competencies for administrative employees at BZU?

1.4. Structure of the Study

The research will be presented in six chapters

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will include an overview of the study, research problem and purpose of the study; questions of the research and structure of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter offers a review of the related literature that addresses the research questions. It is divided into eleven main sections.

Chapter Three: Human Resource Management at BZU

This chapter consists of four main sections; it explains the development of human resource department tasks. It highlights the challenges and services, and describes its current situation. It reviews recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal and payroll and compensation processes. This chapter is important because it is considered the cornerstone in determining a methodology that is adopted in this study to determine Birzeit University administrative employees' most important competencies which have an impact on improving human resource department performance.

Chapter Four: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter presents the selected research approach, design and methods employed in this study. It further explains sampling methods and the sampling selection criteria in addition to research instruments, validity and reliability in addition to research limitations.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents discussion and analysis of the findings, the benefits of adopting the competency system and challenges which BZU may face in adopting and applying the competency-based system.

Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter provides an overview of the study and summarizes results discussed in the previous chapters. This chapter includes conclusion, recommendations for Birzeit University, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The first part of the literature review provides a quick look at the evolution of the human resource management function and its transition from administrative to strategic function. Then it highlights competencies in strategic management and defines core and technical competencies. Furthermore this chapter presents the emergence and the need of using competency-based human resource management system. It also reviews benefits and negative outcomes of competency-based systems. It then shortly highlights competency models and how to conduct a competency model. Following it reviews competencies in the public sector and in the higher education institutions. Finally this chapter ends with a conclusion including theoretical framework and the way competencies for administrative employees at BZU are determined.

2.1. Moving From Administrative to Strategic HRM

The late 18th century move from an agrarian to an industrial economy led to the decline of the apprenticeship programs that had been the basic way of transferring knowledge in the workplace (Swanson & Holton, 2001; Zwell, 2000). Socioeconomic changes led to the emergence of industrial revolution in the form of accelerated demand for higher production and efficiency in manufacturing. As a result, managers started to analyze jobs in order to identify the best ways to

perform individual tasks. In this process, they relied on "scientific management" which was firstly introduced by Charles Babbage in the early 19th century, and was later refined and popularized by Fredrick Taylor (Lawler, 1994; Swanson & Holton, 2001). The new concept implied that the "right" workers should be put into various jobs. Thus required systematic and centralized efforts, initially, plant supervisors handled this function, but eventually, personnel departments with "personnel specialists" grew in size and became influential in the recruitment and selection of workers (Chruden & Sherman, 1976). As production methods at manufacturing plants became more complicated and workloads increased, personnel functions expanded from being merely a traditional employment activity to include offering training and assistance for managers and supervisors. The importance of personnel departments became notable when the Tuck School at Dartmouth College offered the first college personnel course in 1915 to train employment managers (Chruden & Sherman, 1976).

Another shift in HR responsibilities started to take place in the 1980s when the collective growth of globalization, technology, and automation forced firms to transform their operations. The 1980s were characterized as a decade of transformation that was an opportunity for HR to add demonstrable economic value or, simply, "score points" by evolving to a strategic player role (Beatty & Schneier, 1997). HR professionals, however, continued to focus on operational, day-to-day delivery of their practices, such as staffing and rewards, and to a lesser extent, on strategic activities to enrich employee knowledge, skills, and abilities through job rotations and project teams (Ulrich et al., 1989).

Once again, the HR profession underwent changes to accommodate organizational needs (Challenger, 2001). The 1990s was a decade dominated by corporate merger and acquisition (M&A) activity, which transformed the organizational landscape (Risher & Stopper, 1999). The

subsequent effects of M&A are generally significant downsizing and cost cutting measures to eliminate duplicated plants and to consolidate operations. This created a constant state of flux in HR professionals' responsibilities and made it impossible for them to focus on one area alone. As a result, they faced a paradox of being an agent of employees, while maintaining loyalty to management. At the same time, they tried to nurture the existing culture and created policies that would fit within organizational customs and norms (Zwell, 2000).

Human resources professionals are expected to spend less time as the keepers of information and more time as strategic partners. HRM transformation from an administrative support function to a strategic business partner has accelerated in recent years and is changing almost daily due to globalization, competition both domestically and overseas, and changes in workforce demographics (Laabs, 2000).

Being strategic in this context means that HR professionals focus on developing employees and managers to maximize their performance. It entails planning and analyzing present and future direction of the organization by taking a holistic approach, while seeking opportunities for growth and identifying constraints (Treen, 2000).

Many HR professionals are no longer exclusively engaged in administrative tasks, due to changes in their job function such as processing new hire forms and administering benefits, or focusing on micro issues, such as an individual worker's performance and job satisfaction. Brown (2002) asserted that, "this role shift is the ultimate strength and endurance test for HR leaders who choose to take on the organizational marathon" (p. 6). The largest impact of HR was still perceived to be in its traditional employee related issues, a view which narrows the possibility of HR to turn into a strategic contributor.

Without HR's transformation to managing the HR function strategically, the executive team continues to consider the HR department as a drain on firm resources and not as a contributor to firm performance. Zwell (2000) considers analytical and conceptual competencies to be critical for HR professionals, particularly when managing organizational change, to maintain the accuracy and consistency of HR professional's credibility depending on the interviews results.

No doubt, the current challenges encountered by HR professionals deviate from their traditional practices that have not been seen as providing economic value to the company (Noe et al., 2000). HR professionals in strategic management are expected to play an even greater role than in the management of talent, employee relations, quality of work-family life, communication of information, cultural values, compensation, and benefits (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004). HR departments are like other business units they must adopt a new approach to communication that can quickly reach employees in various locations and allow employees to interact with their HR professionals in order to establish an immediate feedback loop (Johnston, 1996). In order for HR professionals to become fully competent strategic players, scholars and practitioners recommend that these professionals be given a visible role in organizational management and cross-divisional assignments outside their own responsibilities.).

This section has delivered a basic background about the changes that happened to HR functions through the recent years; it also discussed the transformation of HRM from its traditional administration to become strategically integrated in the organization. It shows that human resource role was turned from personnel administration, manpower

and the delivery of day to day practices to be a strategic partner with both employees and management. Nowadays, Human resource professionals are expected to play an important strategic role in a significant proportion in any institution. In the following section, the HR competencies that can be critical for organizational success will be addressed.

2.2. HR Competencies in Strategic Management

Although a job-based approach to hiring individuals for jobs has historical utility dating back to the era of manual-labor productivity experiments, organizations in industrialized nations are now pressured to rely on a competency-based system (McLagan, 1997). A job competency includes knowledge, skills /ability, attitudes /values, and motives (Spencer & Spencer, 1993) – essentially anything related to differences among individuals that might help explain why some people perform better in a job than others. It is virtually impossible to argue with the claim that competencies are better than intelligence tests for predicting job performance – one of the initial arguments for competencies (McClelland 1973).

Due to this shift, employees including HR professionals are expected to be a source of competitive strength and vitality. For HR professionals, this means a transformation from their supporting roles at the micro level to the macro level where they are partners of a strategic vision (Tokesky & Kornides, 1994). Ulrich (1997, 1998) also advocated a competency-based approach, specifically designed for various HR roles. He has

proposed that HR professionals become strategic partners, administrative experts, employee champions, and change agents, with each role having different competencies. It is expected that specific competencies will add measurable value into HR practices and eliminate role ambiguities. On the other hand, Buckingham & Vosburgh (2001) suggest the following initiatives that would allow HR professionals to position themselves as strategic partners to the business:

1. Identify the outcomes expected by each role.
2. Identify the natural talents common to the best performers in each key role.
3. Design an interviewing system to select employees who possess similar talents to the best ones.
4. Measure each employee based on the required outcomes (not on the required competencies).
5. Identify each employee's areas of talent and non-talent.
6. Encourage each employee to strengthen talents with skills and knowledge, and then find ways to manage around areas of non-talent.
7. Label areas for improvement as areas of talent (greatest opportunities for improvements lie in talents, not in weaknesses).
8. Rate employees on whether they have improved on the required outcomes.(p.22-23)

While there is no clear systematic approach in demonstrating which specific competencies are critical for HR in its strategic management role. Certain

competencies have received extensive coverage in the broad literature. HR professionals' strategic orientation entails that they adopt the organization's strategy whether it would emphasize quality, innovation, or any other strategy to enhance performance through HR practices (Ulrich et al., 1995; Yeung et al., 1996; Zwell, 2000). Luoma's (2000) qualitative study on three Finnish manufacturing companies, where each had more than 800 employees also emphasized the interrelatedness of different elements of the organization. This meant that HR issues should be included in the strategic planning process, rather than only in the implementation phase. In this study, line managers and HR professionals stressed the importance of their co-operation and that this interaction was supported by the senior management. Specific competencies required from HR professionals to demonstrate their contribution to the business included collaboration, influencing skills, knowledge of employees and processes, and business knowledge.

After having identified different competencies and their importance within HR practices, the next part will focus on defining the term “competence” in the different literatures, demonstrate the differences between core and technical competencies and then provide an overview of the characteristics that comprise individual's competency.

2.3. Competency Definition and Terminology

The term "competence" first appeared in an article authored by Craig C. Lundberg in 1970 titled "Planning the executive development Program". The term gained attention in 1973, when David McClelland, wrote a seminar paper entitled, "Testing for

Competence Rather than for Intelligence". Since then it has been popularized by one-time fellow McBer & Company (Currently the "Hay Group") colleague Richard Boyatzis and many others (Robinson et al., 2007). The New Oxford Shorter Dictionary defines competence as the "power, ability, capacity to do, for a, task". Dubois (1993) defines competence as "the employee's capacity to meet (or exceed) a job's requirements by producing the job outputs at an expected level of quality within the constraints of the organization's internal and external environments"(P.321). In addition competency was viewed as "an underlying characteristic of an individual that is causally related to criterion-referenced effective and/or superior performance in a job or situation (Spencer & Spencer, 1993, P.9). McLagan (1997) defines competencies as, an individual's demonstrated knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and other attributes underlying effective job performance. In Swanson & Holton's' (2001) point of view competencies reflect task-specific actions found within an individual's specific knowledge domain.

Since the end of the 1990s, competency-based HR management has become widespread in the US, in relation to the HRD in general, leadership, selection, retention and remuneration (Dubois et al, 2004; Houtzagers, 1999). This was mainly because it offered employers a new way of defining and assessing those hard-to-measure traits, or soft skills that so often make the difference between superior performers and the rest of the crowd. Competencies also provided fundamental building blocks for ensuring that all of the people processes in the organization could be fully integrated. Competencies were proclaimed as the one common set of standards to be used for all HR processes (Houtzagers, 1999).

Boyatzis, a professor of organizational behavior, defined job competency as an underlying characteristic of a person that leads to or causes superior or effective performance (Yeung et al, 1996). Boyatzis (1982) mentioned that, Individuals set of competencies reflect their skills, capability and behaviors. And he also added that, functional competencies may be a motive, trait, skill, aspect of one's self-image or social role, or a body of knowledge that an individual uses, and the existence and possession of these characteristics may or may not be known to the individual.

Spencer & Spencer (1993) identified five types of competency characteristics consisting of motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills. First, motives are the things that an individual consistently thinks about or wants that stimulate action. Motives drive, direct and select behavior toward certain actions or goals and away from others. Second, traits are physical characteristics and consistent responses to situations or information. Third, self-concept is an individual's attitudes, values or self-image. Fourth, knowledge is the information that an individual has in specific content areas. Finally, skill is the ability to perform a certain physical or mental task. Knowledge and skill competencies tend to be visible and relatively surface characteristics, whereas self-concept, traits and motive competencies are more hidden, deeper and central to personality. Surface knowledge and skill competencies are relatively easy to develop and training is the most cost-effective way to secure those employee abilities (Spencer & Spencer, 1993). Figure 1 illustrates Iceberg Model of central and surface competencies.

Figure 1.1

The Iceberg Model

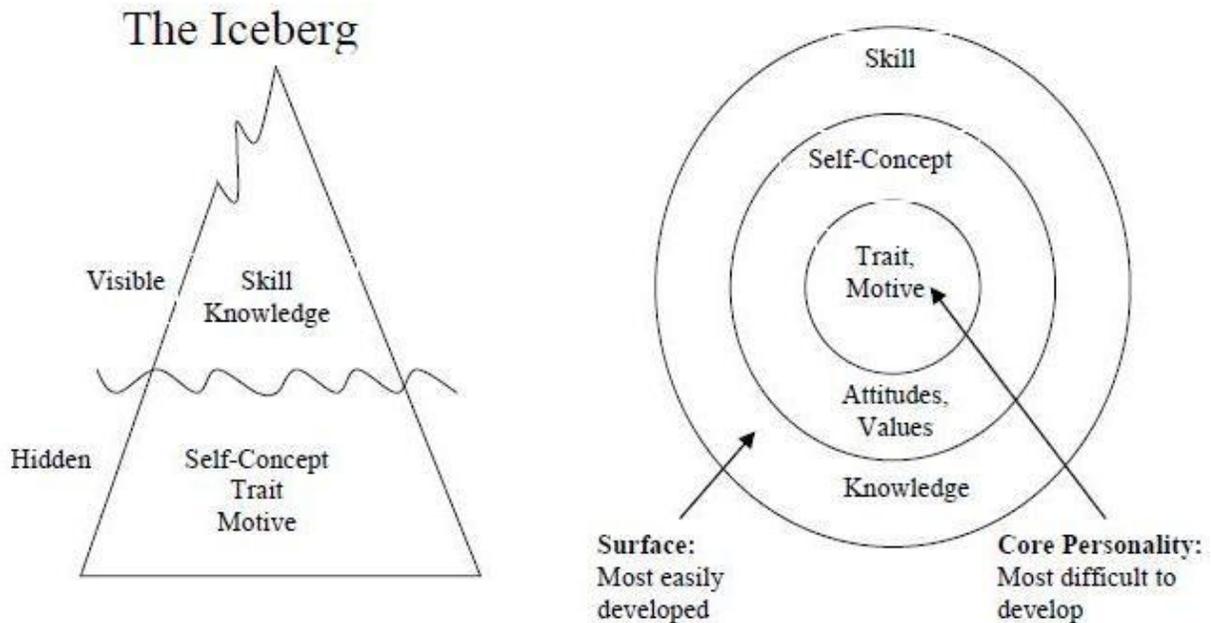


Figure 1 The Iceberg Model and Central and Surface Competencies
 Source: Spencer and Spencer (1993: 11)

From the iceberg model above we can say that visible competencies such as knowledge and skills may be somewhat technical competencies which are basically required by the job, whereas hidden competencies such as self-concept, traits and motives are behavioral competencies that drive an individual's performance in the job.

Competency-based human resource management on the other hand takes the broad term of competence and breaks it into its component parts. It identifies and assesses different competencies that make up an individual's overall competence and matches

them with required job competencies. Knowing which competencies are required as compared to which competencies are available to an organization can help inform and direct HRM interventions related to compensation, recruitment, promotion, training, and organizational culture.

A competency may be demonstrated in many ways. One method of identifying the typical ways that competencies are demonstrated is to identify the behaviors or tangible results (outcomes) produced by their use in the context of the work performed. A behavior is an observable action that is taken to achieve results or that contributes to an accomplishment. Green (1999) defined behavior as an action that can be observed, described, and verified. Competencies could be measured by using behavioral indicators.

2.3.1. Core (fundamental) Competencies

Core competency indicates an aptitude or skill that enables an HR professional (a person) to deliver perceived value to the organizational success; they are aligned with and support the primary goals and strategies of the organization. "Core competencies are becoming increasingly important as organizations become more flexible in using their workforces and as they strive to drive organizational change throughout the organization using human resource systems as the vehicle" (Byham & Moyer, 2005, p.78).

Prahalad and Hamel (1990) introduced the concept of core competence for an organization, referring to the unique competencies associated with market competitiveness. The term core or organizational competency is used in reference to

the collective learning and performance capabilities of the entire organization (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

Maddy et al. (2002) defined core competencies as “the basic knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors that contribute to excellence in extension education programs” (p. 1). Liles & Mustian (2004) have defined core competencies as “the basic knowledge, attitudes, skills, and observable behaviors that lead to excellence in the workplace (p. 432). Maddy et al. (2002) also suggest that the majority of competency models include 7-9 core competencies that all employees must demonstrate for the company to achieve strategic goals and objectives. While Fogg (1994) defines organization core competency as “those few internal competencies at which you are very, very good, better than your competition, and that you will build on and use to beat the competition and to achieve your strategic objectives” (P.325).

2.3.2 Technical (unique) Competencies

Technical competencies are the knowledge and abilities that are required to drive results in the particular position and describe the behaviors that are keys to the success of an individual job or position within the organization. They are often built upon the foundation of the organization’s core competencies (Maddy et al., 2002).

Specifying the position’s major duties and responsibilities is the main step for identifying technical competencies for any positions. In other words, visible competencies such as knowledge and skills may to some extent indicate technical

competencies that are basically required by the job. Skill and knowledge are surface or technical competencies that can be developed easily by training (Boyatzis, 1982).

Spencer and Spencer (1993) described technical competencies as the knowledge and abilities that are required to drive results in the particular position and describe the behaviors that are keys to the success of an individual job or position within the organization.

The previous part of literature has presented several definitions and illustrations of competency and its related characteristics, a competency can be defined as a mix of knowledge, behavior, skills abilities, attitudes, motives and traits that lead or cause superior or effective performance. It also explained the two main terms that are used in identifying the different competencies which include core competencies, and technical competencies. Core competencies are the basic knowledge, attitudes, skills at which you are very good (better than competitors). On the other hand, technical competencies are knowledge, skills and abilities that are required to drive results in a particular position and describe behaviors that are keys to the success. The following section intends to provide information regarding the appearance of Competency-Based Model and its major role in capturing individuals' competencies.

2.4. The emergence of Competency-Based Approach

Research and theory in the fields of organizational behavior and human resource management have been focused for decades by the view that jobs are the basic building blocks of complex organizations. The idea that individuals have a job which involves

specific accountabilities, responsibilities, and activities is well-established and fundamental to organizational behavior research (Lawler, 1993). Traditionally; job analysis was used as the basis for creating job descriptions with minimum requirements and has been the foundation of human resource activities. Job analysis has focused on what people actually do in their jobs, perceptions of what people do, what people should be doing, and what should be done in the future (Dubois et al., 2004). Job analysis is a decision tool in which a particular job is taken apart piece by piece and a report, called a job description, is written on precisely how that job is done. The job analysis can be referred to as a consideration in hiring, development, and compensation. A competency model is also a decision tool, but it tends to be a stronger tool with higher reliability, because it always takes into account knowledge and skills, - which are often omitted in job descriptions (McLagan, 1997). Most Organizations begin their organizing approach using a job description that typically specifies an individual duties and activities. Byham & Moyer (2005) argue that traditional job descriptions are written to identify activities and may not clearly describe outputs needed for organizational success. Dubois et al. (2004) suggest that job descriptions may become disregarded before they are written and thus become hindrance to organizational change.

Weatherly (2005) explains that a competency-based approach can help moving the focus away from jobs toward individuals and their competencies. Dubois (1993), states that competency models provide the adhesion or glue that is necessary among the elements of an organization's human resource management system. According to

Dubois (1993) Competency models help organizations take a unified and coordinated approach to designing the human resource management system, including job design, hiring, performance improvement, employee development, career planning or pathing, succession planning, performance appraisals, and the selection and compensation systems for a job. He further describes a competency model as being able to capture those competencies that are required for satisfactory or exemplary job performance within the context of a person's job roles, responsibilities, and relationships in an organization and its internal and external environments. The job-based approach fits the mass production that dominated Europe and United States during most of the 20th century. Rapid developments in computing, information technology, and the movement to a global economy, have combined to change business competition as well as the type of work which is done in the more developed countries (Lawler, 1993).

Byham & Moyer (2005) describe trends and issues facing organizations which support a need for a competency based approach to human resource management. The most important reason that cuts across the issues and trends according to Dubois et al. (2004) is that competency-based HR management focuses attention on the people who do the work rather than the work done by those people. Another important trend is the technological change, the need to structure thinking around competencies that enable individuals to make best use of existing and emerging technology, and the growing importance of knowledge capital. Competency-based job strives to identify and develop exemplary performance and bring average employees closer to exemplary (Dubois et al., 2004). Byham & Moyer (2005) state that rapidly-changing team-oriented environment is also an important trend for organizations to anticipate and react

to change, they must have individuals capable of dealing with the associated challenges where jobs change and roles change frequently.

Human resource management traditionally used to use job description as a basis for recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, compensation and benefits and training and development. Competency-based HR management system became most commonly used all over the world because it helps organizations to focus its attention on the human capital rather than the work done by employees. After discussing the superiority of the Competency-based HR model over the job-based model and how it is considered critical for improving human resource activities and thus for organizational change, the following section intends to investigate the benefits derived from the competency-based approach.

2.5. Benefits of Competency-Based Human Resource Management System

Competency models offer a tool for identifying what is required today and in the future. This approach creates a more elastic and responsive collection of talent by adjusting selection criteria and professional development systems and by supporting development of a broad set of skills (Byham & Moyer, 2005). For maximizing efficiency, competencies help businesses and individuals to focus on what will have the important and biggest impact (Dubois et al., 2004). Competency models provide a tool for identifying what is desired today and in the future.

Several benefits can be attributed to the competency-based approach. Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) illustrate some main benefits of competency based HR systems in training and development.

- A. Competency-based HR systems facilitate the focus on important skills and behaviors. When people are clear about what it takes to succeed, they are better able to make decisions about training and development.
- B. Competency-based HR systems guarantee alignment of training and development. Focusing on training and development aligns with what is essential for the organization. A fit constructed competency model describes behaviors for success on the job and supports the organization's strategic direction.
- C. Competency-based HR systems make the most effective use of training and development. This approach removes the speculation on where to focus scarce resources so time and money are well spent. Also it can help identify who needs which skills at which point in their job and then offer training when employees have a use for it.

McLagan (1999) furthermore, claims that traditionally trained HR professionals tend to rely on task-based systems. She has argued that the competencies and mindsets of HR professionals do not always fit the new work profile and that their administrative skills of the past have a negative relationship with the emerging requirements. In order for HR to function effectively, Ulrich and Yeung (1989) encourage HR professionals to

develop competencies in "state-of-the-art HR practices" and stay current in areas, such as staffing, development, and communication.

The objective of a competency-based approach is to "identify the competencies required of high performers in key positions throughout the organization; strive to eliminate any competency gaps that exist through effective selection and/or training and development (Weatherly, 2005a, p.4). Many authors agree that competency-based systems can support all of the HR management systems which include: (a) recruitment and selection; (b) orientation; (c) training and development (d) individual development; (e) coaching and mentoring; (f) performance management (g) compensation (h) career development; (I) succession planning (Bernthal et al., 2004; Dubois et al., 2004; McLagan, 1980; Moulton et al., 2006; Weatherly, 2005b). These human resource management functions are all designed to assure that individuals will be motivated and capable of performing jobs (Lawler, 1993).

Differences between traditional and competency-based HR management are described by Dubois et al., (2004). Competency-based HR management move the focus from compliance and policies to let HR play an important role in talent management, a role that contributes to the organizational mission and productivity. Typically, a finite number of competencies are identified, and applied across multiple functions or job families. Attaching competency model in this way simplifies the human resource systems and facilitates comparisons across functions that support parity in systems like compensation and ease job movement across functions (Martone, 2003).

While HR continues to fulfill its compliance responsibilities, it does so in a competency-based environment, recruitment and selection moves away from

qualifications, and assumptions that qualifications equal ability to perform, to a focus on decisions based on competency models for the organization that define the knowledge, skills, and attributes of high performers (Dubois et al., 2004). Competency models insure hiring new employees by using assessments and other selection procedures that measure the competencies (Bartram, 2005; Lawler, 1994). In fact, a key difference between job analysis and competency modeling may be that they are often intended to distinguish top performers from average performers (Olesen et al., 2007).

Through clarifying behaviors and practices of effective employees, competency models raise the possibility that resources invested in hiring put the right people in the right place. Competency models offer a comprehensive image of the job requirements; it increases the chance of those hired to succeed, and ensure more efficient interviewing process. Competency model helps separate competencies that have the possibility to be improved from those that are more difficult to develop (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999).

The changing environment makes training programs that are initiated by HR professionals to be even more important. Training and development are critical to the success of a competency-based approach. Particularly when individuals are paid for skills acquisition, they place a great emphasis on being able to learn and develop their abilities (Lawler, 1993). A competency-based training and development system create competencies aligned with high performance and represent procedure for individuals to know their own competencies and for the organization to identify and grow talents (Dubois, et al., 2004).

Van der Veen (1993) mentions that once an individual goes through training to handle a higher position, while concurrently doing their present job – they called this development. In the traditional model the two tracks were treated as separate with little connection. Competency assessment has changed this notion; there are now three tracks in the training and development region and they greatly overlap:

1. The career line – includes job history, where they gained experience, what kind of experience they gained, which jobs now and in the future would benefit from the employees' experience, what further experience is needed.
2. The KSA line – What knowledge, skills, and attitudes are necessary to perform according to present and future standards, what relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes does the employee possess currently.
3. The education and training line – what level and type of education is needed to perform at an adequate or superior level. What succession of courses and training had a significant impact on performance. What additional courses and training are needed.

Various applications of performance appraisals have left many managers in a state of confusion and frustration with the employee evaluation process (Gurbuz & Dikmenli, 2007). The biggest complaint from managers is that they are not given sufficient guidelines to assess people; and the biggest complaint from employees is that the process is not equitable and fair. Performance appraisal concentrates much in assessing past behaviors of employees, a situation some manager's exploit to victimize unfavoured employees (Bersin, 2008).

The job competency assessment process objectively identifies common attributes among superior performers, taking into consideration the knowledge, skills, and motivations that lead to that superior performance (Mele 1993). Byham & Moyer (2005) describe competencies as an evaluation tool against which all individuals, or at least a broad band of individuals, can be evaluated. We can use job competencies to evaluate the performance of employees by structuring the appraisal instrument around the competencies (Posthuma & Campion, 2008). Mensah and Seidu (2012) asserted that precise definitions of the job-related behaviors are required. This would help reduce the tendency for appraisers to rely on their individual interpretations. Performance standards must be clearly defined and a regular adequate feedback should be provided (Mensah & Seidu, 2012).

In other words, the better you perform, the better you will be paid – there are few if any limits. The only problem is that an employee can quickly reach his or her ceiling level of abilities and then may feel “stuck.” The competency-based model focuses more on the value of the employee to the organization. There are no true limits to competency based pay – as long as the employee continues to increase his or her competencies and grow in value to the organization. For each competency there are four levels of performance:

- A. Consistently exceeds requirements
- B. Meets requirements
- C. Partially meets requirements
- D. Not meeting requirements

The competency-based model can serve as an inspiration to low performing employees, because they can improve their pay a little at a time, as they gain competencies. This can reward an employee greatly for improving his or her knowledge, skills and attitudes in one competency. This hopefully will motivate the employee to improve other competencies. This is a win – win solution, the employee is rewarded for their improvements, they set their own pace for improvement and reward, and their productivity rises accordingly – which leads to greater profit for the organization (Mensah & Seidu, 2012).

Compensation is a sensitive issue for both the organization and the employees. To have a successful compensation system there must be consistency. Compensation includes wages or salary, bonuses, retirement contributions, and perquisites that can be converted to cash or replace living expenses. Employees need to have a clear understanding of how they will be evaluated, by whom and how often. There needs to be a common vocabulary for discussion of the capabilities, assessment, and compensation of the employee (McLagan, 1997). The field of compensation has seen some recent trends that have changed the manner in which organizations provide compensation for their employees. As with all trends, the field of compensation saw several come and go. However, three trends have outlasted the temporary buzz that most new ideas inspire before they die out. Those trends according to Pasternak (1993) include:

- A. A movement to strengthen the link between compensation and company philosophy.

- B. Changes in the traditional job analysis and evaluation.
- C. Improvements in the variety and administration technology of 410 K plans.

Thorpe & Homan (2000) give reasons why employers choose to introduce competency-based pay. They suggest that amongst the most frequently quoted objectives are the support of a change initiative, the pursuit of flexibility, and the need to build a broader skills base within the organization.

In conclusion, competency-based management system provides a complete picture of job requirements which increases the chance of employees to succeed, distinguishes top performers from average performers, and puts the right people in the right job. Competency models will concentrate on training and development as individuals are paid for skills acquisition, and the better they perform the better they will be paid. As the competency-based approach offers several benefits in achieving human resource development and training objectives and it highly contributes to the effectiveness of the HRM within organizations. There can be some barriers to the HRM effectiveness associated with competency-based approach as shown in the following section.

2.6. Negative outcomes of unreliable Competency-based HRM

Dubois et al. (2004) indicates that less reliable competency-based HRM models can result in negative outcomes:

- A. Developing less significant competencies in organizations lacking clear vision of their goals or strategies.
- B. Being relatively expensive and time-consuming to manage.
- C. Diminish core competencies understanding as a result of poor employee attracting.
- D. Add nothing in organizations that have difficulty in differentiating between successful and unsuccessful performance and when the competencies are too broad".

Mansfield (1996) indicates that the cost, time, and effort required to develop the competency model makes its use impractical for more than a small proportion of jobs in the organization. He also considers the cost, time, and effort in light of the rate at which jobs are changing in many organizations and the fact that the shelf life of a competency model is likely to be two years or less. In addition, layering job-specific HR programs over broader organizational programs can lead to inconsistency. Mansfield (1996) proposes that it is difficult to compare the competency requirements of one job to the requirements of another job or an individual's competency assessments in one job to the requirements of another job.

The following section intends to provide a pre-study review that assists in building the study theoretical framework; Competency models will be presented with general background information about the key steps in its process development.

2.7. Competency Model Framework

Competency models should be highly leveraged, thus they should only include the most important competencies that really predict future performance. Models sometimes are also shown as a visual model. Competency models are used as decision tools in human resource management systems including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, and succession planning. Competency models are designed to meet the needs of an organization, including a list of competencies, definitions, and behavioral indicators (Cochran, 2009). Dubois et al. (2004) defined a competency model as “a written description of the competencies required for fully successful or exemplary performance in a job category, work team, department, division, or organization” (p. 23). Competency models typically include a list of competencies and behavioral indicators that make the competency come alive in terms of what it looks like in the context of an organization (Dubois & Rothwell, 2000; Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). Competency models are used to align individual capabilities and human resource functions with organizational strategy.

Conducting a competency study and developing a competency model for an organization is a multi-step process. Draganidis & Mentzas (2006) summarize key steps of competency modeling based on their literature review: these include the creation of a competency systems team. The identification of performance metrics and validation sample. The development of a tentative competencies list. The definition of competencies and behavioral indicators. The development of an initial model. The cross-check of initial model. Model refinement and validation .And finally model finalization. Byham & Moyer (2005) mention five steps used in competency modeling,

background review, data collection, data integration, validation and finalization. Common steps in competency modeling include: selecting some previously identified models as a foundation, tailoring the language to the specific organization, piloting, validating, revising and finalizing model (Naquin & Holton, 2006).

Stephen (1998) mentions seven essential steps which are needed to transform the HR functions and develop the Competency system. All these steps are significant and come into sight in some form in those successful organizations that have used a competency:

- A. Agree on the need to transform.
- B. Develop a statement and agreement on the new role.
- C. Identify roles, competencies, and accountability
- D. Communicate roles and competencies throughout organization.
- E. Establish process to gain competencies
- F. Measure results of the HR staff impact on mission
- G. Correct, adjust and improve the transformation process based on experience and results obtained

A summary of the essential steps in building the competency model were provided in the section above. Further literature regarding the importance of competency system in the public sector and higher educational institutions is presented in the following section; this will help in forming the part of the study framework as presented in section 2.9.

2.8. Competency in Higher Education Institutions

Universities face increased pressure from many directions; HR professionals have an opportunity to support their institutions by recruiting, hiring, and training non-academic staff that have the competencies necessary to guide the institutions through an era of change. Universities are under pressure to provide an education that will ensure future employment. Padilla (2005) describes higher education institutions as a complex, unpredictable, interdependent and functioning within cultures of shared governance, faculty independence, and collaborative decision making. Higher education institutions are diverse organizations, requiring leaders to be well informed about multiple organizational elements.

Bryson (1995) describes several methods by which public sector and nonprofit organizations can identify their organizational core competencies as a significant output of the strategic planning process. For example, a strategic consideration of a public sector organization's strengths and weaknesses can identify its organizational core competencies in concrete terms. Improvement of organizational core competencies can then be achieved through coordinated adjustment of HRM administrative policies and practices covering all, or selected, personnel functions. In some cases even in public sector settings, it will be important to ensure that an organization's competency model would be explicitly future oriented, rather than implicitly historic, and that it identifies levels of superior strategic performance rather than levels of threshold, or minimum, operational performance (Jacobs, 1989). The British civil service designed a competence checklist to replace its traditional,

centrally-controlled selection criteria and it resulted in a pattern of strengths and weaknesses similar to those reported in the North American literature on competencies (North, 1993). The competency movement in the public sector will probably be less connected to an effective strategic planning process, and thus will be less effective than it may be in the private sector. Exceptions to this pessimistic forecast may occur in public sector organizations which enjoy both a strong mandate and an effective, ongoing consultation process among all its key stakeholders (Bryson, 1995).

Recent surveys indicate widespread use of competency-based human resource models by banks, insurance companies, management consulting firms, technology companies, transportation companies, utility companies, delivery companies, retail eating outlets, manufacturing industries, and mining companies. Winter (1996) describes how Guardian Insurance uses competencies to assess and reward individual performance in terms of core competencies that reflect the company's strategic focus and priorities and how Bell Sygma applies the notion of competencies to all aspects of human resource management, starting with the HR plan. Other private sector initiatives reported by Czarnecki (1995) include the finance department of McDonald's Canada which introduced competency modeling for its 50 employees and Purolator Courier which used a project team to identify 10 to 30 technical competencies (e.g. keyboard, software skills) and five to eight behavioral competencies (e.g. time planning, initiative, telephone presence).

Smith (2003) mentioned that HR functions are vital to college and university operations; given the importance of having highly skilled, talented, and committed individuals working within higher education .Smith also mentioned that there are great

opportunities for HR departments to lead efforts assertively which enable institutions not only to identify and hire great people, but also to support their future development after they have been placed in leadership positions.

Higher education institutions should treasure and nurture their own human capital during times of change (De Lange & Olivier, 2008). Challenges like anxiety, low morale, work errors and loss of motivation can be caused by restructuring (Arnolds, 2005). Human resource (HR) departments have a role to play in dealing with these challenges. Schultz (2010) concludes that higher education institutions have a unique environment, in which, knowledge of business and HR practices, personal skills and management skills are the essential HR competencies.

Through his study conducted over a two-year period at a major East Coast research university, Smith (2003) identifies fourteen competencies for non-academic leaders grouped in five clusters: Leadership, Building and Managing Relationships, Cognitive, Personal Responsibility, and Fundamental Skills.

Smith and Wolverton (2010) conclude that higher education leaders should be creative, strategic thinker, competent in both oral and writing communication and should engage multiple perspectives in decision making. Professional presentation, a type of nonverbal communication, lighthearted, unselfish behavior, is also important. Demonstrates understanding of academics, and demonstrates understanding of complex issues related to higher education, are contextual to higher education institutions.

Smith (2003) emphasizes that leaders want individuals who are accountable for their actions, who can work both independently and collaboratively, who take charge of their

endeavors, who take pride in what they do, and who can be counted on to produce results.

After presenting the general review about competency based models and its development in educational institutions, the following part of the study attempts to discuss the theories that will be used for this research in order to establish the main steps necessary in identifying the core competencies at Birzeit University.

2.9. Theoretical Framework

From the wide range related literature mentioned earlier, no common definition of competencies can be found, despite the fact that many definitions of competencies include "knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics (KSAO's). Competency definition can be summarized as individual's actual performance in a particular situation, competency describes how well the individual integrates knowledge; skill, attitudes and behavior in delivering care according to expectations. Competencies often extend traditional job analysis by including some or all of the following: traits, motivations, drives, personality characteristics, values and behaviors. Job competency is an underlying characteristic of a person that leads to or causes superior or effective performance. Competencies also differ from traditional job analysis techniques because they often are specifically linked to a department's and/or organization's goals and strategic objectives, as opposed to being focused on the individual employee.

Traditional job analysis focuses primarily on the present - how the job is defined now, competency modeling often focuses on both current and future demands.

There are several methods for collecting and analyzing data, for deciding what to include in a competency-based model. The needs of key users, budget and time available to develop the model are to be considered. A good model is often supplemented with components that will add value for an intended HR application (Mansfield, 2012). As mentioned earlier firms create a competency model to clarify how competencies lead to performance, it explains personal and job related characteristics, the organizational context, and the inter-relationship of these elements that result in performance as per pre-determined standards.

In order to develop an appropriate competency model, much care must be taken in the process. To begin with, there are some terms and ideas that should be integrated into the model. Some of the terms and ideas Mirabile (1997) includes but are not limited to: Ability – refers to talent, while may be learned or enhanced, there tends to be a natural predisposition to them. Behavior –observable demonstration of some competency, can be taught, learned and measured. Behavioral Anchors – more specific than simple behavior, they are built in levels of increasing complexity. Competency – knowledge, skill, attitude or characteristic associated with high performance, some definitions include motives, beliefs, and values. Criticality – measure of how important a particular competency is for a job or group of jobs. Proficiency – how much of a particular competency a person must have to be successful in their work

There are many tools that can be used to develop a competency model. A quick knowledge and skill assessment of the job description is an excellent place to start.

Follow that by finding a current successful performer and develop a model of the competencies they use. The future should also be taken into account by listening to what experts are saying about the future competencies that will be needed (McLagan, 1997). This is also an excellent idea to document outputs, knowledge, skills, and attitudes that superior performers demonstrate. Singular critical-incident interviews, as well as sets of critical-incident interviews, contribute to the development of the competency model as well as drawing on learning from past behavior (McLagan, 1997).

The estimate is that approximately 80% of the important actions for successful job performance are controlled by 20% of the competencies used in the job (McLagan, 1997). Therefore, it is essential to point out how the competencies are chosen in order for a competency model to be successful.

In this research the researcher will identify and describe main core competencies required for the four administrative departments at Birzeit University, where the researcher has been working for the last 4 years in the HRD. Based on Spencer & Spencer (1993), Lucia & Iepsinger (1999), it is intended to follow the below steps to determine competencies of the administrative employees at BZU:

- A. Review the four administrative departments' strategic plans.
- B. Study available job descriptions for the positions in question.
- C. Interview directors of the administrative departments and identify future needs of employees.
- D. Identify the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics required for all BZU employees.

- E. Group very similar knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics to create a competency category
- F. Compare the findings from this process with the initial literature review and available benchmarking information.
- G. Create an initial list of required core competencies.
- H. Validate the list with the concerned parties

2.10. Conclusion

Chapter two highlights the literature related to competency models and ended with a summary for the framework which the researcher intends to adopt for identifying the major core competencies of the four administrative departments at Birzeit University. In the next chapter, the researcher identifies how the current human resource functions at BZU may benefit of applying a competency model.

Chapter Three

Human Resource Management at BZU

Introduction

This chapter explains the development of human resource department's tasks. It highlights the challenges and services, and describes its current situation. It also reviews recruitment and selection, training, performance appraisal and payroll and compensation processes. This chapter is important because it is considered the cornerstone in determining a methodology that is adopted in this study to determine Birzeit University administrative employees' most important competencies which have an impact on improving human resource department performance.

The Human Resource Department is one of the main administrative departments in Birzeit University's organizational structure. It consists of four main sections; the recruitment and selection (employment section), payroll and compensations, training & performance appraisal and the contracting section.

3.1. Recruitment and Selection

As part of the HR continuing mission to keep on track with the technological development and for simplifying the recruitment and selection procedures for the applicant, BZU has developed its own online recruitment system (e-careers) in 2009, although the applicants can still phone or email the employment administrator for any information and assistance. With online recruitment, BZU has reached, and is reaching, a wider pool of potential employees by building its own data base. For example, many qualified people from abroad can apply to BZU via e-careers very easily. By this way BZU receives many qualified applications and does not depend only on the availability of qualified people in the local market.

Until 2009, applicants used to visit the Human Resource Department physically in order to take hard application copies, fill it manually, and then submit it back to the Human Resources Department. A responsible employee used to summarize information written in the applications on an excel sheet by taking into consideration the applicant's qualifications such as experiences, education, training courses etc.

From the above we can conclude that the recruitment process at BZU was time consuming, very costly, and needed a lot of paper work. BZU benefited from developing the e-careers since it has a better and faster screening for both the academic and administrative staff.

The Applicants may be insiders (current employees) or outsiders (new applicants). There are a number of advantages for recruiting from inside BZU. For instance, internal recruitment maximizes the return on the organization's investment in its

employees, increases motivation of individuals who are interested in improving their careers and reduces cost and time spent on orientation and training for new employees.

The process of the recruitment and selection process can be summarized in the following:

3.1.1 Job requisition

A job requisition form must be filled by the department which needs to refill an existing position or request a new position depending on their needs assessment and the work size. This form must be supported by a justification why the department needs this position. The form used for refilling an existing position differs from the one used to request a new position.

Requesting a new position form must be supported by related documents such as current organizational chart of this department, annual budget and an approval of having this new position, and the job description and job specification. This form must be sent to the HR department for auditing and then will be sent for the top management for approval.

Refilling an existing position form needs only to mention the name of the employee you need to fill the position of and why he had resigned, in addition to the job description and job specification of this position taking into consideration that the degree required for this position shouldn't change .

3.1.2 Posting the vacancy based on the need to fill a position.

The position will move through a manual approving path and once all of the individuals who are required to review the position have approved the position, the vacancy will be officially posted to the e-careers web site.

It is important to mention that it is a rule at BZU that every department while filling its annual budget has to forecast for any new employees for the year to come. In addition to the annual forecasting, many new vacancies at BZU arise as a result of new projects during the year especially in its centers and institutes.

Before making any announcements on the E-careers the HR department ensures that the vacant positions were identified in the annual budget and there is enough budget for any new employment.

3.1.3 Review and update job descriptions and specifications for the position

The traditional starting point for the recruitment process is preparing and/or updating a job description and specification. The HR department makes sure that the job description accurately reflects the work to be done well put in an appropriate, specific and clear language to ensure that it's clear for all those who are interested. As for the job specifications, it specifies the qualifications an individual should possess in order to carry out the work. After the review of both the job description and specification the HR employment administrator can screen the applicants objectively by comparing the applicant's qualifications to the job requirements.

3.1.4 Selection of the most qualified applicants

The selection process can be summarized below as follows:

A. Selection process

The HR employment administrator with an administrative employee from the department that is looking for a candidate, screen all the submitted applications according to the job requirements announced in the newspapers or on website. They both ensure that the selected shortlisted candidates are meeting all the subjective and objective criteria needed for the post.

B. Selection Tools

The HR employment administrator uses several tools to select the most appropriate applicant from the shortlist. These tools include the applicant's resume, job related exams, structured or unstructured job interviews and the reference check.

C. Establish a shortlist

After the applications have been screened by one or more selection methods, usually a few well-qualified people stay.

D. Make the selection decision

An Interview for the candidates is held by a selection committee in order to decide which candidate is best equipped to do the job. An evaluation form must be filled by every selection committee member in order to find out which candidate receives the best marks and a comparison is done among committee member's evaluation. One candidate usually emerges as the favorite choice. The names of other candidates may

be retained to contact in the event that negotiations and the job offer with the preferred candidate were unsuccessful.

E. Negotiate a competitive compensation and benefits package

BZU usually doesn't negotiate for salaries or benefits because it has –like all Palestinian universities- a scale for salaries, benefits and compensation. But sometimes for some top level management positions or for some special contracts, BZU offers higher salaries than the scale to hunt the most qualified persons.

Despite all the improvements mentioned above and the time and cost reduction in the recruitment process, the researcher, who is also an observer who works at the HR department, sometimes listens to colleagues comments on the recruitment and selection process describing them as subjective and inconsistent in some cases.

The selection process at BZU is mainly focusing on application forms, interviews and evaluation forms, selection tests. However it never searches for prospective employees, the process is very slow, and there is insufficient guidance on the composition and operation of interview panels which requires development in the recruitment and selection process.

Birzeit University has taken good steps in order to have an effective recruitment and selection process through using online recruitment system (e-careers). As was explained earlier the online recruitment system reduces the cost of the recruitment process as well as assists HRD in selecting the most qualified candidates. However, the recruitment and selection process is still prone to be subjective, and lacks awareness to fairness. Selection is narrowly focused on interviews, application forms and reference checks are not managed comprehensively. Current challenges include, difficulties

regarding the efficiency and speed of the recruitment process, insufficient guidance on the composition and operation of interview panels and insufficient guidance and training for recruitment committees.

Competency-based recruitment and selection is result oriented process, it focuses less attention on educational level or years of experience that have little connection to verifiable results. The competency model will make selection methods more effective, it will reduce turnover, the persons who are hired are more likely to do well in jobs or work roles that match their existing or potential competencies (Wood & Payne, 1998). The competency model will provide insight into whether or not a new hire will be a good fit with the organization's culture (Guinn, 1998).

The decision to move to a more focused, objective approach to recruitment and selection through adopting a competency-based approach to recruitment and selection requires positive changes to the existing job-based system. Competency-based recruitment and selection is a result oriented process. It is easier to concentrate on the results expected of a successful performer. Competency-based recruitment have an important role in attracting individuals who possess skills, capabilities, and behaviors that might be difficult, if not impossible, to develop by training or development efforts (Garrett, 2007).

3.2. Performance Appraisal

Performance appraisal is another main function of the HR department. Performance appraisal section manages the evaluations of all BZU employees at the end of each year.

The appraisal process can be summarized in the following steps:

3.2.1. Identifying the Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Key performance indicators are identified to measure performance of “some” jobs, such as the number of employees supervised by the employee, tasks and workload. For “some” jobs they depend on information from different databases to identify KPI’s such as the number of loaned books during a certain period for measuring workload in the library. The objective of identifying KPI’s is to make the appraisal system more objective and minimize subjective decisions, however Birzeit University has a weakness in identifying the KPI’s because they are not applied for all jobs and are not linked to the strategic goals for each unit.

3.2.2 Enter the KPI’s into the HR management system

KPI’s are identified for “some” jobs, they are not linked to the strategic plan for the university and employees goals which are not connected to the university’s strategic plan.

3.2.3 Announcing the evaluation period and making the system live

The performance appraisal for both the academic and administrative staff takes place at the beginning of April of every year and usually stays for the whole month. The HR department is responsible for the whole process; it starts by sending the evaluation forms for all the concerned parties and ends by receiving the recommendations from all

departments and units. The HR department in parallel with the Computer Center provides all the necessary support (technical or administrative) to all directors and employees during the evaluation.

HR department follows the process from the beginning until receiving recommendations from all departments and units. HR department provides the necessary support to all departments and directors about the system and solves any problems that arise while the system is alive.

3.2.4 Following up the evaluation process

The HR department issues/renews all types of contracts (cadre, special, daily) for the next year taking into consideration all the recommendations provided by the appraisal. The incentive system is “somehow” linked to the appraisal process, since cash rewards are paid to all employees based on the recommendations given in the appraisal by the beginning of the next academic year, but the annual increment is not usually based on employee performance.

Employees’ evaluations are the cornerstone for issuing employee’s contracts and incentives so it’s very important to be done within a timeframe so HR department could follow the recommendations provided by the appraisal.

As mentioned above, the current appraisal system may lack the ability to measure the real performance of employees. It only measures the technical skills that employees should have in order to accomplish their tasks. Current appraisal system doesn’t take behavioral skills, attitudes, traits into considerations when measuring employees

performance. Current appraisal system allocates only 20% for administrative skills, competencies and behaviors while the remaining 80% goes to assess the tasks set in the job descriptions (see appendix V).

BZU appraisal and evaluation system focus almost exclusively on an employee's past performance. This traditional system may inhibit performance unintentionally by focusing energy, attention, and effort on past shortcomings rather than future successes. Characteristics of an effective performance feedback process as set by Noe et al. (2000) are:

- A. Feedback should be given frequently, not once a year.
- B. Create the right context for the discussion.
- C. Ask the employee to rate his/her performance before the session.
- D. Encourage the subordinate to participate in the session.
- E. Recognize effective performance through praise.
- F. Focus on solving problems.
- G. Focus feedback on behavior or results, not on the person.
- H. Minimize criticism.
- I. Agree to specific goals and set a date to review the process.

Adopting a competency-based approach to performance management can be more useful. In a competency-based approach, employees' work results are aligned with achievement of BZU strategic objectives. This approach affords the opportunity to identify and develop needed competencies. In line, competency assessment results provide a strong tool for identifying training needs that can be used to plan and deliver

employees' training in a targeted manner. The benefits of a competency-based system are more precious than financial rewards for employees.

3.3. Training and Development

Human Resource department is responsible for preparing and conducting training programs for employees, on the other hand training programs “if any” are dependent on the employees' annual appraisal. Some employees may be sent abroad for attending training courses upon their direct administrator recommendations during the year.

3.3.1. Training Problems at BZU

- A. The lack of budget allocated for training due to the financial crises that Birzeit University always has and is currently facing.
- B. Training needs assessments were never done by BZU HR in order to identify the deficiencies in the administrative employee's performance. However, most of direct administrators recommend training courses for the employees just to fill the blanks in the annual appraisal.
- C. Providing training courses for employees in general is beyond BZU's priorities which prevent it from requesting funds for developing its employees. But this does not apply on certain employees in the institutes and centers. It is obviously clear that there is a bias in training especially when the same employees are always receiving different training programs.
- D. The offered training lacks the ability to provide the employees with the required skills that are important to improve their performance.

- E. Training does not have a plan linked to the mission, vision, values, business strategies and objectives of BZU.
- F. Training should have an immediate and highly specific impact on work performance, and it should be grounded in the organization's requirements and unique corporate culture.

3.3.2. Future plan for training

- 6.2 To seek support and cooperation from various BZU centers and institutes, to implement specialized training courses for the benefit of the employees and the university as a whole.
- 7.2 To analyze the training needs on regular basis, by a specialized employee from the HR department and study its impact on performance.
- 8.2 The HR department is strategically planning to benefit from the highly qualified employees in the university to transfer their experiences to a wider group.
- 9.2 To make a focus group to study the training needs.

Competency based training focuses on the corporate culture in a better way than what job description approach does. Competency-based training requires trainers to make a big shift from only achieving single behavioral objectives to competency acquisition and its application for competent performance.

3.4 Payroll and Compensations & Benefits

The compensation system including salaries and promotions and employees development at BZU, are not wisely linked to the employee's annual evaluation and appraisal. Instead it is based on the Unified Palestinian Cadre that is designed for all Palestinian universities. Unfortunately, the Unified Cadre equalizes between the creative employees and the ordinary ones since it is not designed to give credit to the distinctive employees only in very rare cases. On the other hand and in many cases the direct managers don't appraise their employees objectively which in turn is reflected on their pay.

In many cases the employee reaches the end of the scale according to the Unified Cadre which means that he/she will keep receiving the same salary until quitting work at BZU regardless of the development in performance. On the other hand, in rare or special cases the united scale is violated to attract employees for filling some top positions.

Compensation and benefits are one of the most important functions in HR. It has been an extremely important issue for both employer and employees, as money is directly or indirectly related to the fulfillment of most human needs. BZU are not paying for performance and the compensation and benefits are so small and equalizes between creative employees and ordinary ones.

A competency based compensation and benefits system is one which can satisfy the performance-linked pay in which employees are paid on the basis of actual performance. The competency based compensation and benefits system should be

designed on the basis of employees' capabilities and experience and by taking into account the market's demand for unique skills and experience.

3.5 Conclusion

The researcher refers to the case of some administrative units that had triple the average turnover, a remarkably high number of discipline issues and employee complaints, an unusual number of training and development requests, including requests to "help motivate" department members and significant employee stress complaints. BZU HR units are not fully integrated which may lead to ineffective communication. We could have quickly determine that vague job descriptions and poorly designed interview process have the potential to lead to bad hires. Performance expectations were vague, managers lacked fundamental coaching and teambuilding skills.

The purpose of this study is to identify HR competencies for administrative employees at Birzeit University to improve the performance of each HR function through adopting and applying competency assessment in each function of HR department. Competencies enable an organization to integrate strategic HR and business plans into one seamless overarching strategy to develop people, optimize resource allocation, enhance services, and create efficiencies. Competency models are based on measurable work results and are specific to organization's culture and success factors that are more consistent than job descriptions. Competency models are more effective in describing

characteristics associated with excellent individual performance. Competency based human resource management system will improve the capability of HR employees by linking organizational core competencies to the competencies of individual best performance.

Chapter Four

Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter presents the selected research approach, design and methods employed in this study. It further explains sampling methods and the sampling selection criteria in addition to research instruments, validity and reliability of the study in addition to research limitations.

4.1. Definitions of Research

Research could be defined as “an organized, systematic, data based, critical, objective, scientific inquiry or investigation into a specific problem, undertaken with the purpose of finding answers or solutions to it” (Sekaran, 2003,p.4). However, Nelson (2003) defines research as “a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge” (P.3). According to Bruce et al. (1993) research can be either survey or field research. Survey research is “the research that involves the application of questionnaires or interviews to large groups of people”. The main purpose of survey is to identify the presence of characteristics among groups. Field research is “a matter of immersing oneself in a naturally occurring set of events in order to gain of the situation” (Bruce et al., 1993, P.12).

Kumar (2005) assumes that research provides the needed information to help the managers to make the necessary decision to deal with problems. The information provided could be a result of a very careful analysis of data gathered for the first time or data already available.

4.2. Types of Research

According to Kumar (2005) any research can be one of two types

4.2.1. Basic (Pure) research

Involves developing and testing theories and hypotheses that are intellectually challenging to the researcher but may or may not have practical application at the present time or in the future. The knowledge produced through basic research is sought in order to add to the existing body of research methods.

4.2.2. Applied research

Applied research is done to solve specific, practical questions; for policy formulation, administration and understanding of a phenomenon. It can be exploratory, but is usually descriptive.

According to Lutzker et al. (2001) the basic researcher can usually control the setting and conditions under which the research is conducted. On the other hand, applied research is usually conducted in natural setting.

4.3 Types of Research Design

According to the purpose of the study, the research design can be divided into three categories (Creswell, 2012):

4.3.1 Exploratory study

This study is undertaken when no information is available on such problem or when there is not much known about the situation. In such situations extensive preliminary work is needed to be familiar with the phenomena in order to be able to set up a design for a comprehensive investigation.

4.3.2 Descriptive study

This study is conducted in order to be able to describe the characteristics of variables of interest in a certain situation. Hence, its goal is to describe the relevant aspects of the phenomena of interest.

4.3.3 Hypothesis testing

This study is undertaken to establish differences or to explain the relationships among groups. It can predict organizational outcomes and can explain the variance in the dependent variable

4.4. Research Methodology Selection

The purpose of this study is to identify HR competencies for administrative employees at Birzeit University in order to improve the performance of each HR function through adopting and applying competency assessment. Before one decides on the most appropriate methodology for a study one must take look at the most important methodologies of research. There are two principal research methods which are qualitative and quantitative methods (Dawson, 2002). The choice of either qualitative or quantitative research depends on the researcher's assumptions.

4.4.1. Quantitative Research Methodology

According to Cornford and Smithson (1996), Quantitative research is a research that “relies on developing metrics (numbers) that can be used to describe the phenomena (objects and relationships) under study” (p.40). The quantitative research involves a number of techniques: experimental technique, observation technique and the survey technique, which uses questionnaires or interviews. The questionnaire must be well designed and distributed to a random sample to provide numerical and predictable results on the target population (Alreck & Settle, 2003). Quantitative research tells us how often or how many people act in a certain way, but it doesn't answer the question “why” Denzin & Lincoln (2002). Different kinds of methods can be used for quantitative research such as field and laboratory experiments to investigate a research problem Straub et al. (2004).

4.4.2. Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative research is “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” Strauss & Corbin (1990, p.17). Qualitative research is a research designed for exploratory purposes. It involves numerous techniques such as group interviews, projective techniques and case studies. It also analyzes human behavior and focuses on people’s experiences to give results on phenomenon that are complex and cannot be quantified (Kumar et al., 2001).

4.5. Sampling

Sampling is “the process of selecting a sufficient number of elements from the population so that by studying the sample, and understanding the properties or the characteristics of the sample subjects, it would be possible to generalize the properties or characteristics to the population elements” (Sekaran, 2003, P. 267-268). The fundamental reason for using sampling rather than collecting data from the entire population is that in research there are thousands of elements and it would be impossible to examine each element on the entire population (Creswell, 2012).

There are two types of sampling designs, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling allows each element in the population to have a well known probability whereas in non-probability sampling the element does not have a probability of being selected as subjects. The most important step in the sampling process is to make a careful selection of a true representative sample of the population to which the findings will be generalized (Creswell, 2012).

4.6. The Employed Research Method

The researcher used triangulation method. Triangulation is a powerful technique that facilitates validation of data through cross verification from more than two sources. In particular, it refers to the application and combination of several research methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon, it can be employed in both quantitative (validation) and qualitative (inquiry) studies (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). The purpose of triangulation in qualitative research is to increase the credibility and validity of the results. Altrichter et al. (2008) contend that triangulation gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the situation.

In this study The researcher combined qualitative and quantitative methods in addition to his actual practice as an observer of the situation and active participant working in the human resource department at BZU, in order to determine BZU's administrative employee's core and technical competencies. The researcher used three research methods (Focus Group, Personal Interviews and Questionnaires) in order to triple checking results and to make sure that the results which went through these three instruments are homogeneous.

4.7. Research Instruments

In order to choose the most appropriate methodology for a certain research, its purpose, its scope and setting, the research type and the unit of analysis should be considered (Creswell, 2012). This research aims to identify competencies of administrative employees of BZU, and the research method best suited for our purpose is qualitative

research. The researcher has adopted three main instruments to be used to collect and analyze data which are focus group, the questionnaire survey and the interviews.

Focus groups are good methods for gathering ideas about new initiatives. Also they are considered to be more efficient than conducting several individual interviews. Focus groups are useful when gaining access to a sense of participant commonality is the central concern (Parker & Tritter, 2006). It is rapidly becoming one of the major research tools to understand people's thoughts and feelings. It is usually conducted by inviting six to ten people to gather for a few hours with a trained moderator to talk about a product, service or organization. The meeting is held in a pleasant place, and refreshments are served to create a relaxed environment (Kumar, 2005). On the 3rd of October 2012 a focus group session was held in the old administrative building at Birzeit University. The session consisted of 8 employees divided equally (two each, 1 old employee and 1 new) on the main four administrative departments. New employees are those who worked less than 2 years, where old employees are those who have longer work experience and more familiar with work practices at Birzeit University. The session started by a 10 minutes presentation by the researcher to introduce his research topic, the main goals he is seeking to achieve and the disadvantages of the existing system. After the researcher's introduction, the discussion of the group had started and lasted for about one hour. The researcher served as the moderator of the group with the assistance of a professional (neutral) moderator. The moderator asked the attendees to ask questions and to mention their opinions about the current HR management system, the functions of HR department and the role of the HR

departments. The attendees also identified the core competencies for administrative employees. The researcher used a tape recorder in order to listen again to the discussions and verify data. Results gained from the focus group were used to construct personnel interviews and questionnaire, open discussions gave the researcher a chance to get new ideas.

Interviews are discussions, usually one-on-one between an interviewer and an individual, meant to gather information on a specific set of topics. Interviews can be conducted in person or over the phone. Interviews differ from surveys by the level of structure placed on the interaction. The main advantage of this method is that the researcher can easily adapt the questions as necessary, clarify doubt, and ensure that the responses are properly understood by repeating or rephrasing the questions (Gall et al., 2003). The researcher conducted 4 interviews with head of each administrative department of BZU. The researcher tried to make each interview similar to a conversation, the questions centered on identification of factors, benefits, challenges and barriers in such a way as to try to get different factors from different point of views as possible. Results gained from the focus group were discussed with managers in order to validate results, specially the core competencies. (see appendix I and II for focus group discussed points and interview questions)

A questionnaire was designed to evaluate the existing system. The questionnaire usually consists of a set of questions presented to a respondent for answers. The respondents read the questions, interpret what is expected and then wrote down the answers themselves. It is called an Interview Schedule when the researcher asks the

questions (and if necessary, explains them) and records the respondent's reply on the interview schedule. Questionnaires are very flexible because there are many ways to ask questions (Kumar, 2005). Data gathered through focus group and interviews was used to construct the questionnaire, this questionnaire was distributed to all administrative employees (55 questionnaires) of the main four administrative departments of BZU. It consisted of demographic questions, Likert-scale questions and Yes or No questions.

4.8. Validity and Reliability

Validity means that correct procedures have been applied to find answers to a question. (Dawson, 2002). Trustworthiness and validity are the two terms that researchers use to describe how qualitative methodologies establish confidence in their research (Jones et al., 2006).

To assure validity the researcher relied on multiple sources of data and multiple methods to gather data (Triangulation method). The questionnaire was evaluated by the researcher's supervisor and thesis committee defense members in order to receive expert approval on the content and construction of the questionnaire. Then it was translated into Arabic since it will be distributed to Arab respondents. Once the questionnaire was constructed, the researcher did a pilot testing in order to test if it is obtaining the results the researcher requires and to correct any vague questions to make it clear. Piloting the questionnaire was done by asking people to read it and see if any ambiguities exist or other points were overlooked by the researcher. The respondents

were also asked to comment about the length, structure and wording of the questionnaire. The researcher also explained to the interviewees and focus group participants what the Competency-Based HR system is, and its benefits.

Reliability refers to the quality of a measurement procedure that provides repeatability and accuracy (Dawson, 2002). Reliability is a psychometric characteristic necessary for validity and concerns the extent to which a measuring procedure, such as a survey instrument, yields the same results on repeated occasions (Carmines & Zeller, 1979).

The most popular test of consistency reliability is the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The closer the Cronbach's alpha gets to 1.0, the best and the higher the internal consistency of a dimension. In general, values between 0.7 and 0.8 are considered accepted, while less than 0.7 are considered poor, and values higher than 0.8 are considered satisfactory (Creswell, 2012). Therefore, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated for each item in the questionnaire and it was greater than 0.7 for all items.

4.9. Limitations of the study

One main limitation in any research is the reliability of the instruments used, but in this case the researcher used the triangulation methods to validate his data. Furthermore, the questionnaire, focus group and interview questions were given to people who have enough expertise in human resource management. One limitation was that the sample didn't represent all administrative employees in BZU. The researcher focused on the employees of the main administrative departments. Another limitation is emphasizing

four major HRM functions and excluding other functions which may benefit from a competency based system such as HR planning, health and safety and other functions. Moreover, this research didn't try to identify the level of importance for each competency at a job level but rather determine the core needed competencies. This study didn't provide a competency model to be used by Birzeit University; however it formulated a road map for Birzeit University to construct its competency-based HR model. Despite these limitations, the researcher was able to get adequate representative data of the outcomes of the study.

4.10. Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the research setting and methodology and highlighted the importance of using the triangulation method in this study. It also illustrated the data gathering procedures. The analysis stage is significant in order to draw a meaningful conclusion. Chapter five highlights the semi-structured interviews and focus groups findings, comparing these findings with those revealed from the survey questionnaire.

Chapter Five

Findings and Discussion

Introduction

The analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaires, focus group and semi-structured interviews was carried out in terms of research questions posed in the first chapter of this research. The researcher tried to identify the weaknesses of the current human resource system functions and to determine how the competency system would improve these functions. The researcher also tried to reveal the benefits of applying such system and to determine the success factors besides the barriers facing its implementation. Finally the researcher tried to show the main core competencies which should exist among all administrative employees of BZU.

5.1. Sample Characteristics

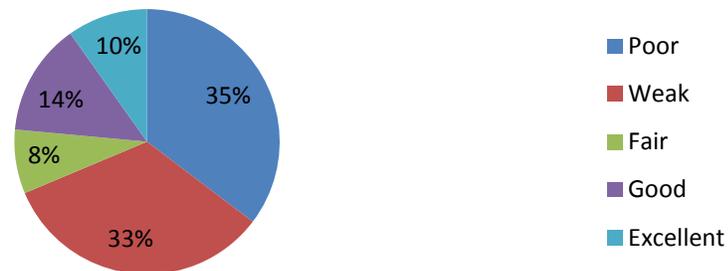
Employees who responded to the questionnaires, focus group and semi-structured interviews ranged in age from 19-55 years. More than half (51%) had earned bachelor's degrees, 27% masters degree and 22% diplomas. 53% of the sample was females and the rest (47%) were males. The majority indicated that they worked in the finance department (33%), 31% in registration office, 20% in the computer center and 16% in HR department.

5.2. HR Department Role

68.6% of questionnaire respondents described HR department's performance as weak (illustrated in Figure 5.1) which indicates how weak the current system is. Attendees of focus group had approved that one of the main reasons behind the weak performance of the human resources department is the university's philosophy which concentrates on attention, priorities, privileges and resources to the academic side; while neglecting and overlooking the administrative side taking into consideration that the university first and foremost is an academic institution. This trend has been addressed by many authors, as it focuses on operational, day to day delivery of their practices (Ulrich, Brockbank, & Yeung, 1989). This philosophy has badly affected not only the HR department's performance, but also other administrative units; in which it has also negatively affected recruitment, training, motivation and development of employees. Zwell (2000) also considers the HR department as a drain on the firm's resources and not as a contributor to the firm's performance if not managed strategically.

69% of the respondents are dissatisfied by the way the university is managed and how they deal with administrative employees within the main four administrative departments.

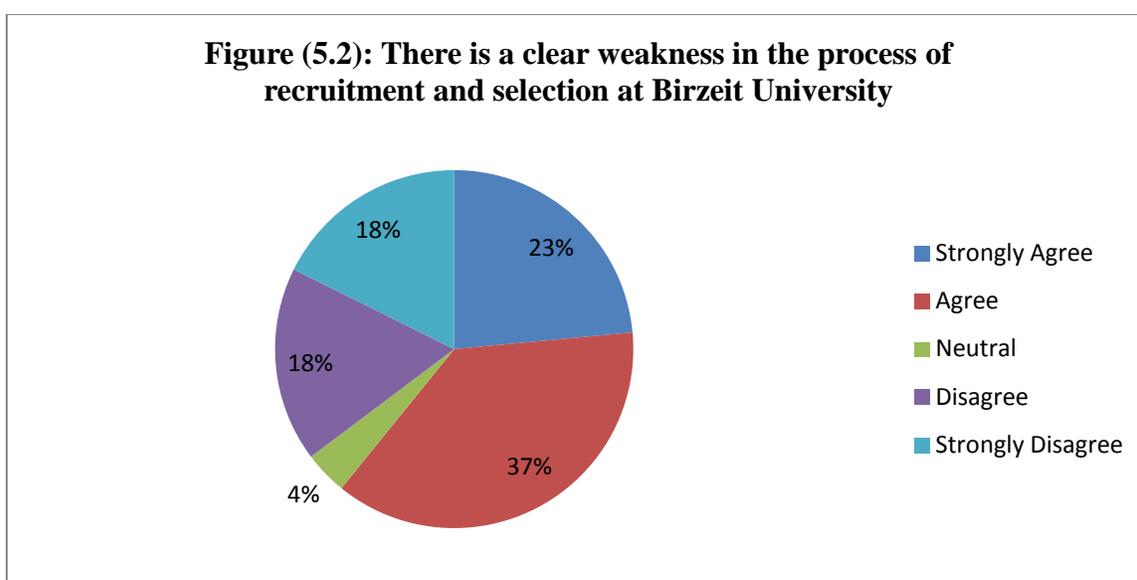
Figure (5.1): In general, how do you evaluate the performance of the Human Resources Department towards employees



Attendees of the focus group session approve that the human resource department is suffering from weaknesses in its main four duties. Directors of the administrative departments which have expressed their views through the semi structured interviews evaluated HRM currently used by Birzeit University as weak and it facing many problems. The attendees also confirm that the existing job-based HR management system is old and is highly dependent on outdated regulations that were put forward 30 years ago and which are no longer suitable for the time being. HR professionals in strategic management are expected to play a greater role than the management of talent, employee relations, communication of information, compensation, and benefits (Wheelen & Hunger, 2004). As a result HR department must adopt a new approach of communication that can quickly reach employees in various locations and which can also allow employees to interact with their HR professionals in order to establish an immediate feedback loop.

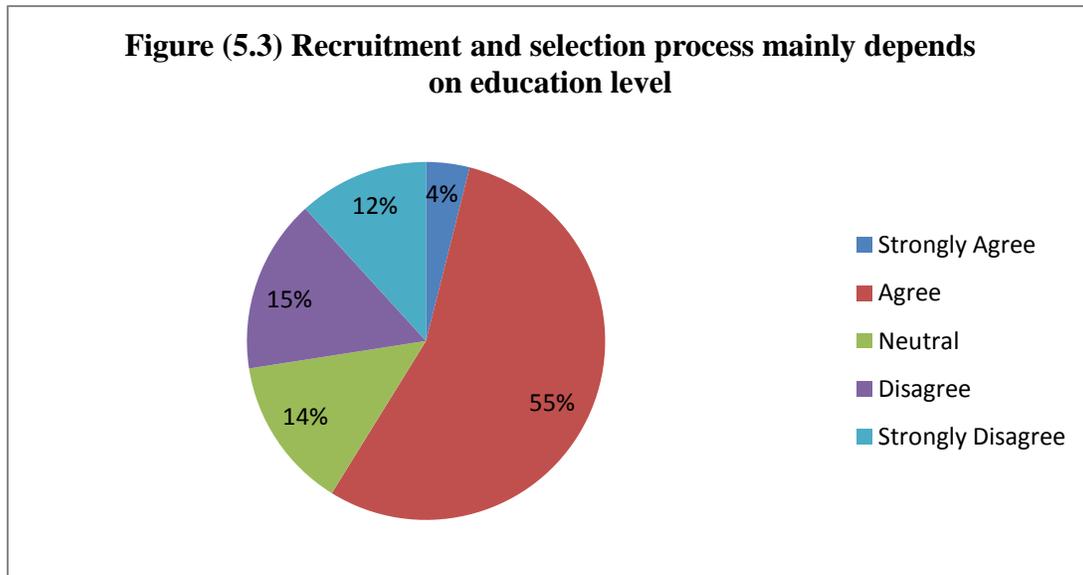
5.3. Recruitment and Selection

Starting with the recruitment and selection process, attendees of the focus group think that, neither the mechanism of the process is clear nor the duties of the employees. And this usually has a negative affect on the evaluation of the applicants and the equality of choosing among them. Figure 5.2 illustrates that 60% from the respondents of the questionnaire agreed about the weakness of recruitment and selection process.



The acting director of the finance department sees that one of the most prominent weaknesses is the recruitment and selection process. She believes that relying primarily on the education of applicants assessment does not lead to the selection of the perfect employee for Birzeit University. In contrast, competency models ensure hiring new employees by using assessments and other selection procedures that measure the competencies (Bartram, 2005; Lawler, 1994). Dubois et al. (2004) assert that competency-based recruitment and selection moves away from qualifications and assumptions that qualifications equal ability to perform, to a focus on decisions based

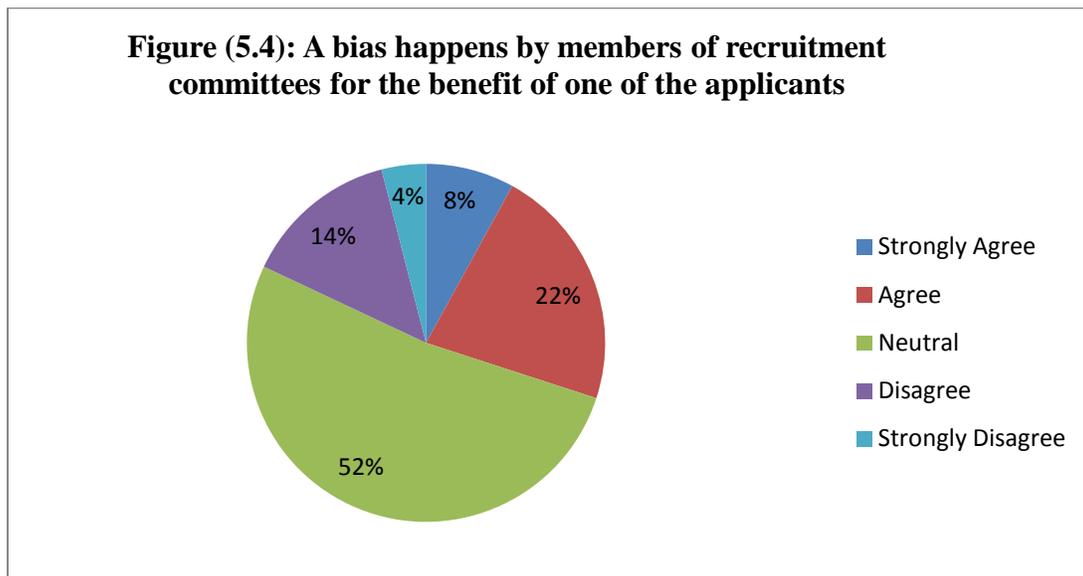
on competency models for the organization that define the knowledge, skills, and attributes of high performers. The same result reached through questionnaire where 59% of respondents agreed that recruitment and selection process depends on educational level, as illustrated in Figure (5.3).



The acting finance director also believes that there is a significant impact of some personal relationships in the recruitment process and this was affirmed by all of those interviewed, including the director of human resource department who explained that there is a kind of (non-cooperation) from some directors in the recruitment process and immoral interventions in favor of some applicants. This affects fulfilling Birzeit's slogan EEO "Equal Employment Opportunity" to all applicants. The director of the computer center and technical support also complained from personal relationships which may interfere to prefer one applicant over others. He also stated that there are no clear criteria for the selection process and for short listing applicants for interviews;

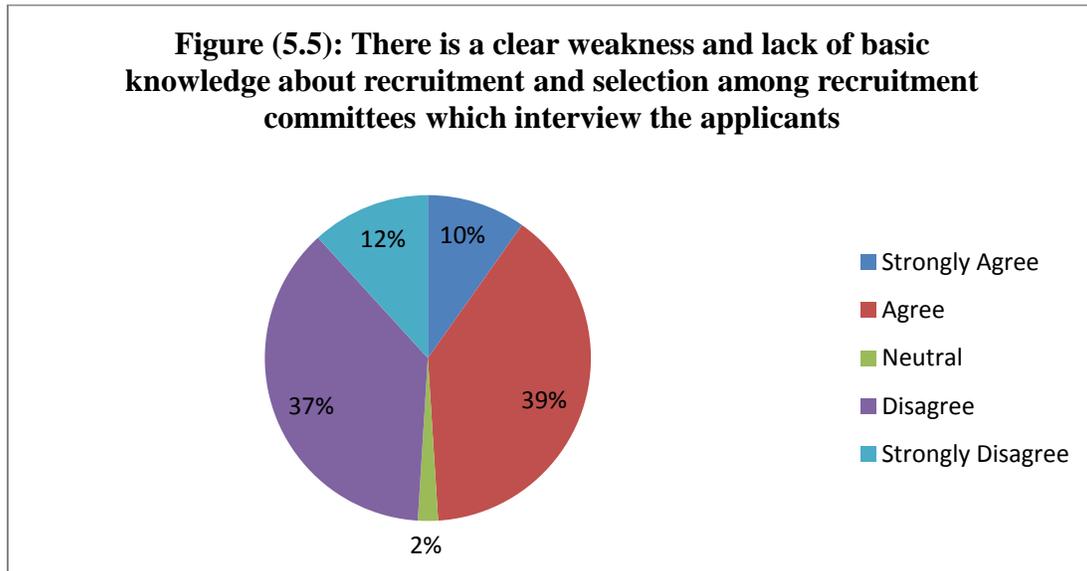
also there are no clear criteria for measuring and evaluating the applicants during the interview.

Figure (5.4) demonstrates that 30% of questionnaire respondents have the same opinion regarding this issue, even 52% of the respondents were neutral as shown below.



Through their evaluation of the current situation, the directors of the administrative departments believe that there are weaknesses in the selection of the interviews committees. There is no unified committee in order to interview applicants for all administrative jobs, but there are committees which usually consist of one or two interviewers from the human resource department who have the sufficient knowledge about conducting interviews. However, this committee must include two or three persons from the department that intends to employ, and who are not familiar with the methods of interviewing and the selection of staff, yet they have a significant impact on the selection process. This weakness is also confirmed by questionnaire respondents;

almost 50% of the respondents agreed the lack of basic knowledge about recruitment and selection among interviews committee's members, and this is illustrated in Figure 5.5.



The director of the human resource department says that there was an attempt to make a unified interview committee which consists of trained and highly qualified employees for selecting the most qualified applicant for all jobs to be filled at the university, but there was an opposition from senior management and many of the directors of certain departments and institutes.

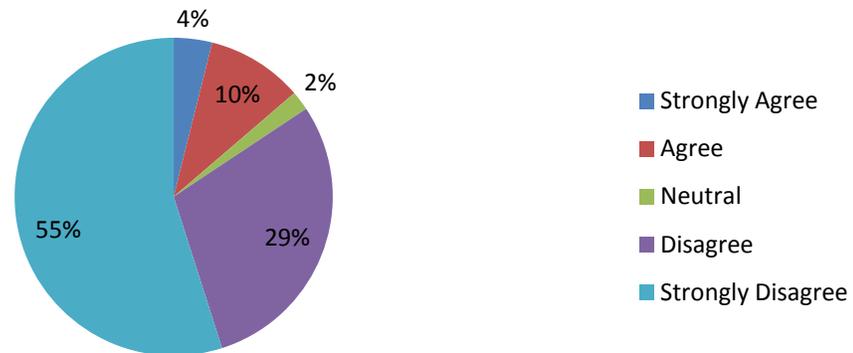
Moreover, about 68% of the questionnaire respondents didn't think that the interview plays a key role in the detection of suitability of the applicant for the job. 64% of the respondents also denied that job interview contains a variety of questions which reveal the behaviors and competencies of each applicant. On the other hand about 50% agreed that the E-careers system has improved the efficiency of recruitment and selection process through reaching a wider pool of potential employees by building its own data

base, and many qualified people from abroad can apply to BZU via e-careers very easily. Through this method BZU receives many qualified applications and does not depend only on the availability of qualified people in the local market. The E-careers system makes it better and faster screening for both the academic and administrative staff, saving lot of time, cost and effort. While a competency-based recruitment has an important role in attracting individuals who possess skills, capabilities, and behaviors that might be difficult to develop by training or development efforts, and provides insight into whether or not a new hire will be a good fit with the organization's culture (Garrett, 2007; Guinn, 1998).

5.4. Training and Development

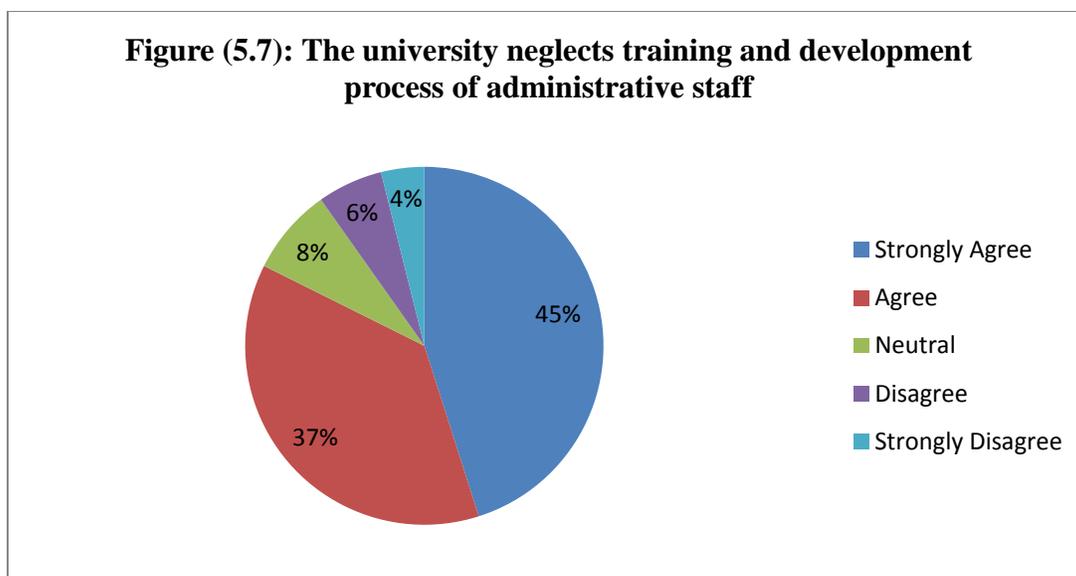
The changing environment makes training programs that are initiated by HR professionals to be more important. A wide range of literature asserted that training and development are critical to the success of any institution (Dubois, et al. 2004; Lawler, 1993; Lepsinger, 1999). Through the semi-structured interviews directors described the process of training and developing the administrative staff as a poor and weak process. Figures 5.6, 5.7 shows that almost 85% of questionnaire respondents think that BZU administration ignores training and development process for administrative employees. Focus group attendees assured that the development and training of employees is a neglected issue at Birzeit University compared to faculty members. On the other hand if there are any training courses it is usually directed toward a specified category with no specialization and usually funded by external organizations. Nevertheless Spencer & Spencer (1993) describe training as the most cost-effective way to secure employee abilities, knowledge and skills.

Figure (5.6): I think there is an interest in the training and development process for administrative employees at Birzeit University



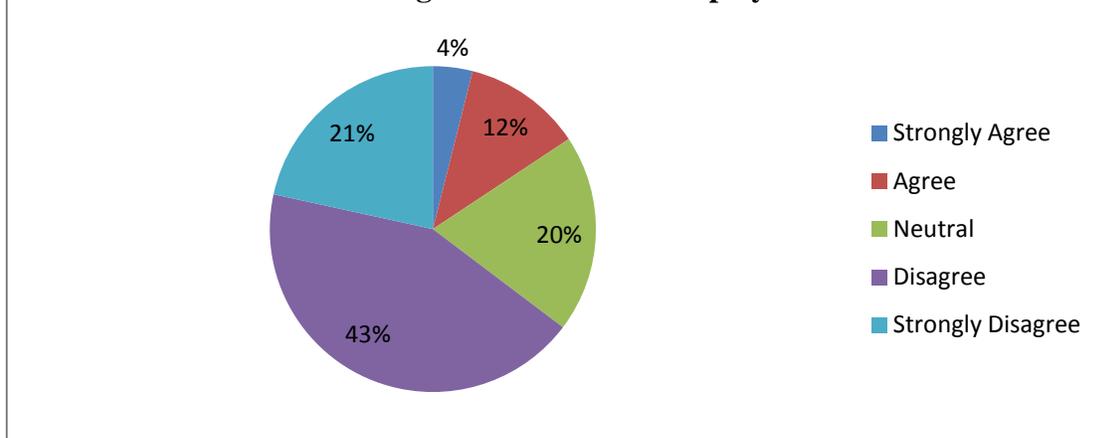
The training supervisor at the HR department confirmed that the development and training budget for all administrative departments never exceeds 3000 JD annually (8 JD's / Employee). Black (2010) mentioned that the annual training and development expenditure per employee in the U.S companies is \$955 on average. Mondy (2010) estimated an average annual expenditure of \$1040 per employee in the U.S. Khalil (2007) reported that the British public sector annual expenditure on training and development was £414.43 per employee. Muna and Khoury (2012) estimated the annual training and development annual expenditure in private sector in Palestine by \$107-\$178 per employee. This illustrates the weakness of training and development in BZU and proves that university administration doesn't pay much attention to administrative employees training.

Figure (5.7): The university neglects training and development process of administrative staff



Moreover, all the attendees of the focus group session had shown resentment regarding this issue and assured that their directors recommend training courses for them on an annual basis, but they had never been trained. According to the assistant director of the registration and admission department, it is attributed to the lack of a clear vision of the need to train (weak need assessment). Organizations usually try to increase their capabilities by investing more in training and development, Ichniowski et al. (1996) stated that HRM practices have a greater effect on organizational performance than on individual performance. While at BZU directors claim that they always ask for training courses each year for their employees through the annual performance evaluation but usually they get nothing. Figure 5.8 shows the same result confirmed by the questionnaire respondents.

Figure (5.8): The university responds to the recommendations provided by the direct managers whenever they request training courses for their employees

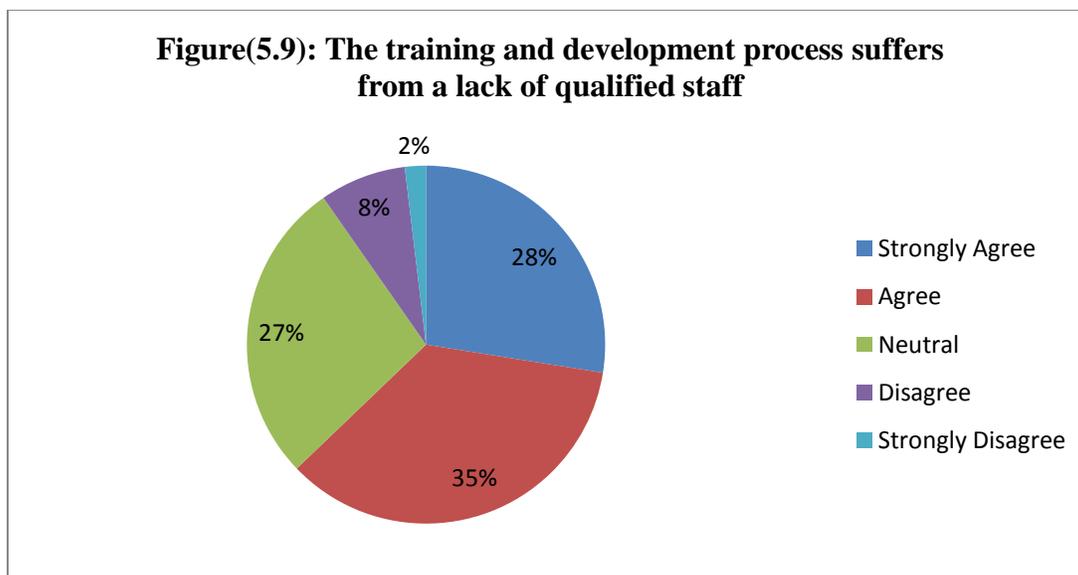


Results from questionnaire respondents were so close to those gained by the focus group and the structured interviews. Respondents' asserted that university administration is focusing on the development of academic human resources while ignoring the training and development of administrative staff. This was clearly evident in the opinion of the assistant director of registration department, who attributed the reason to the philosophy and policy of the university which is based on that "it is primarily an academic institution" and thus the administrative departments are marginalized. The top priorities for HR is to prove its strategic value in the near future where training staff on business and financial skills and redesigning HR business processes.

The director of the human resources department and the acting director of the finance department and the majority of questionnaire respondents agreed that there isn't enough staff to manage a comprehensive training process and annual follow-up throughout the year. There is a lack of training evaluation and measurement of the benefits of training for those who receive training, in addition to lack of knowledge on

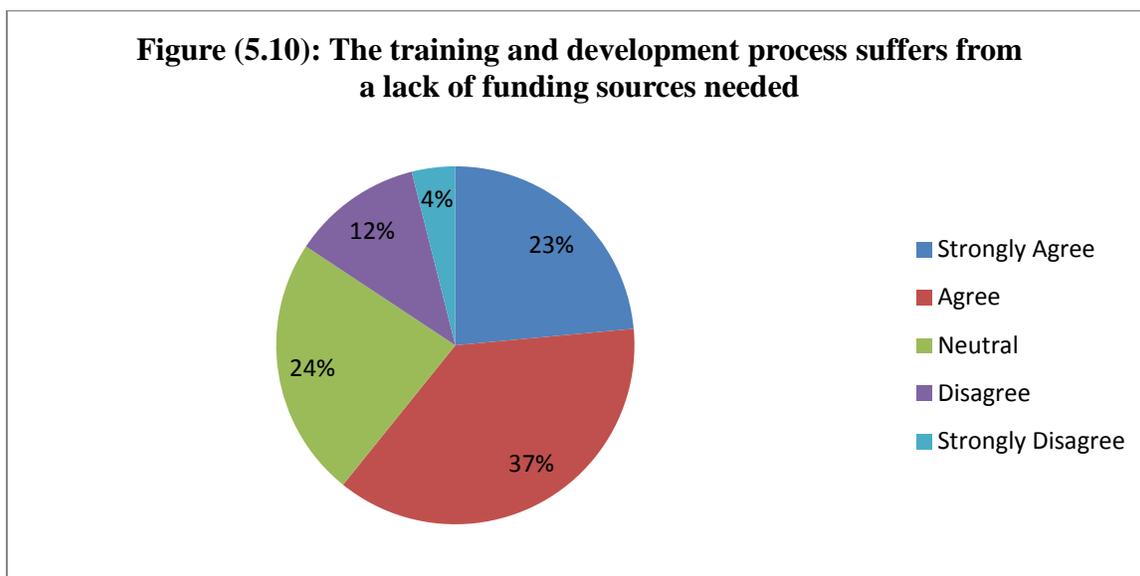
how to transfer the expertise to other staff. Ivancevich (2003) says that training is the systematic process of altering the behavior of employees in a direction that would achieve organization goals. Training is an effective approach in developing an individual's competencies and BZU is ignoring this approach. This needs a relatively large number of qualified employees and relatively larger financial resources, which are not provided by Birzeit university, especially now in light of the difficult financial situation.

A likely reason for HR's obvious disengagement from training courses was that it had no control over training budgets and operational strategies. Figures 5.9, 5.10 depicts the lack of fund and qualified staff for training and development process.



Furthermore, the director of the computer center sees that the process of training and development must be based on an in-depth study by the direct manager of the employees at any department. He/she is expected to be very familiar with the nature of the work of his/her staff and the courses needed to develop his/her employees and invest in them, where the benefit will be reflected on the output of the employees in

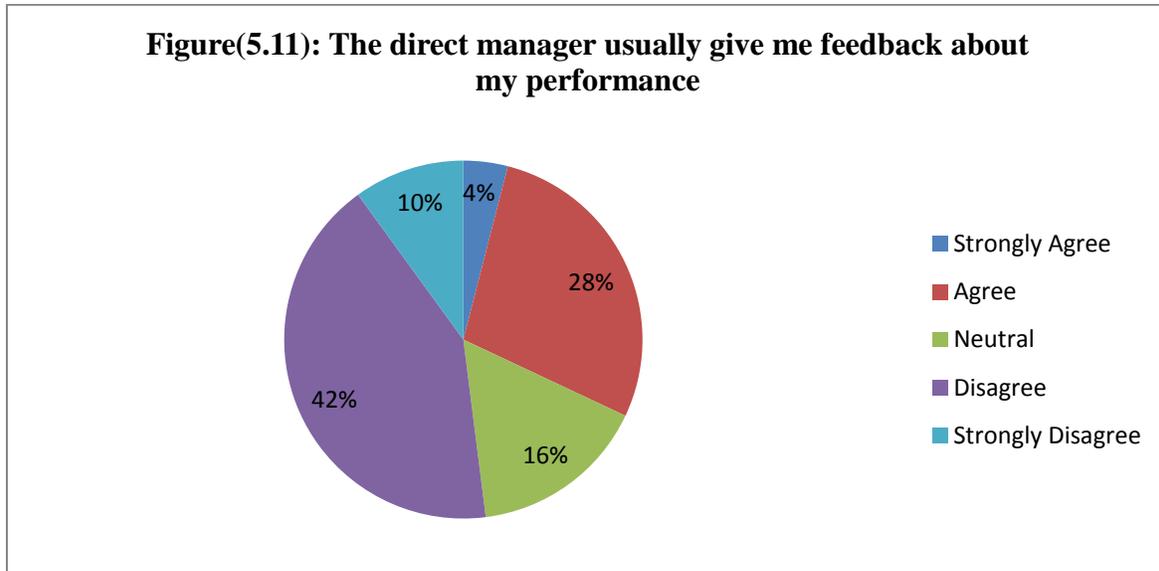
particular and on the university in general. He also believes that the problem is not related to financial resources, and this issue could be solved by guiding the staff to use the internet and free material on the web to study theoretically the issues that we want employee to develop, and this way of training will reduce the cost of the courses. However this may work for the computer center but not for all administrative departments.



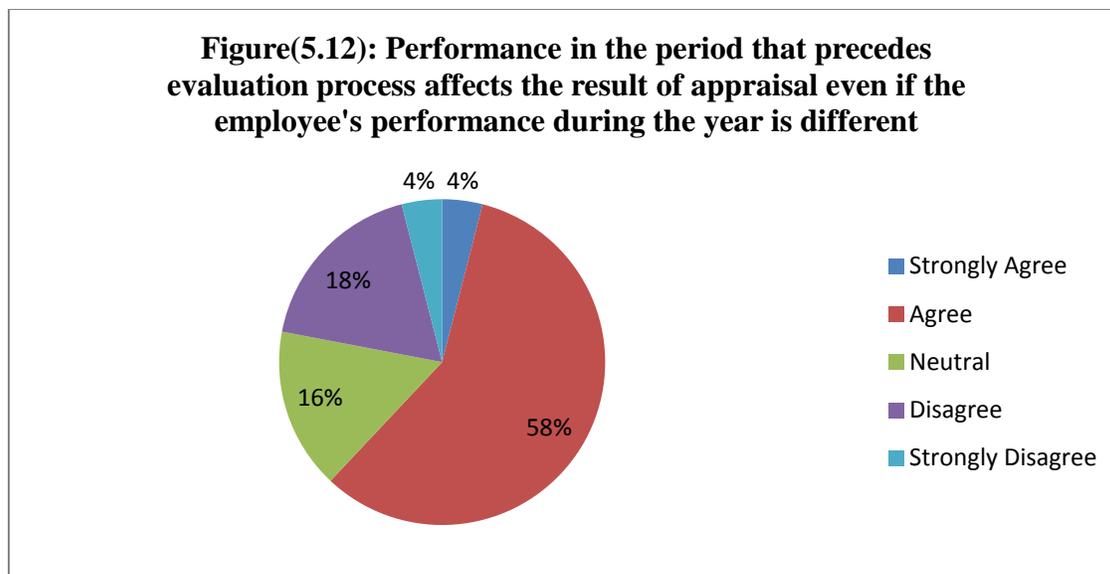
5.5. Performance Appraisal

Gurbuz & Dikmenli (2007) describe that various applications of performance appraisals have left many managers in a state of confusion and frustration with the employee evaluation process. Focus group attendees and directors (through interviews) have seen that this process at BZU suffers from several problems that need to be changed. One of the issues that were highlighted is that the evaluation process is implemented once a year and this affects the credibility of the performance evaluation process. The same issue was brought to light by questionnaire respondents as 90% of

them said that it happens just once a year. Nevertheless, almost 60% said that they never got feedback during the year, this illustrated in the figure below, figure (5.11).

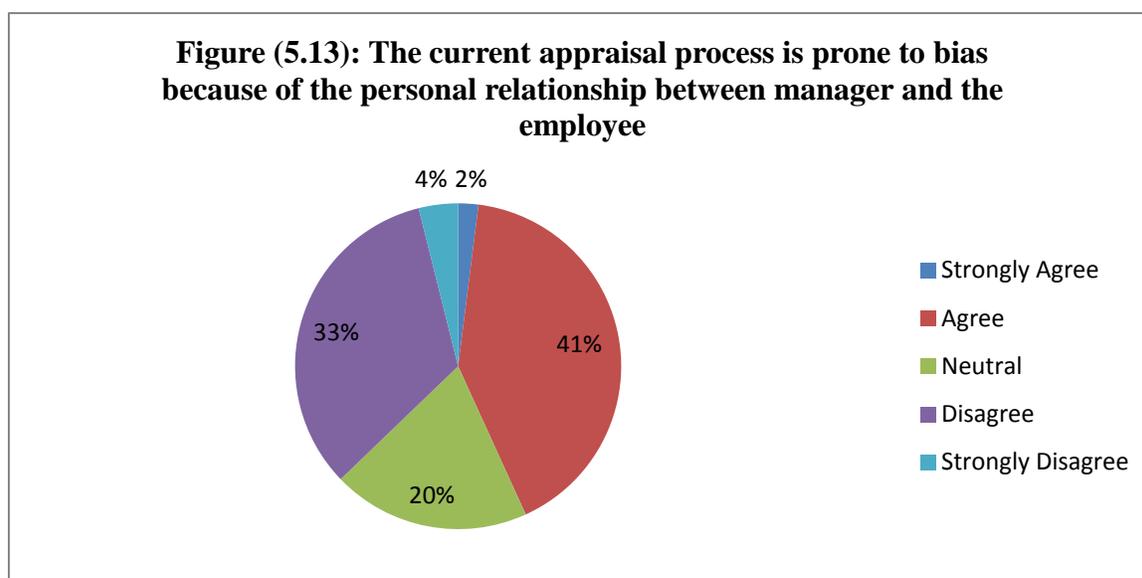


Focus group attendees mentioned that the process of performance evaluation is likely (and this happens quite frequently) reflected in the last period of the year (Recency effect) (Dessler, 2011). Performance appraisal in a job-based system concentrates much on assessing past behaviors of employees (Bersin, 2008). Figure 5.12 illustrates the agreement of 62% of administrative employees at BZU that employees' performance during the period which precedes the evaluation process usually affects the result of performance appraisal.



Also the participants of focus group and directors of the four departments agreed that the evaluation points basically depends on the job description and no significant weight is given to competencies and behavioral skills which must be available in the employee. Thus, in some cases employees are evaluated on job descriptions that do not contain what they are actually doing, because these job descriptions are not updated according to the current demands of the position. The assistant director of the registration and admission department and the acting director of the finance department mentioned that the problem of performance evaluation is that it usually depends on the employee's personal relationship with the director which is reflected on his incentives and rewards and therefore there won't be an objective evaluation. If the director shows that he/she's not satisfied (for personal reasons) from the employee under his supervision, this may leave employees feeling frustration. This was consistent with the results of questionnaire respondents described in figure 5.13 in which 43% of the employees agreed that the current appraisal system is prone to a bias and personal relationship. In such situation the use of job-based system leads some managers to

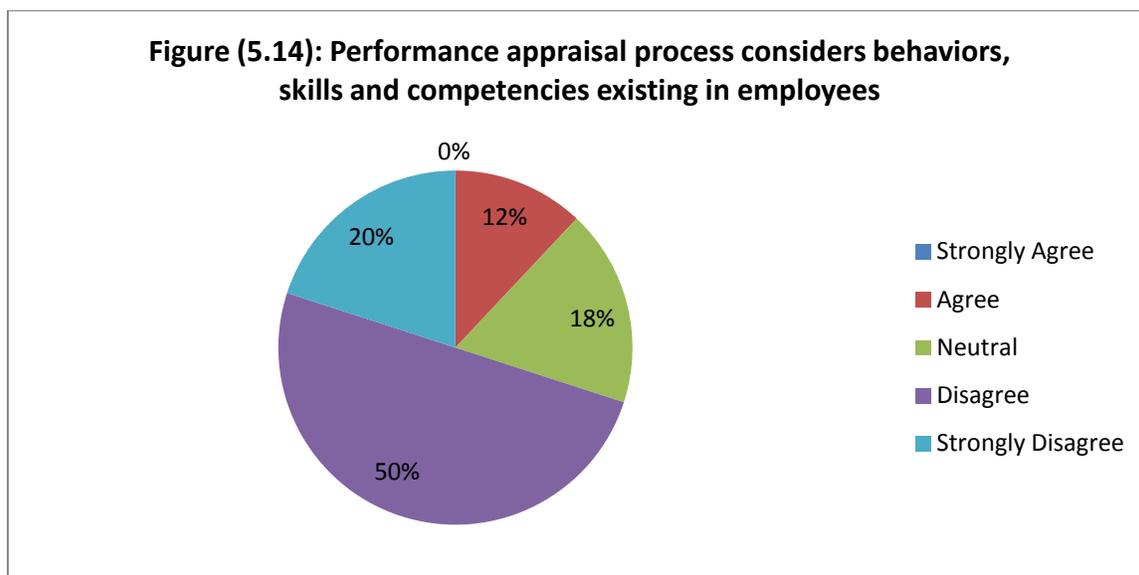
victimize unfavoured employees (Bersin, 2008). One of the miserable issues that all the attendees of focus group agreed on is the evaluation, reward and promotion system which is highly linked to personal matters, and depends highly on the relationship between the employee and the director.



For instance, during the previous evaluation “an employee was evaluated based on an outdated job description, and this was the fault of the human resources department especially because the problem is not solved yet” as articulated by the registration assistant director. Human resource department director sees that the main weaknesses in the evaluation are due to not filling the evaluation form objectively by the directors of departments. No discussions are held between directors and the staff about their evaluation. Although this procedure and the evaluation instructions are generalized by the HRD, consequently, the evaluation is often a courtesy between the director and the employee.

Respondents of questionnaire asserted that the current performance appraisal didn't consider the behaviors and skills of employees. Performance appraisal instrument sometimes didn't include skills and jobs mentioned in the job description, so that he/she is evaluated based on criteria that are not specified in the job description.

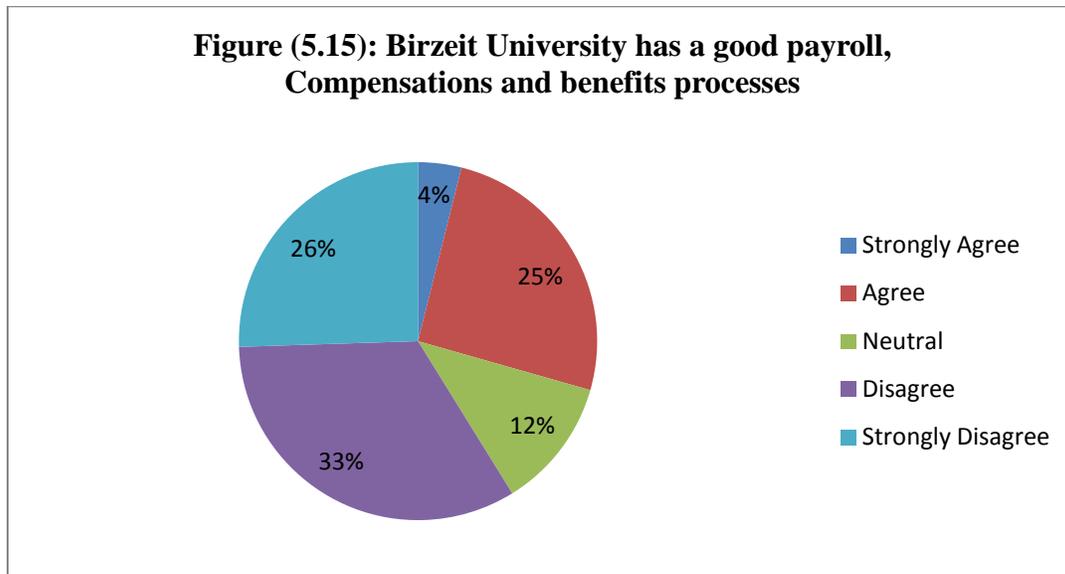
The focus group attendees had the same opinion as they said that the current appraisal system gives a weight of only 10-20 % for behavioral skills of the appraisal form points. Figure 5.14 illustrates employee's views about performance appraisal and behavior, skills and competencies weights in it.



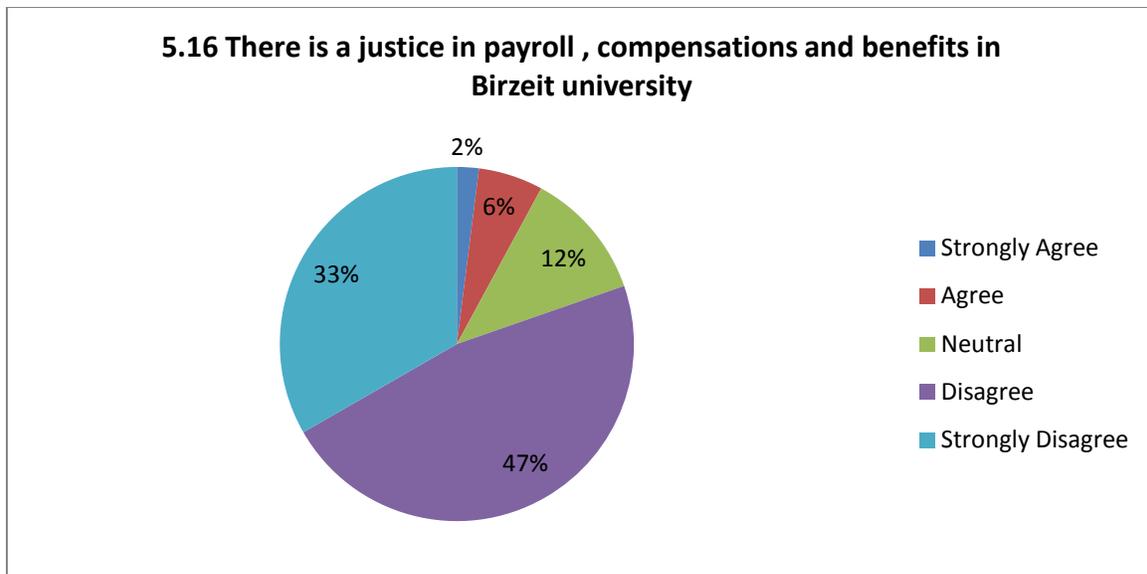
5.6. Compensations and Benefits

Compensation and benefits are one of the most important functions in the HR department because it has been an extremely important issue for both the employer and the employees, as money is directly or indirectly related to the fulfillment of most human needs. For BZU 59% of questionnaire respondents disagreed that BZU has a

good payroll, compensation and benefits system. Figure 5.15 exemplifies their answers on that question.



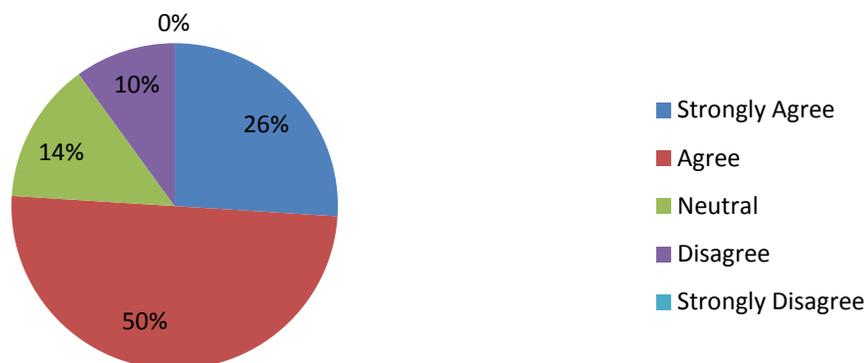
When assessing compensation and salaries, directors believe that there is clear injustice in employee's motivation, rewards, benefits and salaries which primarily depend on the performance evaluation process that is directly controlled by the direct supervisor; its basis was mentioned earlier. McLagan (1997) confirmed that employees need to have a clear understanding of how they will be evaluated, by whom and how. The attendees of focus group had also discussed the current motivation and reward system and all approved that the current one is very poor and equalizes between distinctive and ordinary employees. This was also approved by the respondents of questionnaires illustrated in figure 5.16.



This equalization is pulling the distinctive employees down, causing depression, and affecting their performance and loyalty to work. To have a successful compensation system there must be consistency (McLagan, 1997). Why work extra hours? Why make extra effort? Why is there no fairness? Why is my work not appreciated? All these questions are usually raised by hard working employees. And these “whys” are preventing the employee from doing a good quality work.

As though there was a consensus from all the directors and employees that the most important weakness is the implementation of the “Unified Cadre” to all employees regardless of the size and type of work they do. This leads to frustration for the creative and industrious employees, and keeps them without bonus or reward for good performance. Thus, feeling that they are treated and rewarded as other careless employees just because the university is restricted by the “Unified Cadre”. Figure 5.17 describes these results while more than 76% of them agree with this.

Figure (5.17): The united Cadre is supposed to be a weakness in the compensation process as it equalizes between normal and industrious employees



The director of the human resource department finds that the incentive plan adopted by the university is not fair and leads to the frustration of the staff in the administrative departments because it's customized only to staff working at the institutes, centers, and to those working on projects. He also said that the incentive plan states that incentives should be paid only to those working on projects or under any outsourced fund and not by the university. This affects the hard-working employees at the administrative departments especially when they see there is no plan to motivate them. And this was so obvious in figure 5.18 below; almost 75% of the respondents believe that there is no incentive plan for them.

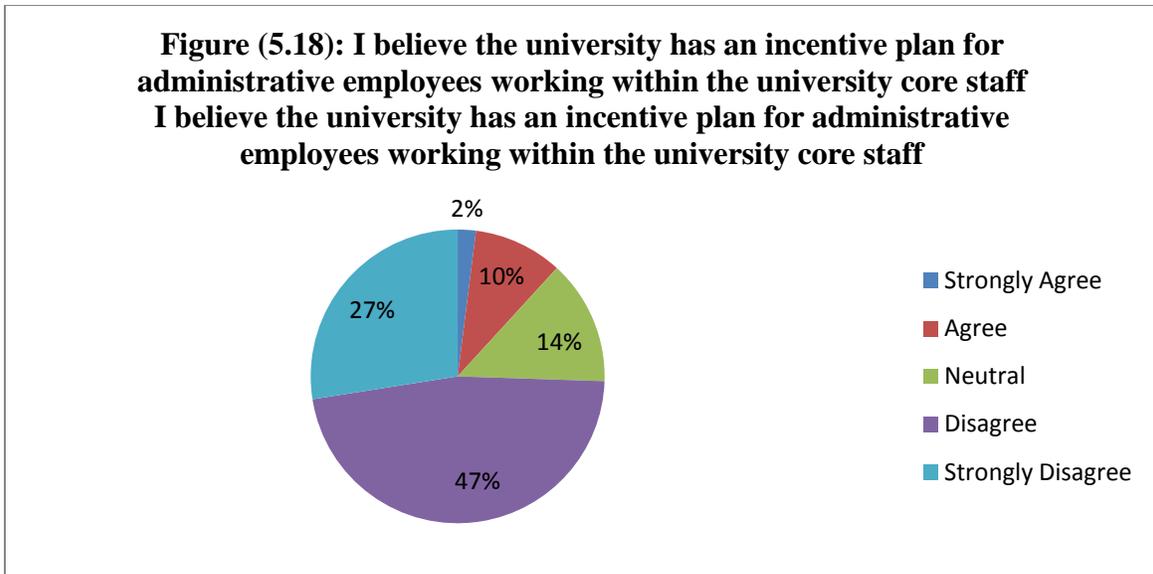
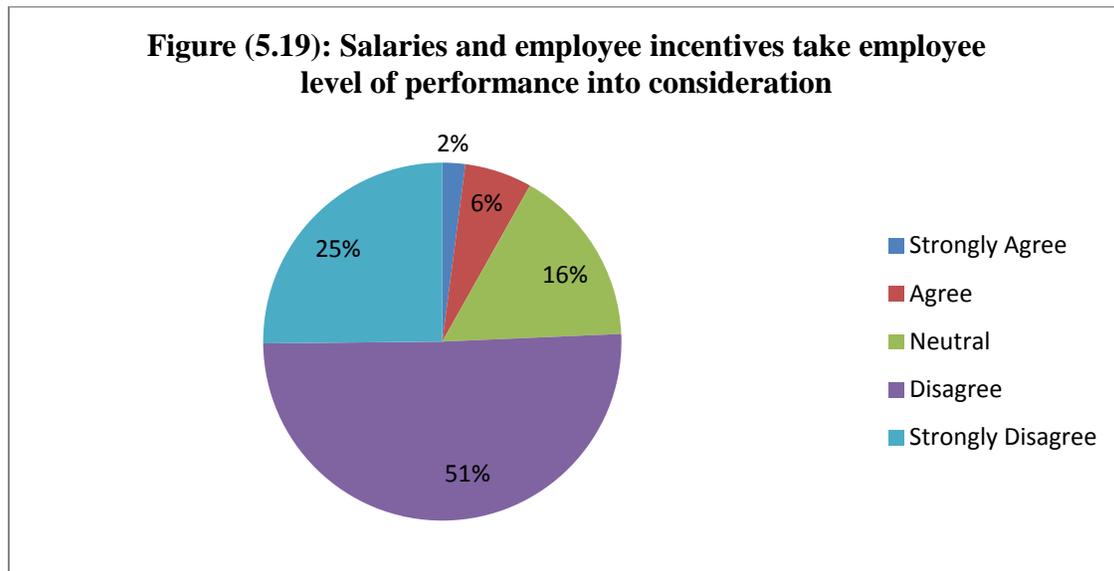


Figure 5.19 illustrates that 76% of the respondents think that salaries and incentives do not depend on performance and are also connected to the unified cadre.



It was clear that all respondents were not satisfied with the university's policies and practices toward the administrative employees. They have a strong feeling that their job revolves around serving the faculties and students, without any attention given to their needs.

5.7. Needed Core Competencies

Spencer & Spencer (1993) identified five types of competency characteristics which consists of motives, traits, self-concept, knowledge and skills. All four administrative departments' managers who were interviewed agreed on twelve core competencies. According to them, these characteristics must be possessed by all Birzeit University administrative staff. The attendees of focus group session also thought that all employees and applicants should have the same core competencies. The results were very close to what was reached through the focus group discussion and through the questionnaires.

Spencer & Spencer (1993) reviewed competency studies across a variety of jobs to develop a generic competency model that includes 21 competencies in six clusters. The researcher concludes 12 competencies compatible with what Spencer and Spencer mentioned in their study. Birzeit university administrative staff should have oral and written communication skills in order to communicate easily with each other and with other people. They also should have good computer and technological skills so they will be able to work easily on the administrative and financial programs they use all the time. Staff at Birzeit University should be respectful in dealing with each other or with other people and institutions that deal with Birzeit University. It's important for every employee at Birzeit University to possess learning skills in order to develop him/herself and his/her work; administrative employees should also possess listening skills, initiative, and loyalty. Table 5.1 reveals those core competencies as shown below.

Table 5.1**BZU Administrative staff core competencies**

Competency	Acceptance
Computer skills	100%
Communication skills (Oral, Written)	100%
Learning	100%
Respectful	100%
Disciplinary	100%
Listening	100%
Flexibility (Multi tasking)	100%
Creativity	87.5%
Loyalty	75%
Initiative	75%
Analytical thinking	62.5%

The attendees also choose 7 major core competencies which they think managers of administrative departments should have, as follows:

Table 5.2**BZU Managers Core Competencies**

Competency	Acceptance
Managerial competence	100%
Accountability/Responsibility	100%
Fairness and honesty	100%
Decision making and problem solving	100%
Self confidence	100%
Cross functionality	87.5%
Technical knowledge	62.5%

Directors asserted that the competencies mentioned above may differ in the degree of importance to each department, and also there were a small number of important competencies that weren't mentioned, such as competencies for former Birzeit administrative employees. The directors of the human resources and finance departments mentioned that the following competencies should be available in the employees at the HRD:

- A. Industriousness
- B. Teamwork
- C. Accuracy
- D. Problem Solving
- E. Work under pressure

All the competencies mentioned above were found very important to be available to all the employees of that department.

Directors almost agree that there are no differences in the degree of skills by the position in the same department. The director of the computer center emphasized that some positions under his supervision need higher degree of certain skill, such as “writing skills” for some positions which are related to fundraising and who must write project proposals.

5.8. The need for a competency system at BZU

Respondents agreed that there is a need to change the existing system in light of deficiencies of the current system. Thus, benefits maybe gained through applying the competency-based system, especially in the major areas that were investigated in this research

In their answer regarding whether the existing HRMS supports Birzeit University's strategic direction, participants of focus group agreed that the overall system doesn't support the university's vision. It is observed that the actions and policies of senior management reflect a lack of interest in the administrative staff by not giving them all the attention and support needed on the pretext that it's an academic institution. The major reasons for a competency system is to improve employees performance, improve processes associated with recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, payroll and compensations, strengthen current skills and abilities, improve workforce flexibility, support the integration of overall HR strategies

and reduce turnover (Byham & Moyer, 2005; Dubois, 1993; Dubois et al., 2004; Weatherly, 2005).

According to the interviews conducted with directors and focus groups, benefits that motivate Birzeit University to apply Competency-Based were:

1. Raise and develop the performance of staff so that Birzeit employees would be more efficient and with greater quality.
2. Provide training and work on development, based on identifying the real needs assessment through objective evaluation of the employee's work.
3. Upgrade recruitment and selection process of staff in order to raise the quality of the staff.
4. Reduce turnover, which leads to a reduction in the employment cost.
5. Motivate employees and raise the level of belonging and loyalty to the university through the development of compensation, bonuses, salaries and pay on performance policies.
6. Development of skills, competencies, and current capabilities.
7. Support the integration of the main four human resource functions.
8. Improve job satisfaction and employee retention.
9. Increase competition among employees which increases work quality.
10. Achieve justice and bring fairness.
11. Strengthen BZU strategy.
12. Change the role of the HR to a new role as a strategic business unit involved in the formulation and implementation of university's strategies.
13. Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administrative staff.

Respondents agreed on the need to change the perception of the HR department and redefine its role to become more involved in decision-making and to have a strategic role. They also agreed on the acceptance of the new system by the majority of the administrative employees, but for sure there will be a fear from change in the beginning which should be dispelled by human resource department through orientation and through clarifying the benefits that will be gained from applying this system. Directors mentioned that the best way is to administer the new system through a mix of internal staff and outsourced team for the remodeling. Internal members will have the sufficient knowledge about BZU culture and current system problems and so on, and they can outsource some activities if needed. However, to succeed and reach the top management support is highly needed.

5.9. Challenges to a competency-based approach

Respondents mentioned that adopting such a system needs support from the university's top management. It needs to adopt a new policy and in order to increase the interest in improving the administrative staff. This change will lead to an improvement in the performance of employees and increase their degree of satisfaction as supporting units to the academic staff.

However according to the respondents some of the main barriers which face applying the competency-based HRM system are as follows:

- A. Fear from change by employees (resistance)

- B. No clear strategic plan
- C. BZU functional structure
- D. Cost and time
- E. Bureaucratic university systems
- F. Labor law and the unified cadre

5.10. Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher illustrated and discussed the results gained from the three data collection methods adopted in this study. The major weaknesses have been highlighted and therefore the researcher provides the main reasons needed to adopt the competency system in light of the mentioned weaknesses of the current system. The benefits of adopting the competency system were also discussed. At the end of this chapter the potential challenges which BZU may face in adopting and applying the competency-based system were also identified. The next chapter will provide recommendations and practical implications along with recommendations for further research.

Chapter Six

Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the study and summarizes results discussed in previous chapters. This chapter's discussion includes conclusion, recommendations for Birzeit University, and suggestions for further research.

6.1. Conclusion

The research was carried out in order to identify problems of the current HRM system at Birzeit University especially for the administrative departments; and to provide recommendations to solve those problems by applying a competency-based HRM system instead of the traditional HRM system. The researcher tried to identify and describe main core competencies required by employees of the four administrative departments at Birzeit University so that they would become successful now and in the future. Moreover, he discovered the benefits of applying such system and the key success factors for its implementation. Therefore the researcher started his study by reviewing a wide range of previous studies written in the area of competency based human resource management systems. The researcher used three different methods of data collection, he started with a focus group session followed by semi-structured interviews with the directors of the four administrative departments in BZU. Finally,

the researcher validated the data gathered through a survey questionnaire for all administrative employees in the four administrative departments.

It was obvious that Birzeit University suffers from deficiencies in four main HRM functions including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and compensation and rewards. Adopting a competency-based system will help support and improve HRM four major functions. Competency based recruitment and selection process offers the recruitment staff the opportunity to focus less on the educational level and years of experience. As known from previous literature, it plays a major role in attracting candidates who have the characteristics that would be difficult to acquire through training and experience. Competency-based recruitment and selection processes give the HR department an opportunity to plan for developing competencies for new hires.

The use of competency-based training focuses on learning objectives and expected performance outcomes (Rothwell 1996). Competency-based training will allow employees to configure their activities and processes in ways that are most meaningful for them. Through this method, employees will be able to identify and use many learning resources in diverse settings. Competency-based approach will start to focus on all trainings concerning meeting the employees' needs that support successful and creative team performance. Competency-based training requires trainers to make a big shift from only achieving single behavioral objectives to competency acquisition and its application for competent performance.

Through competency-based performance appraisal system, employees' work results will be aligned with the achievement of Birzeit University's strategic objectives. This approach offers BZU the opportunity to identify and develop needed competencies. In line, competency assessment results provide a strong tool for identifying training needs that can be used to plan and deliver employees' training in a targeted manner. The benefits of a competency-based appraisal system are more valuable than financial rewards for employees.

A competency-based compensation and benefits system is one which can satisfy the performance-linked pay in which employees are paid on the basis of their actual performance. The competency based compensation and benefits system should be designed on the basis of employees' capabilities and experiences and by taking into account the market demand for unique skills and experiences.

From the previous chapter and the analysis of the results, it can be concluded that adopting and applying a competency-based HRM system is a very important issue to BZU. Adopting competency system will support Birzeit University's strategic direction, improve employee's performance, improve processes associated with recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, payroll and compensations, strengthen current skills and abilities, improve workforce flexibility, and support the integration of overall HRM strategies. BZU administration should pay attention to its philosophy and should give attention to the priorities, privileges and resources of its administrative employees, just as they do for the academic staff. The Administrative departments are support units for the academic

members and units, thus neglecting them would highly affect the academic member's performance.

6.2. Recommendations and Practical implications

In respect of conclusions mentioned earlier we recommend BZU administration to pay attention to its philosophy and concentrates attention, priorities, privileges and resources to the administrative staff as they do for the academic staff. BZU administration should know that the frustration of administrative employees may reflect on the academic process. To do so Birzeit University in coordination with HR department must have a clear strategic plan before they start applying a competency-based system because this system links the university's strategic goals with HR main four functions without any distinction between administrative employees and academic staff in order to achieve its goals and vision in the future.

Human resource department must update its mission statement to be realistic and consistent with Birzeit University's culture. HRD should pay attention to the gaps between its mission statement and what it is actually providing to employees. Top management in coordination with the HR department must develop and implement a communication strategy to support updating its mission and vision in consistent with BZU strategy. Human resource department must also communicate to employees Birzeit University's mission and vision statements and to inform them of the strategic plan and ask them to work in order to achieve those goals.

Birzeit University needs to allocate time and money to carry out training and development programs for its employees. Individualized competency identification is a good tool to assess needs to employees and therefore attract fund needed to develop administrative employees and to attract trainers and specialists in the field of the required training. BZU must take the recommendations of trainings needs made by the direct managers in the appraisal into considerations because they know exactly what their employees really need. Directors of administrative departments must also be trained to have sufficient knowledge about the main four HR functions and to be able to link between the strategic plan and the way they manage their employees to be consistent with the Birzeit University culture. Competency based training should be consistent with the corporate culture. Building awareness is an important point for HR employees. They should attend workshops, classes, or conferences on competency modeling or invite external consultants. Taking these actions does much to make HR employees as true leaders for human capital

Human Resource department must develop a better communication way in order to communicate with staff and listen to their problems so they can solve their problems and make employees satisfied from their roles. HR department must activate employee's relation function in order to stay close to employees. Birzeit University must review the Unified Cadre agreement with the workers union as it equalizes between the creative employees and the ordinary ones since it is not designed to give credit to the distinctive employees except for very rare cases. Opening of the Cadre

may also play a great role making distinctive employees satisfied and give them a motivation to work harder and be creative.

In addition to the above discussed and detailed conclusions and based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests the following specific recommendations for each HR function:

The staff was not satisfied with the current HRM system and consequently this necessitated attention to improve the deficient areas. HR department could use recommended HR competencies for effective management and facilitation in the four main functions. Human resource department is expected to play a strategic role and should not only focus on operational, day to day tasks.

BZU needs to improve its recruitment and selection function through revising job descriptions, and consider the new competencies mentioned by respondents while determining the level required from each competency for the various positions in each department. While reviewing job descriptions for some jobs within the four administrative departments, the researcher found that some employees are working on something that was never mentioned in their job descriptions. As a result, HR department should start updating the job descriptions of all employees in order to be coherent with what employees are actually doing. HR department should depend less on education for applicant's assessment as it doesn't necessarily lead in hiring the right employee. Human resource department should attempt to make a unified interview

committee, consisting of trained and highly qualified employees for selecting the most qualified applicant for all jobs to be filled at the university.

Birzeit University must be concerned with the development and training of its staff as it's suffering from explicit weakness in this function. HR department must pay more attention on training administrative employees, because it is the most cost-effective way to secure employees' abilities, knowledge and skills. Birzeit University should also provide HR department with financial and human resources to start training employees and develop their performance. Moreover, HR department needs to develop a needs assessment process so as to determine the right training needs for each employee.

Performance appraisal must be done at least twice a year in order to evaluate and reflect employees past and projected performance in the whole period, while taking competencies and behavioral attributes into consideration as well. An important implication is to evaluate employees on what they actually did, make sure to evaluate them based on all the work they do and continuously provide feedback to employees. Employees should be evaluated depending on the updated job descriptions and competencies. For example, the researcher found that some employees were evaluated based on a job description that didn't contain all the tasks they are actually doing, and sometimes they were evaluated based on something they never do but written in their job descriptions.

Fundamental actions should be taken by Birzeit University to review its payroll, benefits and compensation policy through revision of the Unified Cadre agreement with employees union and the ministry of higher education. This would be the first step towards paying employees for their performance. Moreover, Birzeit University's administration should implement a new, unified, effective and fair incentive plan for its administrative employees.

Adopting a competency-based system is expected to support Birzeit University's strategic direction, improve employee's performance, improve processes associated with recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal and payroll and compensations.

6.3. Recommendations for Future Research

This study was able to provide an insight into core competencies and its relationship to BZU performance, however no attempt was made to determine the level needed of each competency by the various positions in each department which can be emphasized in future studies related to implementing competency HRM system. The data gathered in this study and the findings could be expanded through additional research. First, this study focused only on administrative employees. Further research could thus focus on academic employees, so a better understanding of the effects of core competencies on BZU performance may be achieved. Further research could also measure performance before and after adopting a competency-based system, in order to validate the

effectiveness of this system for Birzeit University and its impact on the performance of its administrative and academic employees. Finally, Future research could identify technical competencies for each position in order to have the best employees in each position.

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Appendices

Appendix I

Semi - structured interview questions

- Please identify the competencies you believe are important for BZU administrative employees?
- Please evaluate if the current HR system takes all of them into consideration?
- Do you think the present situation supports BZU strategic direction?
- Do you think your employees need different competencies than other departments? Identify them and identify to which level each competency should exist in your departments?
- Does the level of each competency vary according to each type of job at your department?
- What organizational factors does this system require to succeed if implemented? What are the barriers?
- How do you expect people to behave if such a model is implemented?
- Who should administer the remodeling? Internally or outsourcing?

Appendix II

Focus Group Questions

- In your opinion, what are the most important Core competencies for all BZU administrative employees?
- In your opinion, what are the major weaknesses of current human recourse functions?
- Will BZU gain any benefits from applying a competency-Based system?
- Do you see a competency-based system will improve the service provided by administrative departments?
- What are the challenges will face us in applying the competency-based system.

Appendix III

Questionnaire

Dear Respondent

Regards,

I am an MBA student at Birzeit University conducting a research about “Applying a Competency-Based Human Resource Management System to Administrative Staff at Birzeit University” under the supervision of Dr.Grace Khoury.

I appreciate your time to fill this questionnaire objectively and honestly, which I guarantee that all your responses will be confidential for academic purposes only.

Many thanks for your cooperation

Ali Nakhleh

MBA student

➤ **Demographic Questions**

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age : 19-25 26-30 31 and above

3. Education

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? If currently enrolled, mark the previous grade or highest degree received.

Diploma Bachelor Master and above

4. Duration of employment at the university:

Less than 3 years 3-10 11 and above

5. Duration of employment in current position:

Less than 3 years 3-10 11 and above

7. Department:

Human Resource Finance Computer Center Registration

8. Job title:

Director Assistant to the director Section head Administrative assistant

Accountant Programmer Other _____.

➤ **General questions**

1. Are you aware of the university's strategic plans

Yes No

2. Do you think administrative employees at Birzeit University possess the required competencies that allow the university to reach its objectives

Yes No

3. How satisfied are you with the way of administration during your work period

Very Dissatisfied *Dissatisfied* *Neutral* *Satisfied* *Very Satisfied*

4. Are you engaged in identifying and developing future plans for your department

Never Sometimes Often Always

5. Do you think that your colleagues in the department perform their jobs as they should be

Yes No

6. In general, how do you evaluate the performance of the Human Resources Department towards employees

Poor Weak Fair Good Excellent

7. Did you made a pre-employment qualifications test

Yes No

8. Performance appraisal process happens once a year

Yes No

Please Show your degree of agreement on the following points

#	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	There is a clear weakness in the process of recruitment and selection at Birzeit University					
2	Recruitment and selection process mainly depends on education level					
3	There is a clear weakness and lack of basic knowledge about recruitment and selection among recruitment committees which interview the applicants					
4	A bias happens by members of recruitment committees for the benefit of one of the applicants					
5	E-careers has improved the efficiency of recruitment and selection process					
6	The applicant is subject to pre-employment screening test which reveals the level of his skills and competencies					
7	Interview plays a key role in the detection of suitability of the applicant					
8	Job interview contains a variety of questions which reveal the behaviors and competencies of each applicant					
9	Performance appraisal process at Birzeit University is effective					
10	The direct manager usually give me feedback about my performance					
11	Performance appraisal process considers behaviors, skills and competencies existing in employees					
12	Performance appraisal focuses on job descriptions to evaluate employees					
13	The current appraisal process is prone to bias because of the personal relationship between manager and the employee					
14	Performance in the period that precedes evaluation process affects the result of appraisal even if the employee's performance during the year is different					
15	Sometimes an employee is evaluated on a job description that does not contain all his duties.					
16	I think there is an interest in the training					

#	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	and development process for administrative employees at Birzeit University					
17	Administrative staff managers have a clear vision for the type of courses and training to be provided to their unit employees					
18	The university responds to the recommendations provided by the direct managers whenever they request training courses for their employees					
19	The training and development process suffers from a lack of qualified staff					
20	The training and development process suffers from a lack of funding sources needed					
21	The university neglects training and development process of administrative staff					
22	University administration is focused on the development of academic part, ignoring the training and development of administrative staff					
23	I see that the university focuses on the development of administrative staff regarding in its mission and strategic plans					
24	Birzeit University has a good payroll, Compensations and benefits processes					
25	Salaries and incentives are equivalent with the job description for administrative employees					
26	There is a justice in payroll , compensations and benefits in Birzeit university					
27	Incentives depend on the appraisal process which is affected by personal relationships between the manager and the employee					
28	The united Cadre is supposed to be a weakness in the compensation process as it equalizes between normal and industrious employees					
29	I believe the university has an incentive plan for administrative employees working within the university core staff					

#	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
30	Salaries and employee incentives take employee level of performance into consideration					

- Please indicate which of the following competencies you think administrative employees of Birzeit University should have by putting a rate between (1-5) for its degree of importance beside the YES column. Put (X) in the NO column if you think the competency is not important at all.

#	Competency	Yes	1-5 , 1 means most important	No
1	Computer skills (M.S Office , Administrative and financial programs)			
2	Oral communication skills			
3	Formal writing Skills			
4	Lifelong Learning			
5	Respect and professionalism			
6	Disciplined			
7	Listening skills			
8	Flexibility (adaptation, openness to change and multi tasking)			
9	Creativity (thinking in different ways to do the routine jobs, finding new ways and work methods, devising new or modified work practices)			
10	Loyalty and belonging			
11	Initiative			
12	Analytical thinking and reasoning abilities			
13	Work under pressure			
14	Teamwork			
15	Accuracy			
16	Industriousness (hard working)			
17	Problem Solving			
18	Self confidence			
19	Objectivity			
20	Honesty			
21	Other, specify _____			

- In regards to the current job demands, what suggestions could you provide to amend your job description and specification by adding other needed competencies that are required to perform your job?

Appendix IV

إستبانة

تحية طيبة وبعد ،

انا موظف في دائرة الموارد البشرية في جامعة بيرزيت وفي نفس الوقت أتابع تحصيلي العلمي لشهادة الماجستير في إدارة الأعمال . اقوم حاليا بإعداد رسالة الماجستير بعنوان "اعتماد نظام إدارة الكفاءات كنظام لإدارة الموارد البشرية "الكادر الإداري" في جامعة بيرزيت" بإشراف الدكتورة غريس الخوري.

وأنتني أشكركم وأقدر لكم الوقت والجهد المبذولين في تعبئة هذه الإستبانة بكل مصداقية مع التأكيد على سرية إجاباتكم ، حيث أنها لن تستخدم سوى لأغراض البحث العلمي.

شكراً جزيلاً

علي نخلة

طالب ماجستير

➤ أسئلة ديموغرافية

1. الجنس

 أنثى ذكر

2. العمر

 25-19 30-26 31 او اكثر

3. التحصيل العلمي

ما هي الدرجة العلمية الأعلى التي اتممتها؟ إذا كنت منخرطاً في إكمال درجة علمية معينة، الرجاء تحديد الدرجة العلمية السابقة التي حصلت عليها .

 دبلوم بكالوريوس ماجستير او اعلى

4. مدة العمل في الجامعة

 اقل من 3 سنوات 3-10 11 او اكثر

5. مدة العمل في المنصب الحالي

 اقل من 3 سنوات 3-10 11 أو أكثر

6. الدائرة

 الموارد البشرية الدائرة المالية التسجيل والقبول مركز الحاسوب

7. المسمى الوظيفي

 مدير مساعد مدير رئيس قسم مساعد إداري محاسب سكرتيرة مبرمج

 غير ذلك _____

➤ أسئلة عامة

1. هل أنت مطلع على الخطط الإستراتيجية لجامعة بيرزيت

نعم لا

2. هل تعتقد أن موظفي جامعة بيرزيت الإداريين يمتلكون الكفاءات (المهارات ، السلوكيات) المطلوبة لتحقيق

أهداف الجامعة

نعم لا

3. ما درجة رضاك عن طريقة إدارة الجامعة خلال فترة عملك فيها

غير راضٍ بتاتاً غير راضٍ محايد راضٍ راضٍ تماماً

4. هل يتم إشراكك في تحديد وتطوير الخطط المستقبلية لدائرتك

أبداً أحياناً غالباً دائماً

5. هل تعتقد ان زملائك في الدائرة يقومون بعملهم كما يجب

نعم لا

6. بشكل عام ،كيف تقيم أداء دائرة الموارد البشرية تجاه الموظفين

ضعيف جداً ضعيف مقبول جيد ممتاز

7. هل خضعت لفحص جدارة قبل التوظيف

نعم لا

8. تحدث عملية قياس الأداء في جامعة بيرزيت مرة واحدة خلال العام

نعم لا

➤ الرجاء تحديد درجة موافقتك مع كل من النقاط التالية

#	الجملة	لا اوافق بشدة	لا اوافق	محايد	أوافق	اوافق بشدة
1	هناك ضعف واضح في عملية الإستقطاب والتوظيف في جامعة بيرزيت					
2	يعتمد نظام التوظيف في الجامعة على المستوى الأكاديمي بشكل أساسي					
3	هناك ضعف لدى لجان التوظيف التي تقوم بمقابلة المتقدمين للوظائف لعدم وجود معرفة بأمور أساسية تخص هذه المهمة					
4	يحدث تحيز من قبل اعضاء لجان التوظيف لصالح أحد المتقدمين للوظيفة					
5	لقد حسن نظام التوظيف الإلكتروني من كفاءة عملية التوظيف في الجامعة					
6	يخضع المتقدم لوظيفة لفحص جدارة يكشف عن مستوى مهاراته وسلوكياته وكفائته					
7	تلعب المقابلة الوظيفية في الجامعة دور أساسي في كشف مدى ملائمة المتقدم للوظيفة					
8	تحتوي المقابلة الوظيفية في الجامعة على أسئلة متنوعة تكشف سلوكيات وتصرفات المتقدم للوظيفة					
9	عملية تقييم الأداء في جامعة بيرزيت فعالة					
10	يقوم المسؤول المباشر بتزويدي بتغذية راجعة عن أدائي بين الحين والآخر					
11	تؤثر الفترة التي تسبق التقييم على نتائج تقييم الموظف بشكل عام حتى لو كان أداء الموظف خلال العام مختلفا					
12	أحيانا يتم تقييم الموظف بناءً على وصف وظيفي لا يحتوي جميع المهام التي يقوم بها					
13	تأخذ عملية تقييم الأداء الكثير من السلوكيات والمهارات والكفاءات التي يتمتع بها الموظف بعين الاعتبار					
14	يتم التركيز في عملية تقييم الأداء على تقييم عمل الموظف بمقارنته مع الوصف الوظيفي					
15	عملية التقييم الحالية عرضة للتحيز بسبب العلاقة الشخصية بين المقيم والمُقيم					
16	اعتقد ان هناك اهتمام بعملية تدريب وتطوير الموظف الإداري في جامعة بيرزيت					
17	يوجد رؤية واضحة لدى مدراء الموظفين الإداريين بنوعية الدورات التي يجب توفيرها لموظفيهم					
18	عملية التدريب والتطوير في الجامعة تعاني من عدم توفر كادر مؤهل للتدريب					
19	عملية التدريب والتطوير في الجامعة تعاني من قلة مصادر التمويل اللازمة لذلك					
20	يتم التجاوب مع توصيات المسؤول المباشر بطلب دورات تدريبية معينة لموظفي دائرته					

#	الجملة	لا اوافق بشدة	لا اوافق	محايد	أوافق	اوافق بشدة
21	هناك إهمال لعملية تدريب وتطوير الموظفين الإداريين من قبل إدارة الجامعة					
22	ينصب إهتمام ادارة الجامعة على تطوير الوضع الاكاديمي متجاهلة تدريب وتطوير الموظفين الاداريين					
23	أرى أن الجامعة تركز على تطوير الكادر الاداري في رسالتها وخططها الاستراتيجية					
24	عملية مكافئات وتعويضات (رواتب) الموظفين في جامعة بيرزيت مُرضية					
25	تتكافى الرواتب والحوافز مع الوصف الوظيفي للموظف الاداري					
26	يوجد عدالة في عملية رواتب ومكافئات وحوافز وتعويضات الموظفين الإداريين في جامعة بيرزيت					
27	تعتمد الحوافز على عملية التقييم والتي تتأثر بالعلاقات الشخصية بين المدير والموظف					
28	يعتبر الكادر الموحد نقطة ضعف في عملية الرواتب للموظفين ، حيث يساوي بين الموظف المجتهد والعادي					
29	لدى الجامعة خطة حوافز للموظفين الإداريين العاملين على كادر الجامعة					
30	رواتب وحوافز الموظفين الاداريين تأخذ مستوى أداء الموظف بعين الاعتبار					

➤ الرجاء تحديد أي من هذه الكفاءات التي تعتقد أنها يجب ان تتواجد لدى الموظفين الإداريين في جامعة بيرزيت . الرجاء وضع إشارة (X) تحت نعم إذا كنت تعتقد انه يجب توافر هذه الكفاءة لدى كل الموظفين الإداريين في جامعة بيرزيت مع تحديد درجة أهميتها بجانبها على سلم من 1-5 . ضع (X) تحت لا إذا كنت تعتقد أنه من غير المهم توافرها لدى موظفي الجامعة.

#	الكفاءة	نعم	من 1-5 ، 5 تعني الأكثر أهمية	لا
1	مهارات إستخدام الكمبيوتر (, M.S Office Administrative and financial programs)			
2	مهارات التواصل الشفوي			

لا	من 1-5 ، 5 تعني الأكثر أهمية	نعم	الكفاءة	#
			مهارات الكتابة الرسمية (كتابة التقارير الإدارية والمالية والتواصل بين الموظفين عبر الإيميل)	3
			مهارة الإستماع	4
			قابلية التعلم	5
			الإحترام	6
			الإنضباط	7
			الإبداع (التفكير في طرق مختلفة لأداء المهام الروتينية ،إيجاد أساليب وطرق عمل جديدة)	8
			المرونة (التكيف،الإنفتاح على التغيير وتعدد المهام)	9
			الإنتماء	10
			روح المبادرة	11
			التفكير التحليلي والمنطق	12
			العمل تحت الضغط	13
			العمل ضمن فريق	14
			الدقة في العمل	15
			الإجتهاد في العمل	16
			القدرة على حل المشاكل	17
			الثقة بالنفس	18

#	الكفاءة	نعم	من 1-5 ، 5 تعني الأكثر أهمية	لا
19	الموضوعية (النزاهة)			
20	الصدق			
21	أخرى ، الرجاء التحديد			

➤ بناءً على متطلبات العمل الحالية هل لديك أي اقتراحات لتعديل وصف وتوصيف الوظيفة التي تشغلها عن

طريق إضافة مهارات، جدارات أو سلوكيات تحتاجها للقيام بعملك ؟

Appendix V

المهارات الإدارية وزن القسم 20% (يوزع بالتساوي على الأسئلة)			
الملاحظات	التقييم	السؤال	#
		ينفذ جميع ما يطلب منه دون الحاجة إلى تذكير	1
		يعمل باستمرار على زيادة الفاعلية و الإنتاج	2
		يحسن معاملة الزملاء ويتصرف بلباقة في جميع المواقف	3
		يحدد اولويات العمل وفق جدول زمني	4
		يعمل بشكل فعال مع مسؤوله المباشر	5
		يحقق النتائج بالجهد المناسب	6
		مهارات عالية في استخدام برامج الحاسوب الضرورية في العمل	7
		لديه قدرة عالية على العمل تحت الضغط بفاعليه	8
		يعبر عن آرائه بوضوح تام	9
		يبادر بتحسين طرق العمل باستمرار	10