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Methodology

Introduction

Times have been difficult also for GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, UK, which confronted with the economic recession. The company is a national glazing contractor, operating also as a glass repairer for the insurance and commercial sectors (GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION official website).

GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, part of the Saint - Gobain Group, an international group, activating globally in the construction sector, has been chosen as the case study for the current research, precisely because it is part of an international group which has been affected by the recession. The interest in choosing GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION stays also in the fact that the group that it belongs to develops structured approach to Human Resource Management and accurate programmes for Leadership Development. Moreover, as it has been stated in the " Procedure and Data Collection" section from the previous chapter, the proponent of this research required the participation in the case study from various companies, and this is the company that answered positively, accepting to be part of this study.

Aim and Objectives of the Research

The economic recession generally implies a cost reduction strategy, and as a result of optimizing the costs the nowadays organizations are cutting organizational processes such as trainings, employee development plans or leadership development programmes. However, the current economic downturn imposes challenges for the organizations, because the business world is still highly competitive, despite the recession and this forces

companies to push and optimize their resources in order to cope with the competitive requirements. Therefore, the challenge is to adjust to the current global economically affected business world, by approaching the organizational developmental programmes from a qualitative perspective, adapted to the specificities of the economic crisis.

General Aim

The aim of this research is to investigate how GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, UK is dealing with the economic downturn while seeking to remain competitive, and specifically how it implements its leadership development programmes in this sense. The model employed by this company will be considered as the one adopted in general, by companies with similar characteristics (global company affected by the crisis which still invests in LMP)

Objectives

This research paper proposes to look into how the company was affected by the economic downturn and how it applied the HRM strategies for coping with this situation.

Moreover, the objective is to also evaluate how HRM and leadership development programmes are contributing to the company's plans to reduce the crisis effects, to gain competitiveness and to come back strongly after the crisis.

Hypothesis

Because of the economic downturn companies are creating strategies for optimizing their costs and this has a significant impact on the companies activating in the architecture and construction industry. As GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, UK provides sophisticated architectural solutions for specifier, business or consumer segments, the current economic situation might determine the targeted clients to reconsider their investments (Korotov, 2009), hence invest less in their architectural plans and this might be the cause for which GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION is impacted by the economic crises.

This research paper hypothesizes that despite the economic downturn, the fact that companies are continuing to invest in their people by constantly implementing LMD is helping the companies to redress from the hits suffered because of the economic crisis, as they apply the leadership development programmes to the current economic situation, seeking to adjust its leaders to the needs that the current climate created for the company, becoming like this a catalyst for present survival and future success.

Methodology/Research Design

For testing the hypothesis according to which the LMP are helping the companies to survive the effects of the economic crisis, contributing also to their future success, this research paper uses the case study as the methodology design. This research method should either sustain or disprove the hypothesis of the study, depending on the encountered evidence (Burns, "Research and Teacher Education"; Daniel & Sam, 2011). As such, for

proving the stated hypothesis, the results of the investigation should indicate that the fact that the company is continuing to invest in the HRM programmes, focusing on leadership and management development trainings, (which are, however, customized on the current situation, addressing the economic asperities) contribute to sustaining the company's business performances on these difficult economic times, although the total budgets for this organizational process may be lower than it was previously to the economic crisis. For disproving the hypothesis, the results of the methodology employed should evidence that although the company continues to invest in LMD programmes, its situation is not redressing and shows no sign of having sufficient resources to survive on the market.

As defined by Dul and Hak (2008), the case study is an inquire of a single instance, which represents the case that is destined to be studied, which is to be analysed in a real life context, unlike the experiment that surprises a manipulated analysis, focused on a qualitative approach, unlike the survey methodology that uses statistical data.

Thomas (2011) observes that while the case study methodology focuses on one thing, it does not seek to generalise from it, as a case study is about the particular, focusing on “ how” and “ why” something might have happened. However, Yin (2003) observes that case study is a methodology used by researchers to define broad not narrow topics, to analyse contextual, complex and multivaried aspects and not isolated variations or to base their evidence on multiple, not singular sources.

The case study methodology can be utilized as a single research methodological design or accompanied by other designs when conducting a

research (Yin, 2003; Woodside, 2010) and it has been observed that it works in close relation with another qualitative method, which is the interview (Dul and Hak, 2008). Unlike other research methods, however, the case study is not dependent on the sampling; in other words, associating the case study design with sample is inaccurately, as the case study is a choice, a selection that is vitally significant for the underpinned study (Thomas, 2011).

Referring to the situations when the case study is recommended to be used as a methodological design, Yin (2003) states that the case study is the method of choice when investigating a phenomenon that is not distinguishable from its context.

The case study research method was selected for developing the current research for analysing how the economic crisis that affects the companies' finances influences the firms' decisions regarding investing in LMD, investigating also how companies have adjusted their LMD trainings to the current economic situation. In investigating this, a close attention will be given to how the investigated company chooses to budget its LMD programmes and if the budget for this organizational process has suffered any modifications. Other aspects, such as the content of the LMD training programmes, their focus and objectives are also to be examined within the current dissertation.

This research method is appropriate for the current underpinned research, as it only focuses on a singular actor for predicting similar behaviours of other economic actors that have been affected by the crisis. The case study will be used together with the interview design, just as Dul and Hak (2008) mentioned as being relevant for the study's results.

Practically, the proponent of this dissertation had the opportunity of interviewing the Head of HR in GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, UK. Specifically, after sending the request for investigation to multiple companies, GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION was among the companies that responded positively to the research request. After verifying if the company was eligible with the criteria needed for going into the case analysis (Czaja, 2005) (if the company has suffered as a result of the economic crisis and if, despite the hit it continued its LMD programmes), the study advanced with proposing an interview to GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION's Head of HR. A positive response finalized with a 30 minutes interview with this person, who answered a set of 15 questions regarding the LMD programmes unfolded within the company before and after the economic crisis. At the recommendation of the company's Head of HR, the investigation moved further into interviewing other two persons at GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, respectively the Training Specialist of the UK, Ireland and South Africa delegation of Saint Gobain and one senior executive. With these other two persons, there were also held a 30 minutes interview with each of them.

Besides the interviews, the Head of HR also provided significant data and documents that were useful for the analysis of the company's situation regarding the unfolding of the LMD programmes. Therefore, official data and documentation from GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION represents another secondary methodology (Parasuraman, Grewal & Krishnan, 2007) that adds to the primary research design (the case study), to which there will be added yet another secondary methodology - the investigation of relevant websites,

for retrieving useful information for the analysis of the firm's LMD programmes in the context of the economic depression.

Epistemology

The methodological mix described above is part of an empirical epistemology, aiming to attain knowledge by engaging in procedures that are demonstrable through observation and/or experimentation (“Epistemology”). As Carter and Little (2007) observe, epistemology is employed for guiding methodological choices. Therefore, in the case of the current underpinned research, epistemology, or the need to developing knowledge (about the modalities in which companies are currently dealing with the effects of economic crisis when it comes to sustaining leadership and management development actions), required the case study approach, sustained by the interviews and data analysis as secondary research for attaining knowledge.

Empiric epistemology judges the facts from an objective point of view, generating a reality that is available for everybody in the same way (not interpretable or customized), as a reflection of the scientific processes that are linked to it, which are, by nature, objective, realistic, describing the world in a natural way (Darlaston - Jones, 2007).

Expanding this theory to the current research, it is safe to say that the results of this research, reached through empirical epistemology research (using as procedures for reaching the findings the case study, the interviews and the data analysis) are universally applied to the researched world (the

corporate environment affected by the economic crisis, which impacted the leadership and management development programmes).

Analysis Strengths and Limitations

The case study approach offers a loyal image of what is going on within the examined company and combined with the interviews and the documents and data analysis provided from inside the analysed organization, this research will construct a reliable perspective regarding the approach of a global - player company affected by the economic crisis to its LMD programs, which constitutes the strength of the research.

The method utilized in this research uses the empirical evidence gathered from a single source of investigation, the GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION, aiming to extend the findings to companies that have a similar situation regarding the effects of the economic downturn on their leadership and management development programmes. This is a narrow approach to reality, going from particular to generalizing. From this perspective, the research is limited to the case study herein developed. Another limitation of the study is the small number of interviews (three). Nevertheless, in the context of the current research, this number is representative, because the interviewed persons are viable for the research, being directly involved in the LMD programmes.

Ethics

The main ethical principle in developing a case study is “do no harm” to research participants or to the entire research community employed in the examined case and another significant principles implies knowing the

analysed business subject thoroughly, from secondary research and objectively interpreting the data gathered (Dawes Farquhar, 2012, p. 12). Idealistically speaking, the ethical behaviour (not limited to research field) contributes to protecting individuals and society, minimizing the potential harm and increasing the sum of good for making a “ better place” (Israel & Hay, 2006, p. 2).

In the current developed research paper, the ethics applies to the methodology used (the case study) by accurately using the information retrieved from the interviews and the internal data and documents received from GLASSOLUTIONS INSTALLATION’s Head of HR. This means that the information gathered will be treated professionally and objectively and the data will not be manipulated. As described in the previous chapter, the case study participants will be presented with the aim and objectives of the research and about the confidentiality clause.

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