

Effects of Horizontal Multiskilling of Tradesmen on Employee Performance for the Zimbabwean Manufacturing companies in Harare

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Abstract

One of the key concerns in the manufacturing industry is technical skill acquisition. The present incompetence and poor performance among many tradesmen in their specialized work environment expose them among other factors, the inadequacy in; diversity of knowledge, different practical know-how, diverse skills and approaches. This is against the backdrop that many factors have created uncertain working environments due to rapid changes in technology, economics, globalisation and internationalisation. Consequently, they created an unbalance between staffing and staff skills as well as skills demand. It also significantly increased both under and over staffing costs. However, the use of polyvalent employees who initially had one skill minimizes such mismatches. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of multi-skilling on employee performance for tradesmen in manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. The study adopted a survey research design. The target population was one thousand one hundred and eighty-seven tradesmen from all large manufacturing Zimbabwean companies based in Harare, from which a sample of four hundred was drawn through stratified random sampling technique. Then two hundred and ninety-nine questionnaires were dully filled, returned and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences to facilitate descriptive and inferential analysis of the study variables. Linear regression results indicated that multi-skilling of tradesmen significantly explained employee versatility which intrinsically motivates them to enhancing their performance and consequently organisational performance. Pearson correlation results showed strong positive relationship between horizontal multi-skilling and employee performance. The study concluded that multiskilling plays a significant role in employee performance in the manufacturing sector.

The study recommended manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe to rigorously implement multiskilling training programs for their technical maintenance staff.

Keywords

Multiskilling, Employee Performance, Tradesmen, Specialization, Versatility

1. Introduction

Multiskilling of the maintenance staff in organisations plays a crucial role in adding value to the business. The traditional philosophy in work places, placed great emphasis on specialization which caused tradesmen to become experts in their single fields of trade and made them more efficient on their job performance. This philosophy is coined “minding one’s work” which entails sticking to only those tasks specified in the job description of one trade. However, although specialization in a single trade helped the tradesmen to build their reputations for the expertise in their areas of jurisdiction, it limited their opportunities when that area of specialization became less important to the employer or when it is no longer in demand due to technological changes, digitalization, globalization or any other circumstances for that matter (Kimani et al., 2020). Again, as tradesmen build up experience in their areas of specialty, they became over specialized and proficient in those tasks, but after certain periods of time they became dissatisfied with their work since the tasks are routine and monotonous (Okeyo & Juma, 2021). This would then prompt cases of unplanned employee absenteeism. The extant of literature determined that specialization has become costly (Adindu et al., 2021). However, the philosophy in the contemporary global order especially in the work environments, places more emphasis on multiskilling and this resolved the problem of manpower crisis and production holds up in organisations (Conte et al., 2021; Moon, 2018). Further Anwar and Abdullah (2021) argued that human resource management practices can improve productivity by increasing employees’ skills and abilities, of which, these may motivate them. This suggests that providing employees with expanded responsibilities enables employees to make full use of their skills and abilities.

Statement of the Problem

The tradesmen in organizations including manufacturing companies are responsible for the success and failure of those organisations. The present incompetence and poor performance among many tradesmen in their specialized work environment are exposed in them among other factors, their inadequacy of versatility in; diversity of knowledge, diverse skills, different practical know-how and approaches. In fact, the individual skills set do not match the state of the art production automated machinery in the plants. However, the use of polyvalent

employees who initially had one skill minimizes such mismatches. The working environment of the manufacturing sector is fast changing which demands versatile skills and competencies for them to perform their job effectively and efficiently. As such, the manufacturing sector is facing increasingly operational challenges attributed to ever changing technology, globalization such as climate change, changing customer demands and economic challenges which have affected its performance (Mathende & Yousefi, 2021). With the increase of such emergent developments, employee productivity remains low. The manufacturing sector has cited inadequate technical skills and capabilities that culminate into low employee performance hence the overall profitability of manufacturing is affected. The situation is worsened further by the high cost implications of training and development, hence, limiting employee developmental programmes that would enhance employee versatility and consequently employee performance. Inconsistently, the manufacturing sector cited increasing staff capacitation through training and development as a mitigation measure. Although a number of researches on training and development have shown that it influences employee performance (Mercado et al., 2022), no much regard was given to multi-skilling training program as an internal, cost-effective and efficient way of polyvalent skills training to rapidly improve employee job performance. Yet, multi-skilling is the key competency of the new world order. However, there is limited literature on the effects of multiskilling of tradesmen on employee performance for large manufacturing organisations currently operating in Zimbabwe. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the effect of multi-skilling tradesmen on employee performance in large manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe. The study is guided by the hypothesis that: H1: There is a significant effect of multi-skilling tradesmen on work performance for manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Employee Performance

Employee performance is referred to as the extent to which an individual contributes to the achievement of organizational goals and is a key driver for the attainment of organizational benefits such as productivity, efficiency, quality of service and customer satisfaction (Supratman et al., 2021). Performance in this case is concerned with employee's inputs and values and these inputs are namely; knowledge, skills, behaviour and competencies which are necessary for the employee to be able to achieve the expected results (Jerman, 2020). Furthermore, the employee's performance is attained through the use of employee values provided they uphold core organizational values. In that regard, employees' performance depends more heavily on employees' skills, abilities, behaviour, traits and competences. According to Sjödin et al. (2020), being responsive to emerging changes requires greater versatility or flexibility in the ways one does his/her job. Of which, this versatility in tradesmen is born out of multiskilling.

Organizational leaders are thus required to foster versatility or flexibility because it is no longer effective to address fluctuating market conditions by assigning specialized tradesmen. There is high recognition that global environment, ever-changing technology and complex environment require constant surveillance over productivity. Of which, the importance of the tradesmen's skills in dealing with these issues are being recognized as another driver for organizational performance (Shang et al., 2020). As such, employee performance is enhanced only when firms respond to uncertainty with a polyvalent workforce. A polyvalent tradesman is a worker who is capable of completing a broad range of tasks. For example, a tradesman is qualified to competently undertake both electrical and mechanical engineering maintenance, service and repair work.

2.2. Multiskilling

According to the Incomes Data Services, multiskilling is where workers are trained to undertake a limited range of functions in other trades, with due regard to safe working practices (Horbury & Wright, 2001). Similarly, Oil Industry Advisory Committee defined multiskilling as another way of working where the barriers between work areas and trade disciplines are removed, and individuals have skills to carry out wide range of different types of tasks (Carysforth & Neild, 2002). In the same way, Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) defined multiskilling as the acquisition of additional skills to supplement those already attained by the tradesmen (Dhar, 2008). On one hand, the above definitions imply that it is not to make employees competent in the two or more disciplines, but it is about skill broadening where the tradesmen are equipped with additional skills relevant to the efficient running of the business. On the other hand, it implies cross skilling or dual skilling where another major skill is acquired on top of the main skill and consequently the tradesmen carry both tasks competently. In Zimbabwe, this is most apparent in Millwrighting engineering trade as well as in process artisans and team leaders or supervisors in industry. Multi-skilling is classified into four types: vertical multi-skilling, horizontal multi-skilling, depth multiskilling and multi-skilled teams (Henaio et al., 2019; Mercado et al., 2022). However, this study focused on horizontal multi-skilling of tradesmen. Horizontal multiskilling refers to training workers for gaining expertise and competence to undertake a wide range of jobs in at least more than one skill besides his/her core skill. Afshar-Nadjafi (2021) asserts that horizontal multiskilling is learning skills from another discipline within an organization. This creates greater opportunity of learning and adaptation against work place environmental changes. This, however, reflects the common and widely used form of multiskilling used in the Zimbabwean workforce. Of which, the definitions alluded to earlier are skewed towards horizontal multiskilling. This implies that, horizontal multiskilling if properly implemented, it has an intrinsic value on employee and it consequently enhances employee performance.

2.3. Relationship between Horizontal Multiskilling and Employee Performance

The current economic developments which are attributed to technological changes, globalization, climatic changes and changing customer demands require organizations to be sensitive in terms of their organisational needs as well as being sensitivity around issues to do with efficiency, effectiveness and cost reduction. This implies that the primary role of managers is to ensure the development and sustenance of core competencies and the retention of flexible and efficient work force. The extant literature show that managers are responsible for equipping employees with the necessary skills, competencies and abilities to handle complex tasks and emergent changes to create adaptable and flexible or versatile tradesmen (Diaz & Halkias, 2021; Kumah et al., 2016; Milliman & Clair, 2017). Flexibility has been described as a core practice that organizations can adopt to attain several benefits from employees such as employee engagement, motivation and employee performance (Bal & Izak, 2021). In which case, multi-skilling is an essential human oriented approach in creating flexibility or versatility in organizations (Chhabra, 2017). This is consistent with other researchers who also concur that multi-skilling is an efficient response to uncertainty and pressures in the business environment to ensure effective labour utilisation and productivity (Henaio et al., 2019). Therefore, multiskilling can be referred to as a type of training administered to employees to undertake a wide range of jobs in order to provide an organization with flexible and adaptable employees and to further create a skilled versatile pool of human resources for now and into the future in order to consistently increase employee performance. In this case, employee performance is not enhanced by just becoming better at what you can do. It is about being able to do what you have not been able to do before.

According to the Resource Based view (Barney, 1991; Gupta et al., 2018), resources that are rare, valuable, non-imitable and non-substitutable are the sources of competitive advantage of an organization (Opoku, 2020; Davis & DeWitt, 2021). Now, in as much as organizations thrive to make their resources inimitable, it is not practical to make financial resources, technical resources and other physical resources inimitable and non-substitutable, they remain imitable and substitutable (Collins, 2021) but human resources are. This is because human resources like the tradesmen or craft workers comprise of a complex web of social, psychological and behavioural systems in them which make their capabilities and abilities immune to imitation and substitution. Therefore, when an organization possesses a pool of tradesmen which are inimitable and non-substitutable by rivals, then it has a human capital advantage. Thus organizations that focus on the quality of their tradesmen and their learning and development as well as their adaptation to the changing environment, they increase their employees' versatility and flexibility for work performance output. Armstrong (2006) concurs to say, training and developing employees are a means of retaining human capital to ensuring that the organization makes improvements regarding flexibili-

ty, productivity, and capacity to innovate. This ensures that the organization is creating value from their human resources in a way that is rare and difficult for competitors to imitate. Therefore, such training and development like multiskilling, enhances a unique employee performance that cannot be imitated.

However, literature reveals that horizontal multiskilling is under researched, and fewer researches that attempted to study multiskilling focused on in-depth form of multiskilling (Okeyo & Juma, 2021), which leaves other forms of multiskilling limited in literature. On a general note, other studies done in different countries, industries and organizational contexts concur that multi-skilling is an efficient and cost effective response to uncertainty and pressures in the business environment that enhances labour productivity (Afshar-Nadjafi, 2021; Mercado & Hena, 2020; Vergara et al., 2021). Furthermore, most studies done in Zimbabwe on employee performance as a dependent variable were paired with other independent variables such as leadership styles, training and development, diversity in workplaces and environmental conditions (Mathende & Yousefi, 2021). Again, studies done in various individual and selected companies in Zimbabwe also focused on organizational culture (Huragu & Chuma, 2019), leadership styles (Mathende & Karim, 2022), Social corporate responsibility (Makanyeza et al., 2018), innovation (Makate et al., 2019) on work performance. In that regard, there is dearth of evidence on the study of the effect of multiskilling of tradesmen on work performance for organizations in Zimbabwe. Hence, this study aims to fill the empirical and contextual gaps by examining the effect of horizontal multi-skilling of tradesmen on work performance, with a case of manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe.

2.4. Conceptual Framework

The underpinning issues of this conceptual framework are to stress the effect of multiskilling of tradesmen in improving employee performance for the manufacturing organizations in Zimbabwe. The diagrammatic presentation of the conceptual framework is shown in **Figure 1**. The diagram shows horizontal multiskilling as an independent variable and work performance as the dependent variable. Thus the study proposed that there is a significant effect of horizontal multiskilling on employee performance.

3. Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey research design and the target population comprised of 1187 tradesmen for all the five large manufacturing companies of Zimbabwe in Harare. Using Krejcie and Morgan sample size table, a sample size of 291 was appropriate. Then the study distributed 400 questionnaires using

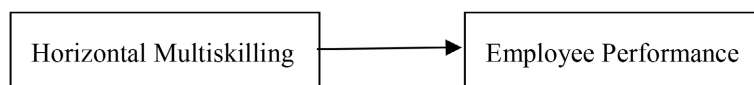


Figure 1. Conceptual frame work.

stratified random sampling technique and 299 questionnaires were returned and usable for analysis. This constituted a response rate of 74.75%. Of which this response rate is considered good because Bryman & Bell (2015), states that the response rate of 60% is considered a sufficient sample size. Now, data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23. Then, descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analysing the data.

The framework was measured with two variables; Horizontal multiskilling and employee performance. The items for each of the variables were adapted, modified, and were scaled on a five-point Likert scale. Horizontal multiskilling was measured with seven items adapted from Manyi et al. (2018) and Okeyo & Juma (2021), while employee performance was measured with ten items which were adapted from Koopmans et al. (2014) and Ha & Nguyen (2014).

The Cronbach's alpha values for the pilot study were calculated using SPSS software for horizontal multiskilling and employee performance to determine the internal reliability. The results of reliability measurements showed that all the variables have a Cronbach's alpha values above the minimum acceptable level of 0.6. They were 0.937 and 0.951 respectively as shown below in Table 1.

The internal consistency of items of both dependent and independent variables were assessed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results were interpreted premised on the attestation of hair et. al., 2010 that, acceptable Cronbach's alpha range for considering the instrument reliable is between 0.6 to 1 and affirmations of Bryman & Bell (2015) that Cronbach's alpha values which range between 0 and 1 measures the internal reliability, and that the value of 1 depicts a perfect internal reliability and the value of 0 depicts no internal reliability. Therefore, the dependent and the independent variables under study met the threshold for considering the instrument reliable for subsequent data analysis.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The summary of the descriptive statistics of the responses on horizontal multiskilling statements on employee performance are presented. It utilized a 5 point Likert scale in which, 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 represented disagree, 3 represented neither agree nor disagree, 4 represented agree and 5 represented strongly agree. Means and standard deviations of the responses were computed for the independent and dependent variables and represented in the Tables below.

Table 2 shows that the majority of respondents (90) strongly agree that they

Table 1. Reliability test analysis.

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	No of items	Comment
Horizontal multiskilling	0.937	7	Reliable
Work performance	0.951	10	Reliable

Table 2. Aspects on horizontal multi-skilling.

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
	1	2	3	4	5		
I often undertake other tasks outside my core skill	40	72	52	45	90	4.311	0.851
I have acquired multiple skills in my current position	45	74	51	48	81	3.929	0.885
I have expertise in my job due to my specific and additional but different skill I undertake	45	55	57	52	90	3.785	0.906
I perform better due to the additional and specific skills I undertake in my current position	41	71	60	50	78	3.812	0.679
My performance has improved as a result of additional trade experience which I have acquired in my current position	31	67	48	60	93	3.380	0.767
I have deep sense of increased Job security	30	100	61	43	67	4.279	0.866
I have better growth prospects building on existing and additional skills I acquired	39	73	52	45	90	4.316	0.568
Aggregate Score						3.973	0.788

often undertake other tasks outside their core skills, which is, (30%), which implies the concept of horizontal multiskilling. The majority (81) further strongly agree that they have acquired multiple skills in their current positions, which is (27%); 90 respondents strongly agree that they have expertise in their jobs due to their specific and additional but different skills they undertake, which is (30%); 78 respondents strongly agree that they now perform better due to the additional and specific skills they undertake in their current positions, which translates to 26%. In that regard their performances have improved as a result of additional trade experience which they have acquired in their current positions, that is, 93 respondents which translates to 31% and have better growth prospects building on existing and additional skills they acquired (90 respondents) which is 30%. On the other hand, majority of respondents (100) disagree to the statement that they have a sense of increased Job Security, which translates to (33%). However, the aggregate mean score was 3.973 with a standard deviation of 0.788 hence most of the employees agreed that horizontal multi-skilling influence employee performance. This implied that providing employees with a broad range of skills, capacitates them with a wider perspective and the ability to; be versatile, quick to troubleshoot, successfully conduct remedial work and then conduct a root cause analysis that has solutions that prevent the recurrence of faults. Therefore, focused horizontal multiskilling aimed at producing versatile maintenance staff, can be a powerful force in addressing up-time of assets and current skills shortages in an organization.

4.2. Employee Performance

The descriptive results of the summarized responses on employee performance in large manufacturing companies in Harare Zimbabwe are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Aspects of employee performance respondents.

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	Std. Dev.
	1	2	3	4	5		
I have greater job opportunity, collaboration and flexible	43	44	42	57	113	4.196	1.049
I am willing to take on additional responsibilities	22	65	19	57	136	4.196	1.049
I am always responsive to change and any emergent issues	36	40	19	69	135	3.467	0.867
I always meet my targets	10	50	23	66	150	3.624	0.906
I always surpass my targets	20	62	23	54	140	4.430	1.107
The quality of service to customers is good and they are satisfied	31	42	31	70	125	3.417	0.854
I always step in for an absent colleague and effectively carry out his/her duties	30	32	40	68	129	3.518	0.879
I have a deeper understanding regarding the Business as a whole	37	44	34	69	115	3.467	0.867
There is a coordination among employees due to better understanding of organizations work processes	16	22	20	66	175	3.624	0.906
Continuity of work is guaranteed in the organization because employees often handle duties for absent colleagues	33	50	41	61	114	3.921	0.980
Aggregate Score						3.786	0.947

Table 3 shows that majority of respondents (113), which is 38%, strongly agree that they have greater job opportunity, collaboration and flexible. Further, majority strongly agree that, they are willing to take on additional responsibilities (136) which is 45%. 135 participants strongly agree that they are always responsive to change and any emergent issues, which is 45%; majority (150) always meet their targets, which is (50%) and 140 strongly agree that they always surpass their targets, which is, (47%). The majority, 125 respondents strongly agree that the quality of service to customers is good and they are satisfied, which is 42%; the majority, that is 129 respondents, always step in for an absent colleague and effectively carry out his/her duties, which is, (43%). Again, majority of respondents (115) have a deeper understanding regarding the Business as a whole, which is, 38%. Again, the majority of respondents 175 which is 59% of participants strongly agree that there is a coordination among employees due to better understanding of organizations work processes. Then 114 which is 38% of respondents also strongly agree that continuity of work is guaranteed in the organization because employees often handle duties for absent colleagues. The aggregate mean score is 3.786 with a standard deviation of 0.947. These responses show that horizontal multi-skilling influenced employee performance, in which case, providing employees with broader skills apart from their core skills or enhancing horizontal acquisition of other skills related to their core skills make work exciting for them and consequently, it improved employees' engagement on the job. It also improves responsiveness to emergent issues or complex situations quickly and effectively. Again the coordination among employees, individual job performance, as well as, increased understanding of organizational

work processes is greatly improved which positively affect productivity.

4.3. Inferential Analysis

Correlation test was done on the study variables to determine if there is an association among the variables of study using Pearson correlation.

Table 4 presents the findings that horizontal multiskilling ($R = 0.623$, p -value < 0.05) has a positive correlation with employee performance and statistically significant as well. This implies that these two variables are linearly related. It also shows that the two variables do not have multi-collinearity problem. Hair et al., (2011) states that the problem of multi-collinearity exists when the correlation coefficient is close to 1 or -1 but when the correlation coefficient is less than 0.8, then there is no multi-collinearity. Hence the correlation coefficient for the independent variable is below the standard set by Hair et al., (2011).

4.4. Regression Analysis of Horizontal Multi-Skilling and Employee Performance

Simple linear regression analysis at 95% confidence level was done to establish the relationship between the independent variable and dependent variable namely Horizontal multiskilling and employee performance respectively. Now the effect of Horizontal multiskilling on employee performance is illustrated in **Tables 5-7**.

Table 4. Correlation test.

		Horizontal Multiskilling	Employee Performance
horizontal Multiskilling	Pearson Correlation	1	
	Sig (2-tailed)		
	N	299	
Employee Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.623	1
	Sig (2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	299	113

Table 5. Model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.623 ^a	0.702	0.693	0.07103

^aPredictors: (Constant), Horizontal Multi-Skilling.

Table 6. ANOVA.

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
1	Regression	213.708	1	213.708	350.03	0.000
	Residual	181.331	297	0.6105		
	Total	395.039	298			

Table 7. Coefficients.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1					
	(Constant)	0.411	0.155	3.835	0.001
	Horizontal Multiskilling	0.719	0.067	0.623	0.000

The findings reveal that $R^2 = 0.702$ depicting that 70.2% of employee performance in large manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe in the City of Harare is explained by horizontal multi-skilling practices practiced at their work places. Again, the Karl Pearson product correlation coefficient shows that $R = 0.623$ indicating that there is a strong positive relationship between Horizontal multiskilling and employee performance. The ANOVA results illustrated in **Table 6** reveal that the model has a good fit and statistically significant at ($F = 350.03, p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Put differently, it means that there is a significant relationship between horizontal multi-skilling and employee performance in large manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe that are operating in Harare. This shows that Horizontal multiskilling is the key driver on employee performance especially in manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe because it allows employees to work on areas and in departments other than their own expertise. The emphasis is no longer on the depth of the skill but breath of the skills where employees go beyond their immediate roles and become versatile and responsive to business demands. This is normally referred to as an “all-rounder” kind of a person. This versatility or flexibility and responsiveness allows organizations to cope with complex environments and adopt a consistent business approaches which positively increase productivity. The study findings are consistent with [AbdulAzeez et al. \(2019\)](#) who found out that the concept of multiskilling is an antidote to skills shortages in the building construction industry in Nigerian firms, because the employees were flexible to work across functions. Similarly, [Wise et al. \(2020\)](#) in their study aimed at clarifying the workforce flexibility in a Health Care set up, found out that clinicians used their multiskilling ability and overlapping roles to work flexibly in order to respond to patients needs and to adapt to changing workload demands. On the contrary, [de Vries et al. \(2021\)](#), maintained that specialization and not multiskilling is a determinant of productivity based on the firm's employment composition in business functions, in which they distinguished firms that specialized in Research and Development (R&D), Fabrication and Marketing. They assert that R&D and Marketing require specialization and fabrication does not. Furthermore, **Table 7**, shows the standardized regression coefficients and it reveals that as horizontal multiskilling increases, employee performance would also increase by $\beta = (0.719)$ and is statistically significant ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Put differently, the increase in one unit of Horizontal multi-skilling leads to an increase on employee performance positively by 0.719 ($\beta = 0.719$) thus the model is a good fit. This supported [Mercado](#)

et al. (2022), who revealed that, multi-skilled employees or polyvalent employees are an effective source of labour flexibility to minimize the levels of over or understaffing. Therefore, multiskilling leads to increased employee performance and consequently organisational performance.

4.5. Hypothesis Test

H1: There is a significant effect of multi-skilling of artisans on work performance for Zimbabwean manufacturing companies in Harare Zimbabwe. The results show that, horizontal multi-skilling has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.623$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that investment in horizontal multi-skilling of tradesmen plays a significant role in employee performance in the Zimbabwean Manufacturing companies, such that it becomes an insurance against irrelevance and redundancy at workplaces. Therefore, it is a powerful engine for now and for future organisational traction. As manufacturing companies increase to horizontally multiskilling their maintenance staff, such as mastery in two or more trades or expertise and the ability to performing job assignments that normally require two or more different tradesmen to execute it, then those broader practices have intrinsic values which increase the commitment of tradesmen. This provides breath of skills and knowledge ideal for quick, efficient and effective troubleshooting, root cause analysis and execution of correction and corrective actions. Again, the study concludes that horizontal multiskilling in the Zimbabwean Manufacturing companies is crucial to enhancing employee performance as depicted by the positive correlation. Horizontal multiskilling enhances versatility, flexibility and overlapping of roles of tradesmen as well as engagement of employees to enable them to cope with complex jobs arising from changing markets and technological demands. Therefore, such tradesmen who perceive themselves as possessing polyvalent skills and competences necessary to keep the assets in good working condition have a mind-set which consequently motivates them to improve job performance. The study recommends that horizontal multiskilling should be implemented by manufacturing companies in Zimbabwe in order to improve employee performance and consequently organisational performance. The reason behind that is, multiskilling takes employees out of their comfort working zone by enhancing learning new ways or methods of doing things to keep the skill set relevant to the environment. Again, the study recommends intensive training and development of individuals in two or more trades as they undertake apprenticeship training programs. This also informs and requires the government of Zimbabwe's relevant policy makers to revisit the education curriculum and training proficiency skills syllabi for it to aim to produce a polyvalent person. In fact, at the early stages of education, schools need to start help

preparing children for the need of multiskilling. Colleges and university are not to spare; they need to heed this call. Failure to prepare and produce multi-skilled persons for the country and for the future is risky, given that the direction of the industry is pointing towards a digitalised and a globalised world, as well as fast changing technology which undoubtedly requires multi-skilled personnel.

Areas for Further Research

A replication of this study can also be done in different sectors in Zimbabwe, most importantly in sectors such as the Health sector and the Tourism and Hospitality sector among others using a longitudinal research design which can identify changes over time. Hence, it overcomes the methodological limitations of the current study

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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