



**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

**GENERAL MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION**

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**GSB 5270-RESEARCH DISSERTATION**

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**TITLE**

**An assessment of the role of human resource management practices and strategies in achieving competitiveness and growth of small to medium scale enterprises, a case study of SMEs in the construction industry in Bulawayo.**

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to assess the role of human resource management practices and strategies in achieving competitiveness and growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the construction industry in Bulawayo. This study discussed human resource practices and strategies and how these can give an enterprise competitive advantage. The objectives of the study were to identify forms of human resources practices in various SMEs, to find out factors that influence human resources practices in SMEs, to assess the effectiveness of human resource role in the growth and competitiveness of SMEs. A positivist philosophical approach was used with which a mixed research design was undertaken for data triangulation. The study focused on SMEs in the construction industry in Bulawayo province and data was collected using questionnaires and interviews. Literature reviewed included text books and journals on SMEs in general and human resource management practices and strategies in particular. A total of 95 enterprise owners, managers, line managers and employees provided the data for the study. A statistical software (SPSS), cross-tabulations, pie charts and graphs were used to present and analyze data on the role of human resource practices in SMEs. The findings of the study showed that the majority of SMEs are not using standard human resource practices and strategies. The results revealed that there is a positive and close relationship between standard human resource practices and business competitiveness. The results showed that standard recruitment, selection, training, development, motivation and human resource planning have direct positive effect on the performance of employees and ultimate productivity of an organisation. SMEs should embrace current and standard human resource practices and strategies in order to achieve competitiveness and growth. Although the study focused on SMEs in the construction industry in Bulawayo province, the outcome may be relevant to other sectors like mining, manufacturing, tourism, education and health sector. This study unveiled recommendations on how SMEs can gain competitive advantage and growth through the deployment of standard human resource management practices and strategies. It can be concluded that human resource management practices and strategies can result in competitiveness and growth of a business through cost leadership and differentiation.

**Key words: Human resources, Enterprise, Competitiveness, Growth, Differentiation, Recruitment, Training, Development, Motivation and Strategy.**