

Challenges of contemporary management in Papua New Guinea

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Abstract

Management trends at the global level are transforming the international business environment and also having an impact on the way organisations are managed in Papua New Guinea (PNG). This article discusses the challenges of contemporary management in PNG particularly how organisations are responding to the management trends at the global level. Managers in PNG need to be aware of the changes in the external business environment when managing their organisations. The changes can be a threat or an opportunity to the organisation. Understanding management trends enables managers and their organisations to deal with management challenges of the contemporary business environment by applying relevant management practices and strategies. Discussions are based on managerial views from literature, interview notes and postgraduate essays. The first part of the paper reviews the literature on management trends at the global level. The second part examines the impact of management trends at the global level on organisational management in PNG. The third part discusses the challenges managers in PNG face when managing organisations in the contemporary business environment stimulated by global factors.

Key words: Contemporary business environment, management challenges, management trends, global management trends, learning organisation concept, Total Quality Management, cost competitiveness, speed of supply, innovation

Introduction

Managers in Papua New Guinea (PNG) need to be aware of the major changes in management at the global level and the impact the changes are having on their organisations. Daft and Samson (2009) highlighted that understanding the global management trends would enable managers to deal better with challenges of the contemporary business environment by applying relevant practices and strategies on organisational management issues.

A contemporary business environment in the context of this paper refers to management trends in the 21st century (i.e. year 2000 to the current time). A contemporary business environment is increasingly competitive and challenging. Beamish (2008) highlighted that the external business environment is constantly influencing companies' capability and strategic decisions. Organisations are competing with others for contracts, clients and customers. Competitors are using proactive strategies to influence the industry

environment by offering new products and services. Customers are well educated and aware of their options and demanding high quality goods and service efficiency. Businesses competing in the contemporary environment must engage in strategic actions to manage in a way that the organisation delivers goods and services that provides the best value to the customers.

Discussions in this paper are based on literature reviews and analysis of interview notes and essays from managers in PNG, particularly postgraduate students in Business Administration at Divine Word University. The first part reviews management trends presented in literature. Management literature was reviewed to identify the general trends of management at the global level. The second part examines the impact of management trends at the global level on organisations in PNG. Analyses of interviews and essays were conducted to identify the impact of global management trends on management practices in PNG, particularly the way organisations are managed and how they are responding to the global management influences. The third part discusses the challenges PNG managers are facing when managing in the contemporary business environment that is stimulated by the global influences.

Review of management theories and practices

The most significant developments that affect the management profession in contemporary business environments are twentieth century inventions. Therefore this review examines the management trends from the twentieth century to the current period. A brief history of management will give a general perspective of what happened in the past, what is happening now and what is likely to happen in the next few years.

Management emerged as a formal discipline at the turn of the twentieth century and most of the theories that evolved are relevant for the contemporary business environment. Bateman and Smell (1996:30) highlighted that out of the great variety of ideas about management over the years, parts of each approach have survived and been incorporated into contemporary perspectives on management. The legacy of past efforts, triumphs, and failures has become the guide to future management practices.

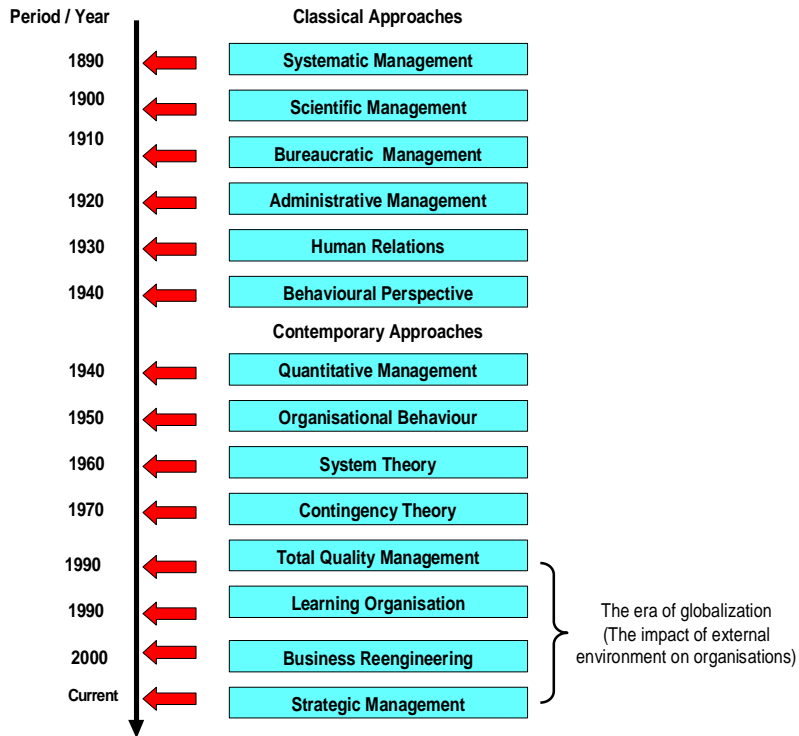
According Bateman and Snell (1996) and Daft and Samson (2009) the major management theories that shape management practices in the contemporary businesses are scientific management (1900–1915), administrative management (1841–1923), behavioural management (1910–1990), management science (*operations management, information (IT) management, statistics and computing* 1940–current) and organisational environment (*organisational behaviour, systems theory, contingency theory, total quality management, learning organisation, business reengineering, and strategy management, 1990–current*). Figure 1 illustrates the evolution of management theories in the last century. Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of management practices in the last century.

Figure 1. Evolution of management theories



Source: Bateman and Snell (1996)

Figure 2. Evolution of management practices



(Bateman and Snell, 1996)

Management theories emerged to address specific management problems during each period on the management timeline. Bateman and Snell (1996) mentioned that most of the changes in management thinking were driven by the industrial revolutions. Table 1 illustrates management theories developed to address issues concerning people's skills, organizational functions and organizational systems.

Table 1. Management theories and problems they address

Management theory for people's skills	Type of problem addressed
Human relations	Motivational problems
Organisational behaviour	Improving the integration of people and organisations
Information and decisions	Management decision skills' problems
Management theory for organisational functions	Type of problem addressed
Scientific Management	Human productivity problems
Quantitative Management	Application of objective functions to management
Strategic Management	Organisational long-range planning problems and adjusting to environmental factors
Management theory for organisational systems	Type of problem addressed
Administrative management	Organisational problems
Organisational theory	Organisation design problems

(Daft and Samson, 2009; Bateman & Snell, 1996; Anderson, 1988)

Management trends of the contemporary business environment

According to the management literature (Samson and Daft, 2009, Beamish, 2008, and Bateman and Snell, 1996), there are five major management trends that are transforming the way organisations are managed at the global level. Inevitably, these trends are also having an impact on the way organisations are managed in PNG. The management trends identified are: (1) globalisation, (2) workforce diversity, (3) job flexibility, (4) flat organisational structures, and (5) networks, partnerships and strategic alliances.

Globalisation of competing organisations

A trend which is definitely reflecting the character of contemporary business environment is globalisation. According the Lahiri and Reinn (2005), globalisation means expansion of business, political and cultural ideologies around the world. In the globalisation era, businesses are entering international markets; there is further expansion of the power of transnational companies; and political influences are exerted by world governing bodies such as the

World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Asian Development Bank (ADB). Such influences are impacting on the business sector and on many governments, particularly those in the developing countries. As an example, public service in many developing countries is responding to globalisation challenges by reforming its management practices.

The pressure is on the public sector to adopt new management concepts and practices to improve service delivery, sustain programs and projects, and facilitate good governance. Involvement of business organisations in the global arena is primarily coupled with opportunities the global environment offers. Simic (2005), highlighted that globalisation has dramatically increased the range of challenges for organisations competing in the contemporary business environment. Factors of the impact of globalization on the way organizations are managed include industrial, financial, economy, political, information, socio-cultural, business and ecological. The impact of these factors is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. The impact of globalisation

Factors	Impact
Industrial	Emergence of worldwide production markets and broader access to a range of foreign products for consumers and companies; particularly movement of material and goods between and within national boundaries
Financial	Emergence of worldwide financial markets and better access to external financing for borrowers; simultaneous though not necessarily purely global is the emergence of under-regulated or unregulated foreign exchange and speculative markets
Economic	Increased exchange of goods, services and capital ; emergence of regional economies particularly from China and India
Political	Cartels of governments (e.g. World Trade Organization, World Bank and International Monetary Fund) which regulate the relationships among governments and guarantee rights arising from social and economic globalization; threats posed by crises in the middle east and terrorism activities
Information	Technological change with the advent of fibre optic communications, satellites, and increased availability of telephone and Internet services; reduced cost and improved quality of international transportation and communication search for unsaturated markets.
Social-cultural	Language - the most popular language is English; <i>Cultural</i> - growth of cross-cultural contacts; advent of new categories of consciousness and identities which embody cultural diffusion, the desire to increase one's standard of living and enjoy foreign products and ideas, adopt new technology and practices, and participate in a world culture; Some bemoan the resulting consumerism and loss of languages; exploitation of regional cost and expertise differences

Business	Competition: Survival in the new global business market calls for improved productivity and increased competition. Due to the market becoming worldwide, companies in various industries have to upgrade their products and use technology skillfully in order to face increased competition. Increasingly global sales, manufacturing, and research management. Movement from direct exports to having sales offices in different countries spread across the globe. Increasingly a globalized labour market.
Ecological	Global environmental challenges that might be solved with international cooperation, such as climate change, cross-boundary water and air pollution, over-fishing of the ocean, and the spread of invasive species. Since many factories are built in developing countries with less environmental regulation, the free trade trend may increase pollution. On the other hand, economic development historically required a 'dirty' industrial stage, and it is argued that developing countries should not, via regulation, be prohibited from increasing their standard of living

(Daft and Samson, 2009)

Workforce diversity as a source of competitive advantage

Globalisation is having an impact on human resource management strategies of many organisations operating at the global level as the nature of work is changing in the workplace of the contemporary business environment (Batman and Snell, 1996). People are interacting with others who are different from themselves with biological, political, religious or cultural differences. Companies are expanding operations across borders and this means that employees in the contemporary business environment need new relational skills to deal and communicate with people from different cultures. Organisations need new coordinating mechanisms to accommodate different kinds of people in the workplace.

Daft and Samson (2009) argued that organisations are encountering new challenges to deal with diversity as more women and people from minority backgrounds are entering the workforce in the contemporary business environment. Diversity issues include gender, political, cultural and religious dimensions of people's life. The response to workforce diversity has increased organisational flexibility. Some organisations, for example, allow workers with different needs to have very different work and payment schedules, such as full-time and part-time conditions and benefits.

According to Chan (2004), organizations should value diversity to enhance organizational effectiveness because cultural diversity gives companies a competitive advantage in the global market. As global competition drives corporate success, it is critical that companies recognize the advantage of having a diverse workforce and invest in it. For example, having a diverse workforce with various cultures and backgrounds gives a motor vehicle

company such as Chrysler, a competitive advantage when doing business in foreign countries.

Therefore, it is important for global organisations to employ people from other cultures who understand the customs and traditions of other countries and to deal appropriately with customers. Many organisations are finding innovative ways to integrate diversity initiatives into their workplace policies. According to Daft and Samson (2009), organisations recognised that the differences people bring to the workplace are valuable, and these differences enable firms to compete more effectively globally and to tap into rich sources of new talents.

Flexibility as the nature of performing jobs is changing

The other major management trend that is noticeable in the global business environment is flexibility in the way work is done. Flexibility is described by Batman and Snell (1996) as organisational systems, processes and people that can respond differently to different situations; where there are fewer detailed rules and procedures, greater autonomy and encouragement for initiative; and customizable employment relationships and sharing of responsibilities. Job flexibility results from differentiated customer needs, increasing diversity in workplaces, and an increasing pace of change in technology and markets.

According to Daft and Samson (2009) the current management trend shows that many global companies are investing in flexibility initiatives to build competitive advantage. Many global companies are investing in employee performance improvement as one of the sources of competitive advantage. For example, offering flexibility in balancing work and family demands, is a key component of Chrysler's diversity strategy, where flexibility helps employees to balance work and deal with family issues. International Business Machines (IBM) also have very effective Human Resource Management (HRM) strategies on diversity management in the belief that workforce diversity is the bridge between the workplace and the market place.

Flat organisational structure

Other noticeable trends in the contemporary business environment are downsizing, re-structuring and flattening of the organisational structures. These trends are described by Robbins and Mukerji, (1994) to result in fewer levels of management and workers being empowered to make decisions. According to Lahiri and Reinn (2005), organisations are downsizing their structures as a result of globalisation creating intensified competition, which increases the need to cut costs and respond quickly to the market demands. Also contributing to the trends are changes in information technology that enable greater productivity and efficiency.

Beamish (2008) highlighted that, with increased competition comes a faster pace of change, as each competitor introduces innovations in order to outperform their competitors. This in turn creates a situation in which

organisational response time is at a premium. According to Johnson and Scholes (1998) organisations that can develop new technologies faster, or adapt to market changes faster, are the ones that will outperform their competitors. To maximize response time, organisations have been flattening, downsizing, and networking. According to Batman and Snell (1996), flat organisations make decisions more quickly because each person is closer to the ultimate decision-makers. Smaller organisations are faster to respond to market demands because there are simply fewer different things going on and fewer competing goals and fewer people to coordinate. Organisations that flatten tend to simultaneously encourage horizontal communication among workers.

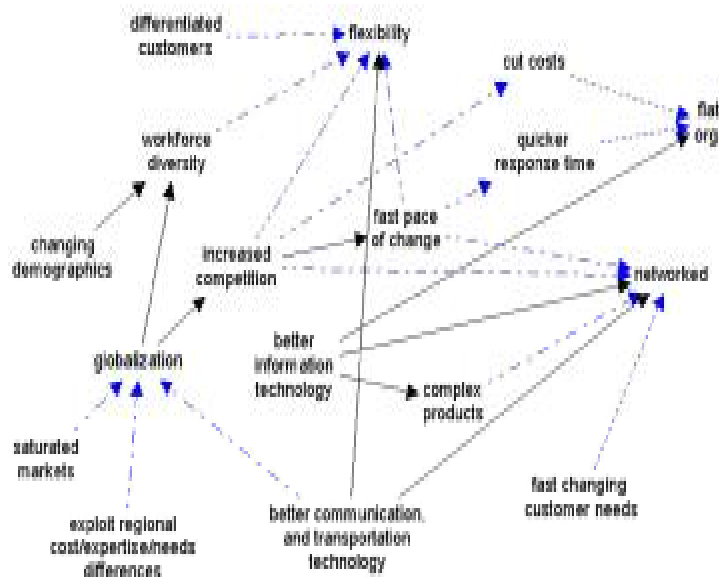
Networking, partnerships and strategic alliances

Other management trends that are having an impact on the way organisations are performing in the contemporary business environment are that organisations are working in partnership and have networks in their supply chain management functions. According to Sporleder (2006), a networked organisation is a collection of autonomous companies or units that behave as a single larger entity, using social mechanisms for coordination and control.

The entities that make up a networked organisation are usually legally independent entities but not always. Some of the entities may be wholly owned subsidiaries. They can even be divisions within a company, but treated as separate companies that sell to outside customers. Another meaning of networked organisations refers to their relations to other organisations. An example are organisations that have downsized to just their core competencies and then outsourced functions that used to be done in-house to other entities. To avoid losing time and effort managing contracts with suppliers, organisations have learned to develop very close ties to their suppliers, so that social mechanisms of coordination replace legal mechanisms which are slow and costly.

Another form of relationship is forming strategic alliances. According to Daft and Samson (2009), strategic alliances are defined as any agreement between or among companies to cooperate in an effort to accomplish some strategic purpose. Strategic alliances are a form of strategic partnering which also includes contracting, ownership integration or entering into mergers and consolidations.

In many industries strong relationships have developed between manufacturers and suppliers (and other manufacturers), so that considerable work is done without a contract and without even working out a firm price (Daft and Samson, 2009). Networking, partnerships and alliances are important in industries with complex products where technologies and customer needs change rapidly.

Figure 3. Summary of 21st century organisational management trends

(Borgatti, 2001)

Challenges for PNG to respond to global management trends

Changes at the global level are affecting the way organisations are managed in PNG. Some of the recent changes are public sector reform, privatisation of government owned enterprises, and deregulation of industries such as airlines and communication. Daft and Samson (2009), highlighted that the key drivers of change in the contemporary business environment are advances in technology, the information processing revolution and globalisation.

What do the drivers of new business environment have to do with organisations in PNG? These factors enhances globalisation, changing the workforce diversity, impacting on the organisations to become mobile (flat) so that organisations can respond quickly to the changes in the external business environment, and changing the nature of work (flexibility). For organisations in PNG to be competitive, managers must be aware of the impact that driving factors have on their organisation and identify strategies to manage the threats and explore opportunities each factor offers. Important factor to take note is that, customers in the contemporary business environment are educated and aware of their options so customers are demanding for quality and excellence in products and goods. Figure 4 illustrates drivers of change in the contemporary business environment.

Figure 4. Drivers of the contemporary business environment



Daft and Samson (2009)

Some competitors are getting smart by applying innovation strategies to offer new products and services to gain market leader in the industry. For these reasons it is important for business organisations in PNG to engage in strategic actions to manage in a way that delivers the goods services that provide the best possible value to the customer (Daft and Samson, 2009).

Challenges for individual managers

According to the management trend of the contemporary business environment, organisations need managers who make a difference through good leadership qualities. According to Paulias Matane (2008) one of the challenges for development in PNG is providing ethical and effective leadership. Leadership is required to institute good governance in both sectors (public and private) and to facilitate effective implementation of the government's development policies.

A student in the Master of Leadership in Business Administration (MLBA) program at Divine Word University (DWU) stressed the importance of leaders having the 'right attitude'. He said,

We (PNG leaders) don't have problems with knowledge but we do have problems with attitude. Demonstrating the right attitude is the quality of a good leader.

What kinds of managers are required in the contemporary business environment of PNG? Daft and Samson (2009:9) emphasized that change in today's business environment has led to a revolution in the field of management. Managers in PNG should respond to this revolution towards a new management paradigm. In this paradigm, managers need to be leaders who:

- Are creative, innovative and have no fear to explore new management approaches to deal with complex management issues,
- are aware of the complexity of today's world
- have a vision for the future and engage in strategic actions
- have a strong desire of success and work with key stakeholders
- are able to put together a winning team to manage the organisation
- can influence, inspire and transform the team become successful

Human resource development and capacity building still remains challenges for organisations in both public and private sectors in PNG. A management approach which would improve management and leadership capabilities of managers in PNG is the '*learning organisation concept*'. Bedeian and Zammuto (1991) highlighted that in a learning organisation, the culture of learning is evident as an active and continuous process. Learning organisations invest in training, education and problem solving through research and information. This can be an effective strategy to change people's mind set, attitude and behaviour.

Challenges at the organisational level

According to Beamish (2008), the external environment is constantly influencing a firm's capability and strategic decisions. So what approach should organisations in PNG take to compete successfully in the contemporary business environment? It is argued that it is important for organisations to invest in strategies that would enable them to deliver value to the customers and to have a competitive advantage in their particular market.

There are four types of performance strategies which the organisations in PNG could invest in to improve their market position. They are quality improvement through Total Quality Management, cost competitiveness, speed of supply chain to deliver value to the customer and innovation on management, product and service.

Total Quality Management for quality improvement

Attempting to provide the best quality for their particular goods or services is one of the key competitive strategies for all global organisations. Many organisations are investing in quality as the source of competitive advantage and using total quality management approach to improve all aspect of the organisational functions (Oakland, 2000). For organisations to be competitive they must improve quality of their management functions, product and services.

One MLBA student at DWU said,

Quality in contemporary business in PNG is not a serious business issue due to lack of competition in many industries. Seventy percent of the population in PNG live in rural and remote areas, so the bulk of population are not well informed of their choices when making decisions on purchasing.

Another MLBA student at DWU said,

Quality has improved recently since the deregulation of some industries, for example in the mobile phone, airline and tourism and hospitality industries. With competition, companies have had to improve their performance to maintain their share of the market. Therefore government has a responsibility to provide an environment for competition which would stimulate firms to provide quality goods and services for customers' benefit.

The only education institution in PNG that has announced its advocacy for quality improvement through Total Quality Management and a well defined implementation structure is the Divine Word University (Czuba Fr. SVD – DWU President, cited in *The National* dated 13/02/09).

Cost competitiveness

Another competitive strategy for organisations to compete in the contemporary business environment is cost competitiveness. According to Bateman and Snell (1998) cost competitiveness means that an organisation's total production cost is maintained at the level where revenue and profit is sustained and valuable products (goods and services) are delivered at the price the customer is willing to pay. To accomplish this goal, managers must keep cost under control to allow the company to set fair prices that cover cost and achieve profit.

An MLBA student at DWU commented,

Maintaining cost competitiveness is a challenge for business organisations in PNG due to high costs of production that accumulate from high costs of fuel, transportation and other costs for technology and importing production materials from other countries.

Another MLBA student at DWU said,

De-regulation of telecommunication and airline industries in PNG has allowed competition which is currently benefiting the customers in these two industries. Companies have developed competing pricing strategy so the cost of their goods and services are decreasing. For example mobile phones are getting cheaper due to competition between Telekom PNG Limited and Digicel International. Likewise PNG Airlines is counteracting Air Niugini's pricing strategy by offering special fares on both domestic and international routes. However sustainability is a real challenge due to uncertain economic conditions at the global level.

Innovation

Another competitive strategy for organisations to compete in the contemporary business environment is innovation. According to Daft and Samson, (2009), innovation enables business organisations to respond to the market demand by offering new products and services that customer value. This practice is the key to staying ahead of competitors.

An MLBA student at DWU commented,

In the public sector environment, the biggest threat to innovation is the bureaucratic structure of the government organisations where top management has the sole responsibility for decision making. This does not allow creativity and innovation in the middle and lower levels of management.

The strategies that should enable organisations in PNG to enhance innovation in management, product and services are creating competition and taking a proactive approach to influence the business environment to develop new products with improved quality. Challenges for business organisations are to facilitate the culture of continuous learning and to invest in human resource development and capacity building. The challenge for the government is to create the environment to facilitate innovation through sound business development policies, laws and regulations.

Speed

Another strategy is the time frame or speed with which goods and services are delivered to the customer. According to Oakland (2004), serving the customer in a speedy manner maintains customer loyalty and is a source of competitive advantage. Organisations can gain an advantage over their competition by identifying market needs quickly, being the first to introduce new products, prompt delivery of customer order; and fast responses to customer requests and market demand.

According to an MLBA student at DWU,

Speed as a competitive strategy, can only be effective to organisations and their customers in the major urban areas of PNG where delivery systems have reasonable access to well structured transportation systems and logistical support. Poor transport systems and ineffective infrastructure and little logistical support are major challenges for business organisations investing in speed as a competitive strategy to locations outside of major urban areas.

Transport infrastructure plays a vital role in creating and supporting economic growth by connecting different parts of supply chains to enable market, delivery of goods and services. The growth and maintenance of PNG's infrastructure in all transport sectors – land, water and air – to rural areas have been slow and it is impacting on the nation's economic growth and development (*PNG Year Book, 2008*, chapter on transport and infrastructure).

Challenges at the industrial level

At the industry level, the challenges include complying with standards and contributing to social and economic development of the country. The challenges to address pollution and sustainable development are not just for governments, but also for the business sector. Industry associations should ensure business organisations and companies comply with state environment laws and standards to minimize pollution, comply with tax laws, improve labour standards, and report information in issues for public debate. Managers in PNG business sector should be charged with the responsibilities of creating value for their shareholders, and employing staff with responsibilities of creating value and contributing to sound economic development for the nation. In doing so managers must ensure that their firms continuously comply with good governance ethics which include economic responsibilities, legal responsibilities, ethical responsibilities, and discretionary responsibilities (Daft and Samson, 2009).

Challenges for the government

There are a vast range of management challenges in the governance systems of PNG, at all levels – national, provincial and district. In the light of the global management trends, the challenge of providing quality services and sound policy frameworks to stimulate and enhance economic should remain a priority of all levels of government. Governments are not immune to the current world economic crisis and they face many challenges in responding to economic uncertainty. An obvious area of current concern at the national level would be economic recovery and monetary policies (*PNG Year Book, 2008*, chapter on economic achievement).

At the domestic level, services such as health, education, infrastructure, transport, law and order and environment protection and management are the main challenges of the government. These services, which vital for the economic growth, can be improved by prudent managerial and policy decisions and through good governance. Effective management of regulatory policies needs attention particularly regulations for governing growing industries such as telecommunication, mining, forestry and fishing (*PNG Year Book, 2008*).

One of MLBA students at DWU remarked,

One of the major challenges for the government of PNG to enhance and facilitate good governance and business practices is to regulate the way organisations do business. Government regulators must constantly work to ensure that business do not trade unfairly, pay below minimum wage levels, provide unsafe work places, ignore unsafe work practices, cause dangerous pollution to the environment, withhold information or give misleading information.

At the district level, the challenges of instituting effective service management and delivery mechanisms remain areas of concern. Continued support must be

maintained to ensure government reform initiatives in the country are effectively implemented and facilitate effective service delivery to populations in rural and remote areas. Service delivery must be supported by establishing structures at the provincial and district level to enable effective monitoring, and evaluation for improvement. Inadequate capacity building of human and physical resources at the district level to support and maintain an effective public service structure still remains a major obstacle for development in PNG (*PNG Year Book, 2008*, chapter on infrastructure development)

Conclusion

Management trends at the global level are transforming the way government and business organisations are managed and this is having an impact on the way organisations are managed in Papua New Guinea. The information revolution, technological advances and globalisation are drivers of contemporary workplace environments. Organisations in PNG are now competing in an environment stimulated by factors such as the globalisation of business politics and cultural values, a fast pace of change, workforce diversity, employment flexibility, down sizing of organisational structures, better communication and transportation technology and the importance of networking and forming strategic alliances. Managers need to respond by being prepared to explore new management approaches, have a vision for their organisation and plan strategically, be success oriented, put together a winning team and inspire high quality performance. Businesses can build competitive advantage by employing strategies such as cost competitiveness and offering value to the customers, total quality management, speed in supply and delivery, and innovation. These strategies would enhance the capacity of organisations to compete successfully and manage challenges off the contemporary business environment.

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