

School Principal's Perceived Practices and Challenges of Human Resource Management: A Gender Perspective Lens

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While much is written about human resource management practices in general organizations, far less is known about the school as an organization and role of women principal as a human resource manager. The purpose of this study was to explore the perceived practices and challenges of women principles as human resource managers in private schools. Since it has been widely accepted that performance of institutions highly depends upon the way human resources are perceived and managed. Applying the case study method, the data generated using the semi-structured interview. The findings of the study show that the women principal, to a great extent, had an understanding about the concept of human resource management such as recruitment, selection, induction, monitoring and evaluation, training, and development. The principal also found to be the key person in employee's performance appraisal, job design and their motivation. In doing so the principal faced challenges in employees' career planning, effective retention approaches, and providing incentives with attractive salaries etc. The study recommends private schools to develop a comprehensive human resource management system on priority basis which could address such kind of challenges.

Key words: *School Principal, Human Resource Manager, Recruitment and Selection, Salary and Incentives, Motivation and Retention, Job Design and Job Satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Pakistan, Privately Owned School Systems (POSS) have their own administrative setups to plan, organize, manage, and run affairs of a school based on their resources, priorities, agendas and interests etc., rather than being very strict to follow Human Resource Management (HRM) policies and practices. This study is interested to explore a woman as head of the school and her perceived practices of HRM in the context of a developing country, like Pakistan (Qutoshi & Khaki, 2014)). A principal, in most of these POSS, plays a key and significant role in the exercising of HRM practices depending upon the exposure to these practices, nature and size of the school system and purpose of providing education for the sake of business and/or service to the community and nation etc. Adopting typical HRM practices are rhetorically sounds better while managing POSS in Pakistan, but self-driven practices, in reality, are found without any check and balance, reflects lack of implementation of standard HRM practices. To this end, principals use a diverse range of practices, which are not uniform in all schools.

However, it is widely accepted that the effectiveness of HRM practices largely contingent upon the two basic aspects. One is the external fit which deals with the organizational ‘units, structure, system and management practices with the organizational stage of development’ whereas the other one is the internal fit which deals with supporting all these factors through a positive attitude, perceptions, leadership skills and beliefs of the managers (principals) in line with organizational goals (Baird & Meshoulam, 1988, p.1; Tiwari & Saxena, 2012).

The way principals perceive and practice HRM functions within their role and responsibilities, and the relationships with staff in exercising their powers tend to, directly and indirectly, affect the overall performance of an organization (Osman, Ho & Galang, 2011; Phillips, 1997). Having a clear understanding of the concepts and keeping good relations with all stakeholders (staff, parents and wider community) make a big difference in the lives of people with whom the principal is supposed to work as a human resource manager.

Context of the Study

As mentioned previously, POSS is taken as a case for this study that offers education to the children from daycare to primary level from “all cultural and ethnic backgrounds who treat the student with respect and dignity and encourage them to treat each other with respect and love” (School Leaflet, n.d., p.2). For this study, a school was selected as a research site through purposive sampling from a brand of POSS with day-long school hours from “09:00 am to 03:30 pm academic hours and 08:00 am to 05:30 pm administrative hours” (school Leaflet, n.d., p.5) with serving freshly prepared hygienic lunch and snacks to all children and staff.

A school is aimed to provide an environment of “perfect home where every child is well-cared, loved and treated as dearer ones” (School Leaflet, n.d., p.2). A school is also claimed to offer quality education to the children including some orphans whom the principal has adopted as sons and daughters. The principal is the owner of the school and the human resource (HR) manager who has a clear understanding of HRM functions and seems to practice accordingly. Although, her decisions and actions can make a big difference in the lives of the people but less accountable in reality regarding HRM practices in the school.

The operations of POSS in Pakistan are more or less parallel to the standard practices elsewhere in the world (Khaki, 2005). The concept of HRM in schools means how effectively employees are managed – recruited and selected, oriented and inducted, trained and developed, motivated, and retained, monitored, and evaluated based on their job design and other organizational roles. The employees are supposed to perform their duties in line with organizational priorities and their goals (Nakpodia, 2010). However, the literature review reveals a gap among school principal regarding comprehension and level of conceptualization of HRM practices in POSS of Pakistan. It is beyond any doubt that an effective HRM is the ‘asset of organization’ (Tiwari & Saxena, 2012) and ‘at the heart of organization’ (Sartain & Finney, 2003) and considered to be the most valuable organ of any organization (Anderson, 2001). The school principal as a manager should have a clear understanding of the role of employees in HRM, is significant to achieve a ‘competitive edge’ among other organizations in the market (Chew, 2004). Therefore, the main objective of this study is to explore the comprehension of women principal regarding the practices of HRM and challenges in carrying out her roles as a HR manager in POSS with reference to a gender lens.

This paper reviews the relevant literature and develops theoretical bases prior to engaging with methodological justifications. The study engages with discussions followed by conclusions and recommendations. The findings of this study will help policymakers and other stakeholders like the head of schools etc. to reflect on school leadership’s HRM practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

HRM is a field of study (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002, 2012) as well as a management function. Looking from an academic perspective ‘HRM is still relatively a new term’ as compared to other established management disciplines (Ibid. p. xi). Generally, the terms “human resource management, personnel management, personnel administration, or manpower management are used interchangeably that refer to the management of people at work in an organization” (Brieger, 2005, p.4; Bratton & Gold, 2017). However, HRM as management function comprises systematic actions of managers and their responsibility to manage people at work effectively to ensure productivity (Jackson, Schuler & Jiang, 2014; Taylor & Woodhams, 2012). This recognition acknowledged that HRM is a distinctive

function of management in any public or private organization that is used to deal with people working in an organization to achieve its goals.

However, before exploring the actual meaning of HRM and delve into prevalent HR practices in the context of school like other organizations, it is necessary to ascertain the nature of relationships – between and among employees and employer in organizational culture. According to Beardwell and Holden, it is "a process of socio-economic exchange in which services are provided by employee or labour to their employer and in return receive a monetary reward" (1994, p.444). This apparently looks simple and linear process yet a very complex nature of relationships between employer and employees that develops a culture and sets the competitive edge of an organization in the market. In this context, Storey (1995, p.5) defines HRM as: "a distinct approach to employment management which seeks to achieve competitive advantage through the strategic deployment of a highly committed and capable workforce, using an integrated array of cultural, structural and personnel techniques". This portrays a hard component of HRM where organizations like schools seem to focus on competitive advantage through strategic management of the human resource.

However, if schools understand the importance of employee relations and focus on building better relationships through facilitation and support, commitment and coordination, and encouragement and trust, those organizations can significantly improve their performance vis-à-vis their competitors and lead (Osman et al., 2011). Moreover, Armstrong (1992) focuses on the soft component of the HRM. It is about the importance of people, the employees, and defines HRM as a "strategic and coherent approach to the management of an organization's most valued assets - the people working there, who individually and collectively contribute to the achievement of its objectives for sustainable competitive advantage" (p.13). This reflects that organizations take lead over their competitors if the relationships among work force and between management layers are well established to create an organizational culture. In this process, individuals work as organizational citizens by developing organizational citizenship behavior among all members of the organization.

In order to develop organizational citizenship behaviour in an organization, it is necessary that organization not only need to understand the importance of the basic elements of HRM but also need to ensure that those values are embedded in the organizational culture. However, POSS in the Pakistani context, are slightly practicing the basic elements of HRM such as: recruitment and selection, induction or orientation, training and development, motivating, retaining, appraisal and performance review/monitoring and evaluation of the staff in order to make sure everyone is performing as per demands and needs of the school (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

Recruitment and selection: It is the first stage of HRM' functions that involves identifying a right person for a right job (Barmby, 2006) to meet the demand of human resource of an organization. In the Pakistani context, the school principal of POSS practices HRM functions

considerably. It is a process of finding capable people (i.e., a right person for a right job) and managing them in teaching position. However, it is not so simple to accomplish (ILO, 2012). It is the job of the principal who has to take recruitment and selection related decisions which not challengeable. To this end, principal needs to bind himself ethically under the principles of HRM functions to ensure fairness. Selection is the function of HRM that always comes after recruitment which focuses selecting people for a particular job through a well-defined process in order to achieve the objectives of organization (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; ILO, 2012).

Induction: Induction is a process of providing adequate support to the newly appointed teachers or recently promoted and/or individuals newly assigned roles to better comprehend their new roles and responsibilities and modus of operandi of their job in a particular organizational culture. The HR personnel needs to give induction and orientation to enable workers to better understand their work which enhances their job satisfaction (OECD, 2005). In this phase, selected employees get familiarity to the prevailing systems through formal or informal way of exposing them to the roles and responsibilities of the most relevant line of authorities, with other support staff, resources and facilities in the organization. This kind of induction and orientation programs helps individuals to better understand the system and the nature of their job. On the other hand, if teachers are just assigned task without proper induction or professional support may leads to 'attrition' (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

Training and development: In the context of jobs in schools, training means developing basic knowledge and skills through guiding, supporting and helping staff using different strategies like mentoring and teaching and building their attitude (Dessler, 2008; Dymoke & Harrison, 2006; ILO, 2012). Thus, through training employees learn how to do their job efficiently. Whereas development is a broader term that covers not only training of the employees but also follow up mechanism after training which is formulated to know the practical application of knowledge and skills of employees in their job. Moreover, training is aimed to improve and enhance the job related skills and competencies, while development is a long-term process of preparing employees for future needs of the organizations, such as future strategic plans of geographical and lateral expansions. The underlying aim of training is to help employees in improving their performance and strengthening their bond with their organization (Dessler, 2008; Peretomode, 2001). Thus, development as a function of HRM is added to the training to ensure better performance of an employee.

The purpose of every training and development in schools is directly linked with enabling staff to meet the challenges of managing change in teaching and overall education system occasionally that help them to perform better and also keep their job secure (Dessler, 2008). This sort of on-the-job training is termed as in-service training. It helps the staff to improve their effectiveness of role performance and increases the efficiency (Osman et al., 2011). The efficiency of schools or institutions depends upon how effectively these programs are designed and implemented in their system (Okoye, 1998; Robbins, DeCenzo & Walter,

2012). The results from different studies show that the effectiveness of HRM practices in schools directly affect the academic performance of learners and suggest to improve professional qualifications - 'get post graduate diploma in education to develop skills in teaching in order to improve students' learning (Bratton, n.d; Phillips, 1997).

Motivating and retaining. One of the important functions of HRM is to retain the staff and galvanize them to perform better in the organization. However, there are many factors which affect retention and motivation of staff and a good HR manager knows how HRM practices can effectively retain employees for a longer period of time (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). Studies have proved that the impact of effective HRM practices in school can enhance the overall performing of the school (Kwan, 2009; Osman et al., 2011). The teachers who are well managed with high motivation by the school administration know how to achieve the school goals by delivering required standard performance with clear and visible performance indicators (Abbas & Ahmed, n.d; Munjuni, 2011). The successful retention of talented employees in an organization can effectively restructure and reengineer the activities in line with organization objectives (Chew, 2004).

According to Clark (2001) and Dessler (1999), it is the HRM in an organization which believes in employee of the choice - the organization which gives outstanding performance through innovative and compelling uses of HRM programs to attract, develop and retain the employees is reflected with not only business-oriented attitude of employee but also humanistic attitude.

Appraisal and performance review. It is one of the most challenging job of HR manager to develop a system of effective appraisal and performance review system (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007; Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002) in school to make sure that every teaching, non-teaching and supporting staff is working as per job description and organization priorities to achieve its goals (Dessler, 2008). Appraising performance means comparing the subordinate's actual performance to the standards that have been set forth... requires one or more feedback sessions...to discuss the subordinate's performance and progress and make plans for any development required (Munjuri, 2011, p. 5).

However, performance evaluation is another term used within this category that is also meant for the same purpose by looking at how effectively an individual is performing his /her job in the organization. The purpose is to make sure that employees are performing up to the mark, however, it highly depends on friendly working relations in an organization that shows friendly environment.

Moreover, 'employee relation, reward management ...needs to be interpreted for different organizational context' (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002: i) because every organization has its own culture and dynamics of relations, system of rewards and appreciation mechanisms which affect the employees' performance at individual level and organizational level. Thus,

in organization's setting creating good relations among employees is one of the most important jobs of the principal as HR personal (Tiwari & Saxena, 2012). Because good working relations within an organizational culture and performance based incentives improve the performance of an organization (Munjuri, 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Theoretical Framework

There are many HRM theories and models exist in literature that focuses on how to deal with employees for greater benefit of both organization and employees in achieving organizational goals. HRM literature (Jackson et al., 2014) argued that policies around the globe which are one way the other guided by certain philosophical underpinnings are gaining more prominence in "HRM architecture" (Blom, Kruijen, Thiel & Heijden, 2019, p17). Kellner, Townsend, Wilkinson, Greenfield and Lawrence (2016) support the idea that HRM philosophy provides a theoretical framework and a model for HRM practices of organizations to explore.

At metaphorical level, organizations like schools should focus on the 'soft' model of HRM whereas in reality the 'hard' model is seen in practice (Gill, 1999). The sloppy HRM practices reflected in the form of frustration among employees especially among teachers that shows hard model is mostly dominant in the school management (Storey, 1995). The hard model approach is to manage teachers with 'multi-level top-down bureaucracies' is a global phenomenon resultantly growing 'frustration among teachers' in schools. They express themselves in metaphorical language somewhere as 'avalanches and aliens' and as 'dehumanized and trapped (Dunn, 2013). Similar system exists in Pakistan where more workload, less incentives and low level of respect for teachers prevails not only in the eyes of school management but also found among society at large.

However, this study argues that 'teaching is a high valued social service in every country (Nakpodia, 2010, p.3) but in reality it is practiced quite different in the world. The hard model, according to Storey (1989) focuses on 'quantitative, calculative and strategic' aspect of the management that seems similar to the strategic HRM. It is one of the models that describes the 'managerial process requiring human resource (HR) policies and practices to be linked with strategic objectives of the organization' (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000). Whereas the soft model is more people-centered, reactions focused through communication, team building and coordinated ways of working to achieve organizational goals. The dichotomy between the soft model - 'humanism' the nature of relationship, communication and team work and the hard model- 'instrumentalism' the idea that people are like machines remained in practice for long time (Legge, 1995).

In the context of Pakistan, mostly schools are emphasizing on soft or humanistic model but in reality, they follow hard model where principal works as a manager not an educational leader (Simkins, Garrett, Memon & Ali, 1998; Bush, Bell, & Middlewood, 2019). Moreover, studies argued that in reality single model is not found in practice rather ‘most organizations applied mixture of both hard and soft approaches’ to manage people (Truss et al, 1997, p. 18). However, historical development has been made on HRM practices through decades, but these studies show that neither of these models is practiced in its pure form (Ibid) in the prevailing situation that makes a ground for adopting mixture of both the models in practice. However, it is the effectiveness of a HR manager who situates himself or herself along a continuum of hard and soft model that can be reflected from the ground realities in the form of practices within an organizational socio-cultural environment.

Historically, the ideas related to soft and hard nature of HRM were initially developed in Michigan University in 1984 and Harvard University in 1985, later on these ideas emerged in the form of two different schools of thoughts. Michigan school’ approach was more strategic in nature (Hendry & Pettigrew, 1994) while Harvard school approach was more humanistic focusing on the employees’ relations and working conditions (Poole, Mansfield, Turner, & Martinez-Lucio, 2007). The basis of these two opposing models is human nature on one side and the managerial control strategies on the other (Truss, Gratton, Hope-Hailey, McGovern, & Stiles, 1997). The managerial control means strategic management as a ‘pattern of decisions and actions’ undertaken by the upper level mostly and controlling through a top-down approach (Bratton, n.d.; Dunn, 2013). While the humanist approach is a more dialogical, one on one basis, need base cum objective oriented accommodative way of working in teams to achieve the objectives of the organization through effective coordination and collaboration (Snow & Snell, 2012).

Looking at the characteristics of both the models and the contextual realities of Pakistan, a theoretical model is developed for this study. This study prefers to make a mix of both soft and hard models as Guest (1987) calls ‘loose & tight models’ in analyzing the perceived practices of HRM of private schools in Pakistan. Understanding this mosaic nature of HRM along a continuum, in the context of private schools in Pakistan, will help principals to see how effective and workable their HR strategies. It also helps to understand HR functions in their own cultural, sociopolitical and geographical context (Gill, 1999) along with providing an opportunity to reflect on this unique nature of practice and its impact on the overall lives of the school people including learners, teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

Research Design

The purpose of this exploratory research, using a qualitative case study protocol, through the lens of ‘holistic in-depth investigation’ (Zainal, 2007, p. 1), is to explore principal’s perceived practices on HRM in the context of Pakistani private school system. The qualitative research design is applied within the interpretivist paradigm to explore the meanings and

understandings of people (McMillan, 2012). Epistemologically, the nature of interpretivist research paradigm is more appropriate to explore personal views such as the perceived practices of the principal regarding HRM (Taylor, 2008). Thus, employing interpretivism in this case study, enabled the researchers to explore in-depth personal views and practices of the principal as Human Resource Manager (Creswell, 2009).

For example, we used case study research as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p.23). This is one of the key characteristics of the case study research that enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003). In this particular context, among many other strategies, case study appears to be the most appropriate strategy for an in-depth study of a phenomenon. Because case study enables us to “make meaning of what people say and do in a real situation” with reference to the perceived views of school principal about HRM practices (Qutoshi & Poudel, 2014, p.9).

Moreover, the selection of a case study as a strategy is also more appropriate to explore a unit of study as a bounded system in terms of people, place and time (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2015). Thus, the bounded unit of study in this case was the exploration of the perceived views of principal about HRM practices in schools within a given time period which were necessary for in-depth understanding of the case (McMillan, 2012). However, the selection of a strategy for data collection and analysis does not matter what the ‘label’ is given to that particular strategy, the most important thing is to see whether the strategy is ‘appropriate for a particular research’ (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2000, p. 92) linking to the questions developed for data collection from research participants working in school as a research site.

Selection of Research Sites and Participants

In district Hunza, one of the schools was selected as research sites for this study by using criterion-purposeful sampling technique (Patton, 2002; Obeidat & AlKhaza'leh, 2019). The use of criterion-sampling technique enabled us to identify one of the most potential schools where components of HRM were practiced to some extent (Obeidat & AlKhaza'leh, 2019). This study used criterion-purposeful sampling technique because we wanted to select a head teacher (research participant) who was somehow aware of HRM in school. Employing purposive criterion-sampling technique we had to select those research sites (schools) where school principal was practicing HRM practices. The rationale for using criterion-sampling technique was that it was helpful for us to find the research sites where the respondents (principal) as HR manager has at least basic understanding of the case (Creswell, 2009).

We selected one of the head teachers as research participant who was (a) somehow aware of HRM in the school (b) practicing HRM in school and (c) willing to participate in the study.

Semi-structured Interviews

This study has used semi-structured interviews for generating data from the head teacher. Semi-structured interview provides an opportunity to use linking questions, the questions which researchers can develop at the time of interview (Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003). The semi-structure interview has flexibility and enables researcher to reshape or even change a question at the time of interview to go at deeper level of inquiry to get all possible answers of the questions asked (Cohen, Manion, Morrison, 2011) with reference to HRM in school. We conducted three interviews spanning about 30 minutes long from the head teachers to explore their views about HRM in the school.

Trustworthiness, Reliability and Transferability

The construct of trustworthiness in interpretive research, in which we make meaning of HRM practices of the school principal, which refers to validity and reliability. Following Lincoln and Guba (1999) certain techniques were employed to establish the 'trustworthiness' of the study. For instance, member checking was undertaken by sharing transcribed data and initial analysis of data with the participants for their consensus (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We also generated rich data for rich description of the research contexts and research participants' i.e., the principal's views of HRM practices (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

While studying a phenomenon or a case such as head teachers' views about HRM practices there were no absolute, or single truth of reality, rather reality could be different for different people (Krathwohl, 2004). According to Cohen et al. (2011) awareness or personal views of school principal is a social function which is derived from the interpretations of the individual as result of cultural and social understanding. Therefore, head teachers' views of HRM was different for various reasons. Therefore, the research finding cannot be generalizable to general population but are applicable only in contexts where condition and situations are same. Therefore, we are quite confident that the findings of this study can be applied in geographical areas which shares the similar conditions.

The reliability of the findings was addressed by giving research participants opportunity to read their transcripts and make necessary changes. This allowed participants to draw on their constructions of reality and ensure trustworthiness while clarifying any misinterpretations. However, trustworthiness could be further enhanced through triangulation while using multiple data collection tools and comparing data from at least three sources to get perspectives of respondents from other sources as well as to re-confirm evidence (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2010).

Data Familiarization and Analysis Procedure

As data analysis is not an isolated process rather it is linked to the theoretical framework with which the researcher develops the approach to the phenomenon being studied. Looking at the nature of case study research, the process of data collection and analysis is carried out by using some appropriate techniques to reach at interpretations. There are some approaches such as five techniques of Yin (2003, P.1) pattern matching; 2) linking data to propositions; 3) explanation building; 4) time-series analysis; 5) logic models and cross-case synthesis', and 'categorical aggregation and direct interpretation' techniques of Stake (1995) are most commonly used. Likewise, Rowley (2002, p.9) used three principles of analysis: "use of all of the relevant evidence; exploration of major rival interpretations; and addressing significant aspects of case study" in a systematic manner to reach at interpretation through thematic analysis. However, for this study we used a theoretical framework that guided the analytical process for answering the stated research question (Hasslöf, 2015). The theoretical framework provided the lens with which we analyzed the data and identified themes that relate to different themes emerged. Following the frame proposed by Schutt (2011) we followed the steps of qualitative data analysis. Firstly, the data were thoroughly read and transcribed. Secondly, the important chunks of data have been coded. Thirdly, the data were categorized into concepts. The concepts have been cross-examined and compared to generate the overarching themes in light of (a) participants' awareness about HRM (b) awareness of education for sustainable development. The process of sorting sub-categories into broader category and splitting the broader category into sub-categories and themes occurred many times till the emergence of final themes and patterns (Engel & Schutt, 2016). Data analysis, as a process of drawing meanings, and making sense of the meanings from the data was carried out in a systematic way using the principles of analysis to interpret the findings.

In recent years, the use of computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) has risen in qualitative data analysis as of its wide-ranging functionalities and systematic way of coding, querying, retrieving, and categorizing the thick qualitative data. In order to make our coding and data analysis rigorous and systematic, the coding and data analysis has been done both manually as well as by using the 'QSR NVivo 11' which is a widely used CAQDAS. Some NVivo generated visualizations are appended in Appendices.

Ethical Considerations

We shared the purpose and procedures of the study with the concerned school authorities and gained written permission for entry into the research sites from the concerned School Education Department and the Executive District Officer. We also got informed consent of the head teachers by sharing the purpose, methods and data collection techniques and then we negotiated time and procedure of interview. We assured the research participants that the data would only be used for academic purposes. The real name of the research site and all the research participants were replaced by pseudonyms (Gay, 2003; Pring, 2004). The

participants were selected on a voluntary basis and all the data generation process and schedule were decided on their own convenience. We tried our level best that the data generation process does not affect the institutional routine work environment and the routine of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study show that principal as school HR manager has to perform variety of activities relating to HRM functions (Snow & Snell, 2012) in the context of a POSS of Pakistan. However, the effective outcome of these activities of principal as HR managers highly depends upon a clear understanding of the concepts of HRM functions, strategies, and commitment to the implication of these activities and actions relating to the lives of the people working in school house (Beer et al, 1985; Snow & Snell, 2012).

The findings of the study revealed that activities which are perceived to be performed by the principal of a POSS in Pakistan are: need assessment, recruitment and selection, maintaining discipline and code of conduct, retention, job satisfaction, and monitoring and evaluation (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007). In so doing the principal performs according to his own understanding and capacity to achieve the objectives of these functions. The study explores principal's perceived roles in the form of routine activities of the school life.

Conceptualization of Human Resource Management

Responding to a question regarding the notion of HRM with specific reference to a private school, one respondent explained that:

HRM is a process within any organization which begins from the recruitment of the people and goes through their management with giving them the required directions or instructions...staffing is very core component which includes teaching and non-teaching staff. We need competent, effective staff in the school... and we try to develop the teachers and other required staff...so that they will be persons of value for the school. (Interview, October 3, 2013)

This shows that the principal perceives HRM as a process of making staff valuable through training and development after their hiring. As HR manager he seems to focus on the organizational needs, in case of school opportunities should be provided to the staff through training and development (Dessler, 2008; Storey, 1989). According to him creating a conducive learning environment and a productive organizational culture is central for teachers learning through different opportunities and its application to improve their teaching practices. Such kind of opportunities makes the staff ready to meet the school needs and enable them to prove as an asset for an organization (Snow & Snell, 2012) that is highly

desired. The professional development is more important rather than what is found in practice within a day long working hours in schools.

Human Resource Management is a Problem Solving Approach

Discussing the importance of HRM functions in school the principal expressed his views that HRM is significant because its function is to help out people when they are facing challenging situations and time. He explained that:

HRM in the school also sees the management of already existing employees...insuring the management of human resources... treat staff as human and offering required help in the times of their need when they are undergoing through a difficulty ... it is important for school success and it is only possible if the school leaders have better understanding of HRM. (Interview, October 3, 2013)

The designation of principal seems to be more people centered rather than task oriented HR personnel. He values the employees focusing on their problems, offering help in times of their needs which shows clear understanding of HRM functions. A learned principal in work place can manage people through supporting in their difficult times on job (Anderson, 2001; Tiwari & Saxena, 2012). However, principal as a HR manager perform various activities and also faces many challenges in the school which are categorized as under:

Perceptions of Principal's Human Resource Management Functions

The participant considers his role is multifaceted in terms of HRM functions. Expressing his views about human resource management activities in school, he explained that:

I need to see many things like...need assessment of the required staff ...both teaching staff, non-teaching, the process of their recruitment, resource planning, planning of remuneration - salary, wages, incentives through analysis of the job and evaluation, ... relations with other institutions, employee relations management, teacher unions relations, organizational development planning and change management. (Interview, October 7, 2013)

The analysis of the above data shows that the principal, as an HR manager, performs many management functions in school. For instance, need assessment of the required staff ...staff recruitment, resource planning, - salary, wages, incentives through analysis of the job and evaluation, establishing relations with other institutions, employee relations management, teacher unions relations, organizational development planning and change management. Firstly, the analysis of the data reveals that the principal plays a pivotal role for performing multiple management functions in a school. Secondly, principal is also aware of micro and macro management functions and considers himself responsible for individual staff

development as well as organizational development and change which reflects his broader vision as educational leader.

The critical analysis of the above data also reveals that such a multi-faceted role of a school leadership may create a kind of chaotic situation in school. A principal, as a single person has to do many things other than teaching that is an integral part of principal-ship roles and responsibilities (Munjuri, 2011). The complex and montage managerial roles and responsibilities of principal as human resource manager neither help school to retain teachers for longer period of time nor let him focus on the main responsibility of improving teaching and learning in school.

Challenges in Human Resource Management Practices

The study explored various challenges confronted by a principal in managing human resources in a school. In this study multiple themes emerged that challenged the school leadership in managing human resources.

Recalling the HRM related challenges in school, the principal pointed out a number of challenges. The principal explained that ...”we face challenges from the beginning of need assessment”. We see so many needs to be met and it is always a challenge which to be met first, but through deep down analysis we prioritize them” (Interview, Oct.3, 2013). This shows that principal is facing difficulty in need assessment because the school has multiple needs to fulfill at the same time very challenging for the principal in prioritizing those needs on the basis of their being most important and most urgent. This finding is consistent with (Munjuri, 2011). Although he seems to be familiar with the process of needs assessment in a given circumstance and also intensity of the need and prioritizing them accordingly on the basis of urgency and importance but find it difficult to implement in real situation.

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection is one of the main functions of the HRM which is practiced in schools as well. However, in this study principal was facing challenge in recruitment and selection of staff. He attributed the challenge of staff recruitment and selection to time factor, unavailability of qualified candidates and their level of dissatisfaction with incentives and salary structure. This finding is also consistent with other studies such (Chris, Sparrow, Vernon, & Houldsworth, 2011). In response to a question to address the challenges he explained that:

...recruitment and selection process is always crucial where you have to be very quick ... to get the best staff for your school. You need to be able to find the right person for the right position who is satisfied with the available resources and committed to deliver. (Interview, October 3, 2013)

However, in a follow up interview session, regarding the process of recruitment and selection especially at times of sudden turnover of staff he found to be compromising with temporarily arrangements for those classes by replacing assistant teachers from other classes. He further expressed that “I need to just replace assistant teacher of the same section or grade level from other class to fill the gap of the teacher who resigns from the school or get expelled from the school” (Interview, Dec 8, 2013). This shows that principal is struggling to cope with recruitment and selection function of HRM. The replacement of teachers from other sections and unexpected teachers’ turnover in the school were the real challenges.

Maintaining Discipline and Code of Conduct

Maintaining discipline among the staff members in school and ensuring an effective code of conduct within the school culture seems one of the challenges that the principal is facing. He expressed that ‘HRM in the school... also handles the issues of maintaining discipline and code of conduct (Interview, October 12, 2013). This shows that principal has to wrestle with human resources in maintaining code of conduct and discipline related matters. According to him “... sometimes I have to fire some staff members on the basis of disciplinary issues” (Interview, December 8, 2013). This shows that principal as HR manager and owner of the school can take spontaneous, independent and sometime hard decisions by firing employees for what he calls on disciplinary issues which may be some concerns for the employees. This finding is also congruent with the literature such as (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007).

Staff Retention

On the matter of staff retention in school principal expressed his views as, ‘having a higher retention rate in the school is another key element for the success of the school... retaining teachers is challenging...however, turnover record shows either they join other professions or go abroad’ (Interview, October 3, 2013). The finding reveals that school is facing many problems in retaining them for a longer period of time because of many factors. One of the key factors among them seems to be searching for better incentives and salaries and it is a fact that “teachers are paid considerably less than the mainstream professions” (Bennell & Akyeampong, 2007, 31) in almost all African and South Asian countries including Pakistan. That is why teachers usually tend to change their profession or seek opportunities to go abroad and this finding is also same of what is mentioned in literature such as (Marchington & Wilkinson, 2002).

Job Satisfaction

One of many apparent factors that play a key role for employees’ satisfaction in school is moderate salaries package. However, in campus incentives and benefits for employees such as free lunch and snacks are insufficient to retain them (Bennel, 2004; Bennell &

Akyeampong, 2007; Munjuri, 2011). In addition, job security and other sub-factors relating to long working hours in the school system (Boxall & Purcell, 2010; Dunn, 2013) found to be key factors causing dissatisfaction with their job. Expressing his views on the employee satisfaction, the principal says, "...provision of incentives, other benefits with good salaries in a caring environment can satisfy employees...however, the school is offering salaries within a range of 100 to 200 USD to the teaching staff that is comparatively better than other schools (Interview, October 3, 2013). The principal claims to satisfy the staff with comparatively better salaries in the market and incentives like free meals within his limited resources. However, engaging the staff in a day-long schooling system seems to be one of the factors that can create low job satisfaction.

Monitoring and evaluation. Private schools in Pakistan have their own framework of monitoring and evaluation which sometimes create confusions for principals to get the objectives of monitoring and evaluation in a particular context. Discussing such kind of challenges principal expressed his views thus:

Challenges arise even in the time of monitoring and evaluation. It is pretty hard for me how to evaluate and what to [evaluate] because your framework of monitoring and evaluation always does not fit in every circumstances. But we try to make it as applicable as possible. (Interview, October 3, 2013)

This shows that school leadership is facing challenges in using proper monitoring and evaluation tools to achieve goals of the schools. However, monitoring and evaluation is one of the core functions of any organization and needs to be very clear in order to achieve effective outcomes of the organization by clearly defining some important questions like why to evaluate, how to evaluate and whom to evaluate and what to evaluate. Other studies also come up with similar findings (Abbas & Ahmed, n.d.; Chew, 2004; Muujuri, 2011). Studies suggest that school principals need to develop accountability mechanisms regarding HRM functions in which they have to play their role (Taylor & Woodhams, 2012).

Future researchers can explore the impact of HRM practices of the school principals on students learning outcomes in order to improve better teaching and learning conditions of students and improving job satisfaction in POSS.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study to a greater extent support the assumptions that 'rhetoric would align most strongly with soft HRM and reality less align with hard HRM' (Gill, 1999:42). Although, the concept of HRM, to a great extent, is perceived well by the principal in the context of POSS of Pakistan, yet it need more concrete actions to ensure accountability and job satisfaction. School principal as HR manager seems struggling to hire right person for the right job to achieve the school goals. However, it has been observed that the teachers join the



teaching positions with low salaries ranging from 100 to 200 USD per month with limited incentives – leading to high turnover within short period of time which creates retention problems for principal.

Principal claims to perform almost all important functions of HRM in the context of school playing multiple roles as HR manager, academic leader and spokesperson of the school. Principal also deals with parents and community, attending teachers' union meetings and engaged in monitoring and evaluating learning and teaching activities to ensure teachers' development for improving teaching practices to achieve school goals. While achieving the objectives of HRM functions like need assessment, recruitment and selection, induction, training and development, remuneration, managing people and maintaining high retention, monitoring and evaluation of activities and performance of staff members, he/she seems to grapple with myriads of challenges. The findings of the study revealed that there is a gap between the metaphorically conceived models of HRM and the model practiced in school. HRM literature termed as 'rhetoric and reality gap' that needs to be identified in the context of HRM practices in the POSS of Pakistan (Gill, 1999). In a particular contextual situation, principal has to use soft model approach as well as the hard model to ensure the organizational goals to achieve. This mixed model HRM approach of dealing with the employees, however, seems contextually effective.

Supplementary Materials: The following are available online at www.mdpi.com/xxx/s1, Figure S1: title, Table S1: title, Video S1: title.

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Appendices

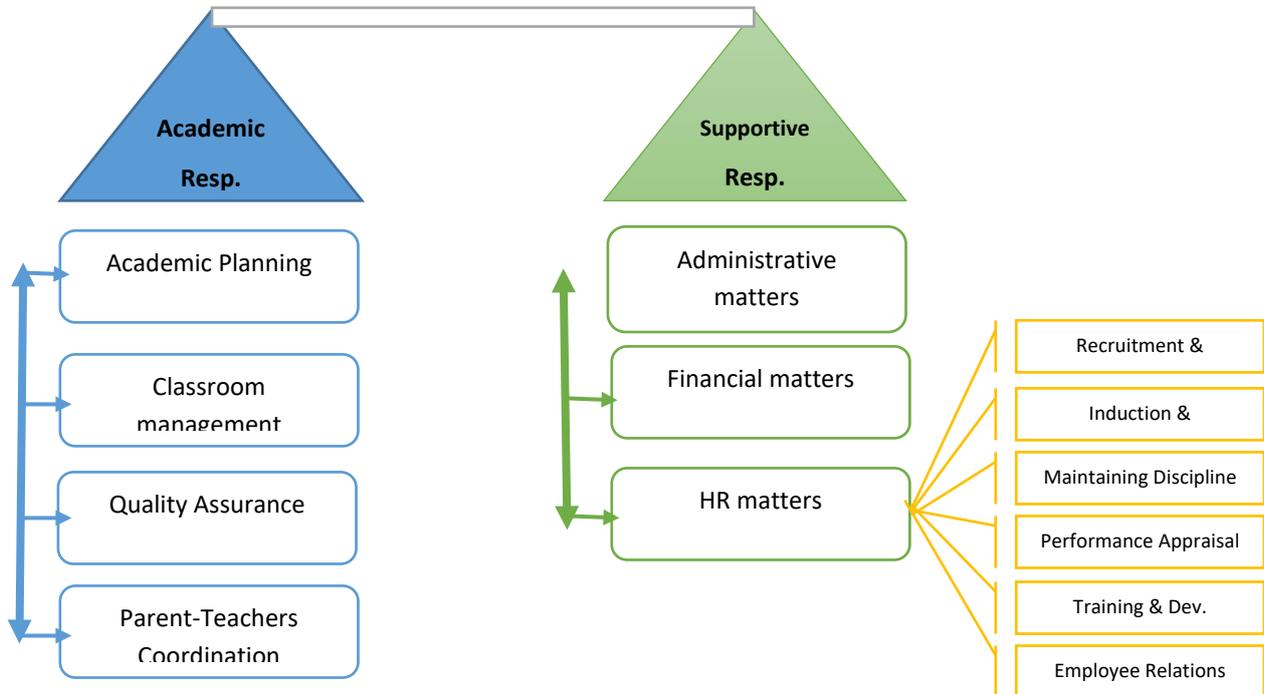


Figure 1. Typical responsibilities of a POSS principal

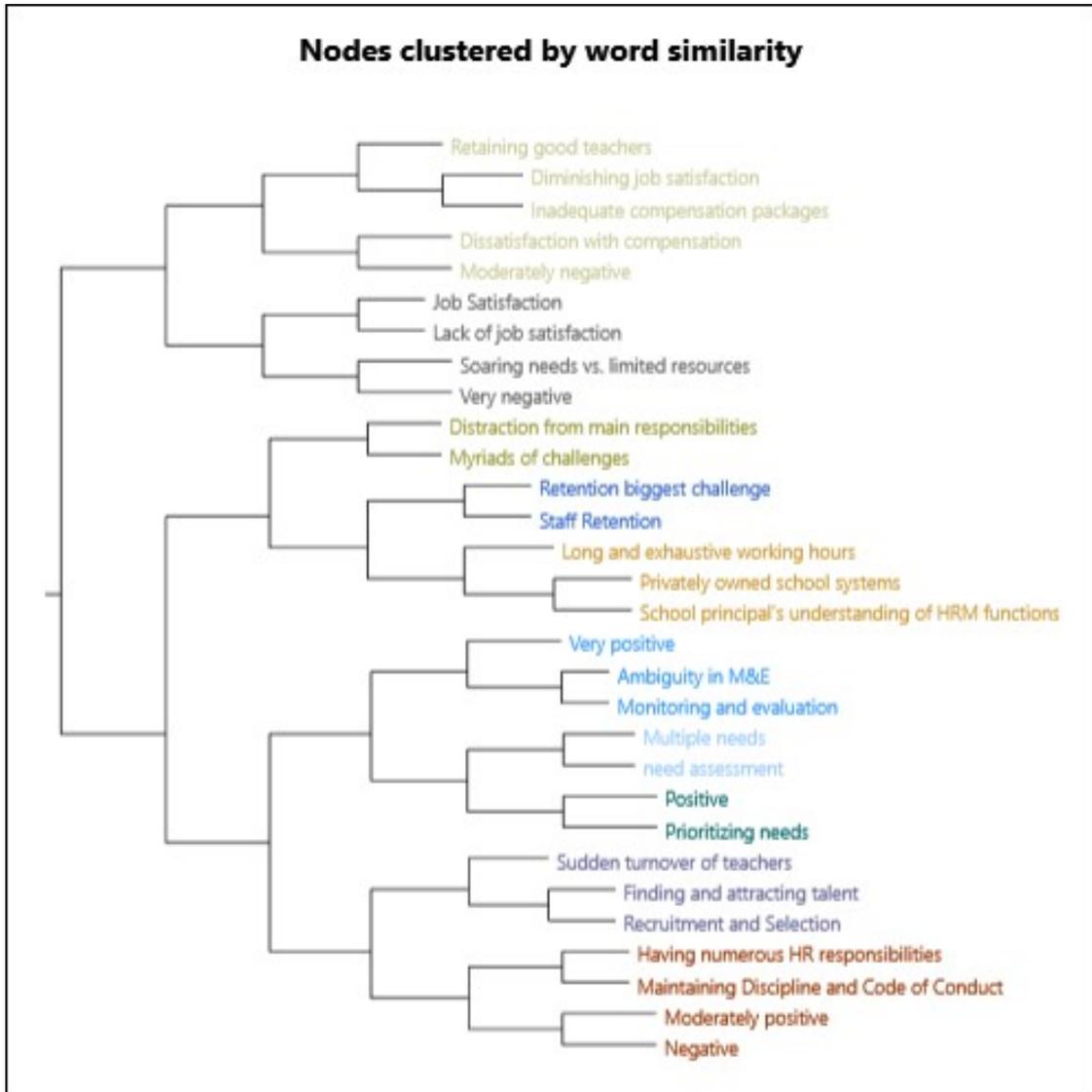


Figure 2. NVivo generated figure; HR challenges of a POSS principal

