

A STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS TOWARD HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN PRAWET DISTRICT, BANGKOK, THAILAND

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Abstract: This study was conducted to identify teachers' perceptions toward human resource management dimensions in an International School in Prawet district, Bangkok, Thailand and to compare teachers' perceptions classified by various demographic factors. A quantitative survey methodology was adopted for this study. The researcher used Henri Fayol's administrative theory and HRM models for discussion. The findings demonstrated that teachers' perceptions toward human resources management in school was at a low level and there was no significant difference in teachers' perceptions toward human resource management dimensions according to demographic factors such as age, gender, nationality, period of work experience and education level. However, the results also revealed that Thai teachers' and Asian teachers' perceptions toward professional development had a significant difference in the direction that the mean of Asian teachers' perception was higher than Thai teachers'. To become better educational administrators, it is recommended leaders review and revise their HRM policy and practices especially in teachers' retention strategy and other weaknesses found. There could be valuable research conducted on a similar study in other International Schools, Thai schools and bilingual schools to compare HRM in education.

Keywords: Teacher Perception, Human Resource Management, International School Teachers, International Schools in Bangkok, Thailand

Introduction

Education is an important component of human development and quality education enhances the future success of an organization. Educators around the world recognize the value of education and constantly initiate means to pursue maintain and evaluate its quality. In 2011, the Thai government allocated 400 billion Baht to the Education Ministry which is a large budget compared to other Asian countries (Saengpassa and Khaopa, 2012). It was a big investment. Unfortunately, there was an inadequate return on investment because students' performance was poorer in both the national and

international level (Intathep, 2012). Thai students did not do well as a whole.

Referring to the results of PISA 2009 (OECD, 2012), the score of achieved by 15 year old Thai students was 50 out of 65. This result implied that there are challenges in the process of teaching, learning and administration. There are many factors that impact quality education, one of them is educational administration. Specifically, people management can be one of the solutions. Therefore, active administrators should give a closer attention to improving Human Resource Management in schools.

The most important resource in the field of education is human resources (Nakpodia, 2010; Norton, 2008; Thompson and Kleiner, 2005). Therefore, managing these people is necessary for school success because human resource is vital for quality education (Thompson & Kleiner, 2005; Rebore, 2011). Human resources and tasks are important basic components in schools. The task or goal must be accomplished and it is only through the competent teachers that schools can meet these challenges and the needs of changing world. This means that, managing human resource has a real effect on students' performance and the improvement of a schools performance. Administrators in every school perform a human resource functions. They may use different approaches, but they are directed to the same purpose. According to Rebore (2012), two important goals of HRM in schools are to achieve a schools' goals and to contribute to the personal and professional growth of staff. Therefore, HRM in education is beneficial for both school and staff.

Most International Schools are registered with the International Schools Association of Thailand. This organization (ISAT, 2012) started from 45 original members in 1994 and its membership has now reached 95. These schools offer a range of curriculum from American, British to International Baccalaureate IB as well as other programs. HRM in International Schools is similar to other public and private schools in its function. Some schools have effective HRM practices especially in dealing with a multi-cultural staff. However, HRM in some schools still focuses on hiring and paperwork (Rebore, 2012). This is also true in some International Schools in Thailand. It is merely an administrative function. Yet, some of schools are becoming aware of the value of HRM and are trying to become better at practicing HRM.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to identify teachers' perceptions toward HRM dimensions in a selected International School in the Prawet district of Bangkok and to compare teachers' perceptions towards these practices. The study will take

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into consideration factors such as the demographics of: age, gender, nationality, period of work experience and education level.

Literature Review

Ability to identify HRM challenges and solutions in schools is one of the effective HRM strategies. According to Bastian (2009), some challenges found in Western schools are the excessive retention of poorly performing employees, ineffective use of available human resources information technology and inappropriate or misaligned performance measures. Moreover, the common challenges of public and private schools in Thailand were the lack of qualified teachers in science, mathematics, and languages, and the retention of these teachers (Kengsom, 2008). According to Rittam (2009), some challenges are that teacher's lack discipline; teachers have no desire to change, and lack appropriate attitudes to professional development. In short, HRM challenges can be found among teachers and administrators as well as in their relationships. Effective administrators are able to identify these challenges, plan solutions and improve HRM practices in schools.

The major theory used in this study is an administrative theory promoted by Henri Fayol (Fayol as cited in Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2008). He created this theory from his own working experiences and his reflections as an administrator in a mining firm (Wren, 2003). This theory presents five basic management functions which are planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling. Fayol claimed that all administrators perform these basic functions. It starts with planning where administrators identify the needs and forecast future actions and direction of organization. The next step is to organize the responsibilities to each part, assign tasks, link various parts for cooperation and control all activities to go to the same direction.

HRM models were used in this study as well. The POSDCoRB Model, derived from Fayol's theory, was created by Luther Gulick (1937). This model focuses on seven functions of management: planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting and budgeting. The Michigan HRM Model is well known and is one of the early models that need to be considered in any study of HRM. It is often mentioned as a hard model which consist of selection, performance, appraisal, development and rewards (Tichy, Fobrun & Devanna, 1982). This model focuses on four processes influencing the performance of both individuals and organizations.

HRM practices in education have been adapted from business HRM and it is well recognized as a process of human resources administration. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) described the following practices in their HRM textbook: planning, recruitment, selection, professional development, performance appraisal and compensation. Planning involves job analysis, forecasting demand and supply and a knowledge of employment laws. School can also plan for a demand of teacher retention or retention

strategies (Mercer, Barker & Bird, 2012; Irwin, 2011). Two important things to consider in recruitment process are sources and methods. Most effective organizations recruit candidates from various sources and choose more than one methods (Werner, Schuler & Jackson, 2012).

It is vital to train and develop teachers' potential by determine what staff training needs, designing programs and implementation. Lunenburg and Ornstein (2008) stated three kinds of performance appraisal. The judgment approach is comparing employees by using graphic rates, absolute standards approach uses a check list or essays and result-oriented approach uses goal-setting, absenteeism, training or experience to evaluate. However, some difficulties in this process are fear and misunderstanding of judgment (Mercer, Barker & Bird, 2010). Compensation is a reward for employees in form of finance benefit and other form of benefits (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Rebore, 2011) such as rewards for achieved performance, special plan for retirement or health plans. Five major variables to consider before making any compensation policy (Rebore, 2011) are performance, effort, seniority, skill and job requirement such as the complexity and responsibility of that job.

A study of HRM practices in America by Morris and Jones (1993) was also used. HRM practice's category is similar to Lunenburg and Ornstein except recruitment and selection. These two combined as one dimension. In short, it is valid to assume that administrators who are able to identify the problems and apply proper HRM theories or models will lead their schools towards successful HRM practices.

Ofori, Sekyere-Abankwa and Borquaye (2012) studied the perceptions of HRM in Ghana and the finding showed that the top three most important functions of HRM are recruitment of qualified personnel, training and development and retention of qualified staff. It is also revealed that a HR function is influenced by age and job position. Nakpodia (2010) studied in Nigeria to examine the usefulness of HRM in schools and the findings showed that HR faced different forms of training. There was also a significant difference between the performances of HR in relation to students' academic performance.

An in-depth study of five teachers who worked in International Schools (Anderson, 2010) found that International School teachers have certain needs and expectations. They also form their own culture. Their needs included a concern about how administrators treated them and trusted them to do the job. Not feeling trusted and desire for a new adventure was among the reasons given for leaving their positions. Teachers expected transparency about their working and living condition. They also expected easy access to communication with friends and families. Trust and relationship were very important along with other needs. Administrators need to take into account these needs.

Dora Ho (2009) argued that teachers need to participate in HRM especially within staff appraisal. The

opportunity for giving feedback to administrators should be provided for teachers as well. Previous research in public schools in Prachin Buri, Thailand (Chanhorm, Chotisukan & Gosalanantagoon, 2011) supported the need that teachers wanted to participate in school personnel administration. There was a difference in the level of teachers' needs which was based on their work experience, and level of education.

There is also research carried out in relation to private schools in Thailand in this study. Meesomboon,

identifying teachers' perceptions of HRM dimension in an international school in Prawet district, Bangkok. It is also focusing on comparison of teachers' perceptions according to demographic factors which consist of teachers' age, gender, nationality, period of work experience and level of education. There are five major HRM dimensions: planning, recruitment and selection, professional development, performance appraisal and compensation.

The conceptual framework is shown below:

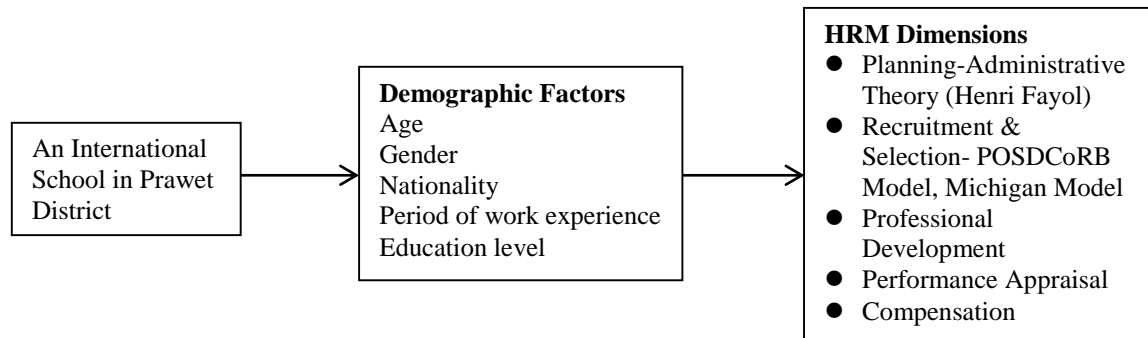


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Tithiworarat and Sookkeha (2011) conducted research on the efficiency of HRM in accordance with principals and teachers under the jurisdiction of the Islamic private schools of Thailand, Bangkok and Central region. They found that efficiency was moderate and there were significant differences toward the effectiveness of HRM in Muslim schools, particular in a commitment to education, work experience and school relationships.

Similarly, a study on Educational Management Problems in Private Chinese Language Teaching Schools in Bangkok (Viengnont, 2008) showed that the overall education management's problems were at a low level but the highest mean was in personnel management, and, administrators' attitude toward the problems of academic management and personnel management where there was significant difference. In contrast, other findings (Kengsom, 2008) suggested that the perception level of teachers, staff and workers was moderate and there was no significant difference in their perception level.

Previous research has shown that the results of HRM practices vary across school sizes, school types and school cultures. Actually, dealing with people is unique because of the individual differences. However, the common challenges found are mostly in the area of selection, professional development, relationship, motivation and retention. In order to improve HRM practices in schools, administrators or educational leaders need to evaluate their systems, being open for feedback and letting their staff participate in these processes. Challenges will become opportunities for school leaders to improve themselves, their employees and their school as a whole.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework is based on Fayol's theory of administration and HRM Models. The study focuses on

Research Methodology

Quantitative research was conducted, using a questionnaire on a selected International School. Populations included in this study were 49 teachers and this study was conducted in the academic year 2013. The survey instrument was designed to assess respondents' perceptions toward HRM dimensions in an International School. The questionnaire consisted of two parts.

Part I: to ask demographic data about teachers' age, gender, nationality, period of teaching experience and level of education.

Part II: to identify the level of teachers' perceptions toward HRM practices as follows: planning, recruitment and selection, professional development, performance appraisal and compensation. The respondents were asked to rate 34 questions using Five-Point Likert Scale. A scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)

Questions 1-7 are concerned with planning.

Questions 8-14 are concerned with recruitment and selection

Questions 15-21 are concerned with professional development

Questions 22-27 are related to performance appraisal

Questions 28-34 are about compensation

Number of questionnaires return was 93.87 % of all the distributed questionnaires.

Data Analysis

The statistical analysis of the data was done by SPSS (The Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics was done to determine the demographic profile of the respondents. Further, Inferential statistics (one way) ANOVA and Independent Sample t-Test were used to study the differences between the levels of teachers' perceptions according to demographic factors. Independent Sample t-Test was used to find the differences of gender.

Results of the Study

These are research findings:

1. Respondent Data. Demographic factors of the research showed that 54.3% of the respondents were females while 45.7% of the respondents were males. Dominant respondents were people under 25 years of age, this represented 30.5% of the respondents. Majority of respondents when classified by nationality were others besides Thai and Asian and they represented 54.3 % of all respondents.

Majority of those respondents had a Bachelor's Degree and those respondents represented 65.2% of all the respondents. Majority of the respondents worked at this school for between 5 and 10 years. Those respondents represented 41.3% of all the respondents. The smallest group, when classified by work experience, was those who worked for 11 years and above. They represented 23.9% of all the respondents.

2. From the research done in this study, teachers' perceptions toward HRM in a selected International School were revealed. The overall level of teachers' perceptions toward HRM dimensions was low.

2.1. Teachers' perceptions at a moderate level: recruitment and selection dimension

2.1.1. The most perceived HRM dimension was recruitment and selection with a mean score of 2.6215. This represented teachers' perception at a moderate level. The highest score of teachers' perception toward recruitment and selection was candidate's major matching for vacant or new position.

2.2 Teachers' perceptions at a low level: planning, professional development, performance appraisal and compensation dimension.

2.2.1 The lowest score of teachers' perceptions towards planning dimension was planning for retention strategies.

2.2.2 The lowest score of teachers' perceptions towards professional development dimension was formal training for new teachers as well as existing employees.

2.2.3 The lowest score of teachers' perceptions towards performance appraisal was employee's self-ratings on performance.

2.2.4 The least perceived HRM dimension was compensation and the lowest score of teachers' perceptions towards compensation was raises or rewards for hard work or for exceptional employee.

3. In response to the hypothesis, there was no significant differences in teachers' perceptions toward HRM dimensions according to the demographic factors of age, gender, nationality, work experience and education level. However, from the analysis of data, there was significant difference in teachers' perceptions toward professional development and nationality. The result data revealed $\text{Sig} = .012 < .05$. Additionally, the mean of Asian teachers' perceptions toward professional development was higher than Thai teachers. In other word, Asian

teachers expressed strongly agree or agree opinion on profession development.

Discussion

The following section presents discussion of the findings of the research. The highest mean score falls into recruitment and selection though teachers perceive it at moderate level. This finding agrees with the notion that most effective organizations recruit candidates from various sources and choose more than one method (Werner et al, 2012). The school might have good networks with other schools and a talent pool from sister or brother schools that enable it to find teachers ready to fill any vacant or new position and use various methods to reach out to candidates. Besides the school website, a school might use an employee's recommendations, advertisements and recruitment agencies.

The result showed that the lowest score in planning dimension was planning for retention strategies. This is one of HRM's weaknesses in this school. According to Fayol's theory, all administrators perform forecasting and planning (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008). The finding indicated that school administrators applied this idea, however, it might not be appropriate or may be lacking in strategy plans to meet the needs of teachers especially retention plan.

Professional development is very important for Schools to train new teachers and maintain the effectiveness of teachers in the school. However, the mean score of teachers' perception toward this was low. This indicated that there was a weakness in providing formal training for both new and existing teachers' needs. Teachers might not get enough training or the training does not meet their needs. The study of Anderson (2010) stated that International School teachers formed their own culture and had special needs. It could be for this reason that most of teachers at this International School disagreed with the professional development programs that were offered to them.

Teachers' perception toward performance appraisal dimension was also low. This could be because of some difficulties found in the process of assessment such as misunderstanding and fear (Everald, Morris & Wilson, 2011). It could be that teachers feel it as a judgment on them. The finding revealed that school may not highly rate employee's self-ratings on performance. Furthermore, Dora Ho (2009) argued for teacher participation in performance appraisal in order to be fair and accurate. While schools may lack providing opportunity for teachers to get involved in evaluation, teachers may want to include self or peer evaluation.

The lowest mean score fell in the compensation which is a reward for teachers in various forms (Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2008; Rebore, 2011). Therefore, it might be possible that there are not enough rewards or special plans for retirement or health plans that motivate teachers to perform better or help increase their commitment. The appropriate compensation depends on

performance, effort, seniority, responsibility, ability and clear criteria that administrators set up before teachers sign their contract (Rebore, 2011). They both have to agree, and be faithful and fair to one another.

Based on the overall findings of the study, the research hypothesis was not supported. The differences may be due to dissimilarities in the sample, culture diversity, school size and location. However, this research finding result confirms previous research. This research stated that there was no significant difference in the perception of teachers and school administrators toward the state and problems of HRM in public schools in the Sakon Nakhon Education service area 2 (Phangjan, 2009 ; Supachat, 2009). In addition, the findings of this study also supported the previous research (Kengsom, 2008), noted that there was no significant difference in the perception of teachers, staff, and workers toward personnel administration in a private school in Chumporn, Thailand.

As evident from the research findings, teachers' age, gender and education level were not an influence on their perceptions toward HRM, which has also been acknowledged by other researchers (Meesomboon, Thitiwratthath & Sukkeha, 2012). In contrast with this research finding, when looking at work experience, they found that Muslim private school teachers and principals in Bangkok and central region showed significant differences toward the efficiency of HRM.

Considering nationality, teachers who are Thai and those who are Asian are different from each other in the professional development. This confirms a previous research that showed a strong and significant association between training and development for different nationalities (Jacob & Jolly, 2012). This difference in nationality and professional development could be explained by these following reasons. First of all, based on the research findings, the diversity creates various needs in professional development. Though teachers are from neighboring country they still see things differently. Second, teachers' backgrounds or cultures that they grew up in influence their perceptions. Those teachers who felt the training programs met their needs; agree more with the professional development plan or programs offered.

Recommendations

These are recommendations for utilizing the results of research:

1. Recommendations for practice are as follows:
 - 1.1 Review HRM policy and revise it.
 - 1.2 Plan for retention strategies such as a relationship strategy, personal and professional growth of employee strategy and compensation strategy.
 - 1.3 Provide opportunity for participation in planning and ongoing professional development.
 - 1.4 Provide regularly assessment, rewards or recognition for outstanding teachers.

2. Recommendations for further research are as follows:

- 2.1 A similar study should be conducted.
- 2.2 A further study on the impact of nationality and professional development.
- 2.3 A comparison of HRM in schools and the business sector.
- 2.4 A combination of qualitative and quantitative study should be conducted.

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