A Review of Sustainable Human Resource Management in Schools

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Abstract

This paper discusses a theoretical framework developed for strategic human resource management in the context of Indian school education establishments, thereby enabling them to be more attractive, performance driven, and student oriented. There is a growing concern of teacher shortages in India and as per some of the recent reports, it has also severely affected the pupil-teacher ratio across the country. As such, schools need to manage their workforce strategically in order to attract and retain best of the available talent. This can be supported through the proposed strategic human resource management model for schools. Such type of a model when supported by programs customized to the characteristics, vision, and objectives of schools will have wider scope for other education systems too. Moreover, some of the human resource management strategies, which can be effective in raising the overall attraction and retention of teachers in public schools are also discussed.

Keywords : **pupil teacher ratio, attraction, retention, strategic planning, human resourcing, mission, vision, primary schools, performance accountability**

JEL Classification : M12, M20, M51, M52

The problem within an institutional context is the acute shortage of teachers at the Indian primary school level, which as per recent report (Yadav, 2011) is approximately 7 lakhs. A further review of statistics from the same report points out that Kendriya Vidyalayas, Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and other Indian Universities also face a shortage of staff across the country, but the shortage at the primary level is grave. One of the leading indicators which is used to describe the quality of education received in any education establishment, be it public or private, is the student or pupil- teacher ratio. The higher this ratio, the lesser the focus derived by an individual student from the faculty(s). According to DISE (District Information System for Education), Ministry of HRD report (Mehta, 2011), some major states like Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Orissa etc. have majority of the schools (more than 50%) with three or less than three teachers. And if this shortage continues, then our education system may have to bear some serious repercussions.

The Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 has necessitated the pupil - teacher ratio (PTR) at the most to 30:1. This is an important feature of this Act, which regulates the availability of teachers in schools. However, the absence of skilled personnel and slow pace of teacher recruitment remains an important issue. As per DISE report (Mehta, 2011) during 2010-11, out of five, two schools didn't reach the primary standard norm of a PTR 1:30, and more than 60% (two out of three) children were registered in schools that did not meet this standard ratio. Likewise, 70% (seven out of ten) upper primary schools didn't achieve the RTE specified teacher-pupil ratio of 1:35, and roughly one in two children were enrolled in schools that failed the norm. There are huge disparities, with nine out of ten primary schools in Bihar having a pupil-teacher ratio of over 1:30. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands is the only region that has achieved the PTR norm for primary and upper primary education. Furthermore, at present, fifty seven lakh approved teaching positions exist within the government sector, in which seven lakhs posts remain vacant. Furthermore, it is critical to note that the present number of teaching posts is inadequate, and it is appalling to note that 54% (approx.) schools pursuing a pupil -teacher ratio have the same way above than 30:1. It is also forecasted that along with filling existing voids, close to five lakhs additional teachers will have to be appointed by the government in order to meet the PTR standard of 30:1. Recently, the Union HRD Minister said (MSES, 2010) that to fulfill the Right to Education obligations (Chatterji, 2011), an additional 13 lakh teachers need to be appointed. The UNESCO Institute of Statistics report (June 2010) "Teachers and Educational Quality: Monitoring Global Needs for 2015" estimated that achieving the millennium development goal of providing elementary education to all children by 2015 will entail the Indian

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government to hire more than 20 lakh new teachers, perhaps the biggest influx of new teachers globally.

Strategic Need for Human Resource Management

The important role that teachers play in helping schools realize their outcomes and teacher shortage issues affecting schools in India needs some serious consideration. This paper argues that the proposed model of strategic HRM can be successful in achieving strategic objectives and business outcomes that can benefit schools. Considering the importance of teachers, one of the major challenges for schools is to attract and retain best teachers in the right quantity, which is very much needed to achieve the business goals and objectives.

The problem solving for teacher shortage will be a key success area for schools in Central India, but the question is how strategic HRM can help in this direction? As per HR strategies, the retention strategy provides suitable conditions for retaining teachers, and other strategies such as involvement, investment, and cohesion are also very much required. These strategies can provide suitable actions that can enhance attraction and retention of teachers under the framework of a school-based model of SHRM. Such type of a model need to be supported by programs customized to the characteristics, vision, and objectives of schools in line with relevant theory and which will have wider scope for other education systems too.

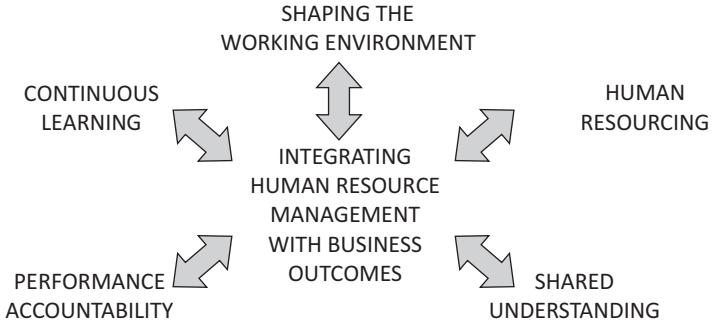
Since most of the schools belong to the public sector and fall under the governance of this sector, this means that the policies and procedures of the education department regulate public schools and indirectly control public schools and as such, the role of strategic HRM is also examined in the public sector.

Human Resource Management in the Public Sector

It has been argued that strategic approach of industry type HRM is not suitable for public sector as most government agencies rarely operate in competitive markets and do not have the same level of autonomy as that of private industries (Kumar, 2008). Therefore, strategic HRM implementations need to be perceived differently as and when compared to private organizations. Many public sector organizations depend on their workers for intellectual capital in order to have a competitive advantage, which also necessitates the strategic management of workers. The system should be able to identify essential knowledge, abilities, skills, and these workers need to develop their capacities and at the same time, nurture employee commitment. This means strategic human resource management has to be viewed in a broader sense, and its objective is not just limited to business profitability or target achievement.

The role of strategic human resource management is to help organizations implement strategic initiatives, carry out integrated personal program for enhancing organizational performance by acquiring, developing, and managing human resources strategically. For organizations that rely on business targets, cost containment HR strategy is used. The public sector agency depends more on human capital and ,therefore, focus is on how to manage this intellectual capital effectively. These governmental agencies seem to depend on a combination of investment, involvement, and retention strategies for attracting, developing, and retaining human resources in a dynamic business environment. The five elements of strategic human resource management that need to be aligned with elements of strategic HRM

Figure 1 : Strategic Human Resource Management Framework



Source: M.A. Smylie, D. Miretzky, & P. Konkol (2004).
"Rethinking Teacher Workforce Development: A Strategic Human Resource Management Perspective".
Chicago (USA), National Society for the Study of Education (NSSE) Publishers, pp.34-69

include shaping the work environment, human resources, shared understanding, performance accountability, and continuous learning as shown in the Figure 1. Each of the points mentioned above is described as follows:

Integrating Human Resource Management with Business Outcomes

- ❖ Desired business deliverables are determined and shared with all employees.
- ❖ Strategic and operational business planning addresses human resource (HR) issues.
- ❖ Business strategy is endorsed by effective human resource information systems.
- ❖ Organizational structure is coordinated with the demands of the business.

Shaping the Working Environment

- ❖ Conditions of the employment are responsive to organizational and employee needs.
- ❖ Policy and guidelines foster ethical conduct.
- ❖ Organizational culture and accountability mechanisms exist for the achievement of diversity.

Human Resourcing

- ❖ The strategic business planning determines priorities for HR planning.
- ❖ Flexible resourcing options are effectively used to ensure that the organization possesses the skills and competencies required to meet demands of the business.
- ❖ Impartial process of recruitment, selection, and induction processes are systematically distributed throughout the organization.

Shared Understanding

- ❖ The expected business outcomes are identified and shared with all employees.
- ❖ Communication strategies take account of the different viewpoints and understanding levels within the organization.
- ❖ Employees are regularly informed about the progress towards the achievement of business outcomes.

Performance Accountability

- ❖ The performance management processes are attached to the fulfillment of business outcomes as well as individual performance and growth needs.
- ❖ Managers are responsible for guiding employees as a crucial part of performance management processes.
- ❖ Employees regularly receive feedback from managers and are encouraged to reflect on their contribution to the organization.
- ❖ The performance management processes are consistently deployed throughout the organization and records are kept so that decisions can be reviewed during appraisal for recognition and reward.

Continuous Learning

- ❖ A strategic human resource plan includes human resource development needs and outlines development activities based on priorities of the business.
- ❖ The core competencies are identified and skills gaps are systematically addressed.
- ❖ The performance indicators measure the success of development activities, service delivery improvements, and in meeting business outcomes.

In the school context, there is almost negligible documented evidence pointing out how human resource management practices function in an integrated and strategic manner for teachers when compared to the practice of individual human resource functions. Evidence has suggested that major improvements can be accomplished by recruiting, rewarding, and retaining effective employees. Moreover, some schools are better as compared to others as they rely on performance accountability, higher clarity of purpose, delegations of decisions, and a common culture of values

for collectivism. The above findings are suggestive of strategic human resource management approach; however, there are dilemmas specific to the school environment, which need to be resolved before strategic teacher workforce management can be fully impinged. To sum up, an important feature of strategic HRM in public sector is the need for suitable strategies to retain and attract human resources, and as such, it is imperative to propose a school model of strategic HRM in this education sector.

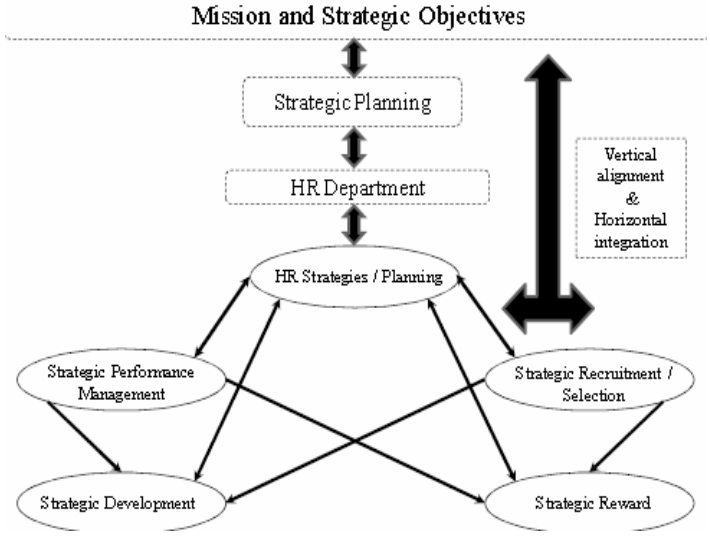
Strategic Human Resource Management Model For Schools

The theory of strategic human resource cannot be separated from socio-economic, political, and industrial relations climate and hence, there is a need to work on feasibility of strategic HRM within one's own industries. The attraction and retention of teachers shall depend on development of strategic HRM framework and processes, which align vision and objectives of the school. As such, some of the key characteristics of school-based strategic HRM model should be as follows :

- ❖ A pluralistic approach which recognizes shared industrial objectives.
- ❖ An approach that emphasizes employee involvement through consultation, commitment, communication, and empowerment.
- ❖ Human resource strategies that focus on developing, attracting, and retaining human resources to realize school outcome.

There are four main requirements of strategic human resource management (SHRM) in public sector organizations. This entails fully setup strategic planning processes, vision, and mission of the organization, committed HR department in which the staff is involved in associating personnel functions with strategic objectives, and vertical activities with horizontally integrated personnel policies and practices. With these prerequisites, the framework for school based strategic HRM model is described in the Figure 2.

Figure 2 : Proposed School Model of Strategic Human Resource Management



Source: J. Tompkins (2002). "Strategic Human Resources Management in Government: Unresolved Issues." *American Journal of Public Personnel Management, 31* (1), pp.95-110

❖ **The Strategic Planning Process :** This is a process of formulating actions in order to guide organizations and consider objectives and future changes to have maximum advantage. The strategic planning process gives a clear sense of direction, and normally, the top management undertakes a strategic plan (Heneman, 2003) which can be short, medium, or a long term plan.

❖ **Mission and Strategic Objectives:** A well-defined and stated mission statement and strategic objectives can help

organizations define its purpose and inform its main goals. Properly defined goals communicated the desired results and performance criteria can be included against these goals to cover all business aspects and concerns (Koteen, 1997). The organization vision gives a clear direction, while the mission statement informs about the organization purpose, which needs to be shared with all the stakeholders.

❖ **A Committed HR Department:** It is important to have dedicated human resource personnel whose skills and knowledge are aligned with the organization's mission and vision. In the absence of suitable resources, the human resource personnel will not be able to act strategically and will perform mere administrative functions. The integration of staffing, retention, development, and change management is also stressed. Furthermore, if employees are involved in the strategic planning process, then the HR personnel can align human capacity in order to support strategic initiatives.

❖ **Alignment and Integration of HR Practices with Organizational Objectives:** The HR activities need to fit both horizontally and vertically. Matching of HR practices with overall business strategy is done under vertical alignment, while the integrated interrelationship that exists among human resource activities is carried out in horizontal alignment. A suitable horizontal fit entails that policies and practices in one functional area do not contradict with other areas and moreover, aligned policies and practices match the organization's mission and objectives.

HRM Attraction and Retention Strategies in Practice

As the human resource function is comparatively new in the field of education and ,therefore, effectively constructed human resource programs need to consider the school system along with a particular need of the school employees. The goals of the school need to be met by suitable attraction and retention strategies, and as such, it should focus on the processes of recruitment, selection, appraisal, and development. It is ,therefore, important to highlight the teacher's need, plan their supply as per future availability. And some strategies to attract talented people into teaching profession include scholarships, internships, etc.

There are many industries which are concerned about changing business needs and respond to customer needs, and schools can learn from this. The flexible work practices allow organizations to adapt to their fast-changing environment. Likewise, hiring teachers on visiting, temporary, short-term or part-time basis can also help ease workload (Noe, 2007). Moreover, offering part-time employment has attracted talented female professionals from other professions back into the education industry. A family-friendly workplace establishes policies supporting flexible working arrangements, part-time work, paid leave to help workers balance work family responsibilities.

Some of the issues of teacher shortages can be resolved by applying these practices but more needs to be done in terms of policy amendments, which can focus on workload reduction and enhance professional status of the teachers. Another strategy is to develop clear career growth structures implemented through formal career progression plan supported by an effective compensation system which can actually help educational bodies retain quality teachers within the education sector. As far as retention is concerned, re-hiring of former employees can increase supply of teachers. The information provided at an exit interview can help employee retention. Strategies can be devised to tackle certain issues, which have been shared by an employee in those exit interviews. Furthermore, there is a need to understand the issues of current employees and some sort of attitudinal survey can also be very useful in this regard. The set of strategies described above can be used solely or in combination to improve teacher attraction and retention. The implementation and development of these strategies can be guided through human resources function in schools.

Conclusion

The human resource strategy is the prioritization that aligns the human resources, policies, and programs with a strategic business plan. The strategic human resource management approach involves evaluating the likely impacts on the organization of both external and internal environments, long-term goals and the ways in which human resource management strategy will help adapt human resources to meet these goals. Therefore, strategic human resource management requires long term strategies which consider possible societal, industrial relations, economic, legislative, global, or technological changes or changes in business directions to achieve the most suitable alignment or 'fit' with the business goals. There is no organization that can maintain full staff attraction and retention, and there is

always some amount of employees who leave the job for various reasons. Having given the changing nature of external environment on internal environment, there is no one particular business strategy that can sustain ongoing improvements in any organization. The quality of education is dependent on the teachers and quality of teaching. Thus, in order to improve the quality of education, it is imperative to address the shortage of teachers as well as quality of teachers and teacher-training courses. Developing a framework of strategic human resource management strategies and processes that align with a school's vision and objectives will help in the attraction and retention of teachers in schools. And ,therefore, our school-based model of SHRM has included some key features such as a soft approach that emphasizes involvement of employees through consultation, empowerment, commitment, and communication. The strategic human resource management can actually help schools make necessary changes as presently required, and adopt a flexible approach for managing and planning of its resources for long-term sustainable competitive advantage, which is very much the need of the hour.

Managerial Implications

This study has some major implications for human resource management in schools. This study identifies how strategic implementation of human resource functions could bring about improvements in the attraction and retention of teachers. The suggested school model of strategic human resource management should provide a simple and pragmatic framework to guide managers and practitioners in the implementation of strategic human resource management in their local school systems. The four key requirements namely : an established strategic planning process, a clear statement of the organisation's mission and strategic objectives, the existence of a dedicated HR department, and the vertical alignment and the horizontal integration of personnel policies and practices form the building blocks a school needs to set up to help it strategically manage its human resources.

Understanding the complexities of teachers' motivations and attributes of work environment that influence teacher attraction and retention are important. Understanding the relative importance of these can help managers prioritize and design appropriate attraction and retention strategies. For instance, if schools attract teachers who satisfy the right personal characteristics, these teachers would stay in the profession if reasonable working conditions are in place. The relationship between personal characteristics and intentions to stay or leave the teaching profession is useful as human resource managers could use 'personal characteristics' surveys to predict the retention potential of the teaching workforce in their schools. They could use this knowledge to develop attraction and retention levers.

Scope for Future Research

Understanding the link between strategic human resource management and school learning outcomes would reinforce the need for strategic human resource management in school systems. Future studies could examine how fully decentralized school-level strategic human resource management could be implemented within the centralized public school sector or in those private schools with centralized or partly devolved systems. Further research could investigate the relationship between teacher attraction-retention and different measures of learning outcomes and quantify the financial cost of implementing the school based model of strategic human resource management and strategies presented in this study. Future research could also complement the current qualitative study into the interrelationships between strategic human resource management factors and teacher attraction-retention.

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