

School Heads' Ways Forward in Addressing Challenges in Recruitment, Selection, and Placement in Davao Region, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the Human Resource Management (HRM) practices of school heads in the Davao Region, Philippines, with a focus on Recruitment, Selection, and Placement (RSP) processes. Using a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2014) and purposive sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015), data were gathered through a validated researcher-made interview guide from 22 school heads directly handling HRM functions. The study highlights school heads' strong commitment to transparency and merit-based recruitment, aligning with Department of Education (DepEd) guidelines through systematic job postings, Comparative Assessment Results (CAR), and structured ranking and reference checks. Institutional consistency and fairness are maintained, while onboarding programs promote staff integration and retention, with inclusive efforts ensuring opportunities for underrepresented groups. Despite these best practices, challenges remain, including a shortage of qualified applicants, procedural inefficiencies, financial constraints, and retention issues linked to migration and limited career advancement opportunities, alongside ethical concerns like favoritism. To mitigate these issues, school heads implement strategic solutions such as mentorship programs, capacity-building efforts, and the creation of Human Resource Merit Promotion and Selection Board (HRMPSB) sub-committees to reinforce fairness and transparency. These efforts emphasize the critical role of school leaders in cultivating an effective, inclusive, and future-ready educational environment, benefiting both educators and learners.

Keywords: Davao Region, Human Resource Management, PRIME-HRM, , School Heads, Philippines

Introduction

Recruitment, selection, and placement (RSP) are vital pillars of human resource management (HRM) that shape the quality and effectiveness of an organization's workforce (Dessler, 2020). In educational institutions, especially within the public sector, efficient RSP processes directly impact the delivery of quality education and overall institutional performance (Garavan et al., 2021). School heads, as primary implementers of HRM policies, play a crucial role in ensuring these processes align with institutional goals and educational standards. However, in the Philippines' Davao Region, these efforts are often hindered by bureaucratic constraints, limited resources, and evolving sectoral needs (Villalobos et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges demands a thorough understanding of current practices and the development of context-specific, innovative solutions.

Despite the Department of Education's (DepEd) emphasis on a merit-based RSP system to promote transparency and equity (DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2017), school heads frequently encounter issues like

prolonged hiring processes, mismatches between personnel qualifications and job requirements, and scarce opportunities for professional advancement (Manila & Reyes, 2022). These challenges not only undermine employee satisfaction and retention but also affect teaching quality and student outcomes. Furthermore, the increasing demand for digital literacy, adaptability, and innovative teaching approaches calls for more strategic and forward-thinking HRM practices (Yazon et al., 2021). Nationally, staffing issues persist, with the teacher-to-student ratio reaching 1:35 in elementary and 1:40 in secondary education (DepEd, 2023), highlighting the urgency of localized and systemic interventions.

This study seeks to explore the practical strategies and solutions employed by school leaders in overcoming RSP-related challenges in the Davao Region. By identifying the best practices, gaps, and opportunities for improvement, the research aims to enhance HRM systems and support the development of equitable and sustainable human resource strategies. It also aspires to provide empirical evidence and actionable recommendations aligned with national education policies and the region's unique socio-cultural context. Through this investigation, the study underscores the pivotal role of school heads in fostering a culture of excellence and inclusivity, ultimately benefiting both educators and learners.

Statement of the Problem

The study purposely was to explore the explore the Human Resource Management in terms of Recruitment, Selection, and Placement practices of school heads in the Davao Region, Philippines. The study sought to answer the following:

1. What are the practices by school heads in the RSP process in the Davao Region?
2. What are the prevailing challenges faced by school heads in the RSP process in the Davao Region?
3. What strategies and initiatives have been employed to address these challenges?

Methods

This study employed a qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2014) to gain an in-depth understanding of Human Resource Management in terms of recruitment, selection, and placement practices of school heads in the Davao Region. Data was collected using a validated researcher-made interview guide designed to explore recruitment, selection, and placement practices, challenges, and coping mechanisms. Purposive sampling (Palinkas et al., 2015) was used to identify participants based on specific inclusion criteria, ensuring that only school heads with direct HRM responsibilities and experience in implementing HRM-RSP standards were included with a total of twenty-two school heads participated in the study, providing rich and diverse perspectives on their HRM experiences.

Results and Discussion

This presentation highlights the key findings on human resource management (HRM) Recruitment, Selection, and Placement (RSP) practices, challenges, and the way forward for school heads in terms of as recruitment, selection, and placement—are implemented, identifying both strengths and gaps in these areas.

Practices of School Heads in in HRM-RSP

1. Transparency and Merit-Based Recruitment Practices

The school heads in the Davao Region have consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to transparent and merit-based hiring processes, aligning with the Department of Education's (DepEd) established

guidelines. Transparency in recruitment is crucial in building trust and fairness in organizational hiring practices (Breagh, 2017). This commitment is reflected in their adherence to DepEd Order No. 007, s. 2023 and DO No. 7, s. 2015, which emphasize a structured and meritocratic approach to recruitment. The practices include posting vacancies on official platforms such as the Civil Service Commission (CSC) website and DepEd Davao del Norte's social media pages. This ensures equal opportunity for all applicants, including persons with disabilities (PWD), members of indigenous communities, and individuals with diverse sexual orientations and gender expressions. The use of Comparative Assessment Results (CAR) further reinforces the principle of transparency, enabling qualified candidates to understand their standing in the selection process (Kapur, 2020).

2. Structured Selection and Placement Processes

A well-defined and structured selection process is a cornerstone of effective human resource management in schools. According to Gatewood, Feild, and Barrick (2015), structured selection methods help minimize biases and ensure fair evaluation of candidates. School heads employ systematic procedures such as the pointing and ranking system, ensuring an objective assessment of applicants. The establishment of hiring committees, adherence to clear job descriptions, and conducting thorough reference and background checks are integral parts of this structured approach. The involvement of the Public Schools District Supervisors and school-level panels in screening and evaluating applicants ensures that the most qualified individuals are selected. This process is further strengthened by the use of the Registry of Qualified Applicants (RQA), which follows a merit-based point system, promoting fairness and consistency in placements (Breagh, 2017).

3. Institutional Alignment and Policy Adherence

School heads' recruitment, selection, and placement practices are closely aligned with institutional guidelines and DepEd policies. Institutional alignment ensures consistency and standardization in human resource management (Dessler, 2020). The schools' compliance with the hiring guidelines for Teacher I positions, as outlined in DO No. 7, s. 2015, underscores their commitment to standardized and equitable hiring practices. This alignment extends to the forwarding of applications to the Division Office, ensuring that the selection process involves key educational bodies like the PESFA for elementary schools and NAPSHI for both junior and senior high schools. By following these institutional protocols, schools maintain consistency in their HRM practices while upholding DepEd's vision for fair and inclusive recruitment (Kapur, 2020).

4. Inclusivity and Equal Opportunity

Inclusivity and equal opportunity are pivotal in the recruitment and selection processes of schools in the Davao Region. According to Noon (2018), promoting inclusivity in hiring practices leads to a more diverse and innovative workforce. School heads actively encourage applications from underrepresented groups by accommodating incomplete applications through additional documentation and training. The publication of job postings on widely accessible platforms like Facebook and the official DepEd pages ensures that information reaches a broad audience. Moreover, the explicit commitment to providing opportunities for PWDs, indigenous community members, and individuals of diverse gender identities reflects a proactive stance on fostering an inclusive educational environment (Dessler, 2020).

5. Comprehensive Onboarding and Orientation Programs

Beyond recruitment and selection, school heads prioritize comprehensive orientation and onboarding programs for newly hired employees. Effective onboarding programs are essential in reducing employee turnover and increasing job satisfaction (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). These initiatives are designed to

facilitate smooth transitions and equip new staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their roles effectively. By providing structured onboarding, schools reinforce institutional culture, clarify job expectations, and support employee integration, ultimately contributing to staff retention and overall organizational efficiency (Gatewood et al., 2015).

Challenges Faced by School Heads in HRM-RSP

1. Shortage of Qualified and Specialized Applicants

One of the most prevalent challenges faced by school heads in the Davao region is the shortage of qualified and specialized applicants, particularly in rural areas. The lack of teachers for specific subjects and specializations, especially those requiring National Certificate II (NCII) in technical and vocational courses, results in staffing gaps that directly affect the quality of education. This shortage often leads to employees seeking transfers to urban stations where opportunities and resources are more abundant, further exacerbating staffing issues in remote schools. In addition, the limited number of qualified applicants sometimes fails to address the specific needs of the school, creating mismatches between teacher expertise and curricular demands (Teulings & Hartog, 1998).

2. Systemic and Procedural Inefficiencies

The recruitment, selection, and placement process are often hindered by systemic and procedural inefficiencies. School heads report that the long appointment process and extensive document evaluation due to the high volume of applicants, particularly from far-flung areas, create significant delays in filling teaching positions. Moreover, the implementation of guidelines sometimes becomes a cumbersome process, adding to the bureaucratic bottleneck. The shortage of available teaching items or slots coupled with intense competition further complicates the situation, leading to prolonged vacancies and unmet staffing needs.

3. Socio-Economic and Financial Constraints

Financial limitations also play a crucial role in the recruitment and retention challenges faced by schools in the Davao region. Budget constraints restrict the number of available positions, and the resources allocated for recruitment and teacher development. Additionally, the relocation of teachers from their homes to distant school stations often results in financial strain, discouraging potential applicants from pursuing or continuing their teaching careers in rural areas. Teachers' financial constraints, combined with the high cost of living and insufficient allowances, contribute to retention issues and a high turnover rate (Gupta & Shaw, 2014).

4. Retention and Migration Issues

The challenge of retaining qualified teachers is a persistent issue. High turnover rates and low retention stem from attractive job offers from private institutions and opportunities abroad, which often provide better salaries and benefits. This migration trend leads to a loss of experienced educators and disrupts the stability of the teaching workforce in public schools. Furthermore, retention issues are exacerbated by teachers' dissatisfaction with working conditions, limited professional advancement opportunities, and the demanding nature of their assignments in rural areas.

5. Ethical and Fairness Concerns

Nepotism and the so-called "backer system" remain a critical concern in the recruitment and selection process. School heads acknowledge that favoritism and external influence sometimes overshadow merit-based hiring, leading to questions of fairness and transparency. These practices not only undermine the integrity of human resource management but also contribute to the hiring of underqualified applicants,

increasing competition without necessarily improving teaching quality. The refusal of contract signing by some selected candidates also points to dissatisfaction with employment terms, further complicating efforts to maintain a stable and competent teaching workforce.

Ways Forward and Strategies by School Heads in Addressing Challenges in HRM-RSP

1. Mentorship and Capacity Building for Effective Teacher Transition

One of the key strategies identified in addressing challenges related to recruitment, selection, and placement in schools is the implementation of mentorship and capacity-building programs. School heads coordinate closely with master teachers to provide mentoring programs aimed at supporting newly hired teachers in their transition into the school environment. This practice aligns with the findings of Borman and Dowling (2008), who emphasized the importance of mentorship in teacher retention and professional development. By pairing experienced educators with new hires, schools not only facilitate a smoother onboarding process but also foster a culture of continuous learning and support.

2. Promoting Diversity and Inclusivity in Recruitment Practices

Diversity-focused recruitment emerges as a vital component of the human resource management strategy in schools across the Davao region. Schools highlight the importance of balancing inclusiveness with qualifications, ensuring that recruitment practices are both equitable and merit based. Each school has established its own Sub-Committee of the Human Resource Merit Promotion and Selection Board (HRMPSB) to guarantee that candidates are selected based on merit, fitness, and qualifications. This approach underscores the need for continuous transparency, efficiency, and fairness in recruitment processes, as well as the importance of unbiased rating systems, where selection committees are composed of school heads, specialists, and division personnel.

3. Enhancing Organizational Culture and Employee Satisfaction

Strengthening organizational culture through team-building activities and promoting community benefits plays a crucial role in retaining and motivating school personnel. Highlighting benefits and growth opportunities within the institution, alongside salary benchmarking practices, ensures that teachers feel valued and supported. These efforts not only improve employee satisfaction but also contribute to a more cohesive and collaborative work environment, which is essential for the long-term success of educational institutions.

4. Ensuring Transparency and Merit-Based Selection

A strong emphasis on transparency and fairness characterizes the recruitment and selection practices of schools in the Davao region. The use of merit-based points systems for addressing teacher shortages reflects a commitment to objective and impartial evaluation. By continuously providing updates through official platforms and engaging multiple stakeholders in the selection process, schools foster trust and accountability within their human resource management systems.

5. Future Directions and Continuous Improvement

Moving forward, schools recognize the need for continuous improvement in their recruitment, selection, and placement processes. By integrating feedback mechanisms and staying updated with best practices in human resource management, schools can address evolving challenges more effectively. Future strategies include expanding mentorship programs, strengthening diversity initiatives, and enhancing the visibility of community benefits to attract and retain top talent.

Conclusions

The findings of this study underscore the commendable efforts of school heads in the Davao Region in upholding transparency, meritocracy, and inclusivity in their recruitment, selection, and placement (RSP) practices, closely aligned with the school's established guidelines. Despite systemic and procedural challenges, as well as socio-economic and retention issues, school heads have demonstrated strategic and structured approaches in addressing these concerns through practices like mentorship programs, structured assessment methods, and comprehensive onboarding initiatives. These efforts not only ensure fair and equal opportunity for all applicants but also contribute to the creation of a supportive and professional teaching environment. However, persistent issues such as the shortage of specialized applicants, procedural inefficiencies, and ethical concerns necessitate continuous improvement and innovation in HRM-RSP practices to maintain and elevate the quality of education in the region.

Recommendations

Considering the challenges and best practices identified, it is recommended that the schools and school heads in the Davao Region strengthen capacity-building initiatives and mentorship programs to support newly hired teachers, particularly in rural areas. Streamlining the RSP process through digitalization and policy simplification can minimize procedural delays and ensure timely placement of qualified candidates. Additionally, promoting competitive incentives and enhancing the visibility of community benefits can help address teacher retention issues. Establishing more robust feedback mechanisms and continuous training on ethical recruitment practices will further reinforce transparency and fairness in the selection process. Through these collaborative efforts, the educational sector in the Davao Region can cultivate a more resilient and high-performing workforce, ultimately enhancing the quality of education delivery.

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