



A human resources operating model establishing professional human resources management for catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis

Arnulfo Somido Aniel

Education Management, Education, Social Science and Humanities, Mahidol University, Salaya, Nakhon Pathom 73170, Thailand

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to develop a human resources operating model establishing professional human resources management for Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis through an examination of current HR functions, roles and situations. This study adopted documentary research interviews, facilitation of workshops and a focus group to collect data from Catholic leaders, HR professionals, heads and teachers from selected Catholic schools. All the useable data collected from the documents, 10 experts and 60 participants from the workshops were analyzed. The findings from this research proved that human resources functions among Catholic schools do not exist as a department but a position. HR roles and responsibilities are shared with school directors, principals and heads. The main conclusions drawn from this study are the principle of employee-centred in implementing additional HR functions like talent attraction, compensation and benefits, talent management and talent retention and the need for HR professionals to be recognized in their roles.

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Introduction

Education in the 21st century means a period of rapid change with constant innovation and technological advancement in a globalized environment where education needs to continuously adapt. Even Catholic schools, which are globally considered providers of quality education, face challenges all around the world. There are numerous Catholic schools in Thailand, and they are confronting their own challenges. The biggest Catholic congregation that manages the greatest number of Catholic schools in Thailand is facing secularization,

cultural and behaviour changes of students, preparation of school leaders and political and social issues. It is necessary for Catholic leaders to utilize all the resources they have, particularly human resources professionals, to respond to those challenges. Without an HR model, limited HR functions and responsibilities of HR professionals, the human resources operating model developed in this study will creatively upgrade their current HR practices to be more effective and efficient.

It is a time of technological revolution that is moving at an overwhelming pace and Catholic schools can be an instrument between human development and technological growth. Catholic schools and their way of teachings is needed more than ever. Since Thai Catholic schools serve both Catholic and non-Catholic students, they are in a position to influence the many and act as antidote to the society of materialism, immorality and technology.

E-mail address: arnyaniel@gmail.com.

Catholic education has the ability to blend both worlds— young people using technology wisely while at the same time developing their spirituality and socially responsible.

Interestingly, the challenges are matters that can be handled through effective human resources management. Human resource is the most important resource in education (Nakpodia, 2010; Norton, 2008; Thompson & Kleiner, 2005) yet separate researches on human resources management in different schools seem to be contradictory. It seems the function of human resources in schools needs some attention to be more effective and efficient.

Previous studies on HR in schools found that effective human resources can impact teachers' performance and be instrumental to the overall success of schools (Butler, 1999; Nakpodia, 2010; Thompson & Kleiner, 2005). They indicated recruitment, development, retention and motivation of teachers as important HRM functions in educational organizations.

The role of HR functions is to take initiatives and provide guidance, support and services on all matters relating to the organization's employees. Essentially, the HR function is in the delivery business— providing the advice and services that enable organizations to get things done through people (Armstrong, 2010). Schools, most especially Catholic schools, can certainly employ HR functions for improvements, further developments and overall achievements. This study aimed to establish professional human resources for Catholic schools and develop a human resources operating model for Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis. The results will provide HR professionals an active role in the school system and the school leaders, particularly the Catholic leaders, a model to manage HR practices effectively and efficiently. The objectives of this study were the following:

1. To examine the current HR functions, roles and situations to establish professional human resources management
2. To establish knowledge and performance improvement of human resources management
3. To develop a human resources operating model for Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis.

Methodology

This research used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. Documents on HR practices in recognized organizations were collected, analyzed and summarized, and were used as basis as professional human resources management. The data were also used as questions for the in-depth interviews with 5 experts who were purposively selected. The experts included 2 Catholic leaders, who used to work as school principals,

2 experienced department heads in schools under the management of the biggest Catholic congregation in Thailand and 1 owner who works as the school director of one of the oldest Catholic schools in Bangkok. Two groups of 100 HR professionals, heads, administrative staff and teachers from different Catholic schools were invited for 2 separate workshops. A workshop on "HR for Non-HR" was attended by 30 participants of teachers from different Catholic schools. The other workshop on "HR Models" was attended by 30 participants of HR professionals, heads and administrative staff working in different Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis. Both groups took a pre-test and a post-test before and after the workshops. The participants participated in lectures, brainstorming, pair and small group discussions. The significant knowledge and opinions gathered from the workshops confirmed current HR functions, roles and situations in Catholic schools that were obtained from the in-depth interviews and what is needed to be done to make their HR management professional. Another group of 5 experts were selected in the focus group discussion to validate the human resources operating model for Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis. The experts consisted of an HR consultant from a non-profit organization, 2 HR Managers from private companies and 2 heads of Catholic schools.

Data Collection

To accomplish the first objective, a documentary research was conducted to examine current HR functions, roles and situations in recognized organizations including schools and the information was obtained from different sources. Data were collected, analysed and summarized into themes and a manageable amount of evidence. In-depth interviews with 5 experts were also conducted to study the current HR functions, roles and situations in Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis and compared to the recognized practices among organizations and schools.

For the second objective, two workshops were organized where 100 HR professionals, heads, administrative staff and teachers from Catholic schools were invited. There were 30 teacher participants who attended the first workshop and another 30 HR professionals, heads and administrative staff participants who attended the second workshop. The participants took pre-test and post-test that were checked by experts on their validity. A pilot test was conducted with 30 participants to ensure the pre-test and post-test were reliable.

A focus group discussion with invited experts was arranged to check the human resources operating model for Catholic schools.

Data Analysis

As the data collected were analysed, they revealed common themes as follow:

Employee-centred

This theme obtained details of human resources management in recognized organizations including schools and a university. They all have common HR functions, roles and policies which are employee centred. They all believe that employees are the key to an organization's success, and employees are in the centre of plans and activities.

No HR department

This theme encapsulated the experts' common opinion of the need for qualified HR professionals in Catholic schools and the need to change their roles and add more functions to the current staff who are assigned to HR work. Human resources exist not as a department but a position. HR roles and responsibilities are shared among directors, principals and heads.

School director as HR

This theme captured knowledge and opinions of the teachers who attended the workshop on "HR for Non-HR" who were not aware of HR professionals (administrative staff) in their schools. As they experienced, all HR related functions in their schools were done by school directors, principals or heads.

Shared responsibilities

This theme acquired all the details of the HR roles and responsibilities as discussed by the HR professionals, administrative staff and heads themselves, who do the HR functions in the schools. All HR functions like recruitment and performance management are shared between school directors or school principals who look after the overall HR management.

Results

What are the Existing Roles of Human Resources Professionals in Catholic Schools in Bangkok Metropolis?

In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with selected experts who have worked in Catholic schools. They collectively had the same opinions on the current HR situations and HR functions in Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis.

There is no HR department in most Catholic schools, but they have someone in charge of HR functions who works directly with the school principal or school director. HR functions are limited to recruitment, employee relations and administrative work. Recruitment activities include job advertisement, processing of applications and arranging interviews with heads and principal or director. Employee relations are primarily about coordination with heads and teachers on school activities. Administrative work involves documentation, policies, communication and tasks as assigned by the school principal or school director.

Based on the results from the in-depth interviews, the information obtained from the experts was considered and compared to the collected data on HR practices from organizations and educational institutions (Table 1). All this was combined and studied to develop the HR operating model for Catholic schools.

Together a list of HR functions and respective tasks/activities for each function was summarized.

Workshops

A workshop was facilitated with 30 teachers from different types of Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis. They participated in group activities and discussions on HR in their schools. They also took a pre-test and post-test on the activities on HR functions.

The results from the pre-test ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.96$) and post-test ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.52$) in compensation and benefits; pre-test ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.07$) and post-test ($M = 5.17$, $SD = 1.60$) in employee relations; and in the overall scores in the pre-test ($M = 19.00$, $SD = 2.03$) and overall scores in post-test ($M = 21.97$, $SD = 3.66$) indicate improvement after the workshop. There was a significant increase in their knowledge after they attended the workshop (Table 2).

A workshop was facilitated with 30 HR professionals, head and administrative staff from different types of Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis. They participated in group activities and discussions on their functions and HR models. They also took a pre-test and post-test on the activities on HR functions.

The results from the pre-test ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 1.01$) and post-test ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.32$) in compensation and benefits indicate improvement after the workshop. There was a significant increase in their knowledge after they attended the workshop (Table 3).

In the workshop, HR professionals, heads and administrative staff were able to share their knowledge on human resources management and their responsibilities.

Paired t-test was used to compute the mean difference and determine the significance with the reliability using Guttman method at .67.

Table 1 Summary of current HR functions with corresponding task/activities

HR Functions	Task/Activities
Recruitment	- Job advertisement - Initial interviews
Training and Development	- Training - Succession planning - Leadership program
Compensation and Benefits	- Salary
Performance Management	- Policies - Work with the heads
Employee Relations	- Policies - Retention program
Administrative Work	- Announcements concerning teachers - Disseminate information

Table 2 The comparison between pre-test and post-test for teachers

		<i>n</i> = 30			
	HR Functions	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Recruitment Pre-Test	4.33	0.71	1.98	.05
	Recruitment Post-Test	4.60	0.62		
Pair 2	Learning and Development Pre-Test	4.63	1.10	0.97	.34
	Learning and Development Post-Test	4.90	1.09		
Pair 3	Compensation and Benefits Pre-Test	3.67	0.96	3.69	.00**
	Compensation and Benefits Post-Test	4.97	1.52		
Pair 4	Performance Management Pre-Test	2.13	0.73	1.06	.30
	Performance Management Post-Test	2.33	0.76		
Pair 5	Employee Relations Pre-Test	4.23	1.07	2.87	.00**
	Employee Relations Post-Test	5.17	1.60		
Pair 6	Overall Pre-Test	19.00	2.03	4.04	.00**
	Overall Post-Test	21.97	3.66		

Note: Total score = 30 points.

** *p* < .01.

Table 3 The comparison between pre-test and post-test of HR professionals, heads and administrative staff

		<i>n</i> = 30			
	HR Functions	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>p</i>
Pair 1	Recruitment Pre-Test	4.30	0.65	0.17	0.86
	Recruitment Post-Test	4.33	0.88		
Pair 2	Learning and Development Pre-Test	4.37	1.00	0.65	0.52
	Learning and Development Post-Test	4.20	1.24		
Pair 3	Compensation and Benefits Pre-Test	3.87	1.01	2.89	.00**
	Compensation and Benefits Post-Test	4.67	1.32		
Pair 4	Performance Management Pre-Test	2.63	0.85	1.61	0.11
	Performance Management Post-Test	2.37	0.85		
Pair 5	Employee Relations Pre-Test	4.33	1.47	1.13	0.26
	Employee Relations Post-Test	4.70	1.56		
Pair 6	Overall Pre-Test	19.50	2.98	1.56	0.12
	Overall Post-Test	20.27	3.28		

Note: Total score = 30 points.

** *p* < .01.

Table 4 Current HR functions and roles in Catholic schools

Functions	Roles
A. Recruitment	Coordinating with recruitment agencies to fill vacancies for foreign teachers. Coordinating with Heads to fill vacancies for teachers. Assisting in advertising vacant positions with the help from IT.
B. Training and Development	Informing teachers about conferences, seminars and training outside. Processing of documents for teachers attending conferences, seminars and training outside. Contacting and coordinate with external trainers.
C. Performance Management	Working with Heads on developing and revising performance appraisal forms. Participating in discussions on performance appraisal.
D. Employee Relations	Organizing some parties or assist the heads organize school activities like parties. Assisting teachers on their issues and concerns.
E. Administration	Processing/Assisting in processing visa and work permit for foreign teachers. Working directly with school director or school principal on administrative work. Tasks as assigned by the school director or school principal.

What are the functions of human resources department in Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis?

From the discussions in the workshops with the HR professionals, heads and administrative staff, below is the summary of the HR functions and the roles of HR professionals in each function.

What are the Functions of Human Resources for Catholic Schools in Bangkok Metropolis?

The overall system of the model is based on the HR practices from the recognized organizations and compared to the current HR functions and roles in Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis (Figure 1).

The results from the pre-tests and post-tests from the workshops together with knowledge and relevant opinions from the participants were also summarized into different functions. Through discussions with a group of experts who shared their expertise in HR management and Catholic school system, the human resources operating model outlines how HR should operate in Catholic schools with clearly defined HR functions including talent attraction and selection, compensation and benefits, talent management and development, relationship and retention and quality administration.

Discussion

The Vatican has a body of literature that provides guidelines for human resource management, but this is unknown to many employers. The documents tackle a variety of concerns which includes employment relationship. These documents are collectively called as Catholic Social Teaching. In 1891, Pope Leo XIII wrote the encyclical

Rerum Novarum, which means “Of New Things” with an English title, “The Condition of Labor” considered to be the beginning of modern Catholic Social Teaching. It was a response to seek improvement in the employment conditions in the past, which still applies in modern times.

The Catholic church believes that work is fundamental in the life of the people and necessary in living. Work is a means for the people to survive, and at the same time, for their self-worth and dignity. In this regard, HR issues are summarized into three themes that are based firmly on the scripture, which establishes the personnel management model, (1) the worker’s dignity, (2) the worker’s family security, and (3) the common good. This model has an impact on the human resource management and its decisions.



Figure 1 Final draft of human resources operating model for Catholic schools

The documents obtained on HR practices from educational institutions and other companies from different businesses all follow the same principle as the HR Model from the Vatican doctrine, which focuses HR functions on employees. All the programs are employee-centred. They all put emphasis on attracting, selecting, developing, compensating and retaining employees. They also have precise, specific qualities and skills that they require for the people who work and will work for them. This makes HR effective and efficient in implementing their functions and creating organizational results.

The current limited HR practices Catholic schools, where responsibilities are shared among leaders as revealed in the interviews and workshops, does not allow HR professionals to implement full HR functions. HR professionals are aware of their roles and responsibilities but need to take active roles to implement them with proper authority.

Experts believe that Catholic schools do not recognize the significance of HR functions and HR professionals to help them achieve goals, which they find as the reason they do not have the active roles and functions. Catholic school leaders do not feel any need to give HR professionals a more participative and active role. With the human resources operating model developed for this study, experts trust that it will be a good starting point for Catholic leaders to consider. The model can serve as a guide for Catholic schools, Catholic leaders and HR professionals, which can also be used in other educational institutions with reconsideration on the religious aspect of the model.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The overall findings revealed valuable perceptions on the status of human resources management in Catholic schools in Bangkok metropolis. The results showed that HR practices in Catholic schools are limited and a shared responsibility that is carried out by senior leaders, particularly with school directors or school principals, who have the overall responsibility. This is the same result as Butler (1999), who studied human resources in educational organizations. It is also noteworthy to find that teachers who are key employees of schools are not aware of HR functions, and most of the time they only deal with school directors for HR related issues. This is contrary to the data obtained from the documentary research, where recognized organizations like FedEx and Google, to mention a few, have employee centered HR strategies with a belief that their success depends on their employees.

Another significant finding is the limited roles and responsibilities of HR professionals, like in recruitment, which Thompson and Kleiner (2005) emphasized is the first step to effective HRM, namely, attracting and recruiting qualified pool of applicants who are teachers, in the case of schools. Nakpodia (2010) also concluded in his study on human resources management in school administration that HRM is an important aspect in all organizations, which can have a major influence in the success of organizations. With the current HR functions, roles and situations, Catholic schools and their leaders are missing the potential they would have with HR professionals. This is strongly related to Hashmi's (2014) research that current practices of human resources are not effective in improving teachers' efficiency with the possible reason that teachers are unaware of HR strategies.

Based on the research findings and results, Catholic schools and school leaders should review their current HR functions and the roles they assign to their HR professionals. The human resources operating model developed in this study outlines how to establish a more professional HR with clear functions. The model can assist them in dealing with current and future challenges and other private schools, which probably confront similar challenges, can also consider implementing the model. According to Rebores (2012), the two important goals of HRM in schools are to achieve the school's goals and to contribute to the personal and professional growth of staff.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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