REVISITING THE HUMAN RESOURCE AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OF THE EARLY YEARS LEARNING CENTER IN MANDALUYONG CITY

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Abstract:

This study sought to investigate the Human Resource and Management (HRM) Program of a preschool hereinafter referred to as the Early Years Learning Center (EYLC) in Mandaluyong City for purposes of this research study. This is a qualitative case study that delved particularly into the issue of employee retention, especially of seasoned teachers and staff of the subject learning center. It used the interview method to generate an in-depth analysis as it revisited its HRM Program. To triangulate the data gathered, documents from websites and social media as well as artifacts were also utilized. There is a dearth of research on the Human Resource and Management Program in preschool education. Most studies are from India and China. In terms of the HRM Program in education, SWOT analysis was frequently used to help improve the program. There were negligible sources that used the balanced scorecard at the preschool level. Hence, a combination of the SWOT analysis and the Balanced Scorecard method were utilized - the SWOT Analysis to determine the problems the learning center faces vis-à-vis its HRM Program, and the balanced scorecard in the search for a solution or strategy to help solve the problem. Based on the study, these combined tools proved to be effective in revisiting the HRM Program of schools. After interviewing the Directress of EYLC, findings disclosed that to be able to improve the retention of employees in the learning center, the focus should be given to the hiring policies and procedures keeping in mind the job security of its targeted employees. This brings forward concerns over advertising schemes utilizing different venues and platforms as well as issues involving the provision of seasoned employees with a retirement package, comprehensive Health Management Organization (HMO), and a continuing professional development program.

Keywords: *Human Resource and Management Program, balanced scorecard, SWOT analysis, preschool, learning center*

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INTRODUCTION

Education is a process that directly involves the active participation of human resources in all aspects of its organizational activities. They take the part of planner, actor, and decision-maker in the achievement of certain goals and objectives. This holds true in the field of education. More specifically because the role played by educators in the learning process cannot be replaced by technology. To fulfill the requirements of the course Human Resource and Management (HRM) in Education, four graduate students at the Assumption College Graduate School Master of Arts in Educational Leadership and Management invited the Directress of a progressive preschool in Mandaluyong City. The interview paved the way for them to write an action research paper for their class. To keep the privacy of the school in place, the preschool will be referred to as the Early Years Learning Center (EYLC) in Mandaluyong City.

The learning center subject of this research is family-owned. It was established to provide a venue for the organizers' passion to work with children. It was established in 2010 in Mandaluyong City. It provided progressive education to children between two to five years old. In 2013, a larger campus was established to have a bigger venue for more children enrolling under its care. By 2017, the preschool became the learning partner of a major private corporation. Eventually, in 2020, another private entity partnered with the center.

EYLC was born out of a love for teaching. It is a learning center that carries out experiential activities designed to widen children's knowledge of the world in a developmentally appropriate environment. It envisions the enhancement of the children's competencies expected for their age, for them to practice independence, and boost their confidence which will stimulate and encourage to foster their love for learning.

Since the preschool was established out of love and passion for children, the workforce is also treated with love, respect, and understanding. The Core Team does not believe in the philosophy of bureaucracy and hierarchy in managing teachers and staff. Consequently, this perception gave rise to a small organization where they treat one another as family. Therefore, the need to stress the importance of professionalism and address the issue of retention of their employees and staff using rational professionally proven methods. Teachers and staff are trained to adhere to the school's philosophy, vision and mission, goals, objectives, and core values. It takes time to develop a core group that is composed of seasoned teachers and staff. Ergo, the need to retain highly qualified and trained staff using professionally accepted tools such as the Performance rating system and the Department of Education's Qualification Standards.

In this regard, the research study examined the implementation of the Human Resource and Management (HRM) Program of the school. Since preschool teachers play a key role in the operation of the school, the researchers investigated how the learning center maintains and improves the retention of its employees, especially the seasoned teachers, and staff.

Background

Human Resource and Management (HRM) is important in any firm. It plays a crucial role in balancing the demands of the employer and the employee. In a well-designed and well-developed organization, both staff retention and financial success are priorities.

The realm of work environments and their personnel has captured substantial research attention, resulting in the evolution of HRM literature. Workers are viewed as pivotal assets that form a competitive edge for a company (Barney & Wright, 1998 as cited in Gerhart & Feng, 2021; Boselie, Paauwe, & Jansen, 2001 as cited in Benjamin, n.d.). The recent surge in HRM research underscores its emergence as a critical focal point for scholars, educators, and industry professionals (Hyun, Cho, & Yoon, 2015).

Both scholars and professionals concur that individuals represent the most invaluable resource within any organization. This consensus arises from their involvement in decision-making across various echelons of the organization, encompassing vital aspects such as overseeing financial resources, conducting business dealings, utilizing diverse communication channels, and engaging with clients (Kumarl, 2015). How modern industry views the concept of human resources as an invaluable competency has undergone considerable modifications.

Human resources within every tier of an educational system are responsible for orchestrating the execution of its curriculum. As stipulated by Nwaka and Ofojebe (2010), educators play a pivotal role in effectively carrying out educational policies and objectives within the practical confines of the classroom. Irrespective of whether in the private or public domain, a manager assuming a crucial position who undermines the significance of individuals in the pursuit of objectives will find their efficacy and efficiency compromised, as noted by Oduma (2012). It is, in fact, the teacher who serves as the ultimate bridge between policy and practice, as they interpret and apply the tenets of the educational curriculum designed to realize overarching educational aspirations (Omojuwa, 2007 as cited in Ndifon, Edu, Olofu & Adie, 2021). Educational merit is preserved and enhanced through teachers, which signifies that teachers make the schools. Good teachers make good schools. They provide the best learning support. Aligned with this viewpoint, stems the notion that the curriculum can be delivered effectively when quality teachers are employed as well as the institution's management is exceptionally carried through. Hence, HRM in an educational institution takes an important role in leading, managing, and supervising teachers and all its education workforce.

In order for educational institutions to function efficiently, the presence of human resources is crucial. While human resources used to be viewed as less important, their importance has grown significantly over the last twenty years. Once again, this heightened significance is linked to the proper recruitment, selection, oversight, training, remuneration, assistance, growth, assessment, and advancement of employees within the educational field. This approach ensures that employees remain committed to their roles and are effective contributors to the education system. Furthermore, it entails a substantial financial investment in educational resources. When managed professionally, human resources have the potential to provide a competitive advantage to education. The strategic consideration of human resource management in any business should mirror the approach taken with financial, technological, and other resources (Onah, 2008 as cited in Usen, et.al., 2021). The term "personnel function" has traditionally encompassed these operations, and the newer strategic orientation of HRM has not replaced it. The personnel function has long been referred to as this set of operations, and the newer strategic focus of HRM has not

been abolished. To conclude, defining a comprehensive, singular perspective on contemporary human resource management is challenging. Nevertheless, the research study underscores the significance of the following factors:

1. **Staff Maintenance.** A strategic take that ensures staff maintenance means a requirement in regular promotions and transfers. It provides employee motivation and helps them visualize their work goals. Another regulation is to guarantee the safety and security of employees. They must feel safe and secure while they perform their duties at work. It includes the provision of proper health services and all other relevant practices. To ensure that workers are treated fairly and with justice, educational institutions must have strict standards in place for staff transfers and promotions. The way an employee feels while doing his job is equally as important as the work he must complete in school. Every HR in the school must ensure the well-being of all employees including administration, faculty, staff, and maintenance team. This may be done by paying salaries on time and providing a safe and healthy working environment for all.

2. **Staff Relations.** A solid communication network must be established at each institution to keep employees informed of the school's success. The institution must advocate and encourage active participation from employees in decision-making regarding school propositions, projects, and direction. This measure allows employees to become aware that their feelings, interests, wants, and emotions concerning their work are given importance while aligning them with the essential to the progress and development of the institution.

3. **Staff Development.** This is the procedure of assessing employee performance and deciding which fundamental abilities and skills need to be improved through training or development. It means providing training and development programmes tailored to their specific requirements. The strength and calibre of an educational organization's staff members influence its success. There is a desire for advancement and skill development through training. This can be accomplished through in-service training, conferences, workshops, and seminars.

4. **Procurement of Staff.** The recruiting and selection process is how educational institutions choose the best personnel to comprehend and carry out their curriculum goals. Human resource management must take charge of hiring school personnel. Hiring personnel or employees for schools is done via screening walk-in applications, agencies, and online posting agencies. Staff procurement's role in education sectors is to find the right persons with the necessary knowledge, talents, and experience to fill unfilled teaching posts in schools.

5. **Job Performance Rewards.** Creating and managing incentives for accomplished tasks has an important function within institutions. Data indicates that employees' performance would increase significantly if they were adequately rewarded for the quality and amount of work they accomplished.

According to the study by V. Rao (2014), the methodologies and concepts that must be used in the human resource audit are described in the audit that was conducted. His methodology makes it easier to estimate many factors like core competencies, organizational values, and culture. The system can be improved in some of the areas where the

employee is failing by assessing their interpersonal abilities. Additionally, the top-level management is made up of open-minded individuals who help the lower and middle-level workers learn about their issues. Accordingly, by raising productivity, every single individual in the company contributes to their ability to accomplish more.

Challenges of Human Resource Management in Education

Since people cannot be trusted to consistently perform the same task in the same manner, HRM has grown noticeably complex. Depending on their qualifications, skills, and cadres, they may be pricey. Their capacity to instruct has a significant impact on their productivity. It is impossible to consistently give the same content. This complexity is an outcome of numerous factors.

As a result of the fact that people are not dependable for consistently performing one action in a particular manner, HRM has grown noticeably complex. Depending on their backgrounds, education, and abilities, they may be pricey. The ability of the individual to instruct has a significant impact on their productivity. Not every time can the same topic be presented. This complexity is the result of many different factors.

Education's use of HRM is crucial, and playing around with it could have negative consequences. The fast-moving development of the society where the institution is located affects its development. Human resources must identify the needs of the institution and formulate a system wherein those employed will be encouraged to give comprehensive productivity, all-embracing service delivery, and a concern for the well-being of the institution. All of these are reliant on the human resources management department.

Types of Employment in the Philippines

In the Philippines, there are five distinct categories of employment, each defined by the tasks and activities an employee is expected to undertake. The employer is responsible for outlining the terms and conditions of the employment agreement, adhering to the guidelines specified by Philippine labor laws and regulations (InCorpPhilippines, 2022).

Employers commonly implement probationary employment for new recruits in the Philippines, even though it is not an officially recognized employment category. This practice allows employers to assess the abilities, capabilities, and job performance of new hires, helping them ascertain whether these individuals can meet the established benchmarks to be considered for permanent employment (InCorpPhilippines, 2022).

According to Article 281 of the Philippine Labor Code, probationary employees are limited to a maximum duration of six (6) months, which is calculated from their initial work commencement date. If employment continues beyond this six-month probationary phase, it transitions into regular employment status. It's crucial to highlight that the employer is required to inform the employee about the probationary period and the performance standards they need to fulfill by the conclusion of the probationary term. In cases where the employee is not appropriately informed of these conditions, the law stipulates that they should be regarded as regular employees from the beginning of their tenure with the company (InCorpPhilippines, 2022).

However, for teachers, the probationary period is usually three (3) years due to the nature of the work. The management needs to see how well they get to perform their job as a teacher in a span of school years and not just months.

Retirement Benefits

MP Camaso & Associates (2022) stated that "employees are a company's greatest asset because they take care of business and the customers." Retirement plans may be complicated but are a valuable benefit that will impact not only the employee's lives, but also the probability of higher employee retention. Understanding the needs of the employees and the goals they have for their future will aid the human resource department in offering plans and benefits fitting for the employees as well as for the institution.

Employees become eligible for a retirement pay benefit, following the Department of Labor and Employment regulations, once they fulfill specific criteria:

1. The employee must attain a retirement age ranging from 60 to 65 years old. Between the ages of 60 to 64, employees can opt for retirement or continue working. However, at the age of 65, retirement becomes mandatory and obligatory (MP Camaso & Associates, 2022).

2. The employee should have served the company for a minimum of five (5) years. This benefit is applicable to all employees except: a.) Government employees; b.) Employees of retail, service, and agricultural establishments/operations that consistently employ no more than 10 employees (MP Camaso & Associates, 2022).

Employees are entitled to a retirement pay benefit (based on the regulations of the Department of Labor and Employment) once they reach these specific criteria:

In the absence of a retirement plan, RA 7641, An Act that Provides Retirement Pay to Qualified Private Employees in the Absence of Retirement Plan shall apply (MP Camaso & Associates, 2022).

SWOT Analysis and the Balanced Scorecard

SWOT stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The SWOT Analysis helps "initiate meaningful change" (ORR, 2013 as cited in Al Kadri, H & Wuduawati W, 2020) to help improve a program.

On the other hand, a balanced scorecard is a strategic management system that can translate an organization's vision and strategy into operational goals and measures that are then expressed from four perspectives: the financial perspective, the perspective of the customer, the perspective of the internal business processes, and the perspective of learning and development (Kaplan & Norton, 1996 as cited in Camilleri, 2021). The balanced scorecard, as defined by Mulyadi & Jony Setiawan (2000 as cited in Utami, Prastiwi, Ningsih 2020), is made up of the words "Balanced" and "Scorecard," respectively. The definition of a scorecard states that it will be used to plan scores that might be attained in the future. In contrast, the phrase "balanced" refers to the ability to evaluate executive performance from a variety

of perspectives, including internal and external, short-term financial, long-term financial as well as non-financial perspectives.

For this case study, the researchers decided to combine both SWOT Analysis and the balanced scorecard to support the research findings. This study is significant for preschool owners especially in the Philippine setting because it amplifies the importance of revisiting the Human Resources and Management of the school. Retention of employees in family-owned preschools or private preschools in the Philippines is a major concern. Revisiting the HRM Program can help identify the problems and find solutions to make sure they keep their employees, especially the seasoned teachers, and staff.

Objectives

The objective of the study is to revisit the HRM capability of the Early Years Learning Center in Mandaluyong City with the view of helping determine how best the school leadership can manage their employees and staff efficiently. Towards this objective, the researchers did not lose sight of the importance of Employee Retention as an issue among preschools taking into consideration the time and investment they take to train teachers and staff. This study seeks to find how EYLC can improve the retention of its employees, especially the seasoned teachers, and staff

METHODS

Research Design

This qualitative case study examined the Human Relation and Management Program of the Early Years Learning Center in Mandaluyong City. The researchers found the qualitative method to be effective for this study because it involves stipulating changes for improvement as it revisits the Human Relation and Management Program. It gives a comprehensive analysis of its HRM Program focusing on the retention of employees, job security, and the hiring process. It utilized the interview method composed of open-ended questions. The interview was conducted through Zoom. This was recorded with the permission of all involved in the study. Documents and artifacts were gathered for triangulation.

Population and Sampling

Using purposive sampling inquiry, the respondent is the Preschool Directress of the Early Years Learning Center in Mandaluyong City.

Instrumentation

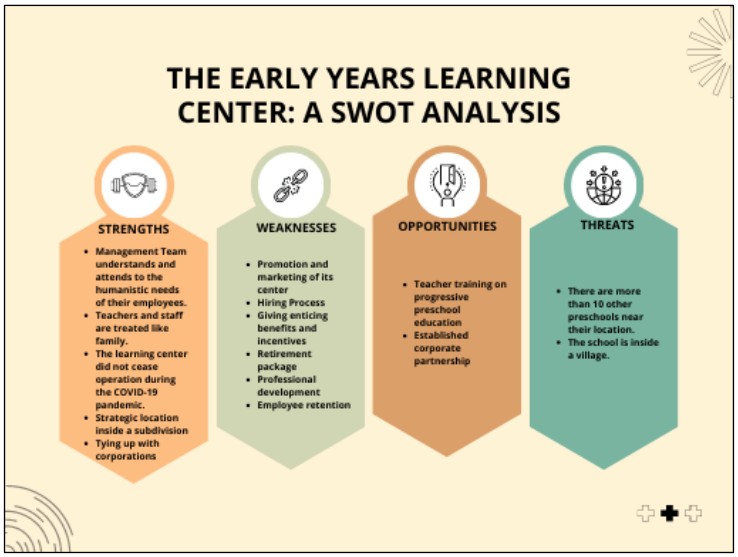
The researchers invited a Preschool Directress for an interview. They provided her with a copy of the questionnaire before the event. The interview consisted of open-ended questions based on human relations and management theories and practices. Questions were on the following topics: the background of the school, its philosophy, vision and mission, the school workforce or manpower, hiring process, training, compensation, and benefits provided for its employees and staff. Focus was given to the foremost concern of the preschool directress.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using the SWOT analysis and the balanced scorecard. SWOT analysis gave an overview of the problems the preschool encountered in terms of HRM. After identifying the major concerns of the preschool, the balanced scorecard provided strategic planning to address the concerns of the school.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION
Figure II.

SWOT Analysis



Based on the gathered information, one notable strength of EYLC (Early Years Learning Center) is its management team's adeptness in recognizing and addressing the humanistic needs of its employees. This factor has enabled the learning center to withstand the challenges of time and maintain its operations, despite its status as a smaller educational institution. The management's approach of treating teachers and staff with both professionalism and familial camaraderie has fostered a sense of loyalty and commitment among them. Consequently, these educators choose to remain and advance within the center. Even in the face of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which severely impacted numerous educational institutions, some of which were much larger in scale, EYLC managed to continue operating. This resilience can be attributed to the deep-seated dedication of the employees, who remain motivated by a purpose-driven commitment to both teaching and contributing effectively to the organization over the long term.

Moreover, the locations that the management team chose for their centers are strategic and are primarily inside subdivisions. They had instant clientele who are the children inside the subdivision and outside of it. Furthermore, the management team did well–by expanding to more centers by tying up with children's education-oriented corporate companies. Because of these, the organization grew, and the employees, as well as the clientele, increased.

In terms of weaknesses, the learning center needs to improve on creating a more solid marketing team. They must find other ways to promote the preschool not just within the vicinity of Mandaluyong City but explore other cities in

Metro Manila too. Moreover, the center should enhance and professionalize its hiring process. Aside from posting the available job vacancies on websites, the center should find other platforms to hire its teaching and non-teaching staff. Likewise, it must think of ways to ensure the job security of its employees such as giving more performance-based benefits and incentives.

In terms of opportunities, the center's training of their teachers on implementing a progressive education in preschool is something that can enrich the career growth portfolio of their teachers. Their teachers will take pride in their meaningful skills and learning which is also expensive, hence, the teachers will be empowered to stay in the learning center. Because the center has established corporate partnerships, more jobs became available and so more career progression for the teachers and staff may happen in the future.

One perceived threat to the center is the availability of other preschools in its location. Therefore, the learning center must think of ways to maintain the confidentiality of its organization's teaching practices as well as other management schemes. Another perceived threat is that since the center's location is inside a village, there might not be enough clientele for them when their children grow up and go past their preschool age. However, there is no match to the excellence of the performance of the learning center in terms of the quality of graduates it produces. Such excellent performance of the center is what attracts students and parents to gravitate towards the learning center.

Figure III.

Balanced Scorecard

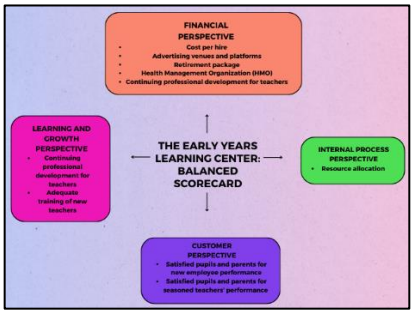


Figure III gives a more precise plan of action that the learning center may undergo to address the SWOT Analysis. The balanced scorecard shows that to be able to retain the learning center's employees, the focus should be on job security and its hiring process. Giving enticing benefits and incentives, a retirement package, and professional development all fall under job security.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are the conclusions that were drawn from the findings:

1. SWOT analysis and balanced scorecard are effective combinations to find how the Early Years Learning Center (EYLC) in Mandaluyong City can improve the retention of their employees, especially their seasoned teachers, and staff.

2. To be able to address the retention of employees, the focus should be given to the hiring process and job security of its employees.
3. The preschool needs to develop new hiring policies and processes through advertising in other venues and platforms.
4. The hiring policies and process should result in the exemplary performance of new employees based on the evaluation inputs of both pupils and their parents.
5. To improve job security, regular employees should be provided a retirement package and a comprehensive Health Management Organization (HMO).

Seasoned teachers will stay if they are given a chance for growth and development through continuing professional development programs for teachers.

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