
AN OVERVIEW OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN ALBANIAN PUBLIC VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: The management of human resources is considered a crucial component of the overall educational process. As a result, functions related to the management of human resources must be carried out as effectively as possible to meet the requirements relating to both individuals, institutions, and society goals. Human Resource Management (HRM) practices play a pivotal role in the success and efficiency of public vocational education providers, which serve as the foundation for a skilled workforce and sustainable economic growth in Albania. This study provides a comprehensive overview of HRM practices within the context of public vocational education (VE) institutions in Albania. It explores the current implementation of the HRM practices as well as challenges, trends, and emerging strategies in managing human capital to enhance the quality of education and ensure the relevance of vocational training in the Albanian labor market. The research draws upon a qualitative methods approach, combining interviews, document analysis, to examine HRM practices across multiple public vocational education providers (VEP) in Albania. Key findings highlight the current approach of recruitment and selection processes, professional development opportunities, and compensation and remuneration and its importance of effective in shaping the workforce quality and educational outcomes. Moreover, the study sheds light on the challenges faced by these institutions, such as limited financial resources, bureaucratic constraints, and the need for alignment with evolving labor market demands. The paper provides information that can be translated to set of recommendations for public vocational education providers and policymakers in Albania to enhance HRM practices. These recommendations encompass the need for increased flexibility, the implementation of strategic HRM approach and the development of comprehensive HRM policies that address the unique challenges and opportunities in the Albanian vocational education sector. In summary, this study offers a valuable insight into the HRM practices of public vocational education providers in Albania, emphasizing the critical role of human capital management in advancing the quality and relevance of vocational education in the country. The findings and recommendations presented herein provide a foundation for further research and policy development in this important field.

Keywords: Human resource management, Vocational education provider, public institution

1. INTRODUCTION

The performance of the personnel in any organization is determined by the management function of human resource management (HRM). According to Azizi et al., 2021 there is a beneficial link between HRM practices and organizational performance. Human resource management is a key instrument for achievement of objectives of an organization (Tensay and Singh 2020), organizational performance (Pham et al. 2020) as well as efficiency and justice within organization (Byers & Rue 2000). While referring to empirical data from earlier studies, HR practices have the greatest impact on organizational performance when they are strategically aligned and consistent with one another (Khatri, 1999). This straightforward statement implies that staff members will be committed to their jobs, remain devoted to them, and be productive in the educational systems when they are properly recruited, selected, supervised, inducted, and compensated. They will also be properly developed, appraised, and promoted on the job. Pradhman, 2022 through an explanatory and descriptive design, concluded that HRM positively impacted organizational performance. The same finding applies for the public sector, where studies by Anwar and Abdullah (2021) and Khancharovna (2022) examine how effectively managing human resources impacts the performance of public organizations. In VEP institution HRM can be defined as an approach used to enhance performance through recruiting skilled and motivated personnel, investing in their continuous development and motivation as well as managing effectively the personnel engaged considering both teachers and instructors. In this context the quality of public VEP personnel directly affects the performance, reputation, and attractiveness of vocational and education school. Given that VE is a significant supplier of the labor market, effective management of human resources in VE providers is a requirement for realizing the mission, vision, and goals of the vocational education and training (VET) system toward high-quality education and training for both young and adults. VET delivery of high quality is one of the main strategic priorities of the policy document unemployment and skills, which leads to improved skills for better opportunities of employment for the youth. In this aspect, the initial and continuous professional development of directors, teachers and support staff has been projected as a strategic measure to be achieved through improved recruiting procedures for VET teaching personnel, defining, and implementing the model for initial qualifications of VET teaching personnel, continuous qualifications of teaching personnel as well as initial and ongoing qualification

for director and support staff. Referring to Albanian VET law the types of institutions that provide Vocational Education and Training in Albania, are: (i) vocational high schools; (ii) multifunctional VET centers; (iii) vocational training centers; (iv) specialized VET institutions for special groups; (v) companies; (vi) other licensed and / or accredited institutions or individuals. This paper is a snapshot of the current situation of operational role of HRM in the Vocational Education (VE) Schools providers institution in Albania, taking in analysis all functions of HRM in two aspects (i) based on the legal framework and (ii) the main issues these institutions are facing based on the staff perception. Referring to Griffin (1997) operational HRM activities are mainly administrative and technical (Mathis and Jackson 1997) and based on legal perspective.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to provide an overview of the current HRM practices in Vocational Education Providers in Albania. The purpose of this exploratory study consists in investigating the implementation of the HRM practices in vocational education system. The analysis is based on the current legal framework which describes the organization and activity of the VE provider institutions, including aspects of human resources management functions. Moreover, some of the findings are based on exploratory interviews conducted in formal and non- formal meetings and interview with representatives of the VE providers.

3. HRM FUNCTIONS IN PUBLIC VEP IN ALBANIA

3.1. Staff planning

Human resource planning is a forward-looking function and ensures that the teaching service is appropriately staffed, with the right personnel at the right places at the right times. To be effective and guarantee productivity staff must be well-planned for and placed in the proper roles (Irani et al.,2022). It aims ensuring maximum cost-effectiveness and efficiency utilizing the staff to achieve the best possible result at the lowest feasible cost. Staff planning is considered a critical HRM tool to achieve and guarantee long-term sustainability (Ofori & Aryeetey, 2011). Each VEP director at the end of each school year, must estimate the staff need at their schools for the next school year and forecast the need even for a medium term. VE provider director is responsible for forecasting the demand for teachers for the school. The number of the teaching staff needed is determined mainly by the number of pupils who attend or plan to attend the profile, and request for the opening of a specific specialization or course. All recruitment procedures aim at implementing the annual staff plan of the VE provider, considering the staff need proposal from each VE provider, with the authorization approved by National Agency of the Employment and Skills (NAES) the superior institutions and according to the budget approval. The total number of the new teaching staff in national level and for each school is approved by Ministry of Finance and Economy (MoFE). It is important to highlight the process of staff planning and forecasting requires cooperation across several institutions including MoFE, NAES, Board of Management, VEP schools directors.

3.2. Recruitment and selection

The processes of recruitment and selection in education system have been critical to achieve long-term sustainability (Ofori & Aryeetey, 2011). A strict selection process fosters exclusivity, raises performance standards, and conveys the value of the individual to the firm (Pfeffer, 1994). When there is a vacancy in VEP school staff, the HR specialist have to draft the new announcement. The content of the job announcement should consider, the legal request and the information provided by the job description, including general requirements/criteria's as well as specific criteria related with the specific position. After the approval of the VET director the last sign it and the announcement are send to NAES, to be published in the official web site of NAES. First the announcement is made for lateral movement, and only if the position is still vacant the announcement is open for all who may be interested outside the VET sector. The announcement for lateral movement is made on the official website of NAES, on the official website of the provider, if any, as well as in a visible place at the entrance of the VET provider, which has the vacancy within 5 (five) working days. The selection procedure in VEP institutions is managed by an ad-hoc selection/ evaluation committee set up anytime there is t procedure, it is composed of 3 (if the director selection) 5 members and is chaired by the Board of Management leader. The Commission after its establishment performs the following steps of evaluation tasks After the appointment, the commission evaluates the candidates according to the steps below:

- reviews the documentation submitted by the applicants and lists the applicants with complete and accurate documentation, which will be evaluated by the commission. Applicants who are not accepted are notified in writing form about the absence of the documentation
- scores accepted applicants based on the criteria defined in the legal framework and guidelines.
- interviews each applicant and observes teaching hours in class for full-time teaching candidates.

- scores each applicant based on the criteria defined in the announcement, interviews, observation of the teaching hour
- communicates the selection decision or the end of the procedure without a candidate selection.
- notify NAES with an official letter submitting a summary report on the process evaluation at the end of the selection process

4. TRAINING AND CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Training and Professional development is an important function of HRM in VE providers for both teachers and non-teaching personnel. The National Agency for Vocational Education and Training Qualifications (NAVETQ) play the key role in training the teaching staff including, the initial training and continuous training and professional Development. The process starts with the need analysis conduct by VE schools, and the next step is to send the request for training to NAVETQ through informing NAES Every public VEP submits to NAES Central Directorate, up to 15 November, the list and data of the new teaching staff who must complete as compulsory initial training the course “Basics of didactics in VET” in the following year. NAVETQ is the agency in charge to manage and provide the training course "Basics of didactics in Vocational education and Training". VEP directors and deputy directors have to complete the initial training on "Compulsory training for VET directors". This training is offered by CSL, Centre for School Leadership.

Especially for teaching staff, Initial training and ongoing professional development assist them to:

- receive up-to-date educational information.
- be up to date with developments in didactics and teaching methods and continuously apply improved strategies to achieve optimal learning outcomes
- strength the identified weak areas
- provide the possibility to address the demands of students through improving one's teaching ability.
- enable to be up to date with the latest curriculum and developments in the subjects he teaches
- develop and manage his career

VEP schools must assist their staff by providing all of the necessary conditions for teachers to meet the requirements and fulfill the procedures for obtaining qualification degrees in accordance with the relevant instructions of the ministry responsible for vocational education and training.

5. COMPENSATION AND REMUNERATION

Compensation and remuneration/benefit systems are intended to motivate employees to perform well in their roles, to feel recognized, and to reap the benefits of high performance. It is critical for an organization to have a fair and transparent system in place for all employees. There are several alternatives to be implemented as incentives based on the performance at VEP level. Currently the teaching staff are being paid for the overtime, which may lead to increase of engagement of the full-time teacher. Moreover, the training related to both initial and continuous one is covered from the school budget, who motivate staff toward continuous improvement of the staff. Payment or other directly financial incentives are not the only alternatives to be implemented. More than financial incentive a promotor element in increasing engagement and motivation in long term, it is the job content itself (Armstrong, 2014). VEP institution should consider the possibility to combine the financial incentive with other non-financial rewards in order to obtain a more strategic /long-term approach.

6. CONCLUSION

The current study sheds light on the trends and practices in human resource management roles in vocational education school providers in Albania.it focused in main HRM function as staff planning, recruitment and selection, training and continuous professional development, compensation and remuneration. The exploratory research reveals that all HRM-related activities in public providers of vocational education are subject to legal regulation. It is evident that HRM is implemented in operational level, while there is no flexibility in how the functions are implemented, and there is little attempt to implement a strategic HRM strategy approach.

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