HR Practices for New Teachers and Teachers' Person-Organisation Fit

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In what follows, I present a mixed methods study on which I'm still working. In the first part, I interviewed principals and surveyed teachers. This part is finalized and the results are presented in this document. In the next part of the study, which I will start in September, I plan to interview teachers about their fit experiences. At the end of this document, I included some questions related to both parts of the study. Thank you in advance for your feedback or answers!

Part One of the Study

Introduction and theory

Drawing on literature about organisations and management, policy makers stress the value of adopting Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) in the public sector. Especially in education, SHRM is gaining attention internationally (e.g. Leisink & Boselie, 2014; Smylie et al., 2004). Today, schools are required to implement SHRM in the context of teacher shortages, teacher attrition and increased accountability. SHRM is especially promising in the educational context, considering critiques on current HRM in education as being anything but systemic or strategic (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 2003). Nevertheless, as research on SHRM in the public sector has largely been ignored (Knies et al., 2014), also the rationale for applying SHRM in education remains by large theoretical and intuitive (Smylie et al., 2004). More specifically, two related research gaps can be identified.

First, while different studies zoomed in on the effects of and differences in single isolated HR practices (e.g. hiring; evaluation; induction), few investigate the configuration of a bundle of HR practices (Smylie & Wenzel, 2006). Yet, this is important as a bundle HR practices is unique for each type of organisation (Boxall & Purcell, 2008) and the study of a bundle HR practices is critical to identify which factors slow down the adoption of SHRM in education (Symlie et al., 2004).

Second, there is a need for more research on the mechanisms through which SHRM affects performance, especially in education. Based on available research about SHRM in the private and public sector, it is expected SHRM increases performance (e.g. Boxall & Macky, 2009; Gould-Williams, 2003). One mechanism through which this might occur is Person-Organisation (P-O) fit (Boon et al., 2011). While this mechanism still needs to be tested sufficiently in the SHRM field (Boon et al., 2011; Mostafa & Gould-Williams, 2014), it is extensively studied in organisational behavior. These studies showed P-O fit is related to positive individual and organisational outcomes (e.g., Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). These positive effects explain why P-O fit also gained attention in education recently (Youngs, Pogodzinski, Grogan, & Perrone, 2015). Yet, until now, available educational research on P-O fit focuses mainly on the positive effects (e.g. Pogodzinski, Youngs, & Frank, 2013; Vancouver, Millsap, & Peters, 1994) and seldom on the antecedents of P-O fit.

Taken together, building on the available research and considering the research gaps mentioned above, the first part of this study aims to investigate how the configuration of a bundle HR practices relates to teachers' P-O fit. More specifically, this part investigates how a 'mini-bundle' of HR practices for a specific group of teachers is configured. We focus on HR practices for 'new teachers' considering their support needs (TALIS, 2008) and the need for consistent HR practices (e.g. Koppich et al., 2013; Kwan, 2009). Furthermore, this study focuses on principals' role in the configuration of HR practices for new teachers given their large responsibility and autonomy in this area (Milanowski & Kimball, 2010; TALIS, 2014).

Methods

Research design and participants

This study followed a convergent (or concurrent or parallel) mixed methods design (Creswell, 2012). Qualitative data -obtained through interviews with school principals- were converted to numerical scores (after analysis) and were analysed statistically, combined with quantitative data -obtained by a teacher survey- which were collected simultaneously. Data were collected from 56 primary schools in Flanders (Belgium). In each school, the principal was interviewed about HR practices for new teachers and was asked to hand out a survey to all teachers in the school. Surveys from 847 teachers in 56 schools were returned. Teacher data were used to determine preferred school values and perceived school values (aggregated at school level). P-O fit (based on a comparison of preferred and aggregated perceived school values) was calculated for only a subset of teachers (= 271). This subset consisted of teachers working at least three years in the school and hired by their current principal. The 'experience' criterion guaranteed teachers experienced current hiring, induction and tenure practices. Furthermore, the criterion 'hired by the current principal' was critical to be sure teachers experienced the hiring, induction and tenure practices explained by their principal during the interview.

Measures

The configuration of HR practices. Semi-structured interviews were used to identify how principals configure a bundle HR practices for new teachers. To analyze the interview data, deductive coding was used based on the dimensions 'strategic orientation' (e.g. Wright & McMahan, 1992) and 'human resource orientation' (e.g. Barney, 1991). Categories for each dimensions were used which were developed in a previous study. Based on these categories, within-case analysis was conducted and all 56 schools were classified according to two possible strategic orientations (low or high) and two possible HR orientations (low or high). Procedures such as peer review and debriefing, reading the transcripts and double-coding were followed in order to increase validity.

Different-source P-O fit. Measured using the School Culture scale (Dumay, 2009) including four aspects of school culture reflected in different school values (i.e. status of disciplinary guidelines and rules; degree of emphasis placed on academic achievement; status of innovation; teacher collaboration and collegiality). Following a procedure by Cooke and Rousseau (1988), all teachers were asked to rate each item twice, first following the cue "My school thinks it's important" (i.e. perceived school values), next with the cue "I think it's important" (i.e. preferred school values). Teacher responded by rating a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). By

comparing the aggregated mean scores for perceived school values and individual scores for preferred values, a different-source index of P-O fit was calculated. A ICC(2) of 0.79 and mean rwg(j) value of 0.91 justified aggregation of perceived school values (n=847) up to the school level (n=56). Next, the different-source index of P-O fit score was calculated for the subset teachers (n=271), building on the correlation between the 19 pairs of preferred and aggregated perceived school value items. These fit scores ranged from -0.54 to 0.93 (M=0.34); positive numbers pointing at high fit and negative numbers indicating poor fit.

Control variables. Building on the P-O fit literature, the following demographic variables of teachers were considered: age, gender and years of experience (Ostroff & Rothausen, 1997; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). Furthermore, we include school SES (aggregated pupil socioeconomic status) since we assume the school population affects P-O fit (Dumay, 2009).

Data analysis

Since the data reflect a hierarchical structure - teachers (level 1) are nested into schools (level 2) - we applied multilevel analysis (Hox, 2010). A number of multilevel models were fitted, using SPSS PASW Statistics 22. Step-by-step, the best fitting model was tested. Dummies were created for gender (male 0; female 1); SES level of the school (high SES school 0; low SES school 1); strategic orientation (low 0; high 1) and HR orientation (low 0; high 1).

Results and Conclusion

First, our study indicated that only a minority of principals configure a bundle HR practices for new teachers strategically. While the idea grows that also in education a strategic approach in HRM is necessary (Leisnik & Boselie, 2014; Smylie et al., 2004), the interviews showed that the majority of principals do not align their school goals with a bundle HR practices for new teachers and do not align HR practices with each other. Furthermore, the interviews showed there is a disharmony in the way new teachers are managed. Half of the principals in this study seem to recognise new teachers' development needs. The other half of the principals seem to perceive new teachers as resources that need to be acquired or selected in the first place, rather than resources that need to be developed.

Second, we examined how the configuration of the bundle of HR practices for new teachers relates to teachers' different-source P-O fit. The results of the multilevel analysis (see Table 1) showed principals' high strategic orientation and high HR orientation in configuring a bundle HR practices for new teachers positively affects teachers' P-O fit. In other words, principals increase teachers' P-O fit by aligning their school goals with the bundle of HR practices and by investing in new teachers. Teacher characteristics (age, gender, years of experience) nor the SES level of the school accounted for variation in P-O fit. Taken together, this study showed that while most Flemish primary school principals lack a strategic approach in configuring a bundle HR practices for new teachers, those who actively engage in configuring a bundle HR practices in a strategic or HR orientated way positively affect teachers' P-O fit.

Table 1

Model estimates of the two-level analysis of teachers' P-O fit

Parameters		Single level	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Fixed	Intercept	0.346 (0.019)***	0.342 (0.032)***	0.341 (0.032)***	0.337 (0.028)***	0.337 (0.028)***
Teacher level	Gender			Ns	Ns	Ns
	Age			Ns	Ns	Ns
	Years of experience in the school			Ns	Ns	Ns
School level	School SES level				Ns	Ns
	Strategic orientation				0.177 (0.069)*	0.117 (0.069)*
	HR orientation				0.131 (0.056)*	0.130 (0.056)*
	Strategic orientation x HR orientation					Ns
Random	Level 2 – school $\sigma^2\mu 0$		0.042 (0.011)	0.041 (0.011)	0.028 (0.008)	0.028 (0.008)
	Level 1 – teacher $\sigma^2\varepsilon 0$	0.092 (0.008)	0.049 (0.005)	0.049 (0.005)	0.049 (0.005)	0.049 (0.005)
Model fit	Deviance (-2LL)	122.005	34.800	33.363	18.425	18.407
	χ^2		87.205	1.437	14.938	0.018
	Df		1	3	3	1
	P		***	Ns	***	Ns
	Reference model		Single-model	Model 0	Model 0	Model 2
	Variance at level 2 *p* (%)		46.15	45.05	30.77	30.77

Question

Although I believe perceived fit is interesting to look at, I really want to focus on different-source fit instead of same-source fit in the first part of this study. I want to know whether HR practices can affect the 'real' congruence between teachers' preferred values and school culture. Yet, in previous studies I got sometimes the following comment of reviewers: "Why do you focus on different-source P-O fit? Different studies found perceived fit is more strongly related to outcomes and is thus superior". How can I counter these kind of critique in a manuscript? How can I emphasis the added value of different-source fit in this study?

Part Two of the Study

Question

In a next part of this study (which is planned to start in September), I want to do a case study research with teachers in schools with a high HR orientation and high strategic orientation on the one hand and a low HR orientation and low strategic orientation on the other hand. With this case study I aim to investigate how teachers' experience fit or misfit depending on the HR practices installed in their school. I try to find some qualitative research on experiencing fit but it seems to be difficult. Do you have some suggestions on qualitative fit literature research on fit?

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