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Teacher Hiring and Placement at the Elementary School Level: The Challenges of Implementing Strategic Human Resource Management Practices

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TEACHER HIRING AND PLACEMENT AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LEVEL: THE

CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

PRACTICES

by

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ABSTRACT

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PRACTICES

Brittany Nicole Walker
Old Dominion University, 2019
Director: Dr. Karen Sanzo

Decades of research emphasizes the importance of staffing schools with quality teachers, as this will have the largest impact on student achievement (Mason, Schroeder, 2010). With high teacher turnover rates in addition to shrinking qualified candidate pools, the hiring process holds great significance (Tooms, 2004). This case study explored how one school district hires and places elementary school teachers. This study follows a qualitative case study approach using documents and interviews as data collection methods. Recently, Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) has made the transition from business to educational literature. This study explored two concepts, including fit and flexibility from SHRM literature as a theoretical framework to determine strategic actions throughout human resource (HR) practices in the selected school district. The results indicated there is little evidence of strategic human resource practices in the studied school district. These findings add to a small, yet growing, body of literature on SHRM in education as well as on teacher retention and HR literature.

This dissertation is dedicated to my elementary school students who teach and inspire me every
single day.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Each year educational leaders are faced with the difficult task of recruiting, hiring, and placing quality teachers in classrooms. As candidate pools continue to shrink, the stakes for hiring quality educators begin to rise higher than ever (Tooms, 2004). Years of research surrounding student academic achievement support the need and importance of staffing classrooms with qualified, effective educators (Mason, Schroeder, 2010). The hiring process has even been stated as the administrative task that will have the greatest impact on children (National Academics, 2007).

Statement of the Problem

Teacher turnover rates are especially problematic amongst the new teacher population. Recent findings revealed 17.3 percent of teachers who began their teaching careers in the 2007-2008 school year were no longer teaching after 5 years (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). This demonstrates that nearly one-fifth of all teachers entering the field of education do not receive the adequate support, or perhaps learning opportunities necessary to fulfill the responsibilities the job requires. While this is an improvement from previous years, it still displays a drawback to public education in America. For example, teacher turnover has a direct relationship to classroom instruction. New teachers who have not yet had the experience to master instructional content are constantly filling vacancies as a result of teacher turnover in public schools. If a teacher is not a good fit for a position, it may cause him or her to leave the position or the profession permanently (Liu, Johnson, 2006). A close examination of HR hiring and placement practices could decrease teacher turnover rates by staffing classrooms appropriately from the start.

Teacher placement is also an area of interest when it comes to determining the best fit for an individual. This study examines teacher placement in an elementary setting as opposed to that of a middle school and high school. In the secondary settings, teachers are often pigeonholed in a specific grade level or subject area based on licensure requirements. On the other hand, elementary school teachers have a wide variety of grade level and subject areas in which they are licensed to teach, making elementary teacher placement decisions an area of interest.

Educational Hiring Practices

Educational hiring practices vary from state to state, district to district, and even between school buildings. Two common types of hiring practices include centralized and decentralized hiring. Centralized hiring practices are conducted at the district level by HR officials who make decisions in the place of school building leaders about the candidate selection which will best fit a particular school. Those in charge of hiring determine the best placement within the school district for that particular teacher, based on the standards and credentials set for that district. Decentralized hiring practices are conducted by local school-building staff and leave all hiring decisions to the principals in individual school buildings.

Competing values present themselves in educational hiring practices. School leaders, part of a very complex organization, often have different values or different priorities than those working at the district level or those operating other school buildings. This presents roadblocks to the cohesiveness of the organization. If organizational leaders are creating and implementing a mission and a vision for the whole district, school building leaders should mirror this vision in their practices.

Human Capital

While public schools operations do not always mirror those of business operations, this study pulls from HR literature surrounding business operations to gain insight on organizational effectiveness through other venues. HR business literature supports the importance of human capital to an organization. Bloom, Fellow, and Kamm (2014) report the positive relationship between human capital and strong financial returns in effective companies. A study by Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, and Ketchen (2011) also found organizational performance is strongly related to human capital and suggest organizational managers should take the time to develop their human capital for better retention purposes. Furthermore, Bloom et. al. (2014) also report the workforce of an organization is a "strategic asset" to the organization's value and the present need for organizations to adapt quickly to meet the demands of increased pace and complexity. "A critical part of the solution has been to identify, recruit, develop, and retain employees with high potential in an environment in which talent is scarce" (Bloom, Fellow, Kamm, 2014, p. 220-221).

Research Purpose

The purpose of this research is to explore a school district from an organizational standpoint to identify if they are purposeful and strategic with their HR practices and operations. This study will specifically look at the practices of elementary teacher hiring and placement from both a district and school level. Specifically, this study seeks to gather information regarding the extent to which the organization operates strategically, where strategic actions are not taken, and what barriers exist to the strategic operations of the school district.

The research will contribute to the literature surrounding HR practices. Additionally, this study will use the concepts from the SHRM framework and apply them to the educational

practice, which is currently absent in the educational HR literature. The practical implications

resulting from this research will be applicable to the studied school district in future practice with

specific recommendations formulated from the collected and analyzed data.

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Research Questions

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For the purpose of this study, the research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How and to what extent does the school district act strategically when hiring

   elementary school teachers?

2. How and to what extent does the school district act strategically when

   determining elementary teacher placement?

3. What factors contribute to or serve as a barrier to the school district's strategic

   actions?

To study these questions, this qualitative research follows a case study design.

Data collection methods include document analysis, interviews, and observations. The data

analysis includes a coding process guided by a theoretical framework grounded in literature.

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Key Terms

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To assist with the reading and understanding of this study, the following key terms are

presented and defined:

- *Elementary teacher* refers to a teacher who teaches in a setting which serves students

  ranging between kindergarten and fifth grade.

- *Flexibility* refers to the organization's response to demands from dynamic environments

  (Sanchez, 1995).

- *Horizontal Fit* refers to internal congruence throughout an organization at the same level

  (Scribner, Smylie, and Mosely, 2008; Schuler and Jackson, 1987).

- *Human resource administrator* refers to a person who works in the human resource

  department. This person plays a role in the hiring or placement process for the

  organization.

- *School building principal* refers to the person primarily responsible for decision-making

  at the school level. The principal manages all personnel in the school building.

- *Secondary teacher* refers to a teacher who teaches in a setting which serves students

  ranging between sixth grade and twelfth grade.

- *Strategic* refers to the alignment of goals, which represent best practice, and the actions

  taken to achieve those goals.

- *Strategic Human Resource Management* refers to all "activities affecting the behavior of

  individuals in their efforts to formulate and implement the strategic needs of the

  business" (Schuler, 1992, p. 30).

- *Strategic plan* refers to current formal goals of the organization or school building written

  and supported by data.

- *Teacher placement* refers to the process of determining where a teacher will work within

  the school building.

- *Teacher turnover* refers to teachers who, for any reason, leave the profession of teaching

  to explore other career paths.

- *Vertical Fit* refers to internal congruence within the organization from top to bottom

  (Scribner, Smylie, and Mosely, 2008; Schuler and Jackson, 1987).

Overview of Methodology

This qualitative case study collected data through semi-structured interviews and a

document analysis. A single school district in the eastern region of the United States was

selected to research for the study. All members of the HR department were contacted, and all

members except one participated in the study. 15 principals were contacted, and ten

principals participated. All participation in the study was voluntary and all participants opted

to participate. Each participant was interviewed, and interviews averaged forty minutes in

length. Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed for data collection purposes.

Next, the data was organized in a spreadsheet and was analyzed through a coding process.

Each participant was assigned a pseudonym to protect his or her identity, and each

participant received and reviewed the transcript for validity purposes.

Organization of the Study

The research study is organized into five chapters where Chapter I serves as an

introduction to the study. Chapter I also provides the research purpose, research questions,

and a definition of key terms. Chapter Two reviews the current HR literature surrounding the

practices of hiring and placement. Strategic HR management literature is reviewed and

provides a framework for the study. In Chapter Three, a detailed methodology for the study

is reviewed and explained including participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter Four outlines the ways in which the data was organized and analyzed to draw

conclusions in the findings. Lastly, Chapter Five summarizes the findings from the study,

discusses the implications for practice, and the implications for future research.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

In this chapter I present a review of the related literature. For the purposes of this study, I explore (a) the importance of hiring quality teachers and the desired outcomes it has for student learning, (b) the detailed hiring process, (c) teacher placement practices, and (d) Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), used as a framework for this research study. This review of the literature is presented to answer the research questions.

Importance of Teacher Hiring

The importance of placing quality teachers in front of students in classrooms has been supported by literature for decades (Mason, Schroeder, 2010; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Donaldson, 2011; Stronge, Tucker, 2000). In 2000, Darling-Hammond reported over a twelve-year period from 2000-2012 that two million teachers will need to be hired as a result of retirement rates, high attrition, and rising enrollment numbers. In an interview with a principal, Donaldson (2011) reports the principal expressed it all starts by making sure you have the right people for the job. The administrative process of hiring has been identified as the single most important job of an administrator that has a direct impact on student achievement and learning (National Academics, 2007). Furthermore, teacher hiring and placement has been identified as an influential factor for teacher job satisfaction and retention (Kardos, Johnson, Peske, Kauffman, Liu, 2000). Factors such as class size, curriculum, funding, and family support, in addition to other factors, contribute to school improvement, yet the most influential factor on student learning is the teacher (Stronge & Tucker, 2000). Hanushek, Kain, and Rivkin (2002) support high-quality teachers influence student success and finding quality candidates matters.

Studies surrounding student achievement have revealed overwhelming data to support the role

the effective teacher plays in learning. Studies taking place in Tennessee (Wright, Horn, &

Sanders, 1997), Virginia (Stronge & Ward, 2002), and Texas (Mendro, 1998) all found students

placed in classrooms with teachers defined as "effective" achieved at higher rates than those

students placed in other classrooms.

  Quality classroom teachers have the ability to help students overcome obstacles life

presents. Haycock (1998) presents the argument that students born and raised in poverty will

perform at the same levels of their peers if they are presented with a quality education and

instructed at those same levels. She states, "If we only took the simple step of assuring poor and

minority children had highly qualified teachers, about half of the achievement gap would

disappear" (p. 4). In this study, student achievement from Tennessee, Texas, and Massachusetts

were examined. The undeniable results revealed the same patterns in each state, verifying

teacher effectiveness is directly related to student achievement. Problematically, qualified

candidate pools are small, as those entering college and declaring majors leading to a teaching

degree are often ranked among the lowest of their high school graduating class (Committee for

Economic Development, 1985).

  Despite the abundant amount of research supporting the importance of this decision,

historically, research reveals overall hiring in public schools can be a rushed process, lacking

quality information (Liu, Johnson, 2006). More recently, however, a study by Cannata et al.

(2008) found the process of teacher hiring in some cases is becoming an information-rich

process. This study found teacher-effectiveness data useful in driving hiring decisions and

developing common vocabulary and look-fors in teacher candidates.

Hiring Process

Job Description of a Teacher

Long before the search for teacher candidates takes place, a job description should be

created to distinguish characteristics of the ideal applicant. Job descriptions should not only

reveal positive descriptions of the job, but should also include more challenging aspects of the

job to give the applicant a "realistic job preview" (Liu, Johnson, 2006) which will ensure the

candidate has realistic expectations, leading to higher job satisfaction once hired. This, along

with duties and behaviors of a teacher, should stem directly from the organizational goals,

mission, and vision (Wiggins, McTighe, 2007). Kelley and Shaw (2009) agree a vision for

student learning should be created, and teachers who align with the mission and vision of the

organization will contribute to student success by closing achievement gaps.

Recruitment

Once a job description has been established, school districts formulate a plan to recruit

candidates who meet the description they have created. The hiring process begins with

recruitment. The recruitment and search for the types of candidates for which a specific district

is looking is vital to the success of locating, hiring, and retaining these candidates (Darling-

Hammond, 2000). Recruitment is a crucial step in the hiring process that is often overlooked,

but necessary to serve students effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Due to the importance of

recruitment, the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) addressed

challenges the United States faces with public education HR practices. As a result, a systematic

approach for reform was identified with five key elements, one of which included a "more

innovative and coordinated approach to teacher recruitment, selection, and hiring" (Darling-

Hammond, 2000).

The importance of this process does not seem to be recognized in practice, as very little

evidence exists to support the majority of school districts engage in an involved recruitment

process or search for teacher candidates (Balter and Duncombe, 2008). Additionally, school

leaders and school districts should strategically identify those incapable of fulfilling the

responsibilities of a teacher and lead them out of the teaching profession if deemed unsuccessful

(Barnes, 1953). While this step of the hiring process is critical, it is also challenging. According

to Viadero (2018), teacher shortage is a nationwide problem and has been reported in all 50

states in at least one teaching area for the 2016-2017 school year. More so, finding teachers who

represent and reflect what is represented in their student bodies was reported as a struggle.

Donaldson (2011) reports one constraint to hiring is a limited supply of candidates who possess

the adequate skills the job entails.

The importance of value alignment is evident through the teacher recruitment process.

Each district or organization should define a value proposition to use as a framework throughout

recruitment. The district's recruitment and marketing plan should completely reflect the values

identified in the proposition (Lee, 2005). The process of teacher recruitment encompasses two

important objectives. First, the district is looking to select candidates who mirror the qualities

the district has prioritized. Secondly, the recruitment process should allow opportunities for

teacher candidates to gain further knowledge about the district, leadership, and job for which

they are applying. "The first step in gaining a competitive edge in the hiring process is to

recognize that the recruitment of the best talent available is a strategic imperative, not an option"

(Lee, 2005).

Traditionally, recruitment pathways include pre-collegiate, community college, post-

baccalaureate, and through the use of incentives. However, less traditional approaches have also

been subjects of experimentation. One particularly non-traditional example from Barnes (1953) includes using existing teachers to recruit new teachers. This unique approach attempts to encourage the attitudes of already existing teachers to successfully make the teaching profession appear more attractive and desirable to those considering the career path. Barnes (1953) suggests instead of only discussing unattractive qualities of the profession, "each teacher should take the position that teaching is an attractive profession and one requiring both talent and skill and that if an individual is good enough, he may be permitted to enter this rewarding profession." A study by Winter, Ronau, and Munoz (2004) used a hiring process scale to measure the attraction to the teaching profession. This study also recognizes the importance of presentation, explaining organizations should present themselves in a positive and desirable fashion to attract applicants to the teaching profession.

Pre-collegiate pathways.

Many high school programs have encouraged students to make career decisions early in high school to be fully prepared by the time graduation arrives and time to enroll in college. In an effort to identify strong teacher candidates early, the implementation of many programs have become common nationwide to interest young people in pursuing the teaching profession. In 1995, a national survey identified over 200 programs, reaching 50,000 pre-collegiate students (Haselkorn, 1996). Cooper and Alvarado (2006) also report secondary schools play a large role in the recruitment process through Future Teacher clubs, internships, and strong instruction on pedagogy. Most importantly, they play the role of attracting quality candidates, something often lacking in the teaching profession.

Community college articulation programs.

Those enrolled in community colleges are often recruited by four-year universities to pursue a teaching degree by forming partnerships between the community college and university level. Universities can contribute to this transition by making credits transferrable, offering scholarships, or providing program frameworks that begin at the community college level and end at the four-year university level (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Additionally, those individuals with two year degrees, working in the school system as paraprofessionals or teacher aids, are often recruited by career switcher programs where they can go back to school to complete their teaching degree at an accelerated rate. A 1996 survey identified nearly 150 programs created to prepare paraeducators to become full time teachers (Haselkorn, 1996). Hare and Heap (2001) found this "grow your own" approach to be successful in increasing the number of teachers of color in urban schools. One major benefit to this approach reported by Cooper and Alvarado (2006) is paraeducators are already familiar with the school, community, and students and may continue to work in their current role while taking the steps to become licensed.

Collegiate recruitment programs.

It is common practice for school districts to create partnerships with universities. In a 1997 survey, 75 percent of school districts identified as having partnerships with universities in the state of Pennsylvania (Balter, Duncombe, 2008). A study from Hare and Heap (2001) found school districts aggressively recruit teachers through their connections with teacher-preparation programs through job fairs, phone calls, e-mail, and flyers. Their findings revealed urban and large school districts are more likely to engage in this recruitment strategy. Smaller districts are less likely due to cost and limited resources.

Hare and Heap (2001) also emphasized the importance of collegiate recruitment

strategies to be used as a means of improving teacher-preparation programs. If the partnership is

well structured, these programs provide an opportunity for school districts to provide feedback

and constructive criticism to improve the program overall. One common critique of programs is

the limited hours of field work or "student teaching" required, however Fleener (1999) and

Mantle-Bromley, Gould, McWhorter, and Whaley (2000) report those students who graduate

with higher hours of field experience have higher retention and job-satisfaction ratings once they

begin their career.

Incentives.

Darling-Hammond (2000) identified efforts by the federal government in the 1960s to

recruit teachers by providing incentives for those pursuing the field of education. They offered

loan forgiveness on a temporary basis until funding no longer allowed for this incentive to

remain. More recently, these incentives have been offered on a state-by-state basis, and now

over 16 states offer some sort of fiscal incentive to teacher candidates who remain in the

profession. In North Carolina, teachers admitted to the North Carolina Teaching Fellows

program do not have to pay back their awarded scholarship if they remain in the profession for at

least four years (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Another state to offer an incentive program is New

York. There, districts are given the option to provide a stipend to those working in "hard to

staff" areas (Balter, Duncombe, 2008). Hare and Heap (2001) reported flexible compensation as

three of the top-rated strategies for recruitment in their study in the Midwest. Cooper and

Alvarado (2006) found forgivable loans, scholarships, advanced degree opportunities, bonus

money, and early job offerings have all been found as opportunities for recruitment through

incentives.

Another incentive reported by Zeichner (2003) is the ability of teachers to complete their

student teaching requirement in the classroom in which they are currently employed as a full-

time teacher. This means these individuals were not required to complete student teaching,

which has regularly been referred to throughout literature as the most important aspect of teacher

prep (Zhang, Zeller, 2016), before assuming responsibility for a classroom full of students. The

Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning (2001) surveyed new teachers in California,

which revealed over half of them completed their student teaching while employed in a school.

This consequently reveals an increase in unqualified teachers in classrooms. The same study

reported teachers who had not yet met the minimal requirements to obtain a professional

teaching license at that time ran 42,000 classrooms in the state of California.

Post-baccalaureate pathways.

Alternative licensure programs, which often expedite the process, are one way to recruit

those who have already obtained a four-year bachelor's degree, majoring in something besides

education. Interestingly, these alternative ways to teacher licensure are often offered to teachers

who are willing to serve in hard to staff schools serving low-income, minority group students

more often than not (Darling-Hammond, 2000). These programs are controversial and are often

questioned whether or not they are effective when it comes to adequately preparing teacher

candidates. They are often considered to be less rigorous than traditional programs, yet they can

be effective if they mirror concepts from four-year programs. The high percentage of new-

teacher turnover is discussed throughout the alternative teacher licensure literature as a potential

contributing factor to this problem.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) reported that four-year preparation

programs teacher graduates are more likely to remain in the profession than those seeking

licensure through alternative route certification programs. Furthermore, Jorissen (2002) believes

longer preparation programs that include a supervised field experience such as student teaching

are more likely to produce teachers who remain in the profession. Similarly, Zhang & Zeller

(2016) conducted a study of three main groups of teachers. The first group was teachers who

were products of a traditional four-year preparation program. The second group was a group of

teachers from a "sink or swim" alternative route certification program. Lastly, the third group

included teachers from a statewide alternative route licensure program that specifically focused

on "recruiting, preparing, and retaining" high quality teachers. The predicted retention

percentages of these groups reveals that teachers from traditional preparation programs are more

likely to remain in the profession after years 2, 3, and 7 (steady at 86.3%). The teachers from the

alternative route certification program that focuses on preparing high quality teachers were

predicted to have the second highest retention rates after years 2, 3, and 7 at 84.4%, 77.6%, and

65.5%. The teachers from the "sink or swim" alternative route certification program were

predigested to have the lowest retention rates after years 2, 3, and 7 at 59.8%, 45%, and 35%

retention rates. This same quantitative study was unable to find patterns revealing if age is a

contributing factor to teacher retention. Research from Nagy & Wang (2007) found teachers

seeking licensure through an alternate route certification program lacked knowledge and

understanding of best instructional practices, classroom management, and pedagogy. However,

even with these knowledge gaps, only 13% of the polled teachers indicated that they intended to

leave the profession after their first year, meaning that teacher retention rates were not affected

by lack of preparation in this study.

     Finally, research from Scribner and Heinen (2009) indicates generalizing alternative

route certification programs or traditional four-year preparation programs as better or worse is

difficult due to the varying quality in both licensure programs. Some studies show that there is

no statistically significant difference between traditional and alternative routes to licensure.

Research from Allen (2003) revealed short-term retention rates between the two programs are

comparable, however research was inconclusive on long-term retention rates. Much like some

traditional programs have better success than others, the same rule applies to alternative route

certification programs. It is still unknown what the specific characteristics of effective programs

are and what types of field experiences these programs offer.

Due to high teacher turnover statistics, the success of teacher recruitment programs is

often measured by retention. Project Promise, a career-switcher program, offers an approach

where their target audience is college graduates who hold bachelor's degrees. This program

contributes its success to an integrated approach, heavily focusing on both theory and practice in

addition to regularly scheduled classroom visits by college faculty. Project Promise reports

"virtually all" candidates remain in the teaching profession (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

Screening

A common obstacle school leaders face when screening applicants is the large number of

applications received. Narrowing the candidate pool down to a workable number of quality

candidates can be a daunting and time-consuming task (Mason, Schroeder, 2010). Wise,

Darling-Hammond, and Berry (1987) describe three types of data used to screen and hire teacher

candidates. These data come with different costs associated with them; therefore some are more

commonly found in practice than others. Low-cost data include common practices such as

reviewing applications, transcripts, and resumes. Medium-cost data include reference contacts

and meetings to gain further insight on an applicant. Finally, high-cost data include teacher

observations, which rarely happen due to high cost and time associated with this practice.

Cannata et al. (2017) discusses the hardship of hiring new teachers since there is no

previous experience to evaluate. These authors suggest videos or demonstration lessons as a

bridge to close this information gap, but limited time and resources make this strategy difficult.

Out of all low-cost data, Bolz (2009) found letters of recommendation to be most valued by

those making hiring decisions. This explains why new teachers have a greater likelihood of

being hired for their first job in the district where they completed their student teaching.

Donaldson (2011) supports it is favorable to hire substitutes or student teachers who are already

well known. References and reputation rank highly to school leaders (Krieg, Theobald,

Goldhaber, 2016). Historically, literature reveals the desirable characteristics of a teacher

candidate, identified by principals are professional characteristics rather than personal

characteristics (Mason, Schroeder, 2010). It is believed this is a result of the subjectivity of

evaluating personal characteristics and the justifiability for candidate selection.

Interviews

The interview phase is often the last step of the hiring process where final decisions are

made. Structures of interviews can be determined by the size of the school district. Larger

districts tend to use a centralized process where applicants are screened and hired by HR officials

at the district level. On the other hand, smaller districts are more likely to use a decentralized

process where decisions are made at the building level by the principal (Mason, Schroeder,

2010). Liu (2003) found decentralized hiring practices place higher priority on "fit" and hiring a

candidate to match the needs of the school culture than centralized hiring does and Donaldson

(2011) supports this by reporting centralization-hiring practices are a constraint to the principal's

ability to hire favorable candidates. She continues by discussing the importance of the

decentralized process and using a committee to make hiring decisions.

It is also common for hiring decisions and procedures to be shared by the building and

central office level (Strunk, Grissom, 2010). By the time an applicant reaches this phase, they

have likely been pre-screened with strategies previously discussed to ensure they meet the

professional qualifications for the position. The interview is a time for the hirer to evaluate the

interpersonal skills of the candidate through verbal and nonverbal communication (Mason,

Schroeder, 2010). While an applicant may have the educational preparation or licensure for a

position, an interview is often the best indicator of whether an applicant is a good "fit" for the

position. Donaldson's (2011) findings also emphasized the importance of ensuring the candidate

is a good fit for the position or school building for which they are interviewing. Principals

interviewed in this study identified one way to make better hiring decisions was to include both

teachers and administrators in the interview and hiring process to gain better insight through

different perspectives. Interviews allow face-to-face dialogue and conversation and reveal

behaviors about the candidate to the interviewer.

According to Clement (2009), interview questions should be open-ended to allow

candidates to speak from prior experiences. This strategy, also referred to as behavior-based

interviewing (BBI) works under the assumption past behavior will be indicative of future

behavior, therefore interviewees should be questioned about things they have previously done.

She also claims interview questions should be strategically crafted to identify if the candidate is

capable of meeting the needs of the areas of focus for the school.

Teacher Placement

In decentralized hiring practices, school leaders have the authority to make hiring and

placement decisions for teachers. Brewer (1993) and Strauss (2003) signify hiring as most likely

to affect student outcomes. Hiring alone however is only part of the battle. Once a candidate is

hired the important decision about their placement remains. Carlyon and Fisher (2012) describe

the placement process as one of the most important components to school planning and explain

change in teaching assignments may sometimes be necessary for students to have optimal

learning experiences.

Grissom, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2017) report the placement process to be a factor

principals and school leaders have direct control of, while hiring is often dependent on external

factors such as low quality applicant pools. Historically, teacher placement decisions were not

always strategic in nature and placed focus on teacher happiness rather than student achievement.

Strategies of preference and seniority were used when assigning teachers to classrooms

(Gorman, 1969).

Literature reveals principals often approach placement decisions while prioritizing test

scores, placing high-performing teachers in higher-stress classes that require a state assessment

as a response to accountability pressures (Grissom, Kalogrides, Loeb, 2017; Chingos, West

2011; Cohen-Vogel 2011). This decision-making is disputed throughout literature, which states

this type of rationale could produce many unintended negative consequences long-term if the

match is poor, and the assignment has effects on learning later (Grissom, Kalogrides, Loeb,

2017; Cohen-Vogel, 2011). It also revealed unintended consequences of responding to

accountability pressure by placing teachers according to student test scores including but not

limited to altering student achievement data, and classifying low performing students as

learning-disabled. These practices may produce a false sense of security through means of

school accreditation but have no impact on what students actually learn.

Carlyon and Fisher (2012) conducted a study in New Zealand to understand what

informed principals' decisions surrounding teacher placement. The findings revealed teacher

needs, knowledge of learning, and pedagogical knowledge (primarily literacy and math) were the

three common factors among the eight studied principals. This study identified principals did

take a strategic approach to their staffing by considering team dynamics and taking a long-term

planning approach, considering impacts and changes up to four years in the future. While

looking long-term, principals must be careful of limitations that arise with teacher placement and

be conscious of unintended consequences of any movements in the building. Donaldson (2011)

reported one limitation to teacher placement is remembering to take into consideration

contractual and certification requirements in addition to tradition and culture of the school

building.

Teacher placement has also been identified as an approach to teacher development.

Lieberman (1995) reports teachers who are strategically paired together on a team by experience

and expertise are likely to develop through collaboration. The relocation of a teacher's grade

level or subject area could produce development within that teacher as they expand their

professional knowledge by trying new things (Lieberman, 1995). Furthermore, Carlyon and

Fisher (2012) explain principals should consider the teacher and his/her professional growth

when making placement decisions. Teacher placement should be in the best interest of both the

children and the teachers and should consider both learning and development. The findings also

revealed grade level placements were often changed for those who desired to be school leaders.

Having a broad range of experiences and teaching at multiple levels is a way to develop and

prepare future leaders.

Teacher-student placement.

Teacher-student placement is also an area to be examined within HR practices and is very

complicated in nature. Monk (1987) reports three parties impacted by pupil assignment to

classrooms including the student being placed, the teacher, and the other students in the

classroom. The parents are considered as a potential fourth party impacted by the placement

decision. This process can be very complex in nature because no two parties may be impacted

the same from a single decision. A placement decision might positively impact the student being

placed while having a negative impact on the teacher and other students in the classroom (Monk,

1987). This study identified overall, principals play a central role in the placement process,

however in some cases they delegate responsibility to teachers to handle these decisions. The

principals who delegated the responsibility were mostly new to their roles, indicating principals

took greater part in the placement process as they gained more experience and insights to the

process.

Research reveals African American students are more likely to be placed in classrooms of

teachers deemed "ineffective". They are also only fifty percent as likely to be placed in the

classroom of an effective teacher when compared to their majority group peers (Darling-

Hammond, 2000). Haycock (1998) confirms this by presenting research from studies Tennessee,

Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Oklahoma where African American students were found more likely

to have under-qualified teachers compared to their white peers. Additionally, Loeb et al., (2012)

conducted a study in a large urban school district which revealed lower achieving students are

more likely to be placed in the classrooms of less experienced, minority, female teachers as

compared to their opposite, experienced, white, male coworkers. They contributed this finding

to women being more likely to teach special education students, who overall have lower

achievement on standardized tests as compared to their general education peers.

Additionally, a study conducted by Grissom, Kalogrides, and Loeb (2015) sought to

understand the micro politics in schools' processes and how they influence teacher-student

placement decisions. This study confirmed lower-achieving students are most likely to be placed

in classrooms with less experienced teachers. It revealed more experienced teachers (especially

with more years of experience in the same building) exercise power within the school building

and are more likely to be involved in placement decisions for students due to the accumulation of

organizational, social, and political capital they gain with their experience. In this study, these

individuals had greater influence over placement of students in their own classrooms including

characteristics of race, poverty, and prior achievement. Additionally, this study reports school

leaders and personnel making placement decisions (on average) do not sufficiently take into

account the needs of disadvantaged students or consider the consequences of a bad placement for

these student populations. It was reported that usually parents and other stakeholders are not

involved and exercise no power in the student-placement process. Monk (1987) reported varied

approaches by principals when it came to involving parents in placement decisions. Responses

fell between two extremes. One principal encouraged parents to send input for their child's

placement via a schoolwide newsletter. Another principal reported they heavily discourage

parents from providing input. In another article, Grissom et al., (2017) report the same results of

lower performing students being placed in the classrooms of beginning teachers despite the

overwhelming research which demonstrates novice teachers are less effective.

     Due to the overwhelming evidence of this inequitable practice, Loeb et al., (2012) found

more effective schools strategically assign students to novice teachers in an equitable fashion. In

these schools, principals assign students to novice teachers who have comparable achievement

scores to those students in classrooms of their colleagues to provide an equitable experience for

both the teachers and the students. Issues surrounding equity have been discussed on both ends

of the spectrum. First, understanding students in classrooms of low-quality teachers will have

lower-quality learning experiences is important for administrators and those making placement

decisions to consider. On the other hand, exceptional teachers will provide higher-quality

learning experiences to the students placed in their classrooms (Monk, 1987). Both of these

experiences represent inequitable circumstances for children placed in these classrooms when

compared to those of their peers.

  Teacher-school placement.

  If school districts take the centralized hiring approach, hiring decisions are made at the

central-office level where principals and building leaders are removed from the decision-making.

Furthermore, placement decisions also occur at this level in most centralized hiring cases.

Darling-Hammond (2000) reported teachers considered "less qualified" measured by adequate

training and completed requirements for a state license, were most likely to be hired or assigned

to schools serving a population of predominately minority group students in high-poverty, low

income areas. Lankford, Loeb, and Wyckoff (2002) conducted a study in New York, which

reported findings of very unequal distribution of qualified teachers across school buildings.

Characteristics such as experience, licensure test pass rate, and current teaching position

(teaching out of licensure area) were taken into consideration when measuring quality of these

teachers. The lower-achieving schools are also more likely to experience turnover as research

supports the idea of teachers preferring to work in higher-achieving schools with fewer discipline

problems and higher parental involvement. While evidence to support lower quality teachers are

found in lower-performing schools, research surrounding placement of these teachers through a

centralized process is lacking. Additional research surrounding teacher-school placement was

limited and an extensive search of the following databases was conducted: Sage Journals,

JSTOR, and ERIC.

Strategic Human Resource Management

HR and the function of the department are especially important in fields such as education, which are especially labor-intensive (Tran, 2015). The rapidly increasing demands of the culture and growing economy leave organizations feeling pressured to become more effective with HR practices (Fombrun, Devanna, 2003) and using available resources most effectively. Becoming popular in the 1980s, this integration of strategy and Human Resource Management (HRM) set new trends for management. HRM has traditionally been used to understand how people are managed from an organizational level. On the other hand, Strategic Human Resource Management (SRHM) is "all those activities affecting the behavior of individuals in their efforts to formulate and implement the strategic needs of the business" (Schuler, 1992, p. 30). SHRM is an "organizational system level approach" to HRM (Chadwick, 2005, p. 200) and refers to a way HR can make a plan to follow. Tran (2015) supports this by arguing the functions of HR must be strategically linked to the outcomes of the organization. In other words, HR must become more strategic in operations. SRHM assists organizations in achieving their goals and stresses the importance of formulating congruence throughout HRM and organizational practices (Schuler & Jackson, 1987) through mission and strategy, organization structure, and HR management (Tichy, Fombrun, & Devanna, 1982). Additionally, Darwish, Singh, and Mohamed (2013) found organizational performance was a direct result of SHRM, and Tichy, Fombrun, and Devanna (1982) suggest it is the greatest determinant of the effectiveness of an organization.

The strategic functions of public education HR officials and systems have not been studied widely in educational research. While many organizations have seen a successful transition from HR to SHRM, it has been observed and noted that public education practices haven't made the transition as seamlessly (Tran, 2015). Furthermore, Scribner, Smylie, and

Mosley (2008) report there is little research literature to assess the approaches to HRM in public

school districts. This places utmost importance on studies surrounding SHRM in education to

progress forward and away from the institutionalization of personnel. It is suggested that HR

officials have the capability to play a huge role in school reform, rather than educators solely

playing the role of the change agent.

Literature presents several SHRM perspectives where two major concepts are common

threads. This study will refer to the concepts of strategic fit and strategic flexibility throughout.

Milliman, Von Glinow, and Nathan (1991) report two relationships between fit and flexibility

with differing opinions discussed in literature. According to Wright and Snell (1997), some

researchers believe fit and flexibility concepts in SHRM are independent of each other and

cannot exist simultaneously. They believe they are opposite and when combined will not have

desirable effects. On the other hand, others believe the two complement each other and work in

a relationship together. Wright and Snell (1997) offer the viewpoint of fit and flexibility being

complementary of each other since they have different focuses. While the concept of fit is

contingent on dynamic factors, flexibility is a foundational characteristic of the organization

itself.

Fit Concept in SRHM

The first major concept used for this study is "fit", which refers to internal congruence

within an organization, rendering high levels of effectiveness in the organization. Scribner, et

al., (2008), and Schuler and Jackson (1987) all reference fit both vertically and horizontally, with

vertical fit referring to HR and strategy alignment within the organization. Additionally, HR

policies and practices should be in alignment throughout the organization, also known as

horizontal fit. All practices within an organization rely and depend on each other; therefore if all

practices are aligned and are all part of the same system, the organization will find greater

efficiency and success (Delery, 1998).

It is also important to note the idea from Doty and Delery (1997), when looking to

determine if an organization has horizontal fit, the specific practices in place are less significant

than the outcomes they produce. They discuss the multiple combinations of practice that lead to

the same outcome. As long as the outcome is consistent and practices are intentionally and

strategically put in place to reach the determined outcome, the specific practices themselves may

vary. Therefore, it is important to identify which practices, or combination of practices, will lead

to the desired outcome before determining if the organization displays horizontal fit.

Misalignment of these policies and practices creates a hardship for organizations to reach their

set goals and objectives, making it much less effective and coherent as a whole. Fit can be

achieved through more than one avenue. Fit can be defined as "the degree to which the needs,

demands, goals, objectives, and/or structure of one component are consistent with needs"

(Wright, Snell, 1997). Fit can also be identified as the relationship between the job/role and the

position of the individual and the shared leadership/decision making available to HR officials.

Wright and Snell (1997) report three types of "fit" and strategy of an organization. First,

strategy-HRM practices fit, which ensures fit between the strategy of the organization and the

practices HR use. Second, strategy-employee skills fit which portrays fit between the strategy

and skills of the employees working for the organization. Third, strategy-employee behavior fit,

which calls for a link, or fit between the strategy of the organization and the behaviors the

employees exhibit.

Flexibility Concept in SRHM

As commonly referenced, "flexibility" refers to the adaptability of an organization through change both internally and externally (Scribner, Smylie, Moseley, 2008). Unlike fit, which can be present at one time yet absent at another, flexibility is a characteristic of an organization embedded throughout (Wright, Snell, 1997). Sanchez (1995) describes strategic flexibility as the organization's response to the dynamic environment. When an organization is flexible, the focus becomes the response to challenges and roadblocks presented. Educationally speaking, organizations must react to the constant changing needs of the environment and people it serves. Morgan (2006) references organizations as organisms, which have the ability to adapt to meet the needs of the ever-changing environment. Organizations as organisms are flexible and meet the needs of the people they serve. Maslow, an organizational theorist suggested humans are motivated by hierarchical needs and perform the best when these needs are met. Policy changes in education require organizations to respond with flexibility to adapt to new requirements without changing the ultimate mission of educating students.

Measuring the flexibility of an organization is easiest done over time. Since flexibility means "to adapt," the steps taken to meet the needs of an environmental change reveal the adaptability or flexibility of an organization (Wright, Snell, 1997). Much like fit, flexibility has three components reported by Wright and Snell (1997). First, flexibility and HR practices refer to the differentiation of practices across sites and the efficiency demonstrated by the need for change of those practices. Second, HR practices and resource flexibility explains the efficiency of resources and how they can be used globally across many venues and for many purposes. Lastly, HR practices and coordination flexibility is the speedy ability to adapt practices to meet environmental demands consistent with the strategic plan for the organization.

Summary

The literature surrounding teacher hiring and placement is extensive. The research supports the importance of teacher hiring as it directly impacts student achievement. The hiring process includes literature on the job description of a teacher, teacher recruitment, screening, and interviews. Literature on SHRM, specifically the two concepts of fit and flexibility were also included. The SHRM literature is used as a framework for this research.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to review the methodology used for the study to identify

strategic actions and barriers to the strategic operation of the organization in an elementary

school setting. The research design was selected using the guiding questions: How and to what

extent does the school district's strategic plan influence teacher hiring? How and to what extent

does the school district's strategic plan influence teacher placement? This research follows a

qualitative case study design approach.

The selected participants provided insights from those who make both centralized and

decentralized hiring decisions at the district and school building level through interviews and

observations. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. A document analysis of all hiring

and/or placement resources was conducted. Transcriptions were coded to reveal themes

throughout the interviews. These data reveal very little evidence to support the strategic actions

of the school district, framed by the SHRM concepts of fit and flexibility in HR practices.

Research Questions

The literature presented in Chapter Two reviews the importance of teacher hiring and the

impact it has on student achievement. Additionally, it reviews each step of the hiring process

from recruitment to placement. It also explores the strategic HR management literature and

discusses both "fit" and "flexibility" concepts. This study explores the school district's human

resource practices, specifically the practices of elementary teacher hiring and placement. The

study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1.   How and to what extent does the school district act strategically when hiring

        elementary school teachers?

2.   How and to what extent does the school district act strategically when

        determining elementary teacher placement?

3.   What factors contributed to or served as a barrier to the school district's strategic

        actions?

Research Design

The method selected for this study is a qualitative, exploratory case study, also known as

a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain

the phenomenon of interest" (Bromley, 1990). A case study is one way to perform social science

research (Yin, 1994). Case studies seek to "catch the complexity of a single case" and real life

situations (Stake, 1995; Noor, 2008). They closely examine things such as programs, people,

and issues, and can closely deal with experiences of people (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Rather

than an entire organizational study of all operations, case studies are focused on a specific issue

or unit to analyze (Noor, 2008).   Due to the specific focus of the study, this approach seeks to

answer questions over a shorter period of time as opposed to other qualitative research designs.

Yin (1994) reports case studies must entail components including: research questions,

propositions, units of analysis, and data linked to original propositions.

In case study research, evidence is gathered through multiple sources and primarily uses

deductive strategies (Yin, 1994). To conduct this type of research, the researcher must be very

focused and reflective upon data collection and analysis (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). This

research method often seeks to understand the difference between what was originally planned

and the subsequent reality (Anderson, Arsenault, 1998). While case studies have been accused

of lacking rigor, they prove to be strong research methods for capturing a complete view of

events as well as the flow of organizational activity (Noor, 2008). A case study design was

selected for this study primarily due to the professional applications that will result from the data.

This case study was conducted in a larger school district, totaling 47 schools, 11 of which are

elementary schools serving students in grades K-5. Additionally, there are 9 primary schools

serving students in grades K-2 and 8 intermediate schools serving students in grades 3-5. A total

of 39,000 attend school within the researched school district, and it employs 5,700 staff

including teachers, support staff, and administrators. The selected school district is able to apply

findings to their HR practices to become more strategic in teacher hiring and placement

practices.

Participant Selection

Participants in the selected school district were asked to participate in the research

process. To ensure all hiring areas were represented, participants included HR administrators

and other central office leaders who directly deal with or oversee the hiring process. This study

examines hiring and placement at the elementary level (K-5), therefore a requirement was that all

participants must deal directly with elementary school hiring and/or placement. The researcher

sent a digital proposal to the selected school district, seeking permission to conduct research in

their schools. After permission was granted, the researcher sent electronic invitations targeted

towards elementary school principals, assistant superintendent of HR, director of HR, assistant

director of HR, and any other HR administrators who partake in hiring at the elementary school

level.

Elementary school principals who make hiring decisions were selected and contacted.

They participated in the research at the building level on a voluntary basis. A variety of ten

different elementary schools were included in the study. Originally the researcher sent digital

invitations to principals of K-5 buildings only as some of the interview questions relate directly

to teacher placement at the building level. Many principals did not respond to the invitation, and

some rejected the invitation so the researcher then reached out to primary (K-2) and intermediate

(3-5) school principals. When identifying principals, the researcher ensured the following were

diversely represented in the participant selection: years of experience in the school district,

gender, race, and demographics of the school. All principal participants were promoted from

within the school district with the exception of one. Five HR administrators were also

interviewed, all of whom were principals in the school district before transitioning to a HR role.

The study intended to identify strategic actions taken by the school district when hiring and

placing elementary school teachers and to identify any barriers that exist to the strategic

functions of the school district's HR functions.

By including both central office and building level personnel, the researcher was able to

identify both vertical fit and horizontal fit as defined in strategic HR management. Each

participant was assigned a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes. First, Mr. Smith was

interviewed. The HR department includes the following participants: Mr. Smith was a teacher

and administrator in the school district before promoting to a HR role. Mr. Smith is now the

assistant superintendent of HR. Mr. Taylor is the assistant director of HR and was the principal

of an elementary school before being promoted to a HR role. Ms. Robinson and Ms. Davis are

both HR administrators who were both elementary school principals before being promoted to a

HR role. Lastly, Ms. Wilson is a current HR administrator who served as a special education

administrator before transitioning to a HR role.

In addition to the HR participants, ten principals voluntarily participated in the research:

Ms. Johnson, Ms. Adams, and Ms. Lee are all principals of elementary "primary" schools

serving grades K-2 in the school district. Ms. Brown, Mr. Miller, and Ms. Thompson are all

principals of elementary "intermediate" schools serving grades 3-5 in the school district. Lastly,

Ms. Williams, Mr. Anderson, Ms. Jackson, and Mr. Morris are all principals of elementary

schools serving grades K-5 in the school district. Ms. Williams is the least experienced principal

in the school district, as she is currently completing her first year of service with the

organization. All other participants were promoted to their principal position from another

position within the school district. The participants are represented in Table 4.1 below:

Table 3.1

Participants

Participant	Position	Years of experience
Mr. Smith	Assistant Superintendent of HR	34
Ms. Davis	HR Administrator	28
Ms. Wilson	HR Administrator	34
Mr. Taylor	Assistant Director of HR	27
Ms. Robinson	HR Administrator	24
Ms. Johnson	Primary School Principal	35
Ms. Adams	Primary School Principal	19
Ms. Lee	Primary School Principal	36
Ms. Brown	Intermediate School Principal	20
Mr. Miller	Intermediate School Principal	28
Ms. Thompson	Intermediate School Principal	26
Ms. Williams	Elementary School Principal	19
Mr. Anderson	Elementary School Principal	28
Ms. Jackson	Elementary School Principal	19
Mr. Morris	Elementary School Principal	20

Data Collection

The data collection in this study used a variety of qualitative research methods to

understand if the district strategically hires and places teachers. The data collection includes all

stakeholders involved in the hiring and placement process at both the building and HR level.

Document analysis and interviews are the primary data collection methods that were used. A

further description and explanation of these methods can be found below.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants who were invited

and agreed to participate in the study. All interview questions were created using SHRM as a

driving framework. This method is preferred for case study research because it allows for

flexibility in approaching each participant differently, while still collecting the same data (Noor,

2008). Interview questions were created to understand values of those in charge of hiring,

qualifications they are looking for, and what the top priorities are when hiring a new teacher.

Interview questions were driven by the theoretical framework with the intention to identify

strategic actions already in place by the organization and barriers that are present to achieving

strategic fit and flexibility. Questions were all open-ended to allow room for follow-up

questioning and discussion based on the responses and knowledge gained throughout the

interview.

During the interviews, field notes were taken and the interviews were audio-recorded.

Next, interviews were fully transcribed using Temi software. The researcher reviewed each

transcript and matched it to the audio recording, making adjustments as needed. Transcripts

were then sent to the participants who also reviewed the transcript to confirm everything spoken

was represented accurately in the transcript. This ensured both reliability and validity of the

transcription.

HR administrators were interviewed with the purpose of understanding the elementary

teacher recruitment and screening process as these occur at the school district level. The

researcher formulated questions to gain better understanding of the process itself and of the

values surrounding the process. Elementary principals were asked questions to understand the

process of teacher hiring and placement at the school building level and the driving values the

leader uses when making these HR decisions.

Document Analysis

Next, a document analysis, which is a data collection method seeking evidence from

written material, was conducted. This method was used to analyze all hiring and placement

resources. Items such as applications used for screening, interview questions, and rating scales

used for evaluative purposes were analyzed to determine both vertical fit between central office

and the building level, and horizontal fit across school buildings within the organization. District

level interview questions used for screening were analyzed. The researcher analyzed the current

set of questions in addition to the last set of questions before the questions were revised in 2017.

Flexibility was measured by determining if hiring at the building level has been adapted to meet

the needs of the organization. The researcher also analyzed interview questions at the building

level to determine if interview questions aligned with the stated priority of each principal. The

purpose was to identify if interview questions were designed to determine if the candidate had

the qualities the principal prioritized.

Data Analysis

After the interviews were transcribed, the researcher reread the transcripts multiple times while identifying any statements connected to the SHRM framework. The qualitative data analysis process of coding was used to translate and interpret the data.   According to DeMarrais and Lapan (2004), when conducting case study research, the data should be reduced through a sorted, focused system, and reorganized to draw conclusions and discover findings. Initial coding, focused coding, and axial coding were all used to analyze the collected data. All data sources including documents, interviews, and field notes were coded to triangulate the data for more comprehensive findings (Yin, 1994).

The coding process began with a very basic initial coding, also commonly referred to as "open coding". This type of coding is an open-ended approach to data (Saldana, 2016), which allows room for development. This process broke down the data to examine it and identify similarities or differences throughout the data. Initial coding is a good starting point for this case study data analysis because it allows the data to guide the direction the findings will go, as these codes are sometimes tentative (Saldana, 2016).

Next, the researcher used focused coding, also known as "selective coding." The purpose of this coding is to assign labels to the data. Focused coding assisted with categorizing and theming the data from the most commonly referenced codes to further break the data down. From this, subcategories were also created for organizational purposes.

Lastly, the researcher used axial coding to explore how the identified categories relate to each other. The purpose of axial coding is to identify the relationships between the codes and possibly identify which codes were broken apart during the initial coding phase and strategically put them back together (Saldana, 2016). This coding process identifies characteristics of the

categories and determines which codes are most important while simultaneously removing

redundancy from the codes (Saldana, 2016).

Throughout the entire coding process, the researcher identified specific evidence of both

vertical and horizontal fit in addition to flexibility of the organization as a focus of the findings.

The theoretical lens using the SHRM literature as a guide drove this coding process. Additional

codes, absent from SHRM framework were also identified with the purpose of exploring

potential new findings. To organize the data, the researcher developed codebook spreadsheets

for easy manipulation of the data and easy organization of the data. The ability to assess the data

in different ways was important for the findings of this study.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality, the researcher first assigned pseudonyms to each participant.

Participants, schools, or any other identifying information were not used in the reporting process.

All identifying information mentioned in the interviews was removed from the interview

transcripts and replaced with pseudonyms. Additionally, transcripts and audio recordings were

stored securely on a password protected computer and account. Lastly, audio recordings and

transcripts were destroyed upon completion of the research. All information has been

confidentially reported in the findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

The research explored the strategic actions of one school district in the southeast region of the United States as it pertained to human resource matters of elementary teacher hiring and placement. The selected school district and the outcomes from this study are described in depth in this chapter. The following research questions were examined through semi-structured interviews with elementary school principals and HR administrators: First, how and to what extent does the school district act strategically when hiring elementary school teachers? Second, how and to what extent does the school district act strategically when determining elementary teacher placement? Lastly, what factors contributed to or served as a barrier to the school district's strategic actions? A document analysis of interview questions and recruitment documents was also conducted. The researcher used the SHRM framework when first analyzing the data, and then allowed the data to speak beyond the framework. The findings are organized thematically as follows: Inconsistency, Lack of Communication, and Slow to Change.

Discussion of Findings

Current Hiring Process

To identify these strategic actions, the researcher first had to understand the hiring process for the school district. To find out about the hiring process, each participant was asked to describe the process from beginning to end as part of the semi-structured interview. It was discovered the hiring process is unique in comparison to surrounding school districts as other processes were mentioned frequently. The process incorporates a little bit of both centralized and decentralized practices. Below is a summary of the findings:

The school district begins the hiring process when an applicant applies online through a

database. The application is then flagged and sent to the appropriate HR administrator who

oversees that specific department. The written application is screened, and references are

contacted by the HR department. The written application is scored on a 1-5 scale, including

qualifications and references. Next, candidates are selected to interview with an HR

administrator for what is called a pre-screening interview. This interview takes place at central

office and is composed of ten questions. After the pre-screening interview is complete, it is also

scored using a 1-5 scale. Candidates receiving a 4.5 or higher (on average) are sent to school

buildings to interview with principals. HR determines where candidates go to interview at the

building level, and principals receive a list of candidates to interview. Once the candidates have

been interviewed, the principal selects a candidate he/she wishes to hire and notifies HR of the

decision. The HR department is then responsible for offering the position to the candidate. If

the candidate accepts the position, the HR department is also responsible for collecting the

required paperwork and conducting a background check and fingerprinting the candidate as the

last step to the process. Figure 4.1 provides a visual representation of the current hiring process.

Figure 4.1

Hiring Process
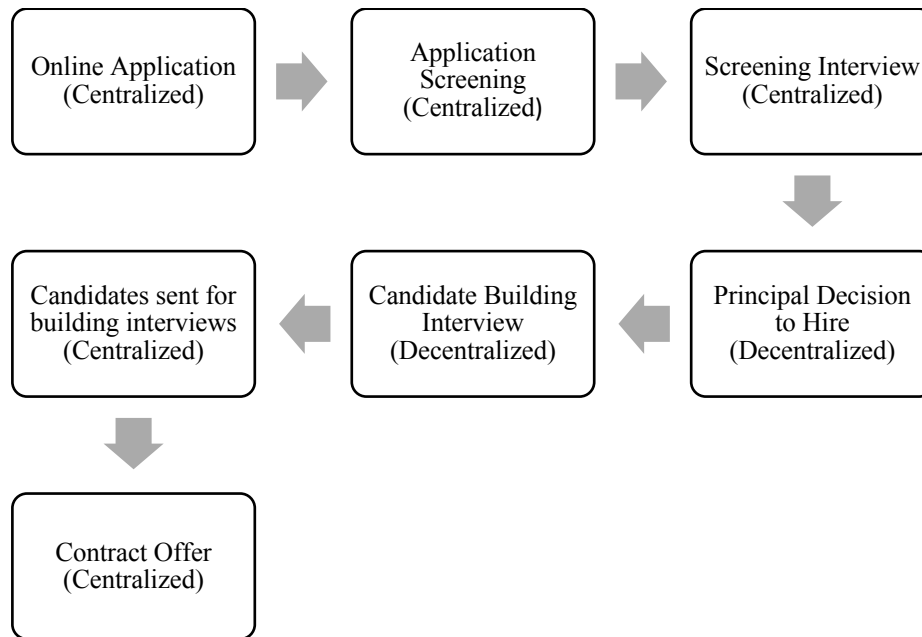
After an extensive analysis of the data, three themes emerged including: (1)

Inconsistency, (2) Lack of Communication, and (3) Slow to Change. The first theme was driven

by the theoretical framework and examines the consistency within and between the different

levels of the school district. Subthemes emerged including inconsistent criteria, inconsistent

priorities, and placement. The second theme of lack of communication explores the perspective

of the principals in the district when it comes to communication between HR and the school

level. Lastly, the third theme, change discusses the amount of change experienced with these

practices during the time the participants have been employed by the district. This theme

includes two subthemes, fundamental change, natural change, and purposeful change as a

response.

Theme 1: Inconsistency

As part of the semi-structured interviews, the researcher asked each participant what criteria they look for in a candidate when conducting interviews. All participants in this study are responsible for interviewing candidates in some capacity within the school district. The HR administrators interview candidates during the pre-screening interview, and principals interview candidates after they have been vetted by the district for their individual buildings.

Inconsistent Criteria

The researcher analyzed the criteria each participant shared is a "look-for" in two ways. First, the consistency in criteria within the HR department was analyzed to identify "horizontal fit" within the organization. Next, responses from principals were analyzed to identify "vertical fit" throughout the organization from top to bottom.

HR criteria.

This data reveals the criteria used to determine if a candidate is deemed hirable by HR is inconsistent across the board. Some responses indicated a focus on personality traits and skills such as communication and professionalism where others focused on instructional strategies and classroom management. One answer focused solely on passion for the job. The district is not achieving "fit" according to the SHRM framework because it is not using the same criteria when deciding whether or not a candidate should be hired in the school district. Little to no evidence of consistency was found in criteria. Throughout the five HR interviews, classroom management was mentioned twice, instructional strategies were identified two times, professionalism was mentioned once, and passion was identified once. The first response to the question comes from Ms. Davis stating,

With the interview questions that we have, that they have a thorough knowledge of

instructional practices. They have a thorough knowledge of, behavior management and

what they look for in behavior management. The instruction is the biggest thing.

Differentiating their instruction, classroom management, like I said, lesson planning.

What makes a successful lesson plan? What instructional strategies do they use? Best

practices? Those are the types of things in their answer, and the thoroughness of their

answers will help that.

When asked the same question, the other HR administrators had differing answers and

opinions on important criteria a candidate must have to be hired in the school district. Ms. Davis

simply stated, "Instruction. Instructional knowledge, student achievement, planning, and being a

team player" while another HR administrator explained,

Passion. Relationships. They got to love children. They love what they want to do. I got

to see some kind of internal motivation to want to make a difference, to be a part of a

team, to collaborate, to continually sharpen their saw, to participate in staff development,

to learn, have that continuous learning process and not stay stagnant. I'm looking for

people who are positive, who have a skillset of helping kids and motivate kids. I'm

looking for people who are willing to take on challenges, being open to new ideas,

receptive, caring individuals. It bothers me so much when I hear people say, I'm looking

for somebody who's really strong. Yes, strong content is very important, but you can

teach content, you can't teach how to love a child or have a relationship and how to care

for another individual. You can't teach that, so yes, I would rather take a risk on

somebody young who may not have the content background, but if I see someone who is

very caring and somebody who really has to make a difference, go getter. I'm looking for

a go getter. Somebody positive.

These answers represent different sets of criteria pre-screening interviewers are looking for in

teacher candidates and were given by two HR administrators who participate in pre-screening

interviews at the district level.

Each pre-screening interview is scored on a scale of 1-5 by the interviewer. The

interview itself is scored as a whole as opposed to each question being scored individually.

Candidates who receive high scores (referenced as a 4.5 or higher) are sent to principals at the

building level to interview. The researcher asked how scores are determined and while there are

sample answers included on the interview document, there is no rubric used to assist with

scoring. This method leaves room for inconsistencies in scoring based on the preference of the

interviewer.

Principal criteria.

When elementary school principals were asked what criteria they are looking for in a

teacher candidate, answers varied heavily. The responses covered a large variety of skillsets and

personal characteristics. The collected data reveals principals within the same organization are

seeking varying qualifications from their candidates.   While each school building has diverse

needs, there is no evidence of organizational fit in the data when looking at the criteria each

principal uses to identify a strong teacher candidate.

Inconsistent Priorities

After the desired criteria for an elementary school teacher candidate was established, the

researcher asked each participant what criteria takes priority when making hiring decisions. The

priorities were found to be inconsistent in two ways. First, within the HR department and

second, throughout the school district. Five HR administrators provided three different priorities

as their response. Likewise, ten elementary school principals provided six different priorities as

their response.

HR priorities.

Throughout the five HR interviews, there were three different criteria identified as the top

priority. Mr. Smith shared, "The first thing I look for is somebody that I can tell really loves kids

because if you don't love kids you ought not be teaching." Ms. Wilson agreed, "But over and

above all probably is simply, um, who you are as a person and our, our kids. What's important to

you or are they the core of why you selected to become a teacher? Because if you're not here for

the kids, then it doesn't matter how good you might be in planning a lesson or even managing

your behavior."

The response of Ms. Davis and Mr. Taylor differed greatly from the previous responses,

indicating instructional knowledge always takes priority when hiring elementary teacher

candidates by expressing, "Instructional Knowledge First" (Ms. Davis), and "Instruction takes

priority" (Mr. Taylor). The outlier of responses focused on relationships and simply states,

"Relationships. You can't teach a kid if you can't connect" (Ms. Robinson). Table 4.2 below

represents the HR priority data.

Table 4.2

HR Priorities

	Love for children	Instruction	Relationships
Mr. Smith	X		
Ms. Davis		X	
Ms. Wilson	X		
Mr. Taylor		X	
Ms. Robinson			X

Interestingly, some HR administrators were confident their priority was the same as the rest of the department. After hearing their priorities, the researcher asked a follow-up question to participants. When asked if they felt the priorities they hold are the same as the rest of the department, Ms. Wilson responded, "I feel like for the most part people are on the same page in our office. Ms. Davis replied, "Yes. Absolutely."

When asked, each also expressed confidence he or she knew the priorities of the principals at the school level. This is valuable to the study because the HR administrators are responsible for selecting candidates for each school building based on the needs of the building and the desires of the principal. Mr. Taylor shared, "I think, you know, you could probably go to any elementary principal and ask them what their priority is and it's going to be something related to instruction, quality instruction." When Ms. Davis was asked if principal priorities were aligned to her priority of instructional knowledge, she replied, "Yes."

Principal priorities.

When principals were asked how they prioritize the criteria they look for in teacher candidates, answers were widely varied. Throughout the ten principal interviews, six different criteria were identified as the top priority when selecting a candidate for the school building. The criteria included integrity, people skills, targeting weaknesses in the building, instruction, personality, and passion. Table 4.3 below represents the priority for each principal interviewed in the study:

Table 4.3

Principal Priorities

	Integrity	People skills	Targeting weaknesses	Instruction	Personality	Passion
Ms. Johnson	X					
Ms. Williams		X				
Ms. Brown			X			
Mr. Miller				X		
Ms. Thompson				X		
Ms. Adams			X			
Mr. Anderson					X	
Ms. Jackson				X		
Ms. Lee				X		
Mr. Morris						X

When examining the criteria and how the criteria are prioritized, very little evidence

exists to support fit within or throughout the school district. While instruction was the most

common priority among principals, it was not the most common priority mentioned by HR

administrators who conduct the initial pre-screening interviews to determine if a candidate gets

sent to a school to interview. Additionally criteria within each department differed greatly. This

indicates a lack of consistency and fit both horizontally and vertically in the organization.

The researcher conducted a document analysis of interview questions at each individual

school. Principal participants were asked to share their interview questions. Six out of ten

principals shared their interview questions. The remaining four principals did not share their

interview questions. Of the six sets of interview questions analyzed as part of the document

analysis, three question sets included questions designed to determine if the candidate possessed

the qualities that principal identified as his or her highest priority. The other three sets of

interview questions did not address the priority the principal shared in his/her interview.

Competing Values in the Placement Process

The purpose of this research includes examining the school district's process of

elementary teacher placement. Placement happens in two different ways under the current hiring

process. First, HR administrators place teachers for interviews by determining with what school

they will interview. Next, once a candidate is hired, principals make placement decisions for that

candidate in their school building. In this study, the data mostly revealed information

surrounding the HR placement of candidates with principals for school-based interviews. While

HR expressed the principal needs and desires are considered, principals do not play any role in

this process.

In the semi-structured interviews with HR administrators, they were each asked to

describe the hiring process for the district. The follow-up question was asked to explain the

placement process and how they determine where they send elementary teacher candidates to

interview. The most common responses revealed the department places priority on harder-to-

staff schools. Therefore they send quality candidates to those schools to interview first. Equally

as common however was the response indicating there is heavy consideration placed on where

the candidate lives and what their commute would be to work each day. "A lot of, um, some of

the things that will drive and in no specific order: where somebody lives, we try to get them so

that they're not having to travel as far to go to work. It's difficult" (Ms. Davis). Ms. Robinson

agreed, "I always ask them if they live in the city. Do they prefer to stay on one side of [the city]

versus the other? I think of traffic, I think of the commute, I think of families." The values

embedded within these responses display inconsistency and compete with each other. The first

places value on placing quality candidates in lower-performing schools while the other values

convenience and fails to recognize school need.

When describing the placement process, Ms. Lee shared, "I do think sometimes they send us candidates in proximity too, that aren't too far across town." Ms. Brown agreed,

> I don't always see the connection because I think sometimes, they're just sending
> candidates but not necessarily the design for the school. Only because I've known them to
> say the person was interested in working at [my school] because they [live close]. So
> that's not necessarily their interest in the population because they understand these
> students.

These responses indicate a focus on candidate preference and convenience rather than a focused interest on the needs of the school and the desires of the principal.

Counter Examples

While inconsistency was the primary theme throughout the organization, three counter examples did result from the data analysis. First, all applications are screened and scored using the district-created "Teacher Applicant Pre-Screening Form." All administrators who score written applications use this form and the same rating scale to score the application and provide feedback on the candidate. Next, all HR administrators who conduct pre-screening interviews use the same set of district-created interview questions. These questions are also rated throughout the department using the same scale. Sample answers to be found acceptable for each question are provided on the document as a guide for the interviewer.

Finally, it is clear there are consistent expectations established for teacher hiring and placement. The elementary principals were all asked to describe the hiring process in place for the school district, and all answers mirrored those interviewed in HR. Ms. Williams explained the process by stating, "They prescreen and they'll call applicants for a screening interview. And then based on the outcome of that screening interview, they'll say that candidates are acceptable

or not." Ms. Brown explained, "So in general, it goes through a screening process. They apply

online and then if they meet the initial criteria, then they are brought in for a screening interview.

So at the school level, they send us candidates, and we interview them."   All principal responses

were very consistent. Each participant understood that recruitment and screening take place at

the district level and understood their role in the process is to interview candidates sent to them

by HR.

Theme 2: Lack of Communication

Communication is vital to the strategic functioning of an organization as it breeds

consistency and "fit" within. Throughout the research the lack of communication was a common

theme. This theme was mostly discussed in the interviews with the principal participants.

Principals can only formally hire candidates through communication with the HR department

and expressed the frustrations of that communication process from time to time. The lack of

communication is a hindrance to the strategic functioning of this organization.

The lack of communication is embedded throughout the research, most commonly

applicable to the communications between HR and building principals. Communication is a key

factor to the current hiring procedures in the school district. The hiring process begins as a

centralized process for screening and placement, moves to decentralized practice for the hiring

decision, but then returns to centralized for the job offer to be made and finalizations to occur.

The structure of this process makes communication critical to the functionality and strategic

actions of the school district in the hiring process. The data surrounding communication was

analyzed from two different lenses, including HR and building principal perspectives.

Differing Perspectives

When explaining the communication process between HR and principals, HR

administrators described the process as a non-issue, explaining if principals had questions about

a candidate they could reach out to HR to ask, and they would answer questions. Principals

however did not indicate that is something they are usually likely to do. Two principals did

mention they have been known to physically travel to the HR department to pull a file on a

candidate if they had questions about their screening documents or interview, however no other

responses indicated principals have the time to reach out on behalf of the candidates. Principals

spent a lot of time describing all of the other tasks they have on top of hiring, indicating that

taking the time to reach out to make contact with HR is often too time consuming. Principals did

mention having immediate access to candidate information would be beneficial to their decision-

making process.

When asked to elaborate on the hiring process, speaking specifically about

communication with the school buildings, Mr. Taylor shared the process by explaining,

> That's a good question, there's a lot of variation I think in that area. It really depends on
>
> the time of year in the hiring season that it is. Early in the hiring season, you're much
>
> more likely to get a wealth of candidates. You know, anywhere from three to five to
>
> seven candidates for a vacancy, and you're probably at that point more likely to have a
>
> little bit of knowledge about each one. That's communicated from our office to the
>
> school, as things get moving much more quickly and much more hurriedly, the number of
>
> candidates for a position will decrease throughout the summer, and there may not always
>
> be a wealth of information communicated about each candidate. We'll send, if it's end of
>
> July or August, we might have to say, okay, we've got three viable candidates to send

you. We give them names and phone numbers and, and at that point they may not know

anything more than that until they come in for an interview.

This response indicates that communication occurs when the department has time but often gets

pushed to the side when the department is busy during the primary hiring season. Principals only

receive names and phone numbers of candidates with whom to set up an interview during the

busy times. Principals mentioned having access to the screening interview could give them

insights to questions they would like more information on or help them structure their interview

more purposefully. Mr. Taylor continued,

That's kind of what I was getting into at the beginning of the year where there's more time

they're more likely to have access to that. It's not, it's part of our system and it's really, it's

not a, it's not really user friendly. The reality of it is the hiring process has to happen

more quickly than we can utilize the system for. So yeah, it does have the capability, and

when things don't have to be fast and in rush we can, we can move those candidates over

to the school, the principal can go in and look at the resume and we'll get, you know, the

complete application, really the employment history, the references and all that. When

things get moving fast, especially within the summer, it's not likely.

Principals also shared their perspectives of the communication with HR. The principals

communicated they do not have information they desire to have on a candidate before

interviewing them including pre-screening interview information, resume, references, etc. Their

experiences conveyed an opposite message from HR. "I don't have, to my knowledge, I don't

have the interview questions on hand" (Ms. Johnson). Ms. Lee shared, "The online system we

use has it but not readily available to us." Ms. Brown agreed, "So let me think about that. I want

to say the candidates are blind to me because I'm mixing up because for different positions, non-

teaching positions, I can pretty much see whatever I want to see. But for the teaching positions,

they don't release those candidate names to us so that we could see, for example, their resumes

and references and all that. So that hasn't been opened up to us." Ms. Jackson explained this

challenge,

> Yeah, I mean I think like, like I said, the biggest thing is not being privy to any
>
> references, recommendations, documents, anything upfront. Not knowing who the
>
> candidates are, if they're, you know, what's, why my list is different than someone else's
>
> list. Um, and then just since you turned the process back over to human relations that
>
> kind of takes it out of your hands too.
>
> A lack of awareness among the principals of how the candidates are placed was

mentioned in the data. The principals explained they did not know the process for determining

which candidates get sent to which schools. More communication surrounding this would lead

to a more trusting environment and build stronger relationships between HR and schools. Ms.

Johnson also described the communication challenge in depth,

> Yeah, maybe the communication piece is awfully hard. It's a huge task for HR to be in
>
> constant contact with buildings and vice versa. They have an overwhelming number of
>
> candidates that they're screening and trying to process people. They try to remember
>
> what each principal's looking for and then a principal in another area of the city is
>
> looking for something else. I mean it becomes a juggling match and it's like the circus
>
> act where they're spinning plates on the stage to keep all the plates spinning at the same
>
> time. I get that sense sometimes and if, if there's any gap that I could actually point to, it
>
> would be the communication piece. Trying to keep everybody happy and, and trying to
>
> listen to the needs of the principal in the same time. Get the folks out as quickly as you

can, which we've got jobs to fill and we want to do it as fast as possible. So basically just

the fact that it's a big job for a small department…I think they're overwhelmed at times.

The communication process lacked a systematic description from all participants. It was

more so described as something that occurs on an "as needed" basis. Additionally, no

communication systems were described or mentioned throughout the interviews. Email and

phone calls were the only forms of communication mentioned by principals or HR

administrators.

Other than sending an email or making a phone call, there is no systematic approach to

collecting data from principals surrounding the needs of their specific school buildings. HR

administrators shared throughout the interviews they try to send candidates to school buildings to

interview based on school needs. Without a strategic approach to data collection, and

communicating these needs, principals identified the task of sending candidates to schools seems

daunting to the department, and they feel the communication often gets lost in translation.

Lack of communication within an organization can breed mistrust and toxicity. It was

discussed through the interviews principals do not know what makes their list of candidates

unique to their buildings. They were also unable to identify why they receive certain candidates

and other principals don't. One principal was unaware if the same candidates interviewed

everywhere with openings or if candidates are only sent to certain schools. This is not

communicated, and principals are left blind to the process.

Theme 3: Slow to Change

The idea of change and what change means for an organization is mentioned throughout

SHRM literature through the concept of flexibility. Change was a common theme throughout

the research, but was recognized more for thoughts of change than the change itself. The

organization was found to respond to change in the time of crisis for survival purposes, rather

than changing to stay ahead. This data indicates limited adaptability and flexibility of the

organization.

The organization being slow to change was found to be a common theme throughout the

data. Change was mentioned in two different capacities, including ways the organization has

remained the same (absence of change), and also ways it has evolved over time. Some data

revealed instances where change has already happened, where some data revealed the desire for

change. The piece that stands out the most is the pace at which change occurs in the

organization. In many cases, the described change was described as a response to something the

organization had to do to "keep up" with the competition. It was described as a method of

survival for the organization rather than something to separate the organization ahead of others.

This was particularly evident throughout conversations surrounding recruitment. Other school

districts and the competition were discussed in detail, and actions such as signing bonuses,

paying relocation costs, and early hiring were all mentioned. The school district indicated they

are making steps to find ways to incorporate some of these more aggressive recruitment

techniques but have not yet found a way to make it feasible. Ms. Wilson explained, "I just don't

know if recruitment has ever been monetarily made a specific priority."

No Evidence of Fundamental Change

When identifying change, the first thing revealed by the data was a lack of fundamental

change in the organization. Fundamental change was a term established as a result of the coding

process in addition to the other terms used to describe change in this chapter. Participants

included in the study had a wide range of experience within the school district. The participant

with the least amount of experience has been working in the school district for less than one year,

and the most experienced has more than thirty years' experience with the organization. When

asked how the school district has evolved over time with hiring and placement practices, each

individual responded with a consensus that the school district has experienced no fundamental

change with the hiring process. Ms. Brown answered, "No I would say it really hasn't changed"

and Mr. Anderson agreed, "the system has been in place for a while at least for the past 15 years

since I've been an assistant principal or principal." Mr. Miller explained, "The process has

pretty much maintained." When asked the reasons the district procedures have remained the

same, Mrs. Davis went further to say, "It's working, we get people." The last response was

extremely surprising, as all other interviews identified how challenging it is to find teacher

candidates right now, as teacher shortage is a nationwide challenge. This response was

inconsistent to all other interview data and represents a mindset that there is no need for

improvement or change in the district. This mindset can be damaging and act as a hindrance to

the adaptability of the organization.

These data reveal the same hiring practices have been in place through the entire tenure

of the most experienced participant. The current hiring process was described as a centralized

screening process, which then moves to a decentralized interview at the building level for a

principal to make a selection for the school building. The final decision is then moved back to a

centralized process where HR considers the principal's request for the candidate and makes the

job offer to the candidate. HR ensures that paperwork and legal procedures for employment are

followed.

Forced Change by Environment

Some change throughout the school district has occurred naturally over time and was

forced with the change of state policies and technology. Some changes have occurred naturally

due to environmental consequences. One commonly referenced natural change in the hiring

process is the licensure requirements for elementary school teacher candidates and the

nontraditional hiring approaches implemented due to this change. In the past, elementary

teachers were required to be fully licensed to become employed. However, in recent years the

state has allowed school districts to hire provisionally licensed elementary school teachers as a

response to the nationwide teacher shortage. Mr. Taylor shared,

> Yeah. Well, another thing that we historically have not done is hire teachers on a
>
> provisional license or any kind of temporary unit where there was a career switcher or
>
> provisional or a nontraditional approach to licensure. VDOE will now let us use
>
> experiential learning to count in lieu of content, college content. This is a new trend in
>
> the state, and I have a feeling that we're going to be using that much more in the future as
>
> the candidate pool is shrinking. But now we're, I mean, this would have been unheard of
>
> a few years back. We're hiring provisional elementary teachers.

> Ms. Robinson also expressed the licensure requirements is a change the district has

experienced, "Licensure. They have really been more relaxed with licensure. We're looking at

people with less experience, some that have not even student taught. We're looking at

provisionals. We never looked at provisional licensure for general education teachers ever until

like last year."

> Similarly, the criteria used to evaluate an elementary school candidate have naturally

changed as a response to the shrinking applicant pool. The data reveals the school district feels

an extreme pressure to keep up with the growing demands for teachers as a result of teacher

turnover and attrition. Ms. Robinson admits, "We are much less selective and desperate. It was

never like this for elementary general education. We had elementary general education a dime a

dozen. It was great because you could pick the very best teachers."

Lastly, technology was identified as a change throughout the data. While the process has

stayed the same, the application has transitioned to an online application in addition to the

software used for storing HR information. Ms. Jackson explained, "the technology piece of that

has changed, but the process itself is probably a little antiquated. One complaint or critique I

heard is people don't know what vacancies are open because the district doesn't post that way,

whereas [a neighboring school district] posts specific openings, even site-specific openings."

Mr. Smith agreed, "Certainly adding the technology component is different. Fundamentals are

still the same."

Additionally, the natural change of technology was commonly referenced as a barrier to

the process in the school district. Each participant was asked to describe the ideal hiring process

and identify the gap between the ideal process and what is currently in place in the school

district. The application system itself was identified as a barrier as it is not user friendly and

deters applicants from completing the online application to be considered for a pre-screening

interview. Ms. Wilson stated,

> I guess I would say that our HR system that we have in place is a challenge for us. It's
>
> my understanding from talking with those that try to complete the application that the
>
> application itself is unfriendly. So that could be a hindrance to us. People get frustrated.
>
> A lot of people go in and create a profile and they think they've applied and they actually
>
> have never even submitted the application because the submit button is not easily seen or
>
> it doesn't fall in the logical place in the process.

Likewise, Ms. Brown, who has been very involved in the recruitment and screening process for

the district expressed, "The computer makes it difficult for people to get through the door" and

continued to explain, "It is not user friendly." Ms. Robinson agreed, "I would love to see an

application that is more user friendly." The application was a reoccurring theme throughout the

interviews, especially from HR administrators. A user-friendly application system would make

the process easier for applicants. The removal of this additional barrier would increase the

candidate pool, which is especially important during a time of teacher shortage.

Purposeful Change as a Response

　　While the hiring practices and procedures have not changed, it is evident some efforts

have evolved as a response to the environment and needs the school district has acquired over

time.   Purposeful change efforts were revealed throughout the data in the school district in the

areas of recruitment, timeline, interview questions, and support. All of these changes were

directly tied to a challenge that provoked the change within the organization. All changes were

identified as a response to address challenges and keep up with the competition.

　　Changes to recruitment strategies.

　　First and foremost, recruitment was a steady theme found throughout the data as a

purposeful change the school district is making as a response to the environmental demands.

Mentions of budgetary restrictions were consistently found throughout the data, limiting

recruitment efforts the district can make. The recruitment efforts were identified as a response to

the competitive market, aggressive recruitment strategies used by neighboring districts, and

teacher shortage. The researcher interviewed Mr. Taylor who plays a role in developing the

recruitment plan for the school district in the current school year. Mr. Taylor shared,

So we're trying to do things. So one of the things we're doing differently this year is an

early job fair. One of the trends that we have seen over the last few years is the

overwhelming majority of teachers we hire are not coming right out of college or coming

from other school districts, so that early job fair enables us to talk to folks in other school

districts who are looking for a change, and we can then offer them something much

earlier than most other school districts who are looking at those types of candidates for

the next year. Another one of the things we're really doing more of this year, and we've

always done it, but we're really trying to make a concerted effort to focus on recruiting

minorities. It's by visiting more traditionally, historically black colleges as much as there

is a teacher shortage, now we're really seeing a shortage of minorities going into the field

disproportionately. And, we've had some positive results already this year. We've got

some career commitment candidates from those colleges already this year that are very

promising.

Ms. Robinson contributed further information about additional recruitment efforts the

district has explored,

Well, we've hired a number of retired school administrators, actually African Americans,

part time and they're actually going out to colleges and recruiting for us. We started the

career commitment program, so we've got about 24 people lined up for that, and that's

basically guaranteeing them a position for the fall.

These changes to recruitment were explained as a response to teacher shortage and dry candidate

pools. In the case of recruitment, the school district has responded to the competition and is

continually searching to find the feasibility to incorporate some of the same techniques

surrounding school districts are finding successful.

Earlier timeline for hiring.

Another purposeful change theme revealed throughout the data includes the action steps

taken to move the timeline up. The timeline was described as a challenge the school district has

always faced and was revealed to be a key reason quality candidates were being lost to

competing neighboring school districts. This, however, was a response to the competition. The

school district was forced to make purposeful change due to the change already being

implemented in neighboring school districts. Mr. Taylor explains the timeline change,

> Just, in general the move to try to do everything earlier. Letters of intent are, since I've
>
> been in the department, we have offered a letter, it's essentially a short contract that offers
>
> a guaranteed position to a candidate. If we go to a job fair and somebody is really strong,
>
> we can give them a letter of intent. It doesn't tell them which school or grade level they
>
> will have because we usually don't know at that point, but it does secure them a position
>
> if they sign it. Now, the letter is binding for us, like a contract. It's not binding for them,
>
> so they could turn around the next day and sign with somebody else, and it's just a loss.
>
> So one of the changes we anticipate kind of going back to the early hiring is being able to
>
> offer actual contracts earlier.

Ms. Robinson confirms the school district's attempts to expedite the process by moving

timelines to secure quality candidates earlier,

> We have bumped up our timeline to March, like with transfers, we used to have to wait.
>
> Like the school board policy says that principals have to consider internal candidates to
>
> transfer first. So you interview the top three, the most senior three or whoever they want
>
> after that. So that used to have to take place before making any offers. But we bumped
>
> that up to March 15th now, so we have bumped that up. Other school districts are giving

out contracts to kids who are student teaching right now from the fall. They front load,

but they also have a lot higher turnover. So they know they were going to have 500

vacancies so they're going to give out 400 contracts.

Screening interview questions.

A document analysis was conducted of the pre-screening interview questions the school

district uses. The first set of questions analyzed was revised in the year 2011, and the second set

was updated and revised in 2017. This six-year gap of unrevised interview questions supports

the organization is slow to change and hesitant to change in some cases. In an ever-changing

profession, the demands are rapidly increasing (Fombrun, Devanna, 2003). The new set of

interview questions (revised in 2017) revealed a change of six out of ten questions. The

questions were either changed completely or revised to reflect more current language and

practices. The researcher followed up with the HR department to gain clarity of how the new

questions were created. The questions were created as a collaborative effort with the whole HR

department who received informal input from principals who take initiative to participate in the

recruitment and screening efforts alongside the school district. The researcher reached out for

more clarity to discover how exactly the department collaborated with the principals to make

these revisions. No formal feedback was sent out to principals districtwide to gain broad insights

from all areas of the organization. Only those principals who take initiative to participate in the

recruitment and screening process were part of this collaborative effort.

Support to increase teacher retention.

Lastly, support was identified as a theme for purposeful change. As a response to the

high teacher turnover numbers and the challenging task of replacing them, the district has

implemented support systems to increase new teacher retention numbers. Ms. Robinson shared

these efforts,

> A little part of HR is helping develop our teachers and retain quality teachers, but we do
>
> look at the progress of our probationary teachers. So anybody who has zero to three years
>
> of experience, we have meetings with the principals. We talk about their progress or lack
>
> thereof and what the principal is doing to provide support so they have to come and be
>
> accountable, which is great. That is new. We've only done this for two years. The
>
> principal has to come accountable with action plans with what supports have they
>
> provided that teacher. Have they allowed them to go to different buildings and observe?
>
> Do they have resource specialists coming in? What have they done to help support this
>
> teacher? And if there's no progress, then we also give them letter templates putting that
>
> employee on notice that their job's in jeopardy. We can't afford to keep poor teachers.
>
> The team meetings will hold principals accountable for their action plans and so forth. It's
>
> eliminated the transfer problem or just at the end of the year giving people meets
>
> expectations on their evaluations.

This change represents strategic actions on behalf of the school district. While the organization

recognizes the teacher shortage and demand for quality teachers, it also recognizes the

importance of only retaining quality teachers.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine the ways in which the school district acts

strategically with its HR practices of hiring and placement, specifically for elementary school

teachers. This chapter presented the findings of one school district and included ten elementary

school principals and five HR administrators as participants for a total of 15 interviews. Each

interview lasted an average of forty minutes and was audio recorded. Each interview was

transcribed and analyzed through the coding process. Three themes emerged as a result of this

data analysis including inconsistency, lack of communication, and slow to change.

The theme of inconsistency was the first to emerge from the data and included three

subthemes, including inconsistent criteria, inconsistent priorities, and competing values in the

placement process. All 15 participants, regardless of their position in the school district were

asked the same question about candidate criteria as all participate in interviewing to some extent.

When asked what criteria they use when identifying strong teacher candidates, responses varied

across the board entirely but also within each department. HR department data was analyzed

separately from principal data to determine if consistencies in criteria were found vertically

and/or horizontally throughout the school district. Vertical alignment would indicate

consistencies were found from top down throughout the organization from the HR department to

the building level. A horizontal alignment would indicate consistencies were found within the

school district at each department level, for example, within the HR department or within

principal responses at the building level. Throughout 15 interviews, a vast variety of criteria

were reported, so the researcher asked a follow-up question to narrow down the data. After each

participant identified each criterion they use to identify a strong teacher candidate, they were

asked how they prioritize that criterion. This data was analyzed to reveal the inconsistency of

priorities both vertically and horizontally in the organization when it comes to prioritizing

elementary teacher criteria. From the 15 interviews, eight different criteria priorities were

identified from individuals who make hiring decisions in the same organization.

Furthermore, throughout the hiring process dialogue, each participant was asked to

describe the placement process, as that is unique to the school district when compared to

neighboring school districts. Two main inconsistencies revealed the competing priorities of

filling hard-to-staff schools and considering candidate preference. Both HR administrators and

principals were aware of placements being made at the district level for teacher candidates based

on both of these criteria. Some principals expressed the concern candidates are not being placed

based on their knowledge of the student population the school serves, but rather as a convenience

to the candidate. HR administrators confirmed by stating they consider the candidates' commute

to work as they make placement decisions.

      Lack of communication was the second theme to emerge from the data and included as it

was frequently discussed. Principals expressed feelings of lack of communication from HR,

especially when it came to the pool of teacher candidates. Principals are only able to "deal with

what HR sends them," (Mr. Anderson) and feel blind going into interviews with candidates, as

they aren't always given access to their background information, references, resume, etc.

Principals are also not granted access to the entire candidate pool and do not have readily

available access to the results of the screening process, including the pre-screening interview.

Principals expressed this communication would greatly benefit them in their interviewing

process at the building level as they make hiring decisions. On the other hand, HR administrator

participants did not identify communication as a hardship in the process.

      The last theme, slow to change, yielded three subthemes of fundamental change, natural

change, and purposeful change. First, it was revealed the organization has not undergone any

fundamental change with HR practices in the last thirty years. The same process has been in

place throughout the entirety of the most senior participant's employment with the school

district. However, while there was no fundamental change to the organization's HR practices,

some changes were identified occurring over time due to new and improved systems or as

natural consequences to the environment. These changes included the use of technology to keep

up with societal demands, licensure requirements as a natural response to the state department of

education, and the decrease of criteria standards used when identifying strong teacher candidates

as a response to the shrinking candidate pool.

On the other hand, some changes were very clearly intentional actions being made by the

school district as a response to the demands the organization faces with HR practices. Each of

these changes was supported by data by the participants to identify the driving reasons behind

the changes. These changes included many different recruitment strategies to attract quality

teachers, revised timeline to secure teachers in contracts earlier, support to strategically retain

quality teachers, and revisions of interview questions to represent current best practices.

The data suggests the organization as a whole has a growth mindset and strives to

become more strategic in their HR practices of hiring and placement at the elementary school

level. The interviews revealed some inconsistencies the school district should explore and some

additional suggestions by the researcher will be made in Chapter Five. The researcher will also

discuss some barriers the organization faces, and a summary of the findings will be presented.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

The study examined the HR practices of hiring and placing elementary school teachers. The focus of the study was centered on the ways the school district acts strategically when hiring and placing elementary school teachers. Three research questions guided the study: How and to what extent does the school district act strategically when hiring elementary school teachers? How and to what extent does the school district act strategically when determining elementary teacher placement? What factors contributed to or served as a barrier to the school district's strategic actions? Strategic HR Management literature was used as a framework for the study. This qualitative research included semi-structured interviews with 15 participants. The researcher also conducted a document analysis of hiring materials. This chapter will summarize the findings of the research and discuss implications for practice and future research.

Summary of Methodology

This qualitative research collected data from 15 participants in a single school district. Five of the participants in the study are HR administrators and the other 10 participants are elementary school principals. Five of the participants in the study are male, and 10 are female. The participants have a wide range of experience in the school district ranging from one year to beyond 30 years. All principals with the exception of one have seniority in the school district as they were promoted to their current role from within the organization. To ensure validity of the data, each participant reviewed the transcript upon completion and confirmed with the researcher everything was represented accurately. Next, the analysis of the data began.

First, the data was broken down into small parts for close examination. During this phase

of analysis, the researcher identified similarities and differences throughout the data. The data

was transferred to spreadsheets for organizational purposes so the researcher could easily

navigate and manipulate the data. Next, the data was labeled and broken down further into

subcategories. Lastly, the codes were closely examined to identify relationships between them

for reporting purposes. Once themes and subthemes were developed and findings were revealed,

a peer researcher reviewed the themes and asked questions for validity purposes.

Summary of Findings

Nationwide teacher shortage continues to be an obstacle schools are facing. As a result,

schools are forced to respond to this shortage by hiring and retaining quality teachers, and the

need for SHRM becomes increasingly relevant. This research supports the criticality of widely

transitioning SHRM into educational practices, as the current literature surrounding SHRM in

education is scarce. The findings and conclusions resulting from the research of the strategic HR

practices of hiring and placing elementary teachers are presented in this chapter. Three distinct

themes were revealed through the interview and document analysis data including:

inconsistency, lack of communication, and slow to change. Within each theme, subthemes

emerged, and the supporting data under each theme was organized to identify how the school

district acts strategically and where barriers to strategic actions are found. The study concludes

with four findings that both shed light on the school district's strategic actions and highlight the

areas for potential growth to become more strategic with the hiring and placement of elementary

school teachers. The chapter is organized into four sections including: findings categorized by

theme and connection to the literature, implications for practice, implications for future research,

and summary and conclusions as related to the research questions presented.

Inconsistency

The first theme, inconsistency, as reported in Chapter 4 was revealed first through the

data and supported by the literature. Upon further analysis the subthemes inconsistent criteria,

inconsistent priorities, and competing values in the placement process emerged. The subthemes

unveiled the inconsistent practices in place. Some counter examples were also provided where

consistency was found throughout the organization. The findings are explained in detail below:

Finding 1: Attempts Towards Procedural Consistency

This finding was revealed through semi-structured interview and document analysis data.

Evidence throughout the data did conclude there are many attempts to produce procedural

consistency with HR practices in the school district. The first evidence of this was found

throughout the interview transcript data. When each participant was asked to describe the hiring

process to me, all answers were found to be consistent. Each participant was aware of the

process and the procedures for the school district. Each participant was also well informed of his

or her role and responsibility in the process.

The uniqueness of the hiring and placement practices and procedures currently in place as

compared to surrounding school districts does require a strong, broad understanding of the

process to be successful. Each participant identified the centralized application and screening

process, transitioning to a decentralized interview and decision making at the building level,

lastly transitioning back to centralized final decision making to complete the process. Each

building principal identified his or her role in the process is to complete the interview once HR

sends candidates and request the best candidate for his or her school building. Each principal

also identified their role in the process does not allow them to personally offer a position to a

candidate, as that is the role of HR at a centralized level. None of the analyzed data showed any

confusion or inconsistencies with the process itself and the expectations from each participant.

The responses about the centralized screening process indicate the school district consistently

uses low-cost data including written applications and resumes, in addition to medium-cost data

including contacting references and the centralized pre-screening interview as presented in the

literature (Wise et.al., 1987). No evidence of high-cost data was found throughout the data

analysis.

This finding is strongly connected to the SHRM literature and the "fit" concept.

Specifically, the concept of vertical fit is evident, as the organization is in alignment with the

practices, procedures, and expectations for the hiring and placement process of elementary

school teachers. Internally, all participants are well informed of the procedures, and there was no

confusion or inconsistencies throughout any of the 15 semi-structured interviews. The fact that

HR administrator responses mirrored those of principal responses indicates both a horizontal and

vertical alignment, as it was consistent within the department and throughout the organization

from top to bottom.

Finding 2: Absence of Priority Alignment

This finding was also revealed through the collected interview and document analysis

data. As previously mentioned, each participant was asked what criteria he or she prioritizes

when identifying a strong teacher candidate, and very little evidence of alignment with these

priorities within or throughout the organization was found. While it is expected for each

building to have its own unique needs, each individual school building is a building block to the

organization as a whole, which should operate under the same shared mission. It is common for

principals to have different areas of need in their school buildings, however the identification of

priorities within HR participants was not aligned.

Lack of Communication

The lack of communication reflects a shortage of dialogue and collaboration within the HR department and between the HR department and the building principals. Finding 3 reveals the analysis of the different perspectives from the semi-structured interviews. The theme of communication difficulties was present throughout, however the tone surrounding communication from building principals was different than that of the HR administrators. Principals reported they found the communication process to be frustrating from time to time, whereas HR administrators described open lines of communication with principals. The perspectives on communication between the two differed.

Finding 3: Deficit in Communication Practices and Systems

The findings highlighted here explain an identified deficit in communication practices and systems. As part of the research, each participant was asked to describe the school district's screening process during the semi-structured interviews. It was found that, overall, principals were very unfamiliar with the school district's screening process or what it entails. While each principal clearly identified screening happens at the district level, few were able to describe it in detail. Three of the 10 principals were highly familiarized with the process as they had been invited to attend recruitment trips with the school district where screening interviews took place. The other principals were unable to describe any details of the screening process at all. The same three principals were the only principals able to identify what the screening interview questions were or how candidates were scored and ranked before being sent to schools. Principals indicated they are not privileged to any screening information or documents including application, resumes, references, pre-screening interview questions and answers, or scoring documents unless they physically visit the HR department to review the candidate's file.

Slow to Change

The theme slow to change derived from the data represents the ways in which the

organization implements change. While the desire for change was represented throughout the

data, the action of change was not as commonly found. The organization appears to implement

change as a means for survival rather than as a way to thrive. The changes identified are a direct

response to competition and the surrounding environment. Needs for changes were discussed,

however the feasibility to implement those changes is something the organization has not

discovered yet.

Finding 4: Limited Actions Towards Change

These findings paint a picture of the desire for change throughout the school district, but

especially within the HR department. Since the beginning of the process is a centralized process,

it is evident those who directly experience hardships with the application, recruitment, and

screening are HR administrators. Most of the challenging areas, which present problems, are not

exposed to the principals, as their only role is to interview candidates who are sent to them from

HR. While some principals did express a desire for change in the process, the HR participants

working diligently to creatively find solutions to the current obstacles the school district faces

expressed the most evident desire for change.

Change is a response to demands placed on an organization. The main identified demand

placed on this organization as defined by the research is the need to implement more strategic

recruitment strategies to secure the most qualified teacher candidates for employment in the

school district. Some recruitment strategies presented in the literature are currently in practice in

the school district, but not all. The school district is reported to use pre-collegiate pathways

including the Teacher for Tomorrow program. Additionally, the school district partners with

universities through collegiate recruitment programs and has placed additional efforts on

recruitment from historically black colleges and universities. The contrast from the literature to

practice within this organization is the lack of incentives available to candidates. Cooper and

Alvarando (2006) reported scholarships, advanced degree opportunities, bonus money, early job

offerings, and forgivable loans are all effective techniques to teacher recruitment. Bonus money

and early job offerings were specifically mentioned throughout the data as identified strategies

competitors (surrounding school districts) already have in place, yet they are not found in

practice in the studied school district. A desire to change is the first step to the change process,

however it does not represent the change itself.

Connection to SHRM

Need for Internal Fit

There was very little evidence of the SHRM concept of fit within the organization, according to

the data. The lack of consistency in the organization both horizontally and vertically is

problematic as explored through the lens of SHRM. Scribner, et al., (2008) and Schuler and

Jackson (1987) discuss the importance of HR policies and practices being aligned. A horizontal

analysis of the data revealed the lack of fit in what each participant looks for in a teacher

candidate. Both the criteria and priorities were inconsistent within members of the department.

The literature supports the specific practices themselves are not important as long as the desired

outcomes are present (Doty, Delery, 1997). The research identified desired outcomes of the

organization are not being met as defined by the continuous mention of teacher shortage and the

extremes the school district is practicing to hire teacher candidates. Examples from the data of

these extremes include lowering standards and accepting provisional licensed applicants to hire

teacher candidates.

Strategy-HRM practices fit as reported by Wright and Snell (1997) supports the need for

the practices HR uses to be in line with the strategy of the organization. The number one barrier

to HR practices as defined by the research is the shortage of teacher candidates, therefore

recruitment is a large focus for the organization, and practices should be in alignment with the

recruitment literature as the environment determines the strategy of the organization. The current

existing recruitment strategies contrast from the literature in the areas of incentives (Cooper,

Alvarando, 2006) and using existing teachers to recruit new teachers (Barnes, 1953).

Furthermore, strategy-employee behavior fit (Wright, Snell, 1997) helps understand the

fit between the strategy of the organization and the behaviors the employees exhibit. This was

especially absent from the data in regards to one participant specifically who did not

acknowledge a need for change while indicating the organization is operationally sound, and

desired outcomes are achieved. This HR administrator plays a large role in the HR process of

elementary teacher hiring, yet exhibits behaviors inconsistent to the strategy of the organization.

Absence of Flexibility

The competitiveness of the environment was a large focus throughout the data. Teacher

shortage and the scarcity of candidates was identified as the reason for the competition.

Research from Sanchez (1995) identifies flexibility as the response an organization has to the

demands placed on it from the competitive environment. This illustrates the point the desire for

change does not represent the change itself. Without the response action, the flexibility is absent

from the organization. HR practices and resource flexibility (Wright, Snell, 1997) is a

component of flexibility outlined in the literature, emphasizing the importance of using resources

efficiently and across many venues. The HR resources the organization has, especially the

application system was identified as a barrier due to the inefficiency of the program. It was

identified as not user friendly and incapable of performing many desired functions including a

communication component to upload and store official paperwork on teacher candidates,

available to principals.

HR practices and coordination flexibility is identified by Wright and Snell (1997) as the

speedy ability to adapt which was not identified in the research. The organization was found as

slow to change. It also still lacks change altogether in many areas. This part of the SHRM

literature relates back to recruitment strategies and the unwillingness to explore venues that

require increased monetary support.   It also connects to the six-year gap between revisions of

screening interview questions in an everchanging profession. The absence of flexibility is a sign

of the organization being dragged along by the environment, rather than establishing its own

direction. These components of SHRM are necessary to address within the organization, as the

demands of the environment are increasing and everchanging (Tran, 2015), and HR officials

hold the power to play the role of change agents in school reform (Scribner, et al., 2008).

Implications for Practice

The research uncovered five major findings through the data analysis process. This

section will highlight some implications for practice and steps the district can take to become

more strategic with HR practices of hiring and placing elementary school teachers including:

collaboration, feedback, and networking. While these implications are common in nature, an in

depth discussion will follow of how each will specifically benefit the district in regards to their

strategic HR practices.

Collaboration

First, to achieve "fit" at a higher level, the school district can increase consistency both

vertically and horizontally in the school district. To achieve horizontal "fit", the HR department

can collaboratively determine priorities for which they are looking in a candidate. This effort

will require the elimination of personal preferences and biases to determine what characteristics

of a candidate are most important to the success of the school district according to the established

mission and vision of the organization. This action will guarantee a candidate, who may have

been advanced to the next level by another interviewer, will not be overlooked for lacking one

specific criterion from one interviewer. Likewise, it is recommended the HR department create a

custom rubric to assist with the scoring of pre-screening interviews and applications as a whole.

A rating scale alone is not enough to guarantee consistency between interviewers, yet a rubric

with specific indicators would increase the likelihood of an equitable experience for all teacher

candidates.

　　Furthermore, providing job-embedded professional development opportunities for

principals to collaboratively create and discuss quality interview questions is recommended.

Some principals reported they have a "general" or "generic" list of questions they use. Others

reported they received their list of questions from a colleague. Not all principals reported their

questions were intentionally created with the school district's strategic mission in mind. The

data supports this, as only three out of six sets of interview questions aligned with the priorities

the principal identified in the interview as top priorities for them when identifying a strong

teacher candidate. Providing this opportunity for principal development could create a tighter

consistency between school buildings within the organization while still allowing principals to

tailor questions to meet the unique needs of their buildings.

　　Practices leading to increased communication from HR to principals would also increase

consistency within the school district. The data reveals the principals would find better

communication about the candidates helpful to their decision-making. Having information about

candidates ahead of time and having access to their pre-screening interview could help guide

their questioning of the candidate and their ultimate decision-making. It is recommended a

system be in place where screening documents can be digitally shared in a timely manner with

all building principals.

Feedback

Collecting formal feedback from principals on a yearly basis to collect intel on the

specific needs of the building is recommended to enhance communication between HR and

principals. This action will ultimately add consistency to the teacher placement process.

Formally collecting this data from principals will ensure candidates are being placed with

principals and in buildings according to their characteristics and professional strengths rather

than solely based on preference or convenience.   By updating this data each year, HR can stay

current with the changing demands of building dynamics and needs over time, consistent with

the concept of "flexibility" grounded in SHRM literature.

Networking

Lastly, the data shows one of the largest barriers the school district faces is shrinking

candidate pools as a result of the nationwide teacher shortage problem. It is recommended the

school district make recruitment a priority with both time and monetary efforts. Many

recruitment strategies surrounding school districts (competitors) are using were mentioned

consistently throughout the interviews with HR administrators, however many of the mentioned

efforts have not been implemented in the school district where the research was conducted.

Since teacher shortage was identified as the number one barrier throughout all 15 interviews,

recruitment efforts should be brought to the forefront of attention for the organization to

strategically enhance HR practices. Networking with other school districts to seek solutions for

feasibility of these strategies is recommended to create a strategic plan to move forward.

Implications for Future Research

Major findings of this research reveal inconsistency, lack of communication, and the

organization as slow to change. No current literature investigates strategic hiring practices from

the perspective of teachers. Furthermore, teacher placement at the building level, guided by

SHRM framework is still absent from the literature. Future questions for research include:

1. What are teachers' experiences with the hiring process as they were hired?

2. How are principals strategic with teacher placement practices at the building level?

First, a study of teachers and their experiences with the hiring process in the studied

school district would allow a different perspective of the process from a new lens. The teacher

perspective could be valuable, as applicants usually apply to more than one organization,

therefore are exposed to different hiring processes and organizational norms. Teachers might

experience obstacles or frustrations with the hiring process of which the district is unaware.

Adding this fresh perspective could gain new insights regarding barriers and the need for change.

Second, conducting a building-level study to determine how principals act strategically

when placing teachers at the elementary school level within the school building itself could

greatly benefit the organization. Elementary school teachers are often graduate college licensed

for multiple grade levels and subject areas as opposed to secondary teachers who are usually

licensed for a smaller range of subjects and grade levels. This allows much more room for

flexibility within the school building for teacher placement. The interview protocol for building

principals did include questions surrounding teacher placement at the building level, however the

data was limited. The existing data does not reveal any signs of SHRM, however deeper

questions would need to be asked to gather any meaningful data. The addition of this research

could add an additional layer of HR research to carry the strategic functions deeper into the

organization.

Additionally, the school district is currently operating under a new superintendent during

the time of this research. The superintendent was a student in the school district. He was also a

teacher and administrator in the school district but worked outside of the district for many years

before returning as the superintendent. It is recommended a follow-up study be conducted to

reveal the expectations under the new leadership as the school district is currently undergoing a

change of the organizational mission statement. New leadership could result in many changes

throughout several departments, including the HR department.

<div align="center">**Conclusions**</div>

The purpose of the study was to identify ways the school district acts strategically with

HR practices, specifically hiring and placing elementary school teachers. A strategic human

resource management framework, focusing on the two concepts of "fit" and "flexibility," drove

the study. The study was guided by three questions: How and to what extent does the school

district act strategically when hiring elementary school teachers? How and to what extent does

the school district act strategically when determining elementary teacher placement? What

factors contributed to or served as a barrier to the school district's strategic actions?

The research revealed scarcity in the teacher applicant pool is the reason for the

competitive nature of the market and the need for a focus on teacher recruitment in the school

district. The school district's slow response to the competition, displayed through limited actions

of change is a demonstration of the organization being driven by the environment as opposed to

being strategic. Lastly, the limited evidence of SHRM found throughout the data reveals room

for improvement in both fit and flexibility in the organization's HR practices.

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APPENDIX A: PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

<u>Building Level Interview Protocol</u>

Interviewee # _____

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. It is my plan for this interview to not exceed one hour in length. To assist my data collection, I will be audio-recording our conversation today. This audio will be kept confidential and your name as well as any other names mentioned will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by me as the researcher. A pseudonym will be assigned to you to protect your identity and maintain confidentiality. I will destroy these audio-recordings after the research is complete. Once these interviews have been transcribed, I will send the transcripts to you for your review and approval to ensure the communication is adequately reported.

I will now begin the interview and the recording.

1. Describe to me the hiring process for this school district.

    a. What part do building level administrators play in the hiring process?

2. What would a perfect hiring process look like?

    a. What is the gap between the ideal situation and where you currently stand with hiring?

    b. What do you believe is the largest barrier to achieving the ideal process?

3. How do you recruit teacher candidates?

4. How do you screen teacher candidates?

5. What criteria do you use to identify strong teacher candidates?

    a. How do you prioritize these criteria?

      b. What makes these priorities important to you?

6. When presented with a roadblock in hiring such as a subpar applicant pool, what

    decisions do you make?

      a. What do you use to drive that decision making?

7. When presented with an opportunity to hire, how do you approach the applicant pool?

      a. Do you look to hire a person to fill that specific vacancy or take a holistic

         approach?

8. Tell me about the process you use when determining teacher placement within the

    school building.

      a. What is this decision making driven by?

      b. How do you prioritize teacher strengths when making placement decisions?

APPENDIX B: HR INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

HR Interview Protocol

Interviewee # _____

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. It is my plan for this interview to

not exceed one hour in length. To assist my data collection, I will be audio-recording our

conversation today. This audio will be kept confidential and your name as well as any

other names mentioned will be kept confidential and will only be accessed by me as the

researcher. A pseudonym will be assigned to you to protect your identity and maintain

confidentiality. I will destroy these audio-recordings after the research is complete.

Once these interviews have been transcribed, I will send the transcripts to you for your

review and approval to ensure the communication is adequately reported.

I will now begin the interview and the recording.

1. Describe to me the hiring process for this school district.

    a. What part does central office play in that hiring process?

2. What would a perfect hiring process look like?

    a. What is the gap between the ideal situation and where you stand currently with

        hiring?

3. How do you recruit teacher candidates?

    a. Has this recruitment plan changed over time?

    b. Who is in charge of developing this plan each year?

4. How do you screen teacher candidates?

    a. What criteria do you use to identify strong teacher candidates?

i.   How do you prioritize this criteria?

ii.   How are these priorities decided?

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