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RESEARCH PAPER

Implementation of HRM Practices in Higher Education Institutions of Pakistan: Investigating Rhetoric and Authenticity through a Case Study

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
	The objective of this study is to evaluate rhetoric and reality regarding implementation of the HRM practices in a public sector university of Pakistan. Academics and practitioners have long stressed that public sector institutions encounter inherent challenges in the adoption of HRM practices, especially the higher education institutions. In this context, the present study use purposive sampling to collect data from highly informed respondents by conducting in-depth interviews and by using an interpretive perspective to discover the implementation of HRM practices through a case study methodology. Contrary to the dominant notion of the traditional procedure, the results of the current study reveal that the university has adopted a standardized procedure for recruitment and training, and the development of its human resources. However, the issue of compensation is still ambiguous as it involves multiple procedures. An important implications of this study is that policy-making institutions, such as the HEC Pakistan can play a crucial role in adoption and promotion of all HRM practicies by devoting equal support towards the deficient areas in particular. Finally, this study identifies various directions for future research.

Introduction

The twentieth century is marked by massive transformations in organizational structure and practices, along with the adoption of proper Human Resource Management (HRM) practices around the globe. HRM is considered one of the most important features in the development of a country. It is now believed that humans are the major stimuli of a country's growth and progress (Delery & Doty, 1996). The progress of a nation is determined by the development of its people. Even the quality of products produced by a country depends on how experts, teachers, managers, and workers are performing in their workplace. Proper management of human resources is an obligatory requirement as it determines the position of the

country in the modern competitive world (Delaney& Huselid, 1996). Twentieth-century has introduced new horizons in the field of technology and at the same time stressed the people dimension of an organization. In response to the growing trend of adopting proper HRM practices around the globe (Arthur, 1994), developing countries also shift their attention toward proper management of their most precious resources (i.e. human resources). Many countries have also incorporated human resource practices into strategic planning to achieve a competitive advantage (Arthur, 1994). As identified by Ali and Brandl (2017) rapid adoption of HRM in developing countries in response to the change agenda of the government has turned the focus on HRM context-based research to identify the particular veracities of the subject.

Educational infrastructures of Western countries have encountered a big wave of reforms, resulting in great improvements in the administration of higher educational institutions. The systematic implementation of these reforms has affected the whole world. Since education is a global phenomenon, the developing countries have begun to feel the pressure in maintaining international standards of education and restructuring their institutions according to higher education standards set by international institutions. Research studies have described that a major problem in most public sector educational institutions is the lack of effective management of its human resources. These studies indicate that lack of strategic planning and inappropriate execution of proper HRM practices lead organizations to disasters (Pfeffer, 2005). Michelle Gander (2019) identified that structural change in the infrastructure of educational establishments from the public to corporate enterprise creates the necessity of a proper human management system. In today's world employees have to face financial constraints and pressure for being more productive.

Pakistan regardless of its unique geographic location, a large number of educated, hardworking, and capable people are lagging behind other developing countries in adopting HRM practices (Khilji, 2003). Furthermore, higher education institutions require restructuring themselves by introducing new management practices, especially regarding human resources (Raouf, 2006). The banking and telecommunication sectors of Pakistan have introduced HRM practices but the advanced models developed in Western countries cannot be implemented in the cultural context of Pakistan, where HRM is in its introductory phase (Rana & Reid, 2008). Higher education institutions have also adopted HRM activities to keep pace with international standards of education. The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan has given guidelines for higher education institutions to adopt a standard set of practices to align with international standards of education (Jahangir, 2008). Many higher education institutions are restructuring themselves in the light of Higher Education Commission guidance by introducing new management practices, especially in the area of human resource management (Raouf, 2006). According to Naveed and Jadoon (2012), the government sector is hesitant in adopting novel HRM practices. There is a great possibility of a gap between stated HRM practices and implemented practices. Prior studies also identified a gap between rhetoric and the reality of HRM practices (Legge, 1995). Keeping in view prior literature present study aimed at public sector higher educational institutes to identify any such gap between rhetoric and reality of HRM practices. The study is conducted by adopting a qualitative approach; data is collected through in-depth interviews and document analysis.

This paper comprises four sections the first section presents the brief history of the adoption of HRM, the second section highlights relevant literature and research questions, the third section describes the methodology and the fourth section presents the analysis and conclusion along with direction for future research.

Historical Perspective of HRM in Pakistan

Human Resource Management is an emerging trend in all sectors of Pakistan. Multinational companies initiated the culture of cross-culture business and are accredited with the commencement of HRM practices, especially in developing countries (Tayeb, 1998). Khilji (2002) stated that HR gained more importance in Pakistan after the reforms introduced in the 1990s that focused on changing organizations and incorporating private sector practices to improve performance. The private sector and multinationals established HR departments and created tough competition. Pakistani culture is dominated by the American style of management. American syllabus is followed in the Universities along with the management style. Managers are more result-oriented and progressive (Khilji, 2002). The reform efforts of the 1990s introduced structural and functional changes in the functioning of the government and private sector institutions. Privatization, public-private partnership contracting out, and up-gradation of institutions improved status and introduced private-sector practices like human resource management to boost performance (Tayeb, 1998). These modifications were introduced in the 1990s after announcing the reform agenda by the government. In pursuit of the reform agenda of the government, they appointed specialists at the top positions by giving the task to introduce a new merit base, responsive, and decentralized HRM department (Khilji, 2002). An exclusive plan was proposed to modify a new work culture whose foundations were laid by organizational change both in structure and function. By doing so they introduced a new discipline of HRM throughout the country. The private sector was already characterized by using human resources effectively. The government sector to overcome efficiency issues and also to compete with the private sector introduces and encourages the activities of human resource management. They also consider hiring the most suitable candidates, investing in the development of their staff, and offering competitive remuneration packages to compete with the other sectors in the pursuit of survival (Khilji, 2003).

Literature Review

Human Resource Management is defined as the proper arrangement of the employees of an organization. It covers all aspects of human management in an organization right from hiring to the selection, training, and placement of employees in proper positions and compensation (Huselid, 2011). HRM is a fusion of personnel management and industrial relation and presents a more comprehensive set of practices that were previously neglected in the old disciplines and guide the organization in attracting, selecting, retaining, and developing employees on their job (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2003). Khilji and Wang (2006) argue that "intended HRM" being formulated in policies may be substantially different from "implemented HRM" and that mere mimicry of HRM practices cannot produce the desired results until these are implemented in the organization. HRM is a broad discipline covering a wide range of practices, used to deal with the issues of humans in an organization.

It starts from identifying vacant positions, attracting competent candidates, selecting the right candidate for the right job, shifting the person on the job, provide necessary training, identifying and removing performance gaps, and deciding pays according to jobs (Huselid, 2011). The number of practices is not fixed as each organization adopts certain aspects of HRM practices though they perform all the functions related to HRM it is not possible to implement all the standard practices of HRM in one organization. Different authors suggest different sets of practices are adopted in particular situations. Some most common and widely adopted practices are recruitment and selection, training and development, performance evaluation, compensation, and payroll administration (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2003). Recruitment is the process of identifying and attracting individuals to fill vacant positions (Fisher, Schoenfeldt & Shaw, 2004). Recruitment is the publicity of vacant posts and the major source of recruitment is an advertisement. Recruitment leads toward selection and in this stage, the most suitable candidate is selected for the job. In selection, organizations decide and choose from a large pool of candidates the most competent candidates that can lead the organization towards success. Selection is the decision of choosing the right person for the right job and choosing the right candidates ensures success for the organization (Boxall, 2008). The actual role of HRM practices starts with identifying and appointing the right person. It starts with the identification of a job consisting of describing and specification of the job. As stated by Delaney, and Huselid (1996) that job definition draft duties, tasks, working conditions, and required set of expected skills. Employing new staff entails the implementation of HRM practice. Once persons are employed, they need to be integrated into the company's framework through a process of training and socialization. As a second step, the appraisal of the working force and motivating them in the workplace is the responsibility of the HRM department Decenzo and Robbins. (2002). Brown and Heywood (2005) identified that a system of performance appraisal is designed to evaluate the performance of candidates and identify if any gap exists. Proper selection, training, compensation, and communication with the workforce are challenging tasks for the organization (Budhwar & Khatri, 2001). Qadeer, Ahmad, and Rehman (2011) stated that the level of integration of HRM activities is not very impressive in public and private institutions of Pakistan. Iqbal, Arif, and Abbas, (2011) highlighted that HRM is in the initial phase of adoption in educational institutes in Pakistan, and the level of adoption of HRM activities varies in private and -state-owned institutions.

Material and Methods

An interpretive research design is used to conduct the research. As described by Cohen (2000), the interpretive strategy "provides the researcher with an opportunity to realize and infer from the actors of the world". This point of reference is suitable for this study, as it opens the research for information-rich data. A case study methodology is adopted as it aligns constantly with an interpretive orientation. According to Yin (2003), a case study is "a vigilant study of some entity that aims to conclude what features led to its success. The case study has been besieged because the study requires an in-depth analysis of the issue while remaining in a real-life context. The issue of evaluating the implementation of HRM practices is quite sensitive and requires an in-depth analysis of the situation. The case study is the most suitable approach to preserve the holistic and significant distinctiveness of the event

over which the researcher has little control and when the focus is on an existing phenomenon with real-life context (Yin, 2003). Due to constraints of time and resources a single life case is selected. Respondents are selected through purposive sampling. As concerned persons knowing the subject were required so, purposive sampling helped to identify suitable candidates. Twenty people including the registrar, head of FDC, treasurer, and head of the department are interviewed through a semi-structured questionnaire. Along with an interview, document analysis is also used to address the stated research goal. An interview is "an exchange of observation between two or more people on a topic of common concern. It realizes the essence of human dealings for awareness and underlines the social context of research data. This information focuses on content specified by the research aims of organized depiction, prophecy, or rationalization.

Data Analysis

The technique used to analyze and review the data was forming categories and developing themes. Similar pattern themes were discovered in different transcriptions. Similar and consistent notes were positioned under respective categories. It was performed using NVIVO software. All the major themes were coded under "free nodes: and similar ideas were grouped under tree notes which represent minor themes. This procedure provided a ranking of categories (dimensions) and themes. Thus making it easier to interpret and analyze the data.
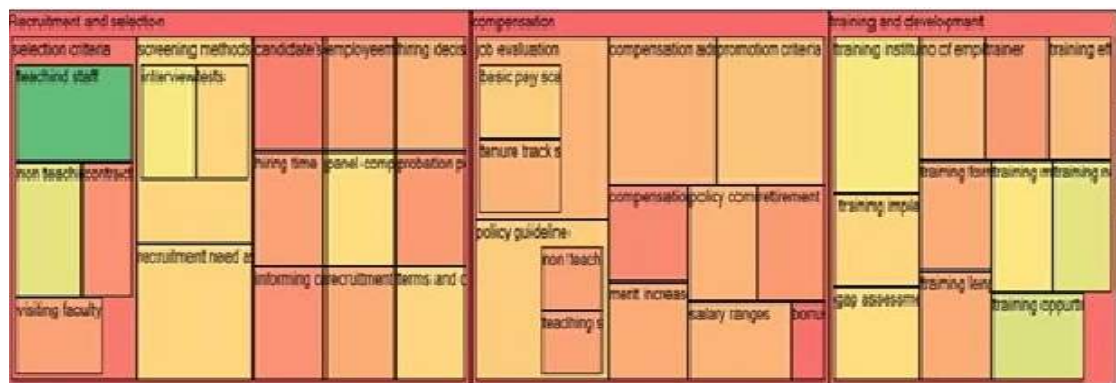
Fig 1

This graph is an output of NVIVO nodes compared by the number of items coded in the query. This graph shows the composition of each node by its children nodes. The graph also indicates the portion of each child node in parent nodes. The graph is made of the basis of responses given by respondents so it indicates the feedback of the respondents on each child node. Regarding recruitment and selection, most of the respondents talk about selection criteria. In compensation focus of attention was on guiding policy of compensation being adopted in the university after up-gradation and on job rating methods used in the university (i.e., BPS and TTS systems). Talking about training and development most of the data received was on training institutes developed in the university and it indicates that training is being performed in an organized way.

Results and Discussion

Recruitment and Selection

Keeping in view the importance of recruitment and selection, the registrar's office has been established to perform this duty both for faculty and staff. They analyze vacant positions, preparing job advertisements, screen applications, arrange the meetings of the selection board, and also prepare appointment letters and issue these letters to the selected candidates. Both internal and external sources are utilized for hiring competent candidates. There are four types of faculty positions permanent, contractual, visiting, and tenure track.

Permanent and contractual positions are identified every year during budget preparation. These posts are advertised in newspapers and on the website of the university. Applications are invited from the candidates who fulfill the required qualifications. After that, these applications are screened during the screening process. The qualifying candidates are called for the interview. Interview carries 40 marks and academic record from matric to MA/MSc stands for 60 marks. A candidate should obtain a total of 60 marks (both in the interview and academic record) for selection. The whole process from advertisement to the selection of candidates takes six months to one year in the case of lecturer and assistant professor. While it may take two years in the case of senior faculty positions like a professor and associate professor as these positions require a more deep assessment of their research contribution. As far as visiting positions are concerned, there are no such rules and regulations for the hiring of visiting faculty. The Head of the department can hire competent candidates for visiting positions. Sometimes bureaucrats are also invited on visiting positions to share their practical experience and intellect with students.

Tenure Track posts are advertised along with permanent and contractual posts and mentioned separately. According to HEC policy for lecturer minimum qualification is a first-class master's degree, for assistant professor Ph.D. or M.Phil. with 4 years of teaching experience, for associate professor Ph.D. with 10 years of teaching or research experience with at least 4 publications, and the post of professor Ph.D. with15 years of experience and 10 publications is the requirement. The recruitment & selection activities are shown in fig1.1.

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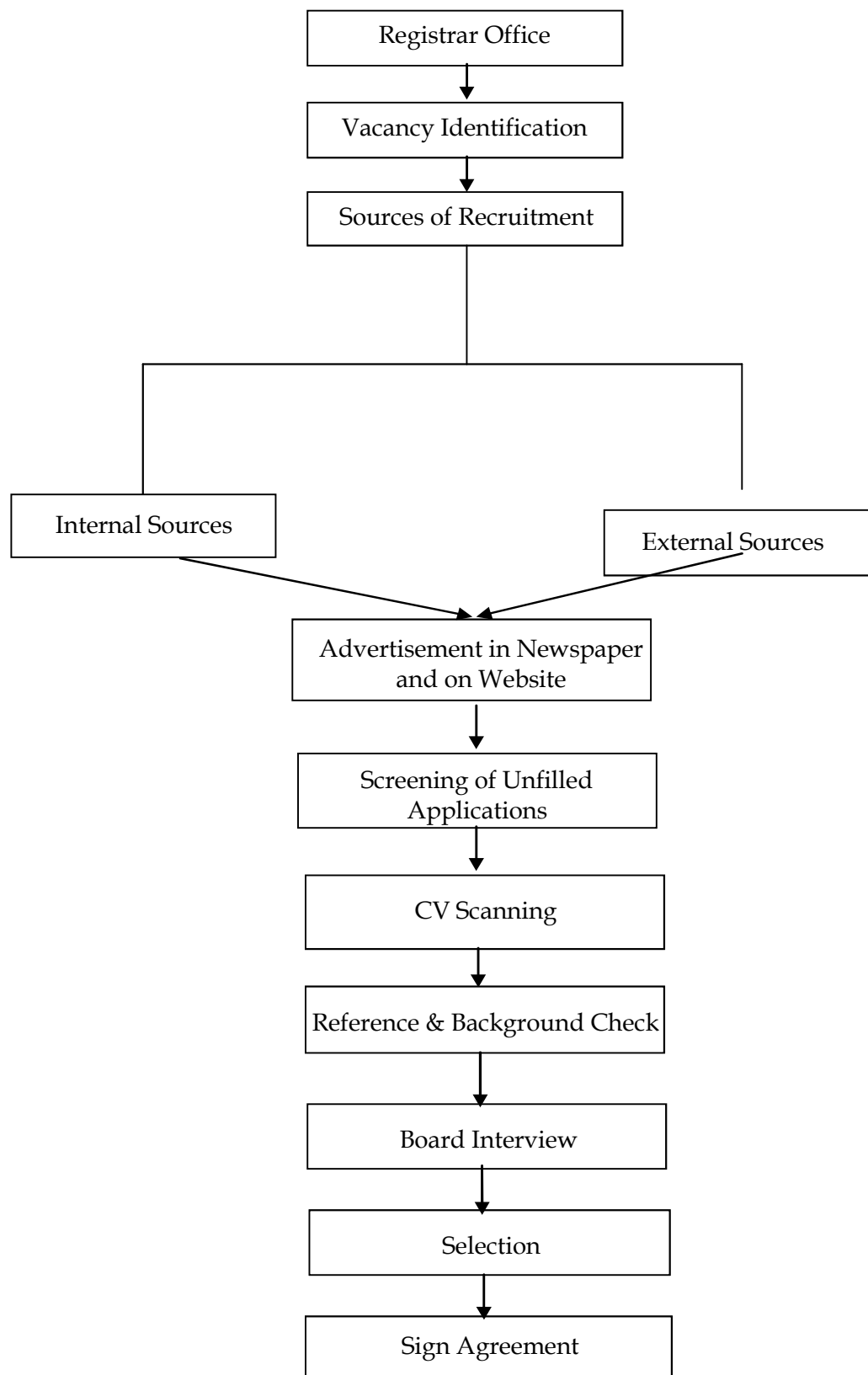
Figure 2 Recruitment and Selection

Training and Development

University has devoted special attention to the training and development of faculty and staff as it was a mandatory requirement by HEC. Keeping in view the importance of training and development in 2011, the directorate of faculty development and internationalization (FDI) had been established. FDI comprises of the Faculty Development Centre (FDC) and the International Resource Centre (IRC). FDC is committed to providing mandatory training and development to each member of the university's teaching and management staff through personal and departmental development. The training institute is not only fulfilling the university's need for training but also offering training and development services to the other institutions. Both generic and subject base training is provided to the faculty. Training need assessment is done at the end of every semester. After that gaps are identified and according to these gaps training sessions are arranged to fulfill the gaps and improve the performance. Activities done during training need assessment are shown in fig1.2.

Newly appointed faculty is trained through one-week induction training after the appointment. Faculty members are also provided development opportunities through doctoral studies both within the country and abroad. Different available scholarships for doctoral studies are regularly shown on notice boards. Faculty members are extremely encouraged to avail themselves of these scholarships.

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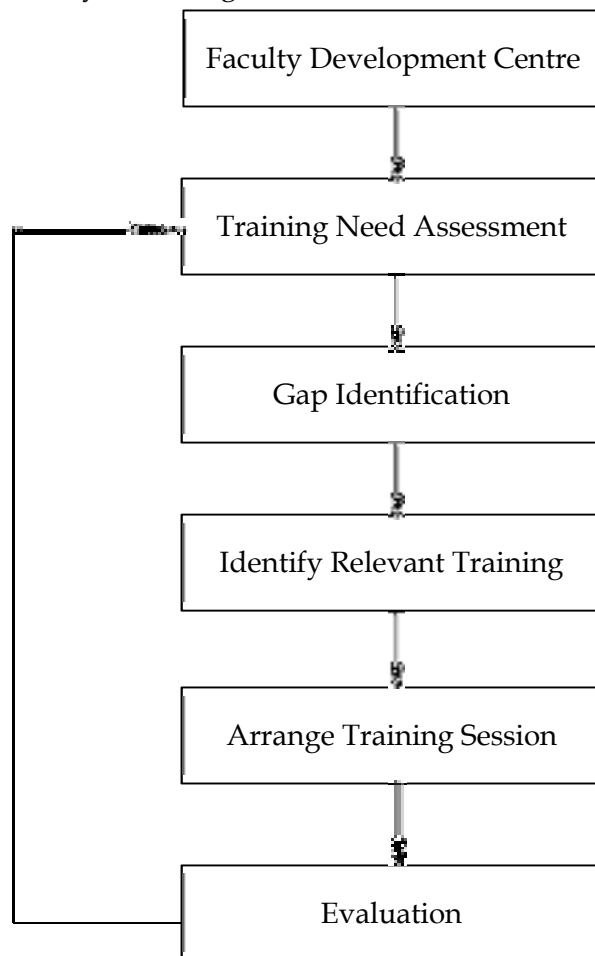
Figure 3 Training Need Assessment (TNA) procedure

Performance Evaluation and Compensation

The positions and responsibilities of staff are copious and compensation of these posts is the most sensitive issue. As Lahore College for Women University is a public university, so National Basic Pay Scales are used in the university ranging from grade 1 to 22. In this system ranks and grades are compensated, not the individuals based on their work, experience, and qualifications. Promotion is seniority-based. Lecturers are promoted to an assistant professor after 4 years of teaching experience and having the required qualification and after 10 years' experience associate professor and after 15 years of experience they are encouraged to the post of professor. Mostly Annual Confidential Reports (ACRs) are maintained to keep a track record. With the introduction of the Tenure Track System, HEC guidelines are used to hire and compensate faculty on TTS positions. TTS posts are compensated by HEC. Under TTS eligibility to the next stage is linked with the number of years on a position along with research experience and publications. Required qualification for assistant Professor is a Ph.D. from a recognized institution. Assistant Professor before being considered for promotion to the rank of Associate Professor is required to have six years' experience after Ph.D. may have a minimum of 4-years of post-PhD experience with at least 6 years of experience before Ph.D. in a renowned University or a professional experience in the relevant field in a national or international organization. Along with this 10 research publications (with at least 4 publications in the past 5 years) in the Journals, recognized for appointment on Tenure Track by the Higher Education Commission, are required. To apply for the post of Professor, the faculty member is required to have a Ph.D. from a recognized and reputable institution in the relevant field with either 11-years post-PhD or 7-years of post-PhD experience with at least 12 years of teaching or research experience before Ph.D. Besides 15 research publications (with at least 5 publications in the past 5 years) in international Journals, accepted for appointment on Tenure Track by the Higher Education Commission, are required. With the grant of financial autonomy, the university has to create its financial resources HEC and the government has reduced the financial grant to the university. So, to fulfill its financial needs university has introduced short course schemes. The Treasury office has been established to deal with the financial matters of the university. Both the registrar office and treasury office are responsible for the implementation of the compensation policy of the government of Punjab and the tenure track system of HEC. Prominent activities of compensation are shown in the figure
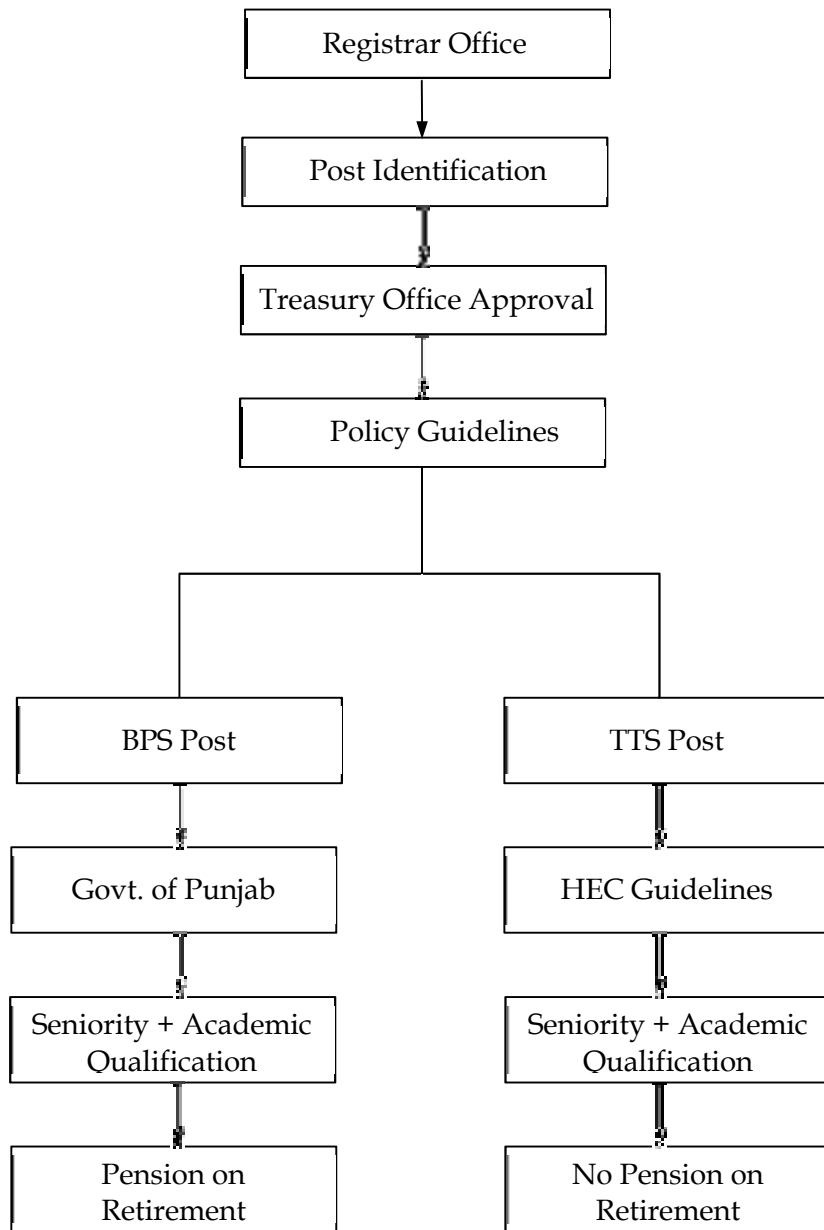
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Figure 4 Compensation

Conclusion

In the context of the growing interest of academics and practitioners in the adoption and promotion of HRM practices in various public sector institutions, the current study provides important insight into higher education institutions. This study illustrates the implementation of HRM practices in Lahore College for Women University (LCWU)—a public sector university of Pakistan. A case study approach is utilized for the detailed analysis of the phenomenon. From the analysis of data, the findings of this study reveal that the university has devoted special attention to the management of its human resources. Registrar office, treasury office, and directorate of faculty development have been established to deal with recruitment, compensation, and training needs of the institution. Keeping in view the fact that once an organization has developed a proper HRM system and determined human resources and it can compete with other organizations.

The study has negated the fallacy of Khilji and Wang (2006) that intended HRM practices are substantially different from implemented HRM practices. These findings are in line with the findings of Iqbal, Arif, and Abbas, (2011) that the status of HRM practices is better in public sector universities. Our findings are contrary to the findings of Naveed and Jadoon (2012) that the public sector is restricting the implementation of HRM practices. Our findings also negate the findings of Ali (2013) that selection and hiring in the public sector are not merit-based and without proper systems. There is a proper system right from the identification of vacant positions to its advertisement and selection of candidates. A post is advertised openly on all prominent channels and after the initial screening, the candidate is called for an interview. Interviews are conducted by a proper board, which comprises 3 to 5 persons from different institutions, who are experts in their relevant field. All these measures minimize the chances of any partial treatment and bias in selection. Regarding training and development, our study supports the findings of Iqbal, Arif, and Abbas (2011) that public universities of Pakistan are providing excellent opportunities for training and development of their human resources. Compensation needs special attention. Being a public sector institute university is following the policy of the government of Punjab for compensating its employees. Along with the parallel lines HEC policy is adopted for the compensation of TTS faculty.

Overall this study concludes that LCWU has adopted proper practices for the management of its human resources. Although at the time of this study, a designated department by the name of the HR department is still not established, working at its given capacity university is performing a fabulous job in terms of the HRM activities. In this regard, only training and development is performed in their full capacity and in the most outstanding way. This can be explained based on funding and institutional support provided by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan to the institutions in developing their human capital.

The finding of this study highlights the crucial role of policy-making institutions in the initiation and promotion of HRM practices. It is evident from the findings of the current study that HRM practices that are supported by HEC Pakistan are performed more systematically. Although, LCWU has received policy guidelines and financial support regarding recruitment, training, and compensation of faculty

the provided support is more evident regarding training as compared to recruitment and compensation. So, the status of training is more prominent as compared to other activities. These findings highlight important implications for policy-making institutions in devoting equal support towards the implimentation of all HRM activities in public sector institutions, particularly higher education institutions. This study identifies several directions for future research. Further research can be conducted in identifying the role of policy-making institutions in the adoption of the HRM system in Pakistan. The strategic focus of higher education institutions regarding HRM practices is also a promising theme for future research.

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