

The Role of Human Resource Practices in Developing the Service Culture of Universities

Hina Arzoo¹

MPhil Scholar, Department of Education,

University of Sargodha

hinaarzooyamin@gmail.com

Riffat-un-Nisa Awan²

Associate Professor, Department of Education,

University of Sargodha

riffat.nisa@uos.edu.pk

Abstract

This study was conducted to explore contribution of Human Resource Practices towards the development of service culture of universities of the Punjab. Teamwork, communication and empowerment practices were chosen for exploring their effect on service culture. Three randomly selected universities of the Punjab were selected to collect data. Two hundred thirty one teaching and non-teaching staff members of selected universities were the sample of the study. A self-developed questionnaire on HRM practices and an adapted tool on service culture were used to collect data. The results of the research showed that there was strong relationship between teamwork, communication, empowerment and service culture. Linear regression analysis showed that there was significant effect of teamwork, communication and empowerment on service culture of universities. It was suggested that universities may focus on all HRM practices for developing service culture to help students and their parents.

Keywords: *HRM practices, Teamwork, Communication, Empowerment, Norms, Values, Behavior, Service Culture*

Introduction

Managing organizations has always been a challenging task for leadership. Armstrong (2006) proclaims that in past for management of people rules and regulations were made but now human resource management has taken place of people management theory. Human resource management is a hidden method to manage persons who are working in any organization individually and in group of people to attain the objectives of that organization. Teamwork, communication and empowerment are the HRM practice, which are popular to manage employees who are working in any organization in group of people to attain the objectives of that organization (Agarwal & Adjirackor, 2016). This study was conducted to find out the relationship of teamwork, communication and empowerment as human resource management practice, and service culture of universities and to explore how these HR practices affect the service culture of higher education institutions.

According to Senyuçel (2009) people like to live in the form of group and they like to accomplish their task in teamwork. Their interest, purpose and actions are all to achieve the common aim of organization. (Agarwal & Adjirackor, 2016; Gallear & Ghobadian, 2004; Ghobadian, O'Regan, Gallear, & Viney, 2004) establishes that teamwork has been an important factor for enabling cultural change in organizations and developing quality culture. Employees discuss their problems with each other and try to find out the solution of problems. (Ghobadian et al., 2004) Employees have common aims and try to achieve those aims collectively. Employees want to make groups due to many reasons. First, they want to be safe, secondly, for the attainment of organizational goals they want to take support of others, and finally, they need others to get strength, to socialize and live together.

Communication plays a very important role to achieve desired results of organization. It's a two way process. In organization manager and employees both are very important to do work and there should be good communication so that problems may not arise. In any organization where communication is strong among its employees that organization progresses and their problems are solved. According to Lincoln, Travers, Ackers, and Wilkinson (2002) empowerment can be defined as to give opportunity to members of organization to think carefully to complete organization task and have a decision making power. Armstrong (2006) stressed that empowerment has a positive impact on staff performance because staff use their information and new notions to solve problems. Staff can impact the organization through their attitude of work that's why their skills should be used in positive way. Kandula (2012) focused that empowerment is an exercise that can be understood only when staff members and owner are agreed to do work for the organization and for the benefit of each other.

Mathis and Jackson (2010) emphasize that people are very important asset that need to be utilized effectively. Managers use policies that create positive environment in

the institute and staff members do their job happily. Organizations facilitate its worker to perform duties according to its selected values, norms and acceptable behavior. Workforce attitude towards their work, dealing with clients, communication styles and commitment with job impacts on service culture of the institute. Organizations work smoothly to achieve its target and quality of work improves.

Workforce in any organization plays very important role in handling other members of the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). People in organization perform their duties and during work they need to talk and discuss problems of assign task. Some organizations establish their own norms, rules and regulations to meet and to socialize with each other in organization. Such policies have purpose to create good conditions and progressive environment for the staff.

Staff members perform well when they are deliberately arranged in groups and they understand the problems of members and task and try to solve these problems (Kandula, 2012). Previous researches show that if people are arranged in groups according to their abilities and knowledge, they perform well and work is completed in given time. Kandula also describes that organization progresses day by day if managers of the organization combine people with proper understanding of their capabilities. There should be confidence and trust among the team members and they should help each other to do their work by sharing information. Peoples are very valuable resource of any organization and they should be utilized in such a way that organization can get more benefit from them. Teamwork, effective communication and empowerment have great impact on employees' productivity and improves working performance of organization (Agarwal & Adjirackor, 2016; AlSalman & Hassan, 2016). Organizations can create quality culture through effective HRM practices (Körner, Wirtz, Bengel, & Göritz, 2015).

Organizational culture is developed by different means like human resource policies, owners' attitude, environmental factors, staff attitude and working conditions. Beach & McKenna (mentioned in Itika, 2011) assert that culture of any organization involves creating ethics, prides, norms and processes that people implement in their life. Service culture is arrangement of values, norms, believes, assumptions and attitude that are helpful in developing the behavior of employees in an organization for the purpose of serving the clients (Itika, 2011). According to Armstrong and Taylor (2014) there are four elements of culture; values, norms, artifacts and management styles. Values are standards of organizations which they accept to get the work done. Norms means that how workforce behaves to do task and if they do not behave in acceptable way than their behavior will not be accepted. Communication to the people inside and outside of the organization and their attitude with the staff and client is involved in artifacts of institution (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Different types of management styles influence the progress of institute.

Educational institute should pay attention in service excellence like commercial organizations do (Martinez, Smith, & Humphreys, 2013). It demands more coaching

programs and many others reforms to bring service culture excellence. According to Ueno (2012) service culture is affected by HRM practices and there were significant relationship among them. Result of studies on service culture showed that culture can be create through implementing HRM practice such as teamwork and empowerment (Körner et al., 2015). These days every organization wants to get more benefit through satisfying its client. Competition among institutions has forced them to think and to create quality culture and fulfill the needs of clients. In universities the most important clients are parents and students. If their needs are fulfilled than they are satisfied. Many researches focused on creation of excellent service culture of universities and found out that employee's way of behaving, their communication, teamwork, job satisfaction and their attitudes affect the clients (Körner et al., 2015).

Universities are public sector organization and they have to fulfill the public requirements regarding admission, teaching and learning, basic facilities and infrastructure, and guidance and counseling. Clients in universities are students and their parents and the problems which they are facing in the organizations can impact university intake and their repute in the market. Hence it is very important for universities to improve their service delivery for client satisfaction. Different HRM practices of the universities like teamwork, empowerment, training, and communication, can influence the service quality and service delivery of the organization which contribute towards the development of overall service culture of that specific institution.

Educational institutions are non-profitable institutions. They are developed to impart education which is helpful in character building of students, and preparing them for the future jobs. Every organization wants to fulfill their client's needs and in educational institutions students and parents are clients. Their needs should be taken into consideration. Service culture of any institution depicts their service quality of facilitating its clients. Teamwork, effective communication and empowerment play very important role in development of service culture of any institution. This study was conducted to find out the impact of teamwork communication and empowerment on service culture and to explore how these practice are being instrumental in developing service culture of universities and in delivering quality services to its students and their parents.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were:

- To explore human resource management practice (teamwork, communication and empowerment) and identify the service culture of universities.
- To assess the relationship of teamwork, communication and empowerment with service culture of universities.
- To find out the effect of teamwork, communication and empowerment on service culture of universities.

- To examine group difference of teamwork, communication and empowerment and service culture in term of demographic information.

Methodology

Population and Sample

All universities of Punjab were the target population of the study and only three universities were the accessible population of the study.

1. University of Sargodha, Sargodha.
2. Fatima Jinnah Women University Rawalpindi.
3. Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University, Rawalpindi.

For the purpose of detail information regarding teamwork and service culture of universities, convenient sampling technique was used to collect data. All teaching and non-teaching staff (Junior clerk to Dean) both male and female were sample of the study from three selected universities. Data was collected from 231 male and female teaching and non-teaching staff members.

Instrumentation

One self-developed questionnaire for teamwork and second adapted tool for service culture of universities (Ifie, 2010) were used for data collection. For reliability of scale Cronbach alpha was applied to measure items reliability, table 1 gives the detail of reliability coefficients.

Table 1: *Mean and Standard Deviation of HR practices and service culture of universities*

Variables	Mean	SD	α
1 Teamwork	3.46	0.07	.833
2 Communication	3.45	0.06	.850
3 Empowerment	3.20	0.01	.901
4 Service culture	3.56	0.13	.875
A Service Quality Values	3.70	0.09	.833
B Service Quality Norms	3.49	0.07	.892
c Service Delivery Behavior	3.48	0.07	.901

The mean values mentioned in the above table describe that respondents rated their service culture and HRM practices as high, especially value (M=3.70) and overall service culture (M=3.56). The above table also gives alpha values for teamwork (.833), communication (.850), empowerment (.901) and service culture (.875) which were in acceptable range.

Table 2: *Mean, SD and percentage analysis for Teamwork*

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1 University employees always share their experiences with colleagues from other departments	16	36.8	22.5	17.7	6.9	3.37	1.15
2 Employees are skilled at collaborating with each other to diagnose and solve problems	16.5	35.1	30.3	12.6	5.6	3.44	1.08
3 University employees help new employees learn about their job	19	37.7	23.8	14.3	5.2	3.51	1.11
4 University employees share their experiences in formal teamwork	17.3	41.1	23.8	12.6	5.2	3.53	1.07
5 University employees place significant importance on mutual cooperation	18.2	45	25.1	8.7	3.0	3.63	1.00

Table 2 showed that majority of respondents agreed with the statements of teamwork practice of HRM. Majority of respondents agreed with the statement that they shared their experiences in formal team work and gave importance to mutual cooperation.

Table 3: Mean, SD and percentage analysis for Communication

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1 Employees in the university are aware of the university objectives, mission statement, vision and objectives it intends to achieve	17.3	41.1	25.5	10	6.1	3.54	1.08
2 University keep employee well informed on matters important to them	19	32.9	27.3	12.6	8.2	3.42	1.17
3 Communication across all level tend to be good in this organization	16.9	35.1	27.7	13.4	6.9	3.42	1.13
4 Organization structure encourages horizontal communication	15.2	34.2	31.6	15.6	3.5	3.42	1.04

Table 3 showed that majority of respondents agreed with the statements of communication practice of HRM. Majority of respondents agreed with the statement, employees in the university are aware of the university objectives, mission statement, vision and objectives it intends to achieve.

Table 4: Mean, SD and percentage analysis for Empowerment

	Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1	University employees participate in goal setting	13	31.6	28.6	16.9	10	3.21	1.17
2	University employees participate in decision making process	14.3	31.6	23.4	19.9	10.8	3.19	1.22
3	Employees are inspired to take speedy action for improving service quality problems in their jobs	11.3	26.8	37.7	16	8.2	3.17	1.09
4	Management encourages university employees to be creative and innovative	15.2	28.1	29.4	17.3	10	3.21	1.19
5	University employees are independent in performing their responsibilities	16	26.8	28.6	19	9.5	3.21	1.20

Table 4 showed that majority of respondents agreed with the statements of empowerment practice of HRM. Majority of respondents agreed with the statement University employees are allowed to participate in decision making process.

Table 5: Mean, SD and percentage analysis for service quality values

	Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1	Employee's top priority is that students and parents see this university as the best in service provision	21.2	45.5	19	10.8	3.5	3.70	1.03
2	University employees want to providing high levels of service in this university	21.2	42.4	23.8	10.4	2.2	3.70	0.99
3	University employees appreciate the necessity to provide high level service quality	16.9	45.5	21.6	11.3	4.8	3.58	1.05
4	University employees believe in being flexible towards students	20.8	44.6	23.4	9.1	2.2	3.73	0.96
5	University employees are open to new methods for solving student's related problems	19.9	40.3	26.4	10.8	2.6	3.64	1.00
6	Respect for students is a core principle shared by university employees	18.6	42	25.5	11.3	2.6	3.88	0.92
7	University employees try to be fair and honest with students and parents	27.3	40.7	26.4	3.9	1.7	3.84	0.86

Table 5 showed that majority of respondents agreed with the statements of service quality values. Results indicated that their major desire was to be seen as reliable

by students and parents and they believe in being honest and fair with students and parents.

Table 6: Mean, SD and percentage analysis for service quality norms

Statements	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1 Employees normally stress each other to focus on meeting students and parent’s needs	13.4	35.9	30.3	17.3	3	3.39	1.02
2 University employees greatly appreciated their colleague who strive for high levels of service	16.5	34.2	29.4	14.7	5.2	3.42	1.09
3 Employees think that all employees should be creative in finding solutions to student’s needs	13.9	40.3	31.2	10.8	3.2	3.49	0.99
4 It is a shared expectation among university employees that they make students and parents feel valued and important	16.0	37.7	29.0	13.9	3.5	3.49	1.03
5 University employees encourage one another to for being committed to service quality issues	18.2	36.4	28.6	13.4	3.5	3.52	1.05
6 University employee’s emphasis on high levels of cooperation for information sharing	13.9	39.4	26.0	15.2	5.6	3.41	1.08
7 University employees are quick to adjust service offerings where necessary to meet students and parents’ needs	17.3	42.9	25.5	10.4	3.9	3.59	1.02

Table 6 showed that majority of respondents agreed with the statements of explaining and inquiring about norms. Majority of respondents were quick in assistance where necessary to meet students and parents’ needs. University employees also believe in encouraging each other to be committed to service quality problems other than their specific job assignments and roles.

Table 7: Mean, SD and percentage analysis for service delivery behavior

Statement	SA	A	N	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1 Employees anticipate students and parents’ needs and meet them even before students and parents ask	15.2	36.8	29.0	13.4	5.6	3.42	1.08
2 University employees respond very quickly to service failures and rectify them	13.0	37.2	24.7	18.6	6.5	3.32	1.12
3 Experienced university employees voluntarily train others for better service delivery	19.0	34.6	25.5	15.2	5.6	3.46	1.13

4	University employees regularly make constructive suggestions for service improvement	18.6	38.5	26.4	11.7	4.8	3.55	1.07
5	Employees try to improve service-related interactions among themselves	15.6	41.6	24.7	16.0	2.2	3.52	1.01
6	University employees constantly seek for ways to ensure that service delivery runs smoothly	16.5	38.5	26.8	14.3	3.9	3.49	1.05
7	University employees spend their time to improve their service knowledge and skills	20.8	37.7	24.7	13.0	3.9	3.58	1.08

Table 7 showed that behavior of majority of respondents towards service delivery was positive. Majority of respondents agreed with the statement that they spare time to improve their knowledge and skills.

Table 8: Correlation between HR practices and service culture (N=231)

	Value	Norm	Behavior	Service Culture
Teamwork	.509**	.533**	.517**	.582**
Communication	.477**	.510**	.499**	.554**
Empowerment	.457**	.512**	.517**	.555**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 8 showed that there were positive relationships between teamwork and service culture of universities. There were significant and strong relationship of teamwork (R=.582), communication (R=.554) and empowerment (R=.555) with overall service culture of universities and with sub scales of service culture i.e. value, norm and behavior and as correlation coefficient was greater than .50 and p values ≤ .01 for all sub scales.

Table 9: Regression coefficient for the teamwork as predictor of service culture of universities

Model	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig
Constant	62.419	3.893		16.033	.000
Teamwork	2.944	.272	.582	10.822	.000
F=171.121, (1,229) R=.582, R ² =.338					
Constant	68.583	3.575	.555	19.182	.000

Empowerment F =101.714, (1,229) R =.555, R ² =.308	2.166	.215		10.085	.000
Constant	63.208	4.093		15.441	.000
Communication F =101.520, (1,229) R =.554, R ² =.307	2.899	.288	.554	10.076	.000

Dependent variable: Service Culture

Table 9 shows the linear regression analysis that was computed to determine the effect of teamwork, empowerment and communication on service culture of universities. The results showed $R^2 = .338$ for teamwork, which implied that teamwork was able to explain 34% of the variance of service culture of the universities. A significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 229) = 171.121, p < .000$ which showed that there was significant effect of teamwork ($\beta = .582, t(229) = 10.82, p = .000$), on service culture of the universities. The results also showed $R^2 = .308$ for empowerment, which implied that empowerment was explaining 30% of the variance of service culture of the universities. Again a significant regression equation was found, $F(1, 229) = 101.714, p < .000$ which showed that there was significant effect of teamwork ($\beta = .555, t(229) = 10.08, p = .000$), on service culture of the universities. For the effect of communication ($R^2 = .308$) it was again explaining 30% of the variance of service culture of the universities. The regression equation was significant, $F(1, 229) = 101.520, p < .000$ which showed a significant effect of communication ($\beta = .554, t(229) = 10.07, p = .000$), on service culture of the universities.

Table 10: Independent sample t-test for teamwork and service culture of male and female university employees

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Teamwork	Male	147	14.09	3.62	229	1.314	.190
	Female	84	13.44	3.58			
Communication	Male	147	13.82	3.45	229	.178	.859
	Female	84	13.74	3.57			
Empowerment	Male	147	16.31	4.58	229	1.422	.156
	Female	84	15.40	4.82			
Service Quality Norms	Male	147	34.88	6.46	229	-.009	.993
	Female	84	34.89	7.18			
Service Delivery Behavior	Male	147	30.90	6.86	229	-1.196	.233
	Female	84	32.05	7.32			
Overall Service culture	Male	147	102.46	17.70	229	-.805	.422
	Female	84	104.48	19.27			

Table 10 showed the result of *t*- test of teamwork and service culture of universities. Result showed that there is no significant difference between the mean score of teamwork and service culture among male and female university employees.

Table 11: *Independent sample t-test for teamwork and service culture of teaching and non-teaching staff*

	Department	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Teamwork	Teaching	132	13.55	3.68	229	-1.498	.136
	Non-teaching	99	14.26	3.50			
Communication	Teaching	132	13.86	3.32	229	.320	.749
	Non-teaching	99	13.71	3.73			
Empowerment	Teaching	132	15.79	4.40	229	-.730	.466
	Non-teaching	99	16.24	5.04			
Service Quality Values	Teaching	132	36.83	7.06	229	-.413	.680
	Non-teaching	99	37.20	6.21			
Service Quality Norms	Teaching	132	34.83	6.77	229	-.161	.872
	Non-teaching	99	34.97	6.67			
Service Delivery Behavior	Teaching	132	30.90	6.85	229	-1.034	.302
	Non-teaching	99	31.87	7.27			
Overall Service culture	Teaching	132	101.96	17.10	.401	-.915	.280
	Non-teaching	99	103.88	18.97			

Table 11 showed the result of t-test statistics for teamwork and service culture of teaching and non-teaching university employees. Result of *t*-test showed that there were no significant difference of teamwork and service culture of teaching and non-teaching university employees because all values of p are greater than .05.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to explore the role of HRM practices such as teamwork, communication and empowerment in developing service culture of universities. The result of the study showed that teamwork was in practice in almost all the universities, there was effective communication mechanism in universities and staff was feeling empowered. According to Iqbal (2015) employee’s knowledge enhances when they discuss with each other and present study result showed that employees shared their knowledge and experiences with each other and other departments. They helped new employees to perform their jobs and find out the solutions of problems. They were fully skilled to understand the problems of new employees and guide them to solve problems. A positive environment was created to help other employees especially the new entrants. This study also acknowledged the importance of teamwork, communication and empowerment. Majority of respondents were happy working in teams. They appreciated each other. They liked to share information with each other. They shared their experiences in formal team work and gave importance to mutual cooperation. They collaborated with others in diagnosing and solving students and parents’ problems. Geary and Dobbins (2001) have also identified progress and improvement in employees’ jobs as

an outcome of teamworking. Teamwork had positive relationship with innovation and motivation and teamwork played important role to develop motivational environment of institution (Perdomo-Ortiz, Gonzalez-Benito, & Galende, 2009).

According to Kimolo (2013) empowerment played very important role to develop creative environment of the institution. Employee's performance improved when they were authorized to perform task according to the demand of situation. Present study also showed that employees had autonomy to perform certain tasks according to the situation. According to Chew (2004) good communication developed trust among employees and present study showed that employees were well informed about aims and objectives of the organization and strong communication was appreciated.

According to Ifie (2010) there was strong relationship among elements of service culture i.e. service value, service norm and service delivery behavior. Present study also showed the same result. Service culture of universities showed that employees gave more importance to be reliable and honest in front of parents and students. University staff tried to offer their services to fulfill the needs of parents and students and gave first priority to provide facilities to students and solve their problems. They provided flexible environment to students so that they could discuss their problems with them. The core principle of employees was to respect their clients. They tried to learn skills which were beneficial for them and showed their commitment to perform their duties well. They adjusted their behavior according to students' needs. University employees anticipated students and parents problems and tried to find out new ideas to tackle them. They constantly sought for means and ways to make sure that service delivery is being run smoothly and made constructive suggestion to improve service delivery. Hashim and Mahmood (2011) found out that employees in public sector universities in Malaysia are conscious about improving the service quality. They often discuss quality issues with each other and were concerned about prioritizing high service quality, and delivery of it.

The findings of the research showed that there were significant relationships between teamwork, communication, empowerment and service culture of universities. Ueno (2012) also found significant relationships among HRM practices and service culture. Ueno's research also revealed that the organizations preferring team working revealed a strong relationship between culture and Teamwork. According to Taylor, Levy, Boyacigiller, and Beechler (2008) HRM practices and organizational culture played important role in organizational effectiveness. Employee's way of behaving, work in teams and their attitudes affect the clients. Result of this research also showed that teamwork had significant effect in creating and developing service culture of universities. Service culture is concerned with workforce acceptance of service quality values, norms and service delivery behavior to complete task of organization. Standards of organization and workforce involvement to complete the task and action to do the task develop service culture of organization. The findings of this study confirm Berry and

Parasuraman (1992) suggest that teamwork support readiness to deliver quality services and help teams to make service quality as their top priority, which support to create a service excellence culture. This research also revealed that communication and empowerment had significant effect in generating and building service culture of universities.

According to Chew (2004) there was a gender difference in the mean score of HRM practices when compared with organizational commitment of employees but in this study, there were no significant differences in the mean score of male and female university employees on teamwork, communication, empowerment and in providing service to their students. All employees of the institution either male or female were trying to give their best service to their clients. They only concentrated to facilitate their client in the organization. They shared problems with each other to find out solution of their clients problems and encouraged their fellows to solve matters. Any institution can provide excellent service to its client where all employees work with cooperation and coordination. The present research result showed that employees were working in organizations without having any influence of gender. All were equal in providing and facilitating the best service to its clients. For creating good service delivery environment teaching and non-teaching both departments play very important role in educational institute. It is impossible to deny the importance of any one. The present research result showed that in educational institute teaching and non-teaching departments both have the same value for universities. There were no significance differences in both departments. They both were performing for providing the best service to their clients.

Conclusion

It was concluded that HRM practices (teamwork, communication and empowerment) played a significant role in developing service culture of universities. Relationships among HRM practices and service culture were significant. It was also concluded that teamwork, communication and empowerment had significant effect in creating service culture of universities. Teaching and non-teaching both departments, and male and female employees were same in all selected HRM practices and in delivering value to the universities. It was recommended that university employees should be provided proper feedback and rewards should be given according to the delivery of service. Training should be provided to work in teams effectively and employees should have autonomy in their areas of responsibility with effective horizontal communication to solve problems of students and parents.

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