

**The Application of Strategic Human
Resource Management in Improving
Attraction and Retention of Teachers**

Jennifer Ayebaye Ashiedu

BSc (Rivers State University of Science & Technology, Nigeria)

MA (Keele University, United Kingdom)

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy at the Murdoch University
September 2009

I declare that this thesis is my account of my research and contains as its main content work, which has not previously been submitted, for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Jennifer A. Ashiedu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
LIST OF TABLES	vi
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF APPENDICES	ix
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
ABSTRACT	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background to the Research.....	2
1.1.1 Critical Role of Teachers and Teacher Shortage	3
1.1.2 Understanding the Teacher Shortage Problem in Western Australia.....	6
1.1.3 Attraction and Retention Strategies Currently in Place	11
1.1.4 The Role of Strategic HRM in Attraction and Retention	17
1.2 Research Problem and Research Questions	19
1.3 Purpose and Significance of Research.....	20
1.4 Overview of Applied Methodology.....	22
1.5 Structure of the Thesis	24
1.6 Conclusion.....	25
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW	26
2.1 Introduction	26
2.2 Realising School Goals – Teachers as Key Stakeholders	27
2.2.1 School Systems, Structures and Governance.....	28
2.2.2 Teachers as Key Stakeholders	33
2.2.3 Strategic Human Resource Management and Teacher Shortage.....	34
2.2.3.1 What Attracts People to Teaching	35
2.2.3.2 Why Teachers Leave.....	37
2.3 Strategic HRM Evolution - Background and Theoretical Perspectives	45
2.3.1 Beliefs and Assumptions of HRM	50
2.3.2 Strategy of HRM.....	50
2.3.3 The roles of Line Managers in HRM	52
2.3.4 Levers of HRM implementation	53
2.4 Strategic Human Resource Management in Practice.....	57
2.4.1 Elements of Strategic Human Resource Management.....	61
2.4.1.1 Human resource strategies.....	64
2.4.1.2 Human resource planning	65
2.4.1.3 Human resource functions	67
2.4.2 Universal Approach and Contingency Theory	76
2.5 Adopting Strategic Human Resource Management in Schools	78
2.5.1 Strategic Human Resource Management in the Public Sector	79
2.5.2 School Model of Strategic Human Resource Management.....	84
2.5.3 Strategic Human Resource Management Strategies to Build a Steady Teacher Workforce	87
2.6 Conceptual Schema and Research Questions.....	96
2.7 Conclusion.....	98
CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	100
3.1 Introduction	100
3.2 Justification for the Methodology.....	101
3.2.1 Constructivist Paradigm	103

3.2.2	Ontology	104
3.2.3	Epistemology	104
3.2.4	Methodology	105
3.3	Research Strategy Design	107
3.3.1	Delphi Study Phase	109
3.3.1.1	Delphi Procedure.....	111
3.3.1.2	Delphi Participants.....	114
3.3.2	Case Study Phase	116
3.3.2.1	Procedures and Methods for Case Study A.....	118
3.3.2.2	Procedures and Methods for Case Study B	124
3.3.3	Electronic Data Collection Methods	130
3.4	Ethical Considerations	131
3.4.1	Validity and Reliability	132
3.5	Conclusion.....	135
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS.....		136
4.1	Introduction	136
4.2	Delphi Study Findings	137
4.2.1	Teacher Shortage Problems in WA.....	139
4.2.1.1	Round 1	139
4.2.1.2	Round 2	140
4.2.1.3	Round 3	141
4.2.2	SHRM Implementation in WA's School Sector.....	143
4.2.2.1	Round 1	143
4.2.2.2	Round 2	145
4.2.2.3	Round 3	146
4.2.3	Current HR Practices for Teacher Attraction/Retention	148
4.2.3.1	Round 1	148
4.2.3.2	Round 2	153
4.2.3.3	Round 3	153
4.2.4	SHRM strategies to Improve Teacher Attraction / Retention	154
4.2.4.1	Round 1	154
4.2.4.2	Round 2	155
4.2.4.3	Round 3	157
4.2.5	Summary of Delphi Study Findings.....	158
4.3	Case Study A Findings: Status of SHRM Implementation.....	159
4.3.1	Case Demographics.....	161
4.3.2	Status of SHRM Implementation: Detailed Case by Case Description	162
4.3.2.1	CASE CS1	162
4.3.2.2	CASE CS2	164
4.3.2.3	CASE CS3	168
4.3.2.4	CASE CS4	170
4.3.2.5	CASE CS5	173
4.3.2.6	CASE CS6	176
4.3.2.7	CASE CS7	180
4.3.2.8	CASE CS8	184
4.3.2.9	CASE CS9	186
4.3.2.10	CASE CS10	189
4.3.3	Status of SHRM Implementation: Cross-Case Analysis	195
4.3.4	Summary of Case Study A Findings	199
4.4	Case Study B Findings: Strategies for Teacher Attraction and Retention.....	200

4.4.1	Findings from Ten Multi-Site In-depth Interviews.....	200
4.4.1.1	Teacher attraction and retention problems	201
4.4.1.2	Current HR practices to attract and retain teachers.....	202
4.4.1.3	Importance of teachers for competitive advantage	204
4.4.1.4	Implication of SHRM approach to teacher attraction / retention.....	204
4.4.1.5	Strategies for general teacher attraction / retention	205
4.4.1.6	Strategies for early career teachers:	207
4.4.2	Findings from Retired Teachers In-depth Interviews	208
4.4.2.1	Why people are attracted to teaching?	209
4.4.2.2	Why teachers leave the profession?	210
4.4.2.3	Ranking of attraction and retention influencing factors.....	212
4.4.2.4	Strategies for improving teacher attraction / retention.....	213
4.4.3	Findings from the Teacher Survey.....	218
4.4.3.1	Demographics of participating teachers	218
4.4.3.2	Why the participants were attracted to teaching	219
4.4.3.3	Strategies for improving attraction and retention	221
4.4.3.4	Participant's future career direction and preferences.....	223
4.4.3.5	Additional strategies for improving attraction/retention.....	226
4.4.4	Summary of Case Study B Findings	229
4.5	Conclusion.....	231
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS		234
5.1	Introduction	234
5.2	Implementation of Strategic HRM in Schools	235
5.2.1	Strategic Planning Process.....	235
5.2.2	Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives	237
5.2.3	Dedicated HR Department.....	238
5.2.4	Vertical and Horizontal Alignment.....	239
5.2.5	Overall Level of SHRM Implementation in Schools.....	240
5.3	Teacher Attraction and retention	243
5.3.1	Appraisal and Performance Management Strategies	250
5.3.2	Professional Development Strategies for Teachers.....	250
5.3.3	Recruitment and Selection Strategies.....	251
5.3.4	Reward System Strategies	252
5.4	Limitations	253
5.5	Contributions to Current and Future Work.....	256
5.5.1	Contributions to Current Theory and Practice.....	257
5.5.2	Implications for Future Research.....	259
5.6	General Summary	260
LIST OF REFERENCES		266
APPENDICES		289

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Delphi Study Participants and Study Criteria Expectations	114
Table 3.2: Delphi Study Participants Listing	115
Table 3.3: Case Study A Participants and Interview Dates.....	123
Table 3.4: Retired Teachers Interview Participants and Response Dates.....	127
Table 3.5: Teacher Survey Respondent Spread.....	129
Table 4.1: Question 1 Response Distribution in Percentages and Mean Scores.....	140
Table 4.2. Variation in Attraction and Retention Problems by School Sector.....	142
Table 4.3: Question 2 Response Distribution in Percentages and Mean Scores	144
Table 4.4: Question 3 Response Distribution in Percentages and Mean Scores	152
Table 4.5: Ranking of Attraction/Retention Influencing Factors	154
Table 4.6: Question 4 Response Distribution in Percentages and Mean Scores.....	155
Table 4.7: List of Suggested Strategies to Improve Attraction/Retention	156
Table 4.8: Evidence of Strategic Planning Process	195
Table 4.9: Evidence of Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives	196
Table 4.10: Evidence of Dedicated HR Department	197
Table 4.11: Evidence of Vertical and Horizontal Alignment.....	198
Table 4.12: Composite Evidence of All SHRM Requirements.....	198
Table 4.13: Summary of Status of SHRM Implementation.....	199
Table 4.14: Extent of Teacher Shortage Problem.....	202
Table 4.15: Strategies to Improve General Attraction / Retention	205
Table 4.16: Strategies to Improve Attraction / Retention of Early Career Teachers....	207
Table 4.17: Ranking Results	212
Table 4.18: Reasons Participants were Attracted to Teaching	219
Table 4.19: Reasons 20 – 30 Year old Participants were Attracted to Teaching	221

Table 4.20: Strategies for Improving Retention.....	222
Table 4.21: Strategies for Early Career Teachers.....	222
Table 4.22: Percentage of Participants' Location Preferences.....	223
Table 4.23: Remote Location Choices by Years Worked.....	224
Table 4.24: Future Career Intentions by Years Worked.....	224
Table 4.25: Reasons for Attraction and Future Career Intentions.....	225

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Map of Australia showing Western Australia	6
Figure 2.1: A Strategic Model of Human Resource Management	62
Figure 2.2: WA Public Sector SHRM Framework.....	81
Figure 2.3: Proposed School Model of Strategic Human Resource Management	85
Figure 2.4: Conceptual Schema Drawn from the Literature	97
Figure 3.1: Research Strategy Design.....	108
Figure 3.2: Delphi Procedure Flowchart.....	112

LIST OF APPENDICES

- Appendix 3.1: Delphi Study Cover letter and Round 1 Questions
- Appendix 3.2: Delphi Study Round 2 Questions
- Appendix 3.3: Delphi Study Round 3 Questions
- Appendix 3.4: Case Study A and Case study B Questions
- Appendix 3.5: Retired Teachers Electronic Interview Questions
- Appendix 3.6: Teachers Survey Questions
- Appendix 3.7: Examples of Consent Agreement Letters
- Appendix 4.1: Case Study Participants and Site Demographics
- Appendix 4.2: Retired Teachers Demographics
- Appendix 4.3: Teachers Survey Participants' Demographics

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My profound gratitude goes to my supervisors - Dr. Brenda Scott-Ladd and Associate Professor Lanny Entrekin for making this research a reality. Thank you for your effort, support and guidance during the different phases of this study. You have been good mentors all through this period of my career development. I am also indebted to Murdoch University, which provided assistance through numerous seminars and workshops.

I would like to acknowledge and thank the various school organisations, directors, human resource managers or officers, principals, as well as the current and retired teachers who participated in the various aspects of the study. Your contributions led to the overall success of the research.

I must also acknowledge my appreciation of the support given by colleagues and friends, for their time, advice and encouragement during this period. Thank you Gloria Oraekwuotu for the strength you gave when it mattered and Zhenyu Zhang for helping out with technical support when faced with Endnote and computing challenges.

Lastly, I am immensely grateful for the patience, love and support from my children - Precious, Praise, Princeton, Prisca and my husband Rufus Ashiedu for putting up with me during those long and unending years of thesis writing. Prisca, mum is home now to play Maths Puzzles and Word Games. God bless you all.

ABSTRACT

Many industries have successfully linked human resource functions and strategic management processes to provide competitive advantage, improved performance and quality of work life (Lansbury 2003; Cascio 2006). This thesis investigates the uptake of Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) and whether SHRM practices can improve the attraction and retention of teachers within the school sector in Western Australia (WA). The State, like other areas worldwide, has an ageing teacher workforce and faces the threat of longer-term teacher shortages (Department of Education, Science and Training 2003) and implementing SHRM might be one way of addressing these shortages. Aligning a strategic planning process, a clear mission, strategic objectives and a dedicated Human Resources (HR) department to vertically and horizontally integrate HR functions (Tompkins, 2002) as suggested by the SHRM model, should improve teacher attraction and retention outcomes.

This multi-method qualitative research used an exploratory Delphi study and two case studies. The Delphi study drew on eight participants from school agencies and academia. One case study involved principals or HR staff from the private and public school sectors; the other case study included serving and retired teachers.

Currently SHRM uptake is variable, with the strongest evidence from the larger private schools and the public sector centrally, though this was poorly devolved at the school level. The smaller private schools had the weakest evidence of SHRM uptake. Respondents agreed that SHRM could improve teacher attraction / retention by enhancing working conditions, such as appraisal and performance management, professional development, recruitment and selection, and reward. SHRM could also

foster important influences on teacher attraction and retention, such as personal characteristics and a supportive culture and in addition, respondents recommended implementation of further specific SHRM strategies.

The study generalisability may be limited by the unique characteristics of WA or there could be some respondent bias. Nonetheless, this study is one of the first to investigate the level of implementation and role of SHRM in improving attraction and retention of teachers. A model of SHRM in education would not only benefit WA schools, but also could broadly apply to or add insights for other education systems.