Birlesik Dünya Arastırma
BD·CENTER
Innovasyon ve Yayıncılık Merkezi

CJES
Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences

Recruitment and selection of school leaders in Saudi Arabia

Ahmed, Eman[a*], Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia. https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5697-3758

Adel Al-Dhuwaihi[b], Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia. https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9966-8849

Abstract

The success of schools depends on effective recruitment and selection of school leaders. The present study sought to understand the processes of recruiting and selecting public school leaders in Saudi Arabia from their perspectives. Interview data were collected from 39 high school leaders in the Eastern province in Saudi Arabia. The results of the study indicated that the school leadership recruitment and selection processes in Saudi Arabia consist of few linear steps where the ministry engages in an effort to attract candidates from internal resources, followed by initial screening, and a formal interview to select the candidate from the pool. The analysis also revealed several challenges involved in the recruitment and selection processes of prospective candidates. Based on the findings of this study, schools are currently struggling to recruit qualified candidates that commensurate the mission and the needs of our schools. Therefore, we recommend providing appropriate budget, resources, and training to human resource staff to effectively communicate with prospective candidates, identify the type of candidates and design recruitment and selection strategy accordingly.

Keywords: Recruitment, selection, school leaders, human resources, Saudi Arabia.

[*] ***** ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Ahmed, Eman, Department of Educational Administration, College of Education, Imam Abdulrahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia, Dammam 31441, Post Box 1982.
E-mail address: eiahmed@iau.edu.sa

1. Introduction

The recruitment and selection of effective school leaders are among the major priorities of educational policy in Saudi Arabia (Al-Ati and Al-khuthlan, 2018). Effective recruitment and selection of school administrators is important to improve the efficiency of schooling (Al-Mahdy et al., 2015). The changing expectations and demands placed on school leaders alter the priorities and practices involved in leader recruitment and selection process (Pounder and Young, 1996).

Successful administration derives from systematic hiring practices (Al-Ati and Al-khuthlan, 2018; Chapman et al. 2005). Despite the crucial importance of these practices, there has been little research on how leaders are recruited and selected. As Blackmore, Thomson and Barty (2006) commented that "what is surprising is that the practices used to select the key players (principals) have not been subject to substantive interrogation by researchers" (P. 297). And yet, as is true in the US and many European countries, Saudi Arabia struggles to find highly qualified candidates to fill leadership positions. Although the knowledge base on school leader's recruitment and selection is quite well explored in western societies, no research to date has been done to analyze the processes of recruiting and selecting public school leaders in the Eastern province of Saudi Arabia. The present study was conducted to fill a gap in the educational leadership and management research in Saudi Arabia. Moreover, this study corresponds to the efforts of the Saudi Ministry of Education (MoE) to improve recruitment and selection of public-school leaders. Therefore, the present study sought to examine the processes of recruiting and selecting public school leaders in Saudi Arabia.

In the following, we review the literature on recruitment and selection. Then, we describe the purpose of the study and the leader hiring context in Saudi Arabia.

2. Literature review

Effective leaders are a critical component of school improvement efforts. Darling- Hammond (2010) states that identification of effective prospective candidates is crucial to the recruitment and selection of effective leaders. The new concept of effective leadership has caused recruitment and selection to be one of the most problematic human resource functions within the field of education and a major challenge to school reform (Normore, 2006).

According to Engel and Curran (2016), human resources should have a comprehensive practice related to leader staffing that perceive leaders as critical determinants of school improvement. Recruitment and selection are two different hiring processes (Omran, Taha and Omran, 2018; James et al, 2018). Hook at al., (2015) commented that recruitment and selection should be treated separately. Although the two processes may interact, they require different skills and capabilities (James et al, 2018). Recruitment is a set of practices that attract candidates to fill vacancy (Searle, 2009; Walker and Kwan, 2012; Rebore, 2004), while selection is data collection process that assess the "suitability of a candidate" to fill an available position (Herriot, 2002; Searle, 2009). Rebore stated that (2004), "the recruitment practice has never been more important to school districts as they search for

the best people available to achieve the mission of each district, educating children and young people**"** (p.92).

Troubled with hard working conditions, inadequate incentives, higher expectations, and the enormous responsibilities for the leadership, many schools are struggling to recruit qualified candidates with appropriate qualifications (Al-Shohnah, 2017). Recruiting the qualified person is crucial for school improvement (Al-Mahdy, Fahdy and Mohammed, 2015; Engel and Curran, 2016; Walker and Kwan, 2012). Whitaker (2003) commented that the task of "recruiting leaders is a daunting one… Increasing high quality leader candidates' pools will require coordinated and collaborative action on the part of the schools, national governing bodies, and the universities" (pp.50-51). According to Rebore (2004) and Omran et al., (2018), It is a mistake to assume that the correct candidate will be there to fill vacancies without making effort to seek the qualified persons to meet human resources needs.

Recruitment

The global literature on recruitment in education has moved from examining the perspectives of either the candidate or the institution to examining the perspectives of both. In their recruitment theory of Job choice, Young, Rinehart, and Place (1989) and Aqili (2009) explained that the prospective candidate's choices are influenced by objective factors including salary, benefits, location, educational reform; subjective factors including work environment, satisfaction; and critical factors such as physical facility and the recruiter's characteristics. Rynes and Barber (1990) constructed an interdisciplinary applicant attraction theory. The theory describes how recruitment is influenced by the position and institutional characteristics. While the theories of job choice and applicant attraction described recruitment from the applicant's perspective, Maurer, Howe, and Lee's model (1992) defined recruitment from the institutional perspective as an opportunity to improve human capital by filling vacancies with highly qualified candidates.

However, Winter (1996) thought that recruitment is a two-process model. It involves both the institution and the applicant. It assumes that school leadership should focus on the applicant's perspective. It should address the attributes of the position in the recruitment message. Recruitment messages should be understandable, clear, accurate, and realistic. Winter's model of recruitment (1996) involves six steps including setting recruitment goals by identifying the desired number and the quality of the applicants. The second step involves creating a profile that includes the desired, actual applicant characteristics and the job requirements. The third step includes developing the job advertisements, and descriptions. The fourth and the fifth step involves matching recruitment with marketing practices. Finally, recruitment is implemented and evaluated.

Rebore (2004) commented on several practices of recruiting qualified leaders through internal research, referrals, the internet, newspapers, and publications of professional associations. To focus on their own strategic plans, many schools decide that recruiting should be within their own districts. To seek quality applicants, "practitioners from the bottom of the organization to the top must become scouts, site- based efforts and other internal recruitment strategies should be encouraged and shared" (Lovely, 2004, p.18). Whitaker (2003) commented that the administration must support deputies and aspiring teachers with leadership capabilities for leadership. Cavanaugh (2008) suggested implementing mentorship programs by pairing high quality leaders and aspiring leaders. According to

Whitaker (2003), creating partnerships with colleges and universities could provide aspiring leaders with training opportunities.

Recruiting through internet-based has become an extremely important recruitment method. According to Rebore (2004), the recruitment through the internet could "reduce the number of the staff members that manage the recruitment process" (p.101). Potential candidates can easily access the website to gather information about the job and the hiring strategies. However, the staff members involved in the recruitment process have a critical impact on the applicants (James et al, 2018; Aqili, 2009). According to Knight (2017), having credibility averting bias is critical in the communications with potential applicants.

Selection approaches

Recruitment and selection are "unusual disciplines in one important case'' (Billsberry,2007, p.9). The success of schools depends on effective selection of school leaders (Normore, 2006; Coelli and Green, 2012; Tran, 2017). According to Billsberry (2007), there are three major approaches to selecting potential candidates including psychometric approach, social process, and person- organization fit. The psychometric is a leading selection paradigm that dominates the selection process in many countries. It considers how selection decisions should be done from the perspective of the institution. It assumes that selecting candidates who best fits the criteria. "This approach assesses individuals against the knowledge, skills, and other attributes (KSAOs)" (Billsberry, 2007, P.9). It is a structured decision-making process designed by the recruiter. Psychometric paradigm involves selection methods (e.g., assessment tests). This paradigm works well when job criteria are clearly developed and agreed on (Aqili, 2009).

Despite the preeminence of the psychometric approach, two other approaches emerge in the selection process literature. The social process approach emerges from the social psychology. It considers the selection as a social process. It is an exchange process where the applicant comes to understand the nature of the recruiter and the organization assesses the fit of the applicant. Unlike the psychometric approach, the candidate is active in the process of selection. According to Billsberry (2007), social process approach "has not replaced the psychometric paradigm …Instead it used a critical adjunct to explore the impact of the psychometric process". (p.9).

Another competing approach is the Person –Organization fit (Profit). This approach is centered on the connection between the organization and the applicant. It emerges from the interactional psychology. This approach overcomes one of the major weaknesses of the psychometric approach. The psychometric approach focuses on the perspective of the recruiter; the social process focuses on the perspective of the prospective candidate, while the fit- organization paradigm considers the perspective of both the candidate and the employer.

Purpose of the study

The present study sought to understand the processes of recruiting and selecting public school leaders in Saudi Arabia from their perspectives. More specifically, our study seeks to answer the following questions: 1) How do school leaders perceive recruitment and selection processes based on their

perceptions? and 2) What are the challenges associated with recruiting and selecting public school leaders?

The leader hiring context in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia Kingdom was founded in 1932. It covers four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula. The legal system in KSA is based on the Sharia Law and the Sharia Law is derived from the Islamic law. The discovery of the oil in the 1938s sparked a rapid economic and educational development.

It is significant to address the education governance system in Saudi Arabia in order to understand how recruitment and selection processes work. There are three types of schools in Saudi Arabia: public, private, and international schools. In this paper, we will focus on public education which constitutes about 85.7 % of the whole number of schools in Saudi Arabia (General Authority for Statistics, 2019). MoE established in 1953 administered over public, private, and international education. Established in 1960, the General Presidency of Girl's Education presided over education for girls. Avoiding dualism, the ministry of education, located in Riyadh, the capital of KSA, presides in 2003 the General Presidency of Girl's Education. Saudi Arabia is divided into thirteen provinces. Each province is supervised by a general educational administration. There are about forty educational offices all located in the major cities. These entities act in a centralized hierarchical system. In the eastern province of Saudi Arabia, there are about 2,713 public schools.

The educational system in Saudi Arabia is segregated by gender. It is characterized as a dual system of female and male education prorated into five administered systems, general education for boys, parallel education for boys and girls, general education for girls, private and international education for boys, and private and international education for girls. Regardless of the type of the school, all schools are evaluated by educational supervisors based on evidence gathered during site visits. Leaders in the public schools are appointed directly by MoE through the hiring practices supervised by the General director of the educational administration in each province of the kingdom. Saudi Arabia does not have a scheme of certification for school leadership.

In the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia - and the rest of the Kingdom - the process of selecting new leaders happens each year, usually, at the end of the academic year. This process takes place in preparation for filling the vacancies in schools caused by retirement of school leaders and/or their movement to other schools. There are several criteria that must be taken into consideration for candidates during this process. These criteria include the following (Ministry of Education, 2018):

1.The candidate should hold at least a bachelor's degree.

2.The candidate must have work experience as a deputy for at least four years.

3.The candidate must have work experience as a teacher for at least four years.

4.The candidate must be distinguished morally, academically, and professionally.

One thing in this selection process is missing; that is to measure the candidate's leadership abilities and competencies. Also missing is measurement of the candidates' willingness to be promoted.

Included among the methods used in the leadership selection process are the candidates' application and an interview. The application is completed by the applicant and the interview is conducted by the school leadership committee that includes 11 members (e.g., Assistant Director of Education, Director of the Department of Educational Supervision, School Leadership Head, School Leadership Supervisor). Both methods are used to gather information about the candidates' attitudes, experiences, and perspectives through their responses to predetermined questions. The general goal of the leadership committee is '' supporting school administration and enhancing their role to advance the level of school leaders'' (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Because of the limitations of the interviews, the ministry of education tests candidates who are seeking leadership. These tests focus on measuring the applicants' job-related situations. However, the effectiveness of these tests on the subsequent achievement of the leader is still unclear.

Despite the importance of recruitment and selection processes, the relevant authorities laid little effort in developing a better way of selecting leaders for the region's schools. They would rather wait until the end of the academic year to discover the number of schools with leader vacancies and then they try to convince deputies to take on the job. Those deputies who refuse to be promoted will face the probability of being downgraded or demoted and leave their role to become classroom teachers.

The hiring process causes the deputies to feel insecure. They may at any time be asked (or forced!) to be promoted to leadership without any preparation or consent (Al-Dhuwaihi, 2011). Moreover, this process puts pressure on the authorities themselves because the result is either selecting the wrong people for the job by forcing them to accept the promotion, or by leaving some of the schools without heads and the loss of good deputies.

Thus, leadership recruitment and selection practices in Saudi Arabia lack what is needed, causing schools to go short of highly qualified leaders. Educational administration should re-imagine the leader's role, that is a position that quality leaders seek and are equipped to execute successfully (Doyle and Locke, 2014). Many aspects of school leadership in Saudi Arabia are seldom investigated and poorly understood. In other words, little is known about how educational administration recruit leaders and match their skills to the demands of the schools. Our study adds to the global research by exploring the recruitment and selection of public-school leaders based on their perceptions in Saudi Arabia.

3. Method and Materials

In this section, we present the research model, participants, data collection tools and process, and data analysis.

Research Model

This study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is concerned with "understanding human beings' experiences in a humanistic, interpretive approach" (Jackson, Drummond, and Camara, 2007, p.21). In this study, we used qualitative research to provide deep description of the processes of recruitment and selection among public school leaders and the aspects that were considered

problematic. Being the largest province in Saudi Arabia, Eastern province provides a unique opportunity to analyze the hiring practices of public-school leaders.

Participants

Maximal variation sampling was used to maximize the richness of the data. This is a type of purposive heterogeneous sampling technique that studies a specific number of cases that maximize the diversity relevant to the questions and the purpose of the study. It can enable the researcher to get greater differentiation in the perspectives of the participants (Patton, 2002). This study did not begin with a specific number of participants, but it developed as the interview progressed. We interviewed 39 high school leaders in the academic year of 2019/2020. Of those leaders, 19 were females and 20 were males. The demographical data of the participants are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution by demographical data

	No of participants (N=39)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	20	51.3
Female	19	48.7
Age		
31-40	12	30.8
41-50	17	43.6
51-60	10	25.6
Educational Background		
Bachelor	36	92.3
Master	3	7.7
Teaching Experience		
1-5 Years	6	15.4
6-10 Years	11	28.2
11-15 Years	12	30.8
16-30 Years	10	25.6
Leadership Experience		
1-5 Years	11	28.2
6-10 Years	18	46.2
11-15Years	10	25.6

Data Collection Tools

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data for this study. Interviews are one of the most effective methods of qualitative research. They facilitate collecting information on participants' perceptions and experiences (Coughlan and Cronin, 2009).

Data Collection Process

The research review unit approved to conduct the study. The participants consented to participate voluntarily in this study. The authors developed the interview protocol which includes the questions

to be covered during the interview. The demographic information questions were used for starting off the interview. This is followed by the questions which focus on the processes of recruiting and selecting school leaders, such as, what do you think about the procedures for selecting school leaders**?** What do you think about the personal interview for candidates for school leaders**?** What are the challenges associated with the recruitment and the selection Processes? Probing questions were used to allow the participants to expand on the topics of interest. Probes included questions such as, can you elaborate more on that? Do you have some specific instances in mind? Each interview lasted for approximately 45-60 minutes. The demographic information of the participants was described in a way that no one can personally identify the participants in the study.

Data analysis

The data was analyzed based on a four-stage process of condensing, coding, textual and structural description, and composite description. First, the data were transcribed. The first stage, condensing, provided the authors with a general sense of the data. Second, each interview was coded to help to develop a set of statements about ''the participants' perspectives. This step was data driven and theory driven, developed by careful explanation of the perspectives of the leaders regarding the hiring practices (Shaked, Glanz & Gross, 2018). This step is called the horizontalization of the data. We developed ''clusters of meanings'' from ''significant statements'' into unique themes (Creswell, 2007). Thematic development was significant to answer the research questions, namely, to examine the process of recruiting and selecting the school leaders. In the third step of analysis, a textural and structural description was developed. Finally, we developed ''a composite description of the topic incorporating the textural and structural description (Creswell, 2007).

4. Results

   Our qualitative data analysis revealed in more detail on the pages that follow (a) the participants' perceptions related to the recruitment and selection processes in Saudi Arabia; and (b) the challenges associated with recruiting and selecting public school leaders.

The nature of the new leaders' recruitment and the selection processes

   Analysis of data revealed that the leader plays a significant role in improving students' achievement and educational outcomes. Thus, the overall performance of the school rests on the leader hiring process. F4, a female school leader, with four years of work experience as a leader noted that "the leadership recruitment and selection processes constitute of few steps where the ministry engages in an effort to attract a pool of efficient candidates from internal sources. Then, she added "initial eligibility screening through which the ministry makes an initial assessment to the candidates' eligibility of leadership followed by a test and an interview to select the best candidate from the pool. F7, a female school leader with three years of work experience as a leader, also mentioned that "the leadership recruitment and selection process follow more thoughtful procedures in comparison to other fields."

   Many male participants, for example, M7, M9, M17, reported that the school leadership committee had "pressure to appoint." They stated that "sometimes the committee experiences the pressure to hire less qualified leaders, especially in remote areas to fill the vacancy". If hiring could not

be made, they added ''the committee will ask any teacher to apply, regardless his academic qualifications, experience, and inspirations." M9, a male school leader with four years of work experience as a leader, said that "the recruitment and selection process follow specific procedures; however, these procedures are not applicable especially in remote areas." "In one school, he added, they had the pressure to ask a first-year teacher to act up just to fill the vacancy". M7, another male school leader with seven years of experience as a leader, said "We do not have thoughtful recruitment and selection processes; they "are pressured" to act up and fill the vacancy. I know they have pressure to assign me the leadership duties."

The participants also felt that the recruitment and the selection procedures were "unclear" (F10 & M2). These procedures are circulated to all the schools in the province which "usually attract any internal candidate to apply" (F4). Moreover, M13, another school leader with nine years of experience as a leader, felt that "previous procedures are much better than the current recruitment, and selection procedures need improvements…following successful models in other successful countries".

Other participants, for example, M10, M5, F4, and F19 placed "a huge weight on the interviewer." They felt that although the format of the interview might be different, "the interviewer plays a critical role in the whole process. "Stakeholders including parents and teachers are completely absent in this process. Thus a "biased subjective interviewer might lead to the selection of a low-quality candidate". Because of its critical role, the interviewer should have the expertise to make such a selection. From the qualitative data, most of the participants, for example, M2 & M16 felt that the assessment, including the test and the interview "are good, but not good enough". In addition to existing assessment practices, the ministry should develop a set of activities to assess the candidates' true leadership competencies. Other participants, for example, F2 and F10 also reported that "the assessment test should not be part of the selection process because leadership is not about memorizing a set of skills and work procedures."

Challenges associated with the recruitment and the selection Processes

The data analysis revealed several obstacles involved in the recruitment and selection processes of school leaders. Participants reported that the first problematic aspect in the process concerns the failure of the appointing committee to define key measures of the prospective candidates. In line with this, F8, a school leader with three years of experience as a leader, said that "one of the major obstacles the schools face in hiring leaders is that they lack the set of qualities and measures that would make the prospective candidate a good fit for the school." F5, another high school with six years of experience in the job, believed that "the committee does not select the best candidate because they do not have clear criteria to assess the candidates' leadership competencies and performance". M2, a male school leader with eight years of experience as a leader, mentioned that "we do not have clear quality measure of the type of the candidate that the school wants to recruit."

Additionally, the leaders reported that one of the major obstacles is that the committee neither establishes nor implements sustainable recruitment and selection procedures. M4, a male school leader with nine years of experience as a leader, mentioned that "there should be well-structured recruitment and selection procedures." M10, another male school leader with eight years of experience as a leader said that "unfortunately, the procedures are not efficient or objective enough to obtain quality leaders. He added "no measures are available to assess recruitment and selection

strategies accordingly." Moreover, F16, a female school leader with ten years of experience as a leader mentioned that "the recruitment and the selection procedures are not up-to-date and do not conform to recent educational trends, they are time-consuming. Accordingly, it fails to define the qualities that would make the candidates a good fit for the school." F18, a female leader with seven years of leadership experience, stated that "I do not support the current procedures, schools should follow specific steps for recruitment and selection." F1, a female school leader with eight years of work experience as a leader, felt that "the procedures are not effectively implemented, so schools suffer from low quality candidates, especially in remote areas."

The capability of the governing committee in the recruitment and the selection process came also as a problematic aspect in the leader hiring process. M2, a male school leader, with eight years of work experience as a leader, mentioned that "some members in the committee are not competent, biased and do not have clear criteria that would make someone a good fit for the school." Moreover, most of the participants, for example, M4, M5, F2, F11, F13, and F15, believed that some members in the committee might prefer an applicant over another for no reason. They revealed that "nepotism is a critical factor that prevents the committee from selecting the best candidate from the pool." F18 stated that "personal inclinations of the members of committee inhibited many qualified teachers to fill the vacancies."

The experience of the selection team also emerged as a problematic aspect in the hiring process. F4, a school leader with four years of work experience as a leader, said that "the selection team should include experienced leaders who really know the reality of the field with its details and problems. Sometimes the selection team cannot assess the candidates' competencies, so I recommend that it should include psychologists who can assess the candidates' ability to act in different situations. The obstacle here is the team's inability to distinguish the best candidate." M13, another male school leader with nine years of work experience mentioned that "Most of the selection teams are not trained to accurately screen or assess the applicants to select the best candidate from the pool."

Another major problematic theme is the shortage of the candidates. F1, a school leader with eight years of work experience as a leader said that "the high shortage of candidates, especially in remote areas, contribute to the selection of low qualified candidates." F2, another high school leader with eleven years of work experience as a leader mentioned that "one of the mistakes is to assign the unqualified assistant leaders the leadership duties just to fill the vacancy. She added "the school supervisors who are inexperienced and unaware of the basics of administration." F6, a school leader with ten years of work experience as a leader, believed that the current recruitment and selection model is not applicable because of the shortage of high qualified candidates. F6 said that "sometimes, they assign the teachers the leadership duties with no preparation or coaching which negatively affect the school performance."

Most participants also felt that the assessment tools appear not to be selecting the best candidate from the pool. Although the province uses adequate selection strategies, the procedures through which they assess the applicants are flawed. M1 & F16, school leaders with ten years of work experience as leaders, mentioned that "the assessment tools do not measure the candidates' leadership competencies. Thus, the committee appears to select the wrong person.'' M4, a school leader with nine years of work experience as a leader, felt that "selection criteria should align with the interview questions to evaluate the personality of the candidate." M2, a school leader with eight years

of work experience as a leader, mentioned that "interview is an important assessment tool, but it should be preceded by more rigorous assessment tools built on clear objective criteria…. using multiple selection procedures should enhance the validity of the selection." M7, a high school leader with seven years of work experience as a leader, stated that "interview is a central tool in the selection process. It enables the committee to evaluate the candidates' true competencies to fill the vacancy, however, she added, they are not implemented effectively to tap into the candidates' competencies."

M6, another male school leader with ten years of leadership experience, stated that "the validity of the assessment test is very low, and the selection decision cannot be built upon." F4, a female leader with four years of leadership experience, mentioned that "the interviewers should be experienced leaders who can assess the candidates' response to realistic school situations." F10 and F12, high school leaders with three years of work experience as leaders believed that interviews as a selection method need to be carefully designed and structured. They stated that the "interviews last no more than five minutes and do not assess the candidates' leadership competencies." Moreover, they added that "the validity of the assessment test is low …before taking the final decision, the candidate should be allowed to respond to a realistic school situation." Finally, M15, a school leader with 9 years of leadership experience, said that "the interview is an important aspect of the selection process; but it raises a number of problematic aspects, such as the interviewer bias, and the expertise to evaluate the candidate." the interviewers, he added "are not qualified to reach the goals."

5 Discussion

This study used qualitative analysis of Saudi school leaders regarding their perceptions of the recruitment and selection processes and its challenging aspects. The findings indicated that the leadership recruitment and selection processes in Saudi Arabia consist of few linear steps where the ministry engages to attract candidates from internal resources, followed by initial screening, and a test and a formal interview to select the candidate from the pool. The findings also revealed several challenging aspects in this process. The literature on recruitment and selection may help to explain that although the hiring process appears to be linear and simple, it is "complex" (James et al. 2018, 14), anecdotal (Hooker, 2000) and unstable process. The findings also revealed that the schools suffer from a shortage of high-quality candidates and reliance on internal candidates. The shortage of the qualified candidates is related to the lack of appropriate resources and attention to the recruitment process. This finding is consistent with results reported in earlier studies (e.g., Al-Ati, and Al-khuthlan, 2018; Al-Sharhani, 2015). Moreover, the process lacks a clear set of criteria that would make a candidate a good fit for the leadership. No criteria are available to indicate when a deputy is ready to be a leader. This finding is consistent with (Al-Ati, and Al-khuthlan, 2018) who found that school districts lack a clear set of measures and criteria for recruitment and selection process.

In addition, the findings show that there are limited advertising strategies to recruit high quality external candidates. In times of low qualified supply relative to demand, recruitment procedures become more important than the selection process to secure quality candidates for the position (Pounder and Young, 1996). Based on the attraction theory, the ministry could influence candidates' beliefs regarding working conditions to influence their attraction to the position. For example, recruitment activities including job fairs could also provide applicants with information about current employees' characteristics to "assess fit" which in turn affect their attraction to the position (Hoye and Turban, 2015). Moreover, given the increasing responsibilities that school administrators are facing,

policy makers should bestow school leaders with better working conditions including competitive salary to develop the attraction to the leadership positions.

The capability and the expertise of the selection committee came also as a challenging aspect in the process. Most participants reported that some of the interviewers are not prepared to select the qualified candidate from the pool. Although interview appears to be a key assessment tool in the selection process (Coughlan and Cronin, 2009), interview bias came as a crucial problematic issue in the assessment. In fact, recruitment and selection researchers consider this as a major challenge that leads to the selection of the wrong person. These findings highlight the importance of using multiple selection practices to assess the candidates' competencies, although scoring the candidates in all these activities might be a major challenge for the selection committee (Omran et al., 2018).

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides new data regarding a crucial aspect of human resource management. However, exploring leader's recruitment and selection practices should not be isolated from other processes of human resource management. This alignment is critical to the effectiveness of human management (Omran et al., 2018; Engel and Curran, 2016). Further research could examine leadership hiring practices in combination with other aspects of human resource management.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, schools are struggling to recruit qualified candidates that commensurate the mission and the needs of our schools. Therefore, building rigorous recruitment and selection procedures, providing needed resources and adequate training can achieve significant improvements. More specifically, we recommend providing appropriate budget, resources, and training to human resource staff to effectively communicate with prospective candidates, identify the type of candidates and design recruitment and selection strategy accordingly.

We also recommend differentiating the advertising tools and strategies to attract a large number of applicants internally (assistant leaders within the school) and externally (qualified teachers, leaders who show leadership capabilities from neighboring provinces), conduct initial screening to determine minimum eligibility requirement for the leadership positions, use competency assessment that address the prospective candidates 'leadership skills, and evaluate the prospective candidates against the assessment tools and the selection criteria to reach the final decision and ensure that the prospective candidates could achieve the mission and the plans of the schools.

Our findings also reinforce the recommendation that the selection committee should include trained interviewers who can evaluate prospective candidates' leadership competencies. Using a structured interview guides which includes position-related application questions for all the candidates could support the validity and reliability of the selection decision (Pounder and Young, 1996).

Our findings have also some practical implications for aspiring leaders in Saudi Arabia. Based on our results, we suggest that there is a need to attract aspiring leaders among teachers and support them to apply for the leadership position in schools. A well-developed structured aspiring leadership

programs are essential to provide aspiring leaders with various leadership experiences. Leadership training programs need to reconsider the responsibilities and the expectations for the roles of the leaders in order to accommodate the needs of the newly appointed school leaders and support them to stay in the leadership (Normore, 2004; Ahmed and Al-Dhuwaihi, 2020).

References

Ahmed, E and Al-Dhuwaihi, A. (2020). Early experience of first-time principals in Saudi Arabia. *School leadership and Management, 40* (5), 444-464. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2020.1806812n

Al-Ati, R and Al-khuthlan, M. (2018). A proposed scenario for the application of human resources management in Education administrations in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 19*, 362-386. (In Arabic)

Al-Dhuwaihi, A. (2011). *New head teachers in Saudi Arabia: Professional identity and learning leadership* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of London.

Al-Mahdy, Y., Fahdy, R and Mohammed, H (2015). *Human resources management in education: Theoretical origins and practical applications*. Al-Falah Library. (In Arabic)

Al-Sharhani, M. (2015). *Developing human resources management processes in Public Educational Administration in Aseer: A proposed Scenario* (Unpublished Master Thesis). King Khaled University. (In Arabic)

Al-Shohnah, A. (2017). Development of school administration in general secondary education schools. *Journal of the College of Education*, 21, 389–476. (In Arabic)

Aqili, A. (2009). *Contemporary human resource management: Strategic dimension*. Dar Wael. (In Arabic)

Billsberry, J. (2007). *Experiencing recruitment and selection*. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Blackmore J, Thomson P & Barty K. (2006). Principal selection: Homosociability, the search for security and the production of normalized principal identities. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 34 (3), 297-315. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1741143206065267

Cavanaugh, B. (2008). Hire Education. *Best's Review*, 56-58.

Chapman, D. S., K. L. Uggersley, S. A. Carroll, K. A. Piasentin, and D. A. Jones. (2005). Applicant Attraction to Organizations and Job Choice: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Correlates of Recruiting Outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, 928–944. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.5.928n .

Coelli, M and Green, D. (2012). Leadership effects: School principals and student outcomes. *Economics of Education Review, 31*(1), 92-109. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.econedurev.2011.09.001n .

Coughlan, M and Cronin, P. (2009). Interviewing in qualitative research: the one-to-one interview. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation, 16*(6), 309-314. https://doi.org/10.12968/IJTR.2009.16.6.42433

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). Teacher education and the American future. *Journal of Teacher Education, 6*(102), 35-47 https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0022487109348024

Doyle, D and Locke, G. (2014). Lacking Leaders: The Challenges of Principal Recruitment, Selection, and Placement. Washington Thomas B. Fordham Institute.

Engel, M. and Curran, F.C. (2016). Toward understanding principals' hiring practices. *Journal of Educational Administration.* 54 (2),173-190. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JEA-04-2014-0049 .

General Authority for Statistics. (2019). Retrieved from: https://www.stats.gov.sa/en/5800n

Ahmed E.& Al-Dhuwaihi A. (2021). Recruitment and selection of school leaders in Saudi Arabia. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. *16*(5), 2277-2291. https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i5.6330

Herriot, P. (2002). Selection and self: Selection as a social process. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 11*(4), 385-402 https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320244000256 .

Hook, C., A. Jenkins., and M. Foot. (2015). *Introducing Human Resource Management*. Pearson.

Hooker, K. O. (2000). Superintendents' perceptions on the recruitment and selection of building level administrators. *Planning and changing, 31*(3 & 4), 182-205. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ652043n

Hoye, G., and Turban, D. (2015). Applicant-Employee Fit in Personality: Testing Predictions from Similarity-Attraction Theory and Trait Activation Theory. International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 23 (3), 210-223. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12109n

Jackson, R., Drummond, D., and Camara, S. (2007). What is qualitative research? *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication, 8* (1), 21-28. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17459430701617879

James, C., Fitzgerald, S., Fellows, T., Goodall, J., Costas Batlle. I and Jones, J. (2018). Primary school headteacher recruitment and selection in England: the processes and the problematic aspects. *School Leadership and Management*. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2018.1525699

Knight, R. (2017). 7 practical ways to reduce bias in your hiring practices. *Harvard Business Review Digital Article.* https://www.hbsp.harvard.edu/product/H03P4V-PDF-ENGn .

Lovely, S. (2004). *Staffing the principalship: Finding, coaching, and mentoring school leaders*. USA Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Maurer, S. D., Howe, V., and Lee, T. W. (1992). Organizational recruiting as marketing management: An interdisciplinary study of engineering graduates. *Personnel Psychology, 45*(4), 807-833. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1111/j.1744-6570.1992.tb00969.x

Ministry of Education. (2018). *School leadership committee*. Riyadh: Saudi Arabia. (In Arabic)

Normore, A. (2006). Leadership recruitment and selection in school districts: Trends and issues. *Journal of Educational Thought, 40*(1), 41-73. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23767533n

Normore, |A. (2004). Leadership Success in Schools: Planning, Recruitment, and Socialization. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning, 8* (10), 1-22. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ984558.pdf

Omran, K., Taha, A., and Omran, S. (2018). *Human resource management*. Almotanbi Library (In Arabic)

Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.

Pounder, D.G., and Young, P. (1996). Recruitment and selection of educational administrators: priorities for today's schools. In K. Leithwood, J. Chapman, D. Corson, P. Hallinger, and A. Hart (Eds.), *International handbook of educational leadership and administration* (pp. 279-308). Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Rebore, R. W. (2004). *Human resources administration in education: A management approach.* Pearson Education, Inc.

Rynes, S. L., and Barber, A. E. (1990). Applicant attraction strategies: An organizational perspective. *The Academy of Management Review*, 15(2), 286-310. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1990.4308158

Searle, R. (2009) Recruitment and selection. In: D. G. Collings and G. T. Wood (Eds.) *Human Resource Management: A Critical Approach* (pp. 151-168)*.* Routledge. http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/158536/

Shaked, H., Glanz, J., and Gross, Z. (2018). Gender differences in instructional leadership: how male and female principals perform their instructional leadership role. *School Leadership & Management, 38*(4),417-434. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2018.1427569

Tran, H. (2017). The impact of pay satisfaction and school achievement on high school principals' turnover intentions. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership, 45* (4), 621-638. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F17411432166361155

Ahmed E.& Al-Dhuwaihi A. (2021). Recruitment and selection of school leaders in Saudi Arabia. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. *16*(5), 2277-2291. https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i5.6330

Walker, A. and Kwan, P. (2012). Principal selection panels: strategies, preferences and perceptions. *Journal of Educational Administration, 50* (2), 188-205. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211210549

Whitaker, K. (2003), Principal role changes and influence on principal recruitment and selection, *Journal of Educational Administration, 41* (1), 37-54. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230310457420

Winter, P.A. (1996). *Recruiting Experienced Educators: A Model and a Test. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 29*, 163-171.

Young, I. P., Rinehart, J. S., & Place, W. A. (1989). Theories for teacher selection: Objective, subjective and critical contact. *Teaching & Teacher Education*, *5*(4), 329–336. https://doi.org/10.1016/0742-051X(89)90030-9