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## **Hiring Lay Faithful in the Catholic Church: Comparing HRM Theory and Practice**

### *Zaposlovanje laikov v Katoliški Cerkvi: primerjava teorije in prakse pri upravljanju s človeškimi viri*

*Abstract:* The role of lay employees in the Catholic Church has grown over the past few decades. As a consequence, the overall quality of human resources management (HRM), which includes the process of hiring, has become crucial within Church organisations. After an overview of the general theoretical findings about the process of hiring, we continue by presenting a survey executed among members of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference about value orientations concerning the hiring of lay persons within the Slovenian dioceses. The survey results were unexpected. We attempt to explain them within the scope of possible differences between the general HRM theory findings and research focused exclusively on the Church. Our conclusion is that, as a rule, Church practice does not follow the principle of creating a large pool of possible candidates for the job. Rather, it depends on more personal, individual invitations communicated to previously selected applicants.

*Keywords:* Catholic Church, lay faithful, hiring, recruitment, human resource management

*Povzetek:* Vloga laikov v Katoliški cerkvi v zadnjih desetletjih narašča. To pa pomeni, da je v cerkvenih organizacijah vedno bolj pomembna splošna kakovost funkcije upravljanja s človeškimi viri (UČV), ki vključuje tudi proces izbire bodočih sodelavcev. Po pregledu splošnih teoretičnih spoznanj o procesu izbire sledi predstavitev ankete, izvedene med člani Slovenske škofovske konference, o usmeritvah pri vrednotenju glede zaposlovanja laikov v slovenskih škofijah. Nepričakovani rezultati raziskave nas vodijo k poskusu iskanja razlage v okviru morebitnih razlik med splošnimi ugotovitvami teorije UČV in raziskavami, osredotočenimi zgolj na Cerkev. Ugotavljamo, da cerkvena praksa načelu oblikovanja velikega nabora možnih kandidatov za delovno mesto praviloma ne sledi. Raje ga nadomešča z bolj osebnimi, individualnimi povabili, ki jih posreduje predhodno evidentiranim potencialnim kandidatom.

*Ključne besede:* Katoliška Cerkev, laiki, izbiranje, zaposlovanje, upravljanje s človeškimi viri

## 1. Introduction

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Basically, there are two sorts of employees in the Catholic Church (hereafter, the Church): clerics and laity. The tasks of clerics or ordained ministers are defined by the internal legal system (canon law) of the Church, which regulates its organisation and directs its activities. The laws and legal principles included also enable relative independence and decentralisation, which result in the indisputable authority and responsibility of clerics, both on the diocesan and parish levels. These characteristics differ from often-observed public opinion, which perceives the Church as a centralised and functional top-down managed organisation, with a military-like internal organisational culture.

In contrast to the position of clerics, the one of laity or non-ordained workers is not so precisely defined. This is reflected in many aspects of their roles, starting with their hiring for specific jobs designated for lay people, but also the never-ending process of recruitment.<sup>1</sup>

From a historical perspective, the situation may be explained by the initially voluntary support of lay faithful to the functions of the Church. In such circumstances, the clerics historically oversaw all strategically important tasks and decisions.

However, overall progress in human affairs resulted in the organisational progress of all types of institutions worldwide, and this did not bypass the Church.

## 2. Church Identity and the Role of Lay Faithful

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For a meaningful application of contemporary HRM approaches in the Church context to preserve or even strengthen its value identity while striving for effective human resource management, it is necessary to place these issues under discussion in the broader context of the Church's functioning. To do this, it is necessary to take into account the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and the role of the laity, especially in light of recent synodal efforts.

From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the growing importance of lay faithful (Perše 2013; Šegula 2015) has also been formally admitted and supported by numerous official documents of the Church's highest institutions, such as: „Pastoral

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<sup>1</sup> Neither in the academic literature nor in operational HRM practice is there a consistent distinction between ‚hiring‘ and ‚recruitment‘. The terms are often used as de facto synonyms, or hiring is understood only as the final stage of the recruitment process; in such cases, the terms ‚selection‘ or ‚selective hiring‘ are also used. These observations should be kept in mind, especially when reading the theoretical overview chapter. However, we consistently understand and use, in our own opinions or conclusions, the term ‚hiring‘ as a selection activity that takes place when a specific role needs to be filled by finding, evaluating and establishing a working relationship with the most suitable person, while recruitment is the continuous process of attracting the most qualified people to an organisation, even in times without vacancies, in order to »keep in touch with the labour market and maintain a network of potential candidates« (Osoian and Zaharie 2014, 132). In other words, as interconnected activities we comprehend recruitment as a broad, ongoing strategic HRM process (which underlines its influence on objective indicators of firm performance) and hiring as a more focused, project-based task.

Letter of 1919" (1919), „Mater et Magistra" (1961), „Lumen Gentium" (1964), „Gaudium et Spes" (1965), „Apostolicam Actuositatem" (1965), „Populorum Progressio" (1967), „Economic Justice for All" (1986), „Sollicitudo Rei Socialis" (1987), „Centesimus Annus" (1991), „Communities of Salt and Light" (1993), „Called to Global Solidarity" (1997), „Everyday Christianity: To Hunger and Thirst for Justice" (1998), „Welcoming the Stranger Among Us" (2001), „Deus Caritas Est" (2005), „Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" (2012) and „Evangelii Gaudium" (2013).

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) led to significant long-term changes in the renewal of the identity of the Church in general, including the role of the laity. The new emphasis on the co-responsibility of all Christians, summarised by Perše (2014), meant that the faithful should move from being passive recipients of pastoral gifts to becoming active participants in the Church. A new turning point occurred with the 1987 Synod on „The Vocation and Mission of the Laity in the Church and the World". A year later, as a result of this meeting, Pope John Paul II published „Christifideles Laici" (1988), in which the vocation and mission of the laity is presented in the parable of the workers who, having agreed on their wages, are sent by their master to work in his vineyard. In this context, we can recall the words of Pope Benedict XVI who summarised the content of the 26<sup>th</sup> Apostolic Exhortation on the Christian Laity by saying: »I urge you to do everything possible to make the parish a ‚spiritual community‘ for people - a great family where we also experience the even greater family of the universal Church, and earn through the liturgy, through catechesis and through all the events of parish life to walk together on the way of true life.« (2006) In this context, the results of the 2012 survey are encouraging. All the priests surveyed in the Archdiocese of Ljubljana were in favour of a greater future role for the laity in parish matters (Perše 2014). However, as the author points out, the laity should not only play a supporting role to priests but should also have their own mission, in terms of being active in the world and in the Church. Even St. John Henry Newman, when asked about the role of the laity, replied, that without them, the Church would seem limited (Newman 1991). These mentions are consistent with the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church no. 543, which states that there are certain areas in which the Christian laity live and work: all worldly human realities, personal and social, circumstances and historical situations, structures, and institutions. To the extent that the laity strive to harmonise their actions with the vision of God's love in these realms, »for the lay faithful to be present and active in the world is not only an anthropological and sociological reality, but in a specific way, a theological and ecclesiological reality as well« (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace 2004). However, the most explicit recent announcement about the growing role of the lay faithful was made by Pope Francis in his 22 December 2016 speech to the Roman curia. Pope Francis presented the twelve guiding principles of the reform and tenth on the list was the one called ‚Catholicity‘, offering explicit support for the growing importance of the role of the lay faithful within the Church:

»Among the Officials, in addition to priests and consecrated persons, the catholicity of the Church must be reflected in the hiring of personnel from throughout the world, and of permanent deacons and lay faithful carefully selected on the basis of their unexceptionable spiritual and moral life and their professional competence. It is fitting to provide for the hiring of greater numbers of the lay faithful, especially in those Dicasteries where they can be more competent than clerics or consecrated persons. Also of great importance is an enhanced role for women and lay people in the life of the Church and their integration into roles of leadership in the Dicasteries, with particular attention to multiculturalism.« (Francis 2016)

The guiding principle cited here could hardly be more explicit in its nature, allowing for no real creativity in interpretation from those in charge of its implementation.

Since the task of hiring is mentioned twice, we will focus our research on this activity (see note 1). It is based on the need for highly qualified lay people to fill the positions previously held mostly by clerics.

We hypothesise that, among Church officials, there is an indisputable alignment to clearly defined values and principles during the process of hiring lay faithful for the needs of Church organisations.

We start by explaining the broader context of the Church's functioning for a meaningful application of contemporary HRM approaches. The second chapter is devoted to an overview of the existing, general theoretical findings concerning the process of hiring, which is one of the dominant processes within the area of HRM. The empirical research into the value orientations concerning the hiring of lay persons within the Slovenian dioceses will be presented in the third chapter. This is followed by a comparison of general HRM findings and the presentation of practice in the Church. These observations will be discussed in the fourth chapter. Finally, our conclusions are oriented towards recommendations for the scholars of future research in this area.

### **3. The Church and hiring**

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#### **3.1 The typology of faith-based organisations**

Although the expression 'faith-based organisations' (as the opposite of secular organisations) is commonly used to describe organisations where religion has a certain degree of influence over job service programmes (Bielefeld 2006), we prefer to use the typology as established by Sider and Unruh (2004). Based on their religious characteristics, these authors differentiate between faith-permeated (the religious dimension is believed to be essential), faith-centred (religious messages and activities are explicit, but participants can opt out), faith-affiliated (some visible influence of their religious founders, but no requirement for employees to

express faith or engage in religious practices), faith-background (tending to look and act in a secular way, though historical ties to a faith tradition may exist), faith-secular partnerships (typically secular in administration, but dependent on religious partners for volunteers and in-kind support) and secular organisations (no reference to religion).

The dilemma of whether the use of this typology is appropriate only for the social services (which embrace activities from providing goods and services to individuals to enhancing the overall quality of life) and educational organisations and programmes, or also for the purpose of defining other types of Church-connected organisations (e.g., companies established by the Church), remains undressed in the scientific literature.

However, having personal experiences in working for a faith-based organisation, respecting the principle of consistency in evaluation which supports the aforementioned typology, and since we are unable to reveal any well-founded argument against this approach, we opt for its utilisation. In so doing, we enable the conditions for establishing the possible criteria to be incorporated for the purpose of assessment of the candidates included in the hiring process: their alignment with the previously defined religious values and principles of each organisation.

### 3.2 Characteristics of the Hiring Process

One of the tools favoured by modern HRM specialists is competency (Information Resources Management Association 2012).<sup>2</sup> The competency-based management model, as understood by Darós, Conca and Sáez (2003), is articulated in three basic dimensions: acquisition (hiring), stimulation (salary and incentive policy) and development (training management). The main purpose of the hiring process is to evaluate the future working performance of the selected candidate realistically (Osoian and Zaharie 2014). The hiring – a selection process that usually includes more than one person – is discriminatory in its nature. However, the noun ‚discrimination‘ should be understood and accepted by its definition of »the ability to recognise a difference between one thing and another« and not by its dominantly negative connotation, as »the practice of treating somebody or a particular group in society less fairly than others« (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, s.v. »discrimination«).

The result of the hiring process, which is certainly an ethically challenging task for the managers, is one or more selected applicants, who get salaries and additional financial or non-financial benefits, but usually also rejected candidates who remain without the desired job, along with its opportunities and advantages.

»It is therefore a reality of organisational life that managers engage in acts that harm people /.../ Although individuals might prefer to avoid per-

<sup>2</sup> Comprehended as the relation between humans and work tasks (McClelland 1973), a combination of motives, traits, self-concepts, attitudes or values, content knowledge or cognitive behaviour skills (Spencer, McClelland and Spencer 1994) or a mixture of knowledge, skills, abilities, motivation, beliefs, values and interests (Fleishman 1995).

forming them altogether, failure to accomplish these tasks threatens the greater good for which they are intended.« (Pinnington, Macklin and Campbell 2007, 237)

As one of the normally unpleasant, but sometimes just unavoidable, managerial choices, harming people is always an ethical issue. When it cannot be avoided, the argument using ‚necessary evil‘ (Molinsky and Margolis 2005) is, by virtue of its logic and content, the same type of explanation as the one about ‚greater good‘. Both are, in reality, based on the philosophical concept of Utilitarianism (Bentham, Mills, Sidgwick, and others), the most widely known form of Consequentialism, as an approach to the normative ethics which serve as the foundation for modern techniques of cost-benefit analysis in the quest for economic efficiency (Marseille and Kahn 2019).

A poorly organised and executed hiring process can involuntarily exclude potentially attractive job candidates, as well as those working for competitors and whose onboarding could represent a double win at the same time: strengthening ours and weakening the competitor’s organisation. In order to organise and execute the hiring process effectively, which is itself intended to support building a high-performance organisation, we propose to take into consideration the findings of Pfeffer (1998), who lists the main points to be respected: the existence of a large applicant pool from which to select; screening for the cultural fit and attitude of candidates; clarifying a list of the most critical skills, behaviours, or attitudes crucial for success; executing several rounds of screening to build commitment and prove seriousness; involving senior people as recruiters, and executing the final evaluation of the results and the whole process performance.

The multi-candidate selection activity leads toward a procedure even more complex than would be the case with only one applicant. A large applicant pool may be ensured by different sources (e.g., list acquisition, membership directories, proprietary organisation websites, social media, referrals, colleges, job fairs and employment agencies) that can be grouped by using various criteria; for example, internal/external or formal/informal (Kirnan, Farley, and Geisinger 1989). Still, every source must be activated by the appropriate attraction activities; for example, by using the specific content of recruitment messages (Highhouse et al. 1999) to achieve the targeted characteristics of the applicant pools because, if the most desired and previously identified candidates do not actually apply for the openings, they cannot be hired.

In addition, the existence of a large applicant pool can mask the possible absence of the best candidates and the organisation may not even be aware of this. Coupled with the high costs of the hiring activity, both facts may lead to dissatisfaction with the results of the hiring project and a decision by the organisation not to repeat the procedure. The result may also be poorly-performing recruits.

Recently – and especially in the case of international organisations – we have observed a trend to hire people from diverse backgrounds and skills, with firms prepared to train and promote their employees (Sangeetha 2010). The increased number of candidates in the selection process thus introduces a variety of competencies, enabling comparisons to be made. If an organisation wishes to avoid

the multi-candidate procedure for the reason of lacking internal HRM competencies and/or enough dedicated personnel, the possibility of outsourcing the hiring process is an option, although attention must be paid to its possible drawbacks, especially the high costs of outsourcing and insufficient quality of recruits, due especially to the unclear request after the specific competencies.

As Judge and Ferris have written (1992), the importance of company culture fit is reflected in understanding how including fit as a hiring selection criterion may assist organisations. They list four possibilities: fit as a control mechanism (control is achieved already through the selection (*ex-ante*) rather than through the socialisation (*ex-post*) process), fit as an assurance of workforce homogeneity (hiring people similar to existing employees will help to create or maintain the organisation's homogeneity), fit as a job-related criterion (especially relevant with regard to the growing importance of the service sector) and fit as an organisational public image enhancer. If organisations are aware that their web presentations must also consider the cultural, sociological and psychological element during the localisation process (Vaupot 2020), what we understand as a form of external or environmental acculturation, it is even more normal that fit to the organisational culture is expected from future employees, which could be explained as a form of internal acculturation.

By defining the most critical skills, behaviours, or attitudes crucial for success, companies describe the 'ideal' candidate that is expected to fit within the organisation by possessing a clearly defined set of abilities for completing their specific tasks (Elrick 2016). This activity is defined as creating a 'competency model': a descriptive tool or behavioural job description, based on the seminal works of McClelland (1973) and Boyatzis (1982). It usually identifies a group of seven to nine core competencies needed to work successfully within a specific organisation or industry (Shippmann et al. 2000; Vazirani 2010).

Under the condition that these skills, behaviours, or attitudes are objectively evaluated and confirmed for the selected candidate, the perfect match with the organisation's requirements should be assured. However, every parameter included in such a definition excludes certain types of candidates that do not fit within the model.

Bowen, Ledford and Nathan (1991) emphasise the importance of the »approach to selection in which employees are hired to fit the characteristics of an organisation, not just the requirements of a particular job« (Bowen, Ledford and Nathan 1991, 35). Similarly, Rivera (2012, 1) concludes that »hiring is more than just a process of skills sorting; it is also a process of cultural matching between candidates, evaluators, and firms«. In consequence, although prepared with the positive intention of finding the best candidate, the one-dimensional competency modelling approach may easily become inefficient and discriminative in the negative sense, since »firms may ignore or deliberately deny that different types of workers have the ability to do a given job« (Windolf 1986, 237).

Putting applicants through several screening rounds of interviews and rigorous selection is a protracted procedure that results in several benefits: careful scrutiny

of those who pull through and better development of the commitment of the selected candidates. It can also foster the feeling of becoming a member of an elite group, which positively influences their motivation (Pfeffer 1998). However, based on our practical experience, the number of screening rounds, usually larger than three, should be justified to avoid a negative counter-effect, even among the best candidates.

Especially for positions that differentiate the organisation from its competitors, the role of senior people as recruiters is crucial. Pfeffer presents an example of their involvement in the hiring procedure for flight attendants at Singapore Airlines since they are »an important point of contact with the customer and one way in which Singapore Airlines differentiates its service« (1998, 100).

As put by Carlson, Connerley and Mecham (2002, 461; 465), »it is becoming clear that effective recruitment is critical to organisational success /.../ the first priority of recruitment should be attracting the best possible applicants«. Like any other process of the organisation, the hiring process performance should be evaluated. This is absolutely in line with Deming's PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) concept (Moen and Norman 2009). The activities connected to hiring process evaluation are focused on the quality measurement of selected candidates, but also on the effectiveness of the process itself.

In their survey of 620 organisations representing companies of all sizes, the Aberdeen Group revealed that companies with the best talent acquisition programmes achieved the best results with the following hiring performance criteria: time to hire, quality of hire, new hire retention and hiring managers' overall satisfaction with the programme (Minton-Eversole 2008).

Several common characteristics of the best performing organisations have also been discovered: intense collaboration between hiring managers and recruiters, active use of their websites as tools for showcasing the culture and job opportunities, pre-screening of the job candidates for technical competencies and a clear understanding of what applicant sources provide the best quality job candidates for their organisation (Aberdeen Group 2008).

The introduction of the quantitative, financial aspect of evaluation may be expressed by the calculation of the cost-per-hire (CPH), often considered as the most important metrics. According to Corpuz (2006), the appropriate CPH evaluation should include in the analysis the following elements: internal costs (e.g., recruiting office salaries, staff travel costs, lodging, administration), costs of external recruiters, company visit expenses of the candidates, direct fees (e.g., advertising, job fairs, agency, and executive search fees) and other data (e.g., an average annual salary of recruits, number of interviews versus the number of hires, acceptance rate, relocation costs). In contrast to Corpuz's (2006) approach, the Saratoga Institute's HR Effectiveness model provides the other recruiters' costs and the administrative costs. These costs are added as a flat 10% weightage. These simplified metrics, which avoid considering the real costs, are also the model's main shortcoming (Sangeetha 2010).



Avoiding the extremes of an exclusively qualitative or quantitative approach, the models of Utility Analysis (UA) are in fact a combination of both. According to Bodreau (1991, 622), utility analysis is based on »the process of describing, predicting, and/or explaining what determines the usefulness or desirability of decision options«. These models attempt to identify the ,returns' (typically defined as productivity and expressed in money terms) associated with the use of various recruitment and selection procedures. Two strands of research design can be observed that should be considered complementary: those that focus on the impact of recruitment on the individual candidate and those in which the organisation is the unit of analysis. However, each evaluation method has advantages and disadvantages (Barber 1998) and its application depends on the circumstances of the particular evaluation case.

#### 4. Empirical Research

Having explained several of the main points to be considered during the hiring process, we proceed with an attempt to evaluate empirically the value orientations of high-ranking Church leaders concerning modern HRM practices in hiring.

In doing so, we have executed an anonymous survey among the members of the Slovenian Bishops' Conference (SBC), whose ecclesiastical authority covers the geographical territory of the Republic of Slovenia. This accounted for ten members at the time of the research (2021). They all received a printed version of the questionnaire, whose content and research results are presented in Table 1. After initial distribution, two reminders to fill in the questionnaire were sent. In total, the process lasted approximately one month. Four replies were received, though one had to be excluded from the analysis owing to its non-alignment with the instructions for completion.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
prefer to avoid affecting individuals						67	33	preference for benefits to the organisation
prefer one candidate					33		67	preference for more candidates
prefer respect for privacy							100	preference for consideration of personality traits
many paths lead to results						33	67	prior definition of expected competencies is necessary
prefer fast selection procedure					67		33	prefer multi-stage selection procedure
no added value by senior members of the commission				33		33	33	senior commission members are useful
vettted composition of the commission is critical				33			67	HRM experts are needed as members of the commission
post-analysis of the selection process is not needed					33		67	post-analysis of the selection process is beneficial

**Table 1:** *Results of a survey among members of SBC. Distribution of the answers on the 7-point semantic differential scale (in %). For details of the survey, please contact the author.*

Already, from the beginning of the empirical part of the research and because of the small size of the population addressed, it was obvious that no complex statistical analysis of results would be possible. Even if we agree with Roscoe (1975) that sample sizes between 30 and 500 are appropriate for the majority of analyses, but that »in case of simple experimental research with tight experimental controls, successful research is possible with samples as small as 10 to 20 in size« (Sekaran 2003, 295), the use of Yamane's (1967) recommendations would still bring us to a sample size of nine received answers to obtain significant results for the total population of 10, with the confidence level of 90%. In order to raise the confidence level, the total population of the SBC should have answered the survey.

So, more than just the conclusion that approximately one-third of SBC members are generally well-aligned to the value orientations of modern HRM practices concerning the hiring process, the observation that almost two-thirds decided not to answer the 8-question and 15-minute survey attracts our interest. Is there any specific rationale for that choice?

After excluding the most common reasons for not responding to the survey (e.g., vague, sensitive or difficult questions, absence of survey relevance and its length, time burden, irreverent treatment, survey saturation, security concerns) as proposed by Tourangeau et al. (2000) and Gideon (2012) owing to their improbability, we hypothesise that no answer situation in the presented case is predominantly the consequence of an absence of clear personal opinions about the specific topic in question.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

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In trying to verify the hypothesis, we analyse whether there are any publicly available value orientations of the Church officials or experts concerning the hiring procedure for the lay faithful. In such a case, these guidelines may have interfered with the general HRM recommendations and resulted in the decision of certain SBC members not to answer the presented survey, to avoid revealing a potential conflict situation between the different sets of values.

After studying the selected and relatively scarce literature that deals with the subjects of HRM theory and practice in the Church, we conclude that two topics, connected to hiring activity, have attracted the special attention of academics. The first subject is the way parishes approach the possible candidates for job vacancies and, second, the importance of the candidate's fit. These areas of research can be contextually related to the first two phases of Pfeffer's aforementioned model (1998): the existence of a large applicant pool from which to select, and screening for the cultural fit and attitude of candidates.

Within the first topic presentation, we start by mentioning Murnion, who published his work about lays as new parish ministers (Murnion 1992). When talking about

hiring activity, he differentiates between the ‚professional‘ approach and the one (let us call it ‚personal‘) that relates to the pastor’s previous experience with the lay person to be hired. According to the survey, the ‚personal‘ approach has been dominant and used in almost 82% of the hiring procedures. As Fox writes (2010), this observation has been confirmed by two subsequent pieces of research by Murnion and DeLambo (1999) and DeLambo (2005). In the latter, the author revealed that more than half of lay parish ministers have been informed about the available ministry position through direct contact from the pastor or other parish employees.

It is a logical assumption, then, that in hiring decisions, pastors value personal qualities, good interpersonal skills, specific ministerial experiences, prayerfulness and the sharing of a similar ecclesiology.

In 2010, DeLambo completed these previous results with the observation that only 22% of lay parish ministers have first received information about the available position through more formal means, like magazine advertisements, internet postings, the religious order network, etc. The conclusion is that little emphasis is placed on previous experience, like formal education or trainings, and »in terms of recruitment practices and job qualifications, lay parish ministry remains largely informal« (DeLambo 2010, 36–37).

The topic of cultural fit and the attitude of candidates in connection with both scientific and religious/biblical principles has attracted the attention of Cousins, Anderson and DeKruyter (1990), who list three important criteria to be considered when hiring: Christian commitment (it makes people better workers since they most probably evaluate their activity as a vocation), compatibility (team players who fit the Church’s culture and whose competence is compatible), and a combination of competence, dedication and vision. Messina (2007) focuses on four areas in the process of recruitment and selection. Besides the cultural and position fit of the applicants, their expectation of job security must be acknowledged. The author underlines that the whole process should be well-organised and unhurried, but also transparent.

The starting point of Roberts’ (2015) research is the concept of servant leadership promoted by scripture. The author supports the execution of a realistic job-preview, which tackles the positive and negative characteristics of the specific job and the whole organisation. Such an approach enables the candidates themselves to evaluate realistically whether their personal attributes are a suitable fit. Meetings between the applicants, supervisors and current employees can support this down-to-earth evaluation.

The priority of first considering the person-organisation fit and only later the person-job fit during the process of hiring is emphasised by Winston (2018). Finally, besides the concern for using both internal and external sources to establish a large pool of appropriate candidates to choose the right person for the job, Busuttill and Van Weelden (2018) highlight the importance of matching the most appropriate candidates to specific jobs (a structural perspective), but also their fit with the whole organisation (a relational perspective).

We conclude by our observation that there is no important difference between the theoretical, general HRM recommendations and those dealing specifically with

the Church hiring procedures as presented in the literature. The only issue accentuated in the Church situation is a difference in the first phase of the hiring process. Based on the presented research, which describes this practice, as is' without evaluating its (in)appropriateness, it seems that Church practice usually does not follow the principle of creating a large applicant pool of possible candidates for the job. Rather, this is replaced by more personal, individual invitations communicated to previously-selected applicants. Whether only one or more invited applicants take part in the selection process does not seem to be of primary importance. What really appears to count is that the screening of the candidate's fit is an activity usually executed before candidates are invited to enter the selection process and that they may even be unaware of the fact. We argue that the presented conclusions about differences between theory and practice may also, at least partially, explain *de facto* rejection of our survey by an important part of the SBC members. To verify the validity of such an interpretation, it would be interesting to conduct a similar type of research within the scope of the Bishops' conferences of other countries. This could represent an interesting starting point toward implementing a more structured approach, not only for the purpose of the continuous improvement of hiring procedures in the Church but also of its overall HRM professionalism. Initiatives such as the creation of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life in 2016, when Pope Francis merged previously separate bodies into one institution, can make an important contribution. According to the prefect, Cardinal Kevin Joseph Farrell, the thread that connects these areas is the fundamental role of the laity in the Church: they are called, above all, to contribute to the formation of the Christian life of other lay people, and to assume greater responsibility in their parishes and dioceses (Zamuda 2019). The work of the dicastery soon bore fruit in the form of the launch of the website [www.laityinvolved.org](http://www.laityinvolved.org), which presents initiatives and good practices in terms of the evangelization, formation and encouragement of lay people that have been successful in some countries and could be imitated in others. Also, good practices in relation to the empowerment of the laity and the corresponding HRM approaches are needed to achieve this goal.

## Abreviation

HRM – Human resources management.

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