

TEACHERS' MULTIPLE COMMITMENT IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

Teachers work in higher educational institutions to provide specialized education to their students. They also work to introduce innovative ideas to the nation through their research and developmental activities. Furthermore, teachers in institutions of higher education play a critical role to train students in economic development as well as sustaining the well-being of the societies. The utility of the research carried out by teachers cannot be appreciated until it results in commercial use. Teacher cannot secure their position in the field of their expertise unless they are committed to their job and related entities. Consequently, the factors influencing the levels of commitment of the teachers in wider education systems must necessarily be the focus of an important field of research. This paper discusses about the significance of teachers' commitment, conceptualizes different types of teachers' commitment, identifies instruments to measure teacher commitment, and also possible outcomes of teacher commitment. Limitations and implications of the study have been discussed.

Keywords: Higher educational institutions, Teacher commitment, Instruments

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1. Introduction

There has been a phenomenal growth of technical educational institutions in recent years, emerging with the belief that people armed with new knowledge in the field of technology would contribute better to the growth and development of the country. Some of the institutions maintain their standards, whereas most of the institutions are struggling to achieve the required standard. One of the reasons for such state of affairs may be attributed to the teacher, who happens to be the vital member of the entire institutions environment.

Although the infrastructural aspects of an educational institute would definitely aid in efficient working, the real competitive advantage comes from teachers who possess skills, intellectual capabilities, and attitudes. It is known that human being is the most important input to any organization and this fact is more significant in the higher/professional educational institutions. Pfeffer (1998) observed that people should be put first in making profits and refers those practices as people centered strategies.

It is a well known fact that to become an economic super power country, more emphasis should be given to research and developmental activities. There is a strong belief that teachers working in higher/professional educational institutions can play critical role in advancing economic and technological development of the society they serve. Nearly 70 per cent of the new products/services introduced in the market are getting replicated in a one year time. To remain in competition, organizations are looking for rapid technological changes. It is seen that technology changes about 4 to 5 times during the service career of a teacher. Teachers cannot teach the latest technology in the field of their expertise unless they are committed to their job. Thus, the factors influencing the levels of commitment of teachers in education system must necessarily be the focus of an important field of research. Lack of research into teachers' commitment motivates us to venture into this topic.

Array of definitions exists on commitment. However, in simpler terms commitment is viewed as an attitude that reflects feelings like attachment, identification, or loyalty to the object of commitment (Morrow, 1993). A teacher in the workplace may exhibit more than one form of commitment simultaneously. If a teacher is less committed to one entity in the workplace (e.g., the institution), then there is a possibility that he/she may be more committed to another entity (e.g., the job or the group). This may be one of the important reasons to justify the need for the

growing interest in the broader concept of multiple commitments. Such an approach shows the usefulness of more forms of commitments, in contrast to focusing on one or another isolated form of commitment. People must be committed to something; if it is not the institution it will be another entity in the workplace setting. It would be useful to know about teachers multiple commitments, as it can aid to the expansion of existing knowledge base on teachers' commitment.

2. The Significance of Teachers' Commitment

In order to face tough competition which has been posed by the private universities with/without foreign collaboration, the administrators are on the look for teachers who are not only qualified and skilled but also committed to different objects in the work environment. Commitment of an individual at the workplace is reflected in various ways, such as, commitment to the organization, to the workgroup, to another individual, to profession, or to the union the individual belongs to (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Time and again teachers' commitment is a topic which is exposed to critical comments from politicians, policy makers, parents, students and other stakeholders. Quality education cannot be achieved without the efforts of dedicated and highly committed teachers. Society at large has high expectations from teachers as professional persons and community leaders. Park (2005) specified two valuable reasons why teacher commitment should be emphasized in the fields of education. First, commitment is an internal force coming from within teachers themselves who have needs for greater responsibility, variety and challenge in their work. Second, there are external forces directing both reform and development in education and seeking higher standards and greater accountability.

3. Multiple Commitments

The idea of different types of teacher commitment has emerged from the fact that higher educational institutions consist of different sub-systems. To name a few sub-systems, there would be a student counseling cell, research and development cell, administrative wing, academic departments, industry-institute collaboration cell, parent-institute interaction cell, placement cell, entrepreneurship cell, extra-curricular unit, and employee welfare department, etc. Teachers in

their work environment may be inclined to exhibit commitment towards such sub-systems or towards the members involved in these sub-systems. Commitment to a particular entity/object may differ depending on how they are perceived and evaluated by an individual. But it is fair to expect one type of commitment as a dominant in a particular teacher.

If a teacher is less committed to one aspect in the workplace (e.g., the organization), then there is a possibility that he/she may be more committed to another aspect (e.g., the job or the group). This may be one of the important reasons to justify the need for the growing interest in the broader concept of multiple commitments. Such an approach shows the usefulness of more forms of commitments, in contrast to focusing on one or another isolated form of commitment. Carmelli and Freund (2004) tossed three reasons why different forms of teacher commitment could be considered: (1) teachers might have developed different forms of commitment to teaching; (2) these different forms of teaching commitment might affect the outcomes of teaching commitment differently; and (3) different forms of teaching commitment might contribute to different teaching commitment models in different ways and to different extents. The forms of teacher commitment may be correlated with each other or may be independent of each other. However, demonstrating a positive correlation does not necessarily mean that there is no conflict between the two commitments (Aranya & Ferris, 1984).

The following are the important types of teachers' commitment which are relevant in the context of higher/professional educational settings.

3.1 Teachers' Commitment to the Institution

Commitment to the institution has been defined, measured, and researched differently by different scholars (Yousef, 2000). However, the most widely used definition in the literature is given by Mowday, Steers, and Porter (1979). They defined teachers' commitment to educational institution as teachers' belief, and acceptance of the goals and values of the institution, and teachers' strong desire to maintain membership in the institution. To measure teacher commitment to the institution, the *Organizational Commitment Questionnaire* (OCQ) developed by Mowday et al. (1979) can be considered.

3.2 Teachers' Commitment to the Student

Kushman (1992) argued that commitment to students was based on the concept that a teacher's willingness to exert efforts on behalf of both low and high achieving students. A teacher

committed towards student is more likely to work with students in both curricular and extra-curricular activities which help students to connect to the institution and its academic activity. Rosenholtz (1989) asserted that teacher commitment to students led classroom activities more meaningful, introducing new ways of learning, and altering the teaching materials so that they were more relevant and of greater interest to students. Firestone and Pennell (1993) found low levels of teacher commitment resulted in reduced student achievement, less sympathy towards students, and lower tolerance for frustration in the classroom. Such teachers also developed fewer plans to improve the quality of their instructions. Teachers' commitment towards the student can be assessed using Gibson and Dembo's (1984) instrument.

3.3 Teachers' Commitment to the Work Group

Randall and Cote (1991) defined commitment to work group as an individual's identification and sense of cohesiveness with other members of the organization. In this respect, the commitment of teachers to work group in the institution is based on density of the teachers' sense of faithfulness and collaboration with other teachers. In professional and technology intensive institutions teachers have to work in collaboration with other teachers to execute students' projects, consultancy projects, research and developmental projects, etc. Commitment to work group can be measured by using Ellemers, Gilder, and Heuvel's (1998) *Group Commitment Scale* and Sheldon's (1971) *Work Group Attachment Scale*.

3.4 Teachers' Commitment to the Teaching Job

Blau (1985a) defines commitment to one's job (i.e., job involvement) as the extent to which an individual identifies psychologically with his/her job. Job involvement appears to be a construct that follows directly from the way individuals behave on the job. A meta-analytic study of the consequences of job involvement by Brown (1996) showed that the effects of job involvement have significant bearings upon the overall organizational effectiveness. Cohen (2006) found job involvement has significant impact on numerous organizational outcomes such as organizational citizenship behaviour and performance.

In the early approach to job involvement, Lodhal and Kejner (1965) argued that job involvement is the internalization of values about the goodness of work or the importance of work for the person's worth. They describe: (a) job involved person as one for whom work is a very important part of life, and who is personally greatly affected by his or her entire job situation. (b)

Non job involved person as one for whom work is not an important part of his or her psychological life. Later, Kanungo (1979) asserted that involvement in a specific job is not the same as involvement in work in general and developed separate scales for each. Kanungo's (1982, 1979) approach and scale for job involvement have become paramount in job involvement research and more acceptable than the scale developed by Lodhal and Kejner (1965). Much attention to the concept of job involvement has been paid particularly in the industrial psychology research and neglecting teachers' job involvement in educational settings.

3.5 Teachers' Commitment to the Teaching Occupation

Blau (1985b) defined commitment to teaching occupation as teacher's attitudes towards their profession or vocation and it was formulated in accordance with the concepts that are professional commitment, career orientation, career commitment and career salience (Greenhaus, 1971). Somech and Bogler (2002) stated that teacher commitment to the teaching profession involved an affective attachment to the profession or occupation, which was associated with personal identification and satisfaction as a teacher. Commitment to occupation was seen as important because it enables a teacher to develop the necessary skills and relationships to have a successful career, regardless of the institution within which they are employed. Professional commitment becomes crucial because educational institutions have difficulties in observing teachers, assessing teachers' performance and practices. A teacher committed to the profession is expected to develop the necessary skills, relationships and good instructional practices to have a successful career. Teachers' commitment towards career can be measured by the using the works of Blau (1985b, 1988).

4. Commitment and Outcomes

Somech and Bogler (2002) suggest that highly committed teachers go beyond what is expected of them in their work, others who do not feel highly committed to their institutions are not truly engaged and involved in their institutions and perform only the minimum amount of work and such withdrawal teachers are the real concern to institutions.

Reyes (1990) found that committed teachers are likely to believe in and act upon the goals of the institution, intend to remain as member of the institution, work harder and be less inclined to leave the workplace, devote more time to extra-curricular activities in order to accomplish the goals of the institution, influence student achievement, and exert efforts beyond personal interest.

Teachers who are highly committed to both the profession and the institution were found to perform better when compared with the less committed ones, a behavior which results in improved overall effectiveness of the organization (Aranya & Ferris, 1984). Teachers' professional commitment has been found to be critical to good instruction (Firestone & Pennell, 1993).

Finally, forms of commitment predict important work outcomes such as withdrawal, performance, absenteeism, and tardiness (Cohen, 2003, 2000, 1999b; Randall & Cote, 1991; Blau, 1986; Steers & Rhodes, 1978). Hence, commitment has become principal characteristic which needs to be nurtured and developed among teachers in higher/professional educational institutions.

5. Limitation

The measures suggested in the study were based on its application in previous research, hence they should be considered while keeping particular situation in mind. As the quality of the study is primarily dependent on the instrument employed, it would be essential the measures suggested should be submitted to trial in an appropriate situation followed by necessary refinement before use.

6. Conclusion

At present India's higher education sector is struggling, only about 7 per cent of the students get to college education and about 1 per cent of students get into premier institutions such as IITs, IIMs, etc. However, Governments of India is considering various steps for (a) providing quality technical education to the masses, (b) advancing research activities, and (c) reaching self sufficient on economic front. In order to materialize the above objectives a good number of teachers who possess higher commitment levels are required.

The five types of teachers' commitments discussed above are essential for accomplishing institutional objectives at all levels of education. For many years, the topic of commitment has captured the attention of researchers and remained a topic of interest ever since it was introduced in the early 1950s to the field of organizational behaviour. Time has come to endeavor into research related to teacher commitment, as it can prove imperative for the overall institutional effectiveness and the development of country as a whole.

7. Implications of the Study

Observations of the present study are pertinent to concerned officials who are either directly or indirectly associated with the administration at different levels of governance of higher/professional learning institutions.

Teachers who visualize institutions behaving in their favour can contribute more to the institution. The institutions must provide supportive work environment, where teachers should sense that they have control over their job and related activities. Such feelings would elevate their commitment forms. Institutions which possess committed teacher will always have competitive advantage over the institutions. Therefore, head of the institutions should recognize the findings and have to make every effort to raise teachers' commitment to the institution, student, work group, teaching job, and teaching occupation.

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