

Interaction of Competencies and Commitment of Higher Education Teachers

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Abstract

Teachers have a significant role in influencing the belief and thought process of students and in shaping their personality. Students while in higher education begin to think for themselves and decide regarding their life and work. It is essential for the teachers, in the higher education sector who deal with these students who are in their maturing phase to explore the real world. This demands that the teachers need to be not only competent but also committed. There are very less research focussing on the interaction of these two characteristics of teachers. The focus of this paper is to find the existing level of commitment and competence of the educators and to find if there is any significant relationship between these variables. This would help the administrators to focus on those competencies that would result in desired commitment that enhances their performance as a teacher. Competence includes a broad range of knowledge, attitudes and observable patterns of behaviour which together account for the ability to deliver a specified professional service. Three dimensions of competence as professional competence, teaching competence and managerial competence were measured. Commitment was measured as affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting 185 educators from various higher institutes. The data was collected by using self evaluated statements comprising 59 items for competency and 22 items for commitment. Statistical techniques including ANOVA, correlation and regression were used. The study shows that professional competence of the educator has an important role in developing the affective and normative commitment of educators. The educators' professional competence increases as according to their occupational status. Institutions have to focus on strategies that would enhance professional competences so as to increase the level of commitment of educators.

Key Words: Educators, Higher Education, Commitment, Competence

1. Introduction

Organizations nowadays are facing challenges and opportunities due to continuous changing world of business. The changes in the business world include technological advances and changing economic trends in the global market. Werner (2007) states that, "social, cultural, political, technological and global forces challenge organizations to

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redefine their strategies". These changes affect the various aspects of the functioning of organization such as organizational commitment, organizational culture, work motivation and competency of employees. Committed and competent human resources are considered the most important assets in any organisation that leads to enriched performance and fulfilment in their life and work.

A well managed organization possesses well defined roles and list of competencies required to perform each role effectively. This identifies the gap for improving knowledge to develop. Apart from other business sectors, the need is highly felt in the teaching arena too. The increasing complexity of our educational system has given rise to new dimensions and consequently the role of the educator has increased immensely and acquired a new meaning.

Competences would be a driving force in determining an individual's level of commitment to the job or the organization (Blanchard, 1993). Individual with high degree of competence and commitment can be delegated in to any task. Competence and commitment are an integral part of an organization's workforce and both have to go hand in hand for the organisation to scale up. Apart from enterprises, competence based management is being conducted on educational institutions too. Education is subject to the pressures of the marketplace. It could be observed that major and significant changes in competition have made institutions to function business. The focus of the higher education should largely be on producing qualified citizens for a globalized economy and generating tailor made packages for meeting the pre-requisites of survival in the dynamic competitive environment

This study focuses on the level of competencies and commitment of educators and the interaction between the variables. Organizational commitment as an attitude reflects feelings such as attachment, identification and loyalty to the organization as an object of commitment (Morrow 1993). Best (1994) indicates that organizational commitment is behaviour evident when committed individuals enact specific behaviour due to the belief, that it is morally right rather than personally beneficial. In 1990, Allen and Meyer classified Organizational Commitment into three categories and emphasized three different themes in the definition of the term Organizational Commitment: Affective Commitment, Continuance Commitment and Normative Commitment.

The interaction of competency and commitment was intended to be explored as both factors signify superior performance and the influence of the various dimensions of one construct on the other will recommend specific steps for enhancing specific characteristics. When competence refers to one's ability to interact healthily and in a desired fashion in the external environment, commitment is a factor that works so, internally with the individual. Hence there is a need to understand the performance of the individual in a wholesome perspective which could be measured by studying these two constructs. The results of the study may to help identify clues and information that

influences and motivates teachers internally, by understanding their commitment, and externally, by recognising their competence. This study focuses on studying the relationship between teacher competencies and the three types of commitment. As the characteristics of the three types of commitment are different, the relationship between competencies and commitment are expected to give interesting links.

2. Literature review

Earlier researches (Anitha and Krishnaveni, 2013, Analoui, 1995) have shown that professional characteristics of educators include subject knowledge, teaching prowess, updating knowledge, collegiality, commitment, teacher student relationship, empowerment, self development, remuneration and teacher efficacy. These studies comprise various qualities of educators including the different competencies required for the profession and the commitment required for the same to be momentous in the context of the educational institution. This study focuses on the specific literatures that draw attention to competencies and commitment of educators in higher education.

2.1 Competency

The term competency was probably first introduced to psychology literature in 1973 by David McClelland. In 1982 it was Boyatzis who first drew together comprehensive data that had been collected in the USA using the McBer & Company 'Job Competence Assessment' method. Since then, competency has become a significant factor in HR development practices (Simpson, 2002). According to Cheng et al., (2003) the establishment of the competency of individuals is crucial for further development of an organization. Competency assessment is a versatile and powerful tool in human resource management practices (Armstrong, 2003). This view is strongly upheld by Lado and Wilson, (1994) basing the resource-based theory that competencies lead to firm performance (Barney, 1991) for sustained competitive advantage.

To be effective in teaching and capable of adjusting to the evolving needs of learners in a world of rapid social, cultural, economic and technological change, educators themselves need to reflect on their own learning requirements in the context of their particular educational environment, and to take greater responsibility for their own lifelong learning as a means of updating and developing their own knowledge and skills (European Union, 2009)

The higher education institutions have experienced substantial change and growth. Yang, (2003) notes that globalization is transforming the functioning and nature of higher education worldwide. According to him, higher education institutions need to become customer focused, embrace the marketplace and function as full business enterprises in order to survive in the global competitive environment. The changes in the higher education environment are especially evident in the shift from collegialism to managerialism (Deem, 1998; Simon, 2007). Parker and Wilson, (2002) confirm the shift

from collegialism to managerialism in their study of western universities. As a result of the shift from collegialism to managerialism, greater demands are being made on academic personnel. Managerial competencies are activities, knowledge, skills or attitudes and perhaps also personal characteristics necessary to improve management performance. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993) managerial competencies are a specialized subset of the competencies, expressing the intention to have certain specific effects. These specific intentions are particularly important for managers.

In line with the finding of the review of literature cited above, the competencies of an educator were categorised as professional competency, teaching competency and managerial competency. The different competencies, identified using literature review, including knowledge, skills, assessment and evaluation of student performance, values and ethics, involvement in updating curriculum, designing and implementing curriculum, student affairs, guidance of student internships and projects, career guidance and research and publications are classified under the three competency types for this research.

2.1.1 Professional Competence

The term professional competence refers to a set of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, capacities and beliefs people need for success in a profession. Educators' professional competences include various competences in different areas such as pedagogical, cultural, communicational, personal, intellectual etc which are needed for effective teaching. Professionalism is a state or attitude developed by a person as part of a professional socialization process, by which he or she accepts the common standards shared by the professional group. Educators are expected to exhibit professionalism, i.e. to comply with the generally accepted procedures and standards of the profession (Bourdoncle, 1991).

2.1.2 Teaching competence

Teaching competence refers to cognitive knowledge of the educators, which entails effects on student learning. Competence based teaching has a lot to do with the educator education that aims to train students in specific classroom behavior. The teaching competence of educators focuses on their conscious use of their knowledge, abilities, skills and talents to induce students to learn. Teaching competence means knowing how to harness goals, contents, activities, methodology, materials, resources and assessment in order to ensure whether students have acquired the prescribed basic sets of skills.

2.1.3 Managerial Competence

Managerial competences are a specific type of individual competences. Based on a survey Boyatzis (1982) defined competence as a human ability to behave in a way to meet job requirements in parameters given by the organization's environment and thus to achieve the required results. In his work he defined threshold competence as competences crucial

for managerial work, however, not having any significant causal relationship to its efficiency and better results. Managerial competence includes activities, knowledge, skills or attitudes and perhaps also personal characteristics necessary to improve management performance. According to Spencer and Spencer (1993), managerial competences are a specialized subset of the competences, expressing the intention to have certain specific effects. These specific intentions are particularly important for managers.

The following are the variables that were used to measure these competences.

Knowledge and skill: Teacher knowledge is crucially important to the improvement of teaching and learning, attention to their development. International research studies emphasize three aspects when defining teaching skills that include, what teachers do (different kinds of abilities), different kinds of knowledge that teachers need in order to be able to act in the best possible way and thirdly, the attitudes and underpinning values that teachers embrace and apply. Knowledge and attitudes are underlying factors that shape a teacher's actions. The continuing development of new skills and knowledge throughout life is valuable for individuals and essential for the economy

Evaluation of student output: The evaluation process is the most important of the learning process and development, among other processes such as planning and implementation. Evaluation is an organized collection of information that is valid and reliable, effective and appropriate analysis of the degree of this information to set standards for the goals set in advance to take appropriate decisions there on (Al-Azzeh and Yahya, 2011). Test or examination is a means or a tool of measurement of students output and the other tools such as Interview, questionnaire, problem analysis, performance evaluation, and report analysis (Sadler, 2005).

Values and ethics: One of the hallmarks of any profession is the commitment of its members to a code of ethics which sets out professional values and responsibilities. Values are often seen as aspirations or driving forces, often not openly articulated, which effectively shape people's lives and determine where they will direct their energies and what they will hold to be of importance.

Updating the knowledge: Teachers have the responsibility to convey updated knowledge to students, otherwise they may mislead them. We live in the information era, where up-to-date information is available everywhere. Teachers need to keep updated themselves through research, conventions and conferences (Anitha and Krishnaveni, 2013) of live information to be relevant in their performance. Beside subject knowledge, pedagogical skills and content knowledge are also to be updated.

Designing and implementing curriculum: According to Kern, et al. (1998), a curriculum is "a planned educational experience". Hence, the main intention of curriculum design at the tertiary level is to enhance the academic achievement of students. A well-designed and

well-implemented curriculum is likely to enhance student engagement and achievement. Curriculum design and implementation by faculty, with relevance to the real time environment, contribute to high quality teaching.

Student teacher relationships: Students spend a great deal of their waking hours at school; this investment of time indicates that their feelings about the learning environment will impact their learning. Effective interactions between teachers and students are essential for promoting long-term organization success. Student teacher relationships provide a unique entry point for educators and others working to improve the social and learning environments of school and classrooms. Teacher student interactions lead students to feel supported by their teachers and enhance motivation and emotional well being.

Career guidance and counselling: Educators have an important role in providing career guidance and counselling to students. According to Bark, (2003), guidance and counselling are the assistances made available by qualified and trained persons to an individual of any age to help him to manage his own life activities, develop his own points of view, make his own decisions and carry his own burden. In addition, Braddock (2001) states that, the purpose of guidance and counselling in schools is to improve academic achievement, foster positive study attitudes and habits, increase acquisitions and application of conflict resolution skills, and decrease school dropouts.

Research and publication: Research work at academia is considered to be more relevant and more significant in the profession for a genuine disposition of the job and for professional development. Education professionals are always learning, finding out things, analysing information, adapting their behaviour according to information received, looking to improve and adapting to modern demands through research. Research methodologies give teachers the tools to analyze and make informed decisions about their practice. Research and publication experiences of educator can develop their knowledge and skill in their respective field

2.2 Commitment

Organizational commitment was introduced by Becker (1960), and since 1970s, it has been subject to intense scientific studies. It is defined as a “person’s identification of himself/ herself with an organization and willingness to belong to that organization” (Testa, 2001; Mathews and Shepherd, 2002). Research has shown that commitment has been found to be related to job characteristics as task autonomy (Dunham, Grube & Castaneda, 1994), feedback (Hutichison & Garstka, 1996) and job challenge (Meyer, Irving, & Allen, 1998) and certain work experiences such as job security (Yousef, 1998) promotion opportunities (Gaertner & Nollen, 1989), training and mentoring opportunities (Scandura, 1997) and supportive and considerate leadership (DeCottis &

Summers, 1987). The present study is to focus on the relationship of competencies with commitment.

Most of the research on organizational commitment has been done by industrial organizational and occupational psychologists (Mueller, Wallace & Price, 1992). Very little research on organizational commitment has been conducted within educational settings. The focus of the present study is to identify the level of organizational commitment among higher educational educators. Fostering organizational commitment among the academic staff is important because employees, who are highly committed stay longer, perform better, miss less work, and engage in organizational citizenship behaviours.

The study aims to find the existing level of different competencies and different commitment types and the interaction between these constructs. As professional competence among other competences is found to be more value adding (Bourdoncle, 1991, Bella Joseph, 1999) to the educators' performance, it was also intended to study if the professional competence of educators enhanced with experience or with increasing hierarchy.

The study was pursued with the following hypotheses:

- H₀1: There is no significant difference in professional competence in relation to designation.
- H₀2: There is no significant impact of the competences on affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

3. Objectives

- To study the prevalent level of Competencies and Commitment of educators in the higher education.
- To study if there is any significant difference in observing the professional competence based on the designation of the educator.
- To study the predicting power of Competencies that explain the different Commitment types.

This study aims to explore the association of competency and commitment among educators working in higher educational sector. Considering the nature of required data, a descriptive design has been opted. The descriptive method tries to find out the present status of the phenomena under study. A sample of 185 educators was taken for the study. About 73% of the educators were female and 25% of them were male. About 30% of the respondents have 6 to 10 years of experience, 28% of the respondents have 2 to 5 years of experience and 28% of them have <2 years of experience. Simple random sampling technique was employed in selecting the educators from various higher institutes.

The scale was developed by referring an interview guide (Munene, Bbosa, and Obonyo, 2003), that was used to obtain the competency of Engineering lecturers. The items for each variable were carefully analyzed, modified as per the relevance of the study and 59 statements were finalised to measure the variables, with reliability co-efficient of 0.972. The scale measures the three types of competence, namely, professional competence, teaching competence and managerial competence required for an educator of higher educational sector. The professional competences comprises of knowledge and skill, values and ethics and updating the knowledge. The teaching competence comprises of knowledge and skill, evaluation of student output, research and publication, and student teacher relationship and the managerial competence consist of designing and implementing curriculum, career guidance and counselling, planning, organizing and guiding the project.

Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Meyer and Allen (1990) with 22 items, was tested for reliability and was used to measure the level of commitment. The reliability coefficient of the commitment questionnaire was 0.789. The collected data was analyzed with the help of statistical tools such as descriptive statistics, ANOVA and regression.

4. Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Existing level of competence of Educators

The variable competencies are identified through Professional competence, Teaching competence and Managerial competence. The existing level of competences of the educators working in higher educational institution is measured using the mean score and standard deviation. Table 4.1 gives the mean values and Std. deviation.

Table: 4.1 Existing level of competence of educators

| Factors | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Professional Competence | 4.2656 | .37175 |
| Teaching Competence | 4.1704 | .58974 |
| Managerial Competence | 4.1412 | .52659 |

The result shows that the indicator of managerial competence has the lowest score (m=4.141) followed by teaching competence (m=4.170) and the indicator of professional competence has highest score with (m=4.265). As the instrument uses self perception of the constructs, the value of the means may be hiked due to personal bias. However, the relative perception of the three types of competence reflects that the respondents were more psotive towards professional competence aspects. The quality of teaching is mainly dependent on professional competence and the low value of the standard deviation value of professional competence indicates more converged opinion with respect to this construct.

4.2 Existing level of commitment of educators

The variable of organizational commitment is identified through affective commitment, continuance commitment, and normative commitment. Table 4.2 gives the mean values and Std. deviation of existing levels of commitment.

Table: 4.2 Existing level of commitment of educators

| Factors | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Affective Commitment | 3.3007 | .72032 |
| Continuance Commitment | 3.3106 | 1.19530 |
| Normative Commitment | 3.3729 | .53029 |

The indicator of affective commitment is the lowest with ($m=3.30$) followed by continuance commitment with ($m=3.31$), while normative commitment has the highest score of $m= 3.72$. This indicates that most educators of higher educational institution have the feeling of obligation towards the institution rather than affective attachment. The educational institutions believe that the goals are unattainable without the enduring commitment of members of the institution. Therefore, deeper knowledge of organizational commitment is needed to better understand the attitudes and behaviour of the modern workforce.

It is interesting to note that the same group of educators who have perceived themselves with a higher value of competence that scored more than 4, have scored values less than 4 in terms of commitment. In general, educators seem to be perceive themselves high in competence but relatively low in commitment. This may be due to the sample profile that shows majority of the educators (75%) are younger (less than 35 years of age) and the basic characteristic of the Gen Y of looking for better jobs Kumar and Arora, (2012), has reflected in a lower level of commitment. A number of studies have shown that Gen Y or the younger generation are in a continuous spree of better jobs and hence spend less thought and energy in commitment aspects unlike the older generation workforce.

4.3 Differences in professional competence based on designation

Competence signifies a more or less consistent ability to realize specific outcomes. Professional competence therefore can be considered as a highly valued quality which accounts for the efficient use of knowledge, skills, intellect, strength and capacity that are required to carry out one's functions and duties for the profession. Table 4.3 shows the significant difference in mean values of professional competencies based on designation.

The table shows there are significant differences in professional competencies in relation to designation. However to ensure which of the designations specifically differ from one another was verified using post hoc analysis and table 4.4 was arrived.

Table 4.3: Differences in professional competence based on designation

| Factors | Senior Lecturer | Assistant Professor | Associate Professor | Professor | F Value | Sig (p value) |
|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|
| Professional Competence | 2.944 | 3.23 | 3.21 | 3.38 | 2.831 | .017* |

*Significant at 0.05 level of significance

Table: 4.4 Homogeneous subset

| Designation | Subset for alpha = 0.05 | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------|
| | 1 | 2 |
| Senior Lecturer | 2.9444 | |
| Lecturer | 3.0815 | |
| Associate Professor | 3.2192 | 3.2192 |
| Assistant Professor | 3.2306 | 3.2306 |
| Professor | | 3.3833 |

This table indicates that lecturer and senior lecturer fall in subset 1 or have similar characteristics. Associate professor and assistant professor seem to be in both sub sets. However the mean values of these cadres lie more close to the professor cadre than that of the least value of the senior lecturer score. Hence the associate professor and assistant professor cadres are nearer the professor cadre. Hence it is seen that professional competence is significantly higher for the higher designation levels and low for the lower cadres.

Therefore the null hypothesis H_01 : there is no significant difference in professional competence in relation to designation is rejected. Professionalism has been described as stages of development or the degree of expertise. The knowledge, skill and ability of the educators are developed when they move higher in their hierarchy.

4.4 Strength and impact of different competencies on commitment

Educators possess required competencies to perform their job to a satisfactory level. They are also committed to their profession, to the institute and the community at large that includes students and parents. It was intended to study if the competencies possessed by the educator have any influence on the commitment towards one's profession. It was expected that the more the competent an educator is, the more committed he can be.

The impact of different competencies on commitment and its strength was measured using regression analysis. The competences (professional, teaching and managerial) were taken as independent variables and the commitment (affective, continuance and

normative) as dependent variable. Three regressions were run having the three types of commitment as dependent variables individually. It was found that there was no statistically significant impact of competences on affective commitment and normative commitment. However there was statistically significant impact of the competences on continuance commitment.

Table: 4.4.1 Model summary

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| dimension0 1 | .454 ^a | .206 | .193 | 1.07367 |
| a. Predictors: (Constant), MC, PC, TC | | | | |

MC – Managerial Competence; PC – Professional Competence; TC – Teaching Competence

Table: 4.4.2 Coefficients

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. | |
|-------|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|--------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | | |
| 1 | (Constant) | 4.377 | .923 | | 4.742 | .000 |
| | PC | -.835 | .273 | -.260 | -3.054 | .003 |
| | TC | 1.172 | .174 | .578 | 6.736 | .000 |
| | MC | -.578 | .194 | -.255 | -2.971 | .003 |

a. Dependent Variable: Continuance Commitment

The table 4.4.1 indicates that competencies have significant influence on commitment. About 19.3% of continuance commitment is predicted by competences.

The regression equation derived from the above table is as follows:

Continuance commitment = 4.37 – 0.835 (Professional competence) + 1.172 (Teaching competence) – 0.578 (Managerial competence)

The result in table 4.4.2, shows that teaching competence ($\beta=57.8\%$, $t=6.73$, $p<0.001$) has the highest impact on the continuance commitment. The professional competence ($\beta=-26\%$ negative, $t=3.05$, $p<0.001$) have significant impact on continuance commitment but explains it negatively. This means that higher the professional competence, the continuance commitment will be significantly less. The managerial competence ($\beta=-25.5\%$ negative, $t=2.97$ negative, $p<0.001$) also have significant negative impact on continuance commitment. The result shows that educators with higher professional competence and managerial competence will have negative continuance commitment. These educators do not feel to work for the institute just because they had to continue here or not to lose the benefits they gain here. They must have more confidence in themselves to even not to continue in their present job if they have to look for a new one. Their competence helps them with more confidence and hence lesser is their continuance

commitment. The regression analysis suggests that teaching competence can predict continuance commitment of educators positively.

Therefore the null hypothesis H_05 : There is no significant impact of competency on commitment is rejected. The result indicates that competence has influence on commitment. About 19% of continuance commitment is predicted by the teaching competence.

5. Discussion

The analysis and result shows that educators working in higher educational sector perceive relatively high professional competence. The educators with high professional competency are more committed towards their institution. Professional competence is the ability of educators to master the knowledge. Knowledge and Skill, Value and ethics and updating the knowledge are seen as an important aspect of professional competence. The quality of teaching is mainly dependent on the professional competence of the educator, which includes subject matter knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of teaching and learning, curricular knowledge and values and ethics. (Shulman, 1986; Westera, 2001). Professional competence will provide the employee with greater labor market opportunities and greater belief in these opportunities. The result reveals that the educators in higher grade naturally strengthen their knowledge base and thus have high professional competence compare to educators in lower grade.

The result of regression analysis conveys the impact of competencies on commitment. Teaching competencies have positive significant impact on continuance commitment. The other competencies (professional and managerial) have negative impact on continuance commitment. About 19.3% of continuance commitment is predicted by competencies. This signifies that educators who are competent in teaching characteristics and qualities are more comfortable with the job and want to stay with the job due to their comfort in the competence. Hence their continuance commitment seems to be higher and they opt not to switch over to other job or look for other opportunities. The educators with professional and managerial competencies are more comfortable with other occupational characteristics and qualities, other than teaching. Hence they are more confident to even look for other opportunities or take up other jobs due to their varied competence. Hence their continuance commitment is relatively less and their intention to retain in the organisation is flexible than others, with a higher level of teaching competence.

6. Suggestions and conclusion

The result indicates the importance of competencies and commitment of educators in higher educational sector. The present study has given emphasis on professional competency. The study perceived brokers and competence relatively higher than other competencies by the educators. Competence would be a driving force in determining an individual's level of commitment to the job or the organization (Blanchard, 1993).

Teaching competence is found to be more important for an individual to continue in the teaching profession even more than the other types of competences.

Competency and commitment are an integral part of an organization's workforce and both have to go hand in hand for the organisation to scale up therefore, it is widely accepted that competent and committed employees are valuable assets that must be retained within the organization. Competency development must be a continuous process in the educational institution. Competences that instigate better performance of the educator needs to be focused and motivated by the management and administrators.

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