



Faculty Engagement in Higher Education

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Abstract

An engaged faculty will show a high degree of commitment and involvement in the profession. For him/her teaching is more of commitment than compliance. Important thing to be noticed here is where this commitment and involvement of a faculty reflect upon? This paper tries to go deeper into the analysis of justifying what engages the faculties of management colleges and institutions in such a way that it enhances the students' performance.

Keywords: Faculty engagement, management education, students' performance

Introduction

"Employee Engagement" as a concept has started gaining momentum in past decade (Saks, 2006; Lacy, 2009). Organizations have understood that to remain competitive it has become important to retain skilled employees (Lockwood, 2007). The job hopping poses a serious threat to organizations in terms of cost and efforts (Juhdi et al., 2013). There is a great consensus between many authors that engaged employees can bring revolutionary transformations in the organizations (Macey and Schneider, 2008). They are loyal, committed, more productive, better performers, have less intentions to leave, more customer centric and bring profits to the firm (Gallup, 2008). Though studies focus on corporate employees only, faculty teaching in government and private institutions also face this issue. In a developing nation like India, the number of institutions engaged in rendering business management and technical education have increased manifold in recent years.

This signifies the importance of such programmes as it generates a force of graduates who serve a number of industries. Owing to different practices adopted by these institutions, faculties have varying levels of engagement which further affect their productivity and performance (Hagner and Schneebeck, 2000). The psychological functioning of teachers has recently become a focus of particular attention. Turnover and early retirement rates are high in the teaching profession, and teachers' emotional and motivational experience may seriously impact their classroom performance. The concept of engagement has evolved from academics. Later, it was applied for

business organizations, but recently, this concept has gained attention in academics by scholars of psychology, organization behavior and management (Welch, 2011). Highly engaged employees act as an asset for the organization, whereas disengaged employees may prove to be a huge liability (Wilson, 2009). Almost all studies done on teachers indicate that there is an increasing trend of absenteeism, turnover intention and early retirement of teachers which depicts their disengaged state. In academics, faculties need to be engaged. By their unique nature, universities are expected to be a repository of the most specialized and skilled intellectuals. They serve as storehouses of knowledge for nurturing the manpower needs of the nation and, hence, for satisfying the aspirations of the people for a good and humane society. Universities across world portray a different picture of educational values, higher education system and faculty so employed. The university setting or culture is also different. Universities in Western nations are focusing majorly on research and development of their faculty, whereas Indian faculty is still striving to attain a similar stature and competitive salary. Much of the engagement practices have been used by universities located in the USA and others are still struggling to get there. Different types of faculty are facing different issues in their organization which have been discussed later in the paper.

The focus of the study is on the academic system, organization structure and issues faced by the faculty in India. According to Wefald and Downey (2009), there is a difference between academic and industry engagement and not many researchers have attempted to measure this construct. The present study has tried to gain insights into the practices and culture of universities located abroad by throwing some light on the studies conducted there with special emphasis on Indian higher education system and faculty. It will extend the scarce literature on faculty engagement and will be fruitful for future researchers and academic practitioner.

Research Gap and Importance of Study

There are very limited numbers of research on faculty engagement. Over the period of time teaching and research has evolved as prime most responsibilities of the faculties. The common perception was that faculties who were highly involved in teaching engages the students that results in better learning. But, it is not so in reality. How does the faculty's works motivates to see further in terms of performance is still a burning question or an un-answered question? How universities and colleges should engage the faculties to enhance the student learning process? All these require a fresh answer as well as standard model for further study.

Objective

1. The main objective of the study is to identify the factor which engages the faculties of management in colleges and institutions resulting in better performance of the students.
2. To develop a model for faculty engagement based on the study conducted in Karnataka state.

Research Methodology

The overall methodology can be divided into three parts. The first part has been done to understand build the items of the scale which can be used to understand the faculty engagement

factors. In the second part reliability of the scale used was tested. In the third part the factors responsible for faculty engagement were tried to understand.

Best faculty engagement practice

As corporate organizations are rapidly implementing new techniques to keep their employees engaged, administration at universities have also tried to implement same to reap benefits like faculty retention, enhanced productivity and performance along with making them more job satisfied:

1. Faculty members can decide the direction of their work without any interference; and
2. The willingness of the department to foster the academic development of faculty members by bringing them together.

Factors affecting Faculty Engagement

Contribution of the study

The study contributes to the body of knowledge with a new proposed model. This type of empirical study is first of its kind in the North East India for it's based on the 10C, of employee engagement as the basis of the study. Focus group discussion among the faculties may contribute in developing deeper insights into the engagement aspects and its levels among faculty members. Later on the study further reveals the principal factors those affecting faculty engagement. These identified factors emerged from 10 C's of employee engagement may add a new dimension to the faculty engagement in the context of higher education.

Limitations and Scope for Further Research

This study was conducted only in one state i.e. in Karnataka. This study results based on the management educational institutions on Karnataka State (India). By collecting more data from more institutes of other states of India in a larger way would make the model more robust in future. Not only management education institutions, other regular course institutions can also be included with proper modification of the data collection instruments. The model would be more robust, had it been after factor analysis a regression analysis conducted for exploration of factor impacts on faculty engagement. This can be the next step of our research.

Conclusion

From the analyses of this study it is clearly understandable that the study aims at a very qualitative and relative aspect of faculty (as an employee) engagement in the management education institutions. But it is obvious that this study has come to the result and landed on a new proposed model keeping in mind all the previous models and approaches to understand the very fact earlier. So researchers do not propose the model as the best one as the area is very relative, but still it can give us a relatively better option to understand the fact of better faculty engagement in future.

To date, no research has capitalized on the potential of engagement as a multi-dimensional construct that encompasses cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physical components. The richness of encompassing these four components will lead to the challenge of defining and studying each and their combination in conceptually nuanced ways to study the individual connectedness of faculty with their job. Many of the studies of engagement include one or two types (e.g. behavior and emotion) but do not consider all of them. This research will be of great help to faculties, authorities and regulatory bodies governing universities and academic institutions:

- Faculty teaching in professional and technical institutions will get benefitted by knowing the factors which affect their job and organizational engagement level. Factors so identified can be probed to analyze empirically their actual effect.
- Job and organizational engagement which are the two main categories of engagement so identified can be explored with respect to faculty teaching in professional and technical institutions, as faculty may be more engaged toward one of these components or both.
- This study can be conducted to address the relationship of engagement and outcomes of engagement like turnover intentions of faculty teaching in professional and technical institutions, thus elaborating the factors responsible for faculty attrition, as it is the major problem faced by academic institutions worldwide.
- The study has tried to elaborate the best practices implemented by institutions to enhance the engagement level of faculty. This will further help Indian universities to implement and execute such practices which will result in faculty retention, better performance at work and productivity and various other positive organizational outcomes.
- One of the most important practices that prevails in Western universities is of providing academic freedom to the faculty members which is missing in context of Indian universities. The concept of protean career is popular in business firms but academic organizations stay reluctant toward it. Further studies can be conducted to map the perceptions of Indian faculty members in terms of their protean career orientation and, thus, give recommendations to universities on same.
- Researchers may conduct study in government, private and deemed universities which will further elaborate the difference in engagement level of their faculty and factors affecting them.
- Education sector will be benefitted by knowing the elements of faculty engagement and variables influencing them in detail, as literature in this domain is scarce.
- Effect of individual personality traits on the engagement level and turnover intentions of faculty can be studied by taking into consideration their protean career attitude in Indian context.
- Faculty engagement is a significant predictor of enhanced student learning, which is the ultimate goal of all educational reforms. Engaged faculty will be more enthusiastic about investing more time and energy in teaching students. Further studies can be conducted to enhance the understanding of the effects of selected psychographic variable on faculty's job engagement and organizational engagement in the Indian educational context.