

## TEACHER COMMITMENT: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper reviews the recent literature on teacher impact, its impact and challenges. The paper studies occupational and organizational commitment. The paper presents an enumeration of predictors of teacher commitment. The predictors of teacher commitment can be classed into the teacher predictors and school predictors. The literature on teacher predictors reveals that three characteristics are pertinent in determining commitment viz. exogenous characteristics, endogenous characteristics and belief of teachers about job or their school whereas the school predictors include the organizational variables.*

**Keywords:** Teacher, Commitment, Occupational, Organizational, School Predictors.

### Introduction

The future of any nation is designed by teachers. A teacher has to educate his/her pupils despite all challenges and hardships. The different roles played by teacher are educating the students, parental communication, coordination with fellow teachers as well as administrators/management, disciplining the students, preparing safe and healthy atmosphere in the school, checking copies, answer books and other relevant documents of students and also upgrading himself/herself with the relevant and updated knowledge and information for sound teaching (Astrauskaite et al., 2011; Comber and Nixon, 2009). Most of these roles and responsibilities are played by teachers whether they are teaching in school, college or university level but may differ in degree and their intensity depending upon the level, institution and individual himself.

The emotional and intellectual resources desired from teachers present them with huge challenges and these may result into depression, or may cause physical as well as psychological health-related issues, which may include job burn-out (Astrauskaite et al., 2011; Chang, 2009). Job burn-out is an occupational hazard for various professions like human services, education and health care (Maslach and Goldberg, 1998). Teaching as being thoroughly researched from the point of view of burnout (Jackson et al., 1986). Employees who face burnout are those employees who have unfilled higher order needs (Pines and Aronson, 1988). Burn-out in teachers result from having high achievement and high aspirations (Freudenberger and Richelson, 1980; Maslach and Pines, 1977). Pines and Aronson (1988) assert that meaningless life, doing unimportant and less challenging is the main reason behind job burn-out. So we can say that person who confronts job burnout also experiences job dissatisfaction (Burke et al., 2008).

### Motivation and Occupational Commitment

A set of interrelated beliefs and emotions is termed as motivation. These set of interrelated beliefs and emotions are the drivers and influencers of behaviour (Martin and Dowson 2009; Wentzel 1999). Motivation starts, carries on and concentrates behaviour (Sinclair et al. 2008). Latham and Pinder (2005) defined work motivation as set of energetic forces originating within and beyond an individual to initiate work-related behaviour and determines form, direction, intensity and duration of the behaviour. Watt and Richardson (2008) questioned teachers and students with aspects like 'working with children' or 'have had inspiring teachers' to study motivation.

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Some researchers have focussed on the change in the level of motivation of teachers. It is interesting to compare the level of motivation between the time they entered the teaching profession and their present level of motivation. Research is conducted to study how this level of motivation changes due to the interaction between person and context. The change in level of motivation portrays more information than the level of motivation when teachers entered the teaching profession or the current level of teachers' motivation portray separately. Research does not find a direct correlation between change in level of motivation to teachers' occupational commitment. Although Sinclair et al. (2008) speculated that teachers' motivation supports occupational commitment; however he did not examine this proposition any further.

### **Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment includes three constructs viz. affective, normative and continuance commitment. An affective commitment is regarded as positive feeling of identification, attachment and involvement of an employee in the work of the organization" (Meyer and Allen, 1984). Normative commitment incorporates a sense of obligation of employee towards the organization" (Allen and Meyer, 1996). Continuance commitment comes into picture when employee consider the costs of leaving the organization" (Meyer and Allen, 1984).

**DeCotiis and Summers (1987)** examined the relationship between organizational commitment and the outcomes of individual motivation, desire to leave, turnover, and job performance. Researchers found that each of these outcome areas is predicted by organizational commitment.

**Bogler and Somech (2004)** examined the relationship between teacher empowerment and organizational and professional commitment and organizational citizenship behavior. Research found that organisational and professional commitment was predicted by empowerment through professional growth, status and self-efficacy.

**Joolideh and Yeshodhara (2009)** assessed the organizational commitment of teachers of two countries viz. India and Iran. The research revealed that Indian teachers were better in affective and normative components whereas their Iranian Counterparts were better in continuance component.

Commitment may take different forms depending on work-related targets which may include commitment towards organization, occupation, union, or work group (Hackett et al., 2001). Occupational commitment is the employee's attachment to his/her profession, however separate but related towards commitment to a distinct organization (Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). Some others define commitment as a binding force which binds an employee to a course of action related to a specific target or for that matter in case of affective attachment with profession or organization (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). (Hackett et al., 2001) asserts that occupational commitment includes professional and career commitment, and professionalism. Occupational commitment is empirically related to organizational commitment (Reilly & Orsak, 1991) and theoretically separate (Carmeli, Elizur, & Yaniv, 2007).

Occupational commitment is a component of work or task related motivation, whereas motivation may be theorized as a combination of energetic forces that start and maintain not only work-related behaviours but also decision-making (Meyer, Becker, & Vandenberghe, 2004). Taking into consideration the integrative models of work commitment (Meyer et al., 2004), the motivation related to work is a much broader aspect than the occupational commitment, that entails commitment, self-efficacy, and job stress (as well as goals and expectancies also) that play important role in determining the strength, direction and result of work-related motivation. Occupational commitment results into various favourable outcomes, that may include manifesting low absenteeism and high engagement in work (Freund, 2005), and occupational commitment is inversely linked with employees leaving the profession intentions (Hackett et al., 2001).

Although there is difference between quitting intentions and actual behaviour but measures of intention results into high levels of actual quit behaviour being manifested. Some recent studies have reaffirmed the relationship between quitting intentions and implementation of quitting behaviour (Ajzen, Czasch, & Flood, 2009). Hackett et al. (2001) proposed the leave intentions can be distinguished from level of occupational commitment although these two share causal relationship where commitment precedes quitting intention. The path to occupational commitment is determined by employee's work experience, personality of the employee, successful experiences at work place, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction of employees (Meyer et al., 2004; Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Occupational commitment results into positive outcomes like effort and perseverance, and avoids negative outcomes such as work avoidance, protest, defiance, and quitting (Meyer et al., 2004).

However occupational commitment is closely related to decisions by employees whether to leave or to stay in an occupation, but not much research has been conducted by educational psychology researchers to assess the role played by occupational commitment in employee's decisions to quit the profession or to the predictors and effects of teachers' commitment. Although there is a remarkable exception in Rots et al.'s (2007) retrospective study that shows teachers in their early careers and having high level of self-efficacy showed stronger commitment to the teaching profession in comparison to their peers with lower self-efficacy. Day et al. (2009) established that teachers having higher levels of commitment were far more effective and their students showed high grades/ results and academic progress and teachers who were on their later stages and their low levels of occupational commitment resulted into retention issues. Ware and Kitsantas (2007) proposed that the self-efficacy of teachers can act as a protective shield while confronting low commitment and issues of teacher attrition and advised that suitable educational interventions can be planned focusing on ways to build teacher's efficacy so that teachers manifest high commitment and retain in the organization.

### **Predictors of Teacher Commitment**

#### **Teacher Predictors**

Research on teachers have examined three prominent characteristics viz. exogenous characteristics including gender and age; endogenous characteristics that include teacher's level of experience or status of employment and lastly belief of teachers about job or their school. Chan et al. (2008) emphasized that the study of gender however did not generate any consistent results. Although, meta-analytical study of predictors of teacher attrition and retention (Guarino et al., 2006; Borman & Dowling 2008) showed female teachers manifest consistently higher attrition rates in comparison to male teachers. It appears that female teachers decide to quit not due to commitment issues but due to exogenous reasons such as on account of pregnancy or child rearing.

Studies which strive to find the impact of teacher experience on teacher commitment give a clear picture. These studies show that low commitment is shown by teachers at their early stages of their career (during first five years) or at the end of their careers (nearing retirement) and produce a U-shaped pattern of commitment and attrition with respect to experience (Guarino et al., 2006). This U shaped pattern of results explains the reason as to why studies considering teacher experience as a continuous variable produce contradictory findings (Fresko et al., 1997; Chan et al., 2008). Ma and MacMillan (1999) observed that whereas part-time temporary teachers are more committed towards their jobs than part-time permanent teachers, although there is no difference in commitment between full time temporary or full time permanent teachers and part time temporary teachers. Chan et al. (2008), says that one factor that shows the most consistent results in predicting teacher commitment is self-efficacy. Most of the studies have supported the idea those teachers who have confidence in their abilities to bring students to learn something manifest high commitment and satisfaction.

#### **School Predictors**

After the decisive work of Rosenholtz (1989) and Firestone and Pennell (1993), some studies have been conducted to study the influence of school environment on teacher commitment. The rationale behind these studies is that motivation and commitment of teachers depends less on personal factors of teachers but more on the design and management of tasks within schools (Ingersoll, 2001). Rosenholtz (1989) proposes that the school social organization and interactions between the school principal and its teachers can have significant effect on commitment of teachers and it also encourages teachers for achieving professional growth and makes substantial contributions to student learning as well. Studies have come up with various organizational variables which results into development of teacher commitment and these are leadership of the principal, interaction of teachers, teacher empowerment and their involvement in school decision-making, organizational control and autonomy in the school, school culture, and beliefs of collective efficacy. The hypotheses set by Rosenholz (1989) have found support globally as depicted by various studies conducted later.

Methodologically, two sets of studies come up, the first set comprises of studies which consider organizational variables as individual perceptions of the school environment, and the second set includes studies which consider organizational variables as aggregated perceptions of the school environment. Taking about the individual level, studies have found that there is positive association between teacher commitment and perceptions of teamwork (Dee et al., 2006), perceptions of professional interest and staff freedom (Waxman et al., 2009), perceived opportunities of professional growth (Bogler & Somech, 2004), or perceived administration control and organizational culture (Ma & MacMillan, 1999). Chan and colleagues (2008) indicated that the reflexive dialogue has a positive impact on teacher commitment and there is mediation effect of social identification and self-efficacy of teachers.

The role of principal leadership has been investigated by various studies. Coladarci (1992) found that teachers who are working under a principal manifested positively in the aspects of instructional leadership, school advocacy, decision making and relations with students and the school staff seems to be more committed towards teaching. Koh et al. (1997) showed that transformational leadership has significant effects in predicting organizational commitment.

Sanders et al. (2008) also suggested that the culture strength which can be defined as the level of cultural norm 'sharedness', is related to employees' attitudes and behaviors. Researchers found a positive and significant relationship between culture strength in human resources management practices and employees' affective commitment towards the organization.

Collective efficacy was also found to be related to teacher commitment as shown by some studies. Caprara et al. (2003) supported a conceptual model where individual and collective efficacy are proximal and distal predictors of job commitment of teachers. These results find consistency in studies conducted by Goddard et al. (2000), Ross and Gray (2006), and Ware and Kitsantas (2007).

### Conclusion

A teacher designs the future of the nation by preparing suitable citizens facing various challenges and sometimes confronts issues of de-motivation and dissatisfaction. It is interesting to find a direct correlation between change in level of motivation to teachers' occupational commitment. Organizational commitment includes affective, normative and continuance commitment. The predictors of teacher commitment can be bifurcated into teacher predictors and school predictors and our study elaborates on both the predictors. While taking into account teacher predictors, researchers have examined three characteristics of teachers viz. exogenous characteristics that includes gender and age; endogenous characteristics that include teacher's level of experience or status of employment and lastly belief of teachers about job or their school. On the other hand, school predictors include the organizational variables like leadership of principal, school environment, school social organization, interaction between school principal and teachers and among teachers, teacher empowerment and their involvement in school decision-making, organizational control and autonomy in the school, perceptions of teamwork, perceptions of professional interest and staff freedom, perceived opportunities of professional growth, or perceived administration control school culture, and beliefs of collective efficacy

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