

Exploration of possibilities for the enhancement of the workplace productivity in educational organizations: A study

Dr. SARAKANAM SRINIVAS

Associate Professor, Department of English, KLEF Deemed to be University, Vaddeswaram, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh, India.

Email - vasu.vasu14@gmail.com ; sarakanam.srinivas@kluniversity.in

Abstract: This paper explores the possible ways for the enhancement of the workplace productivity in educational organizations. The aspect of productivity has acquired major significance in the age of globalization and liberalization under which a business organization is compelled to compete, sometimes in the same arena and sometimes beyond its specific arena, with every other business organization in the country and the world. Therefore, the discourse of the prerequisites for higher productivity in the workplace of an educational organization, which (to a larger extent) is transformed into a business organization in the post globalized world, is essential. The scope of the research is confined to the study and analysis of the factors which have potential to influence the workplace productivity in educational organizations. So, the objective of this research is to study and analyze the factors that influence and enhance the workplace productivity in educational organizations based on the experiential understanding and observation of the researcher of this paper and the specific experimental research inputs of the researchers who have carried out their research in this area. This research examines several research data related to the workplace productivity of educational organizations with the help of the research evidence procured from the experimental studies conducted in the educational and non-educational organizations as this research is transformative in nature. The transformative research challenges the conventional practices of the research and does not confine itself only to the specific traditional approaches and methods of research. The method that is employed in this research is qualitative which includes the study, observation, and analysis of the experimental and experiential research inputs from the objective perspective.

Key words: Productivity – infrastructure – pre-service training – in-service training – work culture – orientation programs – happiness shocks – minimum higher wages.

1. Introduction:

The productivity of an organization needs to increase on par with the increase of the competition in the free economic society and this productivity of the organization is influenced by the betterment of working conditions in the workplace. Unless the productivity in the workplace of an organization keeps increasing on par with the ever increasing competition in the country, the organization cannot survive with the necessary profit rate in the market –both in the domestic and the international markets-- and thereby it cannot sustain or strengthen its place among other organizations in the country or the world. The increase in the workplace productivity of an educational organization is determined by various factors such as pre-service training, in-service training, infrastructure, productive work administration practices, progressive minimum higher wages, and the assurance of job insecurity. Aside from these internal factors, the external factors like the policies of the government regarding the enactment and implementation of labor welfare laws in the country.

2. Pre-Service Training:

The gap between the education received by individuals and the jobs they are to engage themselves in their prospective careers is widening in the post globalized era. This unfavorable phenomenon is a hurdle for the new or young teachers who are the employees while discharging their daily chores in the workplace. This phenomenon brings before the employers and educators the necessity of pre-service training that is to be provided to the new or young employees before they need to execute their duties in the workplace. The main objective of pre-service training, in general, is to orientate the newly appointed employees to the aspects like organizational goals, work culture, and administrative methods. This kind of orientation programs are quite a common phenomenon in most of the universities and other educational organizations. However, aside from all the mentioned above, the newly appointed teachers need to be enlightened on the productive utilization of the technological devices and the supporting software equipment which are generally used by employees (teachers) while executing their teaching, assessment and evaluation responsibilities.

Herdklotz opines that the orientation programmes, being effective, can “immediately engage new faculty members, acclimate them to the campus and familiarize them with the resources and services which can assist them in the attainment of their responsibilities in the workplace” (Herdklotz. 2017). As the employees are rarely trained in these domains before they join workplaces, it is highly essential for the organizations which aspire to achieve higher productivity in the workplace to train them from this perspective as well. This pre-service training helps them discharge their duties smoothly and this smooth execution of the tasks helps the organization increase its workplace productivity.

3. In-Service Training:

While the pre – service training programs make teachers confident to take up their prospective duties efficiently, the in – service training programs, if held periodically and in a planned manner, help them acquire new skills such as the hands on experience of the application of new technological devices and software and the newly emerged teaching methods and working trends. These in – service training programs include conferences, workshops, project works, field research work and others. When the teachers are encouraged to take part in conferences, workshops, virtual seminars and to take up the relevant project works and field research work, they can gain further insight into their specific branches of knowledge. The in-service training, according to Che Omar, helps the teachers “equip with new knowledge and skills” and enable “them to face new challenges and reformation in education” (Che Omar. 2019). This enhanced insight into their areas of knowledge and work helps them teach the syllabus contents with considerable ease.

The purpose of the acquisition of knowledge by an individual is to disseminate the same in various directions in society. The more the teacher acquires the knowledge and skill, the more the student fraternity is benefitted. The use-value that the students get in the form of knowledge –both the branch specific knowledge and general knowledge-- and skill set along with wisdom is the ultimate end of any educational institution. So, the in – service training which is given to teachers contributes to the enhancement of their skill set and the teachers with their enhanced skills contribute to the enhancement of the knowledge and skills of their students to further extent. The increase in the quality of performance of students is an indicator for the achievement of higher productivity in the workplace at an educational institute.

4. Infrastructural Facilities in the Workplace:

Apart from the pre-service and the in-service training programs, some essential infrastructural facilities are to be made available in workplaces for the achievement of higher productivity. Besides the facilities and the teaching aids in the classrooms, the teachers’ sitting rooms or cubicles are to be equipped with necessary facilities such as the installation and availability of power sockets, the wi-fi facility, the reasonably spacious seating arrangement, and the proper ventilation and lighting. In addition to the aforementioned, the teachers who cannot afford the purchase of computers or laptops need to be provided the necessary financial aid either in the form of a loan or a grant for the purchase of the aforementioned. The teachers with these facilities can work more productively than the ones without the same. Jackson opines that the “right tools and equipment” help the employees “perform their duties efficiently and on time” (Jackson). These infrastructural facilities ensure better productivity in the workplace.

5. Progressive Administrative Practices:

The progressive workplace administrative strategies contribute to the enhancement of the higher workplace productivity. A perfect coordination between the centralized and the decentralized administrative bodies is essential. Aside from this, the administrators need to be tolerant of the concept of free thought on the campus. While the authoritarian leadership expects its team members to obey the instructions without any second thought, the democratic leadership encourages free thought among its team members and thereby it tolerates the meaningful discussions among its team members. The authoritarianism is a hurdle in the way of the blooming of new and creative ideas in the workplace and so it is regressive and unproductive. Hence the replacement of the authoritarianism with the democratic leadership naturally yields better results in the workplace. Furthermore, the authoritarianism which includes “workplace bullying ... such as overt intimidation, insults, belittling opinion, excessive monitoring of an employee’s work, and meaningless tasks ” badly mars the productivity of employees in the work place (Fox and Stall Worth. 2014).

6. Progressive Wages and Other Benefits - The Longer Employee Retention Period:

Another essential pre-requisite which largely impacts the productivity in the workplace is the reasonable wages. It enhances the quality of the performance of employees. Better salary package will act as a good motivational factor for an employee to perform with an increased productivity. It is also one of the factors which can develop and strengthen the sense of belongingness in the employees. This aspect either explicitly or implicitly contributes to the better employee - retention rate which is highly essential for an educational institute. If the employee - retention rate is relatively less, the frequent new recruitment of employees cannot help the organization increase its productivity in the workplace as the newly recruited employees usually need some longer period of time to get used to their new working conditions,

methods and the existing administrative practices in the organization. So, the better wages offered to employees contributes to the better productivity in the workplace. Jackson says that the deserved employees are to be offered “personal incentives for doing [their] job well” (Jackson). Furthermore, the better wages facilitate the employees to lead reasonably settled and comfortable lives with better living conditions and the hygienic food which is “extremely important in boosting [their] brain power and impacting how productive [they] are at work” (Rosborough. 2020). So, the better salary package acts as an integrated motivational factor for employees and thereby it contributes to the enhancement of productivity rate in workplaces.

The better employee retention rate can be enhanced by the adoption of some strategies like providing employees with some benefits in the workplace. The extra benefits, which are provided to employees, contribute to the achievement of better employee retention rate. Dan Marzullo says that the other benefits such as health care, vacations, free or low-cost childcare, birthday offs facilities make employees work productively (Dan Marzullo. 2018). These benefits make employees happier and thereby lead to higher productivity rate in the workplace. Asserting this notion, the experiment conducted by Andrew Oswald, Eugenio Proto and Daniel SGROI at the University of Warwick reveals that the experimental group of workers who were “treated” or given “happiness shock” were more productive than the control group of workers who were “untreated”. The experimental group performed “with approximately 12% greater productivity than [the] control group” (Daniel SGROI. 2015). What they used “happiness shocks” in their experiment are “a short ten-minute comedy clip or the provision of drinks and snacks” (Daniel SGROI. 2015). This experiment proves that even the simple “happiness shocks” can bring in a better change in the workplace productivity. The dialectical implementation of this technique, with the appropriate forms of ‘happiness shocks’ in accordance with the needs of the employees in the workplaces of educational institutes, yields goods results.

7. The Reasonable Wage Laws and Productivity:

The minimum higher wages offered to employees make them perform better in the workplace. When employees feel that they are being paid reasonably for their work, they accomplish their chores in the workplace with enthusiasm. The generous minimum higher wages offered to employees act as a greater motivational factor and thereby it contributes to make the employees intrinsically motivated in course of time. Several experimental studies favoured the “efficiency wage theory” --formulated by Akerlof in 1982-- that “the employees consistently provide higher effort levels in response to higher wages” (“Minimum wages and ...”). The higher pay encourages the employees to be aware of being conscientious of their workplace responsibilities and makes them continue their services with the organization for a relatively longer duration. The minimum higher pay, according to Brochu and Green, prevents the employees from “quitting” their jobs often and the employers from their frequent announcement of “layoffs”. They write that “the total elasticity (quits and layoffs) implies that a 10% increase in the minimum wage implies approximately a 2.6% reduction in separations from jobs with less than one year of tenure and approximately a 1% decline in separations from jobs of all tenures” (Brochu. 2011). Besides all this, the commitment of employees to their work in the workplace increases productivity and this contributes to the “reduction in supervision costs” in the workplace (Georgiadis. 2013). So, the higher the wages, better the performance of employees in the workplace. This phenomenon contributes to the growth of the organization and the country’s economy.

The minimum higher wages policy is to be supplemented with the assurance of job security. The “perceived job insecurity” (Tugend. 2014) adversely mars the productivity of employees in the workplace. The prevalence of uncertainty in the lives of employees causes psychological distress among them and this phenomenon in turn causes them to underperform in the workplace. Tinne Vander Elst says that, “nothing is worse than uncertainty” as the uncertainty makes the employees “feel powerless” and thereby inactive (Tugend. 2014). Dr. Vander Elst further opines that the “job insecurity reduces both physical and mental health, increases burnout, reduces job satisfaction and decreases work performance” (Tugend. 2014). So, the exclusion of the “perceived job insecurity” is necessary for the enhancement of productivity in the workplace. It is the responsibility of both the employers and the law makers of the country to ensure job security for employees and it is this aspect of job security that helps employees increase their physical and mental abilities which contribute to the enhancement of the workplace productivity.

In the age of technology, in which the productive forces –tools, implements and human abilities—are subject to a rapid development, the attainment of higher productivity in the workplace of every organization is crucial for its mere survival. The prerequisites like pre-service and in-service training programmes help the employees develop self-esteem and self-confidence and thereby contribute to the growth of workplace productivity. The aspects such as progressive administrative practices, provision of necessary infrastructural facilities and ‘happiness shocks’ make the employees intrinsically motivated to work and produce the best outcome. The minimum higher wages and the rational assurance of job security help the employers sustain or enhance the employee retention period which in turn contributes to the higher workplace productivity.

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