

Employee Engagement in the Education Sector- Exploration of the Factors and further scope of research.

Firuzi Shazad Bhatena

Teaching Assistant & Research Scholar

Department of Human Resource Development

Veer Narmad South Gujarat University

Surat

Ph: 9510092053

Email: firuzi2003@gmail.com

&

Dr. Digvijaysinh G. Thakore

Professor & Head

Department of Human Resource Development

Veer Narmad South Gujarat University



Abstract:

The contemporary organisations require employees who not only demonstrate diligence but also embrace a mindset characterized by learning, agility, resilience, and perseverance. The evolving nature of business operations demands a consistently high level of performance from its employees. The concept of 'employee engagement' has garnered significant attention from researchers globally, recognized as a crucial catalyst for business success in the current era. Just like its tremendous gains shown in other sectors like manufacturing, IT, Hospitality and Health care, having engaged employees has become imperative for the Education sector as well. The Indian education sector is experiencing significant growth as the country strives to enhance its global standing. The educational sector stands out as the most crucial industry for the economic progress of any nation. Consequently, the quality of education holds paramount importance. Achieving and maintaining high-quality education is contingent upon having engaged teachers. Only an Engaged teacher will be able to engage students effectively. In light of this awareness, the current study seeks to investigate the factors that impact employee engagement within the education industry in India, which includes Schools, Colleges and Universities. This paper uses an exploratory study design and investigates some important empirical papers and theses, making it a review paper.

I. Introduction

In today's dynamic and competitive environment, it is crucial for organisations to continually adapt and grow, a process primarily propelled by their workforce. Employees are now recognized as pivotal assets that require careful attention, nurturing, and development. The evolving landscape has shifted our perspective on how we view and treat employees, acknowledging them as significant stakeholders and internal customers to whom value must be delivered. The challenge of attracting and retaining employees looms large for organisations. Merely adhering to job roles and descriptions is no longer sufficient for driving profitability, productivity, customer satisfaction, and innovation. Organisations now seek individuals deeply invested in and dedicated to their roles, ones who go beyond the prescribed duties. Contemporary workplaces value employees exhibiting discretionary behaviour, demonstrating a commitment that goes beyond the norm (Ritu, 2024)

While research on Employee Engagement typically centres on corporate employees, it's essential to recognize that teachers in educational institutions also confront this issue. Quoting Swami Vivekananda, "A nation's advancement is proportionate to the spread of education and intelligence among its people." Aligned with this philosophy, the Indian constitution is dedicated to providing free and compulsory education up to the age of fourteen. A robust

education system is pivotal for any nation aspiring to break free from detrimental customs and orthodox mindsets and achieve self-sufficiency. Education contributes to the cultivation of competent citizens equipped with knowledge, skills, and a positive attitude. Teachers play a central role in supporting the education system, a crucial factor in a nation's development. To empower the students of a nation, it is essential to tap into the potential of teachers. The engagement of teachers with their work and schools is paramount for delivering optimal performance in the classroom and the overall educational environment. Engaged teachers are inclined to prioritize delivering high-quality education, exploring effective teaching methods, and adjusting their approach to meet the evolving needs of students, parents, schools, and the nation. The engagement of teachers is crucial, as it directly influences their ability to instil desirable values, skills, knowledge, and attitudes in both themselves and their students. Once a comprehensive understanding of the contributing factors is obtained, it becomes possible to effectively motivate and activate teachers, thereby increasing their levels of engagement.

II. Research Methodology

The study adopted an exploratory research design, where literature in the form of articles, research papers and theses were studied on teacher engagement and related constructs to identify different factors that affect teacher engagement. Online databases like Jstor, Google Scholar, Social Science Research Network (SSRN), Research Gate, Academia.edu, and Shodhganga were used to source relevant literature. Keywords used to identify relevant literature were Employee Engagement in Schools, Employee Engagement in Higher Education, Teachers Engagement and Teacher Engagement.

III. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Kahn's (1990) groundbreaking early investigations into employee engagement laid a crucial groundwork for subsequent studies in this area. He introduced the term "Engagement" in his article "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," defining it as a state encompassing physical, emotional, and cognitive dimensions within one's role. Buckingham and Coffman (1999) gained widespread recognition for popularizing the term Employee Engagement within corporate circles, among practitioners, and consultants through their book "First Break All the Rules". Later the works of Schaufeli et al. (2002) to conceptualize Employee engagement were made popular, which stated engagement was the opposite of burnout. Later (Harter et al., 2002; Saks 2006) also boosted the popularity of the concept by identifying antecedents and business outcomes of engagement, which stirred a lot of interest around contemporary organisations.

The idea of "Employee Engagement" revolves around individuals within organisations, rendering it a subjective, intricate, and multi-dimensional concept subject to diverse perspectives and opinions. Kahn (1990) suggested that employee engagement involves individuals fully connecting themselves to their work roles, encompassing self-employment and the self-expression of individuals in a physical, cognitive, and emotional manner within their professional lives. Another prominent widely cited meaning of engagement is given by Schaufeli et al. (2002) characterize work engagement as a positive and fulfilling state of mind with work, marked by qualities such as Vigor, Dedication, and Absorption. Thus, an engaged employee is emotionally, physically, and cognitively engaged with his job and organisation. He/she shows commitment, and satisfaction and is passionate about their job. An engaged employee will go the extra mile for his/her organisation and will not shy of doing the job which is not prescribed in their job roles.

IV. Employee Engagement of Teachers in India and Internationally

Various research projects have explored the dynamics of employee engagement across industries, yet limited attention has been given to the educational realm. According to the Kothari Commission in 1966, among the myriad factors influencing the quality of education and its role in national development, the foremost are the attributes of teachers—specifically, their quality, competence, and character. Only an engaged teacher will facilitate student learning, which can lead to academic success for the school and ultimately the nation (ExtensisHR, 2024). Thus, it has become imperative to study the concept of employee engagement in the Education sector as it can enable school management and administrators to grasp the existing level of engagement and the elements influencing the engagement of school teachers. This understanding can be instrumental in devising strategies to improve the situation and foster greater dedication among teachers in their roles.

Top Management Support

Unless the top management recognizes the significance of having a committed workforce, the supervisors or Human Resource departments are powerless. It's crucial for top management to trust their teachers and embrace the belief that well-supported and nurtured teachers can contribute significantly in return. Thus, making leadership one of the top factors affecting teacher engagement. Several studies empirically proved the relationship between supportive supervisors and employee engagement. Aboramadan, Dahleez & Hamad (2020) identified a positive impact of servant leadership on the work engagement of higher education staff. Maheshwari and Mathur (2020) discovered that a strong leader-member exchange relationship between teachers and management increases their engagement levels. Additionally, elevated

levels of engagement contribute to the manifestation of innovative work behaviour. Sharma (2019) a transformational leadership style, along with rewards and recognition, led to heightened levels of employee engagement.

1. Cohesive Relationship with Superior

Numerous studies support the notion that a strained relationship between superiors and subordinates is a leading cause of talented employees departing from the organisation. Supervisors must exhibit care, authenticity, and sincerity in their interactions with their subordinates. Waseem & Mehmood (2019) sought to pinpoint the factors influencing employee engagement and its correlation with the performance of teachers in higher education. The findings indicated that supervisor support had a more substantial effect on engagement levels. The results also affirmed the idea that engagement significantly and positively affects extra-role performance. Regy & Malini (2017) The findings of the study indicated that a positive working environment and favourable relationships with supervisors and colleagues contribute to enhanced engagement.

2. Conducive Organisational Culture

Cultivating an environment in which teachers are trusted and treated with respect as individuals is essential. Encouraging a culture of teamwork and cooperation among teachers, as well as between teachers and principals, is important. When the School's culture is supportive, teachers should genuinely enjoy coming to the workplace and will have elevated engagement levels. Rachman (2024) elucidated that a culture where there is trust, open communication and respect among the members of the school, will build emotional relationships leading to the commitment of teachers towards their job. Sandhu, Guglani, and Singh (2017) undertook research aimed at uncovering factors influencing the involvement of individuals teaching graduate, postgraduate, and doctoral courses. They employed 370 questionnaires to gather data, revealing that primary contributors to employee engagement in the education sector include emotional fulfilment, the work environment, career advancement, and compensation. Shokunbi (2016) Work environment emerged as one theme as an antecedent that affected engagement levels. Angundaru, Lubogoyi, and Bagire (2016) proposed that evolving times bring about new demands on the educational system, placing teachers under challenges such as diminished administrative support, unfavourable employment conditions, heavy workloads, and subpar working environments—all impacting teachers' engagement levels. The findings affirmed that the proficient execution of various HR functions and practices, including Recruitment and Selection, Staff development, Compensation and reward, Performance appraisal, and fostering

a Democratic work environment, would result in heightened levels of teachers' engagement. Bakker and Bal (2010) sought to uncover the individual connection between job resources, engagement, and performance. The findings suggest that a work environment rich in resources contributes to heightened work engagement among employees. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between engagement and weekly job performance, with engaged employees demonstrating the capability to generate their job resources. According to the findings of Sharma and Jyoti (2006) Despite receiving lower pay, teachers in private schools experience greater satisfaction due to a favourable work culture, in contrast to their counterparts in government schools.

3. Rewards and Recognition

When teachers receive recognition and rewards for their work, they feel a sense of value. Basic human nature yearns for acknowledgement, and a simple commendation for a job well done can significantly enhance satisfaction and engagement. Numerous studies support the idea that financial rewards play a crucial role in boosting employee morale. Rewards must align with the efforts put forth by employees, serving as positive reinforcement for their behaviour. ExtensisHR (2024) recommends programs like Teacher of the Month, monetary incentives for a job well done, and appreciation for the good work of teachers. Acknowledging them will boost teacher morale. Minghui et al. (2018) conducted a study examining teacher efficacy, work engagement, social support, and socio-demographic factors. The findings indicate that female teachers exhibit higher performance than their male counterparts, and both monthly salary and years of experience play a role in influencing teacher efficacy. Kavitha & Uthra (2017) conducted a study to assess the work engagement of both X and Y generations. Significant predictors of engagement included psychological well-being, social support, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. The results revealed that X-generation teachers exhibit higher levels of engagement compared to Y-generation teachers based on personal factors such as subject area, monthly income, hours handled, and reasons for choosing the teaching profession. Umamheswari & Swarnalatha (2015) uncovered in their research that teachers who experience heightened work engagement have a substantial impact on their job satisfaction. They emphasized that to enhance teaching quality, it is crucial for teachers to be both satisfied and engaged. Implementing fair and just HR practices, including training and development, job rotation, and rewards, is essential for elevating the organisation all levels of engagement and satisfaction. In her doctoral thesis, Ahuja (2015) delved into the engagement levels of teachers in the higher education sector in Punjab. Factors such as Employee Empowerment, role clarity,

intrinsic rewards, open communication, and support for career advancement were identified as contributors to enhancing engagement.

4. Learning Interventions

To achieve self-renewal and enhance their capabilities, schools should prioritize learning and development initiatives for their teachers. Clarity in job roles is essential, ensuring that teachers understand what needs to be done and how to do it. Empowering employees to enhance their skills not only increases their capabilities but also boosts their confidence in carrying out their tasks. Gul, Waheed & Sher (2021) sought to establish a connection between learning organisations and employee engagement within the education sector. The results indicated that fostering a culture supportive of learning and providing assistance contributes to higher commitment and engagement levels among teachers in higher education institutes. Shibiti (2020) emphasized the importance of understanding how retention factors impact work engagement. The results indicated that human resource management practices such as fair compensation, training and development activities, and career planning play a crucial role in eliciting engagement levels. Shokunbi (2016) also suggested that training and retraining is one of the important themes that emerged as a factor that affects the engagement levels of teachers. Bay, An & Laguador (2014) also identify learning and development initiatives as a driver for engaging teachers. The researcher highlighted that teachers with such elevated levels of engagement are likely to work with dedication, staying actively involved in their responsibilities, ultimately contributing to the achievement of the institutes' goals.

5. Employee Empowerment

Teachers like to have control over the work they do, each teacher is unique and has a sense of style in the way they work. Giving them autonomy is needed to do their jobs effectively. Waseem & Mehmood (2019) identified the role of autonomy as a driver of engagement, which significantly influenced extra-role performance. According to the research conducted by Malik and Wats (2018), Autonomy emerged as one of the top five factors identified by teachers in both schools and colleges. In an exploratory study conducted by Kirkpatrick (2007) The teachers expressed that their tenure in teaching has contributed to the development of self-efficacy, fostering increased confidence in their abilities. The autonomy afforded to them, stemming from this heightened confidence, plays a pivotal role in enhancing their engagement. According to Hagner and Schneebeck (2001) contemporary teachers are encountering fresh challenges as administrators respond to the evolving market and students seek new teaching approaches. In light of these challenges, the authors stress the critical significance of granting

autonomy to teachers. In his article, Beairsto (2012) accurately asserts that the key to engaging and inspiring students lies in having an engaged teacher. He goes on to emphasize that traditional motivators such as respect, fair treatment, and adequate pay are insufficient for fostering teacher motivation and engagement. Further, the researcher noted that granting autonomy and control over their methods and content plays a more significant role in achieving higher engagement levels.

6. Demonstrate Trust

Along the lines of autonomy, it is imperative to have trust in the teachers and have a general sense of belief in them. According to Fadhilaini, Tjahjono, & Susanto (2021), they believe that organisational trust influences engagement levels. In their research, Singh & Yadav (2013) explored employee engagement practices within both the Banking sector and Higher Education Institutes. Initiatives such as trust and respect were identified as methods employed by organisations to enhance employee engagement. Selmer, Jonasson, & Luring (2013) also supported the notion of the relationship between group trust and engagement.

7. Career Planning

Nowadays, individuals don't only join organisations for a specific job; they also assess their compatibility with the organisation's future. School management should support teachers in their professional growth, enabling them to transition from one role to another. Shibiti (2020) emphasized the importance of career planning plays a significant role in fostering enthusiasm, dedication, and absorption among employees. Sandhu, Guglani & Singh (2017) the outcomes revealed that emotional satisfaction, work environment, career progression, and compensation stand out as the primary catalysts for employee engagement in the education sector. The findings of Guglielmi et al. (2015) The engagement of younger teachers is particularly evident in their sense of responsibility, aspirations for career advancement, and support from peers

And thus, it can be noted that sound leadership, good relationships with superiors, work culture, rewards and recognition, learning and development initiatives, autonomy, trust and career planning were some frequently agreed factors with affected teachers' engagement among some researchers. In her doctoral thesis, Sahera (2022) Furthermore, a significant relationship was identified between eight leadership behaviours, including visionary leadership, gaining teachers' trust, providing autonomy, participative management, offering resources, supporting professional development, recognizing and rewarding achievements, and providing necessary resources on teachers' engagement.

V. Further Scope of Research and Conclusion

Just like employees in business entities are the key talents, the same way teachers are the backbone of any country's education system. Teachers are the ones who mould and make other professions and thus it creates vital importance to nurture and take care of. The attrition rate among teachers is a strenuous problem, which needs to be noted. An engaged teacher will have a psychological commitment and dedication to their work, will go the extra mile for their jobs and strive to do their work with more energy and absorption. Scant research has been undertaken to identify different dimensions of Employee Engagement in the Education sector and thus scholars in India should focus on delving into these areas:

- School-related drivers of Teachers' Engagement
- Personal drivers of Teachers' Engagement
- Study on levels of engagement across Indian geographic areas
- Effect of socio-economic demographics on Teachers' Engagement levels
- Effect of type of School- Private, Grant-in-aid and Government on the levels of teacher engagement
- Relationships between different Organisation behaviour and Human Resource Development function constructs and Teachers' Engagement
- Relationship between outcomes of having engaged teachers

For improving any phenomenon, it is vital to know its current state and thus researchers from the fields of Education and Human Resource Development should collaborate to improve the engagement levels of teachers which will be beneficial to not only the school but also facilitate and leverage the nation's capacity and standing on the global front.

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