

Influence of Trust, Job Satisfaction and Capacity Building on Teacher Retention

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Abstract: With the fierce development of the society, people from different careers including teachers in China show their dissatisfaction of their jobs. There has been an increasing number of teachers leaving their positions due to various reasons. It can be seen that teacher attrition has become a significant crisis to school leaders, students and even the school. Hence, it is important and urgent for school leaders to recognize the reasons which lead such phenomenon and find out some solutions to relieve the negative influences that can be predicted. The study will analyze the background and status quo of teacher retention in China. Also, several reasons will be acquired after combining with the current circumstances.

Keywords: Teacher retention, Trust, Job satisfaction, Capacity Building.

1. Introduction

In a study by Eskew (2016), the researcher mentioned that researchers may easily find the relationships between the three concepts of trust, teacher morale, and capacity building. As all teachers could verify, the great task of the improvement of educational system (and the so-called “pedagogical developments”) compelled on teachers in the modern world cannot be implemented in a solitary manner. Without trust, the study argued that it can be ambitious to have beneficial, integral connections within the university. Trust is an arbitrator to other critical components of university development. If trust is evident, teachers’ morale can be uplifted. When distinguished levels of morale are enduring, faculty members can become daring to build their capacity. If universities are planning to implement and engage in building capacity, teachers and students will consistently develop and cultivate.

Teacher shortages are a growing concern in school districts. Borman and Dowling (2008) discuss that teacher shortages have been a concern even as far back as the 1980s and 1990s, where initiatives such as Teach for America and Troops-to-Teachers came about in efforts to recruit people to the teaching profession. Because teachers who are taken as the conductor in the class indeed have the most significant influence on students’ performance. Even further, some the teachers who are in the classrooms are deciding, for multiple reasons, to change professions. Action must be taken to ensure quality teachers enter the profession and continue in the profession for years to come. Top-down mandates are suffocating teachers within their classrooms. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation in 2001 initiated a narrowing focus on effective instruction and student achievement. The NCLB act called for highly professional teachers in every classroom and brought accountability for schools and student performance through high-stakes testing (Kinsey, 2006). States became responsible for creating and implementing their own high-stakes tests to determine levels of student achievement. Although, as Kinsey (2006) points out, high-stakes tests can also be a “measure of teacher performance and ability”. With accountability measures in place, extreme pressures are placed on schools, districts, and states to “raise

test scores” (Kinsey, 2006). Even more recently, pressures have been heard from the federal government in the quest to have a national curriculum and become more competitive internationally.

2. Factors That Influence Teacher Retention

2.1. Trust

The definition of trust is that it is vital during the process of the improvement of education, and it is acknowledged to be difficult to achieve the target. According to this definition, five facets of trust exist. Benevolence is a key component in the development of trust. Benevolence can be defined as the “confidence that one’s well-being or something one cares about will be protected and not harmed by the person in whom one has placed one’s trust” (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Teachers should feel assured they will be treated with respect and that their needs and interests are protected and cared for. Actions of a school leader showing benevolence would include extending goodwill, showing thankfulness for the effort of teachers, supporting teachers, and having positive attitude and fair in making decisions (Tschannen-Moran, 2014). Reliability is another facet of trust. “Reliability or dependability combines a sense of predictability with benevolence” (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust in the reliability of someone means you can depend on them to consistently do what is expected. Leaders should make certain to act and respond to situations in ways that make teachers feel confident they can count on their leader for anything they need (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b). Trust can grow deeper over time when a leader’s behavior becomes predictable to the teachers. Competence, another facet of trust, relies on the “assured confidence” in the skills and abilities of another (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). One common thread among the definitions is vulnerability. In order to trust, one must be vulnerable and have a certain level of confidence that the other person will live up to his or her expectations.

While trust is vital to an organization’s success, “distrust can impair organizational effectiveness” (Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Distrust can inhibit communication, which is vital to building trust. Where trust can lead to “successful and

mutually beneficial interactions,” when it comes to distrust, it leads to missed opportunities and loss (Hardin, 2006). Distrust is a negative attitude, which can arouse worry and disappointment. In that case, in order to make themselves be in a safe position, some might deceive others to achieve their own goals. (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Individuals who distrust another may become defensive, evasive, distort their own attitudes and truths, and become unwilling to risk vulnerability in interdependent relationships. When distrust exists, too much time and energy is spent on closely watching the behaviors and actions of others.

2.2. Job satisfaction

In a report from Miami Dade Public Schools, Blazer (2012) states, “the physical condition of the school building” can directly affect teacher morale. The report focuses on the physical characteristics of school buildings such as air quality, mold, inadequate lighting, and no wiring for technology can play a detrimental role in how teachers perceive the conditions of their job. Blazer’s (2012) report also found “where problems with working conditions are serious enough to impinge the work of teachers, they result in higher absenteeism, reduced levels of effort, lower effectiveness in the classroom, low morale and reduced job satisfaction”. Whereas, in good building conditions, teachers are enthusiastic, exhibit high morale, and accept their responsibilities (Blazer, 2012). Vail (2005) adds to this notion in saying, “teachers who work every day in crumbling buildings with leaky roofs and broken plumbing are bound to feel that their work isn’t especially valued”. Working conditions can play a role in affecting teacher morale. Alford (2008) offers that leadership, empowerment, facilities and resources, time, and professional development are the top five working conditions teachers believe are the most important, according to a teacher quality survey. Nieto (2003) states, “If we are as concerned about education as we say we are, then we need to do more to change the conditions faced by teachers”. School leaders must consider improving the following working conditions affecting teachers, “class size teaching load, availability to teaching materials, teacher participation in decision making, supportive instructional leadership from principals, and collegial learning opportunities” (Darling-Hammond, 2003).

2.3. Capacity Building

Fullan (2008) asserts that capacity building “concerns competencies, resources, and motivation”. Schools have high capacity “if they possess and continue to develop knowledge and skills, if they attract resources wisely, and if they are committed to putting the energy to get important things done collectively and continuously” (Fullan, 2008). In business terms, in order to get a return, there must be an investment (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013). School leaders should understand the importance of investing in teachers in order to see constant improvement. Additionally, school leaders ought to help teachers engage in professional learning every day. Quite frankly, “learning on the job, day after day, is the work” of teachers and school leaders (Fullan, 2008). Capacity building is an approach based on developing a common knowledge base within an organization, pinpointing a few goals, and sustaining efforts over long periods of time (Fullan & Quinn, 2016). With a capacity building approach, a foundation for ongoing improvements and change can be built within school organizations.

Fullan and Quinn (2016) report on three features of capacity building which have a strong impact in changing teacher practices. The first is the development of learning teams, the second is sustained focus over multiple sessions, and the third is cycles of structured inquiry followed by application and reflection. With this approach, Fullan (2016) believes change can take place on all levels of the school system. One can assume teachers who are involved in a focused, consistent approach to developing themselves further will begin to have a deeper commitment to the school and its purpose. With deeper commitments, teachers will choose to stay in the profession and work toward collective goals of improvement. Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, and Hargreaves (2015) make a compelling case for leaders to focus on internal accountability rather than the external accountability. External accountability is what we are seeing in the United States today— school and teacher performance levels based on standardized testing and teacher evaluations. Internal accountability is focusing on capacity building with great emphasis on improving each individual and the capacity of the whole group.

In light of the literature on influences on teacher retention, it is imperative for school leaders to consider building trust, building teacher morale, and building capacity among their staff. The school leader is the one who sets the tone, the culture, and the climate of a school building. With the rates of teacher retention in mind, leaders should be proactive and invest in teachers. Teachers cannot survive isolated and alone in their classrooms. Teachers need leaders who take action.

3. Suggestions to Relieve Teacher Retention

Focusing on internal accountability rather than the external accountability. External accountability is what we are seeing in the United States today— school and teacher performance levels based on standardized testing and teacher evaluations. Internal accountability is focusing on capacity building with great emphasis on improving each individual and the capacity of the whole group. The Canadian province of Ontario implemented the Ontario Reform Strategy in 2004. The reform initiative included 4,900 schools in 72 districts, with approximately 2 million students. The focus was on building capacity, strengthening the collective capacity of school leaders, and creating conditions for improving instructional practice in order to improve literacy, numeracy, and high school retention numbers. After certain measures were given, the reform strategy yielded positive results. Some reflected on the process by expressing frustration with external accountability, specifically standardized testing, which comes at the end of the year and cannot be used for diagnostic purposes throughout the year. It was realized more attention should be on using transparent student data and collaboration among teachers to drive instructional practices (Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015).

Teachers need to feel support from school leaders. Kinsey (2006) reports on past research findings pointing out that “support is listed more often as a factor in teacher attrition and lower morale than are any other factors”. School leaders must be “empathetic, recognizing and appreciating good work, validating efforts, appreciating a well-done job, and helping people develop new strengths” (Vail, 2005). Teachers who “feel good about themselves and their work will look for ways to reach all their children” (Vail, 2005). When a positive

atmosphere is created by support from school leaders and teachers who feel good about themselves, students will also begin to have positive experiences and strive to reach higher levels of achievement.

(3) Within a school building, principals and teachers must depend on each other's skills to accomplish all teaching and 18 learning objectives. Competence is demonstrated in principal actions when principals handle difficult situations, set high standards and push for results, work hard, problem solve, set a positive example, and resolve conflict (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b). Honesty is an essential component of trust. "Honesty concerns a person's character, integrity, and authenticity" (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b). Leaders must earn a reputation of keeping commitments and following through with their words and promises. Further, leaders must honor agreements, be authentic, and avoid manipulations (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b). Openness is the "extent to which relevant information is not withheld" (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Principals become vulnerable when they disclose facts and ideas freely with teachers. Where principals are open, teachers are more willing to share their ideas in return. Maintaining open communication is key in initiating change within an organization and in shared decision making (Tschannen-Moran, 2014b).

(4) Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2015b) explain the importance of school leaders in granting discretion and delegating decision authority to teachers. "Discretion is rooted in a confidence in teachers' reliability and competence and a willingness to delegate important tasks to them" (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015b). In giving teachers more decision-making authority, the level of trust is deepened and greater professionalism can surface. Principals can use wisdom in whom to share in leadership decisions and can further build capacity within teachers to engender trust if needed.

4. Conclusions

Form the review of the current literature, combined with the current situation of teachers leaving schools, it is not difficult to find that this phenomenon is still in a stage of continuous development. This study introduces the current situation of teachers' retention and resignation, and then analyzes the main factors related to it. These factors include trust, job satisfaction and teacher capacity building. Finally, in view of the phenomenon that the teacher turnover rate is rising, the study puts forward several effective suggestions.

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