

FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE INTENTION FOR VOLUNTARY TURNOVER AMONG TEACHERS

NICULIȚĂ ZENOBIA

LECT. UNIV. DR., INSTITUTUL TEOLOGIC ADVENTIST

Abstract

The present article presents the research results of an applied study regarding the impact of work style and organizational climate on teachers' intention to leave their workplace in the foreseeable future. A sample of 150 teachers aged 21-56, employees of 10 schools from Bucharest, Romania has been the focus of the research, aiming to identify the differences between the group of participants that expressed their intent to leave the organization (called the turnover group) and the ones that stated their intention to remain employed in the school (non-fluctuation group) regarding work style and its factors and the perceived traits of the organizational climate for the schools employing them at the time of the study. Teachers included in the turnover group revealed a more dynamic work style and a significantly more negative perception of the organizational climate.

Key words: organizational climate, work style, teachers' staff turnover rates

JEL : I20, J21, J63

1. Introduction

Teachers' professional activity includes a variety of tasks and processes, from teaching the actual class to management of personal professional projects, those of his / her students and the school's long-term strategies. In this context, the impact of teachers' personalities as unique individuals involved in the learning and organizational processes can be analyzed in the conceptual framework of work style.

As defined for research purposes in previous studies, work style is heterogeneous concept that combines motivational, emotional, cognitive, potential, attitudinal and psychosocial factors, which determine the unique individuals way of working and using his/her resources to reach professional targets (both individual and organizational). The defining factors of work style are: decision-making, flexibility, work involvement, self-management skills, competitiveness, creativity, information-processing style, and orientation towards the others. Each of the work style factors combine different components (attitudinal, motivational, emotional, cognitive, psychosocial) in order to reflect relevant aspects of individuals' behavior in organizational environment and the way they perceive work related tasks and objectives.

From a systemic point of view the organization is not just the sum of its employees, but also a structure of relationships and roles greatly impacted by each individual's work style. The latter has a significant influence on organizational climate and, in its turn, it is nurtured by the culture and climate of the institution. In the education field, the relationships between work style and organizational climate are even more relevant for the organization's outcomes and performance, as each teacher interacts directly with the beneficiaries of the educational services offered by the school.

2. Literature review

Teachers represent a professional category with high turnover rates, which constitutes a valid social and economic problem. At national level, it is directly connected with the phenomena of systematic learning failure, brain export among professionals, poor results at international tests, continuous lack of funds.

At organizational level, the problem becomes part of a vicious circle of turnover: Low performance schools correlate with high turnover rates among teachers, which, in its turn, makes the institutions less attractive for highly skilled teachers (Barnes, Crowe & Schaefer, 2007). When these schools are financed from public funds, the problem becomes one of at least local interest and, as a socio-economic phenomenon, is widespread at national level.

The most frequently analyzed socio-economic factors related to turnover and poor performance in education are poor funding and faulty national policies. Apart from them, there is a number of organizational and psychological factors that aggravate teacher's turnover rates. A consistent number of studies have focused on identifying and exploring the extent of some of those factors, such as:

- The workload overcharge both in teaching and in administrative activities and the quality of relationships in the workplace (Torres, 2014)
- Mentoring opportunity and having a mentor in the same institution (Rockoff, 2008)
- Teachers' perception on their influence over school policies (Jackson, 2012)
- Lack of learning resources and logistics, especially in poorly financed schools (Loeb, Darling-Hammond & Luczak, 2005)
- High stress level caused by students' misbehavior and conflicts (Liu & Onwuegbuzie, A., 2012)
- The level of organizational support (Gardner, 2010)
- Teachers' emotional connections to the work and community environment (Lachman & Diamant, 2007)
- The low level of satisfaction with one's work and workplace (Stuit & Smith, 2009)
- The school's leadership and management (Boyd et al., 2005)

The high turnover rates among teachers have a negative impact not only on education costs and performance, but also on all pedagogical, psychological and organizational components of the educational process. In schools where turnover rates are particularly high it is more difficult to build an academic community and to develop mentoring relationships. (Milanowski & Odden, 2007).

While implementing organizational strategies and national policies that promote stability regarding personnel fluctuation in schools can prove to be a difficult and complex endeavor, training teachers to develop their time and project management skills as part of their work styles might prove to be an effective way of providing them with the personal skills necessary to improve their work environments and to contribute to creating a positive organizational climate in the schools instead of just searching for a new workplace that might prove to be just as disappointing as the previous one.

Considering that creative employees need a higher level of opportunities to express that creativity which in its own turn, correlates with lower turnover intentions (Valentine, Godkin, Fleischman & Kidwell, 2011) it might prove beneficial to provide the creative, adaptive, flexible teachers with means to develop their time and project management skills. This way, they will be better equipped to get involved into shaping their work environments to their satisfaction, thus further reducing their intentions for turnover

3. Research methods

Establishing as starting point the relevance of organizational and psycho-social factors for the high rates of personnel turnover among teachers, (Barnes, Crowe & Schaefer, 2007; Jackson, 2012; Liu & Onwuegbuzie, A., 2012; Torres, 2014 et. al) the research study presented in this paper has aimed to analyze the way in which organizational climate and individual work style influence teachers' intention to change jobs or workplace in the foreseeable future.

The two main hypotheses of the study have been established considering the two main sources of influence: organizational and individual.

1. There are significant differences regarding individual work styles between the group of teachers who express their intent to change workplace in the future and those who don't express the same intention.
2. There are significant differences between the group of teachers who express their intent to change workplace in the future and those who don't express the same intention regarding the perceived organizational climate of the school they work in.

The participants of the study included 150 teachers aged 21-56, employees of 10 schools from Bucharest, Romania (5 private institutions and 5 state schools), of which 102 were female. 43% of the sample consisted of teachers with over 6 years experience in the institution employing them at the time of the research. The participants have been randomly selected from the employees' lists of the schools included in the study and requested to provide a few basic information regarding demographic variables and their intention to leave the organization. Their answers have been provided voluntarily and anonymously.

The two independent variables of the study have been researched using the following instruments: SM III Questionnaire (developed by the author) as a measure of work style and ECO System, an instrument for organizational climate assessment developed by Constantin, T.

The SM Questionnaire has been tested on a 200 participants sample and validated by a committee of experts. The reliability of the questionnaire is estimated at alpha Cronbach=0,866 for the total factor and values between 0,800 to 0,873 for the 7 sub-factors.

The process of assessing employees' work styles using the SM Questionnaire (Ist to IIIrd edition) is based on a model that includes the existence of a composite work style factor, consisting of cognitive motivational attitudinal and psychosocial sub-factors. Each individual tested within the model's frame is attributed a score placed on a bipolar scale between dynamic and structured work style. The dynamic work style is fluent, innovative, intuitive, highly involved in working activities, competitive and creative. A person that scores high on the work styles scale is usually flexible, rather impulsive, makes decisions based on intuition, discarding the quality in favor of speeding the process. He or she integrates easily in the work rhythm imposed by the organization, adapts on the go to the changes in work plans and

methods, appreciate originality and change. Such a person is highly interested in the chosen professional field, capable of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014), striving for performance. Highly motivated and dedicated to reaching the organizational goals, he or she avoids routine in professional activities and uses his / her strengths in order to achieve professional targets. The weakness of such a work style is represented by the reduced capacity for time and project management. This is not because of reduced planning abilities but rather a natural effect of the person's high flexibility. A dynamic work style employee is usually impatient when it comes to implementing original ideas. This is one of the reasons for his / her constant preference for work teams, which allows him / her to avoid unpleasant tasks while having the opportunity to compete and perform.

At the opposite pole of the bipolar factor, the structured work style is characterized by a highly organized way of working and developing professional relationships in the workplace. Such a person characterized by a structured work style carefully analyses every detail of the problem before making a decision and chooses the logic solution against the one subjectively preferred. One of the main traits of this style and an important weakness is the low level of flexibility in every aspect in the professional activity, paired with a disregard for the new ideas, considered disruptive and counter-productive. Such a person appreciates order and feels unbalanced major changes. His / her greatest strength is the high-level of time and project management, including efficiency, perseverance, prioritizing, detailed planning of each activity and good evaluation skills. Although such a person is less creative, he / she keeps a constant work rhythm, which may prove to be a valuable asset when it comes to reaching organizational objectives and standards. Because of his / her focused, structured work style, a person who scores low on the work style scale feels disturbed by the seemingly hectic work habits of his / her colleagues and, although he/she might enjoy the exchanges, the preference will always go to the solitary work.

4. Research results

The research data analysis has been focused on the differences between the group of participants that expressed their intent to leave the organization (called the turnover group) and the ones that stated their intention to remain employed in the school (non-fluctuation group) regarding organizational and psychosocial variables presented above.

Of the 150 participants to the study, 30 have expressed their turnover intention. There are no significant differences ($p > 0,05$) between state employees and the teachers employed by private schools regarding their self-assessed predicted turnover. This result indicates that there are no organizational difference between state and private schools relevant for teachers' turnover intentions.

4.1. Teachers' work style and turnover intention

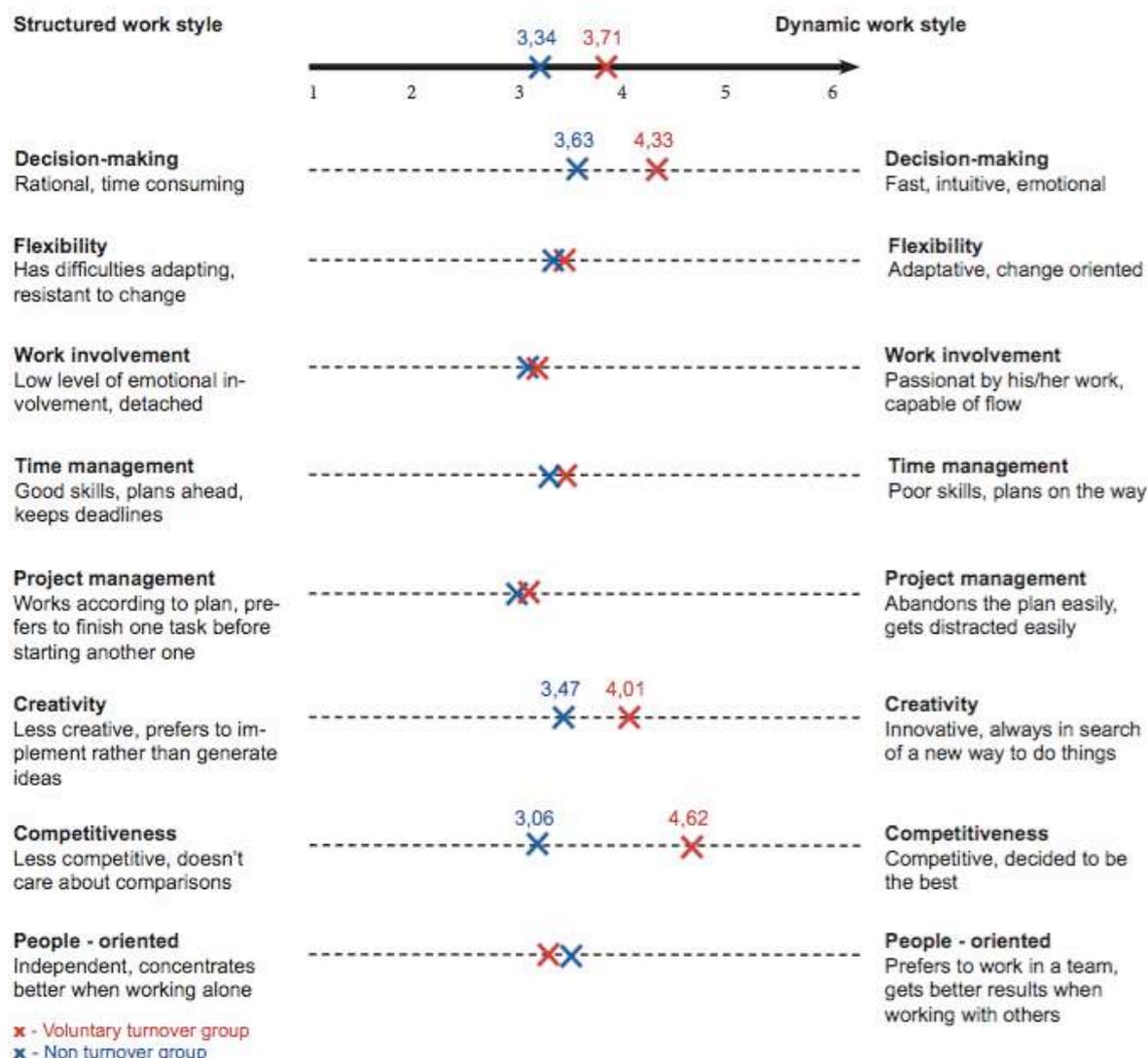
There are statistically significant differences between the turnover and non-turnover group regarding their work styles.

The same significant differences apply for for the following work style factors: decision making, creativity and competitiveness. For all the above stated factors, the fluctuation group's scores were significantly higher. The mean scores for the fluctuation and non-fluctuation groups for the factors presenting significant differences are included in Fig. 1. These results suggest the fact that there is a series of individual factors that influence teachers' decision for change their workplace.

Teachers who express the intent to change jobs have a more dynamic work style. They are creative, competitive and tend to make more intuitive, impulsive decisions. They are more prone switching their workplace for one that is more suited for their needs and their work style.

These results represent an argument in favour of work style as a good predictor for teachers' voluntary turnover, because it connects individual resources with their specific professional activities. Used as a relevant variable in human resources management, work style can help the process of ensuring employees' fidelity and stability.

Fig. 1: Differences in work style profiles between turnover and non-turnover groups



4.2. Perceived organizational climate in schools and voluntary turnover

The research results have pointed out the tendency among participants from the turnover group to perceive more negatively the school they work in and its climate. There are significant differences between the turnover and non-turnover group regarding their scores for the following organisational climate factors: task, relationships, management, evaluation, satisfaction and safety. For all these factors, participants from the turnover group present significantly lower scores than the ones in the non-turnover group. They tend to perceive the organizational climate of their school in a less positive manner.

A summary of the statistical results for comparisons between turnover and non-turnover groups regarding organizational climate factors is included in Table 1.

Tabel nr. 1 Differences between turnover and non-turnover groups of teachers regarding perceived organizational climate scores

Organizational climate factor	Mean turnover group	Mean non turnover group	t	sig
task	19,16	24,60	-7,26	p<0,01
relationship	17,73	23,40	-6,96	p<0,01
motivation	26,63	27,50	-1,02	p=0,30>0,05
support	21,63	22,20	-0,80	p=0,42>0,05
management	21,93	25,11	-3,31	p=0,002<0,01
evaluation	24,56	25,96	-2,01	p=0,46<0,05

justice	24,93	24,96	-0,04	p=0,96>0,05
identification	23,16	23,82	-0,82	p=0,41>0,05
decisions	22,13	22,59	-0,86	p=0,38>0,05
learning	23,86	25,20	-1,44	p=0,15>0,05
satisfaction	24,00	25,62	-2,11	p=0,03<0,05
safety	18,23	19,75	-2,81	p=0,005<0,05
communication	22,40	23,65	-1,88	p=0,06>0,05
workload overcharging	19,63	19,80	-0,20	p=0,83>0,05

Among the participants in the turnover group, tasks are evaluated as being less defined, relationships less satisfactory, the management less efficient and the level of security significantly lower. The teachers who are more prone to voluntary turnover tend to be less satisfied with their work environment. They complain more about unclear and unreasonable tasks, unfulfilling and conflictual workplace relationships, management / leadership and the extent of their involvement in the decision making process (Jackson, 2012) and job safety.

5. Conclusions

Voluntary turnover among teachers represents a real economic and social problem with broad impact on different levels. At school level, it determines and sustains a low level of performance and a high level of instability for the direct beneficiaries (students) and the social community it serves.

This article has presented the results of a research study regarding the impact of work style and organizational climate on staff turnover rates among teachers. Following the statistical analysis, the significant results revealed differences between the fluctuation and non-fluctuation group of the participants regarding their work style and some of the organizational climate factors. Teachers who express the intent to change jobs have a more dynamic work style (as presented in Fig. 1). They are creative, competitive and tend to make more intuitive, impulsive decisions. They tend to perceive the organizational climate of their school in a less positive manner, especially regarding task, work relationships, management, evaluation and safety.

While individual traits related to work style might favor a less positive attitude of teachers towards their workplace, the organizational climate will prove to be essential in balancing those tendencies and providing a work environment that fosters performance and stability.

Even though the intention to leave the position in an organization doesn't always translate into action, this variable represents a good estimation for the turnover tendencies and affords human resources managers to design strategies for increasing employees' loyalty. Moreover, the intention to leave the organization is an efficient indicator for the lack of job satisfaction and for the professional dynamic of the employees.

Acknowledgements

This paper has been financially supported within the project entitled „SOCERT. Knowledge society, dynamism through research”, contract number POSDRU/159/1.5/S/132406. This project is co-financed by European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013. Investing in people!”.

6. References

- Barnes, G., Crowe, E. & Schaefer, B. (2007). The Cost of Teacher Turnover in Five School Districts: A Pilot Study. *National Commission on Teaching and America's Future*.
- Barrett, K.; Bower, B. & Donovan, N (2007). Teaching Styles of Community College Instructors. *American Journal of Distance Education*, 21 (1), 37-49, doi:10.1080/08923640701298738
- Bota, O. A. & Petre, C. (2015). Educational Style Impact on Student Academical Achievements. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 177 (2015). 127 – 131. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.360.
- Boyd, D., Lankfort, H., Loeb, S. & Wyckoff, J. (2005). Explaining the Short Careers of High-Achieving Teachers in Schools with Low-Performing Students. *The American Economic Review*. 95(2). 166-171.
- Brown, B.L. (2003). Teaching style vs learning style. *Myths and Realities*, 26, 54-55.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of Knowledge and Practice: Teacher Learning in Communities. *Review of Research in Education*. 24. 249-305.
- Clark, S. D. & Latshaw, C.A. (2012). Effects of Learning Styles/ Teaching Styles and Effort on Performance in Accounting and Marketing Courses. *World Journal of Management*. 4(1). 67 - 81.

- Coldren, J., & Hively, J. (2009). Interpersonal teaching style and student impression formation. *College Teaching*, 57(2), 93-98.
- Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2014). *Applications of Flow in Human Development and Education*. Springer Netherlands. doi: 10.1007/978-94-017-9094-9_7.
- Edmunds, J., Ntoumanis, N. and Duda, J. L. (2008), Testing a self-determination theory-based teaching style intervention in the exercise domain. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38: 375–388. doi: 10.1002/ejsp.463.
- Eyyam, R., Meneviş, İ. & Doğruer, N. (2011), An Investigation of the Learning Styles of Prospective Educators. *The Online Journal of New Horizons in Education (TOJNED)*, 1 (3), 8-13.
- Franzoni, A.L.; Assar, S.; Defude, B. & Rojas, J. (2008). Student Learning Styles Adaptation Method Based on Teaching Strategies and Electronic Media. *Proceedings of Advanced Learning Technologies, 2008. ICALT '08. Eighth IEEE International Conference*. 778-782.
- Gardner, R. (2010). Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors that Influence the Retention, Turnover, and Attrition of K–12 Music Teachers in the United States. *Arts Education Policy Review*. 111(3). 112-121.
- Giles, J., Ryan, D.A. J., Belliveau, G., De Freitas, E. & Casey, R. (2006). Teaching style and learning in a quantitative classroom. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 7, 213-225.
- Jackson, K. (2012). Influence Matters: The Link between Principal and Teacher Influence over School Policy and Teacher Turnover. *Journal of School Leadership*. 22. 975-901.
- Kolb, A. Y. & Kolb D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*. 4 (2). 193- 212.
- Lachman, R. & Diamant, E. (1987), Withdrawal and restraining factors in teachers' turn- over intentions. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour*. 8, 219–232. doi: 10.1002/job.4030080304.
- Liu, S. & Onwuegbuzie, A., (2012). Chinese teachers' work stress and their turnover intention. *International Journal of Educational Research*. 53. 160–170.
- Loeb, S., Darling-Hammond, L. & Luczak, J. (2005). How Teaching Conditions Predict Teacher Turnover in California Schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*. 80(3). 44-70.
- Mohanna, K., Chambers, R., & Wall, D. (2007). Developing your teaching style: increasing effectiveness in healthcare teaching. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 83(977), 145–147. doi:10.1136/pgmj.2006.054106.
- Opdenakker, M. C. & Van Damme, J. (2006). Teacher characteristics and teaching styles as effectiveness enhancing factors of classroom practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 22. 1-21.
- Reeve, J. M. (2009). Why teachers adopt a controlling motivating style towards students and how they can become more autonomy supportive. *Educational Psychologist*, 44(3), 159-175.
- Rockoff, J. (2008). Does Mentoring Reduce Turnover and Improve Skills of New Employees? Evidence from Teachers in New York City, National Bureau of Economic Research, Inc. NBER Working Papers. no. 13868, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w13868.pdf>
- Stuit, D. & Smith, T. (2009). *Teacher Turnover in Charter Schools*. Nashville, TN: National Center on School Choice, Vanderbilt University. http://www.vanderbilt.edu/schoolchoice/documents/briefs/brief_stuit_smith_ncspe.pdf
- Somprach, K., Prasertcharoensuk, T. & Ngang, T. K. (2015). The Impact of Organizational Culture on Teacher Learning. *The Proceedings of 5th World Conference on Learning, Teaching and Educational Leadership*. 186. 1038–1044.
- Torres, C. (2014). Is This Work Sustainable? Teacher Turnover and Perceptions of Workload in *Charter Management Organizations*. *Urban Education*. 1-24. doi: 10.1177/0042085914549367.
- Trip, S. (2003). Stiluri de învățare in Maxim, S. T & Popoveniuc, B. (coord.). *Analele Universității "Ștefan cel Mare" Suceava*. 107-111.
- Vogt, F. & Rogalla, M. (2009). Developing Adaptive Teaching Competency through coaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. 25(8). 1051–1060. doi:10.1016/j.tate.2009.04.002.
- Valentine, S., Godkin, L., Fleischman, G. M. & Kidwell, R. (2011). Corporate Ethical Values, Group Creativity, Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention: The Impact of Work Context on Work Response. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 98(3). 353-372. doi:10.1007/s10551-010-0554-6.