Organizational commitment among teachers. Opportunity and tasks for educational leaders

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Abstract

The elaboration describes the issue of the organizational commitment of teachers in respect to three components of such commitment: affective, permanent and normative. Its aim is to answer the following questions: What is the level of organizational commitment among teachers in terms of three components that are mentioned above, and is more advanced seniority of teachers a factor accompanied by a higher level of organizational commitment. The application aim of this article is to formulate tasks for an educational leader, as an effect of recognizing the level of organizational commitment of a team of teachers managed by them. The article consists of parts: theoretical, in which the author discusses the issue of identification with profession, organizational identification as factors co-occurring with or contributing to the emergence of attachment to an organization, and then components of such an attachment, as well as empirical presentation of results of own research carried out among 276 teachers with different levels of seniority. As a result of their implementation it turned out that among respondents affective factor shapes commitment to the greatest extent, allowing teachers to pursue their professional goals and values, and that organizational commitment develops together with seniority. The final part of the article is devoted to postulates addressed to educational leaders which are presented to head teachers working with a team of teachers, which inspire reflection and at the same time indicate the direction of feasible actions.

Keywords: organizational commitment, teachers, educational leadership

Introduction

When analyzing the situation of social and, in particular, psychological aspects of human functioning in work situation, the last several years can be considered as a period of increased interest of researchers in the issue of organizational commitment, adjacent to the high popularity of this topic. Increasingly, as can be seen when analyzing source literature, organizational commitment becomes an object of study of different professional groups, these studies, however, have not been carried out among Polish teachers so far.

The subject of the study is an issue of organizational commitment of teachers, as representatives of a profession, which for years has been perceived as being associated with a particularly important mission and specific message in life. Organizational commitment means a peculiar attitude towards our workplace, school, which on the one hand allows for personal development, implementation of our goals and values, and is an opportunity to fulfill oneself through action focused on widely recognized social welfare, and on the other hand it results in the fact that school is seen as a friendly work environment and condition for maintaining balance between personal and professional life. The aim of the study is to answer the following questions: what is the level of organizational commitment among teachers in terms of its three components: affective, durability and normative, and is longer seniority in profession a factor associated with increased organizational commitment?

Another, application aim of this article is to identify rank of importance of organizational commitment of teachers in broader educational leadership not only as a factor that builds motivation of teachers, but as a condition for the head teacher concerning the management of the school environment. Assuming that the diagnosis of level of commitment among teachers may be a factor conducive to building a relationship between head teachers with teachers, we should consider which actions of a head teacher should be taken to strengthen and develop this commitment. This reasoning, of course, requires approval of the assumption that organizational commitment as a belief determining attitude towards one's place of work is a factor contributing to both professional development (rather than limiting this development), sense of work satisfaction, construction of supporting relationships based on cooperation that trigger positive emotions related to performed work thus increasing quality of life of a teacher. Also, from the point of view of an educational leader and school head teacher strengthening organizational commitment is not a manipulation that is intended to treat teachers instrumentally, it consists of conscious-

ly undertaken and accepted impact, the aim of which the welfare of persons with whom the head teacher works, and this action also fulfils a mission of a school as a teaching and learning community.

The elaboration consists of two parts: theoretical, in which the author discusses the issue of identification with the profession, organizational identification as factors co-occurring with or contributing to the emergence of commitment to an organization, and then the components of such commitment, as well as empirical presenting results of own research carried out among 276 teachers with different levels of seniority. As a result of their implementation it turned out that among respondents affective factor shapes commitment to the greatest extent, allowing teachers to pursue their professional goals and values, and that organizational commitment develops together with seniority.

The final part of the article has been devoted to postulates addressed to educational leaders which are presented to head teachers working with teams of teachers, which inspire reflection and at the same time indicate the direction of feasible actions.

Identification with the profession

In source literature organizational commitment is sometimes considered in a slightly broader context, in conjunction with professional identification and identification with the organization. Professional commitment (although among authors there is no full compliance in

this case) is recognized as the third element or result state of earlier identification with the mentioned factors.

In the literature of organizational behaviors we can find the use of words 'profession', 'career' and 'professionalism' in the same context (Lee et al, 2000; Meyer, Allen and Smith, 1993). Lee defines profession as "identifiable, specific work activity in which a person participates in order to earn a living, within a specified period of his or her life" (p.800). The same author emphasizes that the specificity of belonging to a profession requires specific skills, knowledge and specific activity, allowing distinction between one profession and another. Another definition (Van Maanen and Barley, 1984) recognizes profession as an attribute of a group of people who perceive themselves as performing the same type of work. In this understanding, a subjective sense of belonging to a particular group of people becomes important.

Membership in a profession is not synonymous with professionalism. The first of the analyzed concepts is broader; professionalism creates associations related to quality of performed work to a greater extent. (also Blau 2001, Meyer et al, 1993).

Professional career as opposed to profession seems to be a "more ambitious" concept. Authors recognize it as planned pattern of professional activity lasting from the moment of taking up work to retirement (Greenhaus, Callahan, Godshalk, 2000; Greenhoause, 1987; Hall, 1976, Kowalczyk, 2014). In this sense, during

the period of his or her professional career a person can undertake several professions.

Research on professional identification oscilliate around two groups of issues: (1) research on identification of individual professional groups (Chrein et al, 2007; Ibarra, 1999, Kreiner et al, 2006a, 2006b Kreiner and others; Loi et al, 2004, Lui, 2003; Prat et al, 2006); (2) research on compatibility between organizational norms and values, and professional values (Gouldner, 1958; Hall, 1968; Loi et al, 2004; Lui et al, 2003; Wallace, 1993.1995). Diversification of identification with profession revealed in such a way becomes the basis for identification with a specific organization and organizational commitment.

Identification with organization

Identification with an organization boils down to the employee's sense of belonging to an organization when the employee expressly declares such belonging (Ashfourth and Mael, 1989; Ashforth and others 2008). The presented approach refers to a wider social perspective of evaluation of our own belonging having its source in social conditions (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) and the criteria for assessing people through the prism of characteristics such as nationality, race, or profession. These threads can also be found in earlier works on organizational identification (Hall, Schneider and Nygren, 1970; O Reilly and Chartman, 1986; Patchen, 1970). The foundation of this position is

the assumption that organizational membership determines relationships with other social groups, leading to assignment of people to specific sub-categories. In this sense organizational membership is associated with "knowledge of an entity on its membership in a particular social group, evaluated in terms of emotions and linked to a certain system of values (Tajfel, 1972, p.292). Organizational membership is associated with categorizing ourselves and others which, on the other hand, can help us better organize our knowledge about the world and social groups (Tajfel, Turner, 1979, 1986). The main motive for determining our membership becomes the construction and desire to improve our self-image through positive social identification (Hogg, Turner, 1985).

Organizational membership is important for employees and entrepreneurs, as it allows an individual to raise self-esteem through belonging to a "collective" and organization by referring to how significant entities specify their membership in it (Hogg, Terry, 2001 Ashforth et al, 2008). However, in the case when we are dealing with a strong identification with an organization, the difference between defining and assigning specific personal characteristics of an organization and its members is blurred (Dutton, Dukerich, Harquail, 1994) to the extent that employees treat success or failure of their company as personal and engage intensely in order to assist the organization in achieving its objectives.

Identification with an organization can

take different forms. Rousseau (1998) distinguished two types of organizational identification: situated organizational identification and deep, structured organizational identification. In the case of situated organizational identification we are dealing with noticing the importance of human belonging to an organization as a "part of larger picture." This kind of identification is relatively common when a person sees his or her own and common interests with the organization (often speaking as "we" rather than "I"), and their commitment is treated as a personal contribution to this organization (Rousseau, 1998).

Deep, structured organizational identification is progressing much more slowly, and it takes into account organizational membership in one's own self-esteem (Rousseau, 1998). However, currently there are many organizations that create barriers which prevent such kinds of identification. These include contracts, short-term contracts, geographical distance between place of work of workers in relation to the headquarters of the organization, etc.

According to Tajfel (1982, p.2) organizational identification is a multidimensional construction composed of three components: cognitive, evaluation and emotional. The first (cognitive component) is associated with awareness of organizational participation, the second (evaluation component) in relation to system of values is recognized by the individual, and thirdly (emotional component) is characterized by emotional involvement taking into account previous components.

Thus the cognitive component is by far the most frequently present in literature as a subject of studies and defines the scope of organizational membership through which an employee determines his or her own identity (Ashorth et al, 2008). The evaluation component indicates values that an employee may pursue and introduce through his or her participation in the organization. The emotional component in relation to the organization can have a positive or negative nature (Dutton et al, 1994) and thereby it determines the decision to remain at or leave the organization.

Organizational commitment

The author of the three-dimensional model of organizational commitment is Meyer and Allen (1997). This model is a modification of previously developed recignitions of organizational commitment (Porter, et al, 1974; Becker, 1960; Meyer Allen1984, Allen Meyer, 1990). It consists of three components: affective, permanent and normative (Bańka and others, 2002, p.66).

The affective component includes employee emotional attachment to work, commitment and identification with the workplace. People who have strong affective commitment to a given organization remain in it because they want it, i.e. work fulfills their aspirations, allows them to implement their values, provides satisfaction, [and] improves the quality of their professional life (Shahidul, 2012, p.394).

Permanent commitment means the awareness of costs associated with leaving the organization. According to Bańka (Bańka and others, 2002, p.66) employees whose principal bond is based on a permanent commitment remain there because they feel that they "must carry it out". It may be expected that this commitment is a result of a specific calculation and balance of benefits and potential losses, and final decision based on "lesser evil".

The normative component of commitment is based on a sense of moral obligation to remain in the organization. People with a high level of this component refer to values that define their behavior as an essential theme of their own activities. In other words, they feel that they should carry it out.

There is data that indicates that employees with a certain level of organizational commitment represent diverse organizational behavior that are promotional and negative. Promotional behavior goes beyond basic responsibilities and professional roles (Judge, Heller, Mount, 2002). In contrast, negative behavior comes down to the activity which harms the objectives of the organization, violates organizational norms, or affects the decrease in productivity (Spector, Fox, 2005).

According to Bańka (Bańka and others, 2002, p. 66-67) employees who have a strongly developed affective commitment are more valuable employees than employees with a lower affective commitment. These dependencies are largely confirmed by Shore and Wayne (1993) who indicate the relationship of affective and normative commitment with civil behavior.

Bańka (ibid) also emphasizes weaker results of work and dysfunctional interpersonal relationships of employees with a high level of permanent commitment.

Organization and area of own studies

Given the characteristics of the "sacred with tradition and high ethos" teaching profession, opportunities to measure organizational commitment, the structure of which, as indicated by the analysis of cited literature does not seem uniform, on the contrary it is composed of components "attracting" to work (affecive component), and such, which not only attract but result in the fact that leaving the organization may seem too troublesome, as a result of a final calculation (component of durability and normative component) the following research problem has been formulated: how to shape the level of organizational commitment in terms of its individual components in the case of teachers?

In source literature lately there are elaborations that indicate relationships of organizational commitment with diverse factors ranging from job satisfaction (Hińcza et al, 2015; Shahidul, 2012 Szpitalak, 2010; Wołowska, 2014), workaholism, and, finally, seniority, and for this reason the following research problem has been formulated in the elaboration: does higher level of organizational commitment run in parallel with longer seniority?

The study involved 276 people em-

ployed in an educational environment - mainly in primary schools, secondary schools and upper-secondary schools. In this group there are both teachers of preschool education, initial education in primary schools, secondary schools and high schools as well as school head teachers, employees of centers for teachers, and pedagogical supervision. The Polish modified version of the questionnaire of Meyer and Allen- Scale of Organizational Commitment in the adaptation of A. Bańska R. Bazińska and A. Wołowska (2001) was used as the main research tool.

This scale consists of three subscales containing affective component, permanent commitment and organizational component. Analysis of reliability coefficients, which are separated in the questionnaire of scales, composed of six elements each revealed a relatively high internal compliance. The study was conducted during a conference, implemented in connection with the finalization of the project Educational Leadership.

Results of studies

The results obtained with the use of the previously mentioned questionnaire of Organizational Commitment Scale indicated relatively large differences in the level of organizational commitment both in terms of individual, distinguished components and the overall level of organizational commitment.

Table 1. Results of studies in the Organizational Commitment Scale - affective component.

Points	N	%
21-24 pt.	85	30,80
20-17 pt.	94	34,06
16-13 pt.	52	18,84
12-9 pt.	27	9,78
Below 9pt.	18	6,52
Total number	276	100

Source: own study.

Analysis of the data shows a relatively large percentage (approx. 31%) of people who received the maximum score in the Organizational Commitment Scale in the field of affective component.

Table 2. Results of studies in the Organizational Commitment Scale - component of permanent commitment

Points	N	%
21-24 pt.	8	2,89
20-17 pt.	24	8,69
16-13 pt.	158	57,25
12-9 pt.	39	14,12
Below 9pt.	57	20,65
Total number	276	100

Source: own study.

As shown by the data from the following table, the results obtained by subjects in the field of organizational

sustainability component turned out to be much lower than in the case of aspect of affective organizational commitment.

Table 3. Results of studies in the Organizational Commitment Scale - component of normative commitment

Points	N	%
21-24 pt.	13	4,71
20-17 pt.	98	35,51
16-13 pt.	55	19,93
12-9 pt.	30	10,87
Below 9pt.	79	28,62
Total number	276	100

Source: own study.

As in the case of stability subscale, the results of subjects showed a much lower level of normative commitment compared to the affective component.

Table 4. Results of studies in the Organizational Commitment Scale (in total)

Points	Averange seniority	%	%
72-62 pt.	22,74	44	15,84
61-51 pt.	21,48	71	25,72
50-40 pt.	18,66	73	26,45
39-29 pt.	7,19	39	14,13
Below 29 pt.	8,21	59	21,38
Average/total number	17,76	276	100

Source: own study.

Published data shows that teachers participating in the study presented varying levels of organizational commitment, in most cases this level was relatively high (approx.26% of respondents achieved maximum score).

Teachers with longer seniority, as shown by studies, showed greater organizational commitment and the resulting desire to continue working in a place where they are currently working.

The data shows a relatively large and statistically significant difference in the obtained data between the affective component of organizational commitment and other (permanent and normative) components. This situation is encouraging, because we can expect that organizational commitment among teachers is based largely on awareness of the possibility of achieving their goals in life and career, and the value of professional work (Wołowska 2013 p.194). Furthermore, (as shown by the performed informal talks) it can be expected that the relatively high level reached by the subjects in the field of affective component enables them to fulfill themselves at work.

Analysis of statements in terms of component of permanent commitment, which is the result of calculations and consideration of any losses incurred by the same persons concerned, or their families, indicates that they do not treat their current workplace as the only possibility for professional activity, although, according to the author, results should also be confronted with possibilities of work

that exist in a given locality or area for people with specific qualifications. At the same time studies show that they do not feel particularly obliged to accomplish the mission resulting from the ethos of teacher work, i.e. considering potential losses in terms of compliance with his or her own conscience; socially recognized mission of a teacher's work is not a determining factor in organizational commitment.

On the other hand, we need to realize that in this analysis we are faced with evaluating and comparing the importance of individual components of organizational commitment performed only intra-individually. That is why we should be aware of their limitations and of the fact that only a comparison of individual components with research conducted in other more diverse environments could enable a more reliable assessment of the occurred discrepancies.

Summary - implications for educational leaders

The obtained results indicate a different level of organizational commitment among teachers, both in relation to individual components of this commitment, identified in the study in the form of certain subscales, and to the total score of the questionnaire. Also, seniority proved to be a significant differentiating factor in organizational commitment - teachers with longer seniority turned out to be more committed to their jobs than their younger colleagues.

On the one hand the obtained results "break" a stereotype of traditionally understood work of a teacher, whose career, as it turned out, does not have to be related to a specific school, in which his or her professional advancement occurred, (surveyed teachers who were characterized by a high level of affective component change jobs relatively frequently), however on the other hand, a higher level of organizational commitment, characteristic for teachers with longer seniority, indicates their dynamics and the need for greater concern e.g. on the part of a school head teacher or authorities responsible for conducting pedagogical supervision of teachers with shorter seniority. However, regardless of the results, according to the author, a need to pay more attention to younger teachers cannot mean less care from the head teacher for older workers, but this would rather rather include maintenance of a specific balance and a slightly different kind of attention. Having mature workers focused on younger ones may give rise to a sense of injustice on the part of older ones, lead to frustration of the latter and secondarily contribute to the deterioration of relations in a group of employees.

Moving on to the formulation of concrete postulates for an educational leader we should pay attention to the following activities

- in the recruitment and selection procedure (although in the teaching profession it is not performed as often as in business organizations) to establish criteria using

the already existing patterns of normative component of organizational commitment. This component allows us to verify the degree of sense of social mission, which is so important in the work of a teacher.

- carry out at least 1.5-2 years of research in terms of affective component of organizational commitment, which is important for the sense of job satisfaction. In the case of a decline carry out conversations and dialogue aimed at identification of possible causes and undertaking remedial actions.

- use intellectual capital and preferences of more mature teachers so that they could share their knowledge, educational experience, promote supporting relations in school environment, initiate cooperation in teams of teachers despite the fact that formally they do not function as managers with benefit for the school, pursue one's own career goals.

Presented postulates do not constitute a finite list; certainly every educational leader can complement them with his or her insights, but if at least one of them caused a reflection of the reader and inspired to act the author will consider the purpose of this article to be fulfilled.

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