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The University's Impact of Organizational Support on Competency of Academics

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Abstract:

Amidst a complex and challenging developmental landscape, academics have undergo profound transformations in their identity, status and responsibilities. In this context, competencies have emerged as central in discussions regarding educational policies and professional development for academics. Competency development is integral to the growth of the academics professionals, encompassing teaching competence, research competence, communication and collaboration competence and personal characteristics competence. The development of competency is not only the manifestation of personal and professional development, but also a contribution to the overall quality of education, research, and academic reputation of the university. This paper explores the significance of organizational support for academics' competencies.

Keyword:

Academics' Competency; Organizational Support; Influence

1. Introduction

In 1973, David C. McClelland published “Testing for Competency Rather Than Intelligence” which identified competency was more suitable for evaluating complex workers. Competency refers to the motivation, traits, self-concept, attitude, values, knowledge, identifiable behavioral skills and personal traits that can be measured in an effective way to distinguish high performers from average performers (McClelland, 1998; Peng, 2011; Borisova, 2016). The job of a teacher is a complex one due to the many demands and expectations from the professional and social environment (Liang, 2002; Selvi, K., 2010).

After entering the 21st century, with the influence of many factors such as knowledge economy, higher education internationalization and education informatization, higher education all over the world has entered a new round of deep-seated reform stage. Faced with a more complex and difficult development situation, academics began to undergo profound changes in their identity, status and the connotation of their duties. In this context, competence has become a prominent part of educational policy discourse on academicians and their professional development.

Academics' competency not only shapes individual performance (Chen, 2022; Hu & Ge, 2022), but also

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underpins universities' educational objectives (Selvi, K., 2010; Zhang, 2017; Lin et al., 2020). Moreover, the development of academics' competencies relies on both academics' own effort and university organizational support (Wang, 2018). In order to illustrate that the relationship between organizational support and academics' competency at a university can play a crucial role in determining the success and effectiveness of the academic staff, we review some literature.

Evidently, it is necessary to study the relationship between organizational support and academics' competency such that academics can know what support they need from the organization, and the organization (university) can know how to provide support. According to the point of view of system theory, Tong & Wen (2001) believe that the organizational structure of colleges and universities is composed of various elements that are interconnected and interact with each other, having specific number and performing certain functions. These elements are adjusted by a set of established behavioral norms to regulate the relationships among individuals, define and guide their thoughts and behaviors, in order to maintain the operation and stability of university. However, the evident differentiation caused by distinct administrative and academic organizationals in universities can disrupt the stability of the university organizational (Li, 2011). Educational management is a series of actions and tasks relevant to highly well-organized and effectual application of resources within the tertiary education organizational in order to attain organizational objectives (Sapre, 2002; Bush, 2011). Academic is the most important resource in the university, and academic staff management is also related to the future and destiny of university. The management of academic staff should fully follow the objective laws of academic staff development and education, and focus on improving the comprehensive quality of academic staff.

Teacher professional development refers to the ability of teachers to improve their own knowledge, enhance their ideas and promote the teaching effect (Mingucci, 2002), this is a process in which teachers continue to improve their professional quality while professionalizing (Xiao, 2002). Li & Gao (2013) point out that the development of academic work ability (mainly including education ability, teaching ability, scientific research ability, social service ability, etc.) is the core of academics' professional development. Improving academics' professional development level can meet the needs of university development and social development. Academic staff professional development is a two-way process of academicians and environment construction.

Competency can be demonstrated in the successful level of academics in performing their duties professionally and appropriately, such as a complex implementation system that covers academics' essential knowledge, professional skills and personal values such as motivation, the direction of emotional values (Koster & Dengerink, 2008; Zhao, 2020; Chawang, 2020). Because competency can be predicted and measured (Peng, 2011), it has been widely used in the evaluation and recruitment of academics in universities.

2. Organizational Support in Higher Learning Institutions

In 1986, the University of Delaware (UD) social psychologist Robert Eisenberger and other scholars proposed Organizational Support Theory and the concept of Perceived Organizational Support (POS) based on Social Exchange Theory, Reciprocity Principle and Organizational Personification Thought (Robert Eisenberger et al., 1986). When employees perceive the support from the organizational, they will work harder, identify with the organization more emotionally and be more willing to make efforts for the interests of the

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organizational. Millian (1997) pointed out that Eisenberger neglected instrumental support. Without instrumental support, employees will lack the necessary resources to complete their work, such as information, tools and equipment, etc. Instrumental support is the basic need to carry out their work. Received Organizational Support (ROS) refers to the resources, structures, and practices provided by an organizational to support its employees in achieving their goals and performing their duties effectively. Organizational Support in higher learning institutions can be considered from both ROS and POS.

The specific types of ROS for academics in higher learning institutions. This can include working conditions (resources for research, teaching materials, laboratory facilities and so on), training (professional development opportunities), salary (including funding for conferences or research projects), and effective organizational system for administrative support, recognition for achievements. ROS has a direct impact on academic staff's job satisfaction, performance, and retention.

Academicians perceive the organizational support (POS) from in terms of resources, recognition, development opportunities, collegiality, and overall work environment. POS will have a direct impact on academic staff's job satisfaction, performance, and retention, and it can also have an impact as a mediating variable.

3. The Competencies of Academics

Academics' competency refers to their knowledge, skills, and personal characteristics that enable them to excel in their roles as educators, researchers, and professionals within the university context (Huang, 2013; He & Dai, 2017; Huang, 2020; Chen, 2022; Hu & Ge, 2022). Due to different interpretations of knowledge, skill and personal characteristics, a large number of researchers have constructed competency models of university teachers with different index systems. However, some common dimensions that are often included in an academic staff competency model.

Teaching competence is usually regarded as the core competence of academics. This dimension refers to teaching knowledge and skills. Teaching competence sets academics apart from other professions and significantly influences the success of the learning process and outcomes for learners (Rahman, 2014).This includes knowledge of pedagogical content, pedagogical innovation, a transformation of classroom practice, and enhanced student attainment by providing the opportunities for academicians to explore, reflect on teaching and create teaching instructed feedback (Turner. & Drake, 2016).

The other component of academic staff competency is research competence. Academic is not only a teacher, but also an expert in a certain subject. Research competence include the competencies of research methods and techniques, designing and carrying out research in teachers' fields (Selvi, K., 2010). It manifest as development of high-level literacy and subject-matter knowledge (Bocala, 2015). Research competency are influential for academics in following the developments in their fields and developing themselves based on these developments (Selvi, K., 2010), the academics who have failed to improve their research writing have few publications, and their work is deemed unreliable (Agricola et al., 2018).

Communication and Cooperation competence is the basis for carrying out teaching and research activities. Communicative competence of the academics, aimed at communicative tasks fulfilling in the process of the intellectual interaction of all participants in the educational process, is one of the basic components of the academic staff's professional competence, and is a significant factor in the quality of education and professional

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self-actualization of a higher education institution academic (Bulvinska, 2017). Academics need excellent communication skills to effectively convey complex ideas, facilitate discussions, and engage students in learning. This includes verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, clarity of expression, and the ability to adapt communication style to diverse audiences (Blašková et. al., 2014). Teachers are essentially a cooperative profession (Tian, 2005), academics can not only engage in critical reflection in cooperation, but also in the interaction and communication with colleagues, can exchange experiences and develop together (Cao, 2017).

Besides, personal characteristics competence refers to certain constellations of desirable stable characteristics, that is, “good teachers”, or those who are successful in their work with a special aptitude or a talent (Kunter, M. et. al., 2013). Getzels and Jackson (1965) believed that teacher personality refers to all behaviors of a teacher, including behavioral cognitive and modality factors such as attitudes, values, interests, judgments and needs. Academic staff personality is the sum of corresponding and relatively stable psychological characteristics consciously formed by academics on the basis of their physiological qualities while fulfilling their responsibilities and obligations as academics, and it is the dynamic organization existing within individual academic staff (Xing & Jia, 2001). And, the development of the academics' personality is paralleled by the development of all other aspects of academic staff professionalism (Latipah, E. et. al., 2020).

As higher education advances, the connotation of academics' competency is also continuously enriched. For example, based on the educational objectives of applied universities, the practical competence of academics in applied universities needs to be considered separately (Xi, 2014; Lin et al., 2020). Digital competence has gained a strong prominence in the educational context in recent times (Tejada & Pozos, 2018).

4. The Impact of Organizational support on academics' competency

Equipment in education is used in order to support and enrich teaching and to facilitate and make learning effective, especially when educational informatization becomes inevitable. Somekh (2008) argued that such infrastructures are crucial for developing the pedagogical use of digital technologies in school, and he also asserted that organizational structures of schools affected the use of digital technologies in teaching. Educational infrastructure in the form of space, furniture, educational tools and media, as well as books or teaching materials have an influence on academician performance and support in improving the performance of academic staff (Taufan, 2022). Teaching equipment management is an important factor for universities to improve academics’ teaching level, because it directly determine the service life and efficiency of equipment usage (Yu et al., 2021). Organizational infrastructure support provide powerful conditions for academics to improve teaching competence. In addition, teaching training provided by organizational improve academics’ teaching knowledge, skills and self-confidence which hearten academics to have perfect teaching performance. In-service (or professional development) training is positively associated with academics’ productivity (Harris & Sass, 2011). The Center for Teacher Development is an important organizational guarantee for the development of academics′ teaching competence in university, the Center opportunities for professional development such as workshops, conferences, seminars, and funding for research or training programs (Zhang & Yu, 2021). Faculty development programs should be arranged in order to help their personal and professional growth, also increase their trust in the tertiary education institution’s administration as a caretaker and supporter (Saleem & Amin, 2013).

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When organizational can offer sufficient research funds and formulate reasonable allocation and incentive policies, academics' research competence will be develop and achieve higher research outputs. According to Shatunova et al. (2020), the resources for research, such as research funds, and research grants play a crucial role in the research publications, as academics who are highly motivated for their publications and who have appropriate grants for their publications have a far superior research profile than researchers who lack any research grant. Improving competitive allocation mechanisms can enhance research performance by optimizing the utilization of funding resources (Braun, 2003). Similar conclusions also come from Sanjeevni Gangwani et al. (2022), whereby there was a positive significant association between organizational support such as research funding, library resources, research climate, research infrastructure and facilities, reward policy, research center services and academics research productivity. Furthermore, the management aim of organization and the support from colleagues and leaders within organizational encourage academics to improve their research competence. Nguyen et al. (2021) argued that the university characteristics, the institutions' policies (science development polices, human resource development policies, management policies and infrastructure development policies) have positive impact on academics' research productivity. Academics' frequent interaction, collaboration, and information sharing through such as organizing conferences, scientific workshops, training and retaining, sharing experiences, and disseminating new knowledge are important to improve academics' research competence (Abramo et al., 2017). While, leadership in university is also proven to be an important factor affecting research productivity (Tuan et al., 2022). Academics are also inevitably involved with administrative work and some levels of leadership roles. This has certain influence on their competencies in academic work as well.

Specific training and/or educational programs of academic staff communication competence increased the communication competence of academic staff (Lidija Zlatić et al., 2014). In the context of globalization and digitalization in education, academics need gain organizational support in knowledge, skills and equipment to improve communication and collaboration competence in response to new communication paradigms. The efforts toward building academics' intercultural communication competence become more important, academics need to receive intercultural communication training (Irwandi et al., 2019). The World Bank is showing interest in the issue of digital communication competencies (Kochkonbaeva et al., 2022), infrastructures are important and influential in the integration of technology and the development of digital competences in educational contexts (Jorge-Vázquez et al., 2021). Digital infrastructures and training are also important support from organizational to academics, communication and collaboration relates to sharing resources through online platforms and participating in online communities and networks (Garzón-Artacho, 2021). Besides, creating facilitate collaboration and networking opportunities is an important support from organization to develop academics' competency. Collaborative research projects, interdisciplinary initiatives, and partnerships with other institutions or industries (Bozeman et al., 2013; Lungeanu et al., 2014; Perkmann et al., 2013; vom Brocke, J., & Lippe, S., 2015; Wright et al., 2014)can enhance academics' competencies by exposing them to diverse perspectives, fostering innovation, and expanding their professional networks. Optimizing the evaluation system for academic achievements, creating opportunities and platforms for collaboration, and respecting the self-organizing nature of cooperation are essential and influential for fostering intra-university collaboration among academics (Huang, 2022). The management system of teams; team atmosphere; knowledge sharing status, and incentive measures will have an impact on academics' inter-university collaboration (Du, 2018). According to Tseng (2020), there are three fundamental factors of UIC (University–Industry Collaboration) environments within universities—namely, management mechanism, innovation climate, and

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reward system—are identified as critical antecedents of UIC funding and universities' technology innovation performance.

Organizational support in terms of polices of work-life balance would be able to balance the academic matters and personal life among the academics. Work-life balance refers to achieving a balance between professional and personal life through the management, organizational and prioritization of personal tasks and work routines (Fazal et al., 2019). The absence of favoring the work-life balance in the face of academics who work in the university environment can affect their commitment both in the area of teaching and in research (Franco et al., 2021). Therefore, academic administration should develop and implement strategies to support and enhance the work-life balance of academics throughout their academic careers (Amith et al.,2019; Soni & Bakhru, 2019). In organizations, when employees perceive work-life balance, their job satisfaction is enhanced leading to heightened levels of commitment and loyalty to the organizational objectives and mission (Agha, 2017). The same principle, when academics have a healthy work-life balance, they are likely to be more engaged, motivated, and productive in their work, leading to higher levels of competency.

According to SWOT analysis, Franco et al. (2021) identified that formulating policies for academicians, like improving the organizational climate, reducing gender inequality in undergraduate and graduate programs, organizing seminars on health, well-being and time management, and training coordination to formulate a structured model of feedback in terms of relationship management improved the work-life balance. In addition, academics who often participate in self-development programs will experience significant changes to the aspect of psychological maturity. They have a better work orientation and time management, have better self-disclosure, and show high enthusiasm; they become more confident and feel more motivated; furthermore, they become more disciplined, more adaptive, more active, and more determined to carry out their roles and duties as educators (Triyono et al., 2020). Hence, organizations shall consider unleashing academics' personal characteristics competence by certain program or activity.

Career development holds out the opportunity of growing vital skills inside the organizations, which are not offered on the external labor market (Saleem, & Amin, 2013). Because teaching staff is a profession that requires special skills as a teacher and cannot be done by just anyone outside the field of education (Solomou & Asimaki, 2022). For academics, the internal support within the higher learning institution is irreplaceable in enhancing their professional competence.

5. Conclusion

This research has shown that a positive relationship exists between organizational support and academics' competency. When universities prioritize and invest in providing a supportive organizational environment, including (1) infrastructures especially digital technology infrastructures, (2) funds, (3) training program, (4) management policies and (5) work-life balance culture can give the perceived organizational support for academics, then lead to higher job satisfaction, increased motivation, improved performance, and ultimately enhance the teaching competence, research competence, communication and collaboration competence and personal characteristics competence of academics.

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