

## Professional Commitment in Teachers: Comparative Study

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**Abstract:** *Professional commitment signifies an attitude reflecting the strength of the bond between an employee and an organization. In the present study we aim at identifying the configuration of the professional commitment dynamics in the primary and pre-school teaching staff, according to the "years of teaching experience" variable and, subsequently, the "age" variable.*

**Key words:** *professional commitment, organisational commitment, teaching staff*

### INTRODUCTION

The quality of teaching depends a great deal on the level of teachers' involvement in relation to the profession exerted, to the organization one is part of and the professional satisfaction that one feels. On the one side, the relation more teacher establishes with one's students, the nature of the teaching activity and the work carried on in the professional community, the relations with peers, superiors, students' parents leads to professional achievement and, indirectly, it reflects into the achievements of one's students.

We may say that the teacher's reaction during teaching activity represents a complex pattern, including specific attitudes and behaviour. A multitude of individual characteristics may affect their work reaction: aspirations, reasons, needs, perceptions, personality, ability to learn, creativity, as well as organizational characteristics, including working conditions, benefits, colleagues, leading style, company's policy, promotion opportunities etc. These factors are inter-related and influence employees in what concerns attitudes and behaviour.

### Organisational Commitment and Professional Commitment – Concept Delimitations

Organisational commitment is made up of more factors, such as faith and acceptance of the organisation's set of values and objectives, the employee's wish to strive for the organization and a strong will to keep working within it.

The efficiency of an educational organisation depends on more details; one of the most important is the interaction between the administrator, the teacher and the students, who are permanent items of the learning and teaching processes. Within this interaction, the school manager is the headmaster and the manager of the class is the teacher. From this perspective, teachers take to the teaching tasks and activities, to their students, occupation and colleagues; in other words, the teachers' attitude may have positive influence on the efficiency of the school they are part of.

The shapes of professional commitment and, accordingly, of organizational commitment represent behavioural predictors of work achievements, absenteeism, fluctuation, but also of the professional satisfaction.

The concept of professional commitment signifies an attitude reflecting the strength of the bond between an employee and an organization. Most of the authors define this concept as "the strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in an organization (Morrow, 1993, apud Charles-Pauvers, Wang, 1999, p.1) or the "psychological attachment felt by an individual within an organization and reflecting the degree to which an individual has interiorized and adopted the organisation's characteristics or perspective" (Oreilly, Chatman, 1986). In 1990, based on observations on several types of organizations, Meyer and Allen develop "The model of the three components of organizational commitment".

**Affective Commitment (AC)** has been considered to be that type of commitment based on the individual's identification with and involvement in the organization. It is an emotional commitment, where people that are in a great deal affectively connected to an organization stay within it because they want to.

**Continuity Commitment (CC)** is based upon the material and psychological costs involved by one's leaving the organization, people with such kind of commitment remaining within it because they are compelled to do so. This denomination has been attributed by Meyer and Allen that have started from the "side-bet" theory, created in 1960 by Becker. Side-bets represent investments in values of any kind, made both by the employees and the organization, that are not connected through work, but serve to ensuring a certain continuity within the organization.

The benefits offered by the organization usually refer to health insurance or certain systems of promotion or retirement, which benefits reduce the attractiveness of other employment opportunities. Actually, Becker referred to this type of commitment as "the individual's tendency to commit to a consistent line of activity". We may notice the commitment becomes more and more accountable, reflecting a cumulus of interests of the employees, accepted and fulfilled by the organization, that "bind" the individual to the organization, leading therefore to a sort of exchange or informal contract.

**Normative Commitment (NC)** is based upon an ideology or a sense of obligation towards the organization, on the individual's moral belief that it is right and moral to continue within the organisation. People having a high normative commitment keep staying within an organization, because they think they should. This feeling of obligation is the result of internalising the norms exerted on the individual before of following his admission into the organisation, through a process of familial or cultural socialization and, accordingly, organisational socialization.

The studies carried on assess that the organizational commitment may be determined by two categories of factors: individual ones, where we may include variables of inclinations (professional values, type of personality), demographic variables (age, gender, educational level, marital status) and organizational factors: structure of the job, type of organization, professional experience etc.

#### **Study Objectives:**

- Psychological analysis of the organisational commitment, professional commitment frames;

- Identification of the dynamics configuration of professional commitment in the primary and preschool teaching staff, according to the "years of teaching experience" variable and, subsequently, the "age" variable.

The investigation has been performed on a panel of 45 teachers in primary and preschool educational staff, working in both rural (20%) and urban (80%) residencies, with teaching experience of two to over 25 years.

The results have been obtained by applying the questionnaire to determine the professional commitment, as adapted according to J. Mayer and N. Allen (1999). The instrument comprises 18 items, grouped into three scales – affective commitment (based on the identification of the individual with the organisation), continuity commitment (based on the costs of leaving the organisation) and the normative commitment (referring to the feeling of obligation towards the organisation, based on the individual's moral belief that it is rightful and moral to stay within the organisation). The employed manner of responding is the Lickert type scale, with five steps, the subjects framing the assertions from 1 (total disagreement) to 5 (total agreement).

The results obtained have been analysed on the three groups of participants: teachers with work experience up to five years, teachers with work experience between ten and twenty years and teachers over 25 years of experience.

Concerning professional commitment, we notice significant differences between the frame components, according to the teacher's working experience. Thus, applying the „t" test of the difference between average values for the independent panels, we notice that:

- there are significant differences between group 1 and 3, regarding the teachers' affective commitment,  $m_1=21$  and  $m_3 = 22,4$ ;

- there are no significant differences between the average values of groups 2 and 3

regarding the affective professional commitment.

The affective commitment refers to the strong belief and acceptance of goals and professional values and the will to make considerable efforts to fulfill the professional objectives and responsibilities. Along their professional experience, teachers affectively involve themselves in their activity, establishing affective relationships with peers and students. The studies carried on prove that the empathy – ability to transpose oneself in another person's situation as if you were the other – as a teacher's professional trait, develops and strengthens in time and has a strong affective component. Other studies on the teacher's affective abilities confirm they develop in time, along performing the teaching profession and they turn into steady personality traits.

- no significant differences have been noticed between the three analysed groups regarding the normative commitment, neither the continuity one. The explanation may reside in the current Romanian socio-economic perspective. In the context of this financial recession, unemployment and uncertainty towards the future in young individuals, but mostly the specificity of the teaching profession lead to a strong continuity and normative commitment regarding teaching, but also towards the organisation where they carry on their professional activity.

### CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER WORK

We cannot generalize the data obtained in our research, because of the limited areal of the investigated individuals, but the variations in professional commitment may be explained in the case of our study by the combined effect of age and professional experience differences.

The implications of the notions on the professional commitment that define a certain professional category determines the design and generation of employees' motivational programmes, because they presume a variety of attitudes and types of behaviour, including various levels of work satisfaction, different levels of productivity and achievement, absenteeism and turnover.

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