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Exploring the Issue of Resignation among External Teachers in Z Region's Higher Vocational Colleges: Based on the Theory of Psychological Contract

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Abstract: As the enrollment size of higher vocational institutions in China swiftly amplifies, and with a simultaneous rise in the number of new specializations, existing full-time faculty members grapple with meeting the mounting prerequisites of vocational education. Challenges encompass a low teacher-student ratio, inconsistent quality, and varying teaching abilities. Given such conditions, vocational institutions have turned to hiring professional technicians from enterprises, a strategy that mitigates faculty shortage, economizes educational expenses, bolsters students' practical skills, and augments the scholarly ambiance. The Annual Report on Quality of China's Higher Vocational Education indicates a teacher-student ratio in Chinese vocational institutions of merely 1:15.6, with some well-sourced institutions even failing to satisfy the qualified standard of 1:18. Post expansion, a lag in administration has resulted in a persistently high turnover rate among faculty hires, thus engendering new challenges. There has been a noticeable yearly upsurge in turnover rates since 2017 among faculty hires. Additionally, diverse issues in faculty management within vocational institutions profoundly influence teaching quality. This article investigates 285 faculty hires from various vocational colleges in region Z. Utilizing the SPSS statistical analysis tool, it is revealed that the transactional, relational, and developmental dimensions of psychological contracts of External faculty all significantly correlate negatively ($P<0.05$) with turnover intentions. A multiple linear regression analysis further disclosed the developmental psychological contract as exerting the most substantial impact on faculty hire turnover rates. The paper concludes by offering suggestions to refine human resource management in vocational colleges in region Z.

Keywords: External Teachers; Psychological Contract; Management Strategy; Turnover Issue; Questionnaire Survey.

1. Introduction

The caliber of a teaching workforce, central to university competition, continually garners significant attention. In recent years, heightened school-enterprise cooperation aimed at fostering high-tech talent has led major vocational colleges to extensively employ technically proficient enterprise personnel as university faculty. While this approach enhances the intimacy of school-enterprise collaboration, it simultaneously elevates students' abilities to apply theoretical knowledge. However, attracting, effectively training, and retaining these externally sourced faculty members is paramount to maintaining teaching quality. The current macroeconomic landscape, fluctuating market conditions, and the escalating expectations of External teachers for their institutions contribute to a challenging employment scenario. Particularly within universities—hubs of knowledge-intensive talents—job-hopping and resignations are frequent occurrences. Data from institutional human resources departments indicate an average turnover period for External teachers of 1.34 years. This high turnover rate and frequent job changes inevitably destabilize the consistent improvement of university teaching quality, weaken core competencies, and obstruct vocational schools' healthy development. Consequently, addressing the high turnover rate of External teachers is pivotal to ensuring the sustainable progression of vocational colleges.

2. Survey on the Psychological Contract and Turnover Intention of External Teachers in Vocational Colleges in the Z Region

2.1. Research Tools

2.1.1. Basic Demographic Information Questionnaire

This questionnaire incorporates fundamental characteristics such as age, gender, emotional state, educational qualifications, and accumulated years of professional experience of the faculty members External by vocational colleges in the Z region.

2.1.2. Psychological Contract Scale

This scale was derived from the psychological contract scales formulated by Rousseau (1996) [1] and Li Yuan (2010) [2]. Adaptations were made to better suit the unique circumstances of External faculty. This instrument, exhibiting commendable reliability and validity upon testing, encompasses three distinct dimensions, specifically, transactional, relational, and developmental, and offers a total of 18 item options. The Likert five-point scoring method is employed, with scores 1 through 5 respectively denoting "strongly disagree" through to "strongly agree".

2.1.3. Turnover Intention Scale

This instrument was constructed based on the turnover intention scales crafted by Thomas (1998) [3] and Mobley (1978) [4], and amended to accommodate the peculiarities of externally employed teachers in vocational institutions. Proven to demonstrate robust reliability and validity upon testing, this scale comprises six item options. The Likert five-

point scoring methodology is utilized, where scores from 1 to 5 represent "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", respectively.

2.2. Distribution and Collection of Questionnaires

Through a combination of online and offline research methods, a total of 350 questionnaires were distributed to several major vocational colleges in the Z region. The questionnaires were anonymous, and 307 were collected, with 285 valid questionnaires, resulting in an effective recovery rate of 92%.

3. Analysis of Survey Results

3.1. Correlation Analysis

The Pearson correlation analysis was used to demonstrate the correlation between each dimension of the psychological contract of External teachers in vocational colleges in the Z region and their turnover intentions, as shown in the table below:

Table 1. Correlation Analysis between Psychological Contracts and Turnover Intention

		Transactional Dimension	Relational Dimension	Developmental Dimension	Turnover Intention
Transactional Dimension	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Significance (2-tailed)				
Relational Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.625**	1		
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000			
Developmental Dimension	Pearson Correlation	.536**	.536**	1	
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000		
Turnover Intention	Pearson Correlation:	-.627**	-.616**	-.679**	1
	Significance (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

** Indicates significant correlation at the .01 level (two-tailed)

From the above table, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient between the transactional dimension of the psychological contract and turnover intention is -0.627, the relational dimension and turnover intention is -0.616, and the developmental dimension and turnover intention is -0.679. This implies that there is a significant negative correlation ($P<0.05$) between each dimension of the psychological contract and turnover intention.

3.2. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 2. Results of Regression Analysis of Psychological Contracts and Turnover Intention

Test results t-test

Coefficients a

		Non-standardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig
		B	Standard Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	6.636	.129		38.363	.000
	Developmental Dimension	-.445	.039	-.382	-9.552	.000
	Transactional Dimension	-.367	.041	-.336	-7.257	.000
	Relational Dimension	-.217	.042	-.202	-5.569	.000

a. Dependent variable: Turnover intention.

Results of Regression Analysis of Psychological Contracts and Turnover Intention, Test results t-test

A multiple regression analysis was used to quantify the impact of each dimension of the psychological contract on the turnover rate of the External teachers, as shown in the table 2.

As shown in the table above, the coefficient of the developmental dimension of the psychological contract is -0.445, the transactional dimension is -0.367, and the relational dimension is -0.217. Therefore, among the dimensions of the psychological contract, the developmental dimension has the greatest impact on the turnover intention of part-time teachers.

4. Recommendations

4.1. Establish Career Planning for External Educators

External faculty members who are part-time personnel from industry are typically younger, crave challenging experiences, yet often lack comprehensive teaching acumen. Hence, they possess a pronounced desire to meticulously plot their career trajectories. Vocational institutions should center their attention on accommodating the multifarious requirements inherent in the career development planning of these External educators, thereby devising a career management framework congruent with their individual aspirations. It should be noted that the majority of these External personnel, upon procuring a lucid and equitable career blueprint, aspire to greater career advancement opportunities. Consequently, institutions should proffer fair and ample avenues for job development for these diversely qualified External educators, with a particular emphasis on creating broader career progression pathways for those with exceptional abilities. Additionally, in formulating the institution's career advancement mechanism, all variants of promotion systems ought to be transparent, equitable, and publicized, thereby boosting job satisfaction and achievement amongst External educators, and consequently diminishing their propensity to depart.

4.2. Foster a Positive Work Environment

Being intellectuals tasked with manifold responsibilities, External teachers grapple with a plethora of pressures in their daily work. On one hand, they must excel in their primary roles within their respective companies to generate value. On the other, they must fulfill their obligations as educators in their part-time roles, bearing the responsibility of nurturing students. Consequently, the creation of a conducive work milieu, inclusive of comfortable leisure spaces and a nurturing atmosphere, can afford these External educators a sanctuary from their hectic schedules, providing emotional relief and curbing complaints regarding excessive workload. Concurrently, beyond the enhancement of physical facilities, it is crucial to appropriately reduce and simplify the tasks shouldered by these External teachers. Overbearing workloads do not necessarily translate into enhanced pedagogical outcomes but may instead stifle their professional zeal. Prolonged work overload could potentially foster turnover inclinations among these External educators. Therefore, vocational colleges should custom-fit a welcoming and comforting work environment, aiding External teachers in recalibrating their work dynamics to alleviate pressure and augment their work efficiency, thereby actualizing transactional psychological contracts.

4.3. Implement Dynamic Management of Psychological Contracts

4.3.1. Management Strategies in the Construction Phase of Psychological Contracts

The establishment of a psychological contract between the External educator and the institution commences at the recruitment and hiring stage. During this period, vocational institutions and External educators consolidate the basis for the construction of psychological contracts through mutual dialogue. Hence, during the recruitment process, institutions should provide precise details regarding remuneration and career development opportunities on offer. Given that the psychological contract content embodies a degree of personal subjectivity, discrepancies in understanding the initial psychological contract between the recruitment manager and the applicant could arise. Therefore, subsequent to the induction of the External teacher, the university's human resources department should maintain regular communication to preclude dissatisfaction or the emergence of discrepancies due to misunderstandings of the psychological contract, which could engender negative attitudes.

4.3.2. Management Strategies in the Adjustment Phase of Psychological Contracts

Psychological contracts are not static entities; they evolve in response to external environments and individual psychological growth. Therefore, the school's human resources department should sustain active engagement and communication with External teachers to comprehend their psychological shifts post-induction and discuss psychological contract contents, thus garnering collective insight and actively considering the teachers' perspectives. Additionally, the institution could compile a psychological contract file for each External teacher, periodically documenting the psychological transitions of these part-time educators from industries post-induction, with the aim of dynamically adjusting management and boosting the sense of accomplishment in the work of these External teachers, consequently reducing their turnover rate.

4.3.3. Management Strategies in the Fulfillment Phase of Psychological Contracts

The construction of psychological contracts for External educators commencing their journey in vocational colleges begins at the initial stage of recruitment. If, upon induction, these educators discern a pronounced discrepancy between their actual income level and career trajectories versus the preliminary commitments expressed by recruiters, it could incite a rupture in their psychological contract, thereby exacerbating their inclinations to depart. Thus, when External educators officially embark on their roles within the institution, it is incumbent upon the human resources department to assign a dedicated liaison to gauge the extent to which the psychological expectations of these new hires are being met. In the event that a gap persists between the actual circumstances and the psychological anticipations of the External educators, human resource managers should exercise acute vigilance. They ought to initiate proactive communication with the External educators to unearth the underlying causes, undertake introspection and modifications, and promptly formulate remedial measures to attenuate the gap between the educators' psychological expectations and reality. In doing so, they can mitigate their propensities to leave and maintain the efficacy of the psychological contract.

In summation, the roots of turnover among externally External educators in higher education institutions are multifarious. The resolution of this quandary demands holistic strategizing and a multifaceted approach. Identifying the causative factors, studying corrective measures, and executing concrete initiatives can efficaciously counteract the elevated turnover rates.

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