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Respect, Recognition, Remuneration and Support for Academic Staff: Implications for Professional Identity, Meaningful Work, Commitment, and Student Experiences

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Organisation Priority

Participants reported challenges between their own priorities (engaging in research, teaching) and that of the organisation (teaching and administration). Person-organisation fit is important in improving job satisfaction and commitment (Meyer et al., 2010)

The case study HE provider is a private institution and so is focused on the generation of profit rather than on good pedagogy, professional development. Students are positioned as consumers rather than learners. In their research, Bunce et al. (2016) report that students adopting a consumer identity are academically weaker.

Academia or Business?

A mismatch between identities emerged from the data, where academics wished to participate in practices that involve research engagement and good teaching pedagogy. This is couched in a context that prioritises the maximisation of investment, a focus on the financial outputs of students. The literature suggests that this is a common experience in for-profit institutions where faculty staff have little authority or influence with the focus on managerial boards (Baty, 2009).

Change

A number of changes were reported such as:

- Student as learner to student as consumer
- Increasing levels of management control and bureaucracy
- Impending organisational structure changes

Uncertainty at work, in any profession, is counter-productive to the development of organisational commitment and loyalty (Meyer et al., 2010).

Professional Status

The academics interviewed wished to prioritise their own development. They recognise that their personal 'brand', reputation, and kudos is linked to research outputs. These priorities are not shared by their institution.

The outcome of this mismatch is that staff intention to turnover is reported highly; a number of interviewees are developing an exit strategies. Commitment to the organisation was not high

Relationships

Camaraderie is high amongst the staff, interviewees report that their academic colleagues contribute positively to their motivation whereas their non-academic management staff contribute negatively.

Wenger (1998) asserts that participation in shared goals at work are instrumental for individual and team success. The mismatch between academics and management noted in this study is likely to be associated with staff disaffection and reduced organisational commitment (Buch, 2015).

Personal Fulfilment

Academics reported feeling pride in their teaching and so were conscious of the quality of their content and delivery. Research provides an intellectual stimulus and PhD progression has been fulfilling for some participants. This is not an uncommon dichotomy in higher education (Graham, 2014).

In the current case study, the reported fulfilment trajectory for participants required them leaving their current institution in pursuit of a better teaching and research relationship.



This study forms part of a larger mixed-methods research project, the qualitative data presented here explores pertinent issues to academic identities in a private provider of HE programmes. Eight members of staff were interviewed to explore their role in order to develop an insight into job-satisfaction related issues such as professional identity, values within academia, shifts in organisational practice and priorities.

The thematic results are explored here, raising issues for institutions, academics, and Higher Education as an industry.



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