

Career Values as Predictors of Teacher Professional Development

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Abstract:

The study used the quantitative method of research to statistically analyze the career values and continuing professional development of college teachers. The study was conducted at selected schools in Jiangxi, China. It involved a sample size of 343 teachers who were selected randomly. The finding of the study has implications for human resource development in schools. It brings to light the importance of strengthening the career values of teachers towards better continuing professional development.

Keywords: teachers' career values, continuing professional development

Introduction

In China, the challenges of shifting educational direction in the post-pandemic is coupled with the rapid expansion of its higher education system. This leads to college teachers feeling the pressure of high demands, few incentives, and fierce competition in the workplace [1]. Amid this situation, school administrators must know whether their teachers are up to the challenge. Some indicators can inform school administrators about it. One is the career values of the teacher, and another is their continuing professional development status. The teachers' career values can be an observable indicator of how far they can go in overcoming the new educational challenges. It is important to understand their present career values because it is the foundation of most work-related attributes of teachers.

Career values are personal principles that define an individual's professional environment toward job satisfaction, career growth, and success. In the literature, it is also regarded as work values that define one's working life [2]. Knowing the career values of the teacher will also give hints about their extrinsic and intrinsic behaviors like career choice, commitment, socialization, engagement, job satisfaction [3], work well-being and general job satisfaction [4][5], job selection, employee's well-being, and job satisfaction [6][7][8].

The present generation of employees espouses an intermix of traditional and protean career values [9] which may be true for teachers as well. According to Hall et al.[10], protean career values are more grounded on intrinsic motivation like self-actualization [11] rather than being influenced by external rewards. The protean career paths of frequently changing employers and jobs, increasing career self-management, mobility, and striving for subjective career success are present in young people [12]. According to Gallie [13], protean values like independence, autonomy, and self-realization are on the rise, and traditional values like security, status, and comfort are on the decline. Recognizing the continuing social developments, Abessolo et al. [14] developed a career-value scale combining traditional and protean

career values. It has the following domains: social, management, specialization, mobility, independence, salary, work-life balance, and variety.

China's quest for high global recognition in education is not affecting career values only. It has drastically changed the roles of the teachers as well. According to Xu [15], the traditional role of teachers as a source of knowledge and ethical authority is no longer meeting the demands of contemporary Chinese society. Chinese college teachers must embrace continuing professional development. Based on the 2021 Education International report, accessible and meaningful continuing professional education is still elusive [16] with a global participation rate of 43% only [17]. This is the reason why high-quality teacher professional development is a top priority in global and political agendas [18]. Evers et al. [19] developed a set of indicators for professional development which are keeping up to date, experimenting, reflecting, and asking for feedback, collaborating with colleagues to improve lessons, and collaborating with colleagues to improve school development.

The need to study career values and continuing professional development was stressed by Fute et al. [2] and Ke, et al., [20] amidst the rapidly changing educational landscape. This study, however, went beyond the simple assessment of career values, and professional development. It also determined whether career values predict professional development. With this objective, it was hoped that this study would contribute significantly to Chinese research literature, and ultimately to improving education.

The study is also anchored on the self-determination theory (SDT) developed by Deci and Ryan [21]. Using SDT, the teachers' desire for career growth can be seen as a way to achieve self-determination. SDT posits that self-determination is driven by the need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These needs may be realized through the teachers' continuing professional development. It may ultimately manifest in the general career values of job satisfaction, career growth, and success which were presented by the theory of work.

Method

The study was conducted in selected higher education institutions in Jiangxi, China. It involved 343 teachers who were selected randomly. The sample of 343 respondents was the minimum size required for the teacher population of 3,138. To gather data, the researcher used a survey questionnaire whose items were adopted from the Career Values Questionnaire (CVQ) by Abessolo et al. [14], and Evers et al. [19] scale for professional development. The survey was conducted online. To determine the predictive role of career values on professional development, multiple linear regression was used.

Results and Discussion

The assessment of social career values showed the following means and standard deviations: social ($\bar{x} = 3.09$, $SD = 0.72$), management ($\bar{x} = 3.11$, $SD = 0.75$), specialization ($\bar{x} = 3.13$, $SD = 0.70$), mobility ($\bar{x} = 3.12$, $SD = 0.74$), independence ($\bar{x} = 3.12$, $SD = 0.73$), salary ($\bar{x} = 3.14$, $SD = 0.72$), work-life balance ($\bar{x} = 3.05$, $SD = 0.43$), variety ($\bar{x} = 3.12$, $SD = 0.73$). While the respondents considered all of the values important, the numerical ratings they gave to each of them varied. For the respondents, the topmost value is salary. The respondents give the most consideration to salary when it comes to their careers. The second priority of the respondents is specialization. They believe that teaching career provides them with opportunities for specialization. They also value the social impact of their work as teachers, the possibility of being a part of the school management, being mobile doing missions abroad, and having variety in work. Moreover, the respondents value independence. They want to be autonomous when it comes to

choosing their career trajectory. On the other hand, work-life balance is ranked last in the set of career values. Whether the teaching job provides an opportunity to balance work and family life is still important to the respondents, however, it is the least prioritized in the set of career values.

The respondents' assessment that all the career values are important is partly similar to what Abessolo et al. [14], and Jun [22] found out in their studies. In the study of Abessolo et al. [14], the Swiss respondents believed that all eight career values are important. The Swiss employees put work-life balance as their top consideration and management at the bottom. In Jun's [22] study, the Chinese teachers considered all eight career values important with specialization at the top of their priority and mobility at the last. The differences in the ranking of the career values reflect the varying contexts each group of respondents is facing.

The assessment of the respondents' continuing professional development showed the following means and standard deviations: keeping up to date ($\bar{x} = 3.14, SD = 0.72$), experimenting ($\bar{x} = 3.14, SD = 0.73$), reflecting and asking feedback ($\bar{x} = 3.13, SD = 0.75$), collaborating with the aim of improving the lesson ($\bar{x} = 3.10, SD = 0.75$), and collaborating with the aim of improving school development ($\bar{x} = 3.12, SD = 0.74$). The overall mean of 3.12 indicates that the continuing professional development of the respondents is in a good status. The respondents keep themselves updated because subject content and pedagogies continue to change. They exert deliberate effort to experiment or undertake something new in their teaching. The respondents reflect to analyze and evaluate their teaching experiences to improve future instruction. They are also open to direct and constructive feedback about their teaching. Moreover, the respondents collaborate to improve their teaching and to improve the school development as well. The finding is partly similar to what was reported by Qian [23]. She revealed that Chinese e-commerce teachers are excellent in their continuing professional development initiatives.

Table 1: Multiple Linear Regression Results

Independent Variable	Adjusted R ²	B	Sig	Interpretation
Social	0.878	0.192	.000	Predictor
Variety		0.165	.000	Predictor
Salary		0.204	.000	Predictor
Specialization		0.188	.000	Predictor
Management		0.148	.000	Predictor
Mobility		0.119	.002	Predictor

Table 1 shows the result of the multiple linear regression. The model includes the following career values as predictors of continuing professional development: social, variety, salary, specialization, management, and mobility. The set of career values explains 87.8% of the variance in continuing professional development. The finding is somehow supported by the study of Zakaria et al. [24] linking career aspirations and professional development and planning of Malaysian TVET teachers. A part of their results showed that career aspirations predict professional development and planning. In the study, career aspirations have elements that are closely associated with career values like intending to pursue certain positions, promotion, and improvement knowledge. On the other hand, the measure of professional development and planning resembles some of the domains of continuing professional development like being better at their work, enhancing technical skills, and attending training courses.

Conclusion

The study has shown that college teachers consider social, management, specialization, mobility, independence, salary, work-life balance, and variety in choosing their teaching career. They also recognize the importance of continuing professional development. More importantly, the study has established the predictive role of career values on continuing professional development. By strengthening the following career values: social, variety, salary, specialization, management, and mobility the continuing professional development is likely to improve as well.

The finding of the study has implications for human resource management. While the respondents assessed all the career values in the study as important, none of it has reached the highest level of regard among the respondents. This implies that the teachers' career values need more cultivation. The finding of the study also has implications for promoting continuing professional development. As seen in the study, there is still much room for engagement in continuing professional development activities. Since both career values and continuing professional development need enhancements, it is logical to focus more on the career values that predict continuing professional development.

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