

THE INFLUENCE OF PRINCIPAL SUPPORT, COLLEGIAL SUPPORT AND ROLE STATES ON TEACHER COMMITMENT

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Although there has been a growing body of knowledge on the factors influencing commitment of teachers in the field of education, not many studies focused on commitment of technical school teachers. Acknowledging this limitation, this study aims to investigate the influence of principal support, collegial support and role states on commitment of these teachers towards the teaching profession. Commitment was investigated using Meyer and Allen's Commitment Model (1990) which comprised of three components: affective, continuance and normative. Based on this model, the study examined the extent to which commitment can be predicted by principal support, collegial support and role states. Data were collected from 120 randomly selected technical school teachers in Sarawak, using self-administered questionnaires. Results obtained from the correlation analysis revealed that teachers who perceived high levels of principal support and collegial support were more committed to the teaching profession. However, teachers who perceived high levels of role states were relatively less committed. Principal support and collegial support were also strongly related to affective, continuance and normative commitment. Role states were negatively related to affective commitment but positively related to continuance commitment. Results from multiple regression analysis revealed that overall commitment was predicted by principal support (emotional support) and collegial support but not role states. These two predictors explained 34.5% of the variance in commitment. Based on the statistical results, implications of the findings were discussed in the context of understanding commitment. Suggestions on how to increase commitment and avenues for future research were also provided.

Keywords: commitment, principal support, collegial support, role states

INTRODUCTION

The ministry of Education has entrusted technical school teachers to achieve the highest standard of education by providing world-class quality technical and vocational education in order to meet the changing needs of industries today. Arising from this demand from top policy makers, the roles of technical school teachers have undergone major transformation. It is unlike in the past whereby, traditionally, they were the professional practitioners in their respective fields, providing entry-level employment skills to groups of low achiever students within an enclosed classroom so that they could fill lower-strata occupational roles. These work-related skills were considered to be sufficient to meet the manpower needs of the contemporary factories and industries at one time.

Today, the traditionally recognised roles and responsibilities of these teachers are being redefined. The role of technical teachers has been broadened to focus more on not only imparting basic work skills but skills and competencies that would enable them to adapt to inevitable changes taking place in the workplace. For such a workforce to develop, they need to create a more conducive teaching and learning environment that goes

beyond the traditional classroom and textbook approach. They need to provide students industrial exposure and hands-on knowledge to meet the changing needs of industries and to face the challenges of the competitive world. As a result of the expansion of roles and responsibilities of technical school teachers, there is a greater need for principal support and collegial support.

Additionally, due to the expansion of roles faced by these teachers today, they have been thrust into a position of more than just educators. They have to play multiple roles and cater for multiple demands coming from policy-makers, administrators, students, parents and society. As a result of the multidimensional roles entailed in today's teaching job, it is not uncommon to hear of teachers complaining of role states or stressors which are associated with role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

All these factors (principal support, collegial support and role states) have a great influence on a variety of teachers' work attitudes such as work satisfaction, attrition, stress, motivation, burnout, participation, performance, commitment (Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Shin & Reyes, 1995; Littrell, et al., 1994; McManus & Kauffman, 1991; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Richards & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Chan, 1998; Thomson & Wendt, 1995; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Fong, 1993; Leiter, 1991; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Fogarty, et al., 2000; O'Driscoll & Beehr., 2000; Singh, 1998; Igbaria & Parasuraman, 1994; Singh, et al., 1994, Brown & Peterson, 1993; Singh, 1993; Singh & Billingsley, 1996). Although past studies have reported the influence of these three variables with a variety of work attitudes, the primary focus of this study is to look at the association between principal support, collegial support and role states with commitment to the teaching profession.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The importance of principal support and collegial support for technical school teachers cannot be ignored in view of the widening roles and responsibilities arising from the changing needs of industries to face the challenges of a competitive world. Arising from the manpower demand of these industries, support from both principals and colleagues are needed to assist them in producing a pool of well-educated, trainable and skilled workforce.

With the expansion of roles and responsibilities entrusted to technical school teachers, complication can also arise when teachers do not have the personal experiences and capabilities to cope giving rise to role related problems, such as role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. Since there are general evidences from the review of literature of the adverse effects associated with role states, failure to address role-related problems issues would result in significant dysfunctional effects on numerous work outcomes as teachers facing role states would not be able to function effectively and efficiently at the work place.

Commitment of these teachers is not of lesser significance. The technical school system also needs to be run by a pool of not only highly skilled but also highly committed teaching workforce. This is because, they not only determine the effectiveness of technical and vocational training but also work towards the educational mission of achieving high quality world-class technical education. Hence, maintaining a well-established and highly committed teaching force in technical schools, with teachers displaying willingness to exert efforts and time on behalf of the profession and at the same time working closely with the system to achieve its educational goal, should be of utmost importance.

More importantly is that past studies have also indicated that commitment is correlated to principal support, collegial support and roles states (Richard & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Pounder, 1999; Karmar & Carlson, 1999; Darchan Singh, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Littrell, et al., 1994; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Hart, 1994; Firestone & Penell, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993 Singh, 1998, Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Igbaria & Parasuraman, 1994; Singh, et al., 1994, Brown & Peterson, 1993; Singh, 1993). The consensual view emerging from the review of literature was that teachers who failed to receive support, either from the principal or peers, at the workplace were found to be less committed to teaching whereas role states have a negative effect on commitment.

In view of the importance and association of these three variables with commitment, this study aims to investigate further into these relationships. Although a thorough literature search found that commitment are correlated with principal support, collegial support and role states, very few studies address this issue among technical school teachers in Sarawak. Since these issues have not been extensively conducted, it was the aim of this study to find out how the three variables are related to their commitment to the teaching profession. This investigation would shed additional light in order to fill the literature gap in this discipline where data are still duly lacking.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The present study aims to enlighten researchers and practitioners on the relationship between commitment, the dependent variable of the study and principal support, collegial support and role states (role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload), the independent variable. Due to the constraint of time and resources, this study was confirmed to the study of technical school teachers in the region of Sarawak.

Specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

- Is there a significant relationship between commitment and principal support support
- Is there a significant relationship between commitment and collegial support?
- Is there a significant relationship between commitment and role states?
- What is the contribution of each of the significant predictor variables towards the variance of commitment?

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section aimed to review relevant literature pertaining to commitment, the dependent variable of this study. The first part discussed the theoretical background of commitment, the conceptualisation of commitment in general, what it is and how it develops. Subsequently, more specific literature review on past empirical studies related to the relationship between commitment and professional support was reviewed and discussed.

Theoretical Background

The theoretical background of this study was taken from Meyer and Allen's multi-dimensional model of commitment (1997). Based on the model, commitment is a multi-dimensional construct comprising of three separate components: affective, continuance and normative. Affective commitment referred to the employees' emotional attachment to, identification with and involvement in the profession. Employees with a strong affective commitment continue employments with the profession because they want to do so. Continuance commitment refers to an awareness of the costs associated with leaving the profession. It develops as a result of any action or event that increases the cost of leaving the profession, provided the employee recognises that these costs have been incurred. According to Meyer and Allen (1997), employees whose primary link to the profession is based on continuance commitment remain because they have to. Normative commitment reflects a sense of obligation to continue employment. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel that they ought to remain with the profession by virtue of their belief that it is the right and moral thing to do (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Wiener, 1982).

Commitment

According to Thornhill, et al. (1990), the concept of commitment is a highly complex element. It has attracted a great deal of attention from researchers trying to conceptualise, explore and evaluate this complex concept. A thorough literature review indicated that previous research examining commitment has focused primarily on one aspect of commitment. The most often used definition of commitment comes from Porter, et al. (1974) where it was defined as 'the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organisation.

However, researchers who have adapted Porter, et al.'s (1974) definition of commitment, have received many criticisms. This is because commitment was viewed as a uni-dimensional construct, measuring the emotional or affective attachment of an individual to the organisation. This definition has been criticised as being too simplistic (Benkhoff, 1997). In a more comprehensive review of literature on commitment in the workplace, researchers have identified more than one factor in measuring commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Balfour & Wechsler, 1996), thereby, casting doubt on the uni-dimensionality of Porter, et al.'s (1974) definition of the concept. Instead of looking at commitment as one single factor it developed to include three other components: (1) affective; (2) continuance; and (3) normative (Meyer & Allen, 1997). According to Meyer & Allen (1997), the uni-dimensional construct of commitment failed to consider that an employee might be committed for other reasons beside the affective attachment. For instance, an employee might be committed due to continuance commitment where

the cost of leaving was perceived to be high or normative commitment, whereby, the employee might be committed due to moral obligation.

Recognizing the multiple components of commitment, this study was undertaken to explore Meyer and Allen's three-component commitment model to differentiate the components which teachers were committed. This is because different component of commitment is believed to have different implications to the education system. Theoretically, all three components of commitment are related to teacher's likelihood to remain in the teaching profession. However, the nature of the teacher's likelihood to remain in the profession might be quite different depending on which component of commitment is predominant. Although there are many foci of commitment, this study has been narrowed to focus on commitment, which is defined as the relative strength of a teacher's affective, continuance and normative commitment towards the teaching profession.

Commitment and Principal Support

In this study, the framework used by Littrell, et al. (1994) was used to guide the definition of principal support. It was defined as the degree to which the principal provides or extends emotional, appraisal, informational and instrumental support to the teachers of the school. Based on literature review, numerous studies have linked commitment to the leader of an institution or organisation. Past studies, either educational or non-educational, reported that commitment was associated with leader consideration, leader-member exchange, administrative support, principal buffering principal/leadership support (Richards & O'Brien, 2002; Karmar & Carlson, 1999; Darchan Singh, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Littrell, et al., 1994; Billingsley & Cross, 1992). Among the educational studies conducted, it was reported that the degree of commitment exhibited by the teachers was very much influenced by the principal. These studies indicated that teachers who experienced higher level of principal support were more likely to be committed than those receiving less support. However, literature review indicated conflicting results between organisational commitment and commitment. For instance, in Billingsley and Cross' study (1992), leadership support was found to be significantly related to organisational commitment but not related to commitment. Teachers who received leadership support were found to be more committed to the school division but leadership support did not influence commitment to the profession.

On the contrary, the study conducted by Singh and Billingsley (1998) reviewed that principal support did contribute to teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. In fact, their studies found that principal support influenced teachers' commitment directly and indirectly through peer support. Their findings indicate the importance of principal support in enhancing teachers' commitment and also the effect principals could have on teachers' collegial relationship. Teachers with received higher level of principal support were found to be more professionally committed than those teachers who felt that the principals were not supportive of them.

Commitment and Collegial Support

Collegial support referred to the extent to which teachers could rely on each other to get work done and to solve work-related problems. The idea that teachers who were involved in collaborative activities and received collegial support were also the most committed is fully grounded in the education literature (Richard & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Pounder, 1999; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Hart, 1994; Firestone & Penell, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993). These findings reviewed that when teachers faced work settings where there was a highly supportive collegial environment, they demonstrated higher level of commitment to teaching. In some studies such as the one conducted by Singh & Billingsley (1998), among the many variables studied, collegial or peer support exerted the largest direct effect on commitment of teachers ($\beta = .30$).

In addition to education research, the more general research on employee's commitment has clearly shown that workplace condition such as co-worker support is also related to commitment (Kim 1999; Nijhof, et al., 1998; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Spector, 1997). These studies concluded that interaction and collaboration with co-workers helped to enhance and strengthen commitment of workers.

Although collegiality has been heavily studied, past findings pertaining to whether its relationship with commitment is significant or otherwise, are still non-conclusive. There are evidences of contradictions among studies conducted on the association between these two variables. For instance, Nijhof, et al. (1998) studied collegiality among human resource managers in the organisations of The Netherlands and found collegiality significantly correlated with commitment ($r = .64$). Similarly, Singh and Billingsley (1998) also reported the same result with a reported beta value of .30. However, the study on automobile workers in Korea, conducted by Kim (1999) and on health education teachers by Richards and O'Brien (2002) failed to establish any significant association between collegial support and commitment. It was reported that collegial support was not a significant determinant of commitment. Based on these contradictions, replication of this association is needed to confirm the findings and also to find out if this relationship is present among technical school teachers.

Commitment and role states

The next section aims to discuss the relationship between role states and commitment of teachers to the teaching profession. In this study role states referred to the degree of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by teachers in the teaching profession. How commitment is linked to each of the components of role states is specifically dealt with in the following section.

Commitment and role conflict

Role conflict referred to the degree to which a teacher receives incompatible demands or expectations from role partners or associated with a single role. An exhaustive review of past studies found an extensive body of research on the relationship between role conflict and a variety of other correlates which were cumulated since the development of the most widely used scales to measure organisational role stress by Rizzo, et al. (1970). Among

the correlates were burnout (Um & Harrison, 1998); job dissatisfaction (Um & Harrison, 1998; Billingsley & Cross, 1992); and stress (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997; Singer, 1993a, 1993b), indicating the negative effects of role conflict on work outcomes. In terms of commitment, empirical evidence also showed that role conflict was negatively associated with commitment (Naumann, et al., 2000; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997; Michaels & Dubinsky, 1996; Igbaria & Parasuraman, 1994; Billingsley & Cross, 1992). This implies that employees who suffered role conflict, reported lower commitment.

The review of literature indicated that this concept of role conflict has been researched extensively by past researchers, which included social workers (Um & Harrison, 1998); counsellors (Freeman & Coll, 1997); special educators (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997); industrial sales forces (Michaels & Dubinsky, 1996); and information system employees (Igbaria & Parasuraman, 1994). However, little attention has been devoted to exploring this concept among teachers, and even much less on technical school teachers. Hence, investigating into this area would be highly important in light of prior findings that technical school teachers also faced role conflict.

Commitment and Role Ambiguity

Closely related to role conflict is role ambiguity which referred to the degree to which a teacher receives insufficient information when carrying out expected roles and responsibilities in the teaching profession.

Since the theory of organisational role dynamics was first introduced, extensive research had also examined the relationships between role ambiguity and a variety of other correlates. Previous studies have provided consistent empirical support to indicate that perceived high level of role ambiguity was related to stress, burnout, low job satisfaction and low job performance (Moore, 2000; Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997; Abramis, 1994; Naumann, 1993; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Cano & Miller, 1992; Siefert, et al., 1991; Milosheff, 1990). The negative job outcomes that were associated with role ambiguity, indicated the importance of role clarifications. In relation to commitment, role ambiguity also achieved similar results to that of role conflict. According to past studies, role ambiguity was found to be negatively related to commitment (Naumann, et al., 2000, Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997; Michaels & Dubinsky, 1996; Igbaria & Parasuraman, 1994; Singer, 1993b; Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Chieffo, 1991). Employees who faced lack of clarity in their roles or responsibilities exhibited reduced commitment.

Although extensive studies have been conducted on this construct, past studies provided limited evidence regarding the effect of role ambiguity on teacher commitment. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to investigate further into this relationship.

Commitment and role overload

The degree to which a teacher receives cumulative role demands which exceeded his or her abilities and motivation to perform the expected role and responsibilities in the teaching profession was used to measure role overload. Although literature review uncovered extensive studies linking role overload to other work outcomes such as

burnout and intention to quit (Moore, 2000; Janssen, et al., 1999; Whitaker, 1996; Schaufeli, 1990; Singh, et al. 1994), there were significantly less studies on its relationship with commitment (Wisniewski & Gargiulo, 1997; Singh, et al., 1994; Morris & Sherman, 1981; Morris & Koch, 1979). Nevertheless, most of these researchers found that role overload was strongly and inversely related to commitment. It is widely accepted that employees who are faced with increased role demands and responsibilities would exhibit reduced commitment.

However, not all studies reported a negative relationship. In the study conducted by Singh, (1998), role overload has a positive influence on commitment and also significantly related. In this study, salespersons who experienced high level of role overload tend to be more committed to their organisation. This finding was found to be in contradictions as predicted by role theory. Due to the contradicting findings, more research was needed to understand the underlying inter-relationship between this variable and commitment.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive correlational design, intended to investigate the relationship between professional support (principal and collegial support) and commitment. This design employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey research methodology, where data were collected by asking a group of respondents to answer a set of predetermined questions at a single point in time. The research was carried out on all the trained technical school teachers teaching in technical schools located in the entire state of Sarawak. A sample size of 120 was randomly selected to represent the target population. Questionnaires were used as a research instrument to collect data from the respondents identified for this study. The questionnaire consisted of three main sections. The first section measured the demographic information of the respondents. The second section consisted of a list of items to measure principal support, collegial support and role states which were adapted from Littrell, et al. (1994), Singh and Billingsley (1998) and Rizzo, et al. (1970) respectively. The third section of the instrument measured commitment, derived from Meyer, Allen and Smith's (1993) commitment scale. The responses of the statements used were based on a likert-type scale of one to seven with one representing 'absolutely disagree' and seven representing 'completely agree'. The data collected were then analysed using SPSS. A combination of statistical analyses such as, descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression were used to analyse the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Respondents in the study were all full-time technical school teachers who were randomly selected from all the technical schools in Sarawak. Out of the 110 respondents in the survey, a demographic assessment of the sample revealed that there were more male (56.4%) than female teachers (43.6%) with an average age of 32 years (SD = 6.39). In terms of marital status, 58.2% of the sample were married, 41.8% were single. As far as education was concerned, 65.5% of the respondents earned a bachelor's degree or higher while 34.5% were non-graduates who held a college teaching certificate. The respondents

have been working in their current school for an average of 5.1 years ($SD=4.43$), and had an average of 7.3 years ($SD = 6.66$) of teaching experience.

Commitment and Principal Support

Table 1 showed the correlation matrix between commitment and principal support. The table revealed that commitment was positively and significantly correlated with principal support. Commitment was also moderately and positively correlated with all the four support dimensions of principal support. The magnitude of correlation ranged from .47 to .58 in the order of instrumental support ($r = .47$), informational support ($r = .53$), appraisal support ($r = .56$) and the strongest correlation was emotional support ($r = .58$).

Upon close-examination into the relationships between the components of commitment and principal support, an almost identical pattern existed for affective and normative commitment, where they were also found to be positively and significantly correlated, with the total scores of principal support as well as its four support dimensions. With respect to continuance commitment, although the relationship with principal support was weak ($r = .20$) but it was statistically significant. However, two out of the four support dimensions were not significantly correlated, which were informational and instrumental support.

Nevertheless, based on this finding, it is still logical to infer that principal support was a significant factor influencing the commitment of technical school teachers in the region understudied. Teachers seemed to demonstrate higher affective, continuance and normative commitment to the teaching profession when provided with principal support, although not all the dimensions were of significant importance.

Previous research conducted within this perspective, linking commitment to a supportive principal or leader of an organization, also showed evidence of a positive correlation between these two variables (Billingsley & Cross, 1992; Richards & O'Brien, 2002; Karmar & Carlson, 1999; Darchan Singh, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Cross & Billingsley, 1994; Littrell, et al., 1994). Minor differences that might occur between the findings of the present study with previous studies, either in similar or related fields, might be partly attributable to the types of professionals who participated in their studies. Nevertheless, the relationship between principal support and commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak has been empirically established in this study.

Table 1

Correlation Coefficient between Commitment and Principal Support, Collegial Support and Role States

Independent Variables	Commitment			
	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Overall
Principal Support	.41*	.20*	.53*	.56*
Emotional	.45*	.19*	.55*	.58*
Appraisal	.39*	.24*	.50*	.56*
Informational	.39*	.18	.51*	.53*
Instrumental	.35*	.15	.46*	.47*
Collegial Support	.29*	.28*	.47*	.51*
Role states	-.30*	.20*	-.12	-.10
Role conflict	-.25*	.13	-.06	-.08
Role ambiguity	-.28*	.23*	-.14	-.08
Role overload	-.25*	.16	-.13	-.10

* correlation is significant at the .05 level

Commitment and Collegial Support

Table 2 presented the correlation results between commitment and collegial support. Pearson correlations revealed that commitment was significantly related to collegial support at .05 level of significance. With regards to the three components of commitment, the results revealed that affective, continuance and normative commitments were also positive and significantly correlated to collegial support. This result implied that teachers who worked in a collaborative setting where colleagues are highly supportive of each other were more likely to remain in the teaching profession.

This finding was found to be consistent with previous education literature (Richard & O'Brien, 2002; Woods & Weasmer, 2002; Pounder, 1999; Abdul Manaf, 1998; Nijhot, et al., 1998; Singh & Billingsley, 1998; Gersten & Brengelman, 1996; Hart, 1994; Firestone & Penell, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993). It has been extensively grounded in literature teachers who faced a work setting where a highly supportive collegial environment existed, teachers demonstrated higher commitment to teaching.

Commitment and Role States

The result displayed in Table 1 showed that role states were negatively related to commitment with r value of $-.10$. However, this correlation was found to be not statistically significant. Also none of the three components of role states, role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, was significantly correlated with commitment. This was partly because these three components shared a weak correlation ranging from $r =$

.08 to $r = .10$ with commitment, and thus not correlated at a statistically significant level of .05.

Table 1: Correlation Coefficient between Commitment and Role States

	Commitment			
	Affective	Continuance	Normative	Overall
Role states	-.30*	.20*	-.12	-.10
Role conflict	-.25*	.13	-.06	-.08
Role ambiguity	-.28*	.23*	-.14	-.08
Role overload	-.25*	.16	-.13	-.10

* correlation is significant at the .05 level

Further investigation into the three components of commitment and its correlates, it was found that there were also no significant relationships between role states or any of its three components with normative commitment. Neither role conflict, nor role ambiguity or role overload was correlated with normative commitment. However, the reverse was true for affective commitment. Table 1 showed that affective commitment was negatively and significantly correlated with role states, with correlation coefficient, $r = -.30$. The affective component of commitment was also significantly related to all the three components of role states, the strongest relationship with role ambiguity ($r = -.28$), followed by role conflict ($r = -.25$) and role overload ($r = -.25$). This implied that teachers would be less likely to be emotionally committed to their teaching job when they faced situations where they received incompatible demands or expectations from their role partners (role conflict), or they lacked clarity and insufficient information to carry out expected roles and responsibilities (role ambiguity) or they perceived that their cumulative role demands exceeded their abilities and motivation to perform the expected role and responsibilities in the teaching profession (role overload). All these three components significantly influenced the emotional attachment of the teacher to the teaching profession.

With regards to continuance commitment, the results depicted in Table 1 showed reverse findings. This component of commitment has a weak but positive relationship with role states. The magnitude of this relationship, though negligible (.20) was found to be statistically significant. With respect to the different components of role states, continuance commitment was significantly correlated with role ambiguity but unrelated to role conflict and role overload. Similarly, the relationships with all the components were also positive, which means that an increased in role states, whether it was role conflict, role ambiguity or role overload, would result in higher continuance commitment among the teachers understudied. One possible justification to explain these unexpected relationships for continuance commitment is that when teachers felt that they were already bound to the profession by the existence of side bets (high continuance commitment), they would not be too concerned about the high role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload that they were experiencing. Being highly aware that the

cost of leaving was extensively high had driven them to accept the presence of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload at the workplace.

Nevertheless, the overall statistics showed that role states, the summation of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, were negatively related to commitment. This was a significant finding since numerous studies in the past have confirmed that commitment decreased with each of the three components of role states (Singh, 1998, Singh & Billingsley, 1996; Igbaria & Parasuraman, 1994; Singh, et al., 1994, Brown & Peterson, 1993; Singh, 1993).

Predictors of Commitment

To determine this contribution of principal support, collegial support and role states towards the variance of commitment, this study employed a stepwise multiple regression analysis. Only two of the predictor variables, principal support and collegial support, entered into the regression equation. The results in Table 2 revealed that principal support and collegial support are selected as significant predictors of commitment. These two predictors when combined accounted for an R^2 of 34.5 % of the explained variance in commitment.

Table 2: Stepwise Multiple Regression of Commitment on Predictor Variables

Variable	Beta	R	R^2	R^2 Change
Principal Support	.387	.556	.309	.309
Collegial support	.255	.587	.345	.036

$F = 28.175$

Sig. $F = .001$

Principal support by itself contributed an R^2 of 30.9% of the variance in commitment. The next or second predictor chosen by the programme was collegial support. When collegial support states were included into the multiple regression model, the additional variance in the criterion variable that could be explained by this predictor was 3.6%. It means that collegial support accounted for an additional 3.6% of the variance beyond that contributed by principal support. Thus, the results of the regression analysis indicated that both principal support and collegial support were the significant predictors of commitment ($F = 28.175$, $p < .001$). The total amount of variance in the criterion variable, that was predictable from these two predictors, amounted to 34.5%. This result implies that commitment could be significantly enhanced by providing principal support and encouraging collegiality in the workplace.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

By adopting a multidimensional concept of defining commitment, instead of viewing it as unidimensional, the results of the study recognised the existence of three different components of commitment among the teachers understudied. Different teachers could experience varying degree of all the components of commitment. Considering that fact, management of technical schools concerned should not be easily contented upon finding that teachers were committed to the profession. It would be potentially important to find out the types of commitment exhibited by the teachers. Since each component could develop differently, it implies that not all components of commitment were alike. Some could be emotionally committed (affective), while others could be committed because the cost of leaving was perceived as high (continuance) or commitment could be driven by feelings of moral obligations (normative). By filtering out the different components of commitment, the management of technical schools would be able to recognise and take into account the different types of commitment displayed by teachers. Therefore, if instilling and strengthening teachers' commitment is deemed important, relevant strategies should be implemented by school management to achieve the desired level of commitment to the teaching profession.

In view of the significant results arising from adopting a multidimensional approach in measuring commitment, its importance cannot be overlooked. It is a topic that has not been widely research upon in prior studies and possibly this is the first study that dealt with commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Most studies in the past have often viewed commitment as a unidimensional construct with strong emphasis on affective commitment, overlooking that commitment has continuance and normative components. Therefore, more studies should be conducted using similar approaches. The data from this study has provided a foundation for further researchers to investigate further into the multidimensional conceptualisation of commitment towards the teaching profession.

This finding also provided strong empirical evidence that principal and collegial support was an important factor contributing positively to the commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Teachers who received support from both their principals and colleagues helped to increase the level of teachers' affective, continuance and normative commitment.

Given that principal support and collegial support are important in maintaining commitment to the profession, how these aspects can be improved in schools, should also be a concern in order to prevent the occurrence of lowly committed teachers. The principal should not only be concerned about running the school smoothly or to bring forth the school to excellence but should also be concerned in providing substantial support to the teaching staff so as to enhance their commitment towards their profession, as revealed in this study. To enhance collegial support, teachers need to work in a collaborative and cohesive work setting that is conducive for collegiality to take place. Specifically, creating school environments where teachers can interact and assist each other especially in matters dealing with professional concerns, give constructive feedback

and be supportive of each other in solving problems, both pedagogical and non-pedagogical, ultimately can have a significant impact on teachers' commitment.

This finding also provided strong empirical evidence that role states, the summation of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload, are negatively related to affective commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. This served to explain the important influence of role states on teacher's commitment which needs to be seriously looked into. If left uncontrolled, it would not only affect teachers' emotional attachment to the teaching profession. Therefore, to avoid these adverse effects as well as not to jeopardise teachers' affective commitment to the profession, management of technical school should take remedial measures to alleviate the problem of role states faced by the teachers. For instance, school administrators could find out the sources of role states faced by these teachers so that steps could be taken to remedy the problem. Another measure school administrators can consider to reduce the problem of role states is to provide well-delineated role definitions. This might prove very useful for teachers as it would be able to supply them with clear, consistent information on how to perform expected roles and responsibilities. Since roles and responsibilities of these teachers have expanded greatly in recent years, guidelines such as this would enable them to carry out expected roles and responsibilities more efficiently. Besides providing well-delineated role definitions, school administrators also have a vital role to ensure that distribution of roles is justifiable. This is to avoid situations where some teachers might be overburdened with insurmountable workload while others have lesser roles and responsibilities to play. Therefore, unless school administrators take immediate actions to address the problem of role states, the effectiveness of improving teacher's commitment remains questionable.

This study has yielded important information that commitment was significantly predicted by both principal support and collegial support. However, these two predictors only explained 34.5.1% of the variance in commitment. Hence, further field studies on commitment should be encouraged to look into other possible contributing factors that were not investigated in this study. Perhaps commitment could be linked to stress and burnout, parental support, organisational culture, principal leadership or job involvement. Exploring these additional variables might provide information to uncover findings not established by this particular model.

It should also be noted that the samples of this study were drawn from a target population represented by technical school teachers in one region in Malaysia and the results of this study can only be generalised to this population of the teaching profession. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct additional research using a larger scale to increase the validity and generalisability of the research findings. For instance, by replicating the study on all the technical schools in Malaysia on a nation wide scale might increase the boundary for its applicability.

Additionally, it might be of interest for future researchers to pursue additional investigations on other non-technical schools to find out whether it produces similar results as those reported in this study. Other research that might be worthy of research is to explore whether the commitment model constructed can clearly distinguish between

commitment of technical and non-technical teachers. By expanding the study to include a variety of school teachers in different types of schools, it would be able to reflect more accurately on teachers' commitment in the educational setting.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research has made a theoretical contribution to the growing interest on commitment, first by adopting a multidimensional aspect of conceptualizing commitment and secondly by investigating into its relationship with principal support, collegial support and role states. It has provided empirical evidence on the importance of these variables in influencing commitment of technical school teachers in Sarawak. Although this research may have inherent biases in which the research model was derived from focusing on one type of school, it is hoped that it has provided education department, training institutions and school administrators in technical schools an insight into the different types of commitment displayed by teachers in the study. The various practical recommendations provided could be useful for them when targeting relevant strategies or intervening mechanism to further enhance the commitment of these teachers towards the teaching profession. However, it should be noted that addressing a subjective and abstract issue such as commitment is a long and complex process requiring multiple strategies and research. It is still an issue that will be confronting the education system for many years to come. Needless to say, it is an issue that needs to be seriously looked into and constantly monitored if the quality and productivity of teachers are not to be undermined.

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