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Fostering Teacher Well-being in the University

Rajendra Prasad Joshi

Assistant Professor

Faculty of Education,

Far Western University

Email: rajendrajoshi53@gmail.com

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Abstract

The study aims at finding out the existing situation of wellbeing of the teachers at the Far Western university and its impact on teaching and learning environment. The research has also attempted to find out the solution of the poor wellbeing status of the teachers. The research is based on the information collected from four university level teachers teaching in different faculties of the university selected through purposive random sampling procedure. Open ended questions were used to elicit the emic view of the informants in the issue in the question. The major cause of the poor well being is the indifference that is shown by the authorities' of the university. Similarly other causes that affect the well-being is academic calendar and the workload; issues related to the students .To foster the well being of the teachers the study revealed that the planning should be done in advance by the respective authorities and should communicate on time to the concerned. Similarly the collaboration among the teachers is also very important to maintain the wellbeing among teachers.

Keyword: Teaching workload, job security, Far Western University, teacher well-being.

Introduction

World Health Organization considers well- being as the basic human right. The performance of an individual is affected by his/her well-being status. 'Teachers' well-being' the construct most often referred to is burnout. (Gozzoli, Frascaroli, & D'Angelo 2015). Well-being status affects people of all different professions and so do teachers. It is one of

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the major motivating factors for the motivation among the teachers. If the teachers are not motivated the teaching and learning is not executed in a healthy way. Teachers' wellbeing is not only a vital outcome in itself, it is a means to other vital outcomes, such as students' learning and wellbeing (Collie & Martin 2020). Low motivated and poor teachers are likely to affect the teaching and learning environment and result in poor performance (Kun, Balogh & Krasz, 2017). Motivation plays an important role to create a better environment for teaching and learning. Teachers who realize positive well-being are more creative and help in learners achieving more (Mercer, 2021). Similarly, the teachers with a higher level of well-being teach more creatively, have fewer discipline issues, and tend to have students with higher levels of gain in teaching learning context (Caprara et al 2006). Well-being institute University of Cambridge defines well-being as, 'Positive and sustainable characteristics which enable individuals and organizations to thrive and flourish' (as cited in Kun, Balogh & krasz2017). Well-being reflects an integration of both feeling good and living well, well-being as multidimensional and incorporates a deliberation of positive affect as well as a life lived with a sense of meaning (Mercer, 2021). The researchers use the concept of well-being synonymously with satisfaction, happiness, or quality of life

Teachers are one of the major stakeholders who play an important role in learners' success however their role is minimized and is given less credit and neglected (Dornyei 2018 as cited in Mercer 2021). In teaching and learning environment well-being of teachers and the learners is equally important. Teachers' poor mental health, burnout or depression is directly connected to their poor performance poor performance, absenteeism and harassment (Cann, Riedel-Prabhakar, & Powell2021). The component that constructs the teacher's well-being may vary from the learner's well-being but for overall development of the teaching learner's well-being both are important. Improving well-being at work focuses on helping employees to strengthen personal sources, enhances and feel proud in the roles, functions to the best of their abilities as an individual and in collaboration with their colleagues and have a positive overall experience of work (national economic foundation 2014). The pandemic crises have played a key role in exploration of this issue and more research is being conducted in this field. Covid-19 behavior regulations presented as challenges that negatively affect teachers wellbeing (O'Brien, O'Brien, Costa & Adamakis,2022).Teacher well-being is completely invisible from policy, professional discourse and research before this and now its being an area of exploration.

Teacher well-being is not only advantageous for the teachers but also for the learners. What factors contribute in enhancing the teacher well-being or the characteristics that hinders teacher well-being are the matter of research done in the particular field. There some research done in this field (De Costa, Li & Rawal 2020) and the findings of this

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research have shown that there are not a single factor that contributes to the well-being of the teachers. Regarding the characteristics that enhance or impede teacher well-being factors like resilience, socioemotional competences, optimism, personality traits, motivation, and self-efficacy plays an important role (Mercer 2021). Similarly, Yıldırım (2014) argues the factors like cooperation among staff, fair and helpful assessment and feedback, positive school climate, student-oriented teaching practices, classroom climate, professional development plays vital role in motivating the teachers and keeping their well-being at the higher level. Teachers' well-being is directly associated with their performance. The performance of the teachers increases when we have motivated teachers and sound well-being.

Defining well-being

Well-being expresses a positive emotional state, which is the result of harmony between the sum of specific environmental factors on the one hand and the personal needs and expectations of teachers on the other. Well-being is associated with the individuals' psychological or emotional well-being. 'Well-being is a dynamic concept that includes not only subjective, social and psychological dimensions but also health related behaviors and economic concept (Kun, Balogh & krasz 2017). Yıldırım (2014) puts it this way 'Well-being can be defined as physically and psychologically being healthy. It includes people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions and global judgments of life satisfaction. 'For many teachers, well-being is taken as the feeling that arises from the within the person himself or herself. However, for many it is more associated with the socioeconomic and sociocontextual factors. Well-being needs to be taken seriously and is not only associate with internal or external factors rather it is the result of interaction between personal characteristics and sociocontextual factor that brings a sense of happiness, satisfaction, and meaning of life (Mercer, 2021). There are both elements that contribute to well-being positive or negative for Myers and Diener (1995) well-being reflects a prevalence of positive thoughts and feelings about one's life it is presence of positive affect, absence of negative affect, and satisfaction with life. Among many professionals the teachers are one of the most stressed professionals around the world. This idea can be verified by the data presented by teacher well-being index (2018) which mentions that 67% of education professionals consider themselves as stressed and 80% of senior leaders comes around this category.

Well-being is an integral part in the workplace for a sound environment in teaching and learning situation and development. Well-being in the workplace is affected by the opportunities for professional development. The workload and concerns are also important for the teacher development and wellbeing. Workload is a huge concern for teachers. Workload and teachers' wellbeing should go together to make teaching and learning work

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with harmony (Magalong & Torreon 2021). The supportive environment in the teaching learning environment. The report by NEF listed the following factors contributing to teacher well-being:

- o Professional development
- o Infrastructure & materials
- o Support from principal
- o Support from colleagues
- o Size of classes
- o Relationship with parents
- o Pressure of work
- o Self-efficacy
- o Innovations
- o National education policy

Teacher well-being is influenced by many factors such as pay, job security, associated social status, workplace culture, leadership styles, professional resources, collegial support, administrative responsibilities and workload, opportunity for teacher autonomy and interactions with learners. Aelterman, Engels, Van Petegem, & Pierre Verhaeghe (2007) views the factors like Job features, such as content of the job, role conflicts and role ambiguity, pressure of work and autonomy, physical and material working conditions, school management, school climate, interpersonal relationships are amongst the most cited regarding the factors that affect the wellbeing among teachers.

Seligman (2012) proposed a model called PERMA for teacher well-being. He advocates that well-being consists of the fostering of one or more of the five elements. PERMA is an acronym which comprises the words Positive emotion, Engagement, Relationship, Meaning and purpose and Accomplishment.

Positive Emotions: Good feelings motivate many human actions. The actions that create positive emotions create well-being feelings upon teachers. Positive emotions increase productivity at work, improve physical health and develop relationships, creating optimism and hope for the future.

Engagement is the attachment of an individual with other members. These attachments with colleagues and students create a sense of belongingness and motivate one towards their tasks.

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Relationship: People have an inner feeling for connection, affection and emotional attachment with others. The well-being of an individual is developed by creating a web of relationships around us.

Meaning and Purpose: When we do any actions or activities with some purpose the achievement is better and higher. So, if the environment can be generated so that the actions are associated with some purpose the feeling of goodness increases and motivates one in a better way.

Accomplishment: When we look back to our achievement, we develop a sense of achievement and create a good impression of ourselves and motivate us towards well-being

Why is teachers' well-being important? Well-being has potential affect both teachers and students and the work place for teachers. Teachers with poor well-being may be less motivated, make poor decisions and are likely to remain absent from their work and may have poor relations with the students and colleagues.

Study context

It is seen that the teachers teaching in the university are not very motivated and they are not focusing their duty the way they should do. Many of the teachers teaching at the university are taking the university job as a step for their professional development and chances to get enrolled in PhD degrees abroad and stay there forever. Many of the teachers are weakly motivated and are taking their job for granted. However, there are many other teachers those who would like to bring some changes in the teaching and learning environment but could not be able to do that because of many factors like students' pressure, workload, political impact upon teaching and learning environment as a result the moral of the teachers seems dropping and this drop in teaching and learning environment may cause the direct impact upon students learning and causes the teachers to move in search of the better opportunities. So, I decided to explore this area to find out the causes that the teachers are facing for their well-being and solve such issues.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to explore the teacher well-being among the Far Western university level teachers and its effect on the teaching and learning environment and how does it affect the learner's well-being?

Research Questions

This research is guided by the following two research questions

1. What is the status of teacher well-being at Far Western University?
2. How can the teacher well-being be fostered?

Methods and Procedures

This research is conducted with a view to exploring the status of the teacher well-being at the Far Western university and to study the ways to enhance the well-being which in turn help in creating a better environment for teachers in their context. To meet the objectives the researcher selected four university teachers Rohit, Bidhi, Bibek and Sohit (Pseudo names) teaching at the university using purposive random sampling procedure. After selection of the participants, they were asked to reflect on the issue in questions. The participants are interviewed and the interview is recorded in the mobile . The collected data was then transcribed and translated. The major themes are generated based on the information collected and analysis is done.

Findings and Discussion

Status of Teacher well-being at FWU

Teachers seem low with their well-being. This well-being is reflected in their day-to-day actions and behaviors. Due to these situations the teachers seem low motivated, anxious, poor relations with teachers and students, less confident. I tried to explore the reasons behind this situation and the following conclusions are made.

Causes behind poor well-being among teachers

On analyzing the data, the following themes are generated for reasons behind the poor well-being of the teachers.

Authorities' Indifference

One of the main factors that affect teacher well-being is the poor presence of the university authorities beginning from the head of the department to the highest level of authority. They are less concerned with the teachers' problems and pay no attention or turn indifferent towards the problems that the teachers are facing. The security issues like pension, gratuity, insurance, etc haven't been decided upon and they are not feeling secure with their job. The following responses by the informants support this opinion.

Bidhi: I sometimes feel very de-motivated and insecure because I am not sure what I would get when I retire. The university has not decided yet regarding my security and I sometimes feel very low. My insecurity gets at the top during Covid as I get worried about it. Sometimes during the class this thought comes to me and I feel anxious.

Similarly, Sohit focuses on policy level and lack of training and orientation when a new course is launched.

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Sohit: I don't remember if the university has organized any training, orientation, course dissemination program in its ten years journey (not even organized by deans office, department head's office). When a new course is launched we need to collect it from the Head of the department and the department provide it after the classes are launched so we sometimes don't have time to prepare in advance.

Analyzing the above excerpts, it can be reached into conclusion that lack of academic and professional policy making and decision are responsible for poor situations among the teacher. Be it related to the security of the teachers or opportunities for professional development of the teachers or advancement of professionalism. De Costa, Li and Rawal() The lack of mentoring support from teacher educators, one of the major issues related to the emotion labour they engaged in was their exhaustion.. To construct a positive learning environment, teachers should be trained to create a positive relationship with students, whose misbehavior could be modified by encouraging good communication and using effective classroom management (Yıldırım, 2014)

Academic Calendar and workload

The university prepares the academic calendar and authorities like to implement it strictly and cause some kind of pressure among the teachers. Unannounced and sudden leaves and bands are not considered. The office of Controller of examination doesn't collaborate with the authorities and which causes a kind of pressure among the teachers and feels low in motivation. Similarly, the loads that the teachers are taking are very high and affects their well-being. The following excerpts are found effective regarding this situation. The result appears in alignment with Teacher well-being index (2018) which mentions that working long hours and stress appear to be closely linked.

Bidhi: There is pressure during the class time to complete the course and we sometimes cannot complete the course on time. The university prepares the Calander and send it to us but there is no consideration regarding sudden and unplanned bands. Sometimes the national and local strikes hamper the classes but we are not considered for these leaves in the college and feel pressure to complete the course. These strikes and challenges also affect the internal assessment of the students. Sometimes we need to skip some portion of the internal assessment and need to manage it virtually (like presentation).

Bibek : I am taking eight classes and five different courses a day and feel exhausted by the end of the day. The time required for preparing for the classes has changed my family life. The anxiety and worry go higher when the routine gets published and we have to complete the course. Students demand the notes in a simplified version and it causes problems for us.

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The above excerpts give a very clear image that the causes that lower the well-being of the teachers are associated with their workload and lack of preparation time. When they have to prepare the notes and materials in a rush, they realize the pressure and their psychological well-being gets affected. Similarly, taking many classes a day and preparing for these different courses has affected their physical well-being and at the same time causes familial issues and problems. Education professionals gave a variety of reasons of what they disliked about working in education— with the overwhelming reason being ‘workload’.

Student related issues:

One of the major causes revealed during this study was related to the students. Be it the number of students or the student union pressure. The teachers are haunted by the financial support that the students demand time and again and their financial status is questioned. The following excerpt can be presented as evidence;

Bibek: Students unions are more than active and they organize various programs and demand financial support from the teachers. Similarly, the unconcerned issues that the student union leaders raise and create problems for teachers. The kind of rivalry has grown among the students and takes it to teacher's level. Students' leaders feel like they are the sole authority to maintain the standards of the university and keep pressurizing the authority from meager issues to larger ones.

Rohit: The disciplinary issues among the students have risen up. The students today are less disciplined and more behavioral issues and as a result it is difficult to manage classes and maintain peace and harmony in the class. The unnecessary backup from the student union is causing this change in behavior among the students. Similarly, the number of students in the class also causes this issue. The university has clear guidelines regarding the class size but due to many reasons teachers are forced to take classes in more than 70 students (lack of teachers, lack of rooms, etc)

Analyzing the above excerpts gives us a very clear idea that the teachers in the university are not feeling psychologically and emotionally sound due to issues associated with students. Most important element for realization of this issue is the discipline level of the students and at the same time the financial support that the students demand is very challenging for the teacher. For many teachers who are working on a contract basis it's very difficult to maintain this gap and as a result suffer psychologically.

Fostering well-being

The research is also intended to find out the solution to the issue generated. What

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ways can be adopted by different authorities to promote well being is also researched and the following result has been explored from the data collected.

Policy level

To increase the teacher well-being, it is revealed that there are certain things that need to be decided and planned at the policy level by the concerned authorities. The anxiety that is created by the courses the teachers have to teach needs to be minimized by the authority at the planning level by organizing the orientation and induction programs before and after the changes made in the syllabus. The following excerpts are the evidence that advocate about this issue.

Sohit: I feel uncomfortable and anxious when I have to deal with the new course.... we don't have a proper system of giving orientation to the teachers before going to class. I get the course of study on the very day when I have to join the class and cannot decide what to do. I feel very anxious.and sometimes the question patterns change without information (MBS new course question pattern changes three times before the final exams) and fear of my image at the students.

Bidhi: The security issues of the teachers play an important role in increasing the confidence level and increasing the labor among teachers. So, I feel if the issues like pension plans, insurance, incentives can be associated with teachers decided sooner the psychological boredom gets reduced and teachers may feel confident. Similarly, there are teachers who are working on a contract basis and if the university plans for their permanence this can help the teachers. The workload that we are having at the institution is also one of the reasons that affect in the poor well being of the teachers.

The above responses by the teachers speak about the issues and their solution that need to be addressed by the authorities at the policy level. Teachers' job security and decisions that impact directly in the teaching learning environment need to be taken on time and communication should be done to the concerned authority as soon as possible. Changes that take place without preparation and those which are not required should not be made. This helps the teachers in focusing on their tasks and visualize them as confident teachers in the future. TPW is mainly shaped by organizational characteristics. The most effective organizational factors are school climate, assessment and feedback, cooperation among staff and classroom climate. Teachers' professional characteristics (teaching practices, professional development) comparatively have an important effect on professional well-being. But individual characteristics have a very small effect (Yıldırım, 2014). Similarly the workload that the teachers are having has greater impact.

Teacher level

In response to the question of how that generates the ideas on creating a motivating and collegial environment in the premises two of the participants focus upon creating the culture of sharing cooperating the collaboration among the teachers. It seems as if all the teachers seem very busy and seems independent and self-centered as a result the sharing culture cannot be encouraged. Rohit and Bidhi puts their views as

Rohit: There is poor relationship between the teachers who teach the same course. We feel more competitive than collaborative with each other. So, if we can create a collegial environment among the teachers at the same level the environment could become more collaborative. I wish the department would allocate some budget to bring the teachers with the same course together on different occasions and enhance the feeling of togetherness.

Bidhi: When I joined the university, I had no idea on what to teach and how to deal with the courses. I struggled to get in line with the courses and the environment. I wish the university had managed some training or set some senior teacher as a mentor for a week or some senior teacher willingly supported me, it would have brought more confidence on me and could do the task smoothly.

As revealed in the excerpts above, if the sense of relationship can enhance the morale of the teachers can be increased and this of course contributes to favorable environment for enhancing the collegiality among the teachers. The department needs to allocate a certain amount of the budget to increase the bonding among the teachers with the same subjects. Motivating the teachers to write as a coauthor or exercising the co-teaching practice can particularly be very useful.. The time spent at school should be more fruitfully used in promoting the meaning of cooperation between colleagues and activities devoted to professional development (Yıldırım 2014)

Student level

The other main factor that makes the teacher feel demotivated and low in well-being is the disruptive behavior of the students. If this kind of behavior can be managed then it can boost morale of the teachers. Bibek emphasizes this in his following words.

The discipline level of the students is decreasing with every new group we come across every year. If only the students' discipline level be managed the teaching is not a challenge at all. The trend of students affiliating themselves with some political party has brought greater challenge. So, if this system of getting affiliated is discouraged the teachers could feel more comfortable and enjoy their job.

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In the same note Rohit responds:

I once penalized the students with their internal marking because they haven't done all the assigned tasks and decided to mark him as not qualified. But I cannot stand my decision from the student union pressure.

On analyzing the above excerpt, we can say that one of the reasons that teacher well-being is affected is associated with the discipline of the students. If we could create some mechanism to control disruptive behavior and manage pressure groups in the name of the unions that reduce the boredom from the teachers and teacher may feel relaxed and focused with their tasks

Conclusion and Implications

This study sought to investigate teacher well-being at the university and the ways that can be used to increase the level of well-being among the teachers. To summarize three major areas are explored through the study that are resulting the poor well-being among the teachers which are resulting from Authorities Indifference: issues like job security and planning and decision making for the teachers' professional development furthermore the Academic calendar and workload plays and important role which include unannounced leaves and pressure to complete the course and the number of hours need to take classes finally the issues related to students is another cause that affect the teacher well being which include asking for donations and the pressure from students union in many areas affect the teachers psychological and emotional state and feel low with well-being. Similarly the second questions was more targeted towards the solutions that can increase the teacher well-being in the context and the three themes that are generated to support this issue and increase the well-being feeling among the teachers there need to be done several things at different levels as at Policy level the authorities should prepare plans related to the security issues of the teachers and a more participatory approach should be taken in taking decisions and implementing them. Secondly in the Teacher level sharing and collaboration among the teachers should be encouraged and the authorities should plan training, orientations and dissemination of the courses. And finally at Student level the disciplinary issues of the students should be managed and the issues need to be reduced. If these issues are managed then the teachers well-being can be enhanced and in long turn the teaching and learning can be made fruitful.

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