Promoting Commitment: The Influence of School Culture and Work-Related Emotional Variables on the Affective Commitment of Teachers at German All-Day Schools

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Abstract: A variety of reform and development efforts in the German educational system, especially the extension of the school day, going along with an increasing autonomy of individual schools and extending demands on teachers led to growing interest in business science concepts being applied in the field of school development research. A main emphasis lies in the commitment of teachers who are responsible for the implementation and the success of these reforms. The aim of this paper is to identify reasons that lead to a high level of commitment of the teaching staff with a focus on German all-day schools. The intended results will be obtained by a structural equation model based on the information provided by 649 primary all-day school teachers. In addition to the relationships with other actors in the school, which are summarised under the heading of school culture, variables relating to the personalities of the teachers can be identified as predictive.

Keywords: Teacher, Commitment, Leadership, School Culture, All-Day Schools

Introduction

Since the beginning of the 21st Century the expansion of German all-day schools has been promoted extensively, not least because of the disappointing results of international student assessments such as PIRLS, TIMSS and PISA (Baumert et al, 2001; Mullis, Martin, Gonzalez & Kennedy, 2003; OECD 2001, 2003). Traditionally, the school day in Germany ended between noon and 1 pm in primary and secondary schools. These schools are labelled as “half-day schools” in contrast to schools with an extended extracurricular program, which are called “all-day schools”, which also cover the afternoon. (KMK – The Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany, 2002). According to public and educational policy discussions, the goals of implementing all-day school programs are very challenging, as the following list illustrates: improving subject-related competencies and key skills, promoting individual development by offering differentiated learning opportunities, qualified supervision to support families, providing a space for socialization to improve social integration and cultural orientation, extending the socio-cultural infrastructure and raising equity of education (Holtappels & Rollett, 2009). In 2002, only 16.3 percent of German schools were operating as all-day schools. By 2020, this percentage had risen to an impressive 71.5 percent (KMK, 2006, 2021). So, in every year of this period the percentage of all-day schools rose by 3.1 points on average. More than 19,000 of the schools in Germany today offer an all-day program to their students (own calculations based on the KMK 2021). This development was driven by a broad public...
discussion about how to improve the outcomes of the school system in Germany, a massive financial investment by the German government and the federal states of Germany, and a rising demand of families for day care for their children. The KMK distinguishes between three types of schools: 1) **Fully compulsory** all-day schools where all students have to take part in the all-day program for at least three days a week; 2) **partly compulsory** all-day schools in which students of certain grades or classes have to participate for at least three days a week; 3) **voluntarily** all-day schools where an all-day program is provided for at least for three days and students have the option to enrol. The most widely encountered type is the voluntarily model, especially for elementary schools. Due to a teacher shortage in general and the broader pedagogical functions for the extended extracurricular program, additional staff with pedagogical qualification conduct the all-day part of school life in most schools. Therefore, teachers’ active involvement and participation in conducting the extracurricular programs vary a lot regarding the intensity and often results from personal interest and engagement.

Furthermore, the German school system has been coined by several procedural and developmental changes, which are complemented by an increasing degree of autonomy of the individual schools (cf. Rürup, 2007). These changes and the accompanying effects they have on teachers have not yet been subject to many studies (cf. van Ackeren, Klemm, & Kühn, 2015; Terhart, 2013).

**Theoretical Framework**

School reforms and its implementation are mostly driven by the teachers, which increases their workload and challenge their existing practices (Day & Smetem, 2009). Extending the school day leads to various changes concerning the whole organization of the individual school as well as teachers’ professional responsibilities. Regarding German all-day school teachers face different changes in their work, such as being involved in the planning and organization of the all-day program or the extracurricular activities. The teachers have to cooperate not only with their teaching colleagues, but also with the additional pedagogical staff and partly actively engaging, for example, in the extended school program by conducting an extracurricular activity.

Looking at the development of the theoretical and empirical discourse, commitment, which has been adapted from work and organisational psychology (see Harazd et al. 2012; Felfe, & Six, 2006; Canrinus, Helms-Lorenz, Beijjaard, Buitink, & Hofman, 2012; Webs, 2016; Abd Razak et al. 2010), gained attention and has become more relevant for the analyses when examining teachers. Commitment describes a personal and emotional bond between an individual and an organization (cf. van Dick, 2017), which is said to have a beneficial effect on the performance and motivation of teachers (cf. van Dick, 2004; Gautam, Van Dick, & Wagner, 2004). Thus, the construct becomes one of the decisive variables regarding participation in, acceptance of and internalisation of school development processes and their results. The relevance of commitment can be emphasized especially with regards to the school system, since there are no possibilities to set incentives for the school management and since teachers, due to their semi-professional position, only have rudimentary contact with the organization as a whole and rather act as individual workers (cf. Rolff, 2012; Blutner, 2004). Commitment