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FACULTY PERFECTIONISM AND UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

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Abstract

The paper considers perfectionism as a social phenomenon which characterizes professional activity of university research and teaching staff aimed at leadership of employee and university as an educational institution. It is determined by high professional standards which are specified by the Ministries of Education in the United States of America and United Kingdom of England and Northern Ireland. Universities implement policies which follow rigorous recruitment and selection process, performance evaluation according to high standards and advanced expectations. Perfectionism in the academic environment is viewed as a product of social mindset traditionally established in the system of higher education as an aspiration to advanced development, economic and social stability, and foreseeable future. Therefore, perfectionism can be considered as both personal and public phenomenon. Perfectionism among research and teaching staff is referred to professional activity, in the first instance; however, it is also cultivated by university social wellbeing policy conducted by human resource management department aimed at providing social conditions for a long lifespan, physical, emotional and psychological health, financial solvency, social activity and continuous professional development. All of these measures create opportunities for personal perfectionism expressed through successful professional growth and achievement of high goals. Public perfectionism in higher education constitutes a basis for human capital development and, ultimately, social welfare.

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Keywords: Faculty, higher education, human capital, human resource management, perfectionism



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1. Introduction

Perfectionism is defined as an aspiration to achieve high goals. The profession of university faculty research and teaching staff is characterized by perfectionism per se. Irrespective of the length of teaching work experience, society equally regards faculty as experts possessing profound knowledge of their subjects and professional skills. High standards are socially attributed to teachers in respect to their personality and personal qualities, too. By common admission, faculty are intelligent, erudite, possessing an ideal social reputation and deep knowledge of subjects (Filyasova, & Potemkin, 2021).

Faculty perfectionism is explained by the pedagogical necessity to serve as leaders and models of social behavior for students: (1) monitoring the most advanced and innovative trends in the modern transforming society related to economy, politics, social life, technology, information science, education, science, among others; (2) broadening general cultural, psychological, pedagogical, scientific horizons; (3) continuous qualification improvement and acquiring new competences; (4) conducting research for creating new knowledge and raising their own competency along with competitiveness of their institution; (5) demonstrating a positive example for students through expert knowledge, practical skills, economic competency; (6) creating and maintaining good reputation and positive image in social and professional community.

Historically, society has been generating models for enhancing functional social effectiveness and social wellbeing. Model creation entails generating goals and practical objectives for corresponding to those models. University serving as a model for perfectionism in knowledge generation is an institution which targets faculty at achieving exceptional results in their professional activity. University was historically created as an institution which creates personal and social ideals. Orientation of university to solving scientific problems which do not have any ready decisions provides the university its status of an independent institution creating opportunities for talented young people, striving for new knowledge, to reach their full potential (Saridaki & Papavassiliou-Alexiou, 2021).

2. Problem Statement

The system of human resources management is largely based on faculty perfectionism. The necessity to implement university mission of preparing new leaders in various areas of theoretical and practical knowledge, candidate screening for research and teaching staff positions obviously has perfectionist character since it implies highest standards and the highest quality of professional education. Candidates must be talented, effective, ambitious, successful, aspiring to perfection, possess the highest qualification, have clear advantages and significant achievements, and match high academic expectations.

Perfectionism is a social characteristic which indicates a tendency to constantly improve not only professional skills but also social wellbeing. Faculty perfectionism can help improve public social wellbeing through implementing progressive research results and innovative decisions. However, the problem is: How can public perfectionism go along with personal social wellbeing? In an organizational environment, wellbeing embraces areas targeting personal faculty potential: “professional, social, psychological, physiological, moral, spiritual, behavioral, creational, communicative, and, ultimately, labor potential” (Potemkin & Molod’kova, 2016, p. 83). For faculty, psychological aspects, reducing

stress levels and burnout (Elomaa et al., 2021; Filyasova, 2020; Jaremka et al., 2020; Mercer, 2020), necessity to understand pride for their work results (Alzaanin, 2021), appreciation, consistency, novelty in their pedagogical activity (Doble & Santha, 2008) – all have a high value. At a personal level, social wellbeing is defined as an aspiration to achieve a certain social level (Grigor'eva et al., 2014, p. 44), life satisfaction and happiness (Tatarova & Kuchenkova, 2016, p. 31), health, creativity, freedom from economic dependence (Udaltsova & Abramova, 2020). A multi-criteria approach should be applied to the definition of social wellbeing (Kiseleva, 2020, p. 238). Public wellbeing is determined by a number of factors such as rational correlation of age groups, reasonable distribution of income, good health of people (Munin, 2012, p. 8069). Generally, social wellbeing is a sum total of positive components related to personal and public development: health, physical activity (Cooper & Barton, 2015), family status, employment, income, age (Povey et al., 2013), attention and care of close people, mutual understanding, human relations, emotions (Weinberg, 2020), goals and habits, virtues (Rusk & Waters, 2015); positive relations inside family, perceptions, health, spirituality (McEwan & Tsey, 2009), cultural capital, ethnical worldview, market situation (Dalziel, 2019).

3. Research Questions

The relevance of the problem is important, firstly, for practical purposes of personnel performance evaluation and motivation for high achievements. Establishing high professional standards implies increased time which teaching personnel have to spend on meeting those requirements, which means reduced amount of time left for home, life and other activities. The level of remuneration is expectedly higher for high performers who pursue objectives aimed at retaining university leadership positions.

Secondly, perfectionism does not always correlate with the mere possibility of reaching high goals which go beyond expectations. Overinvestment of personal efforts, intellectual resources and time means neglecting basic social values such as family, health, financial welfare, communication with friends and colleagues, rest and leisure time activities, correct diet and balanced nutrition.

4. Purpose of the Study

The aim of this paper is to analyze approaches to research and teaching staff management in the system of human resource management of the U.S. and U.K. world-famous universities – from the perspective of perfectionism as a social phenomenon inherent in the system of higher education focused on global leadership. Mission statements, selection and motivation principles of 22 universities were analyzed through the prism of perfectionist approach: Brown University, Columbia University, Harvard University, John Hopkins University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, Princeton University, Stanford University, University of California, University of Chicago, Washington University of St Louis, Yale School of Management; Cambridge University, Durham University, Imperial College London, Lancaster University, Loughborough University, University College London, University of Bath, University of Bristol, University of Warwick, University of York.

5. Research Methods

Mission statements of the U.S. Department of Education and the U.K. Department for Education, along with human resource policy statements of 22 universities, were considered and ideas related to perfectionism and social wellbeing matched, with a focus on their consistency and association. Social wellbeing, as a complex phenomenon characterizing both a single person and whole social community, was defined.

6. Findings

Analysis of policy statements shows that the U.S. Ministry of Education regards teacher personality as of paramount importance, who is due to provide premium quality education to students. The primary goal of faculty is to raise education level to a new level achieving results beyond expectation. All the necessary resources are allocated and opportunities provided for the purpose of reaching success in research and education, maintaining teacher leadership. Perfectionism is an inherent constituent of American educational policy because only the best teaching staff, who are experts in developing, informing and implementing educational policy, are admitted to improving quality of higher education.

The U.K. Department for Education puts the importance of human capital development at the top of their priority list which also includes competitiveness of British education and, remarkably, technical education, on a global scale, as well as autonomy of educational institutions. The main principles pursue financial support of people who provide leadership to research and education, and accurate investment accounting in order to create clear and transparent conditions for leadership policy making. Perfectionism is also a typical characteristic of higher education as only the best experts and practices are selected for developing advanced teaching technologies and maintaining a competitively high level of education at the international level.

Recruitment process implies screening and selection the best candidates which is mentioned among other requirements placed on university websites: *the highest quality, the most energetic, the most talented, world leaders, world-famous, advanced standards, highest standards, strong, the worthiest, the most capable, recognized, aspiring to perfection, striving to make a difference, demonstrating the best practice, highly qualified, possessing clear advantages, ambitious, pursuing high goals, trying to achieve best results, having significant achievements.*

Performance evaluation is conducted on the basis of the highest standards and requirements for job positions: high effectiveness, outstanding achievements, exceptional performance, great contribution, personal effectiveness, reaching full potential, successful goal accomplishment, exceeding expectations – are typically appreciated. Hence, perfectionism in the system of higher education is not an aspiration of an employee, but a systemic quality of university as an institution of higher education whose work is guided by high aims and objectives, elevated expectations and achieving significant results for holding leadership positions in the world. Extended benefits and compensation are paid to those who can prove: *great contribution, exceptional performance, outstanding results of professional activity, proficiency, individual achievement, professional skills development, continuous learning, improving qualification*

level, constant improvement, highest level of qualification, exceeding planned results, personal efficiency, increased productivity, intense labor, activity, results beyond expectation, reaching full potential, development of leadership qualities.

Motivation of research and teaching staff is a means of increasing performance efficiency; it includes personnel career management and professional development planning. Motivation fulfills the function of attracting the best candidates for research and teaching staff positions and retaining them for raising reputation and research potential of university. Meanwhile, motivation implies increasing social wellbeing of personnel for developing human capital potential. The most valuable staff receive maximum benefits which meet their needs starting with basic, related to physical and mental health, and ending with higher level needs of professional self-development and self-actualization.

As a result of motivation policy analysis, it was found that faculty wellbeing is as multi-componential phenomenon which can be addressed only due to systemic approach to satisfying personnel needs. Let us consider them more closely:

- physical – healthy nutrition, balanced diet, sleep, relaxation and meditation practices, control over personal body weight, trainings, healthy lifestyle, bad habits prevention;
- emotional – psychological help, stress management, group management, assistance in emergency situations; happiness, positive work environment creation;
- financial – loan support, financial help, debt management, achievement recognition, performance efficiency, decent financial compensation;
- social – freedom from discrimination, freedom of thought and self-expression, legal help for family circumstances, estate management, labor safety, care for children, parents, pets, care for community;
- professional – continuous learning, mentoring, professional and personal development.

Social wellbeing of faculty personnel is a key aspect of university healthy functioning because the idea of university itself lies in researchers and teaching staff performance. Faculty is the most precious asset of university. Social wellbeing is a complex phenomenon; the basic component is health. It implies physical activity, balanced diet, regulation of body clock, normal body functioning, regular training, medical examination, disease prevention and correction. Health body, along with emotional happiness, is viewed as a condition of successful professional activity.

Financial support ensures decent living standards and meeting various human needs. The level of financial support results from performance evaluation, merit recognition and the amount of contribution employee makes into university development. Material and non-material kinds of financial stimulation are related to financial expenses university assumes for human capital accumulation. Financial support is, eventually, aimed at labor quality increase. Expenditure accounting and investment return calculation fulfill a controlling function relevant for rational and effective financial regulation and faculty motivation.

7. Conclusion

University as an institution of higher education creates a social environment whose subjects are characterized by certain relations and connections which can be called ‘perfectionism’ as they are aimed

at generation of new knowledge, student competence development, and increase of faculty qualification level. University social environment is a system of subject interactions, conforming to a certain structure which opens up opportunities for personal growth, enhanced academic competency, and increase of labor effectiveness.

Social wellbeing provides conditions for setting high standards for faculty and motivation of high achievements. Taking into consideration the ubiquitous approach to leadership in the U.S. and U.K. systems of higher education, it can be concluded that perfectionism is an integral feature of university human resource management system which generates social models and best practices for personal and professional continuous improvement. Social wellbeing is a necessary condition for perfectionism as an aspiration for high performance results. Perfectionism is inherent into social mind aiming at rapid development, economic stability and foreseeable future. Perfectionism is translated to universities as centers for science and education, which prepare younger generation for creating socially relevant intellectual products. University further maintains a system of human resource management focused on constant human capital development.

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