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A Qualitative Approach to Effective Factors in Motivated Intent to Stay of Teachers

Case Study of Second-Grade High School Teachers in Western Azerbaijan Province

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to identify related factors to the motivated intent to stay of teachers. In this study, the intent to stay refers to the consistency in serving as a teacher and motivation for making more attempts and cooperation at teaching. One very important consequence of the lack of intent to stay and motivation of the teachers can be decrease in the learning quality of students. Qualitative research method was administered; data collecting tool was interview and studying related documents. Study population consisted of all second-grade high school teachers and experts of human resource management in Education Department of Western Azerbaijan Province. This study was done in the academic year of 2014-2015. To select the sample, systematic random sampling method was used. For data analysis, qualitative method with open and axial coding was used. Results of the analyses showed that teachers' working life quality, personal traits, professional traits, socio-economic environment, and job professionalization are main factors affecting teachers' intent to stay and their motivation to do more and continue working as teachers.

Keywords: Qualitative research, intent to stay, working life quality of teachers, socio-economic environment, professional traits, personal traits, teaching professionalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Education Department is one of those organizations whose success depends on recruiting persistent and committed staffs. Teachers are the most effective and the most important employees in Education

Department for whom supportive programs and measures are provided to retain and motivate them. Supportive programs for teachers have different outcomes the most important of which is service consistency with motivation and intent to make more attempts for fulfilling educational goals.

Lack of attention to the demands and motivations of teachers may lead to their unmotivated staying along with their attrition, migration, transport and movement whose observation and repetition indicates their unwillingness to remain in teaching (Ingersoll, 2001, p. 19). In addition to these issues, lower than expected efforts, decreased academic performance among students, and multi-jobs can be further repercussions of decreased intent to stay of the teachers. The lack of intent to stay in teachers or unmotivated staying are issues that cause the organization to be respected for just making money as a result of which commitment to the organization decreases. In these conditions, if another position is suggested to them, they will leave their job easily.

Results of some previous investigations in Iran show that the mean lack of intent to stay of teachers is 43% in general and it is 80% in the teachers with higher degrees (MA and Ph.D). Thus, the lack of attention to this issue imposes serious damages to the corpus of education system (Tabarsa, 1993, Golkar, 1995). This study aims to investigate the factors which develop motivated intent to stay of teachers by considering which higher interest and motivation is developed in the teachers for more efficient educational processes. The key role of teachers makes education department concern teacher retaining processes as a main duty, investigating systematic strategies by micro perspectives towards entrance and job quit of teachers as well as consequences and costs of staying intent loss of teachers. Motivated staying intent among teachers is one of the main factors that creates some barriers on the way of achieving some educational goals if it is not considered seriously. Accordingly, education system should retain teachers, improving their staying motivation besides employing new staff. If the processes which are provided for improving teachers' staying conform to their needs, expectations, and demands, they will increase their job satisfaction and organizational commitment besides their staying motivations. Studying motivated intent to stay as an outcome of organizational commitment of the staff is important since one important goal of organizations is retaining their employees (Stampes, 1997). Intent to stay refers to the degree of staying likelihood with the staff's motivation for membership in an organization and intent to make more attempts and continue cooperation with others (Currivan, 2000; Iverson, 1992; Mueller, 1994). In this study, intent to stay refers to the intent of the teachers to stay and make motivated attempts and cooperation in teaching. For the importance and sensitivity of education system and its role in training students, unmotivated staying in this department can have severe consequences. Consequences of ignoring this issue threaten not only education system but also the society as a whole. Despite close relationship between economic and cultural development plans and educational activities and for many social and economic reasons, education in Iran is not considered as a high priority and it has not been successful in attracting and retaining talented, committed, and interested staff. In other words, education system confronts many problems in preserving intents and motivations of teachers. Providing necessary infrastructures for the motivated teachers with enough intent to stay creates and increases commitment in them. This also causes attracting the hearts and minds of teachers for motivating them to better recognition of the organization, more attempts for reaching organizational goals, and continuing work with interest and motivation (Armesterang, 2005, 285). The lack of attention to the motivation of teachers and ignoring their intents, if it doesn't lead to their job

quit, will lead to their demotivated staying whose consequences are not less than their job quit. Motivated staying of teachers conducts teachers to more activities consciously or unconsciously to achieve the goals of education system; it also causes teachers to act beyond their abilities for reaching educational goals (Stephen Hall, 2005, p. 64). Motivated intent to stay of teachers is the key factor in their relationship with their students and education system. Teachers with low commitment and intent to stay not only don't try to reach organizational goals but also may have a destructive role in creating indifference culture among their coworkers towards work issues, leading to underwork, inaccurate work, complex control, supervisory mechanisms, and their following costs. Teachers are concerned as powerful forces at schools; although intent to stay of teachers has not been considered significantly (Gart, 1999). Based on the different studies, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two main variables in the job quality of teachers and the main factor of their staying in teaching (Krieg, 2004; Heris et. al., 1991). Motivated intent to stay of teachers is a result of their job satisfaction that not only helps stimulation of teachers but also is effective in the learning quality of students and their progress (Price et. al., 1997). It is also linked to the job performance of the teachers, especially teachers' cooperation and job commitment (Sarjent, Hannam, 2005). From the middle of the previous century, researchers of education have concerned job satisfaction but just a small part of their attention has been directed to the teachers' intent to stay (Gart, 1999; Evans, 1997).

Results of some studies show that salaries and bonuses affect teachers' intent to stay. Marlow et. al., suggested emotional and psychological factors (e.g. the lack of happiness, despair, stress, failure, social respect, and work conditions) to be effective in teachers' staying. Kelcker and Loadman (1996) investigated the relationship between teachers' empowerment, job satisfaction, and their staying motivation; they found that factors such as salary, job promotion opportunity, rate of vocational challenges, independence, general work conditions, interaction with coworkers and students are effective in this regard. Sarjent and Hannam (2005) conducted a research in northwestern China on the related factors in positive attitude to teaching in the framework of social factors (neighborhood), school and teachers' traits. Adoptive studies between America and China showed that job satisfaction in both countries is the most important factor in retaining teachers (Estefano, 2002). They concluded that effective variables in teachers' job satisfaction included school, neighborhood, and teacher-related factors. Although the issue of teachers' intent to stay in Iran has not been concerned directly, some studies have examined it indirectly.

Some organizational studies have concerned the issue of employees' intent to stay and motivation directly or indirectly in the framework of vocational attitudes including job dependence, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Job dependence refers to the extent to which one identifies oneself by his job. Job satisfaction refers to the general attitude of a person about his job. Organizational commitment is a state in which one tends to stay in the organization whose outcome is motivated service along with more attempts of the employees. Thus, this study aims to identify related factors with teachers' intent to stay, determining their roles in this regard.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used qualitative method with exploratory approach. Through interview, many factors related to teachers' intent to stay considering social, economic, and cultural conditions of Western Azarbaijan were identified.

Statistical population of this study included all second-grade high school teachers of Western Azerbaijan and experts of Human Resource Management in Education Department. This study used systematic random sampling and the subjects with the following conditions were included in the study:

1. Teachers with the highest job satisfaction, elected in different educational fields as experts.
2. Teachers, applicant for leaving Education Department.
3. Teachers who had other jobs besides teaching.

Since in the qualitative approach sample size is not predefined, sampling continues until the sufficiency of the data is obtained theoretically. Thus, sampling was repeated in different time intervals and accordingly sample members were selected and interviewed. In this study, teachers who tended to quit teaching and wanted other jobs were interviewed in group form. Since sampling was systematic and to find the most informed people about the subject of the study, experts and authorities of Education Department were interviewed. Expert and elite teachers were interviewed in group while other teachers were interviewed individually.

Dependent variable of this study included teachers' intent to stay. Intent to stay is a predictor of people's behavior for staying in a job, business, or situation. This term refers to the degree of staying likelihood of a teacher in his job along with beyond-expectation motivation and attempts (Kurivan, 2000, p.497). Based on the organizational factors (working life quality), dependent variables in this study were professional and personal traits, and social factors, investigated by half-structured interview. In this type of interview, questions are not completely open or closed; thus, based on the structure of questions, respondents are directed towards desirable responses. At the onset of the interview, a short explanation was given about the topic, goals, and methodology of the study.

To test the validity and consistency of this tool, first the validity of the questions were examined by the experts and the structure of questions were modified. Also, questions were tested on a group of sample members. To make sure about the consistency of questions, sample members were asked the same questions and the ones with different answers were modified or removed. Asked questions were as follows:

1. Which one of organizational factors (legal, managerial factors, promotion opportunity, professional growth opportunity, and etc) affect intent to stay of teachers in your idea?
2. Which traits of teachers affect intent to stay of teachers in your idea?
3. Do social factors (social status, social supports, social rewards, and etc) affect intent to stay of teachers in your idea?
4. Do the personal traits affect intent to stay of teachers? How?

To analyze the data, open and axial coding was used. Results of data analysis using open coding are represented in tables 1-16.

3. RESULTS

To find the answer of the first question, similar sentences and statements were extracted from the answers, categorized as the concepts. In the following tables, the ways of extracting the concept of job professionalization, promotion opportunity, and vocational unions are represented.

Table 33.1
Job professionalization

<i>Row</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Concept</i>
1	Specialization of teaching and preventing the entry of people who are not qualified in this job	Teaching Professionalization
2	The lack of employing skilled employees regarding qualification conditions in education system	
3	Selection and recruitment of people with more scientific information and expertise	
4	Selection of teachers considering intelligence and aptitude tests	
5	Attention to the interests of teachers for selecting teaching	
6	Aptitude and personality tests on the arrival of teachers	
7	Priority of scientific – technical selection of teachers	
8	Selection based on academic merits	
9	The lack of using non-specialist forces such as Literacy Learning Department’s instructors	
10	Considering scores of aptitude and intelligence tests and enthusiasm in the selection of teachers	

Based on Table 33.1, the concept of job professionalization has been extracted from similar statements such as specialization of teaching, the lack of employing skilled labor, conducting different tests of intelligence, aptitude, talent, and etc. This concept has not been concerned in the literature of intent to stay. While, professionalization of teaching is a factor that leads to the entrance of specialist and interested people with more motivation to stay in their jobs.

Table 33.2
Promotion opportunity

<i>Row</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Concept</i>
1	Obscure criteria for the promotion of teaching	Promotion opportunity
2	Defining job issues for the job promotion of teachers	
3	The absence of job promotion regardless of increasing experience and education for teachers	
4	The lack of job promotion for teachers	
5	The lack of job promotion at different levels for teachers	
6	The lack of career dynamism	
7	Ability to upgrade teachers’ academic and career positions based on existing evidences and service records	
8	Paving the way for the promotion of teachers such as promotion opportunities for the faculty members	
9	Lack of having scientific grades for teachers that reflect their promotion	
10	Ranking teachers	
11	Having vocational and academic ranks of teachers	

Above-mentioned statements in Table 33.2 identify the concepts of promotion opportunity of teachers. Monotonous job path without necessary opportunity for promotion decreases staying motivation and more attempts and cooperation. Thus, promotion opportunity is another factor in the intent to stay of teachers.

Based on Table 33.3, vocational unions of teachers and their activities for meeting vocational goals affect their intent to stay. Presence of representatives of teachers, vocational activities, association of vocational unions with authorities of education department and pursuing teachers’ problems by vocational unions all constitute the concept of vocational unions of teachers that affect their intent to stay.

Table 33.3
Vocational unions

<i>Row</i>	<i>Data</i>	<i>Concept</i>
1	The absence of an association or union for solving the problems of the teachers	Vocational unions
2	Inactivity of vocational unions	
3	Lack of presence of active professional or occupational associations in the province	
4	Increase of union activities	
5	Following problems of teachers by their representatives at vocational unions	
6	Presence of representatives of teachers' associations in decision-making councils of education department	
7	Associations of vocational unions with other organizations and institutions in order to solve the problems of teachers	
8	Reducing political activities of vocational unions and increase of vocational activities	

As mentioned above, after continuous comparison of the responses in the interview, similar responses were represented in the tables and similar concepts were extracted. Accordingly, after drawing up the tables as a part of the qualitative analysis, data from the interview were categorized to complete the analysis based on the open coding and more abstract concepts at the higher levels to achieve related categories. Then, using continuous comparison, every concept was compared to the concepts before and after itself to yield general categories. At this stage, the concepts of salary, bonus, professional growth opportunity, promotion opportunity, participation in decision-making, management support, security at workplace, age, gender, work experience, education, skill variety, job autonomy, existing job opportunities, social status, qualifications, and vocational unions were extracted as follows:

1. Concepts of salary, bonus, professional growth opportunity, promotion opportunity, participation in decision-making, management support, and security at workplace were categorized under the term of “working life quality of teachers”.
2. Concepts of age, gender, work experience, and education level were categorized under the term of “personal traits”.
3. Concepts of skill variety and job autonomy were categorized under the term of “professional traits”.
4. Existing job opportunities and social status were categorized under the term of “socio-economic environment”.
5. Qualifications for making vocational unions were categorized under the term of “job professionalization”.

Thus, in response to the first question, general factors affecting intent to stay of teachers included teachers' working life quality, personal traits, professional traits, socio-economic environment, and job professionalization. In response to the second question, the paradigm of Corbin and Strauss(2006) was used to examine the role of each factor. It required the researcher to refer to the notes resulting from the interviews and the study's statements with scrutiny. For example, is the concept of salary the reason for the lack of intent to stay of teachers, a mediating factor, or a general strategy?

Paradigm model has the following components; intent to stay is considered as a focal phenomenon or main variable. Casual conditions that directly affect intent to stay of teachers and are main reasons for making more attempts and cooperation and continuing teaching is the concept, included in the category of working life quality of teachers. In fact, salary, professional growth opportunity, promotion opportunity, participation in decision making, security at workplace, management support, and job benefits are the main reasons for the intent to stay of teachers, identified by the respondents. Besides casual conditions created by the elements of working life quality, socio-economic environment has the mediating role. As mentioned before, represented responses show that existing job opportunities or unemployment rate, and social status of the teachers have mediating roles in fulfilling intent to stay of teachers as intra-organizational factors. Mediating role refers to the actions for improving intent to stay of teachers by Education Department that is likely to be improved or weakened by the intervention of socio-economic environment. For example, if teachers can find other jobs which are better for them, the effect of professional growth opportunity on their intent to stay may not be strong. Also, some extracted items in this study have background roles based on the paradigm model, referring to specific features related to a job or its owner. In other words, professional traits of teaching (skill variety, autocracy) and personal traits of teachers are the grounds based on which intent to stay of teachers is explained. What teachers do, the features of their job, and psychological and demographic features identify their background roles. The way of expressing sentences by respondents identify the point that teaching has the features that affect the intent to stay of teachers and other related organizational factors. Finally, professionalizing teaching has been identified as a strategy by respondents. In this study, professionalizing teaching is in the condition by which after time pass the conditions for recruiting expert forces for teaching and proper conditions for retaining intent to stay of them are provided; the outcome of this can be the increase of teachers' motivation to stay and making more attempts in teaching. Thus, based on the offered model of Strauss and Corbin to identify the role of categories resulting from qualitative analyses and axial coding of qualitative data, five main categories including working life quality of teachers, socio-economic environment, professional traits, personal traits, and professionalizing teaching are important factors, affecting intent to stay of teachers in different time and place conditions.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Education system has different and complex phenomena that can't be observed objectively. Controlling unwanted variables about these phenomena is difficult. Thus, for studying motivated intent to stay of teachers, qualitative method was used. Effective factors in this regard were considered to be working life quality of teachers (salaries and bonus, security at workplace, professional growth opportunity, promotion opportunity, participation in decision-making, management support), personal traits (age, gender, experience, education level), professional traits (skill variety, autocracy), socio-economic environment (existing job opportunities and social status of teachers), and job professionalization (qualifications and vocational unions). These factors resulted from the responses of the subjects to the questions about effective factors in the intent to stay of teachers. This result about the effect of working life quality of teachers on the intent to stay of them agrees with Pardakhtchi (2005). He suggested efficiency, loyalty, conformity, adoption to staying, absenteeism and drop-out decrease as the outcomes of improved work quality. Luise (1998) also found that working life quality increases job satisfaction, intent to stay, and organizational commitment. Certo and Fox (2001) showed that salaries and benefits, alternative employment opportunities, management

support, and autocracy are effective factors in the intent to stay of teachers. Thus, their results are consistent with the findings of this study.

Also, this study found the effect of demographic variables (job records, gender, and education level) on the intent to stay of teachers. This result agrees with the findings of Bateni (1996). He found that variables such as age, gender, education level, and specialized education affect intent to stay of teachers. Results of this study agree with Marlow and Inman (1997) as well. They showed that demographic features of teachers affect their intent to stay and job satisfaction.

Another finding of this study was the positive effect of social status and existing job opportunities on the intent to stay of teachers which is consistent with the study of Certo and Fox (2001). Ingersoll and Smith (2003) concluded that gaining a better job is one reason for the lack of intent to stay of teachers. Marlow and Inman (1997) showed that social status of teachers affects the intent to stay of them. Their results agree with this finding of the study.

Another finding was the effect of professional traits and job professionalization on the intent to stay of teachers. In other words, the more specialized the teaching, the more specialized people are recruited with more interest in cooperating and making more efforts. Also, if teaching requires various and challenging activities, it is more likely that teachers become more intended to stay in their jobs. This result agrees with Bludern (1982). He found that factors related to teaching from one hand and required skills from the other hand are effective in the intent to stay of teachers. This result doesn't agree with Krieg (2004) who suggested that teachers with more skills, expertise, and abilities have lower intention to stay in teaching. In other words, people with average intelligence and skills continue teaching.

In conclusion, results showed that in order to increase intent to stay of teachers and motivate them for more attempts to meet educational goals and continue cooperation, some measures should be taken by the Education Department to retain and motivate teachers by improving salaries, promotion opportunities, professional growth opportunities, management support, security at workplace, and participation in decision-making based on the needs, demands and expectations of teachers. Professional traits of teachers should also be considered in a way that activities and tasks that the teacher gives require various skills. Besides teaching in class, teachers can diversify class activities using different software, audio-lingual tools, simultaneous and online communication with oversea schools, making teaching interesting and fascinating. Pre-recruitment stage is important so that the prerequisites for being a teacher should be specialized and intelligent and expert staff should be employed. In this way, teaching becomes as specialized as medicine, engineering and other fields and not everyone can become a teacher easily. Besides, attention to the expertise and personal traits, education level, talents, and aptitudes of teaching applicants may lead to attracting capable and interested people to continue this job with higher intent to stay. Teaching is a job which doesn't have a dynamic mechanism. After years of experience, skills, and expertise, a teacher is called a teacher and gets retired with the same title. The lack of a chance to promote teachers, weakens their motivations and intent to stay. Thus, a bright vocational path needs to be defined for the teachers in a way that experienced and expert teachers are differentiated with others and a safe competition develops between them to reach higher ranks. Thus, considering job promotion in the framework of job ranks like faculty members can provide them with promotion opportunities to strengthen intent to stay of teachers. Developing proper work conditions, improving elements of working life quality, revision in the structure and vocational traits of teaching before starting teaching and paving the way, concerning the qualifications and personal traits

of teachers before starting teaching and providing the grounds for a safe career for teachers makes them to be more intended to stay in their jobs and meet educational goals. Another important result was the effect of social status of teachers on their intent to stay. Presence of expert, intelligent, and talented people from one hand and enough income and proper working life quality from the other hand promotes teachers' social status and they prefer teaching to other jobs. Thus, based on the findings of this study, attempts to improve social status of teachers by the Education Department is another factor that affects teachers' intent to stay. There are some suggestions for further studies that can be investigated. Level and rate of teachers' intent to stay should be investigated regarding teaching major, educational level, and educational grade of them. In investigating teachers' intent to stay, teachers who have left teaching should be interviewed as well. The effect of each related factor on the teachers' intent to stay in this study can also be separately investigated in the module of a specific issue.

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