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Cultivation of faculty staff health value practice

Internationally higher educational institutions have been seen as an important setting for health promotion for many years, since education and health are closely linked and higher educational institutions (HEI) teachers have an integral role as promoters of health. HEI teachers are in a unique position to promote the health and well-being of young people, through teaching personal, social, health and economic education.

Nowadays most HEI staff professional development focuses on curriculum delivery. However, their health value orientation is gaining more attention. HEI teachers are a key part of the wider public health workforce worldwide. Research has shown that teaching is one of the most rewarding professions, but it can also be one of the most stressful and this can lead to HEI teachers suffering from burnout. High levels of stress are affecting HEI teacher health and well-being, causing professional burnout, lack of engagement, job dissatisfaction, poor performance, and some of the highest turnover rates ever (Lambert et al. 2006). For centuries, teaching has been characterized as a profession that is “emotionally taxing and potentially frustrating” (Frank et al. 2013). Therefore, the rate at which HEI teachers leave the profession is significantly higher than the departure rate in other professions. This causes instability among faculty staff, students, and the community. Stress not only has negative consequences for teaching staff, it also results in lower achievement for students and higher costs for HEI.

The above-mentioned issues determined the aim of this paper, which is to analyze the ways of stress reduction among HEI faculty staff in modern reality. The tasks of the paper are: to ground the factors of stress among HEI faculty staff; to identify the level of job related stress on the example of Ukrainian HEI faculty staff at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics; to outline the ways of cultivating health value practices among HEI faculty staff.

To begin with, it is necessary to define the notion of stress. The word ‘stress’ is defined by the Oxford Dictionary as ‘a state of affairs involving demand on physical or mental energy’. Job stress can be defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. It can be caused by too much or too little work,

time pressure and deadlines, fatigue from physical strains of work environment, excessive travelling, long hours, having to cope with changes in work. Above all, job stress can lead to poor health including psychological and physiological symptoms (such as depression, anxiety, poor sleep patterns, etc.) and even injury.

Factors leading to stress and burnout are often related to the characteristics of being effective or highly qualified and the pressures related to achieving those goals (Frank et al. 2013). However, those are not the only factors that contribute to the stress of the teaching profession. In this paper, we outline four main sources of high school teacher stress and health disorder, based on literature review conducted (Lambert, Frank, Weare et al.) These are HEI organization; job demands; work resources; teaching staff's personal resources and social-emotional competence.

Let us consider them in detail. The first and foremost source of stress is HEI organization. Unsatisfactory relationships with administrators, colleagues, or students may increase HEI teacher stress, lower job satisfaction and commitment to students. There is also a relationship between HEI teacher turnover and senior staff turnover. Frequent senior staff turnover results in lower faculty staff retention rates. This may lead to lack of communication and agreement between HEI administration and teaching staff.

The next source is job demands. Continued high demands on the job are a key predictor of HEI teacher stress. Limiting HEI teachers' control over the content and pace of their own work, and increasing threats of HEI faculty staff termination contribute to their stress and fear. Managing students with behavior problems is another demanding interpersonal challenge that produces chronic stress and leaves HEI teachers more vulnerable to depression. It can be an obstacle for HEI teaching staff to maintain professional skills and responsibilities at sufficient level.

Thirdly, insufficient work resources, support, and autonomy in decision-making may contribute to HEI faculty staff stress. When senior faculty staff create opportunities for decision-making and collaboration among faculty teachers, the latter feel empowered and have higher satisfaction. Retaining high quality faculty teachers means ensuring they have a voice in decisions at institutional level, and not subjecting them to unrealistic expectations. Above all, the lack of co-worker support and job control are key issues in causing teaching staff stress. This prevents them from being more objective in decision-making process.

Finally, HEI teaching staff personal resources and social-emotional competence are crucial when considering factors that contribute to their stress. When high job demands and stress are combined with low social-emotional competence and classroom management skills, poor teaching staff performance increases. A HEI teacher's own social-emotional well-being is a key factor influencing student and classroom outcomes. Yet, few faculty teachers have training opportunities to develop their own social-emotional competence. If a HEI teaching member of staff is unable to manage their stress adequately, their instruction will suffer, which then affects student well-being and achievement. In contrast, HEI teaching staff with better emotion regulation are likely to reinforce positive student behavior, and support students in managing their own negative emotions. HEI teachers with high

social-emotional competence usually report higher job satisfaction and a sense of personal accomplishment.

According to the survey conducted at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics majority of faculty staff members suffer from professional burnout (mental and physical exhaustion caused by work). We used a validated burnout test, developed by Christina Maslach, one of the leading researchers in the field of burnout. Data collected shows that out of 60 (100%) members of faculty staff, who handle different academic subjects, at least 40 (66.6%) members suffered from medium level of stress, 10 (16.5%) had low amount of job-related stress and were not likely to burn out, and the remaining 10 (16.5%) had the higher degree of stress. The majority of staff emphasized the lack of access to a social-professional support groups, expressed dissatisfaction with rigid application of rules without considering more creative solutions in teaching process and having to deal with rapid program changes. Furthermore, they complained about getting angry and irritated easily and always feeling tired, even when getting enough sleep. Therefore, it may be concluded that there is a correlation between reasons for job related stress expressed by the surveyed members of faculty staff at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics and factors that contribute to job related stress identified above.

Having analyzed the sources of HEI teaching staff stress, we can list its possible consequences: stress negatively affects HEI teachers' physical health; HEI teacher stress can be linked to poor teacher performance and poor student outcomes; HEI teaching staff turnover caused by high level of stress leads to instability and lower effectiveness in higher educational institutions. Based on the findings of the literature review and the opinions of the faculty teachers surveyed, the following ways of cultivating health value practices among HEI faculty staff can be outlined for due consideration and timely and suitable action by the bodies concerned.

Thus, educator's health is committed to be treated ethically and with sensitivity in relation to various social, cultural and environmental issues. The findings above support the need to reduce stress and improve HEI teaching staff well-being and performance by enhancing their teaching by promoting awareness, presence, reflection, and inspiration – the inner psychical and physical resources they need to help students succeed, socially, emotionally, and academically.

Our study focuses on ways of reducing HEI teaching staff stress and promoting their social-emotional competencies, well-being, health and performance. Having analyzed researches on preventing teaching staff stress (Lambert, Frank, Weare, O'Donnell, Kusherman, and McCarthy), we can outline three broad types of health promoting approaches: organizational approach; organization-individual approach; individual approach.

Firstly, let us consider organizational approach. Organizational interventions are directed at enhancing the organization's culture and work practices. They involve promoting a participatory environment, open communication, supervisor and peer support, reducing workload, training, worker health policies, etc. The goal of an organizational intervention is to prevent stress from occurring, which is considered to be more effective than individual interventions alone. There is some evidence to support organizational-level interventions in other service professions,

with documented benefits in reducing job related stress, increasing job satisfaction and reducing turnover. For instance, at the department of pedagogy and foreign philology of S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics the project teams have been organized to undertake outlined tasks. The members of these teams then shared their positive experience. Therefore, they saved their time and effort and managed to maintain healthy and friendly working environment and as a result, the teachers overcome difficult and stressful job related situations in more comfortable for them way.

Organization-individual approach can focus on building co-worker social support and skills training for HEI teaching staff and students. There are some ways when HEI teachers can be assisted in gaining health awareness and cultivating healthcare values.

Given the high rate of HEI teaching staff turnover in the first years of teaching, programs that seek to provide technical and social support to beginning HEI teachers through orientation, guidance, and mentoring programs have spread. Common activities include mentoring from senior teaching staff in the same subject area, regular opportunities for supportive communication with administrators, seminars and workshops, time management, and team building. It is generally accepted that supports for beginning HEI teachers lead to: higher satisfaction, commitment and retention; better classroom instructional practices; higher student scores on academic achievement tests. At our department the most topical seminars have been on the usage of ICT in daily educational practice.

Another helpful approach to addressing HEI teaching staff health and well-being is the implementation of workplace wellness and mental health programs. Such programs target lifestyle changes to reduce health risk behaviors, improve health and reduce absenteeism. Coaching programs can help HEI teaching staff manage emotions and find joy and satisfaction in teaching. These programs can help new members of faculty staff reduce job related stress and raise retention, which improves classroom instruction and management. Various coaching programs that were developed particularly for faculty staff were offered at different levels and for different purposes at the department of pedagogy and foreign philology at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics.

Coaching programs focused on student behavior and social and emotional learning can benefit HEI teaching staff and support classroom learning. According to our analysis the members of teaching staff that trained and supported in implementing social and emotional learning programs have lower job-related anxiety and depression. Members of HEI teaching staff receiving coaching focused on improving the quality of their interactions with students can be guaranteed a significant increase in student achievement, suggesting that systematic and sustained coaching supports may be a critical component of social and emotional interventions for educators (Borova 2012).

Approaching the individual level is the most common way of dealing with job related stress. Such interventions may include psychological relaxation or meditation, cognitive behavioral approaches to improve active coping skills, and goal setting. Stress management based professional development programs foster HEI teaching

staff's ability to focus their awareness in the present moment in a non-reactive manner, connecting to their own experience and to others with ease, patience, and kindness. These skills are to be taught using sequenced exercises such as body scans, breath awareness, meditative movement, greater emotional awareness, and the cultivation of positive emotions and values towards self and others (Frank et al. 2013).

The evidence shows that successful health initiatives should be well-designed and grounded in tested theory and practice; linked to the higher educational institution, home and community; address the ecology and environment; combine a consistency in behavioral change goals through connecting students, educators, family and community; foster respectful and supportive relationships among them; use interactive and blended learning and teaching approaches; exercise individual approach to each student. Communities will be at the forefront of addressing health needs and health inequalities in their areas, and higher educational institutions are an important setting to help address these inequalities.

Many scholars assert that professional preparedness is critical for engaging HEI teaching staff in the promotion of positive health in their daily interactions and routines with students. Having introduced these ideas into practice during the academic year, we could observe positive dynamics in cultivation of faculty staff health value at our department (approximate level of job related stress has decreased by 7% among examined faculty staff). Our research suggests that aside from their major instructional content areas, they may not feel equipped to apply positive health practices. Many scholars assume that all pre-service HEI teachers should be given knowledge in demonstrating competencies in the delivery of positive health approaches. This knowledge includes: understanding the specific role that all members of HEI teaching staff play in the prevention of mental physical and health problems of students; possessing skills to design and carry out instructional approaches aimed at creating positive classroom environments, promoting healthy peer relationships, and enhancing students' self-concept; having curriculum expertise to create learning activities that link students' strengths with academic content to enhance their engagement and motivation for learning.

Hence, our research suggests that with healthy HEI faculty staff students are more likely to learn more effectively; health promotion can assist universities to meet their targets in educational attainment and meet their social aims. Young adults who feel good about their university and who are connected to significant adults are less likely to undertake high risk behaviors and are likely to have better learning outcomes. Thus, HEI can be worksites for the teaching staff and settings that can practice and model effective worksite health promotion for the benefit of all academic staff and ultimately the students.

To conclude, cultivation of HEI faculty staff health value practices is a promising way to help them create and maintain a positive learning environment, avoid burnout and enjoy their work and ultimately achieve positive learning outcomes. Health education promotes core skills and dispositions, which research and teaching staff need to create and maintain supportive learning environments while retaining their well-being and passion for teaching.

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Abstract

Teaching is one of the most rewarding professions, but it can also be one of the most stressful. Worldwide, education and health are inextricably linked. Thus, there is a need to help educators reduce stress. This paper analyzes the ways of stress reduction among HEI faculty staff in modern reality. It grounds the factors of stress among HEI faculty staff; identifies the level of job related stress on the example of Ukrainian HEI faculty staff at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics; and outlines the ways of cultivating health value practices among HEI faculty staff.

Key words: HEI staff, job related stress, professional burnout, health promotion, job satisfaction

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