

Examining the Effect of Goal Clarity on Faculty Performance

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Introduction

Faculty members (teachers) remain the pivotal point for the success of any education system. Globally the systems are undergoing changes, compelling a 'rethink' on the roles of the faculty. The new media communication (NMC) report has used the word 'rethink' to mean, 'the problem is understood but solutions are elusive'¹. This indicates that there is a need for more research on role and development of faculty.

Many researchers and educators have worked on various faculty development activities. Vachlon, et al. argue that faculty development is critical and suggest periodic training on the latest teaching and research methods². Dirk points out that there are several programs to support professional qualification, development, and/or recognition for those teaching in higher education³. Felder and Brent have been conducting faculty development workshops under the auspices of 'The National Effective Teaching Institute' (NETI), which have proved to be hugely successful⁴.

Vaz found that the performance of the faculty, who advised off-campus interdisciplinary research projects, was better than their peers⁵. Faculty Development through industrial internship⁶, through support groups⁷ and through faculty awards⁸ have also been studied. Some researchers have worked on motivation of faculty members in the context of following non-traditional teaching practices. Colbeck, et al. found that faculty's goals for teaching and beliefs about their own professional skills influence their use of non-traditional teaching practices⁹. Finelli, et al. have analyzed factors that influence faculty motivation to adopt effective teaching practices^{10,11}. They have gathered inputs from a sample faculty at their university and are planning a faculty professional development initiative to influence the teaching practices of individual faculty, and an administrative change plan to impact college policies and procedures.

While organizational behavior researchers have proposed various career and motivation management practices, educational institutions do not seem to leverage these practices. Noe¹² believes that the career management process involves career exploration, development of career goals, and use of career strategies to reach the goals, and studies the relationship between different aspects of the career management process and employee development behavior and performance. Sorcinelli, et al. address the top challenges facing faculty members, institutions, and faculty development programs¹³. Greenhaus, et al. examine the conditions under which career goal-setting contributes to effective career management¹⁴. We posit that educational institutions may benefit by adopting such practices.

We, therefore, studied the effect of goal clarity on faculty performance. We screened a movie that highlights criticality of setting goals and then sought goals from all faculty members at an engineering college. After a year, we assessed the performance of the faculty members. We relied on peer evaluation and not student feedback, since the goals were not limited only to teaching. We ran a t-test to find that performance of the faculty with goal clarity was

significantly better from the ones without such clarity. That is the major contribution of the paper. The next section describes our research design for the study that includes concluding remark.

Research Design

Nobody can underplay the importance of faculty development and almost no administrator compromises the activity. They expend substantial resources on faculty educational and award programs. However, they do not seem to look into career management that involves goal setting and goal alignment between an individual and his organization.

Objective, Scope and Type

In this study, we discuss the effect of goal clarity on the performance of faculty members. We studied faculty members working in an Indian engineering college. Our research is descriptive, diagnostic, cross-sectional, field-setting, and mixed (qualitative and quantitative). We describe the characteristics of the population being studied and do not explore the reasons for those characteristics. We sought goals of faculty members and their performance at particular times, making the study cross-sectional. Diagnostic research studies determine the frequency with which something occurs or its association with something else. Our research covers real-life situations and therefore, is a field-setting one. We used qualitative methods to understand goal clarity and quantitative methods to assess the performance of faculty members.

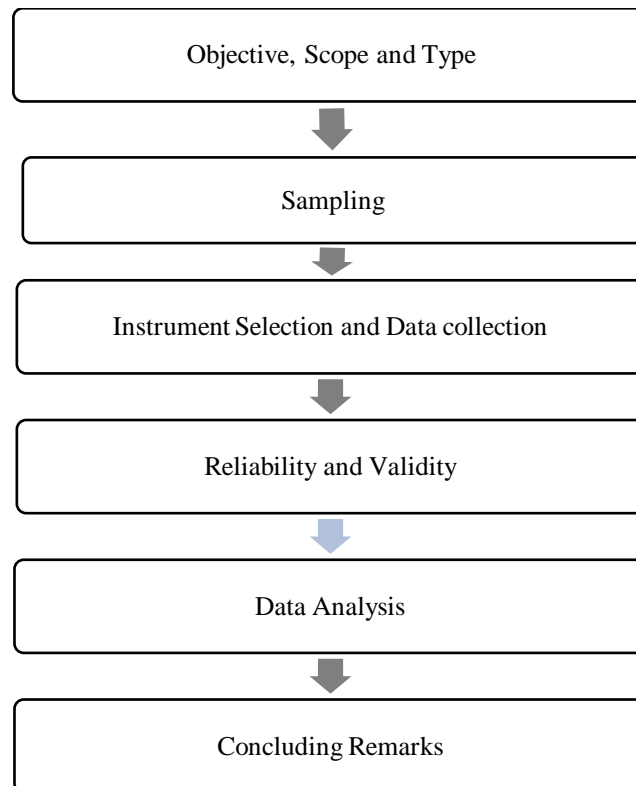


Figure 1 Research design

Sampling

We carried out the experiment at an Indian engineering college where Eighty-one faculty members belonging to different departments participated in the survey that sought their goal definitions. After a year, we carried out peer assessment that covered sixty-seven of the eight-one faculty members.

Instruments Selection and Data Collection

This is a critical step as it maps research problems to a mathematical domain. We perceived that many of the faculty members do not have clarity on goals. We, therefore, screened a movie, ‘Lakshya’, (meaning target or goal), and asked the faculty members a set of questions on excellence, winning, teamwork and goals. Clemson Turregano ¹⁵ says that movies, like case studies, offer real-life portrayals of examples of crisis, and adds that viewers can use these portrayals to discuss the behaviors they would like to emulate or avoid during similar circumstances. A specific goals related question in our survey was, ‘If you want to win - what is your goal and timeline for that?’ We analyzed the qualitative responses to the question and divided them into specific categories such as, teacher, researcher, administrator, and lack of goal clarity. We organized a third party review to validate the mapping of the qualitative goals to different categories. We are providing a sample of the responses (without any editing) and their categorization in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample responses (without any editing) to the ‘goal question’ and their categorizations

Sample responses to the question, “If you want to win - what is your goal and timeline for that?”	Category
i need to be a very good researcher with good number of SCI journals and patents.	Research
I don't know If I wanna win, I'm lost. I'm not able to find purpose of my life. So there is only one goal - To find Purpose of life and then do whatever it takes to fulfill that purpose. I don't know when am I able to find this.	Lack of clarity
Best teacher for my students in every aspect. Within one year.	Teacher
To do a research that will serve to the society and be recognized.	Research
For wining anything success must be the goal timeline always must be prior of the thinking.	Lack of clarity
To serve engineering society (especially in manufacturing engineering) in a form of excellent teaching. Time line is 05 years.	Teacher
My goal is to be become a thoroughly respected academician and a genuine human being. Timeline:10 years.	Teacher
to achieve goal take a small steps. dividing a goal in smaller milestones is important because it gives you satisfaction and success as well.	Lack of clarity
WIN??.....	Lack of clarity
My goal is to achieve excellence In academics and become a perfect teacher as I had. I decided to work hard for that and try to published at least a single research paper in each semester.	Teacher - Researcher

Do best at each and every time. Every moment is time line for me	Lack of Clarity
I would like to Identify personal boundaries at work and know what I can do to make my day more productive and manageable.	Lack of clarity
Goal to be successful in life. Timeline:-having a disciplined life	Lack of clarity
It depends on the nature of the goal. as student it was to secure top position in class, as a young person to secure a good job as team leader to put my best in my endeavors. And for each goal time line is different.	Lack of clarity
Goal must be realistic and timebound	Lack of clarity
according to me win it means personal satisfaction for that my goal is proper balanced life with happiness, for that there is no time line	Lack of clarity
Whatever I want to achieve, I will give my 100% efforts for that.	Lack of clarity
FOCUSED WORK IS MY GOAL. I DONT GET THE TIMELINE THING	Lack of clarity
To do a research that will be helpful for farmers and poor peoples.	Research - Social benefit
My goal is to be a good teacher. is any time line for this because teacher always learns throughout the life. I want to give better shot than earlier every time. I want to review myself in five years of time line.	Teacher
To become Distinguished Emeritus Professor , being considered as one of the top 3 Professor in my area of specialization and holding important position in Government Advisory body in TEN years hence.	Teacher - Researcher
Utilize every single minute of mine.	Lack of clarity

After a year, we assessed the performance of faculty using peer evaluation. We asked each faculty member to name the three best faculty members, in the order of priority, by considering factors such as knowledge, discipline, student-centeredness, devotion, teamwork, new initiatives and their execution, research and ethics. We allocated weightages of 5, 3 and 1 to the first, second and third ranked faculty members. We aggregated the weights and graded the performance as shown in Table 2. We quantized the grades using standard methods (10 for A, 8 for B, etc.) Most of the faculty members had chosen the best faculty from their department (80%) or from the first year department (14 %). Since departments have varying numbers of faculty members, we graded them by departments.

Table 2: Sample peer evaluation scores and their derived grades (done at departmental level)

Faculty	Department	Peer Evaluation	
		Score	Derived Grades
Faculty A - 1	Dept A	31	A
Faculty A - 2	Dept A	11	B
Faculty A - 3	Dept A	8	B
Faculty A - 4	Dept A	8	B
Faculty A - 5	Dept A	3	C
Faculty A - 6	Dept A	3	C
Faculty A - 7	Dept A	3	C
Faculty A - 8	Dept A	3	C
Faculty B - 1	Dept B	51	A
Faculty B - 2	Dept B	35	A
Faculty B - 3	Dept B	18	B
Faculty B - 4	Dept B	12	B
Faculty B - 5	Dept B	10	B
Faculty B - 6	Dept B	9	B
Faculty B - 7	Dept B	8	B
Faculty B - 8	Dept B	5	C
Faculty B - 9	Dept B	4	C
Faculty B - 10	Dept B	4	C
Faculty B - 11	Dept B	3	C
Faculty B - 12	Dept B	3	C
Faculty B - 13	Dept B	2	D
Faculty B - 14	Dept B	1	D

Reliability and Validity

Reliable and valid study connotes the absence of bias and higher truthfulness. For qualitative study, they are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor and quality¹⁶. Lincoln and Guba¹⁷ believe that for qualitative studies, validity implies reliability and suggest demonstration of only validity in those experiments. Creswell and Miller¹⁸ have observed qualitative researchers employing member checking, triangulation, peer reviews, thick description and external audits to demonstrate validity. They have defined triangulation - a widely used measure in qualitative studies in this context - as a validity procedure where one searches for convergence among multiple and different sources of information. We triangulated the faculty performance (peer evaluation scores) rating by correlating it with the student rating where the faculty goal was to be the best teacher. We have presented those data points in Table 3. With all the 13 records, the Pearson correlation between peer and student rating for those faculty members is weaker (p value 0.18 and correlation 0.39). Since the correlation is significantly impacted with extreme values¹⁹, we removed two extreme records (record 1 and 6) and re-computed the correlation (p value 0.001 and correlation 0.834). We have presented the re-computation in Table 4.

Table 3: Comparing peer feedback and student feedback for faculty whose goal was to be the best teacher

Sr No	Goal Category	Peer Evaluation	Students' Feedback
1	Teacher	8	5.5
2	Teacher	10	9.4
3	Teacher	6	8.0
4	Teacher	8	9.5
5	Teacher	6	8.0
6	Teacher	10	7.3
7	Teacher	10	9.3
8	Teacher	8	8.0
9	Teacher	10	9.4
10	Teacher - Consultant	10	9.1
11	Teacher - Researcher	6	7.8
12	Teacher - Researcher	10	9.0
13	Teacher - Researcher	8	8.9

Table 4: Correlation between peer and student feedback for the faculty whose goal was to be the best teacher

Average Peer rating	Average Student Rating	Pearson Correlation	p-value
8.36	8.75	0.834	0.001

Data Analysis

We carried out two-sample t-test using Minitab version 17.0 and found out that performance of the faculty members who have goal clarity (27 faculty members) is significantly higher from the one without goal clarity (40 faculty members). The p-value was 0.0002 as showed in Table 5.

Table 5: Result of two-sample t-test between peer rating for faculty without goal clarity and with goal clarity

Peer rating for faculty without goal clarity	Peer rating for faculty with goal clarity	p-value of t-test
6.2	8.07	0.0002

Concluding Remarks

Faculty performance is undoubtedly the most important lever that educational leaders / administrators can use for their organizations to succeed. Its (faculty performance) criticality has increased in the 21st century in view of the higher level demands from fresh engineers. Faculty members are expected to learn and use a variety of technology-based methods and research-

based instruction strategies for content delivery, learner support, and assessment. They also need to collaborate with their peers locally and globally. Further, they have to comply with documentation and reporting requirements. Organizing various interventions to improve this type of multi-dimensional performance is an easy task and almost no administrator ignores that. However, that may not suffice. Faculty members should also feel committed and passionate about their profession. One way to check that is, to understand their goals and the alignment of the goals with the organization.

Unfortunately, many faculty members do not have clarity about their goals and carry out their duties merely as a matter of routine. That does not help them to deliver performance up to their true potential. We examined the relationship between goal clarity and performance and found it to be statistically significant. We conditioned the faculty members by screening a suitable movie before seeking their goals. For performance assessment, we used peer evaluation, which can cover all the aspects of their duties in a better way than just students' feedback. We triangulated the peer assessment with students' feedback in case of the faculty whose goal was to be the best teacher. We found sufficient correlation to establish validity of the peer assessment.

We carried out our study at a college and need to repeat at more, preferably in different geographies, to validate the findings. We used a simple method of understanding goals of the faculty members. We need to research and develop robust methods to elicit goals. Faculty members have to perform in multiple dimensions, which make it difficult to guarantee correct performance assessments. We believe that we have used reasonably accurate measures but have to continue exploration of better ones.

It is clear that the administrators have to work seriously on goal-planning and goal-setting exercises. In general, academic institutes do not use the human resource management practices that organizational behavior experts prescribe. Many administrators end up declaring a faculty 'pass' or 'fail' and do not think that they can and must optimize their performances. In fact, they have to play a major role in optimizing performances of their faculty to increase chances of success of their organization.

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