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Determinants of Professional Motivation of Academic Teachers in Non-Public Higher Education Institutions

Dissertation

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Summary

The issue of professional motivation of academic teachers constitutes an important area of research in management sciences, particularly in the context of dynamic transformations taking place in contemporary higher education. Motivation affects not only the level of engagement and effectiveness of teaching and research activities, but also the organisational stability of higher education institutions, the quality of education, and their ability to adapt to changing environmental conditions. In the face of growing stakeholder expectations, performance pressure, and increasingly complex formal and administrative requirements, the motivation of academic teachers has become one of the key determinants of institutional effectiveness and the sustainability of competitive advantage in higher education institutions.

In the academic literature, motivation is understood as a complex process shaped by the interaction of internal and external factors, as well as individual and organisational determinants. This dissertation adopts a perspective that enables a holistic analysis of motivation, taking into account both non-material conditions (including a sense of meaningful work, job satisfaction, opportunities for self-realisation, professional autonomy, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and leadership style) and material conditions (including remuneration, employment stability, reward and benefit systems, and working conditions). A key assumption underlying this approach is that material and non-material factors do not operate in isolation, but may mutually reinforce or weaken one another, forming a motivation system specific to a given organisation.

The issue of academic teachers' motivation is of particular significance in the context of non-public higher education institutions. These institutions operate under stronger market pressure, greater organisational volatility, and more diversified forms of academic employment. As a result, they more frequently face challenges related to job stability, transparency of remuneration principles, teaching and administrative workload, as well as expectations concerning the quality of education and relationships with students. At the same time, the organisational environment of non-public institutions may strengthen certain non-material aspects, such as workplace atmosphere, team relations, and the efficiency of internal communication, which in practice significantly influence levels of engagement and job satisfaction.

The main objective of the dissertation is to identify the factors motivating academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions to perform their professional

duties, with particular emphasis on the coexistence and interrelationships between material and non-material determinants. This objective is embedded in the context of management in higher education and the need to design effective motivation systems that, on the one hand, support the maintenance of high-quality academic work and, on the other, respond to the real organisational and economic conditions under which non-public higher education institutions operate.

The achievement of the main research objective was based on a mixed-method research approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods. The application of methodological triangulation enabled a multidimensional exploration of the research problem and increased the validity and reliability of the conclusions drawn. The adopted research strategy made it possible both to identify general patterns and relationships within the studied population of academic teachers and to conduct an in-depth analysis of the organisational context and managerial perspective of non-public higher education institutions.

Quantitative research was conducted using a survey method addressed to academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions (N=120). The research instrument included a set of questions allowing for the assessment of the level of professional motivation, the significance of selected material and non-material factors, as well as subjective evaluations of working conditions, job satisfaction, and motivational practices applied within the institutions. The sample selection was purposeful, and the collected data enabled descriptive, comparative, and relational analyses using appropriate statistical methods.

The quantitative research was complemented by qualitative research conducted in the form of individual interviews with individuals holding managerial positions in non-public higher education institutions (N=15). The purpose of these interviews was to deepen the interpretation of the survey results and to capture the decision-making perspective, which is often not fully visible in quantitative data. The interviews addressed issues related to methods of motivating academic staff, the role of material and non-material factors in management practice, as well as challenges associated with maintaining employee engagement under conditions of organisational change and market pressure. The analysis of the qualitative material made it possible to identify recurring interpretative themes and to confront managerial declarations with assessments expressed by academic teachers.

The research process was embedded in a clearly defined methodological framework. The methodological chapter specified the subject and objectives of the research, formulated the main research problem and detailed research questions, and proposed working hypotheses

concerning the nature and significance of motivational factors. In particular, it was assumed that the motivation of academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions is shaped by the coexistence of material and non-material factors, the importance of which may vary depending on individual characteristics of respondents and the organisational conditions under which the institutions operate.

The applied research methods and techniques enabled an analysis of differences in assessments of work motivation depending on selected socio-demographic and professional variables, such as gender, age, length of service, form of employment, and the status of the institution as the primary place of employment. This made it possible to capture the heterogeneity of motivational experiences within the studied population and to identify areas in which the influence of particular motivational factors is either more universal or more differentiated.

The adopted methodological concept provided a foundation for the systematic analysis of empirical research results presented in subsequent chapters of the dissertation. It enabled a gradual transition from a general analysis of academic teachers' motivation to work, through an examination of non-material motivational determinants, to a detailed discussion of material aspects of motivation, such as remuneration, employment stability, and reward and benefit systems. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study and for the formulation of conclusions relevant both to motivation theory and to human resource management practice in non-public higher education institutions.

The analysis of empirical research results enabled a multifaceted assessment of the level of work motivation among academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions and the identification of factors influencing its development. The findings indicate that the studied group is characterised by an overall moderate to high level of professional motivation, accompanied by differentiation in its individual components. This motivation is dynamic and heterogeneous, and its structure depends on the interaction of individual, organisational, and material factors.

The results of the study demonstrate that the decision to pursue an academic career in non-public higher education institutions is largely determined by non-material and intrinsic motives. The most frequently indicated factors included the desire to share knowledge, a sense of meaningful work, opportunities for professional development, and satisfaction derived from contact with students. Teaching activities were evaluated as the most satisfying area of professional activity, confirming their key role in shaping a positive attitude toward academic

work. Material factors less frequently served as primary motives for career choice; however, they proved to be important in terms of maintaining professional stability and a sense of economic security.

Analyses of overall job satisfaction revealed that it is strongly associated with affective attitudes toward performed duties, the perceived meaningfulness of work, and perceived career prospects. At the same time, it was observed that the occurrence of periodic states of discouragement is generally moderate and situational in nature, and its intensity largely depends on the quality of relationships with direct supervisors and the perceived effectiveness of applied motivational measures. These findings indicate the significant role of organisational and leadership-related factors in sustaining the engagement of academic teachers.

A detailed analysis of non-material determinants of motivation confirmed their key importance within the studied population. Factors that most strongly enhanced motivation included a sense of professional autonomy, the ability to influence the manner in which teaching duties are performed, a positive work atmosphere, and interpersonal relationships based on trust and cooperation. Considerable importance was also attributed to the leadership style of supervisors, particularly with regard to communication, the provision of feedback, and perceived support. At the same time, several non-material demotivating factors were identified, including excessive bureaucracy, ambiguity of procedures, a lack of decision-making transparency, and a perceived limited influence on the functioning of the organisation.

The results concerning material determinants of motivation indicate that these factors play an important, though in most cases not dominant, role in shaping the work motivation of academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions. Remuneration and employment stability are perceived as foundational elements conditioning a sense of professional and economic security. Their significance becomes particularly evident in situations of organisational uncertainty and high levels of teaching and administrative workload. At the same time, the findings confirm that material factors influence motivation in close interaction with non-material conditions, and that their motivational effectiveness depends on the perceived fairness, transparency, and coherence of remuneration and reward systems.

The analysis of relationships between material and non-material factors confirmed the thesis regarding their complementary nature. Material factors constitute the motivational foundation, whereas non-material factors more strongly determine levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and long-term organisational commitment among academic teachers. The results

indicate that an imbalance between these two areas may lead to a weakening of motivation, even in the presence of relatively high remuneration or a favourable work atmosphere.

Both the theoretical analyses and the results of empirical research allow for the conclusion that the professional motivation of academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions is complex, dynamic, and multidimensional in nature. Its development is not the result of isolated incentives, but rather the outcome of the interaction between material and non-material factors, as well as organisational and institutional conditions. The findings confirm the validity of the adopted main hypothesis, which assumes a complementary relationship between material and non-material determinants of work motivation in the academic environment of non-public higher education institutions.

The results clearly indicate that non-material factors play a key role in shaping levels of engagement, job satisfaction, and identification of academic teachers with their institution. Particular importance was attributed to such elements as a sense of meaningful work, professional autonomy, opportunities for development, interpersonal relationships, and a management style based on communication, trust, and support. At the same time, it was demonstrated that the absence of adequate material conditions, including employment stability and transparent and fair remuneration principles, may lead to a decline in motivation, even in the presence of a favourable organisational climate.

An important conclusion drawn from the study is the confirmation that the motivation of academic teachers employed in non-public higher education institutions is strongly embedded in the organisational context of these institutions. The variability of market conditions, performance pressure, and the intensity of teaching and administrative workloads influence the way academic work is perceived and the strategies adopted to cope with professional demands. In this context, the role of managerial staff becomes particularly significant in shaping a work environment that fosters long-term engagement and limits demotivating factors, such as excessive bureaucracy, procedural ambiguity, and communication deficits.

The obtained results have important practical implications for management in non-public higher education institutions. They indicate the need to design motivation systems based on a balance between material and non-material incentives, taking into account the specificity of academic work as well as the diversity of employees' expectations and experiences. Of particular importance is the creation of conditions that support professional autonomy, competence development, transparency of organisational rules, and the building of a positive

work atmosphere. These recommendations may support university authorities and managerial staff in improving management practices and enhancing the overall quality of institutional functioning.

In summary, the considerations presented in the dissertation confirm that effective motivation of academic teachers in non-public higher education institutions requires a comprehensive and balanced approach integrating economic, organisational, and psychosocial aspects. Taking these elements into account may contribute not only to increased job satisfaction and engagement among academic staff, but also to strengthening the stability and competitiveness of higher education institutions in the face of contemporary challenges.