

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMITMENT: THE COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Abstract

The article aims to present issues connected with a commitment in relation to the current transformations of working conditions. Presently people work for many employers during their working lives; hence insecurity of employment became a determinant of the work situation. On the other hand, the employees are guided by the need for personal fulfillment and intellectual development in the professional field. This raises the question of whether organizational commitment, understood as a commitment to the workplace, is still a research problem, or whether another kind of commitment is developing- commitment to the occupation. This dilemma is the result of analysis of the behavior of employees. The observations indicate that some people do their work at a high level regardless of place of employment, identifying themselves with the profession performed. They are guided by the need for professionalism, not by the need for staying in the organization. The article aims to present two positions on commitment, by providing arguments in favor of importance of both aspects according to the different needs of employees. Moreover, this paper outlines the proposed directions of empirical research, undertaking of which would allow for broadening knowledge about changes in attitudes of people towards work.

Key words: organizational behavior, organizational commitment, professional commitment.

Introduction

M. Frankenhauser describes the commitment as a situation which involves challenge, when the need for putting some effort into work does not cause in individuals negative emotions, on the contrary it is accompanied by enthusiasm and a sense of satisfaction (Chmiel, 2003, p. 248). This action is caused by the need of “devoting oneself” to activities being performed (Lewicka, 1993, p. 17). Following this logic, one should assume that the degree of commitment can be expressed by the phase of intensity of motivation. It determines the amount of energy used to achieve the objective (Reykowski, 1977, p. 580). Therefore, commitment has an attributive meaning, as it distinguishes actions motivated by the conviction of the need for their realization and execution with big effort so as to achieve the accompanying goal of the committed action, i.e. achieving the best final outcome.

Naturally, organizations are keen on having committed employees in their ranks because their work is effective. However, recently it is observed more and more clearly that the nature of commitment is changing from organizational to professional. It is caused by the evolution of the situation in which enterprises operate today, and it results in transformation of the relationship between the employee and the organization. This article will discuss causes and areas of change which indicate at the same time the characteristics of both sides of commitment. These include issues related to:

- The current situation of work,
- Attitudes of people towards work,

- The structure of human needs which are satisfied in the workplace,
- The type of employee-organization relationship,
- The role of organizational factors in initiating and sustaining commitment.

Reasons for Changing the Nature of Commitment

The traditional model of the relationship between the employee and the organization, which developed in the industrial era, assumes long-term participation of the individual in the structures of the company. As a result the employee's identity is built through a commitment to the workplace and identification with the aspirations and decisions of his superiors (Vance, 2006, p. 3). Adoption of this assumption justifies the intention of formulating a definition of the issue of organizational commitment, appearing as: 1) identification of an employee with the objectives and values of the organization, 2) the desire to belong to an organization, and 3) willingness to incur the effort for the organization (Nehmen, 2009). Such a model of initiating in employees the interest in the realization of tasks is common. It provides a basis for building incentive systems in organizations. Many reasons speak in favour of its rightness but the observations of changes of reality incline to reflection over its topicality.

In recent years, the work situation has undergone a distinct transformation. Among the reasons for this, two fundamental causes can be distinguished: the impact of the turbulent environment on the functioning of the organization, and changing employees' attitudes towards work. The first of these relates to the changing nature of the environment in which businesses currently operate. It is characterized by unpredictability of the changes that directly affect the condition of the companies. The situation of uncertainty causes sudden changes in conditioning of activities, which in turn effectively blocks the long-term planning. Consequently, employers are not willing to sign long-term contracts with employees, and take a quick decision to reduce staff (Vance, 2006, p. 12). Thus, stabilization of employment is a difficult goal to achieve today (Coetzee, 2005).

The way of organizing work is also undergoing changes. There is a resignation from the permanent division of labor in favor of formulating task forces, created by persons employed solely for the duration of the project. N. Chmiel makes an observation regarding this condition that we should not expect from employees a big involvement in the affairs of the company or identification with it if it is known that they are participants in the organization only for the duration of the project. In this situation, commitment is related to the implementation of a given project (Chmiel, 2003, p 470). It follows from the above that the ability to meet the first condition of organizational commitment is limited. The integration of organizational and individual goals requires time needed for mutual compatibility and strengthening the conviction of workers about the reality of obtaining benefits from devoting their efforts to the employer. Whereas organizations in response to stimuli coming from the environment tend to maintain operational flexibility by shortening the duration of employment, thus not providing sufficient incentives for the employee to take the effort of identification of his person with the workplace (Smith, 1999, p. 31).

The second determinant of organizational commitment expresses the need for the interest on the part of the employee in belonging to the organization. Also in this case one can notice formation of the barriers. The level of education of working people is increasing. They are accompanied by a feeling that by not expanding constantly their competence, they do not just stay in place, but in fact they fall behind in career development because of the high rate of change of requirements that is imposed on their occupation. In addition, many workers with great courage still look for jobs that not only allow them to achieve high income but also give them job satisfaction and the possibility to realize their individual aptitudes (CBOS, 2009). Therefore, employees armed with the knowledge and the need for personal fulfillment remain

with the employer as long as it is worth in terms of salary and career opportunities, and they are not inclined to cultivate bonds with the organization.

In view of these transformations one can observe the change of the nature of commitment from organizational to professional. It occurs as a result of: 1) faith in and acceptance of goals and values of the profession, 2) willingness to incur the effort in the implementation of the profession, and 3) the desire to remain in the profession (Giffords, 2009, p. 388-389). Professional commitment is a term that accompanies the study into the motivation of people doing free professions who by definition are self-employed and who work for the client and not for the organization. Such employees are directed by a desire to develop their careers. This is a group of specialists or those wishing to specialize. In their case, a sense of identity is given by their profession, and commitment is driven by the need to live and work according to the values and rules governing the professional group to which they belong. The group of people distinguished by the professional commitment is varied; it may include occupations related to performing both intellectual and physical tasks. It is expanding, as there are more working people who deliberately choose to do a particular job and their goal is to work in a given profession and perform it at a high level regardless of the location and the entity for which it is performed.

It should be noted that the change of the nature of the commitment is not yet widespread, because people live better when they have a sense of stability.¹ Shortening the duration and relaxation of the relationship between the employee and the organization is in the great extent caused by market conditions and organizational issues. Focusing of the staff on the professional performance of work and complete acquisition of responsibility for their own professional existence is not a normal behavior of employees.² It should be expected, however, that the trend outlined above not only will be maintained but also it will include a growing group of professionals (Baran, 2004, p. 30).

The Change of the Structure of Employees' Needs

Assuming that the change in attitude of people towards work plays a key role in transforming the nature of commitment, as described here, there are grounds for raising issues related to the course of the motivation process, depending on the type of commitment. The following description is built on an approach based on A. Maslow's theory of needs, which is useful due to the classification of categories of human needs, adopted by the author.

Organizational commitment is a state of external motivation. In this model it is assumed that the work environment affects employee in a manner that expands or blocks the development of commitment (Smith, 1999, p. 30). This is because it affects the ability of the employees to meet their individual needs (Bielski, 1996, p. 265), and thus determines the decision to continue employment, and willingness to incur the effort at work. When an employee participates in the organization on the "traditional" terms (long-term contract of employment, the permanent division of labor, with a relatively stable external conditions of the organization) he seeks to satisfy the full range of basic needs - from physiological to self-realization (Maslow, 1990, p. 72-86). The organization generally does not impose restrictions in this area; on the contrary, it feels obliged to be open to the needs of workers so that through their gratification it could provide incentives to stimulate the commitment. In such a situation high on the hierarchy of importance is the need for security whose gratification aims to release from concerns for ensuring existence, and to provide stable working conditions. The means to supplement this deficiency are long-term employment contracts, timely payment of wages, etc. Thus, the function of a generator of commitment is played by the elements of the work situation, i.e. organizational factors directly affecting the motivational processes that occur in workers. If an individual is exposed to the

positive stimuli and circumstances allowing him to satisfy his various needs, the development of commitment occurs, otherwise performance at a basic level can be expected.

In the case of a professional commitment the process of motivation is different. It is a state of self-motivation, because in the first place an individual establishes a goal that he will pursue high-level challenges, regardless of place and the situation. The model of the development of this kind of commitment can be described as follows. At the stage of entry into the organization of primary importance is the state of readiness to accept the effort during the performance of duties. The role of the organization is to provide conditions that maintain the motivation to work at a high level. But in this case, in the light of external determinants of professional commitment, discussed above, its development and support takes place by satisfying only three of the five needs, according to A. Maslow's classification. The needs for security and affiliation are excluded. Among the basic barriers to satisfying needs for security in the workplace there are short-term contracts and changing working conditions (Sullivan, 1999, p. 458). That is why nowadays a man should acquire in the process of socialization the ability of tolerance of uncertainty, by improving his skills of flexible behavior, as well as the ability to secure his existence in case of unexpected changes of employment (Sikorski, 1998, p. 50). In connection with the temporary participation in the organization or teams created within it, limited are also the conditions of satisfying affiliation need which should be realized outside the sphere of professional life (Doherty, 2009, p. 86; Dudek, 2011, p. 115-116). In this respect, there is also the second prerequisite, which shows that focus on professional development eliminates the need to search for companions to spend time inside the company (which is one of the aspirations of those working only to obtain income). So the package of expectation of a man motivated by professional commitment should include physiological, respect and self-realization needs. The means of satisfying the first mentioned category is providing such conditions of work that correspond with the needs of a human body in a way that minimizes psycho-physical overload in workers. The next need, whose importance in the new circumstances is not marginalized, is respect. Expressing appreciation for the work is part of the payment for the good execution of the order. This factor should never be missing, even when it comes to the maximum simplification of interpersonal relations in the organization in favor of focusing on the tasks. Finally, essential to the development of professional commitment, is the need for self-realization. The possibility of combining paid work with the realization of life passion is an impulse which activates willingness to incur effort during works which constitute the practice of a given profession.

To summarize the above observations it can be concluded that a fundamental difference in the course of the motivating process in people driven by organizational and professional commitment lies in shortening of the process of initiating the state of high motivation, and in transferring the location of its stimulator. In the first case, the employee should meet a reasonable prerequisite, which is a positive attitude to work. Then he is subjected to the influence of factors that are designed to stimulate and intensify his motivation to work. The essence of professional commitment is internal stimulation and intensification of the willingness to work, so that the organization admits in its ranks people pre-oriented to incurring effort during the performance of tasks.

Relations between the Employee and the Organization

The issues discussed above are the introduction to determining the types of relationships between employees and the organization which can be distinguished by the type of commitment. As it was pointed out, the development of organizational commitment is determined by organizational factors. Thanks to their positive effects, in people are created forces, which motivate them to perform the entrusted tasks with interest. This assumption is based on considerations arising from the assumptions of mutual exchange between worker and

employer, so called social exchange, in which an important place is occupied by the formation of interpersonal relations (Blau, p. 82). In exchange for the ability to meet individual expectations the employee responds with intensive work (Stazyk, Pandey, Wright, 2011, p. 605). Thus, the source of commitment is seen in an obligation which the employee has towards the organization (Vance, 2006, p. 4). Furthermore, the model of organizational commitment is based on the assumption of the need to integrate individual and organizational goals. Full integration of the aspirations of both sides, unfortunately, is a utopia. It is therefore necessary to move towards realistic principles of designing an organization, which allow achieving those goals which are not interdependent, but parallel. Conditions for development of organizational commitment are the aftermath of a significant contribution of psychology and sociology to the development of management science, and remain in the mainstream of the humanization of work, highlighting the subjectivity of the individual in the work process. However, one must acknowledge the barriers that limit their application in organizational practice. One of them results from the evaluation of profitability of building organizational commitment, because it requires the implementation of a laborious and expensive program to ensure satisfactory working conditions. Another one is the result of research aimed at understanding the correlation between job satisfaction and productivity of employees. This hypothesis has never been confirmed empirically (Bowling, 2007).

Doubts which arise over the results of the analysis of the validity of assumptions of organizational commitment, together with the unfavorable economic situation and the changing attitudes towards work lead to the revision of approach to the employee commitment. Currently, the model of exchange between the employee and the organization is taking shape, in which the workplace is primarily a field for realization of individual goals of the employees. This means the change of the attitude to work from submissive towards the employer's aspirations to the partnership – allowing realizing ambitions of both sides moving in the same directions. Employers treat this situation as favorable because, themselves having a safe approach to realization of personal function, they wish to have only the best performers without making long-term promises of employment (Baran, 2004, p. 196). Hence, one can observe that relations based on principles of social exchange are ousted and replaced by economic exchange, which focuses only on the object of transaction and the conditions set out by its conclusion (Bierówka, 2009, p. 60). As a result the significance of interpersonal relations is being decisively reduced. However, it should be noted that their total elimination is not possible as it is a transaction realized for weeks, months or several years. Emphasis is placed on the realization of a particular subject of the contract, rather than on building relationships between the employee and the organization. Due to the surrounding uncertainty, building of the commitment should not be based on an emotional relation between the parties of the contract as it is unfavorable for both sides. It is then necessary to devote time and effort to care for something that is inherently unstable. In conclusion it is worth noting that at this point fear may arise that workers will be treated instrumentally, however fair treatment of contractors is real and practiced.³ Thus, the type of the commitment changes the nature of employee-organization relationship from subjective (organizational commitment) to objective (professional commitment), but not dehumanized. The model of professional commitment presents a pragmatic approach to the possibility of meeting individual expectations in the organization.

„Double Bottom” Role of the Organizational Determinants

The main role in initiating and sustaining organizational commitment is played by elements of work situation, whose task is to provide positive incentives. This model of commitment is widely used since it applies to all types of workers. Therefore, the stimulators should have a very diverse character, so that they can meet various expectations of the employees, depending

among other things on the nature of work and their individual features. Extreme solutions can prove to be on equal footing with effectiveness, e.g. directive manager towards employees who are unskilled and unwilling to assume responsibility for their tasks, or consultative manager when the team is made up of people who want to demonstrate their own initiative. An attempt to make generalizations may lead to false solutions.

In the model of professional commitment the role of organizational factors is limited to the function of stabilizer of intense motivation to work. This does not mean that their meaning is marginalized. In the case of professional commitment there are strictly defined initial conditions, which should be provided to sustain this commitment. This is due to the fact that an organization, wishing to carry out its work through temporary workers, must be prepared to receive them and to ensure good working conditions, with a minimum period of acclimatization to a new location. Predictors of work situation, which are of crucial significance, should include the liberal organizational culture, a flexible structure of the organization, and democratic management of people and fair implementation of personnel policy. These are the determinants of organizational behavior, which leave people the freedom of action, the acceptance of their individuality, and also ensure the implementation of the contract at a high level (Sikorski, Bieńkowska, 2012, p. 208). The fulfillment of these conditions gives a double benefit, because at the same time they are the factors necessary for the operation of the organization in a dynamic environment.

It is worth to draw attention to yet another issue. The foundation for encouraging the organizational commitment is the establishment of lasting relations based on the integration of values. This is done in the process of instilling into employees the aspirations and goals of the organization, enabling them attachment to the workplace and intense stimulation of the desire to work. Paradoxically, in the case of relationships based on economic exchange, when the parties calculate the choice of a partner, the significance of the value is growing even more. The basis of this statement is the arguments related to the observance of the terms of the agreement. Respecting by the organization such values as fairness, openness, honesty is a trump card in seeking the best specialists. The employee should have a profound conviction when signing the contract that the employer will fulfill all the obligations and admit him into a circle of his employees on the principles of kindness and openness regardless of the length of employment.⁴ (Hejduk, Grudzewski, Sankowska, Wańtuchowicz, 2009) Although the professional commitment is a state of self-motivation, the importance of organizational determinants of human functioning in the workplace does not lose its value. It changes only their function.

Research Proposal

The presented problems connected with the stratification of the issue of commitment, suggest conducting empirical research that would illustrate its distribution in the population. In addition, they open new perspectives for diagnosis of the relations between people and the organization which employs them. It would be interesting to find the answers to the following questions:

- What percentage of employees is guided by organizational commitment and by professional commitment?
- Is the type of commitment dependent on socio-demographic variables such as age, gender, education level?
- Are professionally active persons ready and willing to function according to the state of professional commitment?
- What barriers occur on the way to the development and maintenance of organizational and professional commitment?

These questions are a starting point for framing the research fields related to stimulating and maintaining high motivation to work. Information generated thereby would provide guidance on the determinants of human behavior in organizations, as well as the principles of a design of the organization which would reach out to transformations taking place in the environment.

Discussion

The above description of the two sides of commitment shows the path of change of employees' attitudes towards the place of employment. The dynamically changing work situation does no longer allow living in a blissful sense of stability, and a group of people with skills needed to be driven by professional commitment is now relatively small. The observation of reality provides insights that many professionally active people still prefer to put the effort in the commitment to the organization in order to gain a sense of security. Despite the relatively high professional qualifications, they do not take the risk of self-employment. However, the reality is harsh and entails finding the essence of autonomous functioning on the labor market. Thus questions arise, among others:

- Whether temporary work, on commission, correlates with high level commitment (Glais, Moser, 2009, p. 592)?
- Whether both people and organizations are prepared to function under new conditions, in which professional commitment becomes part of the work determinants (Sullivan, 1999, p. 458)?

An attempt to seek answers to these questions reveals, in the first place, the problem of workers' capacity to pursue an individual career path, on which signposts are the determinants of occupation rather than of identification with the workplace. Thus, the starting point should be a change in the way of identifying the concept of commitment, from the traditional, interpreted as "stability, loyalty, and the feeling of being a part of the organization" (Glaise, Moser, 2009, p. 592) to the approach based on "an individual's identification with and Involvement in the profession, commitment and dedication to the profession, and acceptance of professional ethics and goals" (Rahman, Hanafiah, 2002, p. 79). One of the feasible solutions is to build a path of protean and boundaryless careers (Briscoe, Hall, Frautschy Demuth, 2006). In parallel, a new situation also poses challenges for organizations that must meet the requirements of designing the organizations open to professionally dynamic staff, who need wide operational space (Sikorski, Bieńkowska, 2012, p. 209), as well as honesty on the part of the contractor (Kodeks etyki). This constitutes a new problem and leads to the formulation of a question: are the persons responsible for shaping the relationship between the employee and the organization aware of the challenge which involves shaping the flexible organization (Czarnecki, Filipiak, Krzemiński, Olechnowicz, Woroszyńska-Sapieha, 2009)?

It is worth noting one more question. Among the ongoing research on the issue of commitment it can be distinguished an area associated with the assessment of the level of organizational commitment in temporary workers, which is carried according to the concept of Mayer and Allen (Veitch, Cooper-Thomas, 2009). The results confirm the assumptions made that this type of employment is accompanied by a lower degree of commitment than in workers with stable jobs (Glaise, Moser, 2009, p. 592), which is logical. This fact provides an argument that there is a need to mainstream a new dimension of engagement that will enable the study of people's attitudes towards work in conditions of employment volatility.

Conclusions

The article compares the two types of commitment: organizational and professional. As a result, the direction of change in employee-organization relationship was outlined leading to a redefinition of the desired attitudes of people towards work and development of new standards of conduct in professional life. The discussed issue of professional commitment is not yet a popular area of research in the field of management science. However, due to the changes in the determinants of organizational behavior, this issue is gaining importance. Therefore, research should be conducted to provide guidance on how the organization should be designed to meet the occurring changes and where the implemented solutions will allow using the potential of employees in a way that is efficient and beneficial for both parties.

Notes

1. Interesting are the results of research conducted by CBOS in Poland in 2009. One reason for the mobility of surveyed employees is seeking permanent and satisfactory employment (CBOS 2009).
2. Many people representing free professions (e.g. doctors, architects, lawyers) prefer to work full-time in the organization.
3. The analysis of the issues of professional commitment validates the assumption of Burnham and McClelland about the lack of need to establish interpersonal relations between the employee and the employer. The sufficient condition to achieve the desired level of efficiency is to focus on performing tasks (McClelland, Burnham, 2003).
4. This condition must be satisfied, of course, also the other way, i.e., the employee should also be guided by values. However, in these considerations the accent is unilateral to expose the “second bottom” of the role of organizational conditions.

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