“Reshaping Teachers’ Workload: ‘Workload for Learning’ Approach”

Mahesh M. Joshi
School of Education,
S.R.T.M.University, Nanded

Abstract

Teacher’s workload, a central element of performance management, is intended to improve the quality of teaching (and therefore learning). This paper examines whether teacher’s workload is achieving this purpose, through hypothetical studies and begins with a discussion of the context of teacher’s workload in relation to education reform that is taking shape in India.

The original value of the paper is to approach teacher’s workload model for quality learning & development in higher education from a university’s cultural perspective. When the conceptual model, like mentioned here, are worked out, the professionals can benefit by understanding the interrelated nature of teacher’s workload and emerging higher education context with reference to educational quality and organisational culture in higher education institutions.

Key words: Teacher’s workload, ‘Workload for Learning’ Approach

Introduction

The improvement of teaching is now accepted to be a key to the continual improvement of student achievement. Teacher’s workload, a central element of performance management, is intended to improve the quality of teaching (and therefore learning). This paper examines whether teacher’s workload is achieving this purpose, through hypothetical studies and begins with a discussion of the context of teacher’s workload in relation to education reform that is taking shape in India.

The paper establishes the foundation for a comprehensive understanding and analysis of teacher’s workload in the university, focussing on higher education. While this understanding of teacher’s workload as part of the university culture seems to gain more importance there is still a lack of fundamental research and conceptual understanding of the phenomenon in itself. Therefore, there is a need to focus on promoting a teacher’s workload model given in this paper which is enabling individual teacher to continuously improve his educational practice.
Teachers’ Workload: An international scenario

Simon Fraser University, Canada, have three primary responsibilities in the teacher’s workload: research, teaching and service (SFU, 1999).

a. Research responsibilities require faculty to maintain a program of research, scholarship or artistic creativity through which they should aspire to a national or international reputation as scholars.

b. Teaching responsibilities require faculty to achieve at least a satisfactory standard of instructional competence, to share equitably the annual instructional responsibilities of their departments/schools, to contribute to their department’s/school’s curriculum diversity and richness. This very aspect of contribution to the department’s or school’s richness is missing in the current workload of teachers in India.

c. Service refers to the annual contributions that faculty make to university governance, to their profession, to the development of their discipline nationally, internationally or locally, and to the furthering of good relations between the University and the local community.

Canadian Teachers’ Federation results show that 60% of teachers find their jobs more stressful than two years ago. Full-time teachers in Canada spend more than 47 hours a week on the job, including 28 hours of assigned timetable teaching duties and 19 hours of other school-related work. OISE/University of Toronto’s National Research Network on New Approaches to Lifelong Learning (NALL) found that three-quarters of all teachers spend more than 40 hours a week in their job, and that Canadian teachers average about nine hours a week of school-related work at home (NALL, 2000)

Many cited increased workload as the cause of stress and also as one of the primary reasons for leaving the profession.

Teachers in UK & Sweden spend 35 hours per week in teaching related activities, 52.9 hrs. in Alberta, in England and Wales 50-60 hrs per week. In China the workload is 14 hours per week. In Shanghai University teaching workload is 18 hrs per week. The study by Gallen et al (1995a) found an average 47-hour work week for teachers. The authors discussed teaching as a “multi-track activity”, in which teachers were required to do several things at once, in responding to the needs of students or their interactions with colleagues. Such multi-track activities also led to role conflict, where teachers felt torn and pulled by the need to fill different roles.

One of the ways of reducing teachers’ workload in the University of Birmingham, was increased use of ICT. Overall, teachers believed the use of ICT Project helped to reduce workload, making them more productive as teachers. Changes likely to have contributed to this included: far greater access to ICT facilities both in terms of hardware at home, and sole access at school; increased daily use of ICT by teachers; an increase in teachers' confidence in the use of ICT and changes in teachers' views on the quality of ICT training (Selwood, et.al.,2005)
**Current workload practices in India**

The current workload of a university teacher condensed around the teaching component only. The other components, which adds to improvement of the status of the department in particular and university in general, are neglected. Teacher’s workload policy and practice that revolves round the poor & incomplete teaching has been a missed opportunity to improve teaching effectiveness. It needs to be reshaped in ways that maximise student learning.

Accordingly, keeping this very element of performance management in higher education in mind University Grants Commission, New Delhi, issued the latest notification on the workload which states that “the workload of the teachers in full employment should not be less than 40 hours a week for 30 working weeks (180 teaching days) in an academic year. It should be necessary for the teacher to be available for at least 5 hours daily in the University/College for which necessary space and infrastructure should be provided by the University/College. Direct teaching hours should be as follows:

- Assistant Professor 16 hours
- Associate Professor & Professor 14 hours

A relaxation of two hours in the workload may, however, be given to Professors who are actively involved in research, extension and administration. A minimum of 6 hours per week may have to be allocated for research activities of the teacher” (UGC Notification, 2009).

One more drawback of Teachers workload is this that his workload is considered is counted in terms of the time that he spends in the class and not the time spend in the university for other academic activities, for he, directly or indirectly, is accountable for all the seven criteria laid down by NAAC.

**An Alternative Model: ‘Workload for Learning’ Approach**

The drawback of the current teacher’s workload leads into development of a model which could be called as model for ‘Workload for Learning’ approach in which the strategy would be to build up capacity to ensure that personal, interpersonal and organisational capacities necessary for learning approach are developed.
The workload of a teacher includes teaching, research and extension activities, at par with the international standard. However, as the very notion of workload of a teacher is set on a wrong foundation of the time spend by the teacher in the classroom and not on the university campus for the development of academics. If this very notion is changed from 14 hrs/week to 42 hrs/week, the focus of teacher, in terms of work force, shall definitely change from individual growth to departmental growth. And growth of the department is of prime importance in higher education.

In connection with the above it may also be stated that one research project should be made a part of the workload as per the following:

International Project: 3 Hrs.; National Project: 2 Hrs.; Regional Level Project: 1 Hr.

The present study also sets the teachers workload goals in terms of redistribution of the academic calendar into following:

- Teaching Semester I: 90 days
- Teaching Semester II: 90 days
- Training Semester: 28 days
- Research Semester: 90 days
- Exam work: 10 days
- Vacation: 52 days

Each teaching faculty member’s academic year normally shall consist of two teaching semesters and a research semester or training semester. During teaching semesters faculty members are expected to be active in teaching and extension service in terms of
taking guest lectures. During research semesters faculty members carry out research, continue to supervise their M.Phil & Ph.D. students, and may come out with quality publication, the findings of which then shall be converted to text book that forms the part of the syllabus which in turn shall reach the end user – the student.

Training semester shall essentially try to increase the subject knowledge and writing skills of the individual teacher, wherein teacher shall be given freedom to undertake training in any national institute of repute.

Educational Implication of the Model

Teachers teaching in university need to be motivated to pay more importance to departmental progress in addition to their own professional progress through teacher’s workload proposed in this paper. Besides, the implication of this study for the field of teaching is that teachers need to be trained and motivated to perform better with an emphasis on seven criteria laid down by NAAC which give emphasis on higher and equal importance to fulfilling students’ and system’s needs so as to enhance their own and their institution’s effectiveness. In practical and operational terms, effectiveness of teacher’s workload can be enhanced by enhancing their Student Orientation and Content Orientation as follows:

Student Orientation

Every teacher need to be encouraged to organize his /her subject around the needs and skills of every type of student, enable students to have a say in subject content and objectives, help students to set subject goals and content, allow students a voice in setting subject’s objectives and content, allow students to evaluate the performance of their teacher, allow students to make their own mistakes and to learn by experience, be available to discuss with students, Assign HA based on practical experience and put them on the path of finding unknown things, a first step towards real research, which will develop students’ aptitude for research, publish research paper on his own and even write research project

Content Orientation

Every teacher need to be encouraged to keep up to date in the field, to up-date class and lecture materials constantly, attend to his own professional growth, plan in considerable detail all class activities, construct fair and comprehensive examinations, be known as an effective teacher, plan and organize his coursework carefully, try out new ideas and approaches on the class, have scheduled office hours to meet students, teach basic subjects as well as more advances subjects, give examinations to evaluate student progress and attend professional meetings. Thus, quality of teaching, which is based on student & content orientation which forms the prime component of Teacher’s workload, a central element of performance management, will improve the quality of teaching.

Thus, present teacher’s workload policy and practice, which hardly takes care of any of the seven criteria, has been a missed opportunity to improve teaching effectiveness
but if the model mentioned here in is followed then it could be reshaped in ways that maximise student learning

**Recommendations & segmentations**

The higher education environment shall emerge in most perfect way only if work force of a university takes strength. In order to achieve this following recommendations are put into view.

New faculty members who are at the outset of their academic careers may be awarded a reduced teaching assignment during their first full year at the University, so that he/she can improve on the skills in research and writing study materials.

During the Teaching Semester the faculty members are responsible for meeting all scheduled classes, for making themselves accessible to students for consultation, on a timely, convenient, and routinely-scheduled basis, and for carrying out their supervisory responsibilities in the best interests of their students.

In the case of a faculty member who has achieved the rank of Professor and who wishes to concentrate his/her activities either in research only or in teaching only for a period of time, he/she may opt for a temporary alternative career path with the Director subject to the approval of the Dean. This may involve a reduction in research to concentrate on teaching, or a reduction in teaching load to concentrate on research.

This alternative career path should be defined for a period decided by the head of the university-Vice-Chancellor.

In certain exceptional cases, a teacher who has established a reputation as an outstanding teacher, and whose record of research achievement may not parallel his/her teaching contribution, may be considered for teaching-intensive alternative career path.

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