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Collegiality as a Fundamental Professional Value in an Academic Setting: A Case Study in a Teacher Education Institution in a Small Island Developing State**

Summary

Collegiality is believed to entail “always acting in good faith, [...], in concert with one’s honest judgment as to the best interests of one’s institution” (Siegel, 2004, p. 411). This understanding of collegiality is deemed to be output-oriented and missing out on important underlying concepts and values related to the construct. While research shows that collegiality as a concept and a practice is well anchored in corporate jargon and settings where collaborative efforts among employees are capitalised upon for the optimisation of output, there seems to be a dearth of literature on the importance of collegiality in relation to personal well-being in the professional set-up. Moreover, in academic settings, collegiality as a concept has been extensively researched in relation to teacher collegiality, but there is very little mention of how collegiality influences well-being in work life among academics in higher education institutions. This paper seeks to explore the understanding that academics in a teacher education institution have of the concept of collegiality and its impact on their professional stance and job-related personal well-being. It addresses the question of whether collegiality should be incorporated as a fundamental professional value within a teacher education institution as this is deemed to have implications for human capital development. The study shows that though the corporate logic of the use of collegiality for enhanced

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performance is the most prevalent practice even in an academic set up, academics have also appropriated the concept to include a strong element of social and emotional intelligence.

Keywords: collegiality, collaboration, academia, professional value, job-related well-being, social and emotional intelligence

Introduction

Teacher education is an important area of higher education which embodies considerations for pedagogy. Teacher education has implications at different levels of the education sector: for academics, educators, and students in schools through a cascading effect. Such responsibilities come with their lot of strain and stress that can have a toll on the well-being of academic staff. In an environment of uncertainty and unpredictability characterised as being demanding and stressful, people, their intellectual capital, and the culture they create are valuable assets for organisations (Baporikar, 2015; Palaniandy, 2017). In relation to this, it is generally found that positive and healthy interpersonal relations are closely related to and enhance productivity and output and result in job satisfaction and job-related well-being (Moulin, 2020; Palaniandy, 2017; Shah, 2012). Collegiality is thus perceived as being an important contributor to the enhancement of professional, personal, mental and emotional well-being (Baporikar, 2015; Cipriano, 2011; Moulin, 2020; Palaniandy, 2017; Shah, 2012).

Taking into consideration the importance of collegiality with regards to job-related well-being, this research seeks to probe into the lived experiences of academic staff in a teacher education institution to gain insight into the phenomenon of collegiality as a fundamental professional value in an academic setting in a Small Island Developing State (SIDS). The research was conducted against the backdrop of emotional wellness at the workplace, with explicit focus on collegiality as a means of fostering a sense of personal well-being within the professional sphere among academics in the higher education sector, more particularly in the domain of teacher education.

Context and Background

The research has been conducted in the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), the national teacher education institution in the Republic of Mauritius.

With an area of 2,040 km² and a population of 1,266,334 people (Statistics Mauritius, 2021), Mauritius is considered as a SIDS (Small Island Developing State) because of its small geographical and population size and economic features related to its colonial history (Crossley, Bray, & Packer, 2011; Martin & Bray, 2011). Notwithstanding its small size and demography, the Mauritian people attribute much importance to education as a means of social and economic development, and Mauritius positions itself as a 'Knowledge Hub and Centre for Higher Learning and Excellence' in the region (Tertiary Education Commission, 2012). The island state tops the list among sub-Saharan countries in the provision of education and has been ranked 72nd in the Human Capital Index out of 124 economies (World Economic Forum, 2015). Mauritius boasts a high rate of adult and youth literacy of around 90 to 98%; 92% of children aged 3–5 years are enrolled in pre-primary schools, 96% between 6–11 years are enrolled in primary schools, 96% of the 12–18 years age group are enrolled in secondary schools and 39% of youth aged 19–24 years are enrolled in tertiary education institutions.

These conditions pose demands that have important implications for the MIE which is the sole teacher education institution in the country, with a mandate of teacher education, curriculum development and research in education to meet the needs of the education sector at a national level. The MIE is thus responsible for the pre-service and continuous professional development of teachers and cadres in Mauritian schools, the development of curriculum materials for primary and lower secondary school levels, and research in education to inform policy and practice. The institution is meant to support and promote the government's vision regarding education and implement its national policy, as well as having the responsibility of conducting its activities in a sustainable and responsible manner, with transparency and fairness, in accordance with the principles of good governance. The MIE, as a higher education institution, contributes significantly to national development through the empowerment of the country's human resource, in line with the statement of Martin & Bray (2011, p. 23) that in a globalised economy, tertiary education is of fundamental importance as it provides the human resources that allow countries to connect to the knowledge society. Such responsibilities demand that academics working for the institution live up to the expectations of the educational sector and the government, and this comes with its lot of job-related stress and strain.

Literature Review

In the literature, collegiality is most often referred to as companionship and cooperative interaction between colleagues who share power, responsibility and authority (Shah, 2012). It includes being pleasant and supportive and ready to assist. However, there seems to be a lack of a universal definition of the concept (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011) and the definition of collegiality within the literature is still quite hazy. For the purpose of this paper, collegiality will be perceived as friendly and supportive working relationships between colleagues that promote and sustain a feeling of job-related mental and emotional well-being and satisfaction. Within the educational domain, research in collegiality started in the 1990s and has consistently underlined the contribution of strong collegial relationships to school improvement and success (Shah, 2012). Collegiality is perceived as being important and beneficial for the effective functioning of educational institutions. The power of collegiality in school-based professional development (Owen, 2005), professional well-being and growth (Retallick & Butt, 2004), the contribution of collegiality in improving relationships among colleagues in a school setting (Barth, 2006), teacher collaboration in improvement of student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007), and the impact of collegiality on teacher attrition (Abdallah, 2009), among other related areas, have been well documented. As far back as in 1997, Hargreaves listed several benefits of collaboration among school staff, including moral support, increased efficiency, improved effectiveness, reduced overload, shared and realistic expectations between teachers and administrators, collective professional wisdom, increased capacity for reflection, better organisational responsiveness and opportunities for continual professional growth and development.

In a comprehensive review of the literature on the importance of collegiality among educators, Shah (2012) has summed up the salient points on collegiality in school settings. He points out that among the major outcomes and benefits of highly collaborative and collegial cultures in educational organisations, a strong and healthy collegial relationship among school teachers is regarded as an essential component of school effectiveness and teacher enhancement. Collegiality plays a vital role in augmenting teacher professional growth and development, job satisfaction, organisational and professional commitment as well as school quality and better student performance and academic achievement. Such benefits are evidence of the

importance of building a strong and effective collegial culture in schools. The research recommends that teachers should get opportunities to collegiate with each other to best serve their students, to make their work more meaningful, and to transform schooling in ways that keep it vibrant and relevant.

At a personal level, the review of Shah (2012) points out that collegiality has been found to stimulate enthusiasm among teachers. It reduces emotional stress and burnout, creates a sense of belonging among organisational members and makes the bonds among colleagues more cohesive, leading to a culture of commitment to their organisation and their profession. This influences the motivation of teachers and the extent to which they are willing to modify classroom practice. Teachers who work together collegially become more flexible in times of change and cope better with new demands. They benefit greatly from enhanced communication and willingness to seek and give help, which results in improved practice, enhanced repertoires of techniques, positive attitudes toward teaching, high morale, and increased trust. As opposed to collegiality, an atmosphere of competition in the workplace and pressures and stressful work conditions can be detrimental to human relations.

A culture of collegiality is also found to ensure more systemic assistance to beginning teachers and helps to reinforce their confidence through support from their more experienced colleagues (Shah, 2012). Schools having a good collaborative culture and strong atmosphere of collegiality have lower teacher attrition rates as collegiality helps novice teachers to cope with uncertainty and complexity, respond effectively to rapid change and create a climate that values risk taking and continuous improvement.

At an organisational level, the conception that professionals perform better when working together collegially is supported by organisational theory models. Such conceptions view authentic teamwork as an essential characteristic of the successful organisation as its members interact regularly to share their ideas and expertise and develop common understanding of organisational goals and the means to their attainment (Johnson et al., 2012). Collegial communities create a cooperative climate that heightens the level of innovation and enthusiasm among employees and provides continuous support for staff professional enhancement.

Nurturing a collegial atmosphere within organisations also has a beneficial effect on organisational identification. Pratt (1998) distinguishes between organisational commitment and organisational identification as follows: "Organizational commitment is often associated with, 'How happy or satisfied am I with my organization?' ... Organizational identification, by contrast, is

concerned with the question, 'How do I perceive myself in relation to my organization?' " (p. 178). From this distinction, it is clearly seen that commitment to the organisation and thereby to the profession is closely related to personal satisfaction and happiness at the workplace.

In relation to paying heed to the importance of the affective domain within the workplace, Johnson et al. (2012) point out a distinction between cognitive and affective identification with organisations. According to Johnson et al. (2012), individuals identify with groups in order to either reduce perceived uncertainty, which is related to the cognitive domain, or to feel better about who they are as individuals, which is related to the affective domain. Johnson et al. (2012) find that affective identification provides incremental predictive validity over and above cognitive identification in the prediction of organisational commitment, organisational involvement, and organisational behaviours. Johnson et al. (2012) furthermore highlight the benefits of social identification in an organisational set up, for when employees identify with organisational groups, they are less likely to leave, are more involved and more satisfied with their jobs and work harder. A sense of inclusion and collaboration in groups also nurtures a sense of pride, increased self-esteem and belongingness. These reflect the strong emotional value attached to group interactions through a culture of collegiality among group members in the professional domain, and relate to the benefits of collegiality among teachers as outlined above, and therefore can be considered as universal characteristics. However, the literature points out that collegiality does not completely occur as a natural part of the process in any organisation. In order for a culture of collegiality to be developed among professionals in any sphere, it needs to be structured, taught, developed and fostered (Kuhar & Cross, 2013). This has strong implications for professionals in leadership positions. Kuhar and Cross (2013) also posit for the advancement of 'collegial ethics', which refers to a set of rules of conduct embraced by a group. According to Kuhar and Cross, supportive behaviour resides in people's psyche. People do support their colleagues, and this support should not only be extended in ordinary times but also and more importantly in troubled times, as giving aid and approval, encouraging, helping sustain others and treating others with compassion is part of collegial ethics. In an academic sphere, Baporikar (2015) points out that ensuring collegiality is fundamental to developing academe and can be nurtured and developed for excellence in academia. According to Baporikar, there are at least three important aspects to collegiality in academe – the ethical imperative, the task of assessing

collegiality affects job effectiveness and the question of boundaries. Departments that invite free expression, exploration and inquiry demand not only the right people but also the right approach, which comprises positive academic leadership and a strategy that emphasises building on strengths and opportunities rather than simply solving problems or correcting flaws. Such skills include supportive communication and conflict resolution. These points underscore the need for collegial skills to be identified, taught, practiced and nurtured in professional spheres, as highlighted by Kuhar and Cross (2013).

On a different note, collegiality and managerialism are often portrayed as opposed to each other. However, according to Tight (2014), the two concepts are not as dichotomous as believed to be. Commenting on the relationship between management and faculty staff within a tertiary academic context, Cipriano (2011) points out that collegiality should be evidenced in the manner in which faculty and administration not only interact socially, but show genuine respect for one another, treat colleagues with dignity and civility, value their potential, benefit from each other's experiences, work collaboratively to achieve a common purpose, and assume equitable responsibilities for the good of the discipline, the faculty, and institution as a whole.

Further research within the tertiary academic sphere points out that engaging in professional development and enhancing professional knowledge can be part of collegiality. It is posited that academic institutions should provide institutional support to empower their academics to enhance collegial practices. High levels of collegiality as well as strong and healthy collegial relationships are regarded as essential components of institutional effectiveness (Arnold & Ukpere, 2014), as the quality of education in higher education institutions very much depends on the quality of its academics. Sharing of knowledge is also a way to ensure collegiality. Higher learning institutions, in their aspirations to achieve long-term institutional success and enhanced standards, are ensuring that faculty members not only continue to generate new knowledge but seek to disseminate and share knowledge with others (Howell & Annansingh, 2013). This is an indication of the importance of and huge potential for professional and institutional advancement created by collegial practices within the academic community. Higher learning institutions are encouraged to promote the desire for knowledge sharing among academics (Breu & Hemingway, 2004). In the knowledge-based era, universities should seek to ensure success and permanence, organisational goals, and performance improvements (Sharma & Sharma, 2010). Unfortunately, knowledge seeking and

sharing practices among academics is a rare phenomenon (Skaik & Othman, 2014) let alone knowledge sharing for professional competencies.

The above review of the literature shows that the positive impact of collegiality in schools, organisations and higher education institutions is quite well explored. However, the angle in the analysis is instrumental in nature, as the use of collegiality to enhance performance at the workplace is the most prevalent focus, following a corporate logic. The relationship between collegiality and the affective domain related to personal well-being at the workplace in academic settings seems to be under-researched.

Rationale, Aim and Research Questions

Collegiality is recognised by most institutions as being an important contributor to the well-being of professionals and for the good functioning of organisations. As was seen above, research done has consistently underlined the contribution of strong collegial relationships to school improvement, organisational output and success. The nature of relationships among the academic community has a substantive influence on the quality of institutional work and on student accomplishment (Baporikar, 2015; Palaniandy, 2017). It is believed that a conducive collegial environment characterised by respect, dignity, trust and genuine care for one another among faculty members can nurture a culture of sharing and growth in academic institutions (Cipriano, 2011). Collegiality is thus considered to be an important phenomenon that deserves attention, especially in higher education (Edwards, 2003). Creating a productive work climate within a faculty or an institution requires shared leadership and responsibility and relates to how members of the academic community engage in their share of the workload and responsibilities in a collaborative manner. Understanding how academic institutions and academic professionals can make use of strengths derived from a collegial culture and climate promises to be an area of fruitful empirical research that has the potential to enlighten the academic community about best thinking in an academic set-up. Hence, the aim of this paper is to get insight into collegiality as a fundamental professional value among academics in a higher education institution. It explores the understanding that academics in a teacher education institution derive of the concept of collegiality, the extent of its application in their professional endeavours and its impact on job-related

well-being. The questions that have guided this research can be summed up as follows:

- How do academics of a teacher education institution define collegiality?
- What, in the opinion of academics, is the impact of collegiality on their job-related well-being?
- Why is collegiality important for academics' job-related well-being?

Methodology

This study has been conducted through a qualitative approach grounded within the interpretivist paradigm, which translates itself best with an understanding of the individual. This is so as studies situated within the interpretivist paradigm seek to understand the subjective world of human experience (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). The study was also based within the grounded theory approach, which meant that we let the information that emerged from our data guide our analysis, with the belief that theory is emergent and should arise from particular contexts or situations (Cohen et al., 2007). The study was conducted at the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) which has the responsibility of teacher education and curriculum development for schools as mandated by the Government of Mauritius, and research in education for informing policy and practice. These responsibilities are deemed to be stressful for academics at the institution and it is posited that a culture of collegiality has the immense potential of alleviating job-related stress and nurture job-related well-being.

For the production of our data, we chose participants who are academics with varied years of experience ranging from twenty-two months to eleven years of experience as teacher educators at the institution. We chose a purposive sample of participants with whom we had already established a rapport. The literature highlights how the researcher-researched relationship is of prime importance to allow for the smooth generation of rich qualitative data (Blackledge & Creese, 2010; Feldman et al., 2003; Heller, 2008; Wanat, 2008). Hence, our choice of participants was guided by considerations within these premises. We also ensured that our selection of participants included a fair distribution of male and female teacher educators, though considerations for gender issues were not our initial focus. Moreover, we chose academics within different areas of specialisation to get a broad view on the matter.

Data was produced in two stages. First, we administered a questionnaire to thirty-five academics. The questionnaire consisted of seven questions that focused on a personal definition of collegiality, the importance and benefits of collegiality at the workplace, ways in which collegiality is prevalent at the institution and how collegiality can be enhanced. An analysis of the preliminary data generated through the questionnaire gave rise to the need to probe further in some emergent areas such as the link between the pragmatic and affective dimensions involved in the practice of collegiality, leading to the need for an individual in-depth interview with a selected number of academics from among the respondents of the questionnaire. We were able to secure the participation of three academics based on convenience sampling as they were available to participate in our hour-long interviews on areas that had emerged in our responses to the questionnaire that needed further insight. This new set of data helped us develop a more in-depth understanding of areas that needed further exploration.

Findings

Our findings will be structured around our research questions, spanning across how collegiality is understood by the participants and how collegiality or the lack of it impacts on the professional stance of academics.

Defining Collegiality

Most of the respondents shared a common understanding of what they perceived collegiality to be. For them, collegiality entails the ability to “work together” or “to work with other colleagues on a common task”. Some also stated that collegiality is all about “collaborating with colleagues towards a shared vision” whilst one respondent defined collegiality as “the cooperative relationship of colleagues”. One respondent further added that collegiality entails “not having a hidden agenda and being transparent about what” is expected when working with colleagues on common tasks. From the data that was generated, it can be argued that academics at the MIE view collegiality as being a concept which is intricately linked with the concept of collaboration, sharing as well as caring for each other within the workplace. The idea of collegiality being a positive and healthy ‘relationship’ stands out prominently,

pointing to considerations for the human dimension within the professional sphere. Attention to the role of emotional intelligence in communities of practice is strongly highlighted.

From the above it becomes clear that though the definition of collegiality is hazy in the literature, academics have their own understanding of collegiality. For most, collegiality leads to well-being at the workplace and is thereby closely linked to the affective domain. Moreover, the concept of collegiality is generally associated with positive *humane* values as well as professional ethics and attributes. In the data produced, terms that were frequently used to define collegiality emphasise this dimension, as the respondents bring forth the notion of “fairness”, “trust”, “integrity”, “honesty”, “humour” as well as “respect” with regards to relationships among colleagues. For them, collegiality encompasses these positive deep-seated humane values. Most of the academics also bring forth the affective dimension of friendship inherent in collegiality. It can therefore be understood that collegiality for the participants entails the ability to work together in a positive and conducive environment.

The Impact of Collegiality on Academics’ Job-Related Well Being

It was found that all the respondents concurred upon the fact that collegiality, which is “at the root of a healthy relationship” in the workplace, is extremely important to ensure the good “functioning of any organisation”. However, it was seen that whenever the focus of the discussion was on the benefits of collegiality on the organisation, the participants brought back the focus on the benefits of a collegial work environment on the self. Hence, according to most of the respondents, the presence and fostering of a healthy, positive and conducive work environment is not only beneficial for the organisation but also for the human self. It was felt that collegiality enhanced “communication” and ensured the creation of stronger “social links” as well as healthy interpersonal communication which not only leads to “success of any department” but also to the emotional as well as mental well-being of academics.

Furthermore, the very act of reflecting on the construct through the interviews provided the participants with a platform to probe into the contours of their thinking when it came to collegiality, a concept which is deemed to be an integral part of their professional life but which they do not usually talk about and reflect upon. In this sense the interviews proved to have a cathartic

effect, as it empowered them to reflect on and be clear about how collegiality impacts on their personal well-being as well as that of others within the workplace. The probing into the importance of collegiality at the workplace made them realise a number of things about which they themselves had never thought regarding their own well-being as academics and getting acquainted with their own voices, beliefs and thoughts on the phenomenon.

Most academics also felt that an organisational culture in which collegiality is embedded allows colleagues to align their competencies to work towards the common goals they have within the organisation. It was felt that the “amalgamation of the knowledge, know-how and skills brought by each member of the team” allows for the completion of common tasks in a more efficient and productive manner. A participant also added that collegiality “boost(s) team spirit and create(s) a friendly working environment” which motivates academics as “everyone is valued for their contribution”.

The respondents based on purposive sampling procedures included both male and female as well as novice and more experienced academics and it was seen through this mixed population that collegiality neither has a gender nor an age bias. Both male and female academics, whether young or more experienced/senior staff, felt that collegiality is a crucial organisational value and that it is essential for the well-being of the self as well as the organisation. They all underlined the importance that collegiality has in their day-to-day interactions with each other and for organisational sustainability, though they do not usually put the construct at the forefront of their practices. This shows that collegiality is an underlying fundamental value in a conducive and healthy professional set up.

Moreover, the respondents concurred on the fact that the identity of a teacher education institution, which is where the study took place, is associated with the right set of dispositions and attitudes as one of the aims of an institution functioning at this level is to empower teachers with the “right set of dispositions” and “getting teachers to work better”. In line with this, one participant stated that “it is also about us (academics) doing better things, (collegiality) being part of a better thing”. Hence, a teacher education institution performing the role of a higher education institution is purported to embody what it teaches and this allows academics to identify with the organisation better. The integration of collegiality in the day to day functioning of the institution is felt to be a prerequisite. The respondents felt that “all teacher education courses should be serviced by staff who display the desired qualities”, with reference to the dispositions imbued in a collegial stance. The

respondents were of the opinion that these beliefs as well as attitudes should be translated in the work culture and infused in the institutional culture. They believed that a teacher education institution which fosters collegiality as an essential component of its culture and ensures that it is part of the organisational values offers the platform that makes it possible to enhance collaboration between academics through shared experiences and practices. This would then ensure that all academics grow professionally through negotiation and “acceptance of new practices” which would be “good for the department[s] and the institution as a whole” in the long run.

The Impact of Lack of Collegiality on Job-Related Well Being

A lack of collegiality is generally believed to have a detrimental effect on personal well-being at the workplace. The respondents stated that they equate lack of collegiality with “gossiping” about one another with other academics, a lack of fairness, with “people in power positions” keeping “certain types of portfolios for themselves”, “misuse of power”, colleagues having “selfish and egocentric motives”, being competitive at the workplace, “promotion oriented” and wanting to fulfil only “self-prophesised agendas”. It was felt that colleagues who “do not share good practices” and refuse “to collaborate”, for example, in doing research, create an atmosphere that is conflictual. According to the participants, attitudes and dispositions which are devoid of collegiality are neither in the best interest of the institution, nor of those academics who are victims of such situations, nor of the academics having such behaviours and attitudes themselves, as it fosters mistrust and frustration as well as “stress” and has a negative impact on the emotional and mental well-being of all included. One participant indeed pointed out that collegiality at the MIE entailed “being selective” about colleagues with whom she would work because there are certain persons with “whom she would not work well”.

Moreover, the respondents felt that a lack of collegiality in an organisation can affect self-esteem, especially for those who are newly recruited and who are in the process of constructing their identity within the institution, as evidenced by the words of one participant who noted that a lack of collegiality impacts on her own positive professional self-image as she “feel(s) that (she) might lag behind since (she does) not have ideas or the right kind of information about how to grow professionally” within the organisation.

Another participant added that a lack of collegiality is also translated by self-assertiveness which is based on selfish motives and which trespasses on the well-being of others. This creates unhealthy situations in which academics do not thrive, leading to a lack of self-confidence. For the participants, this is not symbolical of what collegiality should entail. However, it was generally believed that collegiality also entails respecting the personal space of others and has ethical implications, pointing out the need to be sensitive to boundaries as well.

In addition to the above, the data strongly emphasises the destructive effect that a culture of competition can have on the well-being of academics. This culture of competition that is found to be prevalent within the organisation, regarding, for example, the nomination for administrative posts, allocation of staff development facilities and promotions, is believed to impact negatively on collegiality and the benefit that this brings within the professional domain and personal well-being in the workplace. For the participants, tension emanates mostly from a lack of transparency and a perceived lack of fairness that do not foster collegiality. Such conditions lead to academics feeling isolated and impact on their mental as well emotional well-being. Most academics speak of demotivation which results from the culture of competition that prevails.

Discussion

As was seen above, the literature highlights the instrumentalist nature of the concept of collegiality through the application of corporate logics regarding the use of collegiality to enhance productivity, whereas in our study, what comes out really strongly is the *affective dimension embodied* within the concept of collegiality, which encompasses genuine caring and sharing among individuals, without an instrumentalist focus. This is felt to be valuable within the academic work context, hence the humane dimension of collegiality is highlighted. Thus, our study shows that though the corporate logic of the use of collegiality for enhanced performance in common goals is the most prevalent practice, in an academic set up as that of the MIE, academics perceive collegiality as being deeply grounded within the humanistic dimension. At its heart, collegiality is all about how professionals interact with each other on a humane level and consolidate the human relationship between colleagues.

Moreover, what also stands out are two areas related to the positive impacts of healthy collegiality: the *ethical imperative* including respect of boundaries and the *affective imperative* and its *impact on personal well-being, job effectiveness and organisational productivity*. The study shows that organisations that promote and respect free expression, exploration and inquiry demand not only *the right people with the right set of dispositions, attitudes and beliefs, but also the right approach*. This comprises *positive academic leadership* and a strategy that emphasises *building on strengths and opportunities rather than simply solving problems through a problem-based approach* (Baporikar, 2015).

This has implications for setting the proper mission and vision of the institution and of academic staff, and empowerment. Therefore, embedding collegiality as an organisational value is fundamental to developing academe. Collegiality can grow by itself, out of good faith as well as goodwill of some people who have a disposition towards sharing and caring. However, for collegiality to permeate the organisational culture to sustain the desired sense of well-being among staff, it needs to be nurtured and developed. It will then foster excellence in academia (Baporikar, 2015). Thus, it can be argued that a *culture of collegiality* fosters the construction of a positive identity for both the individual and the organisation. A *culture of collegiality* has implications for the dynamics of personal identification, organisational identification, and relational identification (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2017).

It can be argued that the data shows that participants believe that lack of collegiality leads to the disempowerment as an academic and does not motivate them to grow as professionals. Hence, it can be claimed that a teacher education institution having a high dose of competitiveness amongst academics and where collegiality is not nurtured ends up not being a productive institution. If academics find no motivation to give the best of themselves and instead work to undermine the endeavours of each other, this does not augur well for the well-being and growth of any organisation. It can be argued that it is crucial that the institution gages in the well-being of the academics and one way to study that could be through the implementation of Happiness Index surveys such as has been used in Bhutan and other countries (Sithey, Thow, & Li, 2015).

From the study it is also seen that collegiality in an educational set-up relates to the domain of social interaction that promotes the adoption of effective practices and sustainability both in education and educational organisations. Collegiality therefore forms the foundation of successful interactions in academic life (Cipriano, 2011). Collegiality can be considered

to be a virtue as a genuine concern of caring and sharing has the potential of breaking isolation among academics. It contributes to a paradigm shift in the knowledge, skills, judgement and sense of commitment that individuals bring to their work and enhances the collective capacity of academics in tertiary education institutions.

Furthermore, our study confirms the point highlighted in earlier research (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2017; Baporikar, 2015; Kuhar & Cross, 2012; Palaniandy, 2017; Shah, 2012) that collegiality does not happen by chance or automatically once people are working together to achieve common goals in the workplace. It needs to be planned and structured, taught and learned, and internalised by both professionals and organisations for it to become an integral part of organisational culture and professional dispositions and for both the people and organisations to benefit from its positive impacts. Therefore, fostering and nurturing a collegial culture including collegial ethics for promoting a sense of well-being and identification with the institution should be an important objective of both academic and organisational agendas. As such, nurturing and fostering a culture of collegiality is evidence of proper educational leadership.

It can also be affirmed that probing into the impact of collegiality among professionals proved to have a cathartic effect as the study allowed most of the participants to purposefully engage with a concept that is believed to lie at the heart of their professional stance and well-being but which they had not pondered upon in depth. This, then, leads them to reflect on their own selves and the importance to pay attention to their mental as well as emotional well-being within the workplace. What is seen is that academics have appropriated and owned the concept, endowing it with a strong element of emotional intelligence. In doing so, they understand collegiality as being a strong component that impacts on their emotional intelligence that in turn impacts upon their overall well-being at the workplace.

Conclusion

This study not only confirmed several points related to the benefits of collegiality within an academic set up but also revealed a number of aspects of collegiality that were not prevalent in the literature. At least three elements stand out most importantly. First of all, it was striking to note that collegiality knows no age or gender restrictions and barriers. All people flourish in

a collegial atmosphere, contrary to common beliefs that female staff are more sensitive to their emotional well-being than male staff, and that senior staff have the tendency to be independent and prefer being aloof. It was seen that personal and emotional well-being at the workplace was equally important for male as well as female academics, for new recruits as well as more experienced and senior staff within the academic set-up.

Moreover, caring for the affective domain of professionals is a pre-requisite for nurturing an atmosphere where people grow professionally, feel good and strengthen their sense of belongingness and identification with the organisation. These result in enhanced productivity in a cyclical rather than linear process. Furthermore, the act of talking on the topic and reflecting on its practice and applications has a beneficial effect as it helps people probe into their inner selves to identify and understand the importance of wellness at the workplace and the impact of good professional relationships nurtured by collegial dispositions. This highlights the need to probe into the overall well-being of academics by paying attention to the Happiness Index within the institution, in line with the practice adopted by some institutions and countries like Bhutan, through the usage of the Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index to make the happiness of their people the driving force of their initiatives (Sithey et al., 2015; Ura, Alkire, Zangmo, & Wangdi, 2012).

This research has also highlighted the fact that considerations for the humane dimension where people are involved are of prime importance, as opposed to the corporate logic in favour of harnessing the human dimension for the sole purpose of optimising outputs. Professionals working towards common organisational goals, whether male or female, new recruits or more experienced ones, are sensitive to the humane dimension at their workplace and this has a strong impact on their job-related well-being. A dehumanised and output-oriented emphasis following an industrial logic is detrimental to both the professional and the organisation. The human touch makes a big difference in the professional sphere and is important to nurture, foster and promote.

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