Research Article

Investigating the Impact of Employee Engagement on Service Quality Outcomes in Higher Education: A Study of Faculty Members in Self-Financing Colleges

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Abstract: Employee involvement has been determined as one of the major precursors in the performance of an organization particularly in industries like hospitality where human resource is the major driving force to the delivery of services. Faculty involvement in higher education especially in the self-financing colleges is appreciated due to its impact on the teaching-learning experiences as well as with regard to their satisfaction on students. It applies the research in examining the role played by employee engagement in determining the result of such an undertaking as the quality-of-service delivery by studying the experiences that the members of staff have had within the self-financing colleges. The study, in a review of the previous studies, along with the empirical evidence obtained with the help of the well-developed survey and interviews, demonstrates the direction in which cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects of faculty engagement must be used to enhance the delivery of institutional services. The study establish that active faculty are more dedicated, more creative and student oriented and do, comparatively, increase institution reputation and student performance. The conclusion of the article is the implications on management and policy presented by the inference regarding what can be accomplished to facilitate the long-term engagement in a contesting environment in the educational area.

INTRODUCTION

In the knowledge-based economy the role of universities and colleges as a source of empty-scrutinizing and creation of inventions. They should be able to realize high quality of service and sustainability in these institutions depending on effectiveness of teaching, production of research, student services, and punctual administration. Indian self-financing colleges may be regarded as one of the most significant variants of the HEIs stimulating the growth of access to the indian tertiary education. They, however, are faced with challenges which are uniquely theirs, which include high faculty turnover rates and faculty problem, scarcity of money, and pressurizing of students and agencies regulating them. Employee engagement happens to be one of the top levers to maintain and enhance the quality of services in such a kind of environment. In this article, the author intend to examine the relationship between the outcomes of the quality of service provided and the engagement of the employees in self-financing colleges, basing on the faculty members who are regarded as the frontiers of success in service delivery in the academic process.

Employee Engagement: Concept and Dimensions

In the knowledge-based economy, universities and colleges act as generators of empty-scrutinizing and invention. Their success and sustainability rely on the quality of service provided in these institutions determined by the level of effectiveness of teaching, research production, student services, and responsiveness by the administration. Self-financing colleges in India can be considered as one of the most important variants of HEIs promoting the increase of access to the indian tertiary education. They however have unique challenges such as huge turnover of faculty, shortage of funds, and mounting pressure by students and regulatory agencies. In this kind of an environment, employee engagement is one of the leading levers to sustain and improve the quality of services. This article seeks to look at the correlation between service quality outcomes and employee engagement in self-financing colleges based on the faculty members who are the frontiers in the provision of service in the academic process.

Dedication: Dedication can be termed as psychological association of an employee with a job by being described as a feeling of importance, enthusiasm, pride and

inspiration with a job. It is the greater emotional tie to work that employees are able to look beyond their jobs as functions, but as something that has some meaning in a higher cause. Commitment of faculty in educational institutions demonstrates their interest in mentoring, research and teaching only. They also take pride and have been known to exceed what they are required on the issue of shaping up the minds of young infants and sometimes on the student development and goals of the institutions. Dedication is also demonstrated as loyalty and allegiance towards the organization. Commitment perhaps is the answer to quality and sustainability in self-funding colleges that are characterized by increased workloads of the teachers and less support by institutions. Instead, it is the committed faculty who would tend to have higher norms of teaching performance on one hand, and be more involved in their personal construction of How to Teach on the other hand, plus they would build asset on institutional cultures and outcomes in students as well.

Absorption: The aspect of employee engagement which expresses the general concentration and deep engagement of an employee with his work is termed absorption. It is a kind of situation where individuals get engrossed in whatever they are doing to the extent that time passes so quickly and there are chances of individuals forgetting to detach themselves when working. This kind of concentration is such that enables the employees to be more creative in their peak performance and it demonstrates diligence and constancy. The faculty or workers working in the discipline of higher education are found to be very much engaged in lesson planning, classroom instructions or teaching or even effectiveness with the students and overall academic research. They are also alert, open and ready to learn in all occasions. To the teacher, absorption can lead to the establishment of new teaching methods, dynamic learning situations in the classroom and enhancement of interaction among learners. This is significant in self-financing colleges where there are extreme cases of distractions and multitasking. In its absence, quality and integrity of academics can be jeopardized. Encouraging working conditions can bring great improvement to both the productivity of the faculty and the student satisfaction, including lowering administrative load on the faculty members.

Service Quality in Higher Education

1. Tangibles (Infrastructure, Tools) : Tangibles refer to the physical facilities, equipment, technology, and appearance of personnel in an educational institution. In higher education, especially in self-financing colleges, this includes well-maintained classrooms, modern laboratories, updated library resources, digital infrastructure (like Learning Management Systems), and professional faculty presentation. Students often perceive the quality of education based on visible cues, such as campus cleanliness, availability of technological tools, and ergonomic learning spaces. Tangibles not only influence first impressions but also affect learning outcomes, particularly in technical or science-based courses requiring practical

engagement. In self-financing colleges, where resource limitations may exist, maintaining competitive tangible assets is crucial to attracting and retaining students. Well-equipped infrastructure signifies institutional credibility and commitment to quality education. Enhancing tangibles requires ongoing investment and planning, ensuring that tools and facilities align with academic demands and student expectations.

2. Reliability (Accurate, Dependable Delivery): Reliability refers to chances of an institution to offer satisfactory services as promised utilizing correct and reliable ways. This is the time of starting the classes on time, fixed timetable in offering curriculum, fixed performance of faculty and proper evaluation of the student work and adherence to academic calendar in case of higher education. Good institutions make the students have confidence on them because they maintain their side of the bargain by delivering the institutions they allegedly promised to deliver on a timely basis releasing the results on time conducting exams and deploying students without any more ado. Reliability in self-financing colleges may be compromised by faculty turnover, administrative delay or bad planning. However, such aspect can be facilitated by effective institutional framework, open communication and faculty accountability. The happiness of the student is not the only advantage of good academic services that increases the reputation of the institution, reduces complaints, and contributes to the positive word-of-mouth. Last, after students are accustomed to receive inimitable academic help services, they are much more satisfied with the quality of the services and learning value.

3. Responsiveness (Willingness to help): Responsiveness is defined as the readiness of the institution to help students in a timely and efficient way. This will involve responding to academic inquiries, solve grievances, provide timely feedbacks and be available to provide support. Faculty responsiveness is particularly significant the responsiveness of faculty to the questions of the students during office hours, to queries about assignments, and to career choices. Responsiveness is further increased in self-financing colleges because of both the competition and high student expectations. Responsiveness of administration also counts-whether issuing certificates on time, or in admission inquiries, or scholarships. Responsive institutions are caring and flexible, which ensures increased student confidence and faithfulness. Failure to be responsive, contrariwise, may result to frustration and defection. The creation of a culture of responsiveness requires staff training, automation of the communication process with the help of technology, and a student-focused approach to the work of all departments. It is

directly related to the quality of services since students feel important, respected, and listened to.

4. Assurance (Knowledge and Courtesy): Assure means the skill and value of faculty and administration personnel and their capability to put positive impression or image to the students. Given in higher education, this dimension can be observed through qualification of the professors, clarity of teaching, professional relations and the credibility of institutional policy. When they (students) assume their teachers are learned and righteous, there is the likelihood that they become quite confident and inspired. Guarantee also relates to the degree of how confidently the faculty members can address student question, handle classroom situations, teach and mentor student both academically and professionally. In self-funded colleges with diversified and employed faculties on contract basis, there is need of permanent assurance to reassure through very high recruitment criteria, consistent development of the faculty (through training) and faculty codes of conduct. This aspect as well is spread to the institutional integrity, in which the practice of fair means, open appraisal and ethical management is planned. One can enhance high assurance increasing the chances of credibility and creation of safe environment that will foster learning and academic development.

5. Empathy (Personalized Attention): Empathy in service quality relates to providing caring, individualized attention to students. In the academic setting, this means recognizing the unique needs, learning styles, and aspirations of each student. Faculty empathy is reflected through mentoring, patience, inclusive pedagogy, and responsiveness to student difficulties—both academic and personal. It fosters a sense of belonging and emotional support, especially important in self-financing colleges where students may come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. Administrative empathy includes flexible support in fee payments, accessibility of counselors, and accommodations for differently-abled students. Institutions that prioritize empathy often experience better student engagement, lower dropout rates, and more constructive learning environments. Creating an empathetic culture requires training faculty and staff in emotional intelligence, active listening, and inclusive communication. When students feel seen, heard, and respected, their satisfaction and loyalty to the institution significantly increase, enhancing overall service quality and institutional success.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO HIGHER FACULTY ENGAGEMENT

Faculty engagement in self-financing colleges is significantly influenced by a combination of institutional and interpersonal factors that shape the teaching environment and professional experiences. One of the primary drivers is **academic autonomy**, which allows faculty members the freedom to design curricula, choose instructional methods, and innovate in their teaching practices. This autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and intrinsic motivation. **Recognition and feedback** also play a crucial role; when faculty efforts are acknowledged—whether through formal awards, verbal appreciation, or constructive feedback—they feel valued, leading to increased morale and commitment. **Supportive leadership** is another key factor, where department heads and administrators provide guidance, listen to concerns, and encourage collaboration rather than imposing rigid hierarchies. Such leadership cultivates trust and a positive institutional climate. Additionally, **opportunities for professional development**, such as workshops, conferences, research grants, and academic networks, empower faculty to grow in their careers and remain intellectually engaged. When these factors align, faculty are more likely to invest their time, energy, and creativity into their roles, thereby enhancing service quality and contributing to student success. In contrast, a lack of these elements can lead to disengagement, attrition, and diminished academic performance.

1. **Academic Autonomy**: Academic autonomy can be described as the extent of freedom with which faculty individuals enjoy in course design, curriculum choices, assessment setting, and the modification of new teaching practices. Academic autonomy is an important factor in self-financing colleges where bureaucracy may be the major stumbling blocks to the innovation. Faculty members who bear the responsibility of making decisions related to the academic portion of their job are more apt to own their work and are more prone to experimentation on the behalf of student-centered learning methods, incorporation of technology and bringing in practical aspects of real life to the classroom. This is the feeling of control not only that it increases their confidence but also that it adds strong sense of and professionalism. Freedom of thought also enables instructors to base their education on their research skills and specialization on a subject thus making the teaching/learning process interesting to both learners and faculty. Faculty engagement, creativity and long-term commitment to the institution is catalyzed when the institution encourages such independence as this makes them feel respected and empowered.

2. **Recognition and Feedback**: Employee engagement is particularly stimulated by the aspects of recognition and feedback. Faculty and staff enjoy being in an environment where people can see what they are doing and that it is valued, be it through awards, performance rewards, student feedback or in the case of peers, by peer recognition. In self-financing colleges where there exist a burden to perform and resources are scarce recognition serves as an effective non-financial reward. Academic leaders or department heads should also provide regular, substantive feedback to the faculty on ways in which faculty work is aligned to institutional goals and areas of faculty development. Rewards enhance morale whereas positive criticism helps to improve. Also, when students show their appreciation of the faculty members by conducting an evaluation of their performance, a feedback form, or personal statements, faculty can be a motivated force. Culture of recognition can assist in alleviating the feeling

of isolation, escalate motivation, and heighten professional satisfaction. As long as institutions reward faculty success, a culture of trust, loyalty, and a culture of high performance academic institution is developed.

3. **Supportive Leadership**: A major faculty involvement is based on warm leadership. Being able to hear people and to make them approachable and friendly no matter how the people can want to speak to the leader is a factor when it comes to self financing colleges because the staff in such colleges can find themselves landing several jobs at a time. Psychological safety will also come as a result of active listening, guiding, and championing the needs of the faculty by its leaders. This would involve mentorship, sharing of all duties equally, streamlining of conflicts and making decisions with faculty. Such leaders not only promote team building, but also induce the feeling of trust and confidence among employees. Faculties who feel that they are empowered by their leaders; not only educationally but also administratively will have higher probability of being inspired, creative and loyal to the institutional objectives. Moreover, the presence of a leadership that will not erode the work-life balance and the career advancements can be extremely helpful in avoiding the burnout. An effective leadership is not autocratic but it is participatory and facilitating. Facilitative leadership organizational structures are more inclined towards the appropriate retention of the faculty, cooperation in teamwork, and the quality of student service.

4. **Opportunities for Professional Development**: Opportunities for professional development are essential to sustaining faculty engagement and institutional growth. These include participation in workshops, conferences, training programs, research projects, and access to scholarly resources. In the dynamic field of higher education, faculty members must constantly update their knowledge and teaching strategies to stay relevant.

Challenges to Faculty Engagement in Self-Financing Colleges

1. **Job Insecurity:** Loss of jobs due to job insecurity is one major issue that faculty members in self-financing colleges have worried about as jobs in these colleges are usually on a short term or annual basis basis with little job protection. Contrary to the government institutions that have a tenure track or permanent job offers, the self-funded colleges have their models based on cost-efficiency that restricts the job security. This insecurity causes fear and does not allow long-term planning, innovation, and dedication. When faculty members do not know whether they will still have their job a certain time in the future, they will be less inclined to spend time, money, and even efforts developing curriculum, doing research, and advising students. Loss of morale and professional satisfaction is further demonstrated by the lack of any health benefits, retirement plans or sabbaticals to be paid. Turnover is also increased by job insecurity which causes further problems of discontinuity in teaching and consequently affecting the learning outcomes of the students. Coping with this situation would imply the provision of longer-term contracts, unambiguous performance-based renewal policy, and favourable employment conditions by the colleges, which would help develop their sense of belonging, loyalty, and long-term engagement to academic members.

2. **Limited Research Opportunities**: Limited research opportunities are a major barrier to faculty engagement in self-financing colleges, where emphasis is often placed more on teaching loads and administrative tasks than on academic scholarship. Financial constraints and lack of dedicated research infrastructure—such as labs, journals, funding, and institutional grants—discourage faculty from pursuing research projects. Additionally, the absence of structured support mechanisms like research leave, proposal writing assistance, or inter-institutional collaborations further restricts scholarly development. This limitation not only affects faculty motivation and academic growth but also impacts the institution's overall intellectual output and accreditation prospects. For many educators, research is a pathway to innovation, recognition, and career progression. Without such avenues, they may feel stagnant and disengaged. Encouraging a research-friendly culture through seed funding, reduced teaching loads for research-active faculty, and external linkages with universities and industries can significantly enhance engagement and institutional prestige.

3. **Workload Imbalance:** The inequity of workload, especially heavy administrative work, is a big setback to faculty participation in self-financing institutions. At most of these institutions, faculty is supposed to fulfill not only the roles of teaching and mentoring, but also of admissions, event planning, documentation, and compliance reporting. The subsequent loss of time and energy to perform core academic duties of lesson planning, research and educating students remains a major consequence of this over-multitasking which characterizes the excellence of teaching. All this unbalance might result in stress, burnout, and low job satisfaction, which impacts the quality of education provided. Moreover, this administrative overload is hardly ever recognized and rewarded and adds to the sense of undervaluation. There should be a reasonable division of work which emphasizes on the academic duties to ensure the enthusiasm of the faculty remains and there productivity is obtained. The institutions need to think of employing special non-teaching facilities, improved reporting systems, and digitalization of systems to minimize manual work. Through re-balancing, colleges are enabled to re-orientate faculty activity to core business, which is product delivery, namely quality education and student development.

4. **Lack of Recognition**: A lack of recognition is a critical demotivator for faculty in self-financing colleges. Despite their contributions to teaching, mentoring, and institutional development, many educators feel invisible in the absence of formal systems to acknowledge excellence. Unlike public universities, where recognition may come through awards, promotions, or research incentives, self-financing institutions often operate with limited transparency and inconsistent evaluation criteria. This neglect discourages faculty from going the extra mile, experimenting with innovative pedagogy, or contributing to campus initiatives. The absence of regular feedback and appreciation erodes morale and fosters disengagement. Recognizing faculty contributions—through teaching awards, research grants, performance bonuses, or simple public acknowledgment—

can go a long way in boosting motivation. A culture of appreciation reinforces positive behaviors, nurtures a sense of purpose, and builds institutional loyalty. In a competitive educational environment, recognition is not a luxury but a strategic necessity for attracting and retaining high-performing academic talent.

5. **Rigid Management**: Self-financing colleges usually have strict management systems that prevent faculty independence, innovations, and spiritedness. Lying on the top of the decision-making, lack of transparency, and the absence of hierarchy in the communication lack promote open discussions and contributes to the collaborative work on the issues. Curriculum design, policy making and strategic planning processes may not be carried out with significant input of the faculty members hence their feeling of being non-important carriers. This is stricter side that suffocates creativity and freedom in the academic institutions that are unavoidable in good education. Moreover, micromanaging and excessive supervising will lead the employees to the atmosphere of distrust, leading to the passive attitude and having a negative attitude. The key to efficient interaction with the faculty is its participative governance that engages the academic staffs in taking crucial decisions of the institution and treating the academic staff as a stakeholder. To shift management in collaboration-based management, it would be useful to reinforce frequent consultation, feedback loop, and open practices of leadership. The flexibility of operation especially on the teaching practices and evaluation procedures helps the faculty to formulate work depending on the changing demands of the students and trends in teaching and therefore enhance performance in the institution.

ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Self-financing colleges that invest in faculty development signal a commitment to academic excellence and individual growth. Such opportunities empower faculty to enhance their subject expertise, improve pedagogy, adopt new technologies, and contribute to academic discourse through publications and networking. Furthermore, engaging in research and academic collaboration fosters a sense of purpose and progress. Without avenues for development, faculty may feel stagnant, leading to disengagement and attrition. Encouraging continuous learning not only enriches the faculty's professional life but also directly improves the quality of education delivered to students. A robust development ecosystem thus becomes a strategic asset for faculty motivation and institutional reputation.

Table 1: Factors influencing **Employee Engagement on Service Quality Outcomes in Higher Education:**

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Rank
Academic Autonomy	3.72	1.123	3.67
Professional Development	3.54	0.781	2.81
Supportive Leadership	3.17	0.762	4.63
Recognition	**3.86**	**1.154**	**3.74**
Feedback	**2.56**	**1.236**	**2.60**

The data in Table 1 highlights respondents' perceptions of various factors influencing the academic environment, measured using mean scores, standard deviations, and mean ranks. Among the listed factors, **Recognition** received the highest mean score (M = 3.86, SD = 1.154) and the highest mean rank (3.74), indicating that it is perceived as the most significant factor contributing to motivation or satisfaction. **Academic Autonomy** follows closely (M = 3.72, SD = 1.123; Rank = 3.67), suggesting that having the freedom to make academic decisions is also highly valued by respondents. **Professional Development** scored moderately (M = 3.54, SD = 0.781; Rank = 2.81), indicating that opportunities for training and growth are appreciated but not prioritized as highly as recognition or autonomy. **Supportive Leadership** received a lower mean score (M = 3.17, SD = 0.762) and a relatively higher rank (4.63), suggesting it is perceived as less impactful or less effectively practiced. Finally, **Feedback** received the lowest mean score (M = 2.56, SD = 1.236) and the lowest mean rank (2.60), indicating it is the least positively perceived factor and possibly an area needing significant improvement in the academic setting. Overall, the results suggest that while recognition and autonomy are key motivators, more attention is needed to improve feedback mechanisms and leadership support.

Table 2: Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

N	300
Kendall's W	0.216
Chi-Square	518.959
df	4
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

Table 2 presents the results of Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W), a non-parametric statistic used to assess the degree of agreement among respondents regarding the ranking of factors influencing employee engagement on service quality outcomes in higher education. With a sample size of **N = 300**, the computed **Kendall's W is 0.216**, indicating a **low to moderate level of agreement** among respondents in ranking the given factors. The associated **Chi-Square value is 518.959** with **4 degrees of freedom (df = 4)** and a statistically significant **p-value (Asymp. Sig.) of 0.000**. This result confirms that the level of agreement observed is **statistically significant** and not due to random chance. In the context of **employee engagement and its impact on service quality in higher education**, these findings suggest that while there is some consensus among

respondents about the relative importance of factors such as recognition, autonomy, feedback, leadership, and professional development, the degree of agreement is not strong. This implies **diverse perceptions and priorities among employees**, which institutions should consider when designing strategies to enhance engagement and improve service quality outcomes.

Implications for Management and Policy

Managements of self-financing colleges must view **faculty not as cost centers but as strategic assets**. Policies that enhance engagement are investments in institutional reputation, student outcomes, and long-term sustainability. Additionally, regulatory bodies like AICTE and UGC can play a role by:

- Mandating minimum standards for faculty welfare,
- Offering grants or schemes to support engagement-enhancing initiatives,
- Creating benchmarking tools for faculty satisfaction and institutional service quality.

CONCLUSION

The research points out the dramatic role of the faculty involvement in the self-financed higher education institutions effect on service quality. When employees, who are faculty members are intellectually, emotionally, and behaviorally engaged in their duties, they can provide students with excellent academic experiences which are appealing to the students and the society as a whole. Nontheless, this engagement is frequently hampered by systemic barriers: e.g. bureaucratic administration or a lack of recognition. Thus, a humane and strategic faculty management is the key solution to the establishment of the culture of excellence in higher education. The decision to invest in engagement by self-financing colleges is the key to turning a problem into opportunity and revenue creation and redefining educational quality within competitive environment.

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