

Innovative ability, work environment and job performance of young teachers in colleges and universities: Basis for improved employee engagement framework

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ISSN: 2243-7770
Online ISSN: 2243-7789

Received: 28 August 2024

Revised: 25 September 2024

Accepted: 30 September 2024

OPEN ACCESS

Available Online: 1 October 2024

DOI: 10.5861/ijrsm.2024.1286

Abstract

In order to match the rapid expansion of the scale of running schools, local universities have absorbed a large number of young teachers to enrich the teaching staff, and have gradually formed a teaching staff structure dominated by young teachers. The purpose of this study was to determine the innovation ability, work environment and job performance of young teachers in universities, and on this basis to build a framework to improve the employee engagement of young teachers in Chinese universities. A descriptive approach was used in this study to systematically define the conditions, and assess the variables that were examined. The research respondents are 384 teachers from eight universities. A survey questionnaire was used for data collection which was subsequently analyzed using the SPSS software. Based on the finding of the study the teachers possess good innovative ability in the area of subject expertise, classroom management and subject expertise. The respondents agreed that the work environment was affected by material environment, leadership and organizational culture. The respondents manifest satisfactory job performance in terms of task, situational and adaptive performance. There were high significant relationships that exist between innovative ability, work environment and job performance. An Improved Employee Engagement Framework for young teachers was proposed to make them more involved and satisfied.

Keywords: innovative ability, work environment, job performance, employee engagement, organizational culture

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1. Introduction

In today's society, engaged employees will determine the university's performance, reputation and their commitment to their work and focus on the university's success. Young teachers in universities have strong passion for their work as newly graduates and knowing how they engage in innovation ability, work environment and job performance it will show their commitment and effectiveness in the university. Employee engagement talks about a person's commitment to the organization's goals and objectives and the things they're doing to attain it and Innovation ability wherein they develop new methods and ideas to enhance their teaching ability. Work environment is where the teacher socializes and does their work. It will tackle their relationships with students and colleagues as they are the people they normally work with. Job performance is their ability to fulfill their task and responsibility efficiently. Teachers are people who have strong patience, respect, and credibility.

Universities nowadays should actively seek to meet teachers' expectations, thereby influencing employee performance, which in turn influences the success of the company. To achieve their goals, institutions must move beyond employee incentive tactics and focus on growing staff engagement. Having engaged faculties has become critical in a time when institutions look to their personnel to take initiative, provide innovation, and be proactive with solutions to present methods for teaching (Beri, 2020). Employee engagement is the dedication of an employee to their job and also being productive and with the means of staying in the organization. Innovation ability is the capacity of an individual to create new ideas and methods. According to Tura et al. (2020), educational organizations, like any other business, must innovate in order to compete and prosper in the information era. Furthermore, it is a process that includes coming up with ideas, seeing them through to completion, advocating for them, and developing creative work practices. As stated by Pranama et al. (2023), the factors that affect the work environment, motivation at work, and pay have a good and significant impact on teachers' ethical behavior at work. This implies that teachers will be more motivated to work if they are in a pleasant work environment, have strong work motivation, and receive continuously improving pay. Employee Engagement is a key component in an organization since highly engaged individuals consistently contribute considerably to the organization's performance, are enthusiastic, and have a strong desire to do their job/tasks. As a result, engagement tactics should always be at the heart of any employer's plan if defined goals and objectives are to be reached. A productive or performing workforce is also a strong sign of a competitive organization. The study's findings revealed that academic staff responded fairly positively to job performance, which is beneficial to the University. As a result, it is always important for the administration to involve individual employees in setting goals and objectives in order to maintain high performance and provide good, timely, and reasonable feedback with the goal of achieving an acceptable job performance rating (Emuron et. al.,2022). Job performance in a way how they perform and effectiveness in teaching.

The study is conducted in universities with many young teachers that are known for their excellence. The universities that are chosen have a large population of young teachers and also a university that performs well. It will present the profile of the young teachers in the chosen universities. This information about the young teachers will determine their employee engagement in terms of innovation ability, work environment and job performance at the university they are working. Despite the several studies on the topic of employee engagement, most of them talk only about job performance. Other studies also just focus on the job satisfaction of teachers yet none of them specifically focus on the employee engagement in terms of innovation ability, work environment, job performance of young teachers in universities. With that, there is a need to know about the employee engagement of young teachers in universities.

Universities are looking for teachers for a long term and also searching for a teacher that is engaged at their

work. Determining employee engagement in terms of innovation ability, work environment and job performance of young teachers is essential to universities as it will help them to provide quality education and also to know the teachers' needs. Ways to support them as it will help both teachers and students and greatly the university itself. Engaged teachers are more productive and enjoy their work. Examining their work environment to provide their needs and addressing their problems at work so that they can effectively teach students while giving them enjoyment and satisfaction. This will lead to a more committed teachers, job satisfaction and long term employment. It will boost their job performance that will lead to effective teaching and will create a good relationship to colleagues, students and to the university. Overall this study will provide information based on the factors that will lead to employee engagement that will contribute to the universities success and reputation.

Objectives of the Study - The purpose of this study was to determine the innovation ability, work environment and job performance of young teachers in universities, and on this basis to build a framework to improve the employee engagement of young teachers in Chinese universities. Specifically, it aimed to evaluate the innovative ability of teachers from three aspects: subject expertise, classroom management and teaching expertise; determine the factors affecting the work environment from three aspects: material environment, leadership and organizational culture; and determine the job performance of teachers from three aspects: task performance, situational performance and adaptive performance. It also tested the relationship between innovation ability, work environment and job performance and formulated a framework to improve employee engagement for young teachers in Chinese universities.

2. Methods

Research Design - A descriptive approach was used in this study to systematically describe the population, define the conditions, and innovation ability, work environment and job performance as basis for developing improved employee engagement framework. Descriptive research design serves as a foundational approach in research, particularly when the objective is to provide a comprehensive summary of a population or phenomenon. Unlike experimental or exploratory research, which might aim to establish causal relationships or investigate new areas, descriptive research is primarily concerned with the "what" rather than the "why" or "how". In business research, descriptive design is crucial for gathering information about market trends, customer behaviors, and organizational practices. By systematically collecting data, researchers can identify patterns and trends that inform decision-making processes. For example, companies may use descriptive research to assess customer satisfaction, employee engagement, or market segmentation, providing a clear snapshot of the current state of affairs (Saunders et al., 2019). A survey questionnaire created by the researcher and tested for reliability and validity was used to gather the primary data. To collect data, the questionnaires were distributed to respondents in China through online questionnaire distribution software, completed and received over the same medium. The statistical analysis was performed in SPSS version 28 using the appropriate statistical procedures to collect data on the weighted mean, standard deviation, and correlations.

Respondents of the Study - The research respondents are young faculty members. There are 384 respondents across eight (8) universities in China.

Instruments of the Study - A survey questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection. This was used to determine the perception of the employees from the respective universities and colleges. The researchers spent time investigating and researching related literature about the study variables and dimensions, which provided a guideline and foundation for the statements in the research questionnaire. It was thoroughly validated by the researcher's mentor and field specialists. In the first part of the questionnaire, the researcher assessed the innovative ability of teachers from three aspects: subject expertise, classroom management and teaching. The second part is about determining the factors affecting the work environment from three aspects: material environment, leadership and organizational culture. The last part was used to evaluate the job performance of teachers from three aspects: task performance, situational performance and adaptive performance. The Likert scale was employed in this study to assess topics under consideration. The questions on the four-point

Likert scale contained responses of "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree," with weights ranging from 1 to 4, with 1 being the lowest (Strongly Disagree) and 4 being the highest (Strongly Agree). For this study, the Likert Scale grading was 3.5-4 for Strongly Agree, 2.5-3.49 for Agree, 1.5-2.49 for Disagree, and 1.00-1.49 for Strongly Disagree. For the purpose of validity, the researcher consulted with the adviser from the school and all the adviser's and panel's comments and suggestions will be integrated in the study to ensure validity and dependability of the research contents and output. For the purpose of reliability, the questionnaire was subjected to Cronbach Alpha reliability test. This was done by collecting data from at least 20 respondents in order to determine the whether the survey questions are excellent, good, or acceptable. The results from the Cronbach alpha reliability was tabulated with subsequent scores and interpretation.

Table 1
Reliability Test Results Summary Table

Indicator	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
Organizational Innovation Survey	0.864	Good
Classroom Management	0.777	Acceptable
Instructional Expertise	0.792	Acceptable
Physical Environment	0.747	Acceptable
Leadership	0.730	Acceptable
Organizational Culture	0.715	Acceptable
Task Performance	0.707	Acceptable
Situational Performance	0.705	Acceptable
Adaptive Performance	0.763	Acceptable

George and Malley (2003) provide the following rules of thumb ">0.90 – Excellent, >0.80 – Good, >0.7 – Acceptable, >0.60 – Questionable, >0.50 – Poor, and <0.50 – Unacceptable"

Data Gathering Procedure - The researcher used the completed questionnaire as a data-collecting tool after incorporating thoughts and comments from the research adviser. Following the successful completion of the reliability test, the findings were encoded and disseminated to the respondents using an online questionnaire distribution platform in China. Prior to delivering the questionnaire, the researcher wrote a formal letter to the management of the selected and participating companies, seeking permission to conduct the customer perception study. More significantly, prior to participating in the study, the consumers' consent must be obtained. The obtained data were summarized, evaluated, and interpreted by the researcher.

Ethical Considerations - Ethical considerations were taken into account at every stage of the research process to guarantee that any data acquired is utilized only for research, maintaining the integrity and efficacy of the study. The researcher's financial security, discretion, or personal interests were not compromised right away. Prior to the election, the required permits were acquired. The objectives of the study were explained to the participants. They received guarantees that the study would only be used for academic purposes and would not jeopardize their privacy or safety. In order to make sure that the intended respondents are willing to respond to the study questions, the researcher additionally requests consent from the customer respondents via letter and correspondence. By not requesting respondents' names when they completed the questionnaires, it also safeguarded their identity and confidentiality. In addition, the researcher will make certain that respondents respond willingly and in accordance with their own preferences. Finally, it guaranteed that no study subjects are wounded or harmed, and that their safety and security is of the utmost importance.

Data Analysis - Weighted mean and rank were used to determine organizational culture that influences employee innovation performance in terms of organizational, technical and relational aspects; to describe knowledge sharing in terms of social, managerial and structural dimensions; and to assess the impact of organizational culture and knowledge sharing to employee innovation performance in view of job autonomy, innovative behavior and expertise learning. The result of Shapiro-Wilk Test showed that p-values of all variables were less than 0.05 which means that the data set was not normally distributed. Therefore, Spearman rho was used as part of the non-parametric tests to determine the significant relationship. All analyses were performed using SPSS version 28. The estimated means will be evaluated using the Four (4) Point Likert Scale, and the matrices used are: (4) 3.5-4.00 - Strongly Agree, (3) 2.5-3.49 - Agree, (2) 1.50-2.49 - Disagree, and (1)

1.00-1.49 - Strongly Disagree.

3. Results and discussion

Table 2

Summary Table on Innovative Ability of Teachers

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Subject Expertise	2.91	Agree	1
Classroom Management	2.88	Agree	3
Teaching Expertise	2.89	Agree	2
Grand Composite Mean	2.89	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

The summary table on the innovative ability of young teachers in China provides an overview of their performance across three key result areas: Subject Expertise, Classroom Management, and Teaching Expertise. With a Grand Composite Mean of 2.89, which falls within the "Agree" range, it indicates a generally positive evaluation of their innovative abilities.

Subject Expertise ranks highest with a Composite Mean of 2.91, suggesting that young teachers are perceived as particularly strong in this area. This reflects their capability to present lesson objectives clearly, organize ideas effectively, and engage in scientific research, which aligns with the goals of educational reforms emphasizing depth of knowledge and clear communication. Their strong subject expertise contributes to a more engaging and informative learning experience for students, highlighting their effectiveness in conveying content and maintaining academic rigor. Teaching Expertise, with a Composite Mean of 2.89, ranks second, demonstrating that young teachers are skilled in employing effective teaching strategies and making lessons relevant to students' experiences. They use motivational techniques to engage students and create a supportive learning environment. However, there is room for growth in utilizing technology as a teaching aid, which is reflected in the lower ranking of this aspect. Improving technological integration could enhance their teaching practices further, aligning with modern educational trends and maximizing student engagement. In Classroom Management, which ranks third with a Composite Mean of 2.88, young teachers are seen as relatively proficient in maintaining a respectful and organized learning environment. However, there are areas for improvement, such as time management and handling class disruptions. This indicates that while young teachers are effective in creating a positive and productive classroom atmosphere, there are opportunities for further development in managing classroom dynamics and optimizing time use.

Overall, the table highlights that young teachers in China are generally effective and well-regarded in their innovative abilities, particularly in subject expertise and teaching expertise. There are, however, areas such as classroom management and technology integration where additional support and development could further enhance their teaching effectiveness. The positive ratings reflect their commitment to fostering engaging and supportive learning environments while also pointing to opportunities for continuous improvement in specific areas.

Research by Okorie et al. (2023) suggests that universities should implement several managerial strategies to promote creativity among young lecturers. Firstly, they should have policies in place that encourage young faculty members to take on challenges and generate new ideas. Secondly, universities should establish systems to receive, assess, support, and provide constructive feedback on creative proposals from young lecturers. Additionally, they should develop recognition and reward programs to incentivize innovative efforts by these young instructors.

The Summary Table on Factors Affecting the Work Environment provides a clear view of how different aspects impact the engagement of young teachers in China. Each key result area is assessed based on its composite mean, reflecting how well these areas are perceived to support employee engagement. The grand composite mean of 2.88, which falls within the "Agree" range, indicates that overall, young teachers perceive

their work environment as supportive but not optimal. While there is a general agreement that material environment, leadership, and organizational culture contribute positively to their engagement, each area presents opportunities for further enhancement. Improving aspects such as the material environment, leadership effectiveness, and organizational culture can lead to increased job satisfaction, motivation, and overall engagement among young teachers.

Table 3
Summary Table on Factors Affecting the Work Environment

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Material Environment	2.89	Agree	1
Leadership	2.88	Agree	2
Organizational Culture	2.87	Agree	3
Grand Composite Mean	2.88	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

The highest-ranked key result area is Material Environment, with a composite mean of 2.89, which falls within the "Agree" range. This indicates that young teachers generally perceive their physical workspace as supportive of their work engagement. A well-designed material environment includes elements such as flexible workspaces, adequate technological integration, and supportive collaboration spaces. For young teachers, a positive material environment can significantly influence their job satisfaction and productivity by providing the necessary tools and conditions for effective teaching and professional development.

Following closely, Leadership holds the second position with a composite mean of 2.88. This result reflects that young teachers agree on the importance of effective leadership in their work environment. Leadership aspects such as vision articulation, empowerment, and adaptability play a crucial role in influencing engagement levels. Leaders who provide clear direction, encourage risk-taking, and adapt to changing conditions help create a supportive atmosphere where young teachers feel valued and motivated. Effective leadership is essential for fostering a culture that promotes high levels of engagement and commitment.

The Organizational Culture factor ranks third with a composite mean of 2.87. This suggests that while young teachers recognize the importance of a supportive and innovative culture, there is room for improvement. Organizational culture elements such as trust, encouragement of creativity, and reward systems are crucial for enhancing engagement. A culture that promotes these values can positively impact young teachers by creating an environment where they feel secure, valued, and motivated to contribute their best efforts. However, since this area is ranked slightly lower, it indicates that more work may be needed to fully integrate these cultural aspects into the work environment.

Within the company, employee performance is enhanced by a positive work environment. To be more precise, the workplace can help employees perform better because they are resilient and can overcome adversity. Additionally, a happy workplace fosters a caring and enjoyable atmosphere that encourages employee engagement and generally results in people being devoted to their companies. Additionally, it can be said that employee engagement increases worker performance since motivated workers do higher-level tasks for their company or organization. In a similar vein, workers that possess greater accomplishment abilities perform better under pressure. Furthermore, it is generally acknowledged that social interaction is the first step toward motivational activity in corporate cultures and that employee engagement is the means by which positive workplace behavior is encouraged. Performance on an individual and organizational level may be enhanced by this greater participation (Zhenjing et al., 2022).

The summary table on the job performance of teachers, as shown in Table 4, provides insights into different aspects of performance, particularly relevant to the work engagement of young teachers in college settings. The table reflects a grand composite mean score of 2.89, indicating a general agreement among respondents about their job performance across the evaluated areas. Task Performance and Adaptive Performance are both ranked equally high, at 1.5, with a composite mean of 2.89. This suggests that young teachers are generally confident in

their ability to meet job responsibilities, work independently, and handle new challenges. Their ability to adapt to changes and solve problems creatively is also a strength. These aspects of performance are crucial for work engagement, as they reflect a teacher's readiness to manage their workload effectively while staying resilient in the face of evolving demands. High performance in these areas indicates a strong level of engagement and commitment, as teachers who excel in task and adaptive performance are likely to feel more satisfied and motivated in their roles.

Table 4
Summary Table on Job Performance of Teachers

Key Result Areas	Composite Mean	VI	Rank
Task Performance	2.89	Agree	1.5
Situational Performance	2.88	Agree	3
Adaptive Performance	2.89	Agree	1.5
Grand Composite Mean	2.89	Agree	

Legend: 3.50-4.00=Strongly Agree; 2.50-3.49=Agree; 1.50-2.49=Disagree; 1.00-1.49=Strongly Disagree

Situational Performance is ranked slightly lower, at 3, with a composite mean of 2.88. This aspect involves getting along with colleagues, adhering to school policies, and maintaining a positive work atmosphere. Although still rated positively, this lower rank suggests that there may be room for improvement in how young teachers interact with their colleagues and navigate the institutional environment. Challenges in these areas could impact their overall work engagement and job satisfaction. Addressing these situational performance issues, such as enhancing collaborative practices and supporting a positive workplace culture, could further improve engagement levels and job performance.

Job performance is a vital aspect that needs to be considered in order to achieve the company's vision, mission, and targets. According to Budianto et al. (2015), job performance is a measure of the level of achievement of an activity, program, and policies in understanding the goals, objectives, and vision and mission of the company. Furthermore, Chanderson et al. (2020) define job performance (work achievement) as the result of work in terms of quality and quantity achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to them.

Table 5
Relationship Between Innovative Ability and Work Environment

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
Subject Expertise			
Material Environment	0.897**	< .001	Highly Significant
Leadership	0.905**	< .001	Highly Significant
Organizational Culture	0.890**	< .001	Highly Significant
Classroom Management			
Material Environment	0.878**	< .001	Highly Significant
Leadership	0.885**	< .001	Highly Significant
Organizational Culture	0.880**	< .001	Highly Significant
Teaching Expertise			
Material Environment	0.870**	< .001	Highly Significant
Leadership	0.880**	< .001	Highly Significant
Organizational Culture	0.865**	< .001	Highly Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.865 to 0.905 indicate a very strong direct relationship among the sub variables of innovative ability and work environment. There was a statistically significant relationship between innovative ability and work environment because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01. For young teachers, this strong correlation suggests that the environment within which they work significantly impacts their capacity to innovate. When the work environment is supportive and conducive, these teachers are more likely to demonstrate high levels of innovative ability. This relationship underscores the importance of creating a positive and enabling work environment to foster creativity and innovation among young educators. A supportive work environment might include aspects such as effective leadership, adequate

resources, professional development opportunities, and a collaborative culture. The statistically significant p-values, which are less than 0.01, reinforce the validity of this relationship. This significance level indicates that the observed correlation is unlikely to be due to chance and reflects a real and meaningful association between the work environment and innovative ability. In practical terms, this means that improving the work environment in Chinese colleges and universities could lead to enhanced innovative performance among young teachers.

In summary, for young teachers in Chinese colleges and universities, a supportive and well-structured work environment is crucial for maximizing their innovative potential. The significant positive relationship demonstrated by the high rho-values highlights the critical role that organizational culture and resources play in enabling these educators to thrive and contribute creatively to their institutions.

Zhang et al. (2021) aim to explore the relationship between the work environment and the innovative performance of young educators. They focus on identifying key environmental factors that contribute to or hinder the ability of these educators to innovate effectively. The study highlights that a supportive and resourceful work environment significantly enhances the innovative abilities of young educators. This includes access to adequate resources, professional development opportunities, and a culture that encourages creativity and experimentation. Effective leadership is identified as a critical component that influences innovative performance. Leaders who provide clear guidance, foster open communication, and support risk-taking contribute positively to the innovative capabilities of young educators. The study also underscores the importance of collaboration and networking within the academic environment. Young educators who engage in collaborative projects and have opportunities for professional interaction are more likely to demonstrate higher levels of innovation.

Table 6
Relationship Between Innovative Ability and Job Performance

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
Subject Expertise			
Task Performance	0.882**	< .001	Highly Significant
Situational Performance	0.888**	< .001	Highly Significant
Adaptive Performance	0.889**	< .001	Highly Significant
Classroom Management			
Task Performance	0.889**	< .001	Highly Significant
Situational Performance	0.869**	< .001	Highly Significant
Adaptive Performance	0.891**	< .001	Highly Significant
Teaching Expertise			
Task Performance	0.886**	< .001	Highly Significant
Situational Performance	0.871**	< .001	Highly Significant
Adaptive Performance	0.875**	< .001	Highly Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.869 to 0.891 indicate a very strong direct relationship among the sub variables of innovative ability and job performance. There was a statistically significant relationship between innovative ability and job performance because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01.

In the context of young teachers in China, this result underscores the importance of fostering innovation in the teaching environment. Institutions that invest in developing the innovative skills of their young educators are likely to see corresponding improvements in task performance, adaptability, and situational performance. Innovative teachers are more capable of implementing new teaching methods, adapting to evolving educational demands, and solving problems creatively, all of which enhance their effectiveness in the classroom. This strong relationship between innovation and performance highlights the need for schools and universities in China to create environments that encourage creativity, risk-taking, and continuous learning for young teachers. By nurturing their innovative abilities, educational institutions can boost job performance and, ultimately, the success of their students.

Zhang et al. (2021) highlight the strong link between innovative ability and job performance among young educators in Chinese universities, emphasizing that fostering innovation directly improves performance outcomes. Their research suggests that as young teachers become more innovative, they are better equipped to adapt to new challenges and enhance their overall effectiveness in the classroom, resulting in improved job performance. This aligns with the findings indicating a significant correlation between innovative ability and job performance.

Table 7
Relationship Between Work Environment and Job Performance

Variables	Rho	p-value	Interpretation
Material Environment			
Task Performance	0.881**	< .001	Highly Significant
Situational Performance	0.868**	< .001	Highly Significant
Adaptive Performance	0.867**	< .001	Highly Significant
Leadership			
Task Performance	0.882**	< .001	Highly Significant
Situational Performance	0.883**	< .001	Highly Significant
Adaptive Performance	0.882**	< .001	Highly Significant
Organizational Culture			
Task Performance	0.874**	< .001	Highly Significant
Situational Performance	0.882**	< .001	Highly Significant
Adaptive Performance	0.886**	< .001	Highly Significant

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

As seen in the table, the computed rho-values ranging from 0.867 to 0.886 indicate a very strong direct relationship among the sub variables of work environment and job performance. There was a statistically significant relationship between work environment and job performance because the obtained p-values were less than 0.01.

This suggests that the quality of the work environment, including aspects such as leadership, material resources, and organizational culture, plays a significant role in shaping the job performance of these teachers. When the work environment is supportive, young educators are more likely to perform well, both in terms of task execution and adapting to new challenges. The fact that the relationship is statistically significant (with p-values less than 0.01) further reinforces the critical role that the work environment plays. For young teachers in Chinese universities and colleges, a positive and enabling environment likely fosters creativity, innovation, and collaboration, directly impacting their overall performance. This is especially crucial for new educators who are often navigating the complexities of their roles while striving for career development. The supportive work environment not only enhances productivity but also increases engagement and satisfaction, ultimately leading to better outcomes in both teaching and professional growth.

This is in line with studies such as Zhang et al. (2021), which emphasize how the work environment significantly impacts performance by creating conditions where young teachers can thrive. Their study emphasizes that a supportive and resourceful environment not only enhances task performance but also motivates educators to engage more deeply with their work, fostering both personal and organizational success. A conducive work environment typically provides adequate resources, promotes effective leadership, and encourages collaboration, all of which are critical for young teachers navigating their early career challenges. The study suggests that factors like technology integration, flexible work spaces, and collaborative leadership positively impact teachers' ability to innovate and adapt. In particular, when young teachers feel empowered to take risks and explore creative solutions, they are more likely to contribute novel ideas and solutions to their institutions. Moreover, a culture of trust and mutual support within the organization allows these educators to share ideas freely, leading to improved job performance across various dimensions, including task and adaptive performance.

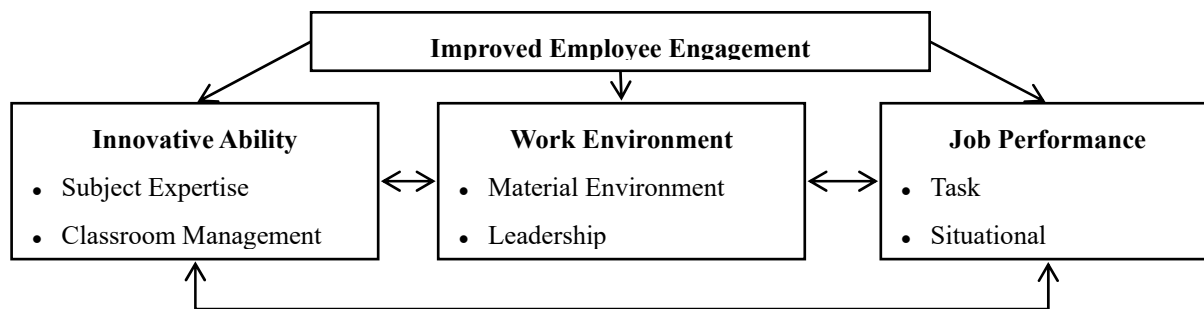
Proposed Framework

Figure 1. Improved Employee Engagement Framework

The improved employee engagement framework for young teachers in Chinese universities, developed through this study, hinges on the significant relationships between three key variables: innovative ability, work environment, and job performance. The framework was constructed to provide a systematic approach to enhancing teacher engagement by addressing the underlying factors that directly impact their work dynamics and professional output.

1. Innovative Ability

The first component of the framework focuses on improving teachers' innovative ability, which is evaluated through three main areas:

Subject Expertise: Developing deep subject knowledge is essential for young teachers to feel confident and effective in their roles. Supporting continuous professional development through training and research opportunities enhances this expertise.

Classroom Management: Effective classroom management fosters a conducive learning environment. Equipping young teachers with the tools and strategies for maintaining order and facilitating learning helps improve their engagement.

Teaching Expertise: By encouraging pedagogical innovation and the use of technology in the classroom, institutions can help young teachers experiment with new teaching methods, which improves engagement through increased autonomy and creativity.

2. Work Environment

The second part of the framework emphasizes the importance of creating a positive and supportive work environment. Three key factors were identified:

Material Environment: Providing a technologically equipped and flexible workspace encourages productivity and innovation. Tools like smart classrooms, collaborative work spaces, and access to cutting-edge educational resources empower teachers to excel.

Leadership: Leadership plays a critical role in influencing teacher engagement. When school leaders inspire, empower, and communicate effectively with young teachers, they create an environment where creativity and risk-taking are encouraged, which is essential for innovation.

Organizational Culture: A culture that rewards innovation, promotes collaboration across departments, and fosters trust is fundamental to enhancing teacher engagement. When young teachers feel that their contributions are valued and recognized, they are more likely to remain motivated and perform well.

3. Job Performance

Job performance, the third variable in the framework, is categorized into: Task Performance: Ensuring that young teachers have the resources and support to meet their job responsibilities boosts engagement. Training programs that enhance their subject expertise and teaching methods also improve task performance. Situational Performance: Encouraging cooperation, adherence to institutional policies, and promoting a positive work atmosphere directly affects how teachers engage with their work and peers. Adaptive Performance: Fostering adaptability by supporting teachers in acquiring new skills, managing pressure, and solving problems creatively ensures that they remain engaged and productive in dynamic educational settings.

This integrated framework emphasizes that engagement is not a standalone factor but is influenced by the complex interplay between a teacher's innovation capacity, the environment in which they work, and their ability to meet job expectations effectively. By reinforcing these connections, universities can promote sustained engagement, leading to improved teacher retention, job satisfaction, and overall educational quality.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: The teachers possess good innovative ability in the area of subject expertise, classroom management and subject expertise. The respondents agreed that the work environment was affected by material environment, leadership and organizational culture. The respondents manifest satisfactory job performance in terms of task, situational and adaptive performance. There were high significant relationships that exist innovative ability, work environment and job performance. An Improved Employee Engagement Framework for young teachers was proposed. Top management may provide opportunities for teachers to share knowledge, such as through team meetings and mentoring programs. It is also important to recognize and reward employees for sharing their knowledge. For improved teachers' innovative ability, universities may encourage collaboration by creating opportunities for teachers to work together on research projects, and by providing resources and support for collaborative work. The proposed framework may be utilized by the universities to further improve employee engagement. Future researchers may use the Deloitte Model of employee engagement in conducting study related to this dissertation paper.

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