Strengthening teachers' morale through awards and recognition approach

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Abstract

This research sought to enhance the motivation of teachers in becoming more productive. The teachers perceived experiences in their year(s) of service will determine their motivation factors, together with the causes of positive and negative experiences, resulting to a program proposal based on the results of the study. A qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews, focused group discussion and naturalistic observation based on the framework of the study were used. According to the findings, the participants with more years of service feel more anxiety and tension. One of the most frequently mentioned motivation factors by the participants is promotion and teacher commitment. These conclusions were developed: a.) Depending on the year(s) of service in their teaching career, teachers characterize their experiences in several ways. They develop anxiety over time because of various difficulties and pressures. New teachers, on the other hand, are filled with zeal and enthusiasm., b.) Promotion, rewards, and appreciation are the primary motivators for teacher respondents, and these factors influence their success in the profession, c.) Professional and personal growth are factors in teachers' positive interactions, and it improves their dedication to their employment. Workload and over-recognition of programs are the sources of negative interactions. The following recommendations were formulated: a.) A psychosocial development Support and Training is recommended to be one of the topics in the Gender and Development Program, b.) Open and Transparent ranking of teachers are encouraged and c.) To aid the negative experiences of teachers, an awards and recognition approach is proposed.

Keywords: EAC GS, teachers' morale, awards and recognition approach, qualitative approach triangulation, action research

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1. Introduction

The teaching profession is shifting in relation to changing educational and social dynamics. Teachers are willing to place themselves at the forefront of this discussion and to be intimately active in shaping the direction of a wider educational transition, even though their experiences, concerns, and values have been largely absent from the national educational debate. A greater understanding of the causes and effects of teacher motivation, confidence, professional identification, and related dynamics is critical for a more optimistic educational environment, increased teacher effectiveness, and a better educational experience for all students from an educational policy and wider cultural perspective. As a result, it is critical to investigate the effect of such efforts, as well as the existing educational climate, school contextual influences, and personal views and values, on teachers' daily lives. There are multiple and dynamic factors that attract people to teaching, keep teachers motivated, and contribute to the development and evolution of their professional selves. Teachers' emotions are fundamental to their professional experiences, personalities, and beliefs, and teaching is an emotionally intense mode of work (Leithwood & Beatty 2018).

Most teachers find it difficult to distinguish their professional and personal identity because teaching is not a career but a vocation (Lens & de Jesus 2019), and the vocational essence of teaching – or a sense of calling or purpose – is a powerful force in their lives. Teachers' professional orientation, or self-perception, is often linked to non-cognitive characteristics, such as psychological, emotional, and interpersonal characteristics that influence human thinking, values, beliefs, behavior, and interaction. Teachers' values, dedication, and sense of moral intent were likely important factors in their decision to join the profession, and these forces continue to be important to their professional identities, to the point where a teacher's self-image and sense of moral mission are closely connected with their professional self-efficacy and identity. Teachers' emotions, beliefs, sense of efficacy, and professional identity are all impaired when conditions hinder the emotional essence of education (Hargreaves 2018). Teachers often encounter a disconnect between the spiritual and affective goals of their work and the external forces that affect it for several reasons, perhaps most notably due to the increased demands of the changing educational environment. In other words, as Hargreaves (2020) points out, the teaching profession's service ethic is "trapped inside a rationalized and bureaucratized system," and many teachers believe that such circumstances are becoming more prevalent.

Educational policies are not always driven by what we know about students' motivation to learn or teachers' motivation to teach. As educational change occurs, the aims of reform and the intrinsic motivation of participants must be aligned. Since education policies have an impact on teachers' professional identities, motivation, and morale, it is important to understand the many factors that influence how teachers see themselves, their students, and their work. When deciding how to better go about school reform, it is beneficial to place teachers' beliefs, principles, norms, behaviors, and sources of morale and motivation in the larger inter-relational sense of schools, societies, and wider elements of educational discourse.

Expectations and teacher workloads rise year after year. Teachers can have low morale since their job sometimes involves long periods of isolation from their colleagues. Teachers engage with their students for most of the day. Finding time to speak and collaborate with other teachers is almost impossible due to factors such as the layout of a school campus, teachers working alone in their classrooms, and scheduling constraints. Teachers can become dissatisfied because of this. A successful performance management framework will help teachers recognize developmental opportunities and put succession planning processes in place. Within the educational sector, performance appraisals are useful tools for improving employee performance. Many schools' performance management systems, on the other hand, are under extreme scrutiny as teachers are kept responsible for their students' performance. Bad performance management systems in schools, according to Day (2018), resulted in

destabilization, increased workload, intensification of work, a crisis of professional identity for many teachers, and a loss of public trust and service quality consequently. However, positive performance feedback is critical for younger teachers to remain in the profession. The degree to which teachers are permitted to engage in the performance assessment method has a substantial impact on their expectations of procedural fairness and the utility of performance input. Employee morale can be boosted by giving them praise for their work. When employee morale is high, which decreases tension, absenteeism, and attrition while also improving employee efficiency. Increased success recognition motivates teachers to advance their careers. Non-recognition of achievement, on the other hand, lowers the quality of schoolchildren's education. Educators should, as a result, be provided with consistent reviews on their own results as well as praise for a job well done.

1.1 Statement of purpose

Through the Program for awards and recognition, this aims to resolve the issues and concerns about efficiency of service of teachers at the same time increasing their productivity at Lopez National Comprehensive High School. This study seeks to study the experiences of participants in their career as teachers, the support that they want, need and are getting from their superiors.

1.2 Literature review

Since the late 1990s, teacher motivation research has evolved and grown, with a significant increase in literature in the field of teacher motivation research across different social cultural contexts over the last decade. The special issue on motivation for teaching published by Learning and Instruction in 2008 was a major step forward, with the emphasis on applying existing motivational theories to the realm of teaching, which Watt and Richardson (2018) have dubbed a "Zeitgeist of interest". The special issue was an important catalyst for setting the agenda for future teacher motivation research by making a significant contribution to the application of motivational theories in the emerging research area of teachers' career choice, education studies, and professional engagement.

Teacher shortages have been recorded in many western countries, including the United States, Australia, and some European countries such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway (Kyriacou & Kunc 2017; Weiss 2019). Early teacher attrition, teaching force ageing, imbalance of high demand with less reward, limited career opportunities, less job security, and low prestige have all been identified as possible causes of current and potential teacher shortages (OECD 2015; Richardson & Watt, 2015, 2016; Sinclair 2018). Teacher motivation research is also important because it is a critical factor that is linked to a variety of variables in education, including student motivation, educational reform, teaching practice, and teachers' psychological fulfillment and well-being. As a result, it is beneficial for educators to figure out how to recruit new teachers and keep them in the classroom. Providing recognition and awards programs for outstanding teachers has been shown to be beneficial.

According to research, both the United States and Australia have a significant shortage of these systems. Teachers who have received recognition and awards for their work have recognized recognition systems for motivating them to continue delivering high-quality instruction. These programs are built on a strong base of motivational theories. In terms of teaching the science behind motivational ideas, teacher educators should make "recognition" an integral part of their curriculum. They may also enable K-12 schools to recognize outstanding teachers who collaborate with university teacher educators to support student teachers. Merit pay is a common principle in the United States and Australia, but research has shown that it is a non-motivator and has not resulted in major changes in student learning performance in most programs that have implemented it.

Despite this wide range, there are three key types of performance-based incentive programs that have been studied extensively in the literature and are used in educational systems. The first model is called merit pay, and it entails individual monetary rewards based on student achievement as well as classroom observation

(McCollum 2019). The second model is known as knowledge and skill-based compensation, which entails individual monetary incentives for gained qualifications and demonstrated knowledge and skills that are thought to improve student success (Odden, 2020).

Knowledge and skill-based pay varies from merit-based pay in that it specifies exactly what is being measured. It is argued that the expertise and skills assessed are related to teacher proficiency, implying that knowledge and skill-based compensation improves teachers' ability. The third model is school-based incentive, which entails monetary incentives for groups of students, usually based on their results. Over the years, motivational theories have centered on the factors that contribute to highly motivated employees. Teachers' appreciation is expressed in, and supported by, two motivational theorists and a recent worker motivation survey. Herzberg's worker motivation theory defined two types of motivators for employees. Hygiene and motivation are the two levels, and each serves a different function for a worker. Pay, working environments, relationships with coworkers, supervisory competence, and business policies are all examples of 'hygiene' considerations. These factors, according to Herzberg, do not guarantee that a worker would be highly motivated. This is where his 'motivational' influences come into play, and they must be met. Achievement, duty or autonomy, appreciation, and development opportunities are among these variables.

Maslow (1954), a second well-known motivational thinker, classified individual needs into a hierarchy. He concluded that humans' more fundamental needs must be met before higher-level needs can be met. Working for success and self-actualization are two of his higher-level requirements (del Castillo, 2021). He defined adequate pay as one of the fundamental needs that must be met to secure life's necessities. Having job security and protection, forming a pleasant work group, and feeling needed are among the second and third levels of Maslow's basic needs. He summarized that higher-level needs such as respect, acceptance, and self-actualization can only be sought and fulfilled after these essential needs are met. Amabile and Kramer (2017), looked at the diary entries of hundreds of workers from a variety of companies. The aim of the study was to find ways to eliminate common obstacles to workers' advancement to improve long-term creative output. Staff can be uplifted by straightforward aims, autonomy, and nourishers, according to the researchers. This included coworker and supervisor support, gratitude, and collegiality. Respect, motivation, emotional support, and association were the four large categories they discovered to have a profound effect on workers' inner work lives.

Recognition, support, and appreciation were identified by many of these motivational theorists and researchers as motivating factors in enhancing worker productivity and self-image. This research aims to enhance the motivation of teachers in becoming more productive. The participants' perceived experiences in their year(s) of service will determine their motivation factors, together with the causes of positive and negative experiences, resulting in a program proposal based on the results of the study.
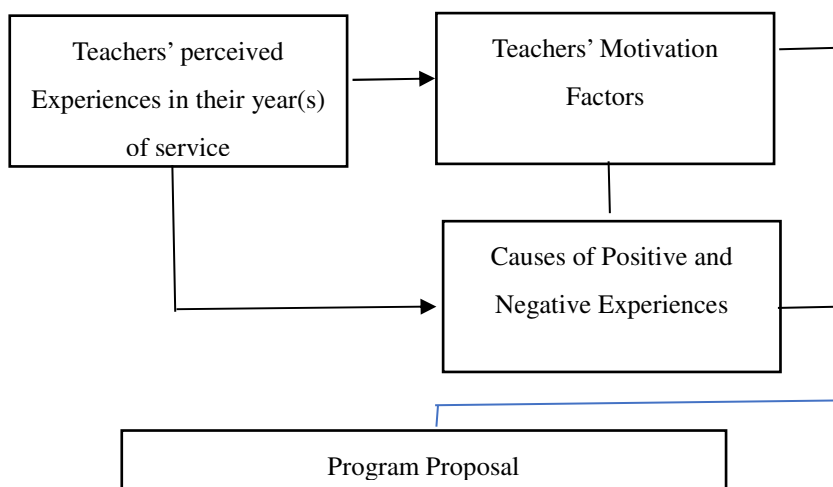

Figure 1. Research Paradigm

This study is only limited to the teaching personnel of Lopez National Comprehensive High School regardless of their year(s) in service, age, sex, and civil status. The researcher selected the participants varying from their plantilla position, and year level through a focused group discussion, online interviews and observations using qualitative research design. The group was composed of 12 participants including the recorder and documenter.

2. Methodology

A qualitative research approach using semi-structured interviews, focused group discussion and naturalistic observation based on the framework of the study was used. According to Pring (2017), qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population that it involves. In broad terms qualitative research is an approach that allows one to examine experiences in detail (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey 2017). Qualitative data are organized, interpreted, analyzed, and communicated to address real world scenarios in the teaching world. The researcher asked permission from the school head in organizing the focused group, from this the researcher went to the different departments to seek permission from their department heads through a formal written letter. The proceedings of the discussion were recorded via voice recorder with the permission of the members of the group through an informed consent form. All proceedings are kept confidential, no names will be revealed throughout this paper, and information gathered were only be used for research purposes only.

3. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of participants at Lopez National Comprehensive High School regardless of the pandemic being experienced at present. The perceptions of the participants were examined, and the results were as follows:

3.1 Teaching experiences

Question: Considering your experience, how likely are you to rate it?

According to the findings of the interview, the participants with more years of service feel more anxiety and tension. Teacher A said "My first teaching experience taught me a lot about what it means to be a teacher and a lot about myself. I have always known that creating lesson plans was difficult, so I'm glad I got this opportunity to help me prepare for the future." Teacher C "I have found that I do not have a clear sense of time when I am teaching, so I now know to make sure to make a plan of what will be completed at what time," Teacher F. "There is nothing that makes a teacher happier than watching their students excel and recognizing that they have assisted in providing students with the skills they need for the future". According to the results, most participants who have been in service longer have been disappointed with their careers from Teacher B, D and E. "The most difficult experience I've had in my teaching career was coping with a parent who was constantly moaning about what we did in the classroom," says Teacher D. To meet their students, teachers must have the following qualities: versatility, compassion, self-discipline, drive, and patience. When creating lesson plans and ensuring that students understand the materials on which they will be tested, teachers must also consider state and local testing goals. Teacher H said, "Teachers must be able to adapt their teaching methods to ensure that all of their students learn effectively." From Teacher J and H, "Teachers are not granted proper appreciation of their activities and excellent accomplishments,". These factors influence the respondents' teaching and service efficiency.

3.2 Motivation factors of Participants

Question: What support do you get for your personal and professional development?

One of the most frequently mentioned motivation factors by participants is promotion and teacher

commitment. As teacher D said, "My motivation factor is to be promoted as much as possible and grab every opportunity". Added Teacher B "Being recognized for my works and services with a proper promotion system of the school can help us a lot in boosting our potential". This may be because when promotion activities are consistent and fair, if teachers are promoted on merit and there is a salary increase if promoted, it leads to a positive improvement in teacher behavior and tends to boost their morale to put them at a higher level. Teacher A said "sometimes, we do not get what we need"

Like Teacher E "We do not get any mentoring from our department, or even coaching for us new in the field, it's just that we ask sometimes from other departments". This is consistent with previous longitudinal research that found that high levels of teacher promotion were associated with a positive social and psychological climate in the classroom, which led to increased efficiency and effectiveness in job performance, as well as a willingness to stay longer. Since it positively improves teacher attitudes, a high compensation system resulted in teacher engagement. Employee loyalty is dependent on incentives and appreciation, according to the findings, which are consistent with previous research. Teacher C said, "I would want to be recognized through an incentive program", a recognition program might help us in the motivation to stay in the service, but it should be fair and square regardless of the tenure". According to Andrew (2015), Ubom (2020), an effective incentive system may be a strong motivator, however an inefficient reward system can contribute to employee de-motivation. Similarly, Kabiito (2015) discovered in his analysis of monetary incentives and organizational engagement of civil servants in the District administration that the more monetary rewards are given to workers, the more committed they become, and thus the incentive to work for the District increases.

1.1   Causes of Negative and positive experiences,

Positive experiences

Question: Are you satisfied with the programs being offered by the school? Why or why not?

Attend conferences, seminars, and refresher courses when different training programs are offered. It helps to raise their morale and encourage them to perform at a higher degree of dedication. As teacher B said, "one of my good experiences is attending free training programs which enhances my skills", I enjoyed the workshops given by the school to us teachers", complied to teacher C: these programs we had in the past few years of teaching helped me a lot in a positive outlook of teaching." The results are consistent with those of Burke (2015), who discovered that workers who participated in the most amount of training programs and classified the training they completed as most important regarded the organization as more supportive, viewed the company more favorably, and had less intention to leave. Also, Teacher D said, "as an applicant in the promotion system I am happy with the system that is being implemented this administration", Teacher G: "yes I am satisfied it's just that the requirements prohibit us new teachers to apply because of the accomplishments we have is very few compared to the teachers more tenured than us". Teachers' social connections can be strengthened because of their professional engagement, adding to the social resource of the school. The studies also show that there is a connection between teacher productivity and teacher training, which includes structured pre-service preparation, in-service professional development, and informal training. According to a study conducted by Nyakundi (2018) in Kenya's Thika west district, better educated and experienced teachers are more likely to be assigned to students with higher ability and with less disciplinary issues.

Negative Experiences

Without an in-depth sociological perspective on teachers' perceptions of stress, coping, and emotion control, too much paperwork has influenced negative experiences of teachers as an individual psychological phenomenon. Stress, on the other hand, has been conceptualized as a social phenomenon faced by the person in the realm of education. Teacher B: "I am stressed when bulk paper works are being demanded of us", Teacher D added: "it is the workload of paper works which causes me negative experiences" and ``submitting with unreasonable due dates". This has influenced negative experiences of teachers as an individual psychological phenomenon.

Stress, on the other hand, has been conceptualized as a social phenomenon faced by the person in the realm of education. Another Participant teacher F said: "I am stressed when bulk paper works are being demanded of us". Some descriptions of teacher emotions, referring to "styles" of teachers, "stages" of emotional experience, and "forms" of caring, continue to depend on a developmental predictability underpinning without issue. As the educational environment shifts, this happens amid reports of clearly unsealed teacher identities. Teachers must not only show a certain emotional front, but they must also function as role models, creating this "front" as a key part of their role, according to the principle of emotional labor (Dominguez 2017).

4. Conclusion

The following are the conclusions of the study: a.) Depending on the year(s) of service in their teaching career, teachers characterize their experiences in several ways. They develop anxiety over time because of various difficulties and pressures. New teachers in the service, on the other hand, are filled with zeal and enthusiasm., b.) Promotion, rewards, and appreciation are the primary motivators for teacher respondents, and these factors influence their success and orientation in the profession, c.) Professional and personal growth are factors in teachers' positive interactions, and it improves their dedication to their employment. Workload and over-recognition of programs are the sources of negative interactions. Teachers' degree of dedication is regarded as a vital factor in their participation in the school's critical, cooperative, and reflective performance.

With the conclusions stated above these are the recommendations formulated: a.) A psychosocial development Support and Training is recommended to be one of the topics in the Gender and Development Program of the school, b.) Open and Transparent rankings of teachers are highly encouraged and c.) To aid the negative experiences of teachers, an awards and recognition approach is proposed which can enhance their morale.

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