

## TEACHERS MOTIVATION: A Study of the Psychological and Social Factors

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### Abstract

*In this paper, we discuss the notion of teachers' motivation. As its main contribution, some material and psychological needs of teachers which are relevant for determining job satisfaction and motivation are addressed. In particular, some issues which adversely affect teachers' performance are identified.*

### 1. Introduction

It is known that issues pertaining to *learning outcomes* versus *productive teaching* have been drawing attention since long: teachers' *motivation* deteriorates as the twenty first century *educational demands* go higher. More explicitly, to a great extent, excellent learning outcomes and productive teaching are functions of teachers' motivation.

It is difficult to trace since when the research on the notion of teachers' motivation came into existence. To the authors knowledge Schonfeld [Sch, 1989] seem to be one of the earliest full-blown expositions on the study. However, during that period till date, a number of works have appeared (Sylvia and Hutchinson, 1985; Rothman, 1981; Beer and Beer, 1996) which has investigated teachers' motivation.

As of now, it can be said that many factors exist which promote teachers' motivation. These factors may be viewed as material, psychological, etc. In particular, it is found that a teacher's daily experience on the job determines the activities which are psychologically most rewarding. This may, to an extent, demonstrate a teacher's level of motivation (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Bishay, 1996). Moreover, Teachers' motivation has been found to activate (to an extent) increased level of academic achievement.

In this paper, we investigate some material and psychological determinants of teachers' motivation. In particular, some issues which adversely affect teachers' performance are identified.

## 2. Definition of Basic Terms

Roughly speaking, work motivation is the psychological process that influences individual behaviour with respect to attainment of work- place goals and tasks (Bennell and Akyeampon, 2007). In particular, teachers' motivation is a state of being influenced by material and psychological factors which may induce activeness (or reluctances) in achievements associated to teaching.

It is important to note that a worker's level of motivation cannot be properly measured, because psychological processes cannot be directly observed. Moreover, there exist many constraints which adversely affect goal attainment. Also, it is significant to point out that job satisfaction is distinct from work motivation. However, it helps to account for work motivation; even though, the distinction is trivial.

Usually, there are two types of motivation, namely, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation.

### Definition 2.1

- i. The satisfaction of a desire, expectation, or goal without being influenced to do so by another person, or by an external incentive or reward is known as *intrinsic motivation*. Intrinsic motivation is sometimes referred to as self-motivation.
- ii. A compel to do something or act a certain way because of external factors is called *extrinsic motivation*. This might include incentives and rewards or even punishments. The goals or expectations of this type of motivation may be determined by someone else.

## 3. Research Problem

It is already known that teachers' motivation is a problem. Distinct from work- related factors, there exist some other factors which affect teachers' motivation. This note attempts to answer some questions provoked by these factors. In particular, our research is due to the following questions:

- i. What do teachers and other stakeholders identify as teacher' motivation.
- ii. What are the major (occupational) factors of teachers' de-motivation?
- iii. How does teachers' motivation affect learning outcomes? That is, is there any relationship between a teacher's motivation and a student's achievement?
- iv. What are the measures to be taken to *increase* teachers' motivation?

## 4. Methodology

The exploratory research approach is adopted. In addition, a conventional survey (questionnaire) consisting of 15 questions was given to 50 teachers in order to find out whether certain psychological, material and social status related issues affect teaching. The questionnaires were distributed to both government and private schools. A one on one interview was conducted with a number of stakeholders (see appendix 1, for details).

The response received from these teachers and stakeholders are analysed in the next section.

## 5. Analysis

Following the response obtained from the questionnaire distributed and the interview conducted, we present the following argument:

The reason most (80%) teachers join the teaching profession is to have something doing. Characteristically, most of them claim to be just a teacher rather than a professional teacher. However, 90% of the teachers in private school would rather be addressed as professionals. This could be a result of the relatively higher job satisfaction and motivation found in the private schools.

Further, 70% of the teachers stressed a *low* level of job satisfaction, 10% of the teachers believe they have *moderate* level of job satisfaction, while 20% of the teachers said they have *very low* level of job satisfaction. Consequently, it is arguable that these percentage differences may be due to condition of service, motivation on the job or teacher's career advancement (teachers with low qualification tend to have moderate or high level of satisfaction, keeping in mind that they have limited job options at their disposal). Therefore, these aforesaid levels of job satisfaction account for the low level of job *retention* observed in the profession. Nevertheless, depending on the offer, 80% of the teachers are willing to leave the teaching profession for another. The same percentage of the teachers stress that they intend to stay on the job for maximum of 15years, of course, this will only be obtainable under good working conditions. Only about 12 percent are willing to stay on the job until retirement.

It is evident that the response given by the teachers is a result of one or more of the following: i) Level of motivation, ii) Working conditions, iii) Job satisfaction.

In view of the teachers opinion on the strategic measures to be taken to enhance both job satisfaction and motivation, 80% of the teachers call for improvement of working condition, good opportunities for carrier advancement, salary increment and provision of allowances. While 15% of the teachers are care free of the working conditions, but welcomes a good salary scale as obtainable in other professions. The remainder of the teachers are indifferent in their views.

In general, all teachers acknowledged that poor motivation affects their productivity and thereby, adversely affect their students' performance or learning outcome.

Summarising, from relevant statements coded from the response gathered from the questionnaire, it is obvious that teacher motivation affects student achievement and thereby, play a significant role in their learning outcome. This is because teachers are the *primary variables* affecting students' performance.

## 6. Some related Theories on Motivation

In what follows, we briefly consider some motivational theories as applicable to teachers' motivation.

Following (Hertzberg, 1966), interpersonal relations, working conditions and pay are *hygiene* factors (see Hertzberg, (1966)) rather than motivators. However, absence of these factors can create job dissatisfaction, but their presence does not motivate or create satisfaction. By consequence, a key proposition may be presented thus; *Hertzberg' hygiene* factors may create short- run changes in a teacher' attitude to work and performance but might not guaranty low rate of *retention*. However, lack of alternative employment opportunities may keep *attrition* rate low.

In McClelland (1978), achievement motivation is viewed as need- motivation. This identifies three types of motivational needs, namely, achievement, power/ authority motivation and affiliation motivation. Every worker (teacher) possesses these three types in different degrees. Following McClelland (1978), the achievement person wants achievement and job advancement. Such an individual needs a realistic and challenging goals and a sense of accomplishment. The authority/ power motivation worker (teacher) believes that others validate their idea and opinions. This makes them feel need by others. The affiliate worker is motivated by interactions with other people.

Consequent to these three types of motivational need, it can be said that every teacher, to some degree, wants achievement and job advancement. This could be in terms of promotion that may bring about a change in his/her status quo, both in the work environment and in the society. Also, teachers like to feel needed by others. Therefore, government, stake holders and the society need to ensure that issues pertaining to teachers welfare and/ or fringe benefit is upheld with utmost priority.

### **Teachers' Motivation**

Following Kazeem (1999), teachers and other school worker tend to remain contented and reasonably motivated as long as salaries are paid on time and they are promoted regularly. Earlier, Eton (1984) identified the payment of salaries, allowances and promotion as the key factors that shape teachers attitude towards their work.

As a direct implication of these aforesaid findings, it is arguably true that prompt payment of salaries induces a direct commitment to teaching. However, there is no *wide spread* agreement on the extent to which financial inducement motivate teachers. This prompts us to infer that prompt payment of salaries; allowances and promotion are desirable incentives to boost teachers' motivation.

In Youlonfoun (1992), it is argued that good salaries and their prompt payment are important motivating factors. Nevertheless, there is evidence that other factors can undermine the commitment to the job. One of such factors is the disparity that exists between the teaching profession and other professions. For example, the working condition that surrounds the teaching profession portrays the *face value* assigned to the profession. A typical example is the impoverished working environment teachers in the developing countries find themselves in. In such an environment, even if a teacher has an intrinsic motivation, (possibly) at a short run, crisis associated to job satisfaction would adversely influence teacher motivation.

### **Students' learning outcome**

Students' learning outcome demonstrates the expected knowledge, skills, attitude and competencies student should possess after undergoing some curriculum. In this respect, it is known that students' learning outcome can be improved by at least changing the classroom variable: the *teaching process and the teacher*. According to Bloom (1976), the teaching process and the teacher are classroom alterable variable. Clearly, it cannot be over emphasized that teaching process is improves students' learning achievement. However, in this paper we discuss students' learning outcomes as a function of the teachers' motivation.

It is arguably true that a *motivated* classroom teacher can significantly improve students' learning outcomes than the unmotivated counterpart. This statement is irrespective of the kind of motivation under consideration. The reason being that, a motivated teacher is equipped with adequate amount of external stimuli for students, while the unmotivated teacher may produce an under stimulated classroom which will consequently yield poor students learning outcomes, in particular, discipline problems. More explicitly, following the analysis given in Travers (1972) on Harry and Maslows' work which emphasize the importance of external stimuli in the classroom, classroom lethargy, discipline problems, and lack of learning are due to insufficient stimuli. This insufficient stimulus is induced by low motivation level.

### **7. Concluding Remarks**

In view of the fact that a sizeable increase in teachers earning will significantly enhance teachers' commitment and performance. It is pertinent to note that good social status of teachers considerably impact on their morale and thereby, motivate them.

As of now, it can be said that no school system can have high achievement more than the level of teachers' motivation within the system. Therefore, all those factors which contribute to appreciable improvement in teachers' morale and commitment should be upheld with utmost priority. Hopefully, when this is done, it will unfold a multi faceted payoff, namely, increased pupils' learning outcomes and high teachers' output.

In fact, it is a good exercise to investigate the extent to which the twenty first century teacher's *job content* versus *reward system* (in terms of pay package and promotion) affects high teacher's output.

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# Questionnaire

*This questionnaire is only meant for research purpose. Therefore, any information you provide us with, will only be used for research and analysis purpose, and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.*

1. What can you say about your occupation?

a temporary teacher  a professional teacher  just a teacher.

2. What are your reasons for joining the teaching profession?

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3. How would you describe you current level of job satisfaction?

High.  Very high.  Low.  Very low.  Moderate.

4. What do you like most about teaching?

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5. How long have you been in the job?

1- 5yrs.  5- 7yrs.  7- 10yrs.  10- 15yrs.  15yrs & more.

6. How long do you intend to stay on the job?

1- 5yrs.  5- 7yrs.  7- 10yrs.  10- 15yrs.  15yrs & more.

7. Does your current level of job satisfaction and motivation affect your performance and behavior?

Yes.  No.

8. If you have better offer outside the teaching profession would you go for it?

Yes.  No.

9. Would you be pleased if your child becomes a teacher?

Yes.  No

10. Are you satisfied with your current income in the profession?

Yes.  No.

11. In your opinion what should be done to enhance job satisfaction?

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12. In your opinion, what should be done to motivate you on the job?

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13. What is your qualification?

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14. What is your current pay?

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15. What pay will be adequate for your qualification?

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