

Motivation, A Key Booster for Teachers' Performance: A Case Study on Public Schools in North Macedonia

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Abstract

The quality of an educational system is closely connected with the quality of its teachers. Thus, research into the elementary teachers' motivation is of a high importance. The main purpose of this study is to describe and identify the level of teachers' motivation, factors influencing teachers' motivation and its impact on teachers' job performance in public elementary schools in the municipality of Chair, Republic of North Macedonia. Furthermore, this study examines teachers' work consumption and organizational engagement as they relate to teaching performance. Teachers' motivation was examined through focus groups with the principles of 10 elementary schools and a questionnaire administered to the teachers of elementary education. A sample of 319 teachers participated in the survey. The questionnaire was developed based on literature review. The findings of the study revealed that teachers' high motivation is closely related to their students' result. The factors that influenced teachers' motivation were their salary level, the working conditions related to infrastructure and the interpersonal relations and communication with the leaders of the institutions and/or colleagues. After analysis numerous recommendations were given to help educational institutions provide better support to teachers and improve their levels of motivation and their job performance, such as providing a satisfying work

infrastructure, key resources, and professional development opportunities, increasing salaries and giving acknowledgments and recognitions to motivate teachers' and thus increase their job performance and satisfaction.

Keywords: teacher motivation, job performance, job satisfaction, Republic of North Macedonia

Introduction

Education, despite the scale, is a process influenced and influencing many subjects. The role that teachers play in ensuring a high quality education is immense. One of the factors that is related to a number of variables in education such as student motivation, educational reforms, teaching practices, teachers' job performance and teachers' psychological fulfillment and well-being is the teacher motivation. While teacher motivation is crucial to educations' quality, research studies show that teachers in the developing countries are not highly motivated. As revealed by Michaelowa (2002) in developing countries teachers' motivation is influenced by various factors, which needs to be investigated in order to achieve educational goals. Thus, research into the elementary teachers' motivation in the Republic of North Macedonia is of a high importance to be studied. This is even more important taking into consideration that in the context of North Macedonia, there is a lack in research studies on teachers' motivation, job satisfaction and overall job performance.

Literature Review

The motivation of employees within an institution or organization is a very important issue in the context of the smooth running work process and putting forth the necessary efforts and actions towards work-related activities. Motivated employees can lead to increased productivity and allow the employee and the organization to achieve higher levels of results. Therefore, the high employee motivation is definitely a catalyst for the overall development of the institution and self-actualization of the employees. Employees who are motivated to work harder are more productive compared to employees who are not motivated (Daniels and Radebaugh, 2001). In the context of education, a motivated teacher will be dedicated and committed to bring her/his best in their workplace so that students, parents and the society will benefit greatly from her/his service. In turn, a motivated teacher will feel happy and satisfied.

There is a variety of definitions of the term 'motivation' which tend to explain that in fact motivation is an inseparable process during the process of practicing a certain profession. Richardson (2014) defines teacher motivation as the internal and external factor that stimulate desire or energy in teaching to be continuously interested and committed to make their best effort to support students' learning goals. In this study, 'motivation' is conceptualized as a "willingness or desire to engage in good teaching model". "Good teaching model" as stated by Guajardo (2011) means respecting professional behavior and striving to help students learn as best as they can. If we

refer to motivation within an organization or institution, Vayjne Modyt and Robert Noe see it as a willingness to achieve the goal of the organization. Regarding educational institutions, teachers' motivation is of greater concern as in the institutions teachers are those who are in direct contact with the students, they play a key role in representing the institution, and the results will depend primarily on them.

There are different theories on what constitutes and creates motivation, which mostly derive from psychology, sociology and human resources management. What those theories have in common is that they treat motivation in terms of internal and external motivation. A summary of some of the most well-known motivation theories is provided below. Herzberg Theory (1966, as cited by Bauer & Erdogan, 2012) is one of the most popular theory that seeks to answer the question "what do people expect from their work"? Herzberg theory is considered as a universal theory and tries to explain what are the factors that lead to job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Motivation factors are related to the ability to achieve and experience psychological growth. The model introduces job enrichment for true motivation, as opposed to job loading. Meanwhile, one of the most used theories in the field of management is considered goal-setting theory, which considers that motivation is based on setting goals for employees and enabling them to achieve them. When an employee does not fulfill the tasks in accordance with what the manager expects from him it often happens because the employee does not know exactly what to do (Locke et al., 1981). Need theories as revealed by Bauer & Erdogan (2012) revolve around the fulfillment of an internal state and represent the foundation of motivation theories. There are three main needs theories: Maslow s Pyramid Hierarchy of Needs Maslow s theory states that people have a pyramid hierarchy of needs that they will satisfy from bottom to top. There are deficiency needs, that will stifle any other movement if they are not satisfied, and growth needs, that can be progressively satisfied once the basics have been covered. Alderfer s ERG Model Alderfer s model condenses Maslow s five human needs into three categories: Existence (material and physiological), Relatedness (social and external esteem) and Growth (internal esteem and self-actualization). On the other hand, McClelland's achievement motivation (1955) looks at different people's needs and different expectations from the work environment, where some people need achievements, some have a need to achieve power and some have a need for affiliation. The Adams Theory of Equity is based on the theory developed by Leon Festinger in the 1950s. According to this theory, motivation derives from the equal exchange of inputs and outcomes between the individual and the organization. With other words, equal giving and receiving to and from the organization creates motivation.

Methodology

This study combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to investigate the level of motivation of teacher in elementary schools in North Macedonian public universities. The survey was made up of a self-reporting questionnaire while the qualitative study was conducted through interviews and focus groups with the principals of ten public elementary schools of the municipality of Chair in Skopje, the capital of Republic of North Macedonia.

Participants

The sample included teachers' of the primary education, from lower cycle (classes 1-5) to high cycle classes (classes 6-9). A number of 319 teachers (74.3% females and 23.8% males) from 10 public schools of the Municipality of Chair, Skopje participated in the study. The high percentage of women is in accordance with the total number of women employed in particular in elementary schools in countries level. Mostly woman and less by man can attribute this difference to gender roles and the fact that the teachers' profession in North Macedonian culture has been traditionally chosen. Cross tabulations between gender and teaching cycle showed that compared to men, the percentage of women in the first cycle of elementary school was higher (85.2%) than in higher cycle (classes 6-9). Reciprocally, men were more representative in higher cycle classes (29.2 %) than in low cycle classes (13.9%). This can also attributed to gender roles, which show that women usually chose a nurturing profession, and younger children need more nurturing than older children do. The majority of the respondents were on the age from 31-40 years old (32.6%), followed by 24.8% 51-60 years old, 24.5% on the age of 41-50 years old, 10% 21-30 years old and only 4.1% above 61 years old.

Survey instrument

The survey was conducted through a self-developed open-ended questionnaire divided in 4 sections. The first section comprised the demographic data of the participants. The second sections included a self- evaluation questionnaire in which teachers had to assess the level of satisfaction associated with their profession and level of income, the work infrastructure and the institution, their level of teaching and communication with the principals and colleagues. The third section included statements that were evaluating the professional consumption of the teachers and the final sections teachers' had to report on their prospects for change. The instrument employed a five-point Likert type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Prior to conducting the survey, permission was asked from the principals of the elementary schools and were given their approval. The survey was administered in the end of the working year and it was voluntary and anonymous.

Results

Data analysis

Survey was coded and entered into SPSS 20.0.0 data system. All items were scored using a five-point Likert scale. A score of one indicated low motivation while a score of five indicated high teacher motivation. Questions encrypted as K7, K11 that measured communication and principals and colleagues, PR1, PR6, KP7, KP8, KP12 that measured professional consumption, and PN1, PN2, PN3 and PN6 that measured prospects for change were reverse scored. Reverse scoring was performed in this way: value 1 was replaced with five; value 2 was replaced with 4 and vice versa. Once the data was entered in the system, tests were run for reliability, descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics.

Reliability

The reliability of the instrument was tested for all the items. Cronbach Alpha for the teacher motivation section was .871, for Professional consumption .755, while for the perspective for change items was .734, which values confirm the reliability of the instrument and allowed to apply the instrument in the study.

Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics were run in order to examine teachers' level of motivation. Teachers' motivation was measured by four motivating factors: perceptions related to the profession and incomes, perceptions about the infrastructure of the institution, perceptions about the performance, relationship with the principals and colleagues, professional consumption and perspectives about change.

Results revealed from the descriptive statistics show that 65.5% of the respondents agreed that they are satisfied with their profession. However, with a 62% agreement teachers responded that the salary increase would have improved their performance in teaching, which pinpointed the fact that one of the factors that added to teachers' dissatisfactions were earnings. In other words, that data showed that teachers' dissatisfaction stems from the level of incomes and not the profession they practice.

As regards perceptions on job performance, with a percentage of 79.5% agreement, respondents expressed, their teaching was effective, they complete their duties on time (78.7%), and they dedicate lots of time to teaching plans (77.4%) and use various teaching methods according to students' needs (76.1%). It is worth noting that all the alternatives measuring the factor of job performance marked over 62% compliance, that shows that teachers' had high perceptions of their teaching level and that they consider their role in the learning process seriously and give their best to educate the students.

Analysis on the factor of interpersonal relations of teachers with colleagues and principals shows that with compliance up to 64.3% respondents reported a constructive relationship between teachers and principals.

Descriptive statistics were run on the Teachers motivation scale computed on the average of all the above mentioned factors, and revealed that, on average, teachers rated their level of motivation (SD = 0.5) as 3.43, which is average to high. The individual item means fell between 3.08 to 4.81.

In order to analyze if there is a difference on the motivation level by gender was used Level test (Table 1). With e value of significance .306, we concluded that gender differences concerning teachers' level of motivation were not statistically significant. The variances of these two groups (male and female teachers) are equal (this is also evidenced by the approximate values of standard deviation of each group).

Table1. Independent test										
		Leven test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Higher
Teachers - motivation	Equal variances assumed	1.050	.306	.814	311	.416	.06161	.07565	-.08724	.21046
	Equal variances not assumed			.886	147.501	.377	.06161	.06952	-.07577	.19899

The Chi Square Independence Test, conducted to measure whether there are differences in the level of motivation depending on the age group in which they were engaged, showed that motivation depends on the educational cycle in which these teachers teach (with the value of the Pearson coefficient is .020).

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	11.669 ^a	4	.020
Likelihood Ratio	12.299	4	.015
Linear-by-Linear Association	.547	1	.459
N of Valid Cases	319		

a. 405 cells (97.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

The comparison of the averages shows that the most motivated in their work are the lower cycle teachers (with M = 3.55) compared to the upper cycle teachers (2.43) which shows that with the increase of the educational cycle the level of motivation of teachers decreases. Teachers who teach in the lower classes are more motivated than teachers who teach in the upper cycle classes.

Descriptive statistics were run in order to examine the level of work consumption and how it is related with teachers' motivation. With a compliance of 75.8% teachers reported that being a good teachers was very important for them and they try to make their teaching as more interesting as possible (71.5%). Only 21.4% agree that they feel tired and without energy due to their work. These data once again confirm that teachers are satisfied and dedicated to their profession and would not change their profession if another work opportunity were given to them (28% agreement).

In order to analyze if there is a relationship between teachers' motivation and work consumption, was used a Pearson correlation (Table 2.), which with a significance value of .568 shows that the relationship between these two variables wasn't statistically significant.

Table 2.

Table 2. Relationship between motivation and professional consumption

	The degree of teachers' motivation	Teachers' Professional consumption

The degree of teachers' motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.032
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.568
	N	319	319
Teachers' Professional consumption	Pearson Correlation	.032	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.568	
	N	319	319

Table 3. Difference of consuming professional by gender

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Work Consumption	WOMAN	237	3.3015	.66476	.04318
	MAN	76	3.2456	.77470	.08886

Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means					
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference

								Lower	Upper	
Work Consumption	Equal variances assumed	.002	.960	.612	311	.541	.05591	.09134	.12380	.23563
	Equal variances not assumed			.566	112,603	.573	.05591	.09880	.13983	.25166

Concerning teachers' perspectives for change, teachers were required to provide assessment of the support that they have received from the local and central government. With an agreement up to 51.7% and 50%, respondents agree that they would have wanted more independence in their work and they would want the school to offer them more extracurricular activities, which tells that teachers would have wanted to have more freedom in building their curriculum and add more extracurricular activities in it. With a 43% compliance they reported that they would have been more productive and committed if their salaries were increased.

The lowest levels of agreement are reported on the alternatives related to the support of the local government (8.8%), and support of the institutions of the central government (Ministry of Education and Science) (11.3%). The teachers (43.5%) expressed a high willingness for trainings and workshops that would have improve their teaching performance.

Focus group data analyses

One of the objectives of this research relates to the possibility of confrontation between the perceptions on motivation between teachers and elementary school principals. The data revealed were in agreement with quantitative results. Principal's focus groups showed that the factors related to teachers' motivation were the constructive communication between teachers and the management, the working conditions and the salary level.

Discussion

The research results mainly confirm what existing literature has found. Previous research has indicated that significant relationships exist between teachers' work consumption, organizational engagement and teaching performance. One major contribution of this study is that it expands previous research on teacher motivation by providing a case study on public schools in North Macedonia, so in a specific

context. One of the interesting findings was that teacher in lower cycle are more motivated compared to teachers of the upper cycle classes.

We must address several limitations related to our study. The first limitation of the research concerns threats to external validity. The findings are based on a small nonrandom sample, thus we cannot generalize the results to the whole population. A larger sample would provide more reliable results and more statistically significant findings. Future research could make a comparative study of specific demographic factors. This can be important as teachers may have different expectations and factors that affect their motivation and expectations at work depending on their gender, age, nationality, region etc.

Conclusions

The following recommendations and conclusions are drawn from the findings of this study: In the context of demographic data, gender does not constitute a relevant factor into determining the level of motivation. Teachers claim they have great relations with the principals of their schools. This statement evaluates the cooperation climate between teachers and management in the Municipality of Chair.

The details of the study show that there is a correlation among the motivation to work and performance in teaching. If teachers' level of performance has decreased, the management must show care of fulfilling the internal and external needs of the teachers, because as internal or the external motivating factors influence directly the teachers' motivation. Investing in infrastructure and in the direction of the microenvironment should be school's task priority. Teachers are not satisfied with the relationship between job-reward.

Performance of teachers in teaching is connected with two categories of motivation, the pleasure that teachers feel about their work tasks and the success that they gain from being a teacher.

The details of the study show that the performance of teachers in the teaching depends also by the degree of work consumption.

Recommendations

Institutions/schools should take into account the work environment.

Principals should be attentive and to recognize the expectations of each of the employees.

Need to try to create bridges of continuous communication between them, to mediate and resolve conflicts in a constructive way. On one hand, teachers should be rewarded for their work performance. On the other hand, for those with low performance the institution should clearly identify the factors that have driven poor results.

The Ministry of Education and Science when drafting legislation in the field of teaching should have in mind the factors that have an impact on the teachers' level of motivation and performance.

Policy makers need to develop policy infrastructure that will be in accordance with contemporary teaching and educations.

Principals should be aware of teachers' level of commitment at work, work consumption and their intention to leave work, in order to prevent motivation decrease at work.

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