

AN INVESTIGATION INTO MOTIVATION OF TEACHERS IN THE COLOMBO DISTRICT GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN SRI LANKA

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INTRODUCTION

More than two million teachers are working in the government schools in Sri Lanka. They play a very significant and dynamic role in teaching-learning process in those schools. Motivation and satisfaction of teachers are very vital to play their role in school effectively, and teachers directly influence by facilitating more than four million students in the Sri Lankan government schools. In the Sri Lankan context, while an increasing body of literature about school education exists few studies have investigated teachers and principals perspectives on teacher motivation. Especially research on the motivation of teachers in the government schools in Sri Lanka has been scarce and fragmented. According to the definition for motivation given by (Eggert, 1999) teacher motivation can be define as: the process which encourages and guides behavior of teachers to reach mission and objectives of the schools. This study aims to bridge the gap in the research by investigating the motivation of teachers employed in the government schools in Sri Lanka. The main research question of this study was: What is the nature of teacher motivation in the Colombo district government schools in Sri Lanka? The rationale for the study comes from a need to understand, first, the key motivational factors involved, and second, what measures can be adopted by both teachers themselves and by the schools they work for to sustain and nurture teacher motivation, ultimately in order to facilitate positive outcomes for students.

METHODOLOGY

In order to answer the research questions, this study employed case study approach, and four schools in the Colombo district considered as four different cases in this study. Woodside (2010) argues that case study research includes collecting and interpreting stories individuals tell about their lives and social events that they know about. The case study research approach has being used by qualitative, interpretive and educational researchers for a long time in disciplines (Burns, 2000) because it has a number of advantages. This approach can be used to investigate actual contemporary life settings and life cycles of people, and it allows researchers to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events of people (Yin, 2009). Therefore case study approach was used to study this research problem as this study aimed to explore real life experiences of the principals and teachers about the motivation of teachers in schools. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected employing questionnaires and semi structured interviews. From four Colombo district schools, four principals and 40 teachers were selected using purposive sampling technique to gather information. Semi structured interviews and questionnaires were employed to collect data. All the teachers in the sample provided information through questionnaires which were given to them, and thirty five teachers returned questionnaires with their responses. Ten out of them were interviewed. Data was gathered from four principals

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conducting semi structured interviews. All the interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. Qualitative data gathered through semi structured interviews analyzed using a qualitative analytical approach. Data of one-to-one interviews was supplementary to questionnaires given to the teachers. The purposes of interviews were to clarify and explore preliminary finding from previous data provided by the teachers, and to find out what cannot be directly get through questionnaires. Data from the interviews also allowed limited data set triangulation. While qualitative data gathered in this study was analyzed using thematic analytical approach, quantitative data was analyzed with percentages to arrive at descriptive findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study give some insights into what factors are vital in affecting teachers' motivation and what measures are likely to sustain or nurture their motivation. 24 teacher respondents and 3 principal respondents *agreed* that (among them, 16 teacher respondents strongly *agreed*) intrinsic factors were more important than extrinsic factors in affecting teacher motivation. Personal achievement or challenge or growth, service to society and imparting knowledge were considered as intrinsic factors, and salary, workload, external recognition (social status), career prospects/training, job security, school management and policies, support/isolation, physical working condition, a positive or negative comparison with others (other jobs or professionals), autonomy (control of curriculum), relations with colleagues, relations with students regard by participants as extrinsic factors influenced for the teacher motivation in this study. Intrinsic aspects of work, including helping students to learn subject matters effectively, involvement in professional training and personal enjoyment were key factors. However extrinsic factors such as management policy and work autonomy also played significant roles.

It was found that 89% teacher respondents were dissatisfied with lack of work autonomy and job security. However the majority of teachers, 57% from the sample intended to stay at their present career or job would show a much brighter picture, if it could be assumed that those who planned to stay were motivated. The second approach to finding out degree of teacher motivation is by exploring respondents' intention of changing their profession or job if they have an opportunity to do so. Sixty nine percent from teacher's sample anticipated to continue their present occupation or job would show a much clear picture, if it could be assumed that those who planned to stay in the present job were motivated. It seems that the majority of the teachers intended to stay in their teaching profession or job which likely indicates a more satisfactory degree of teacher motivation

Regarding measures to sustain or nurture motivation, 86% teachers asked for more professional training and personal challenges in their work, less administrative work, more involvement in management policy and more respect from management. Number of 69% teacher respondents asked for work- related improvements related to training such as: more information about professional training; more professional development opportunities; more time given for training; availability of stress or management workshops; and provision of teacher refresher courses. Fringe benefits was rated the least important motivating factor. Work autonomy, which had a second highest unsatisfactory rate, 65%. teachers expected to reduction of extra or unnecessary work, adjustment of overloading programs, and improvement of communication with management respect, trust, regular and honest dialogues with established clear communication channels. More respondents, 75% teachers in the sample indicated that they wanted improvement in managerial policy. The named measures included: involvement in goal setting; involvement in academic decisions; appreciation of teachers' judgment.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations suggested for improving participants' feelings about teaching were mostly concerned with more professional training, or fair treatment in the areas of less workload, more

respect, and better communication and less restrictions in teaching. Majority of respondents expressed a desire for on-going professional training. Therefore teachers should be provided professional development opportunities such as workshops or training courses, and they must be encouraged and given support to pursue further qualifications related to teaching and learning. It is needed regular or scheduled communication and collaboration between management and teachers, and avenues for team work and collaboration between teachers. Encourage teachers to experiment and create within the confines of work and curriculum, with assistance from colleagues and management.

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