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## Factors Affecting Teachers Motivation and Professionalism: The Case of Public Primary Schools in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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### **Abstract:**

*This qualitative case study aimed to investigate factors that affect teachers' motivation and professionalism. Two public second cycle primary schools were selected in Addis Ababa. A structured and semi structured interview was conducted with teacher participants and also an open and closed ended questionnaire was administered. Field observation was also conducted for consecutive five weeks. From the data obtained the key factor for poor motivation of teachers was repellent salary. Teachers felt that the salary and incentives are very low. The study also revealed that the other reason, in addition to salary and benefits, for the low motivation of teachers was the low emphasis given by the society, student's misbehavior and the inability of the school management & administration to effectively address the teachers' demands for supportive and fair leadership.*

**Keywords:** Incentive, teacher motivation, success, quality education

### **1. Introduction**

A teacher is one of the valuable assets for quality education. Development of any country depends on its educational system that is the quality of its graduates, so teachers are the nation builders. The role of a teacher cannot be ignored in the process of development and success in one country. Teaching is a profession that has low emphasis but teachers have a great role in their students' intellectual, personal and social development, there by influencing the whole nation's development. Teachers can have an influence more profound than others and give the glorious position and dignified status to the nation (Imrab S. et al., 2013). Teaching is about passion, love of education and learning, inspiration, concern, consideration of the other, dedication to trusting students, belief in the power of knowledge and a non-stop attempt to make a difference to the lives of others (Troudi, 2011).

According to Kayuni & Tambulasi (2007) lack of motivation and commitment of teachers can have a negative impact on the student's learning and most importantly it put the future of children on the stake. Thus, teacher's contribution in the human capital development and technological advancement greatly depends on their motivation and willingness for taking initiatives. Generally, competence and commitment of teachers should be the most important determinant of learning outcomes.

Dornyei and Otto (1998) defines motivation as the dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes where by initial wishes and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalized and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out. According to this definition, motivation is dynamic and can change a person's level of interest and involvement in a task. A motivated teacher is recognized by high level of commitment, hard work, devotion, dedication and becomes a source of inspiration through his or her exemplary character because a teacher is always expected to be a role model for students (Imrab, et al., 2013). Motivation is the desire or drive within a person to achieve some goal and also it is an internal condition based on a person's perceptions and needs (Muhammad et al., 2012). To motivate teachers is one of the most important management tasks expected from school principals. It comprises the abilities to understand what initiates people to communicate, to involve, to encourage, setting an example, to develop and coach, to obtain feedback and to provide a just reward (Cook, 1991). Motivation is about cultivating your human capital.

According to the report of Centre for British Teachers in 2008, it was found that the education system in Ethiopia, at all levels is confronted by a lack of quality. Policy makers themselves and other stakeholders also portray the lack of quality in the education system. This is confirmed by the state itself on the debate with political parties (EBC, 2015). Thus, a reform is needed to improve the efficiency and quality of education system of Ethiopia. The lack of quality in the education system in Ethiopia is associated with many factors including the poor standard of those entering the teaching profession, high teacher turnover and problems such as demotivation, poor quality of the teachers' working environment, low status of teachers, inadequate salaries (Centre for British Teachers, 2008: Voluntary Services Overseas, 2010: Workneh & Tassew, 2013: Gedefaw, 2012).

Of these factors motivation plays a great role in the education system, because it is when a teacher has high motivation and commitment that the required change and quality education be ensured. Imrab, et al (2013) strengthen this argument by noting a profound influence of teachers than any other body in the education system. Similarly, Kayuni & Tambulasi (2007) and Troudi (2011) confirmed the negative effect of low motivation of teachers on students learning. However, to alleviate the problem, there is a need to

investigate and understand its root causes to help policy makers take plausible interventions. This study, therefore was directed towards identifying factors that motivate and de-motivate teachers' and to obtain teachers' views on what improvements could be made to motivate them by gathering in-depth data from teacher participants.

According to (Cook, 1991) the indicators of low motivation are: carelessness in preparation, poor classroom management, lack of punctuality and failure to obey school policy, low commitment to use their maximum effort for the betterment of students learning. As it is discussed above, it is argued that education in Ethiopia is on crisis (decline of quality over time). Therefore, this study might contribute some information about the causes of de-motivation and possible implications for practice.

Teacher motivation plays an important role in the promotion of teaching and learning excellence. Motivated teachers are more likely to motivate students to learn in the classroom, to ensure the implementation of educational reforms and feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment Teresa (2012). Education reforms focus on improving teacher competence, the learning and working environments and greater decentralization, all of which can improve teacher motivation. But, many reform programs also try to increase the workload of teachers and ignore or pay insufficient attention and other conditions of service (Paul, 2004). He also put that regardless of development status, the teaching force in most countries has never enjoyed full professional status. According to him, the status of teachers as a semi-profession is more evident in developing countries including Ethiopia.

There are two basic types of motivation which an individual (the teacher in this case) experiences. These are intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to motivation that is driven by an interest or enjoyment in the teaching profession itself. All this factors exists within the individual rather than external pressures. It is based on taking pleasure in an activity rather than working towards an external reward. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand is a drive to perform an activity in order to attain an outcome, which then contradicts intrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motivation comes from outside of the individual. Common extrinsic motivations are rewards like money and promotion, working conditions, pressure, threat of punishment, relationships with others (Hayford & Ahmed 2013).

The teaching profession is one of the undermined professions in Ethiopia (Voluntary Services Overseas, 2010; Gedefaw, 2012). Because of this the education system in Ethiopia is challenged with high turnover (Workneh & Tassew, 2013). Many teachers have been leaving the job to seek employment elsewhere which they think hold promises of better pay and fame for them. Most of the remaining teachers in the profession might experience lower level of commitment with regard to teaching, thus affecting the standard of performance of students.

In Zimbabwe, Gullatt & Bennet (1995) found that the need for motivated teachers is reaching crisis and asserts that a motivated and dedicated teacher need to be considered as a foundation for the effectiveness of a school in facing the various challenges and problems posed to it. It is therefore important to investigate the factors affecting teacher motivation in order to revert the situation. Teachers' poor motivation was reflected in their deteriorating standards of professional conduct including poor professional performance and commitment, absenteeism, lateness and general misbehavior Gullatt and Bennet (1995). Though there are many factors that are assumed to cause poor teacher motivation, the factors vary from place to place and from time to time. Thus understanding the situation in a particular place (county) for a particular school community is important. Teachers' poor motivation and intention to quit are the main norm of school teachers in Ethiopia. This study therefore aimed at identifying factors that de-motivate teachers and provide possible implication for practice from teachers' perspectives.

## 2. Research Questions

The research questions addressed in this study were:

1. What are the factors that affect teacher motivation at primary schools in Addis Ababa town?
2. To what extent is poor teacher motivation prevalent at primary schools in Addis Ababa town?
3. How should poor teacher motivation be improved at primary schools in Addis Ababa town?

This study provides rich insight into why some teachers remain unmotivated about their work; because, its intension is to come up with practical implication for the improvement of motivational level of teachers. It might provide information about factors which de-motivate teachers and this would in turn enable concerned bodies to try to provide motivating factors. The results achieved thereof, help the government, ministry of education, researchers, parents, school administrators to have an insight into the factors that motivate teachers to high performance and determination of which areas of dissatisfaction need to be addressed to retain teachers.

## 3. Methodology

Since this research requires a fresh and rich description of teachers' motivation and professionalism as it is concretely lived, a phenomenological study design was used to achieve my goal. Louis, Lawrence & Keith (2007), confirmed that this methodology allows the researcher to understand human and social behavior from the insider's perspective and thus gain firsthand information about the perception of the participant. Unstructured interview and non-participatory observation was used as a primary source of data for this research. The goal of my observation is to understand the culture, setting, or social phenomenon of teachers in line with the purpose of the study. Non-participant observation involves observing participants without actively participating. This option is used to understand a phenomenon by entering the community or social system involved, while staying separate from the activities being observed (Flick, 2006). I use this type of observation because of natural phenomena in which I cannot place myself as a second cycle primary school teacher. It also allows the researcher to be open to discovering inductively how the participants understand the setting (Patton, 1980).

Interviews on the other hand are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences and pursue in-depth information around the topic being studied and the researcher has the opportunity to examine or ask follow up questions (Berg, 2001).

In this research, teacher participants will be asked unstructured questions such as: What factors do you think affect your motivation to teach or being a teacher? Or if the situation is left unaddressed, what do you think will happen? Often, with only an occasional question from me for clarification, teacher participants described a wide variety of topics throughout an extended interview. Thus, this technique helped me to understand why teachers are de-motivated and lack professionalism.

Convenience sampling was used to select teacher participants. This is to mean that available teachers those who were close at hand and were willing to participate were interviewed. I continued to select teacher participants according to the findings that emerge in the progress of the study and I considered and examined extreme views or contrasting views. I persist doing this until saturation has been achieved or redundancies occur. This notion is called theoretical sampling (Brink, 1993). Accordingly, 15 teachers were interviewed. Two school principals were also interviewed to examine contrasting ideas from teacher participants. To have initial concept for deep investigation during interview, a questionnaire containing open ended and closed ended question were administered for 32 teachers including those participated in the interview (see appendix A).

#### **4. Data Analysis**

Interview data that are audio-recorded was transcribed and checked by participants themselves and by outsider (colleague). After the interview data have been transcribed then the data was categorized in various ways. Coding is the process of creating categories and assigning them to selected data (Yvonne & Dorothy, 2002). Closed ended questions in the questionnaire were reported by tables and percentages, while open ended questions were thematically narrated by combining with the data obtained from the interview.

##### *4.1. Ethical Issues*

In any research, the researcher needs to consider the ethical and political issues in asking a particular research question (Yvonne & Dorothy, 2002). Therefore, in this research project I considered informed consent and confidentiality as an ethical issue to protect my participants' identity. All participants in this study were briefed on the aims of the study and gave their consent. Participants were also informed that there is no harm, whether they agree to participate in the research or not. They were also informed that they are free to withdraw from the research at any time. Each participant who agrees to be interviewed was asked to read and sign an informed consent form and assured their complete anonymity. Moreover, Tape recording during the interview was made only when the participant agrees to be recorded.

##### *4.2. Trustworthiness and Dependability*

According to Guba & Lincoln (1985), the basic question addressed in qualitative research is "How can an inquirer persuade his/her audiences that the research findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to?" Trustworthiness is defined as the conceptual soundness of the research results and is influenced by the notions of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Ibid). Naturally, the very presence of the researcher affects the validity of the data provided by participants. Because, when a new member is introduced into the community being studied, reactive effects can occur (Brink, 1993). Participants may also behave abnormally and distort some information. So to tackle this issue, I tried to stay with my participants' for an extended period of time and create a sense of trust. Moreover, I conducted repeated interviews at different times and in different settings and take detailed field note to examine the variations in responses over the course of time and then I compared results.

To allow my audiences, assess the extent to which proper research practices have been followed and pose their own generalization to their particular context, I thoroughly described the procedures from the beginning to the end, which ensures dependability. Credibility on the other hand is about the congruency of the findings with reality and so ensuring credibility is one of the most important factors in establishing trustworthiness. To ensure this I used different data collection methods such as observation and individual interviews as well as open and closed ended questionnaire.

##### *4.3. Findings and Discussions*

The thematic data analyses generated four themes regarding teacher motivation and professionalism. These themes included: issues related to salary and benefits, administration, students' behavior and respect, societal view of the teaching profession.

##### *4.4. Salary and Benefit*

Of all the issues facing second cycle primary school teachers in Addis Ababa, inadequate pay is the highest in their minds and some of my respondents feel nervous when talking about their salary. One respondent claimed that "I hate the profession since it does not change my life, regardless of its importance we are living under poverty so how can we teach?..." The salary paid to teachers is not large enough to support their family. This issue is found to be the most de-motivating factor. Currently, teachers report that there are allowances paid for housing and public travel (for free), and they claimed the absence of facilities for loans or grants or medical insurance. One of the interviewee states that "the house allowance we receive does not cover the house rent we require, and we are unable to meet the current market situation" The following table shows views of teachers about their profession and salary:

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Do you think that you are satisfied with teaching profession?	67.7	32.3	100
If you are free to choose, would you prefer to continue in your profession?	84.3	15.7	100
Do you think that you receive less salary as compared to the work you do?	0	100	100
Is your salary sufficient to meet the financial needs of your family?	0	100	100

Table 1: Teachers view about their profession and salary

As shown in the above table all respondents are not satisfied with their salary and so they claim for the improvement. Similarly, there is a high quit intension, revealing that the current status of the profession is on crisis. One of my respondents put his reason for leaving the profession if he is free to do so, "...everybody knows the reason even you know it very well, but mine is for the sake of survival". And the other says "the only thing that de- motivate me is the low amount of salary this forced me to leave the profession". The respondents also recognized that there are few opportunities for them to have additional income. About 75% of the respondents say that there is no additional income they earn. The rest of the respondents 25% however said that they get additional income other than their normal career by giving tutor. The result of the finding clearly shows that majority of them doesn't have any source of additional income other than their regular income (their salary).

#### 4.5. School Administration

Teacher participants also raised the issue of a lack of good governance in their school. This is related in particular access to training and workshops and that there was little transparency about how these choices were made. Of the respondents 65.6% report that the school has limitations in communicating policies and procedures of selection to different training and workshops. This is also another de-motivating factor for teachers, because how teachers are managed and supported is of fundamental importance to teacher motivation. One of my participants stated as follows to mention the poor administration in the school system "...The school administration not focused on and accountable for what matters to the primary stakeholders, their focus is simply to meet the political needs of the ruling party and also they are appointed to do so by the top down process". The following table shows teachers view on the administrative support and reward system:

Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)	Total (%)
Is there any reward given for academic staff for those showing good performance?	50	50	100
Do you think that your school administrators appreciate your participation in decision making?	34.8	65.2	100
Do you feel that your administration is best in communicating its policies and procedures?	34.4	65.6	100
Do you feel there are tight rules and regulations in your school which demotivate teachers?	71.8	28.2	100

Table 2: Teachers view on the administrative support and reward Statement

#### 4.6. Students' Misbehavior

Respondents mention students' misbehavior as part of their de-motivation. One of the respondent states that "...what is disgusting about my profession other than salary is: high work load and students' misbehavior". Student misbehaviors such as disruptive talking in the classroom, avoidance of academic work, disrespect of teachers and rudeness were observed and reported by teacher participants. Besides de-motivating teachers, students' misbehaviors in schools can clearly affect the smoothness and effectiveness of the learning process. This is a point of departure for teacher respondents to agree with the decline of students' achievement. The other respondent stated as follows to mention the decline in achievement of students over time. "...almost all students' are low achievers and have low interest to learn".

#### 4.7. Societal View of the Profession

Respondents mention the low emphasis given by the society, as another aspect of teachers de-motivation. One of the respondent states that, "in the eyes of the society the profession is underrated." Another respondent mentions the following to highlight the low emphasis given by the society "around 20 years ago teachers were respected by the society and the government. People were proud to give their daughters to teachers as a wife. They sung by saying ሙሽሪት ኩሪ ኩሪ ወሰደሽ አስተማሪ claiming that she is lucky to marry a teacher. But now this thing is reverted negatively ባጣ ባጣ አስተማሪ አላጣ" claiming that a teacher is the lowest option to be married by Ethiopian ladies.

#### 4.8. The Extent of Poor Teacher Motivation

As it is discussed above, the most de-motivating factor was the issues related to salary and the other factors were secondary for teacher respondents of the study area. Teacher respondents believe that their role is important and they highlight the opportunity they get for their personal development in the teaching profession. However, teachers' does not have any motivation to join the profession; they joined because of lack of opportunity for other professions. This shows that when they join the profession, these teachers have low

motivation because of the low emphasis given to the profession and the low salary. Of the respondents of this study, 93.7% percent of the respondents claimed that they joined the profession without their choice. The remaining 6.3% reported that it is their first choice. The positive thing that teachers have is that they believe that being a teacher is being a base for all professions. One respondent for instance claimed that “a teacher produces human power not an object and producing skilled man power is the best ever satisfying thing” The respondents mentioned that teaching is the main source to every other profession and they can be happy and satisfied by seeing their students’ success. One of the respondents feels as follows: “I feel happy in building future generation and what is more satisfying is when I see my students achievements in their work places”. “When I teach my students I upgrade myself with a lot of knowledge and that makes me happy and satisfied” the other respondent replied. It is also found that they have high commitment to teach and contribute to their country and the society, provided that the question for survival is assured. Regardless of these views, all of them (100%) reported that they want to shift to other profession. The foremost reason to do so was found to be salary issue. All respondents report that they joined the profession because of their relatively low result they have as compared to their peers and hence they have no other option. One of the respondent claimed that “...the only job I get at that time was teaching and so I joined since I have no choice”. This shows that less competitive students are joining the teaching profession.

#### 4.9. Motivating Factors

From teachers point of view, strategic measures to be taken to enhance both job satisfaction and motivation was found to be the improvement of salary and the provision of good governance. Additionally, respondents mention the provision of allowances, life insurances and housing. Teacher respondents agree that poor motivation affects their efficiency and thereby, badly affect their students’ performance or learning outcome. For instance, one of the respondents says “almost all students’ are low achievers and have low interest to learn .To resolve all this problems and impose quality into the education system there should be a political will and commitment to address the problem”.

Maslow (1943, cited in Saul, 2007) stated that people are motivated to achieve certain needs. When one need is fulfilled a person seeks to fulfill the next one, and so on. The most widespread version of Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes five motivational needs, often depicted as hierarchical levels. These are physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, esteem needs and self actualization. However, the above Maslow's five stage model currently has been expanded to include cognitive need, aesthetic needs and transcendence needs (Saul, 2007). Cognitive needs include knowledge, meaning, etc. Aesthetic needs include appreciation and search for beauty, balance, form, etc. Transcendence needs include helping others to achieve self-actualization.



Figure 1: Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs adopted from Saul (2007)

Physiological needs consists of the need for basic biological needs which includes the need for food, water, air and other primary needs such as shelter, clothing, etc. When the physiological needs are not satisfied, no other need will serve as a basis for motivation. Once they are satisfied, then newer needs emerge. Considering this as a baseline when we see primary school teachers particularly in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), it is evident that teachers are striving to fulfill their physiological needs. Their salary ranges from 58.6\$ to 111.55\$ (My wage, 2015). Teacher participants call for the improvement of this salary. The current house rent in Addis Ababa ranges from 50\$ to 100\$ according to the distance from the center and the quality of the house. Teachers are suffering of these problems. They are unable to fulfill their basic needs.

From Abraham Maslow's perspective, their motivation lies at the bottom of the hierarchy. In this stage peoples are motivated to fulfill the physiological needs such as food, water, air and other primary needs such as shelter, clothing, etc. As a teacher they need to prepare themselves for teaching and assisting students in a different ways, but their mind is busy and depressed of the way they are living. Thus they don't give appropriate emphasis for their students in the school. This leads students to become dependent and less competitive which in turn mean gradual decline of the education system in general. I believe that teacher would have a good motivation to work if they reach the safety needs. Because it is at this stage that they feel they are living and the need for serving the society arise.

### 5. Limitations of the Study

This study is not without limitations. The results of this study should be understood with the following limitations in mind: As teachers (the participants) know that they were being observed, they might not exhibit as usual. However, as the data collection stretched over a substantial period of time and I attempted to create sense of trust, (so that) the problem might be reduced to some extent.

The study was conducted in two schools found in Addis Ababa town; consequently, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all second cycle primary school teachers in the other parts of Ethiopia. Such generalization is left for the audiences.

### 6. Conclusions and Implication

Salaries of teacher are found to be the most de-motivating factors. There is a mismatch between the salary and living cost, and that teachers were unable to cover all their basic needs up to the end of every month. Salary and benefits are extrinsic factors associated with the environment. The fulfillment of these factors is a requirement for the intrinsic aspects of the work factors to prevail (Gedefaw, 2012). This study showed that the absence of satisfactory salary and benefits were the main factors found to de-motivate teachers. Therefore, teachers were dissatisfied with the extrinsic aspects of their work. They also showed dissatisfaction with the absence of good governance. The school administration was found to be weak in effectively addressing the teachers' demands for supportive and fair leadership. The teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the administrative support practices prevailing in the schools, which relates to the fairness, transparency and student disciplinary problems.

Teachers' respondents found the intrinsic tasks associated with teaching a satisfying aspect of their work. Teachers were happy with the responsibilities associated with teaching (production of human capital). The teachers' greatest satisfaction was related to the emotional rewards of teaching; such as the opportunity to use their skills at school, their view that their teaching developed the human beings and their contribution to the development of their country.

The findings of this study have the potential to add value to educators as well as those who are interested in furthering the research in a more detailed way. The detailed findings from this study might provide current information to policy makers and practitioners on which areas to target to improve the teachers' satisfaction, and thus their motivation. Based on the aforementioned discussion and conclusion, the following implications were forwarded for implication:

Allocating sufficient budget for upgrading school materials like water, classroom structure, and restroom might help teachers at least to feel comfortable in the school compound. Producing good governance, including the appointment of school principals might also help to improve teachers' motivation level. Generally, the following points were found important from the data obtained:

- Since teachers were highly dissatisfied with their salaries, the government of Ethiopia and education leaders needs to understand the issue and work for its improvement. This will improve motivation of teachers' and effectiveness, and in the end it might contribute for the overall quality in the education system.
- Teachers association needs to work hard to create commitment of teachers to the profession by dealing with stakeholders and government to raise teacher salaries.
- There is a need to provide housing and free health facilities for teachers to meet their basic needs in such a way that they feel they are favored for being in the profession.
- The school principals, need to take time with teachers to listen to their thoughts, aspirations and complaints and take a positive measure.
- Provide merit-based scholarships so teachers can upgrade their credentials and make the selection fair and clear.
- Create a well-furnished staff room for teachers to hold staff meetings, work together, and socialize.
- This study provides information about the factors that de-motivate teachers in Addis Ababa second cycle primary schools. Using the same methodology it is recommended that this study be repeated in other parts of the country.
- This study focused on second cycle primary school teachers. Similar studies could be done with first cycle primary school teachers and secondary school teachers in Ethiopia.

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