

MOTIVATION: THE LEAD-WAY TO TEACHERS' SUCCESS IN THE CLASSROOM

By:

Josephine Abuya. Ph.D

Language Department

Government Secondary School Karshi, Abuja.

Email: abuyajossy@gmail.com

&

Ochigbo, Esther Ehi

Planning, Research and Statistics Department, NCCE-Abuja

Email: estherochigbo24@gmail.com

Abstract

This article explores the critical role of teachers' motivation in fostering a positive and productive learning environment. It discusses motivation theories and various factors that affect and influence teacher motivation, including personal beliefs, school culture, leadership support, professional development, and student engagement. The article also outlines strategies for enhancing teacher motivation, such as creating a supportive school culture, providing effective leadership, investing in professional development, fostering a positive learning environment, and recognizing teacher accomplishments. By understanding and addressing the factors that affect and influence teacher motivation, schools can create a more engaging and effective learning experience for both teachers and students.

Keywords: Teacher motivation, school culture, professional development, and motivational theories.

Introduction

Teacher motivation is an essential factor in facilitating a positive and effective learning environment. Motivated teachers are more likely to exhibit willingness, creativity, and a commitment to their students' success. This article explores the various factors that affect and influence teachers' motivation and discusses strategies for enhancing it.

Understanding Teachers Motivation

Motivation can be conceptualized as the drive that makes people act or not act in a particular way. It is a general term applying to the entire class of drives, desires, wishes, needs, and other like forces. Anything done to touch on these forces causes a behaviour, which is interpreted as the motivation behind that behaviour.

Many people tend to confuse motivation with job satisfaction. Motivation is the drive and effort to satisfy a need, while job satisfaction is the contentment experienced when a need has been met.

Motivation indicates a drive towards an outcome, and Satisfaction is the outcome itself which is already experienced (Koontz and Weihrich, 1994).

Key aspects of motivation include:

- Goal-directed behavior: Motivation drives us towards specific goals or objectives.
- Internal and external factors: Both intrinsic (internal) and extrinsic (external) factors can motivate us.
- Intensity and persistence: Motivation can vary in intensity and duration.
- Individual differences: People's motivations can vary significantly.

Common types of motivation:

1. Intrinsic motivation: Comes from within, such as personal satisfaction or enjoyment.
2. Extrinsic motivation: Comes from external factors, like rewards, recognition, or avoidance of punishment.

Despite the complexity of motivation, there's a consensus on its two key dimensions: direction and magnitude (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This means motivation determines not only why people choose to do something but also how long they persist and how much effort they invest.

In the context of teaching, motivation can be seen as a combination of intrinsic interest, external factors, and long-term commitment. Sinclair (2008) emphasizes the importance of attraction, retention, and engagement. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) extend this to include both the motivation to teach and the motivation to remain in the profession.

Based on these definitions, **teacher motivation** can be understood as the underlying reasons for choosing and sustaining a teaching career, coupled with the level of effort and dedication invested in the profession. This is influenced by both intrinsic factors and external circumstances. **Teacher motivation** refers to the internal drive that propels teachers to engage in their profession with passion, dedication, and a sense of purpose. It encompasses a range of factors, including intrinsic motivation (driven by personal interest and satisfaction) and extrinsic motivation (driven by external rewards and recognition).

Darling-Hammond, L. (2006) asserts that teacher motivation is crucial for effective teaching and student learning. In her work, she emphasizes the importance of providing teachers with **support, professional development, and recognition** to foster their motivation and commitment.

Darling-Hammond argues that teachers are more likely to be motivated when they feel:

- Empowered: Given autonomy and decision-making authority in their classrooms.
- Supported: Provided with adequate resources, mentoring, and administrative support.
- Recognized: Appreciated for their contributions and efforts.
- Connected: Part of a supportive and collaborative school community.

She also highlights the significance of **professional development** in enhancing teacher motivation. By providing opportunities for ongoing learning and growth, schools can help teachers stay up-to-date with best practices, develop new skills, and feel more engaged in their work.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000) assert that teacher education should focus on fostering intrinsic motivation in teachers. They argue that teachers who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to be effective, passionate, and committed to their profession.

According to their research, intrinsic motivation is driven by internal factors such as interest, enjoyment, and a sense of personal satisfaction. They suggest that teacher education programs should emphasize:

- **Autonomy support:** Providing teachers with opportunities to make choices and decisions about their work.
- **Relatedness:** Fostering a sense of belonging and connection among teachers and students.
- **Competence:** Helping teachers develop a sense of mastery and confidence in their abilities.

By focusing on these three factors, teacher education programs can help to cultivate a more motivated and effective teaching workforce.

Based on the assertions by Darling-Hammond (2006) and Ryan & Deci (2000), it is safe to conclude that teacher motivation is crucial for effective teaching and student learning.

Darling-Hammond emphasizes the importance of providing teachers with support, professional development, and recognition to foster their motivation, while Ryan & Deci argue that teacher education should focus on fostering intrinsic motivation through autonomy support, relatedness, and competence.

Both studies suggest that motivated teachers are more likely to be effective, engaged, and committed to their profession. By creating a supportive and empowering environment that fosters intrinsic motivation, schools can enhance teacher effectiveness and improve student outcomes.

Theories of Teacher Motivation

Teacher motivation, a complex interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors, significantly impacts their effectiveness in the classroom. Various theories offer insights into understanding what drives teachers to excel in their profession. Here are some prominent theories:

Intrinsic Motivation Theories

- **Self-Determination Theory** by Richard Ryan, Ph.D., and Edward Deci, Ph.D. They assert that humans have innate psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. When these needs are met in the workplace, intrinsic motivation increases. Teachers who feel they have control over their work, are competent in their roles, and have positive relationships with colleagues and students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated.
- **Goal-Setting Theory:** This theory was developed by Edwin A. Locke in 1968. He suggests that individuals are motivated to achieve goals that are specific, challenging, and achievable. Teachers who set clear, ambitious, and attainable goals are more likely to be motivated to put in the effort required to reach them.

Extrinsic Motivation Theories

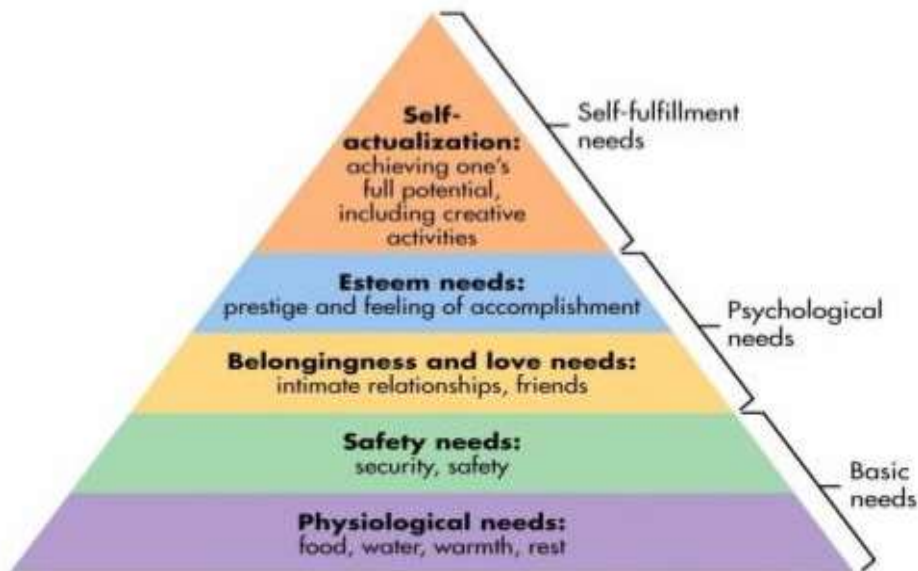
- **Expectancy Theory:** Victor Harold Vroom created the Expectancy Theory of Motivation in 1964. His studies in psychology made known how people behave in the workplace when

it comes to motivation, leadership, and decision-making. He proposes that individuals are motivated to perform a task if they believe their effort will lead to performance, performance will lead to rewards, and the rewards are valuable to them. Teachers who believe their hard work will result in positive outcomes and that these outcomes are meaningful to them are more likely to be extrinsically motivated.

- **Equity Theory:** This theory was introduced by John Stacey Adams in 1965. This theory suggests that individuals evaluate their inputs (effort, time, skills) and outputs (rewards, recognition) relative to others. When individuals perceive inequity, they may become demotivated. Teachers who feel their compensation, workload, and recognition are fair compared to their colleagues are more likely to be motivated.

Other Theories

- **Attribution Theory:** In 1958, Fritz Heider developed attribution theory. He examined how individuals explain their successes and failures. Teachers who attribute their successes to internal factors (e.g., effort, ability) are more likely to be motivated than those who attribute them to external factors (e.g., luck, difficulty of the task).
- **Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** Suggests that individuals have a hierarchy of needs that must be met to achieve self-actualization. Teachers who have their basic needs met (e.g., safety, belonging) are more likely to be motivated to pursue higher-order needs (e.g., esteem, self-actualization).



Maslow believes that human beings' needs start from the physiological needs and end with the apex – self-actualization needs. Locke (1976) describes need as the physical and psychological requirements that must be met to ensure survival and wellbeing.

Factors Affecting Teacher Motivation

The Nigerian education system, like many others, faces challenges in motivating teachers. Several factors contribute to this issue, including:

1. Low Remuneration:

Low remuneration in schools significantly impacts teachers' motivation. Teachers often face financial hardship due to inadequate salaries and irregular payments, leading to decreased job satisfaction and increased stress. This can result in absenteeism, reduced commitment, and a higher turnover rate, particularly among talented teachers. The lack of financial resources also limits teachers' opportunities for professional development, further hindering their motivation and potentially affecting the quality of education. Addressing these issues through increased salaries, improved working conditions, and adequate professional development support is crucial for improving the overall quality of education in Nigeria.

2. Poor Working Conditions:

Poor working conditions in schools significantly impact teachers' motivation. Overcrowded classrooms, inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and excessive workload can create a stressful and uninspiring environment. Teachers may feel overwhelmed and undervalued, leading to decreased job satisfaction and a decline in their commitment to the profession. Additionally, poor working conditions can contribute to health issues and a lack of work-life balance, further affecting teachers' motivation and well-being. To improve teacher motivation, it is essential to address these issues by providing adequate resources, reducing class sizes, improving infrastructure, and offering support services to help teachers manage their workload and maintain a healthy work-life balance.

3. Limited Professional Development Opportunities:

Limited professional development opportunities in schools negatively impact teachers' motivation. When teachers are unable to access training, workshops, or conferences to enhance their skills and knowledge, they may feel stagnant in their careers. This can lead to a sense of dissatisfaction, decreased job satisfaction, and a decline in their commitment to the profession. Additionally, limited professional development opportunities can hinder teachers' ability to adapt to new teaching methods and curriculum changes, further reducing their motivation and effectiveness in the classroom. To improve teacher motivation, it is essential to provide adequate professional development opportunities that are accessible, relevant, and support teachers in their ongoing growth and development.

4. Lack of Recognition and Appreciation:

Lack of recognition and appreciation significantly affects teachers' motivation. When teachers' efforts and contributions are not acknowledged or valued, they may feel undervalued and unappreciated. This can lead to decreased job satisfaction, a decline in motivation, and a loss of commitment to the profession. Additionally, a lack of recognition can create a negative work environment and contribute to teacher burnout. To improve teacher motivation, it is essential to recognize and appreciate their hard work, provide positive feedback, and celebrate their achievements. This can be done through various means, such as public recognition, awards, or simply expressing gratitude for their contributions.

5. Social and Economic Factors:

Social factors can significantly impact teachers' motivation in schools. Teachers may face societal challenges such as discrimination, stigmatization, and limited social mobility, which can negatively affect their self-esteem and motivation. Additionally, unrealistic expectations from the community, safety concerns, and inadequate infrastructure can create a challenging and unsupportive work environment.

Economic factors also play a significant role in teacher motivation. Poverty, inflation, and economic uncertainty can create financial stress for teachers, leading to decreased job satisfaction and a decline in motivation. Moreover, the lack of opportunities for career advancement and limited access to resources can further contribute to a sense of dissatisfaction and disengagement.

6. School Leadership and Management:

School leadership and management play a crucial role in influencing teachers' motivation in schools. Effective leadership can create a positive and supportive school culture that fosters professional growth, collaboration, and a sense of belonging. By providing clear expectations, adequate resources, and opportunities for professional development, school leaders can empower teachers and enhance their motivation.

Conversely, ineffective leadership can create a negative and demotivating environment. Poor communication, lack of support, and unfair treatment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress, and a decline in teacher motivation. Therefore, school leaders need to adopt effective leadership practices that promote a positive and supportive school culture, thereby enhancing teachers' motivation and improving the overall quality of education.

Addressing these factors is crucial for improving teacher motivation and, consequently, the quality of education in Nigerian schools.

Factors Influencing Teacher Motivation: Several factors can influence teacher motivation, including;

1. Personal Beliefs and Values:

A teacher's personal beliefs and values can significantly influence their motivation in the classroom. These beliefs and values shape their perspectives on teaching, students, and education as a whole. When a teacher's personal beliefs align with the goals and values of education, they are more likely to feel a strong sense of purpose in their work. This can lead to increased motivation and job satisfaction. Teachers who find their work personally meaningful are more likely to be intrinsically motivated, meaning they are driven by internal rewards rather than external factors. Additionally, a teacher's beliefs can impact their interactions with students and their overall teaching approach. Teachers who believe in the potential of all students are more likely to set high expectations for them. This can lead to increased student engagement and achievement, which in turn can motivate the teacher. A teacher's belief in the importance of positive relationships with students can influence their interactions and create a supportive learning environment. This can contribute to their own motivation and job satisfaction. Furthermore, teachers who believe in a growth mindset, the idea that intelligence can be developed, are more likely to be resilient in the face of challenges. This resilience can help them maintain motivation, even when faced with setbacks.

2. School Culture and Climate:

School culture and climate play a crucial role in shaping teachers' motivation. A positive and supportive school culture can foster strong relationships between teachers, administrators, and students, creating a sense of belonging and rapport. Open communication channels and a focus on professional development can help teachers feel valued and invested in their careers. Recognizing and rewarding teachers for their contributions can boost morale and motivation. Strong and effective leadership can provide a clear sense of direction and purpose, while adequate resources and workload management can help teachers feel empowered and avoid burnout.

Conversely, a negative or toxic school culture can diminish teacher motivation. A lack of support, poor communication, and a negative work environment can lead to decreased job satisfaction, increased stress, and a decline in teacher motivation. Therefore, schools need to create a positive and supportive culture that fosters teacher motivation and promotes a high-quality learning environment for students.

3. Leadership and Support:

Effective leadership and administrative support can play a crucial role in motivating teachers by providing guidance, resources, and recognition. When teachers feel supported and valued, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work. School leaders can create a positive and supportive environment by providing clear expectations, adequate resources, and opportunities for

professional development. Additionally, recognizing and rewarding teachers for their contributions can boost morale and motivation.

Effective leadership also plays a pivotal role in fostering a conducive learning environment and motivating student participation in Nigerian secondary schools. By creating a positive school culture, promoting student engagement, effective classroom management, providing adequate resources, fostering a growth mindset, and collaborating with parents and communities, school leaders can create a motivating and supportive environment that encourages student participation and fosters academic success.

4. Professional Development:

Opportunities for professional growth and development can enhance teacher motivation by helping them stay up-to-date with best practices and expand their knowledge and skills. When teachers feel that they are continually learning and growing, they are more likely to be motivated and engaged in their work. Professional development can also help teachers set and achieve personal and professional goals. This sense of accomplishment and progress can be highly motivating.

Additionally, professional development can contribute to teachers' career advancement, leading to increased job satisfaction and motivation. When teachers feel that their work is valued and recognized, they are more likely to be motivated and committed to their profession. Furthermore, professional development often involves networking with other educators. This can provide a sense of community, support, and shared experiences, which can be motivating factors. It is important to note that tailored professional development programs can address individual teachers' needs and interests, increasing their engagement and motivation.

In essence, professional development can empower teachers, boost their confidence, and provide them with the tools and resources they need to succeed. By investing in professional development, schools can create a more motivated and engaged teaching workforce.

5. Student Engagement and Achievement:

Witnessing student engagement and academic success can be a powerful motivator for teachers. When students are actively involved in the learning process and demonstrate progress, it can provide teachers with a strong sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. This positive reinforcement can boost their morale and motivation, reinforcing their belief in their abilities and the effectiveness of their teaching methods.

Furthermore, student engagement and achievements can contribute to teachers' intrinsic motivation. Teachers often derive satisfaction from witnessing their students' growth and development. When students are engaged and achieving, it can reinforce teachers' sense of purpose and meaning in their work. Additionally, engaged students are less likely to disrupt the classroom or cause behavioral problems, which can contribute to teacher burnout. A positive and supportive learning environment created by motivated and focused students can enhance teacher motivation and create a more rewarding teaching experience.

Strategies for Enhancing Teachers' Motivation

To foster teacher motivation, schools and administrators can implement the following strategies:

- **Create a Supportive School Culture:**

A positive and collaborative school culture is essential for fostering teacher motivation. Schools should value teacher input, recognize their contributions, and provide opportunities for professional growth. By creating a sense of belonging and community, schools can help teachers feel valued and supported in their work.

- **Provide Effective Leadership and Support:**

Effective leadership and administrative support play a crucial role in motivating teachers. School leaders should offer clear expectations, adequate resources, and ongoing support to teachers, ensuring they feel valued and empowered. By providing guidance, mentoring, and encouragement, leaders can help teachers overcome challenges and achieve their goals.

- **Invest in Professional Development:**

Opportunities for professional development are essential for enhancing teacher motivation and effectiveness. Schools should provide relevant, accessible, and aligned professional development programs that meet teachers' individual needs and goals. By investing in professional development, schools can help teachers stay up-to-date with best practices, expand their knowledge and skills, and improve their teaching practices.

- **Foster a Positive Learning Environment:**

A positive and engaging learning environment can significantly impact teacher motivation. Schools should create classrooms that are conducive to learning, supportive of student success, and free from disruptive behaviors. By providing a supportive and inclusive environment, schools can help teachers feel more motivated and engaged in their work.

- **Recognize and Reward Teacher Accomplishments:**

Recognizing and rewarding teacher accomplishments is essential for boosting morale and motivation. Schools should acknowledge and celebrate teacher achievements, both individually and as a team. By recognizing their contributions, schools can show teachers that their work is valued and appreciated.

Conclusion

The motivation of teachers in Nigerian public secondary schools is a complex issue influenced by various factors, including remuneration, working conditions, professional development opportunities, leadership and support, school culture and climate, personal beliefs and values, student engagement and achievement, and social and economic factors. These factors interact with each other to shape teachers' motivation and ultimately affect the quality of education.

Recommendations

To enhance teacher motivation and improve the quality of education in Nigeria's public secondary schools, the following recommendations are offered:

- i. **Improve Remuneration and Working Conditions:** Increase teacher salaries to ensure they are competitive with other professions. Provide adequate resources, infrastructure, and support services to improve working conditions and reduce workload.
- ii. **Invest in Professional Development:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities that are relevant, accessible, and tailored to teachers' individual needs.
- iii. **Strengthen Leadership and Support:** Ensure that school leaders provide effective leadership, support, and guidance to teachers. Foster a positive and supportive school culture that values teacher input and recognizes their contributions.
- iv. **Enhance School Culture and Climate:** Create a positive and inclusive school culture that promotes collaboration, communication, and a sense of belonging. Address issues of bullying, discrimination, and violence to create a safe and supportive learning environment.
- v. **Prioritize Student Engagement and Achievement:** Implement strategies to enhance student engagement and academic achievement. This can include providing relevant and engaging curriculum, creating a supportive learning environment, and fostering a growth mindset.
- vi. **Address Social and Economic Factors:** Address the social and economic challenges faced by teachers and students. This may involve providing support services, improving access to healthcare and education, and addressing issues of poverty and inequality.
- vii. **Promote Teacher Well-being:** Prioritize teacher well-being by providing adequate support services, promoting work-life balance, and addressing issues of stress and burnout.
- viii. **Involve Stakeholders:** Engage stakeholders, including teachers, parents, students, and community members, in decision-making processes to ensure that their needs and perspectives are considered.

By implementing these recommendations, Nigeria can create a more supportive and motivating environment for teachers, leading to improved teaching and learning outcomes.

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