
Teachers' Level of Work Motivation and Instructional Competence: An Analysis

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Abstract — This study determined the level of work motivation and instructional competence among 331 public elementary school teachers in Cluster C of the Schools Division Office of Albay, covering the municipalities of Libon, Polangui, Oas, and Pioduran. Using a mixed-methods approach, participants were selected through stratified random sampling with proportional allocation guided by Slovin's Formula. Data were gathered through a structured survey, Classroom Observation Tool (COT) ratings, interviews, and focus group discussions, and analyzed using weighted means and Chi-square tests, supported by qualitative thematic analysis.

Findings reveal a predominantly seasoned and high-performing teaching workforce, with most teachers demonstrating “Outstanding” performance ratings. Teachers exhibited very high intrinsic and relational motivation, driven by strong sense of purpose, professional growth, collegial support, and positive school culture, while extrinsic motivation was generally high but constrained by compensation concerns. Instructional competence was rated highly, particularly in subject mastery and literacy and numeracy development, but challenges remain in differentiated instruction for diverse learner needs. Statistical analysis showed that motivation is influenced by personal factors, while instructional competence is shaped by position and salary grade, with performance ratings showing no significant relationship to either, indicating a compliance gap in evaluation systems.

The study concludes that enhancing teacher performance requires a balanced approach that strengthens intrinsic and relational motivation while improving extrinsic support systems and instructional adaptability. It recommends the adoption and pilot implementation of the “Personnel Empowerment and Work Motivation: A Policy Recommendation.” This policy should serve as the foundational framework for school improvement plans, specifically focusing on reducing administrative burdens, empowering teacher autonomy, and formalizing the role of veteran educators as mentors within the institution.

Keywords: Work Motivation, Instructional Competence, Policy Recommendation

I. INTRODUCTION

The central goal of any educational system is to foster student growth and achievement. Accomplishing this requires a delicate balance between a teacher's professional abilities and their personal drive. Research by Dhillon and Kaur (2021) suggests that a school's overall performance is limited by the quality of its educators. Consequently, contemporary educational discourse increasingly views teacher quality not as a static trait, but as a dynamic, multifaceted construct. As a result, improving instructional competence—which combines subject knowledge, teaching techniques, and classroom management—has become a top priority in global education reform. This is corroborated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who asserted that systematic investments in teacher professional development yield the highest returns in student learning outcomes across diverse socio-economic landscapes.

However, technical expertise is only one part of the puzzle. Without sufficient work motivation, even highly skilled teachers may struggle to perform at their best. These two factors are deeply connected: motivation provides the energy to teach, while competence provides the necessary tools. When they align, student interest and academic scores tend to rise (Tufuor Kwarteng & Donkor, 2019). Conversely, Han and Yin (2021) warned that an overemphasis on structural accountability without a corresponding focus on teacher well-being and intrinsic drive often culminates in severe pedagogical burnout, ultimately diminishing classroom effectiveness.

To better understand teacher performance, we can look at Self-Determination Theory (SDT). According to Deci and Ryan (2020), long-term motivation flourishes when teachers feel independent, capable, and connected to their peers. When these psychological needs are met, teachers work because the job matches their values rather than just for external rewards. This framework is further enriched by Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, which argues that a teacher's confidence in their own power directly influences their willingness to try innovative teaching methods (IMJRISSE, 2025). Furthermore, recent empirical work by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2023) demonstrated that a robust sense of self-efficacy acts as a psychological buffer, enabling educators to maintain instructional persistence even when confronted with challenging classroom environments or systemic resource deficits.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) uses the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) to ensure quality. These national standards are formally tracked through the Results-based Performance Management System (RPMS), establishing a uniform benchmark for professional accountability. While the government also provides legal protections and career paths for teachers, national rules do not always account for local differences. In Cluster C of the Schools Division Office (SDO) in Albay, teachers face unique challenges depending on whether they work in urban centers or remote "last mile" schools. As Ulla and Perales (2022) observed in their assessment of rural Philippine education, educators stationed in geographically isolated areas frequently grapple with institutional isolation and severe infrastructure gaps. Therefore, there is an urgent need to see if current motivation strategies work for everyone or if specific factors, like social support, are more vital in isolated areas.

The rise of the digital age has also added new pressures, such as the need for Digital Instructional Integration (DII) and an increase in administrative paperwork. This study investigates how these modern demands affect the inner drive of teachers in Albay. As Labrague et al. (2024) noted, the rapid enforcement of digital modalities in provincial divisions has inadvertently escalated technostress among educators, forcing them to balance heavy administrative loads with the demands of modern digital classrooms. By examining educators in Cluster C, the research aims to identify which type of motivation—internal, external, or social—best supports teaching quality amidst these evolving institutional shifts.

Finally, this study is meant to be practical. The findings will help leaders in SDO Albay move away from generic management styles and toward data-driven support. By understanding the link between motivation and skill on a local level, the division can better allocate resources, design relevant training, and ensure high educational standards are met across all schools, regardless of their location.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study used a mixed-method research design to examine the work motivation and instructional competence of public elementary school teachers in the Schools Division Office of

Albay. Quantitative data were gathered through a researcher-made survey questionnaire, while qualitative data were obtained through interviews and focus group discussions to provide deeper explanations of the findings.

The respondents consisted of 331 public elementary school teachers selected from a total population of 1,884 teachers in Cluster C using Slovin's Formula and stratified random sampling. The questionnaire included sections on respondents' profile, level of work motivation, and instructional competence. To ensure validity and reliability, the instrument underwent expert validation and pilot testing before administration.

Data collection was conducted online through Google Forms with the coordination of district supervisors and school heads. Classroom Observation Tool (COT) rating summaries were also used to verify self-reported instructional competence data. Relevant books, journals, and online scholarly sources were reviewed to strengthen the theoretical foundation of the study.

Ethical standards were strictly observed through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012.

The study employed descriptive statistics such as frequency count, percentage, rank, and weighted mean to describe the respondents and measure variables. Inferential statistics, particularly the Chi-square test, were used to determine significant relationships between teachers' profile variables, work motivation, and instructional competence

III. RESULTS

The empirical findings of this investigation paint a comprehensive portrait of the public elementary school teachers deployed across Cluster C of the Schools Division Office of Albay. The baseline data revealed substantial variance across key demographic and professional vectors, including age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, salary grade, position, and official performance ratings. Structurally, the respondent pool is characterized by a mature workforce, with the majority of educators falling within the middle-age bracket. Gender

distribution reflects a long-standing trend in elementary education, displaying a predominant representation of female educators across the sampled districts.

In terms of academic and professional advancement, a vast majority of the respondents are married and possess advanced academic training, having either earned significant graduate-level units or fully completed their master's degrees. Conversely, only a minor tier of the sample population has successfully attained a doctoral degree. This distribution underscores an educational community that is highly experienced yet structurally diverse, spanning a wide continuum of teaching tenures, salary classifications, and hierarchical ranks. This diversity provides a rich institutional backdrop for assessing organizational dynamics within the division.

The quantitative assessment of teacher work motivation revealed that educators in the division generally maintain an exemplary and highly resilient drive to perform. When disaggregated into distinct motivational domains, the data yielded specific insights into what sustains pedagogical effort in provincial environments. Within the intrinsic domain, the indicator for a profound sense of purpose garnered the highest weighted mean, indicating that the foundational driver for these educators is deeply rooted in the perceived societal value and moral weight of the teaching profession. Furthermore, indicators measuring overall enjoyment and interest in teaching, alongside a commitment to professional growth, also secured remarkably high ratings, demonstrating that despite systemic challenges, the teachers retain a profound internal alignment with their vocations.

In terms of externally driven factors, career advancement opportunities emerged as the primary catalyst, closely followed by the perceived quality of working conditions and workload. These findings indicate that transparent pathways for upward mobility and an operationally manageable school environment heavily influence external drive. Notably, financial compensation and benefits registered the lowest relative weighted mean within this category; however, its descriptive interpretation remained high, suggesting that while financial remuneration is an essential structural baseline, it is not the sole determinant of teacher persistence. For the social and interpersonal dimensions of motivation, teacher-student relationships achieved the highest empirical score, showing that daily, positive interactions with learners serve as primary emotional fuel for educators, while collegial support and supportive leadership were likewise rated

exceptionally high, reinforcing the notion that healthy workplace ecosystems and empathetic school management are vital for sustaining morale.

The data measuring instructional competence revealed that the respondents possess a robust command over their pedagogical duties, overall demonstrating a high level of professional capability. Teachers exhibited outstanding proficiency in applying content knowledge across diverse learning areas and successfully deploying varied instructional strategies engineered to accelerate core literacy and numeracy skills. Furthermore, the educators demonstrated high marks in classroom communication mechanics and excelled at cultivating supportive, orderly learning environments that actively stimulate student participation and sustained engagement.

However, a critical nuance emerged in areas concerning inclusive education practices. Lower relative ratings were explicitly observed in indicators measuring a teacher's capacity to address the unique needs of learners with disabilities, gifted students, and learners navigating difficult socio-economic circumstances. While these indicators still fell within a descriptively high qualification, their lower standing relative to core pedagogy underscores a critical gap, implying that while teachers are technically proficient in standard classroom execution, they face challenges when adapting instruction for diverse student populations, signaling a clear area for targeted institutional intervention.

To uncover the structural relationships within the dataset, a series of Chi-square Tests of Independence were executed, revealing distinct patterns between demographic variables, work motivation, and instructional capacity. The inferential analysis demonstrated that age and length of service share a statistically significant relationship with all three dimensions of work motivation, indicating that personal and professional maturity heavily shape an educator's underlying drive. Similarly, sex showed a significant relationship with intrinsic and relational motivation, highlighting distinct gender-based nuances in how teachers internally connect with their work and construct classroom relationships. Conversely, factors such as civil status, educational attainment, salary grade, professional rank, and performance ratings showed no significant relationship with work motivation, suggesting that a teacher's inner drive remains independent of their structural standing or financial bracket.

A contrasting pattern emerged during the analysis of instructional competence, where salary grade and institutional rank demonstrated a statistically significant relationship with teaching performance. This clear correlation indicates that educators holding higher positions and superior salary classifications consistently exhibit stronger instructional capabilities, validating the division's promotion and merit systems. In stark contrast, age, sex, civil status, educational attainment, length of service, and performance ratings displayed no significant relationship with instructional competence, proving that teaching efficacy is not merely a byproduct of chronological age or chronological tenure. Ultimately, these results suggest that while the public elementary school teachers of the division possess a highly commendable baseline of motivation and instructional competence, their optimization depends on localized administrative strategies that separate the factors driving teacher morale from those driving technical classroom performance.

IV. DISCUSSION

The comprehensive exploration of the demographic and professional characteristics of public elementary school teachers in Cluster C of the Schools Division Office of Albay reveals an intricate, highly diverse workforce. The high concentration of female and married educators conforms directly to long-standing demographic trends observed across primary education ecosystems in the Philippines. This structural composition is deeply intertwined with broader sociological realities, where the nurturing aspects of elementary education frequently align with institutional staffing patterns. Furthermore, the substantial proportion of educators actively pursuing or possessing graduate-level credentials signals an ongoing commitment to personal and career development. This widespread pursuit of advanced education indicates that the teaching staff does not merely view their positions as static employment, but rather as dynamic careers requiring continuous intellectual and pedagogical refinement. This systematic alignment with postgraduate academic training serves as a foundational driver that enriches local teaching practices and modernizes the structural capabilities of the division.

The extraordinary levels of intrinsic motivation observed among the respondents underscore a highly resilient workforce that derives its primary momentum from internal

fulfillment rather than external rewards. The outstanding empirical weight assigned to a profound sense of purpose suggests that these educators anchor their professional identity within the moral and social transformation of their students. This deep-seated commitment serves as a psychological buffer, enabling teachers to sustain high levels of energy and focus even when navigating systemic resource limits or heavy administrative burdens. This internal drive is tightly linked to and reinforced by relational motivation, where positive interactions within the school ecosystem act as vital emotional support. The high ratings given to teacher-student relationships show that the daily, human connection with learners is a primary source of professional satisfaction. When backed by strong collegial networks and empathetic school leadership, these interpersonal dynamics create a collaborative environment that prevents isolation, elevates morale, and transforms schools from mere workplaces into supportive professional communities.

When examining the extrinsic factors influencing teacher motivation, the high value placed on career advancement opportunities, supportive working conditions, and manageable workloads reveals critical insights for institutional planning. While financial compensation and benefits are naturally essential for maintaining baseline job security, they registered the lowest relative weight within the extrinsic domain. This pattern indicates that while competitive pay is a necessary foundation, it is not the sole driver of daily professional effort. Instead, educators show a stronger desire for transparent career pathways, formal institutional recognition, and manageable workloads. This suggests that the teachers place a premium on professional dignity and organizational fairness. Consequently, school environments that prioritize clear promotion paths, reduce administrative friction, and respect the teacher's time are far more effective at sustaining external drive than those relying strictly on standard financial incentives.

The evaluation of instructional competence demonstrates that the educators in SDO Albay possess a highly capable command over core pedagogical practices. Their strong performance in content mastery across diverse subject areas, polished classroom communication skills, and the strategic deployment of varied teaching methods show a high baseline of technical competence. These operational strengths mean that teachers are fully capable of translating curriculum guidelines into active, structured learning experiences that improve student literacy and numeracy. This technical proficiency ensures that the core instructional goals of the division are consistently met, fostering stable and predictable student achievement within standard classroom settings.

Despite these pedagogical strengths, the noticeably lower ratings in areas tied to inclusive education reveal a critical gap in current teaching capacities. The difficulties educators face when adapting instruction for learners with disabilities, gifted students, and children navigating severe socio-economic hardships point to a systemic vulnerability in handling student diversity. While these scores are still acceptable on a basic descriptive scale, their lower position relative to general teaching skills suggests that standard, one-size-fits-all training does not fully prepare teachers for complex classroom realities. This gap highlights a pressing need to move away from generic professional development and toward specialized training focused on differentiated instruction, specialized special education strategies, and trauma-informed teaching practices. Without targeted support in these areas, even highly motivated teachers will struggle to bridge the gap between uniform curriculum delivery and the varied needs of vulnerable student populations.

The inferential analysis uncovers the distinct ways demographic and professional factors shape teacher behavior and performance. The statistically significant relationship that age and length of service share with all three motivational domains indicates that professional maturity and tenure are vital for developing deep institutional commitment. As teachers gain experience, their internal alignment with the school's mission strengthens, making long-term dedication a product of time and experience. Conversely, the fact that instructional competence is tied to salary grade and institutional rank—rather than age or chronological tenure alone—proves that actual teaching capability is driven by merit, structural promotion, and advanced professional responsibility. This insight confirms that higher ranks within the division successfully reflect greater pedagogical skill and broader experience. Meanwhile, the lack of statistical correlation between motivation and factors like civil status or academic degrees suggests that a teacher's daily drive is independent of personal background, relying instead on personal dedication and the immediate quality of workplace support.

To maintain analytical rigor, several key limitations of this study must be carefully considered. First, because the research scope was strictly confined to public elementary school teachers within Cluster C of the Schools Division Office of Albay, the findings cannot be generalized to secondary school environments or other geographical divisions that may operate under different socio-economic or administrative conditions. Second, the study relied heavily on self-reported survey data, which carries the inherent risk of social desirability bias or personal

overestimation. Although the researcher successfully mitigated this risk by cross-referencing survey results with official Classroom Observation Tool ratings from the Results-based Performance Management System, the qualitative insights remain anchored in the subjective perspectives of the participants. These boundary conditions should be kept in mind when applying these conclusions to broader educational policies.

Based on these findings, several strategic actions are recommended to optimize teacher motivation and instructional performance across the division. SDO Albay should transition away from generic mass training and design targeted, localized learning and development programs that focus specifically on inclusive education, equipping teachers with practical strategies for differentiated instruction and managing diverse learner needs. Concurrently, district supervisors and school heads should utilize the Results-based Performance Management System data alongside Classroom Observation Tool workflows to deliver tailored mentoring, focusing on helping early-career teachers build instructional competence while leveraging the deep intrinsic motivation of senior educators through formal peer-mentorship roles. Finally, school leaders should actively cultivate collaborative environments by minimizing unnecessary administrative paperwork and maximizing teacher autonomy, strengthening professional learning communities like School Learning Action Cells to foster the collegial support that teachers identify as a primary source of professional resilience and motivation.

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