



Original Article

Job Satisfaction of Basic Education Teachers in Southeast Asia: Key Issues and Policy Recommendations

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Received 24 June 2020

Revised 23 September 2020; Accepted 13 January 2021

Abstract: This article is taken from the study project, “Job Satisfaction of Basic Education Teachers in Southeast Asia”, a collaborative endeavor among SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization) Centers. It presents the key issues affecting the level of job satisfaction among basic education teachers in Southeast Asia and provides policy recommendations to increase teacher motivation and job satisfaction. The study employs Herzberg’s Dual Factor Theory of Motivation: Hygiene factor and motivator factor; online survey, group discussion and forum are instruments used to gather data. Analysis of responses has demonstrated that the sources of job dissatisfaction are found to be both hygiene factor and motivator factor. The top three sources of job dissatisfaction are: i) Job security; ii) Work environment; and iii) Job responsibility. Significantly, the results indicate that the greatest source of job dissatisfaction is hygiene factor. Further research on key issues affecting teacher job satisfaction unexplored in this study is essential.

Keywords: Basic education teacher, job satisfaction, job facet, policy recommendation.

1. Introduction

Motivation and job satisfaction play an important role in all organizations. In educational institutions in particular, motivation and job satisfaction are crucial for quality education. Sadly, in most countries in Southeast Asia (SEA), teacher job satisfaction is a challenge. There is a growing concern that teachers specifically in the basic education are becoming increasingly demotivated, which contributes to deteriorating teacher performance. This affects, not only the

teacher’s teaching performance, but the well-being of the teachers and their students, teacher retention, overall school cohesion, and the status of teaching profession.

The purpose of the study is to find out the key issues affecting the level of job satisfaction among basic education teachers in Southeast Asia. Its ultimate purpose is to generate policy recommendations to increase the motivation and job satisfaction of the teachers.

The significance of the study is that it provides the school principals and administrators with valuable information on the existing issues affecting negatively teacher motivation and job satisfaction. It provides the policymakers with policy recommendations to

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<https://doi.org/10.25073/2588-1159/vnuer.4438>

increase teacher job satisfaction, which not only the participating countries would benefit, but also across countries in the Southeast Asian region. It also provides the academicians and researchers with the literature on teacher job satisfaction in SEA as a region, which is currently limited.

The basic assumption of this study is that all teachers are different and subsequently have different experiences and opinions regarding job satisfaction and motivation. Although the concept of satisfaction can be quite subjective, the voice of the specific teacher responding to the online survey and the perception of the school leaders and administrators in group discussion and in forum are vital information of this study.

2. Review of Literature

The critical review of theorized connections has been found to exist between job satisfaction and school leadership and management, professional development, job security, work environment, job responsibility, and community linkages on teacher job satisfaction upon which the theoretical framework of the study is established.

Job satisfaction is essential in all organizations. It is defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences (Locke, 1976) [1]. Warr (2002) [2] puts it as simply how content an individual is with his or her job; whether he or she likes the job or not is assessed both at the global level (whether or not the individual is satisfied with the job overall), and at the facet level (whether or not the individual is satisfied with different aspects of the job).

Significantly, the managerial support of *school leadership and management* largely contributes to teacher job satisfaction and overall well-being and retention (Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011) [3]. When facing organizational and social pressures, workload, and discipline issues, teachers need social support to stay motivated and relaxed (Skolverket, 2007) [4]. Teachers build stress resistance when school managers offer help with disciplinary issues, feedback and mentoring (Crossman & Harris,

2006) [5]. Teachers feel demotivated and insecure if the management ignores their problems and needs (Leithwood, 2006) [6]. Lack of support offered by administrators has been shown to increase job dissatisfaction in teachers (Sass et al., 2011) [7].

Professional development equips the teachers the knowledge and skills required of the changing educational environment. Tobing (2016) [8] shows that career development is very necessary for job satisfaction. This is because a good career development system will motivate employees to perform better, which will directly exert a positive impact on the company. Opportunities for self-growth can positively reinforce teacher job satisfaction (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) [9] as professional development is associated with higher teacher morale, organizational commitment and students' success (OECD, 2014) [10].

Likewise, *Job Security* ensures commitment as Davy, Kinicki and Scheck (1997) [11] discover that job security is significantly related to employee commitment. Lambert et al., (1991) [12] view job security as an extrinsic comfort that has a positive relation with worker's commitment and performance. On the other hand, Iverson (1996) [13] emphasizes that job security has a significant impact on organizational commitment. However, Rosenblatt and Ruvio (1996) [14] argue that organizational commitment and job performance negatively correlated with job insecurity. Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2006) [15] disclose that Cypriot teachers go into teaching for extrinsic motives, like salary and holidays. Tobing's study shows that compensation significantly affects job satisfaction. When the company provides the employees better system of compensation, the employees are satisfied. When the employees' level of satisfaction is higher, the employees are highly motivated in achieving high performance.

On one hand, *work environment* motivates teachers to perform best. Poor school facilities (lack of basic teaching materials, and an absence of sufficient equipment for laboratories) and inadequate infrastructure, such as little lighting and drab walls add to the woes of unmotivated

teachers. Poor working conditions of teachers seem to stem from their low remuneration and limited incentives. This is related to the low attractiveness of teaching as an occupation and it slows professional status in many developing countries. When the working conditions and status of teachers are constantly deteriorating, one of the most serious consequences is dropout of trained and qualified teachers. This is affirmed with the study of Horng (2009) [16] saying that when teachers choose teaching jobs, they consider job conditions. Schools with less favorable conditions have greater difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers and consequently have high rates of teacher turn-over. Job satisfaction is essentially an effective and positive job-related reaction to the workplace (Addimando, 2013) [17] that explains how people feel about their work (Kianto et al., 2016) [18].

On the other hand, *job responsibility* enhances teacher's sense of recognition and accomplishment. Baah and Amoako (2011) [19] point out that the motivational factors (the nature of work, the sense of achievement from their work, the recognition, the responsibility that is granted to them, and opportunities for personal growth and advancement) help employees to find their worth with respect to value given to them by organization. Hussain's study (2018) [20] on workload and teacher job satisfaction reveals that there is a significant association between teacher job security, workload and teacher job satisfaction. Teachers report tiredness and stress due to too much workload and demands from stakeholders, discipline issues and lack of appreciation (Klassen & Chiu, 2010) [21]. Stress from discipline issues (Lopez et al., 2008) [22] and stress from workload (Kyriacou, 2001) [23] often lead to low levels of teaching efficacy, increased levels of burnout, and negative teacher-student relationships (Kokkinos et al., 2005) [24].

Community Linkage is an avenue for learning to happen, not only within the school walls, but in the real world. It is now universally accepted in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries that schools must relate well to their surrounding communities if

they are to be effective. In societies that have been undergoing profound economic and social restructuring, the role of the school needs to be related directly to the changes that are taking place around.

Decentralization itself increases the pressure for new forms of governance and partnership including shared decision making with teachers, parents and members of the community. Principals in schools need to become coalition builders as much as managers of the internal running of schools. The very terms "school" and "community" are no longer as precise as they once were. Pradhan et al. (2017) [25] disclose that participation with the village council and community supports education. Community participation enhances collaboration between the school committee and the village council and demonstrates improved satisfaction with village councils' attention to education in the village.

The literature review establishes a good foundation of the current study in its quest for better understanding of the issues affecting motivation and job satisfaction of the teachers of the basic education in Southeast Asia. The literature above has emphasized the necessity to address key issues that promote teacher's motivation and job satisfaction for better teaching performance resulting to quality education. In all, the review sets forth this study.

3. Theoretical Framework

This study espouses Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory of Motivation: Hygiene Factor and Motivator Factor (1959) [26] or better dubbed as a Theory of Motivation. Unlike Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory (1943) [27] and Glasser Choice Theory (1998) [28], Herzberg's Motivation Theory attempts to explain the factors that motivate individuals through identifying and satisfying their individual needs, desires and the aims pursued to satisfy these desires. This theory of motivation is known as a Two-Factor Theory: hygiene factors and motivation factors and it is often referred to as a "Two-Need System". These two separate "needs" are the need to avoid

unpleasantness and discomfort and, at the other end of the motivational scale, the need for personal development.

Herzberg Two-Factor Motivator-Hygiene Theory is the foundation of this study. It brings forth the crucial value of recognizing the importance of teachers' physiological needs (hygiene factors) and their psychological growth (motivation) in the workplace. Adopting Herzberg's Dual Factor Theory of Motivation: Hygiene Factor and Motivator Factor, this study identifies the motivator factors as *professional development, job responsibility, and community linkages*, and hygiene factors as *school leadership and management, job security, and work environment*.

4. Method of the Study

This study employs mixed methods, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative approach is used to quantify the level of satisfaction of basic education teachers. The level of satisfaction is categorized as very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. Qualitative approach is used to gather data for in-depth analysis of the issues affecting teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

4.1. Materials

The tools used to gather data include questionnaire, group discussion and forum. The questionnaire is designed to find out the key issues affecting the level of teacher job satisfaction. The respondents remain anonymous to provide a more comfortable way to divulge information that would make them uncomfortable in a face-to-face setting.

The *questionnaire* includes the six facets of job satisfaction, and each facet has five issues, as follows:

i) School leadership and management includes: i) School policies; ii) Participation in making educational decisions; iii) Support of the school leader; iv) management assistance on difficult situations; and v) School leader relations with the teachers;

ii) Professional development includes: i) Opportunities to advance professionally; ii) Training opportunities among teachers; iii) Teacher competency to perform the duties; iv) Competency of the teachers and co-workers at work; and v) continuous career development;

iii) Job security includes: i) Salary; ii) Chances to be reclassified/promoted/transferred to better school; iii) Appreciation and rewards; iv) Benefits; and v) Overall job security;

iv) Work environment includes: i) Supervisor assisting teacher to improve instruction; ii) Working relationships among peers; iii) Working conditions e.g., lighting, ventilation, working space, dormitory; iv) Accessibility of textbooks, supplies, equipment, copy machine, and others; and v) Student's behavior;

v) Job responsibility includes: i) Teaching assignment relative to specialization; ii) Instructional materials used in the school; iii) Autonomy to improve teaching; iv) Workloads e.g., teaching, administrative, paper works; and v) grade level curriculum;

vi) Community linkage includes: i) School's partnership with the community; ii) Parents/stakeholders' level of participation; iii) School's relations towards parents and caregivers; iv) School engaging teacher in community activities; and v) School using the community resources to enrich teaching and learning.

Group discussion and *forum* are used to gather data about the key issues affecting the motivation and job satisfaction of the basic education teachers from the perceptions of the school leaders and administrators.

4.2. Subjects

The study includes the basic education teachers of Southeast Asian countries, namely, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The respondents of group discussions are representatives of Southeast Asian Ministries of Education and representatives of SEAMEO Centers. The respondents of the forum are the members of the Governing Board Meeting

(GBM) of SEAMEO RETRAC, Vietnam. The respondents of the online survey are school-based teachers in basic education assigned in urban, rural and remote areas. The survey questionnaire is English, except for Vietnam; it is translated to Vietnamese. The survey was done online inclusive in June 2019 - August 2019.

The survey guideline and the survey questionnaire were sent to Ministries of Education in Southeast Asian countries and other supporting institutions. Then, they randomly selected the respondents to participate in the survey. The overall response of the online survey is 3,884 responses. It is sad to say that the response rate of some countries is insufficient as shown in the table that follows.

Survey Data

No	Countries	Responses	Percentage
1	Vietnam	3115	80.20%
2	Brunei Darussalam	449	11.56%
3	Philippines	174	4.48%
4	Indonesia	58	1.49%
5	Malaysia	51	1.31%
6	Thailand	13	0.33%
7	Cambodia	11	0.28%
8	East Timor	4	0.10%
9	Singapore	3	0.08%
10	Myanmar	3	0.08%
11	Laos	3	0.08%
	Total	3884	

Hence, the first five countries that responded the online survey fairly namely, Vietnam, Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia are the participating countries. Due to a big gap of responses among the participating countries, the study discusses the result of the findings by each country separately. However, there are common issues recurring among the participating countries, which will be discussed in this article.

4.3. Data Analysis

This study uses simple descriptive statistics identifying the level of teacher job satisfaction

of the basic education teachers. It uses Excel to illustrate the level of teacher job satisfaction of each participating country separately, and the key issues affecting teacher motivation and job satisfaction. This validates the decision-making process of the level of teacher job satisfaction for each participating country suitably and sufficiently. However, if the study is more advanced, especially involving multivariate analysis, it is more challenging in Excel and in such case, it is worth considering using specialist analysis software, such as IBM SPSS Statistics.

5. Results

The results of the study identify the job facets affecting the level of teacher job satisfaction across Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam. The table below shows the job facets arranged from the lowest level of satisfaction to high level of satisfaction among the participating countries.

The results point out that job security is the first key source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam, but work environment in the Philippines. Community linkage is the second key source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia and Malaysia, but job security in the Philippines, and work environment in Vietnam. Job responsibility is the third key source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam, but work environment in Indonesia.

Work environment is the fourth key source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, but school leadership and management in Indonesia; whereas community linkage in the Philippines and Vietnam. Professional development is the fifth key source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam, but job responsibility in Indonesia; whereas school leadership and management in Malaysia and Philippines. Lastly, school leadership and management is the sixth key source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam

and Vietnam, but professional development in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

As mentioned earlier, these job facets consist of key issues, as follows: *job security* includes: i) Salary; ii) Chances to be reclassified/promoted/transferred to better school; iii) Appreciation and rewards; iv) Benefits; and v) Overall job security; *community linkage* includes: i) School's partnership with the community; ii) Parents/ stakeholders' level of

participation; iii) School's relations towards parents and caregivers; iv) School engaging teacher in community activities; and v) School using the community resources to enrich teaching and learning; *job responsibility* includes: i) Teaching assignment relative to specialization; ii) Instructional materials used in the school; iii) Teacher's autonomy to improve teaching; iv) workloads e.g., teaching, administrative, paper works; and v) Grade level curriculum.

Job facets from the lowest level of satisfaction to high level of satisfaction

Brunei Darussalam	Indonesia	Malaysia	Philippines	Vietnam
Job Security	Job Security	Job Security	Work Environment	Job Security
Community Linkages	Community Linkages	Community Linkages	Job Security	Work Environment
Job Responsibility	Work Environment	Job Responsibility	Job Responsibility	Job Responsibility
Work Environment	School Leadership and Management	Work Environment	Community Linkages	Community Linkages
Professional Development	Job Responsibility	School Leadership and Management	School Leadership and Management	Professional Development
School Leadership and Management	Professional Development	Professional Development	Professional Development	School Leadership and Management

Work environment includes: i) Supervisor assisting teacher to improve instruction; ii) Working relationships among peers; iii) Working conditions e.g., lighting, ventilation, working space, dormitory; iv) Accessibility of textbooks, supplies, equipment, copy machine, and others; and v) Student's behavior; *professional development* includes: i) Opportunities to advance professionally; ii) Training opportunities among teachers; iii) Teacher competency to perform the duties; iv) Competency of the teachers and co-workers at work; and v) Continuous career development, and *school leadership and management* includes: i) School policies; ii) Teacher's participation in making educational decisions; iii) support of the school leader; iv) Management assistance on difficult situations; and v) School leader relations with the teachers.

Furthermore, the results of the study find out that the issues of job facets have affected teachers at different levels of job satisfaction depending on context and circumstance. On *job security*, *promotion* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in

Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia; *appreciation and rewards* in Indonesia, and *salary* in the Philippines and Vietnam, and on *community linkage*, *parents/stakeholders' participation in the school* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia and Vietnam; whereas, *school using community resources to enrich teaching and learning* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Indonesia and the Philippines.

On *job responsibility*, *workload* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction among the five participating countries namely, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippine and Vietnam. On *work environment*, *accessibility of textbooks, school supplies, equipment, copy machine, and others* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Philippines, and Vietnam; *supervisor assisting teachers to improve instruction* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Indonesia, while *working condition* is the first

overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Malaysia.

On *professional development, opportunities to advance professionally* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction negatively in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam; whereas, *training opportunities among teachers* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in the Philippines.

Lastly, on school leadership and *management, teacher's participation in making educational decision* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam; whereas, *management assistance on difficult situations* is the first overarching key issue affecting teacher job satisfaction in Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines.

Based on the result of the study, it is evident that consistent with similar literature, the predictors that lead to either a greater sense of satisfaction or a decrease in dissatisfaction for one group of teachers do not necessarily generalize to others. Indeed, the levels of teacher job satisfaction of these job facets vary significantly; hence, they cannot be generalized. These are crucial to improve quality teaching, keep the teachers stay in the profession, attract new ones to the profession, and make teaching a profession of choice.

6. Discussion

The results of the study reveal several notable findings about the key issues of job facets affecting the level of teacher job satisfaction. Adopting Herzberg's dual factor principles, the study found out that hygiene factors and motivator factors affect teacher motivation and job satisfaction. It was further found out that hygiene factor is the greatest source of job dissatisfaction. Arranged from the lowest level of job satisfaction, they are found to be job security, work environment, job responsibility, community linkages, school leadership and management and professional development.

The first notable finding of the study is on job security with the issues on *salary, promotion, benefits and appreciation and rewards*. A possible explanation of this finding is that teachers feel underpaid, unrewarded, and unappreciated compared to other professions. According to the Social Information Processing (SIP) theory of job satisfaction (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) [29], job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are attributions that have to be socially constructed via comparing oneself with others in the career in terms of job responsibilities, payment, and workload.

A second possible explanation of this finding is that teachers are disappointed with this insufficient pay increase, promotion and recognition and awards. From the viewpoint of the Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964) [30], job satisfaction is determined by the difference between all those things a person feels he/she should receive from his/her job and all those things he/she actually receives. The need-fulfillment theory (Schaffer, 1953) [31] also states that overall job satisfaction will vary directly with the extent to which those needs of an individual can be satisfied in a job are actually satisfied.

A third possible explanation of this finding is drawn from Carraher and Buckley (1996) [32]. Both claim that wages and salaries are recognized to be a significant but cognitively complex, and multidimensional factor in job satisfaction. Money is one of the main reasons why people work. Money not only helps people attain their basic needs, but it is also instrumental in providing upper-level need satisfaction, enhancing the quality of life. Employees often see pay as a reflection of how management views their contribution to the organization. Therefore, if a person is getting less than what he deserves, he is not happy, and naturally the job satisfaction will be low.

Furthermore, Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory proposed that individuals are not content with the satisfaction of lower-order needs at work, such as minimum salary levels or safe and pleasant working conditions. Rather,

individuals look for the gratification of higher-order psychological needs, such as achievement, recognition, responsibility, and self-actualization. According to Herzberg's motivation-hygiene theory, payment is a lower-order need or a hygiene factor that cannot lead to true job satisfaction. But hygiene factors can lead to dissatisfaction when not satisfied.

One the other hand, it is worthy to note the study of Zembylas, M. and Papanastasiou, E. The study was carried out in Cyprus. The study claims that Cypriot teachers go to teaching for extrinsic motives, like salary and holidays. Studies in developed countries, on the other hand, claim that the motivation for entering teaching might be intrinsic. A possible explanation of that claim is that teachers in the developed countries are probably having a substantial standard of living compared to teachers in the developing countries.

The second notable finding of the study is on work environment with the issues on *accessibility of textbooks, school supplies, equipment, and copy machine*. A possible explanation of this finding is that lack of textbooks, school supplies, equipment and facilities especially in rural areas affect teachers' delivery of the lesson. Specifically, teachers are left out in the classroom having a hard time teaching the lessons without reference and students without textbooks. Students, on the other hand, find studying very hard. They have to rely on notes their teachers wrote on the blackboard.

Another possible explanation of this finding in relation to the acquisition of textbooks, school facilities and equipment is lack of funds and resources. Partnerships with local businesses are difficult because so many schools must compete for sponsors and the local businesses are also suffering with the poverty problem. Rural schools will never be successful to provide good education if schools are not provided with books, computers, technology and other supplies and equipment.

To guarantee both the stability of rural communities and the nation's ongoing competitiveness in the global market, it is more

important than ever to ensure that all rural school learners pass with the skills they need for university, careers, and life. But then rural schools must be equipped with the necessary resources to be competitive and to meet the goals of the twenty-first century education.

The third notable finding of the study is on job responsibility with the issues on *workload*. This is the lowest level of satisfaction among the participating countries. A possible explanation of this finding is teachers are overloaded with teaching load assignment that requires 55-60 hours a week or more with large classes having 50 to 80 students or more in a class. It is also possible that due to tight scheduling of classes, the teachers could hardly breathe, for there is no break between class periods. It is also noted that in some cases, the teacher must walk a long way to report to the next class period.

This excludes the too much paperwork to be done plus attending to teacher-related task, such as faculty meeting, coaching program and administrative work. The teachers are having administrative tasks while students are working in the classrooms. Teachers do not feel they are teaching properly, and they are probably correct. The whole system does not contribute to a healthy education. Another possible explanation of this finding is aside from the overwhelming duties and responsibilities at work at hand, teachers may also have financial difficulties due to insufficient salary, and some personal and work-related issues.

The fourth notable finding of the study is on community linkages with the issues on *school using community resources to enrich teaching and learning*. A possible explanation of this finding might be that the school has no community linkages framework. Community linkage has not been integrated in the school calendar, so there are no proper guidelines of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Teachers are left out. This is disappointing and frustrating for teachers. Both school and community can benefit from partnership.

Community linkages complement the academic curriculum with a wider range of services and activities. Particularly, community

linkages enrich arts activities that may not be available during the school day, and support transitions across the school years. Specifically, they support the transition from the critical middle to high school level, which is a key predictor of high school graduation.

Moreover, community linkages reinforce concepts taught in school without replicating the school day. They often expose classroom teachers working in the afterschool program to new pedagogies. They improve school culture and community image through exhibitions and performances that help “shine the light” on students whose talents may not be apparent in the classroom. Through community linkages, teachers gain access to mentors and other resources to support in-school learning and improve the teaching and learning in the classroom itself.

Another significant finding on community linkage is on *the level of participation of the parents and stakeholders in school activities*. A possible explanation of this finding might be that the school is not encouraging parents to participate in school activities. It must be noted that some parents do not have the luxury of time. In urban schools, some parents work as restaurant service crew. Some are customer service representatives. Some are working in offices. Some parents attending school events might cost additional expenses, which they could buy foods at home. In rural or remote schools, some parents are afraid and feel scary to attend school events. Think about the first-generation parents. Some did not finish high school. Conferencing with the teacher is a skill they never learned!

Another possible explanation is parents do not know how to be involved. Some parents might not understand what the teachers want them to do. They do not understand why involvement is important. Some parents might wonder - if the teacher is a master of his subject area, why does he need parents? Furthermore, some teenagers do not want their parents to attend events. Put these together, parents might wonder what exactly the value of simple

physical presence is. For teachers, it matters but not for most parents in rural and remote areas.

The fifth notable finding is on school leadership and management with the issue on *teacher's participation in making educational decisions*. A possible explanation of this finding is teachers seek more input in school decision-making. In the Gallup Survey, the result reveals that teachers believe their input needs to carry more weight when important decisions are being made at the school level. Education policy decisions on curriculum, testing, school funding, school choice and safety are often contentious.

Teachers feel that the governing bodies, especially at the district and the state levels, have had too prominent a voice in important decisions. They believe that they themselves should have much more input in decision-making. Giving teachers more opportunities to register their views could boost overall engagement within the profession. In turn, this could lead to better collaboration among education stakeholders, and it may ultimately improve student engagement in the classroom as well.

The sixth notable finding of the study is on professional development with the issue on *opportunities to advance professionally*. A possible explanation of the finding is some schools might have no scheme for professional growth and development. Teachers are not encouraged to proceed to higher learning. The school principal may not have in mind the benefit of the school when teachers are with high academic qualifications. For whatever reasons, principals do not support and inspire the teachers to move forward and make a difference in their teaching profession.

Another significant finding is on *the training opportunities among teachers*. A possible explanation of this finding is the school might have no scheme for capacity building of the teachers. The school principal should initiate and develop a capacity building program for quality teaching. Another possible explanation on this finding is the possibility of lack of funds and resources especially in the

rural and remote schools. Funding is essential even in simple local training-workshops. When funding is left out, quality teaching is impossible. Furthermore, a possible explanation is the possibility of uneven or unfair distribution of training opportunities to teachers. It seems apparent that only those teachers who have connections to school principals and administrators can easily avail of the training, seminar and conferences, conducted either local and/or national level. In this case, if the school has already the capacity building scheme for all individual teachers, there is something wrong in its implementation.

The aforementioned are the most notable findings generally happening in the participating countries affecting teacher job satisfaction negatively. More critical existing issues affecting teacher job satisfaction are incorporated in the policy recommendations section.

7. Key Issues and Policy Recommendations

Adopting Herzberg's dual factor theory, the study finds out that both hygiene factor and motivator factor affect job satisfaction and motivation of basic education teachers in Southeast Asia. From the lowest level of job satisfaction, these are: i) Job security; ii) Work environment; iii) Job responsibility; iv) Community linkages; v) School leadership and management; and vi) Professional development.

7.1. Job Security

The findings reveal that *salary* is the greatest source of dissatisfaction among teachers in basic education of the participating countries. As said in the discussion and forum, the salary of teachers in most countries in Southeast Asia is low and inadequate to live a modest and dignified life. The teachers are regarded less within the community and outside. This greatly affects the morale of the teachers. It is important to note that incentives, transportation allowance and hardship allowance for those who work in very remote schools are inadequate or none at all. Furthermore, the delivery of payment in rural and remote schools is delayed. These weaken the drive and the

confidence of the teachers affecting their teaching performance and their contribution to the community. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to revisit the salary and incentives policy*.

Benefits and promotion are the second striking issues affecting teacher job satisfaction. It implies that there is discontentment of the benefits that teachers are receiving and there is an existing gap in the practice of promotion. Consistent to this finding is the argument brought out in the discussion. It was pointed out that promotion is disincentive to some teachers. Some teachers who deserve promotion may not be able to get it. They might have lack of connection to top school leaders and managers and lack of knowledge to put together the required evidences, documents and proofs of performance for promotion. Fair policies and their proper implementation are very important for teacher job satisfaction. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to revisit the policy of benefits and promotion*.

Appreciation and rewards are the third striking issues affecting teacher job satisfaction. Some schools do not have the scheme of appreciation and awards, while those that have the scheme, implement it unfairly among teachers. Appreciation and rewards based on competency when applied fairly with doable guidelines increase happiness and motivation of the teachers. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to revisit the policy of appreciation and rewards*.

Rationale

Job security induces organizational commitment of workers. For most people, it is undeniable that monetary compensation is a major rationale for working, no matter what other motivations or passions co-exist for the job. In other words, employees who perceive threat of job security may become less committed to the organization they are working for. They may decide to quit the job. Thus, satisfaction with job security is positively correlated with both organizational commitment and job performance.

A revisit of job security policy is essential to improve the current practice in salary, promotion, benefits, incentives, appreciation and awards and other, making the teachers happy, motivated and satisfied to exercise their teaching profession. The study recommends some strategies to consider in revisiting job security policy: i) Progressive improvement of salaries and conditions of service of teachers to contain the effects of increasing cost of living; ii) Salary increased based on competency subsequently; iii) Granting of study leave for qualified teachers, iv) Institution of best teacher award scheme; v) Accelerated promotion of all grades of qualified teachers; and vi) Promotion based on competency. It is important for teachers to enjoy job security comparable to that of other workers.

7.2. Work Environment

Accessibility of textbooks is the first striking issue that affects teacher job satisfaction. Textbook is the critical issue in the rural and remote areas. Teachers are hampered by limited and inadequate textbooks. The shortage of textbooks definitely decreases the efficiency of teaching. Teachers will spend chunk of class time writing everything on the board and ask the students to copy. Neither the teacher could cover the syllabus, nor could the students learn effectively. In addition, the lack of teaching facilities and equipment, library, and technology affect teacher's delivering the lesson negatively. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to make textbooks, school supplies, library, lab equipment, copy machine and others accessible to teachers and students.*

Working condition is the second striking issue that affects teacher job satisfaction. Teachers need good working conditions where they could place their instructional materials, prepare for their classes, review their lessons, check papers, wait for the next period and so on with good lighting, ventilation, drinking water, comfort room, and other basic needs. The best teachers can be crippled by bad working conditions. To conduct effective teaching and ultimately deliver the learning expected by the

school, parents and the community, teachers should have favorable working conditions. Depending on the context, working conditions might come in different challenges, but they all dissatisfy and demotivate teachers to some extent as Herzberg's Dual-Factor Motivation Theory points out. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to provide a favorable working condition with enough space, tables and drawers, good lighting and ventilation and dormitory as needed.*

Student behavior is the third striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. While good school environment is characterized by good relationships and communication, persistent student disruptive behavior is cited as a strong predictor for teacher dissatisfaction. Disruptive students can make both teaching and learning difficult. Student's behavior to the extent that makes the situation scary and threatening is one factor that teacher quits from teaching. If character building is already embedded in the curriculum, the school needs to find strategies enhancing a desirable attitude and behavior of the students. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to develop a scheme of life skills and soft skills program for students.*

Rationale

Work environment is a complex system, consisting of interactions between school administrators, fellow teachers and students. The school principal sets ethical standards for his/her behavior towards employees and holds those standards. The overall working conditions of a teacher will contribute to a school's retention of the teachers. Teacher retention benefits current and future classes. Constant turnover of teachers leads to students coping with a stream of novices in the classroom. Failure to notice specific academic problems and eventually to an environment where the teachers have to teach as much as to learn contributes to academic breakdowns. The revolving door of frequent newcomers and leavers creates a non-cohesive environment. This can be a major inhibitor to school

efficiency in promoting student development and attainment. Improved work environment encourages the best teachers to stay, promote teacher's teaching performance and commitment, and attracts people to join in the teaching profession.

7.3. Job Responsibility

Workload is the first striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. This finding signifies the result of the group discussion among school leaders and administrators. Teachers are loaded with too much teaching schedules with big class size, such as 60-80 students or more in a class. This requires many course preparations, checking of papers, computing grades, paperwork and other teaching related task. Most teachers in rural and remote areas handle mixed class, which means two or more grade levels are put in one class. Aside from that, teachers are attending meetings, fulfilling a variety of school-related responsibilities, doing administrative work, and constantly attending to the requirements of new initiatives. These result to burnout teachers. Workload creates negative effects including compromising the quality of teaching, increasing stress, and upsetting work life balance.

In line with the workload, the principal should monitor the dynamic of the students' population against the number of teachers needed in the school. The principal should monitor the number of workloads, classes and hours that teachers are assigned in the day-to-day classes. The Department of Education should remove any unnecessary job requirements to reduce workloads. Careful consideration should be given to anything that adds up to a teacher's workload. Annual surveys on teacher workload perceptions should inform decision makers. For every new initiative or responsibility added to a teacher's workload, something of equal weight should be removed. Policies that address class size should also be considered. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to revisit the school policies and standards specifically on workload.*

Instructional material used in the school is the second striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. The finding implies that some schools do not include the teachers to choose the instructional materials to be used. The grade level teachers should participate in reviewing of instructional materials for they are the frontlines in the teaching-learning process of the students. They are informed by experience and observation of the instructional materials that address the needs of the students at the grade level they are teaching. They are happy and motivated if their ideas and expertise in their field of teaching are valued and respected. Participation in the review committee would boost their morale and strengthen their confidence as teachers. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to include the grade level teachers in the committee to review the instructional materials used in the school.*

Grade curriculum is the third striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Grade curriculum should be revisited. Too heavy curricula can certainly burnout teachers. Grade curriculum takes the form of curriculum documents, syllabi, textbooks, instructional materials, and the like. To support the school in upgrading its curriculum relevant to the current time, grade level teachers should participate in the curriculum review and mapping. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to revisit the grade curriculum and include grade level teachers in the curriculum review and mapping.*

Rationale

Job responsibility is a phenomenon intrinsic to teaching task. According to Herzberg' Two-Factor Theory, job responsibility, the work itself, is a motivator factor, an intrinsic satisfier, which is within the ability, passion and interest of the teachers. Teacher can change and modify it based on the teacher's capacity to make it happen, such as instructional materials and teaching strategies, and can suggest the enhancement of the curriculum. But when teachers have no opportunities to participate in the process to enrich the instructional materials and the like for quality teaching and learning, teachers are unhappy and demotivated.

7.4. Community Linkage

Using of community resources to enrich teaching and learning is the first striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Community resources are authentic and of various forms that would enrich teaching and learning significantly. Community linkages bring in twofold community resources to enrich teaching and learning. First, the teachers bring the students into the community. The teachers would let their students engage in the community activities, while learning the importance of community involvement. This learning experience will stay in the mind of the students in their growing process, which nourishes them to become community oriented. Second, the teachers bring the community into the classroom. Teachers can invite parents, local officials, businessmen, and other stakeholders to be the speakers on topics relevant to the lessons at hand, for instance, topics on business, economics, culture, lifestyles, and money management for kids and anything that would make the lessons authentic and interesting. Parents and stakeholders who know about the topic can make up time for the class. This could be an interesting interaction and collaboration among parents, teachers and students. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to design a community resources framework enriching teaching and learning.*

Parents/stakeholders' level of school participation is the second striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Some factors why the parents' level of participation is low and unsatisfying. Some parents are working in companies, industries, and banks. Some are working in the restaurants as crew and servers, janitors. Some are working as house helpers. Some are farmers and storekeepers and so on. Perhaps, they do not have time to participate in the school events and activities. Still, some parents may have time to participate, but they are scared to go to school. They do not know how to get involved and they do not understand the value of their simple presence in the school.

Schools should help parents understand the value of their participation and cooperation as

school-partners. Parents should be properly oriented about the vision and mission of the school. They should understand better the value of their active participation and involvement in the school activities. The school should design a school program of activities that is doable and fun-filled for working parents. Parents should be provided with a copy of the program of activities, so they can mark it in their own calendar. There will also be friendly reminders from time to time. Communication is the key for a successful school-parents partnership. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to design a school program of activities.*

School's partnership with the community is the third striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. School-community partnerships are a shared responsibility and reciprocal process whereby schools and other community agencies and organizations engage families in meaningful and culturally appropriate ways. Schools and community organizations also make efforts to listen and support the parents. They make efforts to ensure them that they have the tools to be active partners in their children's school experience. Partnerships are essential for helping students achieve at their maximum potential.

While parent and community involvement has always been a cornerstone of public schools, greater recognition and support of these collaborative efforts are needed. School-community partnerships can serve to strengthen, support, and even transform individual partners. This would result in improved program quality, more efficient use of resources, and better alignment of goals and curricula. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to create school-community partnership framework.*

Rationale

The school and the community are one unit. Partnerships with all sectors of the community are essential to helping children reach their maximum potential. In other words, teachers, parents, businessmen, social workers, and the like-working together, truly make a difference in the lives of the students. Community

collaboration with schools complements and reinforces values, culture and learning opportunities for students. Teachers need to be involved in the community that they are based. They would not just stay in the four corners of the classroom, for they are needed in the community. The school and the teachers have a very crucial responsibility in bringing about change and development in the community on one hand and the community provides a lot of learning opportunities in the classroom on the other hand.

7.5. School Leadership and Management

Management assistance on difficult situations is the first striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Good management with effective school leaders has been shown to improve teaching and learning outcomes for children indirectly. Most powerfully, it influences motivation, performance and working conditions. On the other hand, incompetent and poor teacher management produces imbalances in teacher deployment mechanisms and teacher terms and conditions. Furthermore, it produces inadequate or absent administrative support, weak quality teacher training program, and high level of teacher attrition. These contribute to low motivation and morale of the teachers. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to provide adequate supervision and support for teachers by training supervisors, setting up accountability mechanisms and organizing group-learning schemes for teachers and supervisors.*

Participation of teachers in making educational decisions is the second striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. The extent to which teachers participate in decisions about school strategic plan, school policies and issues and teacher's autonomy in the classroom has an important effect on teacher's morale and confidence. Given the opportunity, teachers could influence over important policies, such as, setting discipline policy, establishing curriculum, and determining the content of in-service programs. They could also be involved in evaluating the grading system, selecting teaching techniques, determining the

amount of homework to be assigned, selecting textbooks and other instructional materials.

Simply transmitting information to teachers and expecting them to implement changes or innovations is insufficient. They need to be involved in planning educational reform and contribute their insights based on their experience. The involvement is coupled with the belief that their opinions are critical to the outcomes of the decisions. These would increase their confidence and boost their morale, for they feel valued and important. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to involve teachers in the development and reform of educational policies and program and in the decision-making pertaining to teaching, students and classroom matters.*

Moreover, Gallup Survey (2018) [33] reveals that teachers believe their input needs to carry more weight when important decisions are being made at the school level. Soliciting teacher voice should not just be about allowing teacher's voices to be heard. It should be a commitment to the idea that teachers bring critical perspectives to questions of policy and leadership practices. School-division leaders and principals should invite teacher input on every new policy that impacts teachers' work prior to implementation, with the goal of using the input to inform optimal implementation of the measure. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to create opportunities for teacher voice and leadership at both the school and division level.*

The relationship of the school leader with the teachers is the third striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Louis and Leithwood et al., (2010) [34] state that the relationship between teachers and the school principal is extremely important in high-performing schools. Humans long for care and compassion. The same thing applies to a job. When the employees feel the organization cares about them and constantly works to enhance their lives, they will be happier. However, if they are not appreciated for their work and constantly reminded of their mistakes, they will not be able to prosper. The findings suggest *a policy*

recommendation to promote good relationship between the school leaders and the teachers.

The findings of group discussion suggest that school principals must be properly screened and educated of the post they hold. They must be given intensive training and immersion on school leadership and management, not just weeks, but in several months. Schools need competent and effective principals with vision on improving the school's learning environment within a well-functioning school-based management (SBM) system. School principals play a key role in promoting quality teaching and quality education. They are the key players to advance educational equity for disadvantaged students. They must exercise leadership to prioritize school-community partnerships, improve teacher retention by identifying and eliminating barriers for teacher attrition, and enhance school capacity building. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to strengthen school leadership and management through intensive training and immersion leadership programs and quality mentoring, professional networks, and infrastructure.*

Rationale

Scholarly articles and Ofsted (2016) [35] reports have identified effective school leadership as a pivotal part of school success. Ofsted Inspections, which review the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management within a school, claim that bright young teachers are being put off the profession by poor leadership. Because they are bright, young and very perceptive people, they see only one thing - just poor leadership and management. Unless the school gets leadership and management right, then the school will still continue to have problems. Otherwise, teacher job satisfaction is likely to fall apart, and retention across the spectrum is unlikely to be sustained. This leads to weaker, ill school districts, more dissatisfied teachers, and ultimately unhealthy educational environment, from both a financial and a human capital perspective.

7.6. Professional Development

The opportunity to advance professionally is the first striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Perhaps some schools do not have yet a scheme of professional advancement program. For those schools that already have it, some might have not implemented the program equally and fairly. Access to advancing one's profession, which is moving up to higher level of education, is one of the most important aspects of job satisfaction a school can provide the teachers. Professional advancement program is essential because it ensures that teachers are continuing to be competent in their teaching profession. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to develop a professional advancement program for all teachers.*

The distribution of the training opportunity among teachers is the second striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. To provide high quality education, schools not only hire qualified teachers, but also help them improve their skills, stay current in their fields, and learn about new teaching methods. District and school supports for professional development through seminar, training and workshops are essential for quality instruction. Assuming that the schools already have the training-workshop scheme, there may be a problem in practice and implementation. Perhaps, teachers could not avail of the opportunities because they have no connection to the principal and school leaders. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to develop a training-workshop scheme and implement equally and fairly among teachers.*

Continuous career development is the third striking issue affecting teacher job satisfaction. Some courses of the professional development program should occur at the school level allowing for teacher participation in determining the content. This is crucial because some teachers of Southeast Asian countries have no formal teaching qualifications. A need to ensure that a large number of unqualified or seriously under-qualified teachers are fully trained and upgraded both academically and pedagogically through in-service and

continuing education at local, national and international level. This is essential for quality education. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to develop a continuous career development scheme for teachers.*

The findings of the group discussion reveal that teachers need more opportunities to develop their professional practice and engage in their professional community according to their disciplines, such as math, science, technology, and other. While most schools have systems in place for professional development, often these systems do not effectively serve the needs of the teachers. Professional development systems should be designed with the model of professionalism in mind. This means providing structures that encourage engagement with reflective practice and professional collaborations. These systems should also be flexible to allow for self-directed learning, so that differences in teacher experience and subject focus can be addressed. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to create structures to promote professional growth in varying disciplines.*

The findings of group discussion suggest that school should create a career progression and pathways. Teachers do not academically advance through the years. Teachers feel more engaged when they believe that the school is concerned about their growth and provides avenues to reach individual career goals while fulfilling the school's mission. A career development path provides teachers with an ongoing mechanism to enhance their skills and knowledge that can lead to mastery of their current jobs, promotions and transfers to new or different positions. Implementing career paths has a direct impact on the entire organization. This will improve morale, job satisfaction, motivation, productivity, and responsiveness in meeting departmental and organizational objectives. Career progression and pathways scheme helps the teachers direct their path, climb the ladder and move forward to be the best teachers in their teaching profession. With career progression and pathways, teachers are motivated to give out their best specifically in teaching and in any task assigned to them. The

findings suggest *a policy recommendation to create a career progression and pathways scheme for teachers.*

The findings of group discussion propose that school should provide the support system for teachers, like performance evaluation, management in handling difficult students, improving teaching skills, classroom management, teaching strategies, student assessment, and others. It will be very helpful for the teaching staff, specially the new teachers and inexperienced teachers to avail of coaching and mentoring support. The session may start from informal chat with the administrators to formal chat with the coach and/or the mentor. Alkins et al., (2006) [36] suggest the need for more support from institutions for beginning teachers in three categories: i) Instruction theory and practice; ii) Establishing a culture for learning; and iii) Teacher development/transformation. The teacher support system is inclusive to anyone who needs it. The findings suggest *a policy recommendation to develop a teacher support scheme.*

Rationale

Professional development is the strategy used to ensure that teachers continue to strengthen their practice throughout their career. Professional development provides opportunities for teachers to grow personally and professionally. It provides avenues for teachers to interact with colleagues to get a fresh vision about teaching strategy, classroom leadership, instructional leadership, student assessment, and more. Thus, professional development makes the teachers happy and motivated to achieve higher performance.

8. Conclusion

The study concludes that the issues affecting job satisfaction of the basic education teachers in Southeast Asia are found to be both motivator factors and hygiene factors based on Herzberg's Dual-Factor Theory. These issues are recurring yet diverging in terms of level of job satisfaction. But the greatest source of job dissatisfaction across the five participating countries is the hygiene factor.

Specifically, *job security* is the first source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam, but *work environment* in the Philippines. *Community linkage* is the second source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, but *job security* in the Philippines and *work environment* in Vietnam. *Job responsibility* is the third source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Philippines and Vietnam, but *work environment* in Indonesia. *Work environment* is the fourth source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, but *school leadership and management* in Indonesia, and *community linkages* in the Philippines and Vietnam. *Professional development* is the fifth source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam, but *job responsibility* in Indonesia, while *school leadership and management* in Malaysia and the Philippines. Lastly, *school leadership and management* is the sixth source of job dissatisfaction in Brunei Darussalam and Vietnam, but *professional development* in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines.

The study has educational implications for policymakers, school principals and administrators, and teachers. Policymakers play a very important role to make policies to increase teacher job satisfaction and motivation. These policies would be beneficial across countries in Southeast Asia when considering the policy recommendations in the policymaking. Furthermore, school principals and administrators have a more prominent role and function to address teachers' concerns and frustrations in the local context. A continuous check is necessary about which existing key issues are affecting the teachers significantly. In this way, teachers are happy and motivated to put out their best teaching making the learning process of the students effective and meaningful for them.

In the context of the new normal education in the COVID 19 pandemic, teachers may have critical issues affecting motivation and job satisfaction. A new research on teacher

motivation and job satisfaction during the pandemic and beyond is essential to keep the teachers happy and motivated. When teachers are happy, students are happy.

Nevertheless, the study has its own limitations. It supposedly includes the 11 Southeast Asian countries, but it is delimited to only five aforementioned countries that responded to the online survey. Another limitation of this study is that it fails to set the limit of the number of responses for each country, and it also fails to conduct a focus group discussion and/or face-to-face interview with teacher-participants.

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