

Demotivating Factors of University ESL Teachers

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Abstract

Lack of motivation may cause teachers to be less successful in teaching a foreign language. Unreasonable demands of administrators, discouraging team spirit, neglecting rewards, financial problems and many others are factors related to demotivation. This paper examines the factors that English teachers, at the university level, especially An-Najah University, find demotivating and lead to stress, teacher burnout, lack of interest, lack of accomplishment, emotional exhaustion, dissatisfaction and consequently affect their performance and achievement. Based on the results of this research recommendations are provided for the teachers and the administrators.

Introduction

For a long period of time there has been gnawing dissatisfaction among the English teachers at An-Najah National University with the prevailing conditions on the University campus. There have been constant complaints about the whole administrative, academic and social affairs that are related to the courses they teach, their relations with the students and with each other, the social and academic relations within the university, their privacy and comfort in their offices, and a long list of difficulties and hindrances they encounter every day. These difficulties have been persisting and putting a lot of pressure on the teachers affecting their performance, their achievement and their general well being. The teachers feel that these difficulties are adding up to the strain caused by the overall political turmoil which the whole region has been witnessing for decades. Handling these challenges can cause teachers to lose momentum and lose that driving force that create sustainable motivation and development.

The Purpose of the study

This study is intended to pinpoint the problems which the English teachers at An-Najah National University encounter in their daily practice. It aims to find the sources of anxiety, the obstacles, the limitations, and all the extrinsic or intrinsic demotivating factors, that may negatively affect their performance and, consequently, reflect on the students' achievement and standard. Language can best be taught and learned under proper and suitable circumstances, free of all kinds of stress and in a comfortable atmosphere for both the teacher and the learner. This study will attempt to pinpoint the teachers' worries and complaints that are considered educationally unhealthy and interfere with the process of teaching and learning and damage the whole academic atmosphere.

Limitations of the study

This study is limited in time to the period extending from the year 2001 till the present time, a period known to be full of hindrances, anxiety, frustration, despair and a strong feeling of helplessness. A period in which all teachers are forced to expend a lot of effort to maintain a standard and sustain a certain degree of achievement. This study is also limited to the English teachers at An-Najah National University because the researcher believes that this particular institution has been under tremendous pressure and has been subjected to all kinds of harassment and closures forced by the military occupation.

The Importance of the Study

This study is expected to reveal the difficulties which the teachers encounter. It will acquaint the University faculty as well as administration with the obstacles facing the teachers and definitely affecting the process of learning and have a negative effect on the teachers, the students and finally affect the standard and quality of education.

This study will contribute to the realization of the pitfalls in the process of learning and suggest a remedy for those shortcomings for the sake of enhancing the teachers' standard and their performance, improving the quality of the workplace and upgrading the level of education and the students' achievement. This study is also significant in the sense that the findings can also be shared with other academic institutions in Palestine and many other countries and can provide incentives, improvements and change to the prevailing academic conditions.

Instruments of the study

This study has employed a questionnaire which was prepared and distributed among the English teachers and administered by the researcher himself to collect the relevant data. Thus, the study has used the total population of the participants involved in the process of teaching English at An-Najah National University. On the whole there are twenty two full-time teachers in the Department-eight of them are Ph.D holders and fourteen M.A holders. They are specialized in language, linguistics or literature. The data was analyzed and presented in tables with the researcher's comments on them corroborated by the results shown in those tables. The questionnaire was divided into four domains. The first domain includes the intrinsic factors, the second deals with aspects related to the students, the third is related to the University administration and the last is about the English Department.

Review of the Literature

Definition of Motivation

Harmer (2001:51) defines motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do something". Dornyei (2001) states that motivation is thought to be responsible for "why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it".

Ryan and Deci (2000 a: 54) state that to be motivated means to be moved to do something." Suslu (2006) aptly says that unlike unmotivated people who have lost impetus and inspiration to act, motivated people are energized and activated to the end of the task. Johnson (1986:55) states that there are three theories of motivations and productivity that teacher motivation is based on.

- Expectancy theory: it is probable for a person to struggle for work if there is an expected reward.
- Equity theory: unfair treatment for their efforts and achievements makes individuals displeased.
- Job enrichment theory: the more varied and challenging their work is, the more productive employees become.

According to Dornyei (2001:157) there are four motivational aspects in terms of teacher motivation: intrinsic component, contextual factors, temporal dimension and negative influences.

Dhanavel (2006) states that in the second language learning as in every field of human learning, motivation is the critical force which determines whether a learner embarks on a task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres.

NAEN, (1999) states that education leaders need to find ways to keep teachers in the profession and keep them motivated. A motivated teacher is one who not only feels satisfied with his or her job, but also is empowered to strive for excellence and growth in instructional practice.

Sources of motivation

There are two main sources of motivation. Latham (1998):82) says that tangible benefits such as salary, fringe benefits and job security are known as extrinsic motivation. Ryan and Deci (2000b:71) state that intrinsic motivation is concerned with the performance of an activity to succeed in getting a separable outcomes which contrasts with extrinsic motivation.

The second is intrinsic motivation. Ellis (1984) defines intrinsic motivation as self respect of accomplishment and personal growth. Intrinsic motivation is likely to be increased by a sense of relatedness. Raffini (1996:8) defines relatedness as the degree of emotional security that teachers feel. Czubaj (1996:372) states that the teachers with an internal locus of control are under less stress and more successful in teaching. Therefore, the students of these teachers feel less stress and take higher scores in their assessment.

According to Dornyei (2001) intrinsic rewards are the most prominent and satisfying aspect of teaching. These motives concern the educational process, experiencing students' development as a result of the teacher's help... or increasing both the teacher's and the students' level of competence and knowledge.

White (2006) concludes that motivated teachers are mostly intrinsically motivated. As external incentives (money, status) are not substantial enough to attract and retain teachers in the profession, intrinsic motives must be the key to provide gratification to teachers and help them to find pleasure in their job.

Tziava (2003) contends that it comes naturally that the more motivated the teacher is, the more he/she would be successful in giving the students the right guidelines which will lead them to the acquiring of the target language. He continues to say that a motivated teacher provides more motivating learning experiences and thus, produces more well prepared and motivated students of the target language. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) states that only motivated teachers can produce motivated learners.

Dornyei (2001, p. 165) aptly states that teaching is one of the most stressful professions. This is true in the case of university teachers as well. Ofoegbu (2004) concludes that motivation could be viewed as any force that could reduce tension, stress, worries and frustration arising from a problematic situation in a person’s life. Further, he explains that teacher motivation could be referred to as those factors that operate within the school system which if not made available to the teacher could hamper performance, cause stress, discontentment and frustration all of which subsequently reduce classroom effectiveness and student quality output.

Sources of Demotivation

Dornyei (2005, P.143) defines demotivation as a “specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action”. Deci and Ryan (1985) use a similar term (amotivation), which means, “the relative absence of motivation that is not caused by a lack of initial interest but rather by the individuals experiencing feelings of incompetence and helplessness when faced with the activity”. Yan (2009) differentiates between the two terms in the sense that amotivation is related to general outcomes and expectations that are unrealistic for some reason, whereas demotivation concerns specific external causes. He further explains that a demotivated learner is someone who was once motivated but has lost his or her commitment or interest for some reason. Demotives are counterparts of motives.

Kiziltepe (2008) conducted a study to examine sources of motivation and demotivation among teachers at a public university in Istanbul. The results showed that students are the main source of motivation and demotivation.

Willos (2011) states that overcrowded classrooms have more negative effects than any positive. They cause disturbance for students, embarrassment for some to participate and in general the students’ development, confidence and understanding. In addition to that it is a source of stress for the teacher.

Geitenbeek (2011) argues that overcrowded classroom can negatively affect both teachers and students. They can increase the teacher’s burn-out rate, stress and exhaustion and can put strain, both physically and mentally on the teacher.

Lynch (2008) lists three critical problems in English language learning and teaching. They are lack of learner motivation, insufficient time, resources and materials and finally overcrowded classrooms.

Menyhart (2008) says that stress can be the most demotivating factor that can sometimes prevent teachers from adequate teaching.

Results and Findings

Table 1: Sample distribution according to the qualification variable

Qualification	Frequency	Percentages
Ph.D	8	36.4
M.A	14	63.6
Total	22	100

The total number of teachers who participated in this study is 22 out of which 8 are PhD holders, whereas 14 are M.A holders. The M.A holders are the majority and form 63.6%.

Table 2: Sample distribution according to the field of specialization variable

Field of Specialization	Frequency	Percentages
Language	9	40.9
Linguistics	6	27.3
Literature	7	31.8
Total	22	100

The results presented in table 2 show that 9 of the staff members are specialized in language, 7 are in literature and 6 in linguistics.

Table 3: Sample distribution according to the years of experience variable

Years of Experience	Frequency	Percentages
Below five years	2	9.1
5–10 years	3	13.6
Above 10 years	17	77.3
Total	22	100

The figures in this table reveal that the majority of the teachers have been teaching for more than 10 years and only 5 of them had less than 10 years of experience.

Table 4: Means and percentages related to domain 1 (Extrinsic Factors)

No.	Item	Means *	Percentage	Degree
1	The overall political situation affects my performance negatively.	3.73	74.6	High
2	Commuting to work every day puts extra strain on me.	3.64	72.8	High
3	The students' non-curricular activities in the campus put me under stress and disturb me.	4.09	81.8	Very high
4	The students' political divisions create a tense atmosphere.	3.64	72.8	High
Total		3.77	75.4	High

* Maximum response is (5) points

A quick look at the results revealed in table no. 4 reveals that the degree of response to the extrinsic factors ranges between very high and high. All these factors are related to the political turmoil the whole region has been undergoing for many decades. Regional problems or local political divisions put extra psychological strain on the teachers. All kinds of harassment and humiliation from the Israeli military occupation forces and Jewish settlers create a sense of frustration and fury among the Palestinian teachers. Many of them, on daily basis, come in direct contact and clashes with the Israeli soldiers and settlers commuting to work and having to cross several checkpoints and be subjected to interrogation and incredible sorts of humiliating measures, detention, torture and beating. In this respect the students suffer much more than the teachers but all the same it all reflects on the teachers as well.

Table 5: Means and percentages related to domain 2 (Students Factors)

No.	Item	Means *	Percentage	Degree
5	I feel that I have to exert extra effort to make my students keep up with me and understand	4.14	82.8	Very high
6	The students' low level of comprehension and standard sometimes frustrates me	4.60	92.0	Very high
7	The students are not always cooperative and responsive.	4.18	83.6	Very high
8	I feel that my efforts in teaching do not usually yield good results	3.09	61.8	Moderate
9	I feel that the students are not highly motivated to learn	4.09	81.8	Very high
10	Some students' bad behavior puts me under strain	3.23	64.6	Moderate
11	I feel that there is always a barrier between the students and me	2.09	41.8	Very low
Total		3.63	72.6	High

*Maximum response is (5) points

The results presented in table 5 show some very alarming results. The degree of response to items 5, 6, 7 and 9 is very high. These results reflect the fact that the students' standard, performance, response and achievement are very low. These results create a sense dissatisfaction, apathy and helplessness among the teachers. This matter calls for the urgent intervention of the University administration to try to pinpoint the causes of these negative and appalling results and take all possible and swift actions to rectify the prevailing conditions. These are unquestionable results since they emanate from the teachers who are the best qualified people to judge their students' standard, performance and achievement. They are the ones who know well whether their students are motivated to learn or not. Low motivation and low standard create a sense of frustration and apathy, especially when the teachers feel helpless to do anything. Cooperation between the teachers and the administration can yield good results and working together to enhance the students' motivation can eventually pay off if both the parties approach it seriously and consistently.

Table 6: Means and percentages related to domain 3 (Administrative Factors).

No.	Item	Means *	Percentage	Degree
12	I feel that I am not adequately paid.	4.14	82.8	Very high
13	I have never been sent on a training course abroad.	3.50	70.0	High
14	The administrative regulations hinder my progress.	3.55	71.0	High
15	I feel that whatever results I achieve are not appreciated and rewarded by the administration.	3.59	71.8	High
16	I have no privacy and feel uncomfortable in my office.	3.59	71.8	High
17	The university does not have any recreational programs for us.	4.00	80.0	Very high
18	I have not been given any scholarship to update my knowledge abroad.	3.86	77.2	High
19	I have applied for allowances to go to conferences, meetings, symposiums abroad and I was denied that request.	2.59	51.8	Low
20	I feel that the promotion regulations are not fair.	3.77	75.4	High
Total		3.62	74.4	High

*Maximum response is (5) points

The results presented in table 6 show that the teachers expressed a high degree of dissatisfaction with their financial condition. One important factor that contributes to job satisfaction is that a teacher should be paid adequately. Financial difficulties cause a lot of stress and anxiety and thus, lead to a low level of concentration and achievement. Johnson (1990) states that low salaries are a major source of dissatisfaction for many teachers. The response to item no. 13 shows that 70% of the teachers have never been given the opportunity to go on a training course abroad. Abdullah, Zainol Abidin, Luan, Majid and Atan (2006) state that a highly motivated teacher with the right attitude would always strive for excellence. Professional development not only motivates but also helps teachers to keep up-to-date with effective practices in teaching and learning.

The degree of response to item no. 14 is high. It shows that teachers complained about rigid administrative regulations which hinder the teachers' academic progress. For example, teachers who wish to pursue their higher studies have to submit a proposal to the University council of deans for their approval of the subject and the field to be pursued and the university where a candidate wishes to continue his education. The degree of response to item no. 15 is high and alarming. Teachers feel that their efforts and achievements are not usually appreciated or rewarded by the administration. Rewarding achievers is one important way of enhancing the teachers' motivation and consolidating their efforts. Appreciating the teachers' achievements is a very effective kind of incentive and the teachers' response to such incentive is always positive and can generate more commitment to the university and more dedication to the job they do. 71.8% of the teachers indicated that they have no privacy and feel uncomfortable in their offices. Providing the teachers with facilities and means of comfort in their offices is the least the administration can do for them. The response to item no. 17 is very high and this shows that the University administration does not take into consideration the workers' social life which creates a feeling of the absence of the sense of anomie on the campus, disconnectedness and lack of recreational time. Similarly, the result revealed in item no. 18 shows that more than 77 % of the teachers were not given any scholarship to continue their higher education which is considered an essential step in teacher development programs. Moreover, the majority indicated that they were denied allowances for attending conferences or meetings abroad.

The degree of response to item no. 20 is very high and shows that the rigid promotion regulations stood in front of the teachers' development and promotion. Recently, these regulations were made even tougher than before, giving the teachers a very slim chance of getting promoted. In the last few years the points required for getting a promotion from assistant professor to associate have been raised from 35 points to 45 then recently to 55 points. It makes it very difficult for anyone to get promoted and it takes years of strenuous work to be able to satisfy the requirements.

Table 7: Means and percentages related to domain 4 (Department Factors).

No.	Item	Means *	Percentage	Degree
21	I feel that I am overloaded with classes	3.77	75.4	High
22	Overcrowded sections limit my achievement and put me under strain	4.32	86.4	Very high
23	I usually teach courses unrelated to my main specialization	3.00	60.0	Moderate
24	In addition to teaching, I usually do other work, like advising, proctoring, course committee works and so on	4.41	88.2	Very high
25	Certain courses I teach are sometimes imposed on me	3.18	63.6	Moderate
26	There is lack of equipment necessary for teaching in the department	3.27	65.4	Moderate
27	Things necessary for my academic progress, like references, periodicals, computers...etc are not adequate	3.50	70.0	High
28	Interrelations between the colleagues within the department and the university are not as they should be	3.95	79.0	High
29	I feel that my ideas in the department and the university are sometimes not taken into consideration	3.86	77.2	High
Total		3.70	74.0	High

*Maximum response is (5) points

The results revealed in table no. 7 show that the teachers indicated that they are overloaded with classes and other kinds of work such as advising, proctoring exams, course committees, exam coordination and so on. The result revealed in item no. 22 indicates a very serious problem. Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the number of students in their sections. Overcrowded classrooms make it very difficult for teachers to implement any new methods or techniques in teaching. They do not give the teachers any space to maneuver or move chairs around to try new techniques and activities or role playing in the classroom. Moreover, crowded classrooms are very difficult to control. This in addition to the result shown in item no. 10 that the bad behavior of some students puts extra strain on the teachers and makes it more difficult to manage the classroom and consequently, reflects badly on the students' results in their exams and their performance and comprehension of the lesson and the overall academic atmosphere.

The degree of response to item no. 25 is moderate but nevertheless, it shows that more than 60% of the teachers indicated that some of the courses they teach are sometimes imposed on them or outside their field of specialization. The results shown in item no. 26 show that more than 65% said that there is lack of equipment in the department which is necessary for teaching. In response to item no. 27, the results revealed that there are not enough references, journals and periodicals in the university library which are necessary for their research and academic development. The degree of response to item no. 28 is high and shows that there are problems in the department and the university regarding interrelations between the teachers themselves. Finally, more than 77 % of the teachers indicated that their ideas in the department and the University as well are not taken into consideration.

Table 8: Means and percentages for all domains

No.	Domain	Means *	Percentage	Degree
1	Extrinsic Factors	3.77	75.4	High
2	The students	3.63	72.6	High
3	The administration	3.62	72.4	High
4	The department	3.70	74.0	High
Total		3.67	73.4	High

A summary of the results presented in the previous tables shows the means and percentages for all the four domains. The degree of response in all the domains is high and the total average of all the items in the questionnaire that represent all the difficulties is also high.

This is very disturbing and alarming and calls for a speedy intervention of the University administration to start very seriously addressing these problems before they accentuate further.

Conclusion

The figures revealed in this study speak for themselves. It is very obvious that the teachers at An-Najah University are under a lot of strain because of a number of factors. It is very clear that there are many sources of stress and anxiety prevailing on the campus. These sources have been unanimously identified. Teachers encounter these difficulties on a daily basis and all the time. Some of the results revealed in this study are alarming and call for urgent intervention from the administration, otherwise, they will have further negative impact on the teachers' health, psychological well-being and the academic outcomes. These problems create a sense of detachment, lack of commitment and lack of dedication to the institution as well as to the whole academic process. When they persist, they create a sense of indifference, apathy, disconnectedness and create a gap between the teachers and the administration on one hand, and between the teachers and the students on the other.

Recommendations

After this thorough discussion of the difficulties and demotivating factors the English teachers encounter and the impact these problems have on the teachers, on the whole process of teaching and learning and eventually, on the academic standard and the quality of education, the following recommendations can be provided for both the teachers and the University administration.

Recommendations for the Teachers:

Based on the results, it is obvious that the teachers encounter some very chronic problems which they have no hand in and can't do anything about them, such as the overall political situation locally and regionally or the students' political divisions. As far as the students' non-curricular activities which put the teachers under strain and annoy them, it is recommended that:

1. The teachers should try as much as possible to distance themselves from such activities and lessen their involvement or interest in the students' political activities and factional conflicts which do not come under the academic category. During such disturbances, celebrations and campaigns, the teachers can distance themselves until such activities are over.
2. Low level of comprehension and low level of motivation are interrelated. Teachers are recommended to try harder to find ways to motivate the students through extra-curricular activities, such as games, acting in plays, rewards, role playing and so on.
3. Teachers should devise new ways to make their students more cooperative and responsive by showing them films, using audio-visual aids, using rewarding techniques and provide incentives to increase the students' motivation and involvement which will automatically reflect on the teachers themselves.
4. Teachers should resort to every possible means to curb the students who misbehave and who not only put pressure on the teachers but also distract their classmates. Teachers can punish these unruly students and seek the help of the administration to put an end to their bad behavior by applying the university regulations strictly to such bad behavior, even if it takes to dismiss them from their sections or call them to their offices and reprimand them.

Recommendations for the Administration

1. The University administration should take into consideration the fact that the teachers' cannot perform their tasks efficiently if they are not adequately paid and financial difficulties form the major part of the load on the teachers' backs.
2. The University administration is recommended to take care of the teachers' training and try to devise programs to hold regular training courses, locally and abroad, to give the teachers a chance to update their knowledge, to hone their skills and upgrade their academic standard.
3. It is recommended that the University administration relax the regulations that hinder the teachers' progress, such as the promotion regulations which the teachers find unfair and almost impossible to obtain which form an important incentive towards self development.

4. The University administration is recommended to change their policy of indifference to the teachers' academic achievements and start rewarding achievers and show appreciation of their good results.
5. The University administration should take into consideration the teachers' comfort and privacy in their offices and try to provide them with the necessary equipment and facilities.
6. It is recommended that the University administration should allocate enough budgets for travel allowances to conferences, meetings and scholarships.
7. It is recommended that the university administration should limit the number of students in each section to the international standard or something close to that for maximizing the benefit and relieving the teachers of some of the pressure in the classroom and outside where the teachers have to deal with lots of exam papers and home assignments.
8. When distributing the courses in the department, the chairman should take into account the teachers' preferences and not try to force them to teach courses against their wishes and which are outside their fields of specializations.
9. The teachers should be relieved of some of the work they do other than teaching, such as proctoring exams for many hours, committee work and unified exam work and corrections or else be rewarded for such tasks.
10. The University administration should provide these departments with the necessary equipment and audio-visual aids that facilitate the process of teaching and learning.
11. It is recommended that the English department, the Language Center and the Department of Teaching Methods should have their own library, with books, periodicals, journals and references.
12. The University administration should seriously tackle the problem of social and academic interrelations among the colleagues in these departments. Entertainment programs, social gatherings, art functions can be held as a means of recreation and relief from work pressure.
13. It is recommended that the teachers' ideas and suggestions be taken into consideration and teachers should be encouraged to become effective partners in the decision making in the departments as well as the University.

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