

(De)Motivation Among Physical Education Teachers In Higher Education In Nepal

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Abstract

The present study aims to explore the state of (de)motivation among physical education teachers in higher education in Nepal. Qualitative research design has been used in this study. This study heavily relied on the first-hand data that were obtained directly from participants. The physical education teachers teaching at the University level under Tribhuvan University were considered to be the study population. A messenger group including 109 teachers was created in April, 2020 by the teachers of physical education. This group was selected purposively to get information discussed in the group chat. Similarly, in total, 9 teachers were purposively selected from three types of colleges-constitutional, community, and privately run, for an In-depth interview. The qualitative data were analyzed thematically.

The study found that physical education teachers have multifaceted problems. Teachers were found to be worried about the likelihood of job loss due to the decreasing rate of student enrollment in health and physical education. Most of the teachers were found to be hopeless, and they were seeking alternative jobs. Teachers do not have opportunities to excel in physical education as an academic discipline since the university administration is reluctant to provide adequate facilities. Most of the teachers from community and private colleges were underpaid as per the University rules, and their recognition as the university's teachers had become a great issue.

Key words: (de)motivation, physical education, teaching, faculty, profession

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I. Introduction

Physical education (PE) is considered the mother of all education systems since it started with the emergence of human beings (Gallahue, & Donnelly, 2007). It is concerned with natural activities. It is not only regarded as a daily activity but also a broader system that provides students with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and fitness to lead a healthy lifestyle. The main aim of physical education is to lead people toward a healthy, productive, and active life.

Education is a "tri-polar-teacher, students, and curriculum; process" (Dewey, 1974; p. 88). All these pillars should be equally developed to foster the education system. These pillars are interdependent, if one of them is poor, the whole system becomes paralyzed. Students are the first of the pillars, and teachers are the medium between students and the curriculum. Teachers help link the two pillars. In this regard, the teacher's role is crucial to making the whole system functional. Moreover, as physical education is a combination of science and art, it covers theory and practice (Wuest, Bucher, & Fisette, (2003). The physical education teacher should be knowledgeable, skilled, physically fit, and highly motivated (Gold, Petrella, Angel, Ennis, & Woolley, 2012).

The term motivation has been frequently used in the educational process. It is defined as an energy that drives us to act enthusiastically. It is also called the driving force of the people, which forces them to do something efficiently and effectively (Molden, & Dweck, 2000). However, we hardly find a common understanding of motivation among the scholars. According to Williams and Burden (1997; p.25), "there are two types of motivation: initiating motivation and sustaining motivation. Initiating motivation triggers people to do something, whereas sustaining motivation is concerned with the drive for persisting or continuing in acting something". Similarly, Dornyei and Ushioda (2011; p. 32), suggest that there are two "fundamental dimensions of motivation: direction and magnitude of human behavior". In this context, motivation can be viewed in two different ways: "why people take steps for action and how long they persist in the activity" (Williams & Burden, 1997; p. 12).

In the teaching profession, motivation is viewed as pivotal for the quality of teaching and learning. In regard to teacher motivation, Sinclair (2008) identified three components: "attraction, retention, and concentration." According to him, attraction refers to what factors drive people to the teaching profession, retention is viewed as how long teachers sustain in the profession, and concentration refers to how enthusiastically they engage with their work in the teaching profession. Similar arguments to those of Dornyei and Ushiod (2011) can be found regarding the teacher's motivation. They also emphasized the two dimensions of teacher motivation:

"motivation to teach and motivation to remain in the profession". On the other hand, humanitarian theorist Abraham Maslow argued that needs play a central role in motivation (Neher, 1991).

In Nepal, the College of Education was established in 1956 with the aim of producing qualified teachers required for the teaching profession. That institution was converted into the institution of education, under Tribhuvan University after the implementation of the New Education System Plan in 1971 and then renamed the Faculty of Education in 1982. Since its establishment as the Faculty of Education (FoE), it has been producing trained teachers with content knowledge and pedagogical skills. FoE's programs were designed as per the needs of the teachers needed at the school and university levels (FoE, 2022). Students get the opportunity to acquire both content knowledge and teaching skills. The programs at FoE are considered pre-service training. The physical education program is one of the important programs run under the FoE. At the moment, seven different Universities have education programs at various levels. However, only Tribhuvan University has run physical education programs at master's degree level. A very few studies (Gaire, Khanal & Ghimire, 2022; Phyak and Khanal, 2021) have been conducted covering the teachers' motivation in Nepal. There has not been a single such study done so far in physical education in Nepal. Thus, this study aims to uncover the status of (de) motivation of PE teachers in Nepal.

II. Methodology

This study is underpinned by the 'interpretivist paradigm' (Creswell, 2007) as the understanding of the motivation of PE teachers has depended on their interpretation. I deployed 'exploratory qualitative research designed' (Merriam, 2009) in this study. This study heavily relied on the first-hand data that was obtained directly from participants. The study population was considered to be the physical education teachers teaching at the University level under the Tribhuvan University.

Sampling Procedure

A messenger group including 109 teachers was created in April, 2020 by the teachers of physical education. This was an open forum for discussions about physical education related issues. This group was selected purposively to get information discussed in the group chat. However, all 109 members were not active but could see the message. Only 54 members had put their views on the chat. The opinions put on the chat were unorganized, however, I used this information conveniently based on my research questions. Group chats from April 20, 2020 to April 20, 2023 (3 years) were picked up as the information for this study. As I was also one of the members of this group, I could thoroughly understand the context. To uncover the experiences of the teachers, I used to leave some thought-provoking questions regarding motivation. Most of the discussions were based on the questions I put in the chat-box.

Moreover, in total, nine teachers were also purposively selected from three types of colleges-constitutional, community, and private, for an in-depth Interview. These teachers were also members of the messenger group and took part in the group discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted via Zoom Meeting's online application.

Tools for Data Collection

The group chat study technique and in-depth-interview were used as the tools of this study. Firstly, group chats were studied thoroughly. Secondly, nine in-depth interviews were conducted. In order to facilitate the interview, open-ended guidelines were made.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Firstly, I went through the data in the group chats, and relevant data were picked up. I got some insight from these data and based on the ideas generated from the chat data, I conducted the in-depth interview. The raw data obtained through the in-depth interview were transcribed into Nepali, edited as necessary, and then translated into English. Some codes were generated by using the Atlas.ti software, and related codes were combined into sub-themes and themes by thoroughly studying the narratives. The results were compared and contrasted with those of previous studies.

Ethical Consideration

The ethical fundamentals of qualitative research have been maintained throughout the research. Participants' consent was taken to use the group chat, maintaining the anonymity of the participants. Similarly, online consent forms were filled out before the in-depth interview with the participants. The personal identities of the participants have not been revealed in the research.

III. Results

As mentioned in the methodology, participants in this study were university teachers teaching at colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University. Some of them were permanent (4) and some of them were part time (4) teachers at constitutional colleges. Moreover, some teachers were working in private (15) and community owned (31) colleges. These all types of teachers were doing the same job, but the facilities provided, the social security they have, and their socio-economic status might vary.

Motivation is an internal force within people that encourages them to perform actions to achieve a certain goal. Motivation is perceived as a great highway to success (Skinner, & Belmont, 1993). Motivation plays a crucial role in the teaching profession. In this section, the level of (de)motivation of PE teachers has been analyzed. Through data analysis, four themes emerged. These were hope for the future, administrative behavior, university policy, remuneration, facilities, and professional development.

Hope for the Future

Hope is a feeling of trust that, according to Paulo Freire (1971), collective and motivates people to achieve a common goal (Jackson, 2007). In this study, PE teachers were found to be demotivated due to a lack of hope for the future. Most of the teachers agreed that they do not have the confidence to motivate students to study physical education. Further, they realized that they have lost the morale to tell the children to join the physical education program as their future is uncertain in this area. In this context, a teacher raised the question that "*not only have we juniors lost our hope, but our seniors also do not have the moral strength to ask others to join the PE program. Do seniors send their children to M.Ed. in physical education?*"

Teachers were found to be hopeless, and they were seeking alternative jobs too. Among the 54 teachers, 12 said that they are going to leave the teaching job sooner since they have lost hope in this profession. They argue that they are not able to fulfill their basic needs through this profession. One of the twelve teachers said "Studying physical education means wasting our time".

Why are the PE teachers losing hope? This is a critical question raised in the study. Basically, four reasons were identified that cause PE teachers to lose hope. a. decreasing number of students in PE b. less amount of salary; c. uncertainty of the job; d. inferiority complex among the teachers who teach part time in affiliated colleges.

Some participants have expressed a little bit different ideas and tried to console other teachers, saying that they should not lose hope. They argued that the future depends on their hands. If they are updated and capable, they can create space in the future. At this point, a teacher said (Contract teacher, constitutional college) "*There is no university in the world that guarantees the future of the graduates; rather, students themselves need to guarantee their future lives.*" Similarly, a permanent teacher said, "*Instead of criticizing the subjects and seniors, we should think about how we can revamp our subject.*"

Administrative Behaviour

Administration is the "range of activities connected with organizing and supervising the way that an organization or institution functions" (Bozeman, & Youtie, 2020; p. 34). It is a kind of "managerial function that is basically executed by administrators" (Petridou, 2020). In colleges, administrators may be academicians or purely administrators. Generally, administrators execute their functions as per the rules and regulations of the organization. On the other hand, administration is a sort of human behavior. Administrative leaders' attitude, skill, and knowledge affect relationships with other stakeholders. All the participants in this research reported that the administration of colleges and universities is not positive about physical education. They claimed that the university's administration has a negative attitude towards physical education. One teacher (private college) said,

Once, the campus chief said that physical education has become an unnecessary burden for colleges, and needs extra money, but we cannot afford it. Students do not need practical classes; they can practice themselves. Even though we do not need a specific physical education teacher, anyone can teach this subject.

This sort of false understanding is prevalent among most administrators. It shows that the university's administration is to some extent a factor in the demotivation of PE teachers, which prevents physical education from growing to its fullest.

The PE teachers were found to be irritated with the behavior of the health education (HE) teachers. As reported by the teachers, there is poor cooperation among the teachers of PE and HE in the colleges. In some cases, HE teachers are afraid of PE teachers because they think that PE teachers take away their job opportunities. On the other hand, PE teachers also think that HE teachers are teaching their subject, so, they have lost the opportunity. In this case, the administration does not show an interest in facilitating a harmonious environment. In this context, a part time teacher (constitutional college) shared his experience as;

I would like to tell you one thing, I am currently teaching at Hanuman College (pseudo name). I asked the health teachers to provide me with the PE class. He refused to give me the class. He said that he would not

give the subject to me as he has been teaching this subject for more than half a decade. If he is forced to leave this PE class to me, he warned that he would take action and run a storm.

The above data indicates that there is still a battle between the teachers and administrators, who enjoy seeing the battle. This raises the question of who is supposed to give and who should take?

University Policy and Remuneration

As Maslow said, the fundamental needs of the people should be fulfilled to enter the next step (Maslow & Lewis, 1987). In this regard, the teacher's salary is paramount to fulfilling the basic needs of teachers. Most of the teachers, except the permanent ones, were underpaid. They have to go to a couple of colleges to teach; otherwise, they have nothing to do with such low remuneration. One part time teacher (community college) shared his problem as;

I teach at four colleges. I take 6 periods in total per day. Only 300 rupees are paid with tax for one period. Saturdays and other holidays are not counted as periods. I have to go to college on my motorcycle. At least 2 liters of gasoline are consumed per day. Saving money is very contemptible. How can we sustain this low income?

The university has not set a minimum remuneration norm for teachers. Most of the private colleges in Nepal are profit oriented. Students have to pay fees to colleges. Teachers have to work hard for a low salary; otherwise, they would be fired. It can be seen that the college owners tend to generate surplus value, but the teachers (a kind of intellectual worker) are "exploited and alienated from the surplus value" (Marx & Engels, 1848). Teachers get minimum wages (salaries) for their livelihood. In the same way, constitutional and community colleges are not exceptions. According to a part time teacher from a constitutional college, "*part-time teachers get only 150 rupees per period with tax*". This depicts the very worst condition of part time teachers, even in constitutional colleges where the government provides grants.

The demotivation of teachers is a stumbling block to quality education. Data show that most physical education teachers are heavily demotivated. None of the participants in this research are complacent about the teaching profession. The reasons for the demotivation of teachers may be sociological, psychological, economic, and so on. However, in this study, economic and sociological factors have been taken into consideration while analyzing the obtained data. There was a common voice among all the participants that the university's policy is a primary reason for inhibiting teachers from complying with their jobs. One teacher said that;

the university's policy is discriminatory, it does not count part time teachers as university teachers. There are no other facilities, like festival allowance, leave, or study leave. Teachers at community colleges and private colleges are not even recognized as university's teachers. There is no promotion system at all. If some campuses have a promotion system, this is not recognized by the university or government.

All the participants mentioned that PE teachers are treated as second class teachers and other subject teachers are first class in colleges. One teacher (private college) said, "*Once I was called PT master by the campus chief. The campus chief asked me to teach PT to other students too (non HPE).*" On the other hand, most of the college administrators are not positive about practical classes. The physical education curriculum has provisioned double periods for practical classes. Participants reported that none of the community or private colleges have ensured that provision. Moreover, there is no legal provision to force colleges to implement such a provision in practice.

Overpoliticization and nepotism are prevalent in colleges. Most of the colleges are tagged with specific political parties. Campus chiefs are appointed based on political affiliation rather than their leadership qualities. Almost all colleges appoint teachers based on shares among the political parties. A teacher said "*If someone wants to get a job at the college, he/she needs to be affiliated with any political parties*". Participants reported that meritocracy is almost null in the teacher hiring process. It indicates that talents without 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, & Passeron, 1977) and 'social capital' (Halpern, 2005). hardly have access to the job.

Facilities and Professional Development

Physical education teachers have been facing tremendous academic problems in colleges. Health and physical education are integrated at the bachelor's level. In most of the colleges, teachers from health education backgrounds have been teaching physical education. Lacking skill in games and sports, they generally do not take practical classes. They influence external evaluators by using political force as well as individual relationships. One teacher (community college) said;

I have been teaching at this college for 5 years, but I have not had a chance to teach physical education so far. I have to teach health education and the foundations of education. A teacher from a health background teaches physical education. I have been constantly requesting the faculty head to give me the class of physical education, but my appeal has not been seriously heard.

It shows that the value of physical education has not been profoundly understood at the college level. As reported by the teachers, a conducive environment was not present in the colleges for professional development.

If the subject teacher does not get a chance to teach his/her specific subject, how can professional development be possible?

Participants reported that most of the colleges run health and physical education programs without adequate facilities. It was found that some colleges have just one building. They do not even have breathing space on college premises, for them, the playground is out of the question. In this context, one teacher (private college) said, "*I teach at four colleges, only one college has a playground. Other colleges also do not have equipment and supplies.*" Without basic facilities, how can we improve quality education? The evidence depicts that the main problem with physical education is at its root or base. If the base is not strong enough, how can a robust building be built?

Participants reported that they have rarely been involved in professional development programs such as training, seminars, research, etc. Permanent and contract teachers of constitutional colleges were found to have participated in some academic activities organized by the colleges. However, Teachers from public and privately run colleges were found to rarely participate in such activities. Most of the teachers from public and privately run colleges (29) have not published a single research article or even conducted any research except their master's thesis. In the interview and group charts, research and publication-related issues were barely raised. It shows that either they are unaware of the value of research and publication in academia or they still have to fulfill the basic needs for which they do not feel a higher-level need.

IV. Discussions

Various studies (Puhse, & Gerber, 2005; Hellison, 2011) found that there is a correlation between teachers' motivation and students' learning achievement. It shows that teachers who have high motivation to do the teaching job have high performance. PE teachers in Nepal have been found to be demotivated in their job, and they show their dissatisfaction in many ways. The inferiority complex was also vividly seen in the PE teachers, which results in relatively low performance. This is consistent with the findings of a study conducted by Srikangsih and Setyadi in 2015, which found that "motivation has a significant influence on the performance of the lectures at the State University of East Kalimantan. Similarly, teachers who have low motivation suggest that the teacher has low performance" (Srikangsih and Setyadi, 2015).

The part time teachers in constitutional colleges and all the teachers in community and private colleges are not satisfied enough with the job. The guidelines of Tribhuvan University regarding the establishment of colleges have precisely suggested the minimum requirements, but most of the private and community colleges have not had a basic infrastructure. In addition, physical education is a subject that should be taught practically because it requires fieldwork, equipment, and supplies. If these basic facilities are not available at college, it can be adamantly said that they are not following the Universities' rules and regulations on the one hand and cheating the students on the other. The existing policy of the university was found not to be supportive of the PE teachers enthusiasm for the teaching profession. This finding is consistent with a study (Wei, Ji, Wang, Zhang, & You, 2022; pp: 5–6) that found that "the existing laws have the problems of insufficient specificity for the protection of physical education teachers, unclear legal status, generally low salary and remuneration, imperfect policy mechanisms of personnel change, etc."

It is a fact that ideas cannot be generated on an empty stomach. Similarly, the theory of the hierarchy of needs suggests that in order to step forward, the fundamental needs ought to be fulfilled. This study found that money seems to be a significant factor in teachers' motivation. However, PE teachers in Nepal were poorly paid, and as reported by the Teachers, they were demotivated because of the low salary. This finding is similar to the study done by Adjei and Amofa (2014), who "found that wages and salaries were the most influential motivational factors among teachers." The finding of the present study is also supported by Akintoye and Matthias (2001), who assert that "money remains the most significant motivational strategy."

The results mentioned above depict that the teachers teaching in affiliated colleges, particularly private and community colleges, are extremely demotivated. Herzberg states in his two-factor theory that the two main factors, satisfaction and hygiene, determine the motivation of any personnel on the job. According to him, the components of job satisfaction are achievement, recognition; work itself, responsibility, advancement, growth, and hygiene factors, which include supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, salary, status, and security. Looking at the condition of Nepalese University teachers from Herzberg's perspective, it can be vividly seen that both satisfaction and hygiene have been rarely found in colleges, so teachers are unsatisfied with the job.

Acharya (2015), conducted qualitative research on students' willingness to enter the teaching profession in Nepal. This study found that the students studying at the master's level in physical education had strong willpower to pursue the teaching profession. Most of them had a dream to be lecturers at university. If we compare this result with the result of the present study, it seems contradictory. This idea implies that physical education teachers are enthusiastically pursuing the job, but the working environment is inhibiting further development. Thus, it was suggested that an equal and just working environment be created, so that teachers can flourish themselves. This shows that the problem is not in the aptitude of the students pursuing teaching jobs but in the

working environment. In order to create a congenial working environment at the university, institutional development is required.

Similarly, Khanal and Phyak (2021) conducted research on teacher satisfaction at the school level. The research found that 37 % of teachers in Nepal were unsatisfied with their jobs. 56 percent of teachers were found to be partially satisfied with the job. Comparing this result with the result of the present study, it can be said that teachers' dissatisfaction has become a deep-rooted problem in Nepal, ranging from school level to higher education. Therefore, this problem is identified as being timely and properly addressed by the concerned organizations in order to transform the education system in Nepal.

The teacher's motivation plays a major role in directing the instructional activities and research work. Exposure of the teacher can help enhance their professional development. Gaire, Khanal, & Ghimire (2022) conducted research on the practices and challenges of teacher motivation in community colleges in Nepal. The study found that "most of the teachers were found to be less motivated, and they were seeking permanent jobs in constituent colleges. However, community colleges were trying to encourage teachers to learn from others' best practices, yet they were unable to implement those practices in real life due to a lack of resources" (Gaire, Khanal & Ghimire, 2022). The finding of this study is consistent with their study, all the participants agreed that exposure visits can help them learn creative ideas from others practices; however, none of the participants had the official opportunity to visit the model colleges within the country or abroad.

V. Conclusion

Motivation is a key to success in any profession. However, physical education teachers in Nepal have multifaceted problems, they are not able to focus their attention on the teaching profession since their job is not secured. The study identified some demotivating factors, and other studies have supported these findings. The inferiority complex was also vividly seen in the PE teachers, which results in relatively low performance. Teachers teaching in community and private colleges are underpaid and overstretched. The teachers' dissatisfaction with the authority has become a deep-rooted problem in Nepal. It was suggested that, the subject of physical education should be taken into consideration as an academic discipline. In order to create a congenial working environment at the university, institutional development is required.

Declaration of Competing Interest

I declare that I have no competing interests.

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