



Push and pull factors towards a master's or a doctorate degree

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Abstract

Earning a doctorate or a master's degree takes time, patience and hard work. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that only a small fraction of the teacher-population holds a graduate education degree. But, educators have to continually develop as lifelong learners through engagement in graduate studies (Harvey, 2005). However, over time teachers participate less in professional development (Schambach & Blanton, 2001). This study identified the personal, employment and graduate education profiles; motivations; and the forces that affect the Secondary School Teachers' quest for a graduate education degree. Descriptive-correlational design was adopted. Findings revealed that Family/Child Care Responsibilities and Course Fees are the forces perceived to restrain the pursuit of a graduate education degree. The driving forces are Family's Support and Desire to increase Existing Knowledge. The strongest motivators for graduate students are for Professional Growth/Enhancement, and Prospect for Career Advancement/Promotion. Ethnicity, employment status and Present Rank established a relationship on the teachers' motivation in the pursuit of graduate studies. With these, it can be inferred that no matter how great the restraining forces are if teachers are motivated, supported and committed to learning, earning a graduate education degree is possible.

Keywords: graduate education, secondary school teachers, masters and doctorate degrees, motivation, driving and restraining forces

1. Introduction

In an increasingly competitive global economy, high-quality education has become vital for the nation's future. The key to achieve this aim is to improve the quality of teachers.

One way of improving the quality of teachers is their engagement in a graduate program. Professional development through postgraduate studies is a key tool that keeps teachers abreast of current issues in education and helps them implement innovations and refines their existing practice. Harvey (2005) stated that with the increasing emphasis on teacher accountability, it is important that teachers are not just equipped as they enter teaching but continually develop as life long learners through Continued Professional Learning (CPL).

Motivation also plays a very important role in the teachers' role in the pursuit of a graduate studies.

Due to the limited information on the motivations as well as the driving and restraining forces that lead the secondary school teachers of Apayao to engaging in graduate studies, this undertaking was thought of.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What is the personal, employment and graduate education profile of the secondary school teachers who are/were engaged in a graduate school program?
2. What motivates secondary school teachers in pursuing graduate studies?
3. What are the driving and restraining forces as perceived by the respondents in the pursuit of graduate education degree?
4. Is there a significant relationship on the motivation as well as the driving and restraining forces and the profile variables?

2. Methodology

A descriptive-correlative and qualitative methods of research was adopted in the study. The study was conducted in some secondary schools in the province of Apayao –to include Flora, Pudtol, Sta. Marcela, Luna, Calanasan, Kabugao and Conner. Purposive convenient sampling was employed. Only the public secondary school teachers who are currently enrolled, have enrolled before but stopped schooling or have graduated in a graduate education program in any state university/college or private university/college and who at that time were present when the researcher visited their workplaces and distributed the questionnaire were taken as sample in the study.

There were 74 tenured and non-tenured public secondary school teachers, and these samples who are also licensed, have completely answered the structured questionnaire.

Questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather information that were needed in the study. The questionnaire is of three parts. Part 1 dealt on the profile of the respondents along personal, employment and graduate education. Part 2 was designed to elicit responses on the motivations of the secondary school teachers in the pursuit of graduate studies. In the motivations in engaging in postgraduate studies, there were 15 factors from where the respondents decided how strong the motivational factors are to them by indicating their responses in the questionnaire.

Part 3 of the questionnaire revolved on the facilitating and impeding factors in the respondents' quest for degree in Graduate Education. In this part, there were 12 perceived factors each of the impeding and facilitating factors from where the respondents decided how agreeable the impeding and facilitating factors are to them by indicating their responses in the questionnaire.

Parts of the questionnaire used in the last three parts were lifted but modified from the studies of Potgieter, E. and Richards, Lydia, (2010)

The data gathered were analyzed through the use of descriptive statistical tools and Pearson's Product Moment Correlation.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1(a) Personal Profile of the Secondary School Teachers

The personal characteristics of the secondary school teachers include the age, sex, marital status, number of children, ethnicity and religion of the respondents.

More than one third of the respondents (39.19%) belong to the age bracket 36-45. The mean age is 41.99. This could mean the secondary school teachers who are /were in graduate education are in their middle adulthood/mid-career phase of their teaching career.

Females outnumbered males. Almost one fourth of the total number of population are males and 75.68% of which are female respondents. A great number of the respondents are married which constitutes 83.78% of the population are legally married/live-in. Most of the respondents (56.76%) have a children of 1-3. Majority (59.46%) of the population are Ilocanos. More than half of the population 55.41% are Catholics.

3.1(b) Employment Profile of the Secondary School Teachers

As to the employment profile of the respondents, almost one fourth of the total number of respondents, 18 or 24.32% are employed in high schools in the town of Luna, Apayao. Majority of the respondents in the study, 68.92% of the total population are teaching in National High Schools. One fourth of the total population, 19 or 25.68% have been teaching in their present workplace for 0-5 years now. The mean number of years teaching in the present workplace is 12.45 years. They have been more than a decade teaching in their present workplace.

Majority of the respondents, 33 or 44.59% are predominantly loaded and teaching Science/Math.

For the number of years that the respondents have been in the teaching profession, most of them, (37.84%) have taught for less than a decade. The mean number of years in the teaching profession is 15.37 years.

Almost all of the respondents, 93.24% have been permanent teachers, while only 5 or the remaining percentage are non-permanent teachers who are under Provincial School Board (PSB), Local School Board (LSB), temporary or casual employees.

As to the present plantilla position of the respondents, most of whom, 85.14% or 63 are occupying Teacher I to Teacher III positions. Noted are the 5 respondents with no plantilla position yet for they have not been given permanent items.

Regarding the number of years the last time they were promoted, 20 of whom or almost one fourth of the total population had their last promotion 10-12 years ago.

About the net income that the respondents receive in a monthly basis, almost half of the total number of respondents (47.30%) are receiving less than 10,000.

In their present plantilla positions, 28 of them have been in the positions they are presently occupying for 0-3 years. The mean number of years in the present position is 5.77 years.

3.1(c) Graduate Education Profile of the Secondary School Teachers

More than one third of the total number of respondents (29 out of 74 or 39.19%) are currently enrolled in a graduate education program- 25 of whom are in their MA/MST/MS while 4 of them are in their Doctorate Degree, while the remaining percentage (60.81%) or 45 of them are not currently enrolled.

In the case of the other 45 respondents who are not currently enrolled, 19 of whom have already graduated in their Masters and did not continue anymore their doctorate degrees, while 23 of whom stopped schooling in their Masters and 3 just tried to enroll in their Doctorate degree but they were not enrolled in the time of the conduct of the study.

More than half of the respondents, 51.11% are currently enrolled/have graduated in a State University Majority of the respondents, 46 or 61.16% of them are enrolled/have graduated in a Graduate School in Cagayan.

As to the mode of delivery in the Graduate School where they are enrolled in or where the respondents graduated in their MS/MST/MS, more than one third of the respondents (62 out of 74) were into classroom- based instruction.

When it comes to their nature of attendance, 32.43% of the respondents attend graduate school studies during regular semester and summer as to the Nature of their Graduate Studies, most of the respondents 68.92% or 51 of them enrolled in a Graduate education program intermittently or with interruption.

Right after graduation in their BS degrees, a total of 83.78% of the respondents did not enroll in their MS/MST/MS due to finances or difficulty in paying the tuition fee/cost of graduate studies pointed out by 40.32% of the respondents.

Among those who stopped schooling, a total of 21 out of 62 or 28.38% of the respondents only started their MA/MST/MS after 4-6 years.

In the case of those who are currently in their PhD, 28.57% or 2 out of 7 respondents enrolled in PhD right after graduation in their Masters. The reasons for non-enrollment right after graduation as pointed out by 80% of the respondents is due to work/job responsibilities, and about 20% of them did not enroll simply because of attitude.

These respondents who did not enroll in PhD right away had their enrolment after 10-12 years and 1-3 years as experienced by 40% each of the respondents, and the remaining 20% of the respondents had his enrolment in PhD degree after 4-6 years.

3.2 Motivations in Engaging in Graduate Studies

Table 1 shows the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that are believed to influence graduate students in the pursuit of Graduate Education. The indicators "Professional growth and enhancement", and "Prospect for career advancement/promotion" with weighted means of 4.50 and 4.35 were believed by the respondents as "Very strong motivator" in their quest for graduate education.

On the other hand, the motivators "Prospect for Increase in Salary", "Prospect for better employment", "Demand/Challenge of the job", "Fulfillment of a dream to pursue graduate studies", "Pedagogical content and knowledge, and Personal Prestige" were rated as "Strong Motivators". This means that to some extent, these factors influence their

pursuit of a Masters/Doctorate degree. The result would affirm the idea of Greene (2001) [7] that what motivates persons in engaging in graduate education is the promotion in title, salary or responsibility (though it may not come automatically) that can be personally and professionally rewarding.

The indicators “Availability of Scholarship Opportunity”, “Break from Pressures of Work”, and “Prospect for a Lifetime Partner” with weighted means that range from 1.81-2.60 mean that these are “Weak Motivators.” This could mean that only a few of them or they have not availed of any scholarship to help them finance the activities of graduate studies.

Their disagreement that Graduate Education is a break from the pressures of work supports the idea that having enrolled in a graduate study was not an escape from the pressures of work rather it brings an additional task or pressure on their part because of the readings, researches, reportings, paperworks and other requirements that they have to accomplish in the graduate school. This findings conform with the article of Martin (2007) [9] in her Philosophy of Continuous Learning which says formal learning

opportunities are important because it is where consistency is achieved and standards are established. She added that if one does not want to stagnate, one has to enroll in graduate studies and he gets to read. Also, in the website of Mc Master University, it was made clear that graduate school requires a tremendous amount of work, a genuine interest in research, the ability to cope with lots of pressure, and it costs a lot of money.

The overall weighted mean of 3.47 with a descriptive value of “Strong Motivator” could mean that the identified factors were to some extent influence the graduate students in the pursuit of their graduate studies.

This further implies that their reasons for engaging in graduate studies were for professional growth and career advancement/promotion. The result was in agreement with the findings of Eustace as cited by Richards (2007) [16] that people go for continuing graduate education not entirely for themselves. Also, Kekevia in his article pointed out that whether it’s financial boost or prestige, or even less clear opportunities, a graduate education degree is the first step to maximizing potential.

Table 1: Motivations in Engaging in Graduate Studies

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Value
1. Personal Prestige	3.46	Strong Motivator
2. Status symbol	3.27	Uncertain
3. Prospect for better employment	4.08	Strong Motivator
4. Good grades in the undergraduate degree	3.28	Uncertain
5. Prospect for career advancement and promotion	4.35	Very Strong Motivator
6. Demand/ Challenge of the job	3.96	Strong Motivator
7. Professional growth and enhancement	4.50	Very Strong Motivator
8. Competition in the workplace	3.24	Uncertain
9. Availability of scholarship opportunity	2.28	Weak Motivator
10. Pride of being in a graduate school	3.12	Uncertain
11. Prospect for Increase in salary	4.14	Strong Motivator
12. Fulfillment of a dream to pursue graduate studies	3.91	Strong Motivator
13. Break from pressures of work	2.28	Weak Motivator
14. Pedagogical content and knowledge	3.81	Strong Motivator
15. Prospect for a lifetime partner	2.35	Weak Motivator
Mean	3.47	Strong Motivator

3.3 Driving Forces in the Pursuit of Graduate Education Degree

In Table 2, the secondary school teachers of Apayao were asked to respond to statements pertaining to whether they agree or disagree on the perceived Driving forces in the pursuit of their Graduate Education.

The respondents strongly agree to the indicators “Support of Family” (mean=4.57) and “Desire to increase existing knowledge” with a weighted mean of 4.28.

They also agreed on these perceived facilitating factors: “Develop proficiency to meet students’ expectations” (mean=4.11); “Presence of opportunities for promotion or upward mobility” (mean=4.03); “Working out a career pathway” (mean=3.70); “Peer prodding, inspiration and support” (mean=3.63); “Availability of Program offerings of your interest” (3.57); “Presence of role models who demonstrate value of career development (mean=3.46); and “Encouragement of the head/supervisor” (mean=3.43). This implies that those who pursue graduate studies are not only extrinsically motivated but intrinsically motivated as well. Truly, individuals have different drives in attaining such goal as Nolan *et al.* (1995) [13] put that individual’s own

motivation is one of the most significant factors contributing to participation in continuing professional development.

The respondents disagreed on the perceived driving factors “Accessibility of the university/college/school” (2.53) and “Presence of Scholarship/funding agencies” (mean= 2.26). This could mean that respondents are far from the schools that offer graduate education that is why they do not agree that this is a facilitating factor. Also, the respondents considered the presence of scholarship/funding agencies not a facilitating factor. While it is true that some were granted scholarships, the scholarship program was not made readily-available for majority of them to finish their graduate studies, so they were not motivated to engage in graduate education. This corroborates with the idea of Greene (2001) [7] that graduate school is a costly way to pursue learning for learning’s sake. That is, if you do not have the means and sponsors for your studies, you are not motivated to engage or finish your graduate school studies.

The general weighted mean of 3.56 with a descriptive value of Agree could mean that the respondents consider the most of the indicators identified as facilitating factors in the pursuit of their graduate education.

Table 2: Driving Forces in the Pursuit of Graduate Education Degree

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Value
1. Presence of Scholarship/funding agencies	2.26	Disagree
2. Encouragement of the head/supervisor	3.43	Agree
3. Presence of role models who demonstrate value of career development	3.46	Agree
4. Support of family	4.57	Strongly Agree
5. Peer prodding, inspiration and support	3.64	Agree
6. Presence of opportunities for promotion or upward mobility	4.03	Agree
7. Availability of Program offerings of your interest	3.57	Agree
8. Working out a career pathway	3.70	Agree
9. Accessibility of the university/college/school	2.53	Disagree
10. Coherent staff development plans by the institution.	3.19	Uncertain
11. Desire to increase existing knowledge	4.28	Strongly Agree
12. Develop proficiency to meet students' expectations	4.11	Agree
Mean	3.56	Agree

3.4 Restraining Forces in the Pursuit of a Graduate Education degree

Table 3 shows the restraining forces that the respondents perceive to influence their pursuit of a graduate studies. They agreed that what impedes them to continue/finish their Graduate studies are due to Difficulty of paying course fees, and due to Family and child care responsibilities as shown

by their weighted means of 3.96 and 3.85. The overall weighted mean of 2.70 with a descriptive value of Uncertain could mean that they cannot agree nor disagree with the impeding factors though majority of the indicators were perceived by the respondents as not impeding factors in their pursuit of a graduate education.

Table 3: Restraining Forces in the Pursuit of a Graduate Education Degree

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Value
1. Lack of time due to work/job responsibilities	3.38	Uncertain
2. Family and child care responsibilities	3.85	Agree
3. Difficulty of paying course fees	3.96	Agree
4. Absence of physical energy/ill health	2.98	Uncertain
5. Unpleasant past experiences in a university/college.	2.22	Disagree
6. Anxiety about not being able to "keep up" academically	2.38	Disagree
7. Skepticism about the value of graduate studies	2.49	Disagree
8. Too old to learn and go back to school.	2.28	Disagree
9. Difficulty in securing study permits	2.30	Disagree
10. Prohibitive entry requirements to a Graduate school program in a university/college	2.28	Disagree
11. Lack of information about the structure of graduate education programs.	2.28	Disagree
12. Inconsiderate school heads/principal	2.35	Disagree
Mean	2.70	Uncertain

3.5 Relationship on the Motivation, Driving and Restraining Forces when grouped according to personal and employment profile variables

It can be gleaned from Table 4 that there exists a relationship between ethnicity, employment status and present rank/position with that of their motivations in the pursuit of their graduate studies. These three variables were all higher from the critical value which is 0.232.

This could mean that the motivation of the Ilocanos in the pursuit of graduate education differ from that of the Isnag and the other ethnic groups.

It can also be noted from the data that employment status creates a significant relationship on the motivations in the

pursuit of graduate studies as indicated by the computed value 0.238 which is higher than the critical value of 0.232. This further explains that the motivations of the permanent/tenured respondents and that of the PSB/LSB/Temporary/non-tenured vary.

The present rank/position of the respondents is also found to have a relationship with their motivation in pursuing graduate studies. It could be that the motivation of the secondary school teachers who are occupying Teacher 1-3 positions are not the same motivations as that of a Master Teacher, a Headmaster or a Principal. The higher the rank /position of the secondary school teacher, the greater is his/her motivation in engaging in graduate studies.

Table 4: Relationship on the Motivation, Driving and Restraining Forces when grouped according to personal and employment profile variables

Variables	Motivation	Restraining Forces	Driving Forces
Personal Profile			
Age	0.033	-0.053	-0.186
Sex	-0.143	0.165	0.111
Marital status	-0.087	0.018	0.154
Children	-0.149	-0.016	0.048
Ethnicity	0.245*	0.145	-0.023
Religion	0.092	0.218	-0.067

Variables	Motivation	Restraining Forces	Driving Forces
Employment Profile			
Workplace	0.032	0.097	-0.036
Classification of High School they are in	0.003	0.063	0.171
No. of Years Teaching in the present workplace	-0.027	-0.066	0.030
Subjects Presently Teaching/Specialization	0.043	-0.068	0.079
No. of years in the teaching profession	-0.046	-0.029	-0.138
Status of Employment	0.240*	0.179	0.124
Present Position/rank	0.238*	0.214	0.061
Last Promotion	0.045	-0.171	-0.061
Monthly Net income from teaching	0.020	-0.205	-0.056
No. of Years in the Present Position	0.131	-0.099	0.059

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1 Conclusions

While different teachers have different motivations in engaging in graduate studies, their engagement in a graduate program is a mainly for professional growth and enhancement, and prospect for career advancement and promotion-a combination of internal and external factors. This shows commitment to learning, recognition of self-worth and marketability of oneself.

While a graduate degree does not automatically lead to promotion in title/salary, it is widely and positively viewed that it will eventually pay them off both in tangible and intangible ways. Problems and other restraining forces are along the way, but if secondary school teachers are continuously motivated, no matter how great the impeding factors are, they can finish graduate studies.

4.2 Recommendations

Graduate Institutions

1. Universities and colleges in the province of Apayao should offer Graduate studies or intensify their existing graduate education program so as to meet the demands of the secondary school teachers to pursue a graduate education degree near them.
2. Online graduate program is to be made possible to students for it allows the flexibility needed to manage family commitments, as well as work commitments, while overcoming geographical barriers and rigid schedules of traditional programs.
3. Schools offering Graduate Education should adopt a scheme where Graduate school is to be made more accessible to Secondary School Teachers of Apayao.

Graduate Students

1. Graduate students enrolled in a Masters or Doctorate degree have to balance work, family life, and other obligations with the course work.
2. Secondary School Teachers should take the initiative of applying or trying to avail of the scholarship grants offered by the agencies of the government or private agencies so as they can continue/finish their graduate studies.

Government

1. Higher positions and promotion opportunities are to be made possible to graduate students in their working environment.
2. A more generous government funding/ scholarship grants be given to tenured and non-tenured but licensed secondary teachers who are willing to pursue graduate studies.

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