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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON TEACHERS' WORK MOTIVATION IN ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AT SMAN 2 RIMBA MELINTANG

Muhammad Rokiin[1], Adolf Bastian[2], Marwa Marwa[3]

[1] Lancang Kuning University ; rokiinmuhammad@gmail.com
[2] Lancang Kuning University; adolf@unilak.ac.id
[3] Lancang Kuning University; marwa@unilak.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This study explores teachers' work motivation as a foundational element in enhancing professional competence. Employing a qualitative approach with a phenomenological design, the research investigates how teachers interpret, experience, and internalize work motivation and how such motivation contributes to the development of their professional competence. The participants consisted of six senior high school teachers from different subject areas, including Mathematics, Chemistry, History, English, Informatics, and Indonesian Language. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, and were analyzed thematically to identify the essence of teachers lived experiences. The findings reveal that teachers perceive work motivation primarily as an intrinsic drive rooted in moral responsibility, self-actualization, professional commitment, and satisfaction derived from students' success. Extrinsic factors, such as school leadership support, collegial collaboration, recognition, and adequate learning facilities, function as reinforcing elements that sustain motivation. The study further demonstrates that strong work motivation significantly encourages teachers to engage in continuous professional development, improve instructional strategies, enhance subject-matter mastery, and utilize educational technology effectively. Overall, the study concludes that teacher work motivation serves as a crucial foundation for sustainable professional competence and underscores the importance of strengthening both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to improve educational quality.

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Corresponding Author:
Muhammad Rokiin
[1] Lancang Kuning University ; rokiinmuhammad@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers play a central role in determining the quality of education, as they are directly responsible for designing and implementing meaningful learning experiences. In the context of contemporary education, teachers are expected not only to master subject content but also to demonstrate professional competence through innovative pedagogy, effective classroom management, and continuous professional development. Professional competence, therefore, has become a critical indicator of teacher professionalism and educational quality. Despite its importance, numerous studies indicate that teachers' professional competence remains uneven, often constrained by limited professional development opportunities, heavy workloads, and insufficient institutional support. One factor that consistently emerges as a determinant of professional competence is work motivation. Teachers with strong motivation tend to demonstrate higher commitment, greater resilience, and stronger engagement in professional learning activities. Conversely, low motivation often results in routine-oriented teaching practices and minimal efforts to improve professional skills. Work motivation is commonly understood as the internal and external forces that initiate, direct, and sustain work-related behavior. In the teaching profession, motivation encompasses intrinsic elements such as a sense of calling, moral responsibility, and self-fulfillment, as well as extrinsic elements including leadership support, recognition, and working conditions. Understanding how teachers experience and interpret these motivational forces is essential for developing effective strategies to enhance professional competence. Most existing research on teacher motivation and professional competence relies on quantitative approaches, which often fail to capture teachers lived experiences and subjective meanings. Therefore, this study adopts a phenomenological approach to explore teacher work motivation as a foundation for enhancing professional competence. By focusing on teachers' personal experiences, this study aims to provide a deeper and more contextualized understanding of how motivation shapes professional growth.

2. METHOD

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological design to explore teachers lived experiences of work motivation and its role in enhancing professional competence. A phenomenological approach was selected to capture teachers' subjective meanings and interpretations of motivation within their professional context. The participants were six senior high school teachers from different subject areas, including Mathematics, Chemistry, History, English, Informatics, and Indonesian Language. They were selected through purposive sampling to represent diverse professional backgrounds and teaching experiences. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These multiple data sources enabled triangulation and provided a comprehensive understanding of how work motivation was experienced and enacted in professional practice. Data analysis was conducted thematically following phenomenological procedures, including coding, categorization, and theme development to identify the essence of participants' experiences. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through triangulation, member checking, and systematic documentation of the research process, addressing credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed three major themes: (1) teachers' interpretation of work motivation, (2) intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors, and (3) the impact of motivation on professional competence. Teachers perceived work motivation as an inner drive rooted in moral responsibility and professional commitment. Intrinsic motivation emerged as the

primary source of sustained engagement, while extrinsic factors functioned as reinforcing supports. Motivated teachers demonstrated strong initiative in professional learning, instructional innovation, reflective practice, and effective use of technology.

The findings confirm that teacher work motivation is a fundamental foundation for enhancing professional competence. Intrinsic motivation fosters resilience and continuous learning, while extrinsic support strengthens motivational stability. These results align with established motivation theories and extend previous research by providing a phenomenological perspective

4. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher work motivation plays a crucial role in sustaining and enhancing professional competence. Strengthening both intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors is essential for promoting sustainable teacher professionalism and improving educational quality.

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