Problems Affecting the Self-Management of Teachers' Performance

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Abstract

Self–management is the ability of an individual to regulate his/her emotions and resulting behaviors in ways that society considers acceptable. This includes how the individual copes with unmet wants or needs, perseveres when faced with obstacles, and sets goals. With such claims, the present study has been conceived. Specifically, it focuses on the possible problems affecting the self-management of teachers' performance. To achieve the purpose of the study, purposive convenience samples of nine elementary teachers has been done and they were asked to respond to the Self-Management Plan (SMP), Center for Clinical Intervention Interview Guide. The researcher recorded a video, took down notes, listened, and asked questions. Narrative interview texts have been analyzed to identify the informants' points of view. Once the data were collected, the next step was to label the information, then organized into logical categories that summarized and revealed that they had difficulty in managing their work load, worried a lot when unable to focus on teaching, pupils' attitude toward schooling and other extra given activities to be accomplished.

Key Words: Self-management, Teachers' Performance, Work Load, Extra Given Activities

Introduction

For decades, it has been undoubtedly widely regarded that teachers are the primary persons involved in the implementation of the new innovations in record keeping and maintenance particularly in the public school system showing that they are expected to do their fundamental role – teaching – successfully, aside from their other tasks that they are deemed accountable for. Consequently, there are some cases that teachers' efficiency is affected due to their big role of teaching pupils and accomplishing a lot of paper work. Sometimes, this is also affected by time constraints and teachers' responsibility to perform their primary duties and other tasks (Manabat, 2016).

On another note, according to Dizon (2016), teacher's professional duties may extend beyond formal or in-campus teaching. Outside the classroom, teachers may accompany students on field trips, supervise study halls, help with the organization of school functions, and serve as supervisors for extra-curricular activities. In some education systems, teachers may have responsibility as regards student discipline. Also teachers face several occupational hazards in their line of work, including occupational stress, which can negatively impact on teachers' mental and physical health, productivity, and students' performance. Stress can be caused by organizational change, relationships with students, fellow teachers and administrative personnel, working environment, expectations to substitute, long hours with a heavy workload and inspections. In addition, observing daily classroom instructional routines, monitoring students' performances and dealing with the community stakeholders are just some of the expected functions to be performed by the teacher. At the

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culmination of each academic year, the teacher is subjected to performance evaluation translated in his/her efficiency rating (Garcia, 2013).

All of these above mentioned roles, to be responsibly played by teachers, especially in public schools, have been particularly observed in the local elementary school in which the informants of the current research are presently affiliated to. The teachers in this public educational institution have been experiencing the heavy task of performing other activities aside from teaching. These other activities' accomplishment processes keep on being modified yearly; therefore, the teachers always have to familiarize themselves on these processes on a yearly basis, resulting in unending adjustments on their part.

Due to the heavy demands of the teaching profession as described above and because of the adversities that come along the way and which add on to the teachers' responsibilities, they have to deal with, it is sometimes, if not most of the time, inevitable that teachers will encounter setbacks in the course of their work. These setbacks were what the current study aimed to provide solutions for in the light of self-management. It refers to the ability of an individual to regulate his/her emotions and resulting behaviors in ways that society considers acceptable. This includes how the individual copes with unmet wants or needs, perseveres when faced with obstacles, and sets goals for himself/herself (Bandy & Moore, 2010).

Teachers lack self-management skills, when they enter the teaching field directly from university teacher preparation programs, where they had mastered minimal pedagogical knowledge or skills. Teacher enthusiasm, organization, and technical skills of instruction are almost all of the characteristics of an effective classroom leader (Freiberg, 2002).

It is important for teachers to manage themselves to expand their craft to prepare more diverse students for the challenge of work and life beyond school. They are challenged to provide more authentic instructional contexts and activities than traditional knowledge-based curricula (Paris, 2004).When a teacher possesses a good management of self, he/she may, in turn, change student behavior and ultimately affect student achievement positively (Manzano, 2003). However, the public school system has already been severely criticized because of many inadequacies and inefficiencies. Teachers, along with their experiences, are no exception to this. In most instances, failure to successfully handle the changes and demands of the problems and concerns of the public school teachers make teachers not only stagnant but also, in the long run, ineffective in the whole educational system (Cunningham, 2010). In general, teachers are similar in the sense that, they vary in their roles and responsibilities. While they have this similarity, they differ in that beginning teachers may lack the self-management skills that other teachers already have (Freiberg, 2002; Dela Cruz, 2015).

Research Problem

This research aims to address the following questions:

1. How may the public school teachers be described in terms of challenges in self-management considering the following aspects.
   a. Early warning signs that tell the informants(teachers) might be heading for a setback or needing to do something about themselves.
   b. Unhelpful thinking styles that they needed to watch out for.
   c. Situations that are potential problems for them?

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2. How may the informants be described in terms of better self-management considering the following aspects:
   a. Future support options.
   b. Strategies/techniques that they found most helpful and needing to continue to be practiced?

Method

The study is a qualitative research which uses a research instrument called self-management plan, an interview guide used in collecting data and adapted from the Center for Clinical Intervention – a specialist state-wide program that is administered through North Metropolitan Health Services in Western Australia.

Informants

Purposive convenience samples of current elementary level school teachers have been selected (Gay &Airasian, 2000, p.137). A convenience sample would allow the researcher to include informants whoever happened to be available at the time and interested to participate in the study. A total of 20 teachers in Sta. Cruz Elementary School, Porac East District, Sta. Cruz, Porac, Pampanga were chosen as the informants of the study. Only seven (7) of them willingly participated in the study while two (2) of them participated in the pilot testing. They were purposively selected because they met certain characteristics based on prior knowledge of the researcher. These teachers were selected without any bias and were met as informants through professional contacts for the data gathering process. Participation in the study was voluntary, and the informants were free to end their participation in the study at any time without risk or harm.

Instrument

This study uses an interview guide with five (5) primary interview questions developed by the Center for Clinical Intervention (2007). The questions were chosen because they fit appropriately in analyzing the self-management of the teachers in teaching. CCI is a specialist state-wide program that is administered through North Metropolitan Health Services in Western Australia. They conduct clinically applied psycho-social research and provide training and supervision as well as online modules for various psychological interventions. It is part of the public mental health system where service is free. Some of their modules, aside from the Self-Management Plan which was adapted in this study, were posted online so other people can easily view and learn from them.

The **first question** in the interview guide, **"What are the early warning signs that you might be heading a setback or need to do something about yourself?"** sought to determine the reasons for mental/physical stress. Some common examples were: spending more time worrying about what others think or having more unhelpful thoughts and an increase in the amount of time avoiding social situations and/or an increase in physical symptoms of anxiety when one is in previously feared social situations.

The **second question, "What are some of the unhelpful thinking styles that the informants needed to watch out for?"** identified the skills that they have learned and that have been helpful in reducing their anxiety (the calming technique, relaxation, challenging unhelpful thoughts, and situation step-ladders).

The **third question, "What are potential problems for them?"** determined the problems encountered by the informants in the teaching process.

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The **fourth question, "What are their future support options?"** recognized their source of support (e.g. family, friends, grandparents, others) as a chance to talk about what is going on in their life.

Lastly, **"What strategies/techniques have they found most helpful and needing to continue to be practiced?"** identified that to hear their self-talk through something could help to put it into perspective. Often problems seemed bigger than they really were when people tried to deal with them on their own self. The process was to identify the perceptions and explore the insights and beliefs of the informants.

Procedure

After obtaining the permission to conduct the study from the superintendent of the Dept. of Ed. Division of Pampanga, the supervisor of the Porac East District, and the principal of Sta. Cruz Elementary School, the researcher completed a pilot testing of the instrument; it was done prior to the conduct of the study, and it was participated by other teachers of the same school. The data gathered through the pilot testing provided related information about the self-management of teachers in teaching. Furthermore, such data were utilized to develop the actual open-ended questions for the interview. The researcher recorded a video, took down notes, listened, and asked questions, in order to achieve a better understanding of the situation and the informants' thoughts about their experiences. Narrative interview texts were analyzed to identify the informants' points of view on the effectiveness of self-management of teachers. Once the data were collected, the next step was to label the information. Data were then organized into logical categories that summarized and brought meaning to the manuscript of notes. These labels refer to things like self-management, behavior, setback etc. They were the nouns and verbs of a conceptual world. Part of the analytic process was to identify the more general categories that these things were instances of, such as institutions, work activities, social relations, social outcomes, etc. The adjectives and adverbs sought out whether these properties or dimensions came from the data itself, from informants, or from the mind of the researcher depending on the goals of the research. It was important to have fairly abstract categories, in addition to very concrete ones as the abstract ones helped to generate general theory.

Result and Discussion

The informants had similarities in their reasons why they were having setbacks because of workloads. Four of the informants had difficulty in managing their workload which was heading to setback and that they needed to do something about themselves. Least of them worried on the expectation of society, understanding pupils' attitude, and overcoming avoidable situations. Informants received lots of tasks to do aside from teaching, and the amount of time given to them to finish all of these was limited. Having so much work to do, seriously led in sacrificing their allotted time in teaching pupils to do their other tasks plus meeting deadlines. Society expects a teacher to be a good role model making every teacher conscious of their self whether in speech, dressing and manners. Being aware

Table 1 Presentation of informants' early warning signs that they were heading to a setback or needed to do something about themselves

Warning Signs	Frequency Distribution
Inability to manage workload	4
Cautious in every action	1
Frustrated on pupils' behavior	1
Tense on unavoidable circumstances	1

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of their self, is always their concern. Another reason was that pupils behave arrogant in school, they act as if they know and can do everything. They only listen to their teachers if they want to and if not they don't. In teaching, teachers plan ahead of time but in most circumstances there were always unavoidable / unexpected situations to handle that was not on the plan. Examples of this were accidents, emergencies and tragedies. Teachers, agreeing with Elias (2012), "It is not a matter of teachers becoming superhuman and overcoming all horrible conditions and indignities trying to succeed in doing what is virtually impossible, especially in a sustained way. The students need their teachers to stay engaged and fight for them. When the conditions of teaching are bad, the conditions of learning tend to be worse, and children suffer in lasting ways. That's why the collateral damage of burned-out teachers is burned-up children."

Labelling was when we made global statements about ourselves or other people, which were based on behavior in specific situations. Catastrophising was when a person views the situation as terrible, awful, dreadful, and horrible; there was also a bit of predictive thinking and a bit of jumping onto conclusions on the part of the person. When we thought of focusing on only one part of a situation and ignoring the rest, usually this meant looking at the negative parts of a situation and forgetting the positive parts, also known as mental filtering. Emotional reasoning, where one bases his/her view of situations on the way he/she feels. Black and white thinking, seeing only one extreme or other – no in-betweens or shades of gray. Most of the informants worried too much on their incapacity to fulfil the given task to them. Least of them answered pupils' misbehavior, lack of support coming from parents and co-teachers as their unhelpful thought that they needed to watch out for. Teachers start to worry when they receive the task for the first time; they wonder how to do it in a minimum time given. Misbehavior of pupils in a class is unavoidable. Pupils misbehave because they seek attention which is not given to them properly at home. There are parents that show no care to their children; they let their children go to school without taking a bath, changing clothes, eating breakfast and no school materials to use like pencil and paper. As regards teachers, sometimes they fail to comply with the data needed in order to finish a school report; this may cause a lot of delay especially when aiming for the deadline. A teacher could not escape the unhelpful thinking, especially in their chosen field of work. There were lots of problems they might encounter either expected or unexpected. According to Garcia (2013), "The teacher, as he/she performs his/her functions, is bound by the requisites of efficient and effective job performance. Observing daily classroom instructional routines, monitoring students' performances, and dealing with the community stakeholders are just some of the few expected functions to be performed by the teacher. At the culmination of the academic year, the teacher is subjected to performance evaluation translated in his/her efficiency rating."

Table 2 Presentation of informants 'some unhelpful thinking styles that they needed to watch out for

Unhelpful thinking styles	Frequency Distribution
Labelling	4
Catastrophising	1
Emotional Reasoning	1
Black and White thinking	1

The situations that were potential problem for the informants were the times they encountered pupils' negative attitude toward schooling. Other than that, were the extra given activities for them to do. One of the informants' response was crab mentality among co-teachers. The potential problems experienced by the informants were

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unreliable and lazy pupils, extra activities and workloads for teachers, crab mentality among co-workers, and limited time in accomplishing tasks. Pupils tend to become unreliable in their work especially those in lower section; they always hurry in answering their test papers without reading it with comprehension making their scores low and then fail. They were also lazy in attending classes regularly because they preferred to bunk classes and go outside of the school to play computer games. Another problem for teachers was extra activities and workloads to accomplish. The everyday concern of a teacher is to teach and achieve the target goal of every lesson plan, however aside from teaching, they needed to do other tasks assigned to them which resulted in sacrificing the given time for teaching just to fulfil their other tasks before the deadline. Crab mentality was present among co-workers because in the teaching career it will not stop when you are already permanent in the service. Limited time was given in accomplishing a task because the information was not given earlier. There was minimal preparation for the teachers in complying with the command. In relation to this, study of Manaf (1996) presents the frequency and bothersomeness of some general problems of a sample of elementary school teachers (n = 439) in a Midwest state in the USA. The problems were from self-reports of teachers measured using the abridged version of the teacher problem checklist. The top five problems of elementary school teachers reported in the study are: (I) insufficient preparation time; (2) insufficient time to teach and also to diagnose and evaluate teaching; (3) insufficient free time; (4) motivating students to use their leisure time well, and (5) motivating students to enjoy learning for its own sake.

Table 3 Presentation of the situations that were potential problems for the informants

Potential problem	Frequency Distribution
Pupils attitude toward schooling	4
Unrelated duties aside from teaching	2
Insecurities among co-teachers	1

Six (6) of the informants responded family as their major source of support. While secondary responses were co-teachers and friends. Center for Clinical Intervention (2012) encouraged every person to have someone whom he/she can talk about his/her setbacks with. This did not mean a therapy session where one had to pour out his/her heart, but rather just a chance to talk through what was going on in one's life, what his/her goals were, and generally just to ventilate with someone trusted. Often, problems seemed bigger than they really were when a person tried to deal with them by himself. Hearing oneself talk through something could help to put it into perspective. Telling someone about what bothers them especially one of their family members, released their mind from all the school-related work; that made them feel relaxed and refreshed. When meeting up with friends, they tried to cope with each other's stories of what happened when they did not see each other. After that, they had this realization in mind that it was just part of life to encounter such problems. The "reality shock", as to what Salandan (2005) pointed out, meant that beginning teachers found it hard for them to adjust from being hired in a private school to being permanent in the public school, a point when they needed as much support options as available. In line with this, Rosali (2013) also stressed the fact that beginning teachers deserve guidance, advice, and friends to keep them going in the right direction.

Table 4 Presentation of the informants' future support options

Support options	Frequency Distribution
Family	6
Stakeholders	1

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Few of the informants stated that they would improve themselves as a strategy/technique that they would continue to practice. On the other hand, two (2) of the informants would get advice from other people. Most of the informants' helpful strategies/ techniques that they needed to continue to practice, was first improving themselves by being confident about herself, obedient and a good follower; second was getting pieces of advice from other people, and new learning styles for pupils and doing time management. CCI (2012) reminded that repetitive negative thoughts could be postponed (e.g., I am worrying about my test tomorrow, so I will postpone my worrisome thoughts and re-focus on the task of studying). But people were not postponing or putting off obvious actions that they needed to be taking (e.g., I am worrying about my test tomorrow, so I will just postpone studying). Therefore, if there was some obvious immediate action that could be taken that would resolve their worry, then by all means they needed to take action and do it (e.g., I am worrying about making a phone call, why not just make the phone call). Managing oneself reduces behavior problems. It ensures quality of teachers' performance. Mentioned by Cheung and Cheng (1997), "Strategic actors will be aware of the changing education environment and able to readjust their personal goals and action plans to meet emerging challenges." Experiences make them more ready to cope up with various activities given to them every now and then. Supposedly teachers teach, for the pupils to learn but in a mystic way. In the process, they also learn for themselves. Because of this, they become more self-managed in teaching. Teachers should understand their own self just as much as they need to understand their pupils. They also need help in dealing day to day issues, dealing with behavioral problems, teaching with limited resources, motivating pupils and engaging them in class activities, understanding new government and district standards and assessments, learning to communicate with and involving parents, and identifying opportunities for professional development and healthy companionship among co-teachers. In line with this result, Malik (2003) placed increasing emphasis upon the basic areas of competence which included mastery of subject matter, understanding of human nature, interest in continued professional improvement, knowledge of availability to apply the principles of teaching and others. In this regard, he suggested that real reward of true teacher lay in the deep satisfaction he felt in watching students grow in their understanding of themselves and of their world, in seeing them develop self-reliance, initiative, and sense of responsibility, and at observing their learning of facts, skills, habits, and attitudes that were involved in becoming constructive citizens in a modern world.

Table 5 **Presentation of the strategies/techniques that were helpful and needed to continue to be practiced.**

Helpful strategies/techniques	Frequency Distribution
Improving yourself	3
Discovering new learning styles for pupils	1
Getting pieces of advice	2
Practicing time management	1

Conclusion and Implications

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn. The informants have difficulty in managing their workload. **First**, they tend to worry a lot when they are unable to focus clearly on their teaching, they should set activities that need to be finished from the most urgent and most important. **Second**, the situations that are potential problems for them are the times when they encounter pupils' negative attitude toward schooling and extra given activities to accomplish, have and keep a positive thinking habit which

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could be reinforced by strong faith and belief in divine providence. **Third**, six of the informants agree to family as their future support option. **Last** but not the least was that they believe that there is always room for improvement, cultivate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among pupils and anticipate that unexpected things, like additional workloads, might happen or be given anytime.

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