

Teaching Motivations of Selected Chinese Teachers Enrolled as International Graduate Students in St. Paul University Manila

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Abstract: This study, guided by Self-Determination Theory, aimed to explore the role international education in St. Paul University plays in the motivations of Chinese teachers to teach. Utilizing a qualitative case study, this research explored the experiences of 11 higher education teachers from different provinces of China who are graduate students in St. Paul University Manila. Employing purposive and convenience sampling, an open-ended survey with 10 questions was utilized to capture their perspectives. Data gathering involved answering online surveys via Google Forms that did not include any identification information. Thematic analysis was then employed to synthesize responses on teaching motivations that led them to St. Paul University Manila. The results surfaced meaningfulness, difficulties, personal experiences, lessons from students, administrative support, and graduate study as motivators for teaching among Chinese international graduate students of St. Paul University Manila. To intensify motivations to teach, strategies include emphasizing multidimensional learning, inspiring student engagement, promoting holistic development, fostering positive relationships, recognizing feedback, facilitating mutual growth, and creating a supportive environment. These align with SDT principles, enhancing intrinsic motivation and academic engagement.

Keywords: Teaching Motivations, Self-Determination Theory, International Graduate Students

I. Introduction

The internationalization of teacher training is a response to the increasing interconnectedness of the world and the need for educators to be well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities presented by diverse and globalized learning environments (Aydarova & Marquardt, 2016). It involves a comprehensive approach (Jain, 2023) that encompasses curriculum development, cultural competence, language proficiency, collaborative initiatives, and ongoing professional development. Programs now integrate global perspectives, emphasizing cultural competence, language proficiency, and technology skills (Ottley, Hartman, Bates, & Baker, 2020). Collaborative initiatives between institutions worldwide facilitate the exchange of ideas and resources. Recognizing the importance of mobility, efforts focus on establishing internationally recognized teaching credentials (Abbas, Avdic, Xiaobao, Hasan, & Ming, 2019). Continuous professional development ensures educators stay abreast of global educational trends (Srinivasacharlu, 2019). Inclusive pedagogies, accommodating diverse learning styles and abilities, are central to internationalized training (Sanger, 2020). This comprehensive approach prepares teachers to foster inclusive and supportive learning environments while contributing to the development of global citizens.

II. Teachers and Globalization

The profound connection between educators and globalization is evident in the notable influence globalization has on the standards and practices of teachers. This influence underscores the importance of promoting global competitiveness and integrating digital technologies into the classroom, as highlighted by Marginson and van der Wende (2006). Understanding globalization is crucial for grasping contemporary trends in teacher education, including the compression of time and space, the erosion of traditional concepts of time and nationhood, and the rise of a global awareness, as noted by Sorensen (2023). Teachers are instrumental in fostering global and intercultural skills in students, though there may be some uncertainty about the nuances between these competencies, as observed by Kim (2022). Additionally, there is a range of attitudes among educators toward globalization, spanning from positive to negative reactions, as discussed by Karanikola, Katsioli, and Palaiologou (2022). In essence, there is an urgent need for teacher training programs to effectively tackle the challenges and opportunities posed by globalization, equipping educators to navigate the demands of an increasingly interconnected world, as emphasized by Hassan (2022).

III. Motivations of Chinese Teachers in Teaching

Ma (2023) noted that various factors, such as the learning environment, personal background, cognitive structure, and instructional methods, influence the motivations underlying Chinese teachers' dedication to their profession. Lu and Geng (2022) explored the motivations of Chinese language instructors teaching abroad, and categorized them into selfless devotion and societal contribution, personal utility, individual interest, personal aspirations, and pathways to immigration. In regions like Central Asia and Russia, motivations for learning the Chinese language, as highlighted by Levina, Zubanova, and Ivanov (2021), encompass academic pursuits, cultural curiosity, interpersonal relationships, cross-border communication, travel aspirations, and enhanced employment prospects. Additionally, Kairatovna (2022) suggested that teachers' mindsets, whether fixed or growth-oriented, significantly impact students' motivation, with fixed mindset teachers potentially fostering extrinsic motivation and growth mindset educators cultivating intrinsic motivation. Understanding the diverse purpose orientations of prospective teacher education candidates in China, including purposes beyond the self, self-directed life goals, dreamers, and individuals lacking a clear purpose, as outlined by Huang (2023), is crucial for fostering a sense of purpose among educators.

IV. Comparing Chinese and International Teachers

Chinese and international educators exhibit distinct perspectives and methodologies within the classroom setting. Notably, Chinese instructors tend to adopt a more teacher-centered approach to online instruction, contrasting with Finnish educators who lean towards student-centered methods (Zhang, 2022). Moreover, Chinese teachers of international languages harbor both positive and negative stereotypes towards international students, with a prevalence of negative perceptions (Yan, 2023). Conversely, expatriate teachers in Chinese international schools face short-term contracts and job instability but also encounter opportunities for personal development and resilience (Li et al., 2021). Additionally, Chinese teachers' implicit notions of creativity in international school settings vary across categories such as Native, Westernized, Continuous, Mutational, and Common (Poole & Bunnell, 2023). These disparities in pedagogical approaches, stereotypes, employment conditions, and conceptualizations of creativity underscore the intricate dynamics and subtleties in the interactions between Chinese and international educators across diverse educational environments.

V. Challenges Faced by Chinese Teachers in Teaching

Chinese educators encounter a myriad of challenges in their teaching roles, shaped by cultural disparities, educational settings, and the imperative for inclusivity and diversity in internationalized higher education. These challenges encompass conflicts arising from the disparity between traditional Chinese teaching methodologies and student-centered pedagogies, as well as the dilemma of maintaining strict classroom discipline while acknowledging the individuality of students (Ren & Meyer, 2023). Furthermore, Chinese Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) confront racial and cultural disparities in international environments,

which can profoundly influence their interactions and experiences with students (Huang, Chen, Lin, & Cun, 2023). Moreover, pre-service TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teachers in China encounter obstacles such as insufficient proficiency in language instruction, inadequate guidance and practical experience, and limited understanding of students' educational requirements (Huang, Chen, Lin, & Cun, 2023). Additionally, Chinese immersion educators in the United States grapple with challenges related to curriculum development, behavior management, and cross-cultural communication, all of which can impact the efficacy of immersion programs.

VI. Chinese Teachers and Educational System Discrepancies

Chinese teachers and the educational system in China have been the subject of study and analysis. The Chinese education system is characterized by traditional cultural and spiritual guidelines, while also incorporating modern educational trends (Wang, 2019). The system has undergone various stages of reform since 1978, with a focus on improving the quality and accessibility of education for all segments of the population (People's Daily, 2018). The resulting Chinese teaching systems enhance the teaching process through the use of multimedia equipment, adaptive teaching methods, and interactive learning experiences (Petrovich, 2023). These systems provide opportunities for multimedia education, improve teaching effectiveness, and develop students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities. The use of social media has also influenced Chinese teachers' perceptions of education systems and shaped their imaginaries (Wang & Wang, 2023).

VII. Institutional and Administrative Challenges of Chinese Teachers

Research and analysis have been directed towards Chinese educators and the educational framework in China. This system is characterized by a blend of traditional cultural and spiritual principles alongside contemporary educational practices (Wang, 2019). Since 1978, the Chinese education system has undergone successive phases of reform aimed at enhancing the quality and inclusivity of education across all demographic groups (People's Daily, 2018). As a result, the teaching methodologies in China have evolved to incorporate multimedia tools, adaptable instructional techniques, and interactive learning experiences, thereby enriching the educational process (Petrovich, 2023). These approaches facilitate multimedia education, enhance teaching efficacy, and cultivate students' proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Additionally, the utilization of social media platforms has influenced Chinese educators' perceptions of educational systems and has contributed to shaping their pedagogical frameworks (Wang & Wang, 2023).

VIII. Significance of Graduate School in the Philippines to Chinese Teachers

Graduate education holds significant value for Chinese educators in the Philippines, offering avenues for professional growth and specialization (Kung, 2021). The gathering of Chinese educators from various parts of the Philippines in Manila for the First Convention of Chinese Schools in 1957 underscored the historical significance of Chinese education in the country (Chien, 2018). According to the study conducted by Zhenzhen and Alonsozana (2022), Chinese students in the Philippines generally perceive the Values Education program positively, yet there exist areas for enhancement, such as the integration of Chinese ideology and practices into the curriculum. Moreover, the study highlights that Mandarin education in Chinese schools tends to be influenced by a nationalistic perspective of China, impeding educational reforms and the adoption of a pedagogical approach that resonates with the Chinese-Filipino identity (Yang, 2014). Bantugan (2022) emphasized the necessity for higher education institutions like St. Paul University Manila to address the unique learning needs of Chinese graduate students. These needs encompass English translation, acculturation, a streamlined curriculum, accessible communication tools tailored to Chinese students, bridging cultural disparities, providing updates on academic progress, and fostering closer mentorship relationships.

IX. Statement of the Problem

Given the above, this study aimed to explore the role international education in St. Paul University plays in the motivations of Chinese teachers to teach.

X. Study Framework

By applying Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which underscores intrinsic motivation linked to autonomy, competence, and relatedness, the study delves into how the program supports these core psychological needs among educators from China. Through granting autonomy in teaching methodologies and professional growth opportunities, the program may empower teachers by instilling a sense of control and responsibility in their roles. Furthermore, active participation in international education could foster the enhancement of teaching skills, cross-cultural awareness, and language proficiency, thereby bolstering teachers' competence and job satisfaction. Additionally, interactions within the diverse international education community may cultivate feelings of connectedness and inclusion, ultimately strengthening Chinese teachers' enthusiasm for teaching and their engagement within St. Paul University's educational milieu.

XI. Methodology

Utilizing a qualitative case study, this research explored the experiences of 11 higher education teachers from different provinces of China who are graduate students in St. Paul University Manila. Employing purposive and convenience sampling, an open-ended survey with 10 questions was utilized to capture their perspectives. Data gathering involved answering online surveys via Google Forms that did not include any identification information. Thematic analysis was then employed to synthesize responses on teaching motivations that led them to St. Paul University Manila.

XII. Results

Meaningfulness as motivator

Data show that the participants attached meaning to (1) learning, (2) encouraging, (3) feeling good, (4) forming holistically, (5) accompanying, and (6) experiencing good people.

Learning. Learning emerged as the most multidimensional aspect, attached to understanding academic content ("teaching students some knowledge and skills," "discussing teaching content with the class," and students "having a strong interest in the subjects"). It also highlighted learning to excel (achieving "professionalism," "growth, progress, and career development," and "achieving good results") and winning ("Winning awards can demonstrate that the knowledge and skills taught are effective"). Learning to win often accompanied learning how to make "design plans" and "physical models," using a computer, or engaging in entrepreneurship. It also meant making students learn how to think ("fostering profound understanding and cultivating critical thinking"). Likewise, it was meaningful to help students learn about themselves ("guiding them to understand themselves and recognize issues").

Similarly, the responses showed teachers drawing meaning from their learning as well. They expressed having learned from their students ("I gained some knowledge and skills from students"), about their students ("Effectively communicate with students through in-depth interviews, consultations, and other methods"), and with their students ("Learning and progressing together with students"; "we completed the teaching design and integration of course resources together"), and learning practical skills ("In 2005, a student taught me to shop on Taobao").

Participants attached profound meaning to facilitating learning experiences for their students, encompassing both academic content and personal development. This aligns with SDT's emphasis on competence, as individuals strive to master skills and achieve excellence, leading to feelings of accomplishment and growth.

Encouraging students. Participants mentioned encouraging students by "inspiring them" to make "contributions and impacts in the academic realm." The act of inspiring students to contribute and excel academically reflects the need for autonomy, as individuals seek opportunities to express themselves and pursue their interests in meaningful ways.

Forming students holistically. One participant mentioned being able to "enrich the students' after-class life and cultivate and improve the students' cultural and aesthetic qualities." Enriching students' lives beyond academic realms resonates with SDT's focus on relatedness, emphasizing the importance of forming meaningful connections and fostering a sense of belonging.

Feeling good being a teacher. This was underscored by a participant who said, "The students were very grateful to me." Another said, "the course experience with my students... made me feel very meaningful (relevant)." And yet another shared, "Students like my classroom teaching," and "the students can also actively come to me." Positive feedback and gratitude from students contribute to a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, fulfilling the need for relatedness as teachers feel valued and appreciated within their professional roles.

Building relationships. This meant accompanying students and "growing together" as one "gains their care" while being taught. Accompanying students and growing together emphasizes the importance of supportive relationships, fulfilling the need for relatedness as teachers and students connect and bond over shared experiences.

Experiencing good people. This underscored teachers appreciating the good qualities of their students as they are "kind, warm, and lovely." Appreciating the positive qualities of students fosters a sense of connection and empathy, contributing to a supportive and nurturing learning environment that fulfills the need for relatedness.

Meaningful teaching experiences are deeply rooted in facilitating student growth, fostering autonomy, forming supportive relationships, and appreciating the positive qualities of students. These aspects align closely with the principles of SDT, highlighting the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting meaningful teaching experiences.

Difficulties as motivators

Smith (n.d.) wrote that "Challenging work can be a great motivator, as it can keep employees engaged and interested in their role" (para. 1). The idea that challenging work can be a motivator aligns with SDT's emphasis on competence. Engaging in tasks that are challenging yet attainable can foster a sense of mastery and accomplishment, thus enhancing motivation and engagement in one's role. According to the research data, participants faced difficulties in following aspects: firstly, educating students; secondly, managing time; and thirdly, performing out-of-the-ordinary tasks.

Educating students. Educating students is the most difficult experience for participants, including understanding students' needs ("such as maintaining a professional distance, fostering friendly relations, using special teaching methods, or providing extra support"), ensuring all students benefit from class ("as not all are interested in professional learning"), managing behavioral issues ("each class had a few challenging students"),

and managing the classroom (“dealing with rebellious behavior such as smoking and drinking, which is difficult to change”).

Managing time. Some participants mentioned that the most difficult experiences involve balancing time, including balancing work and personal life (“struggling to balance work and life, especially when dealing with childcare responsibilities”), balancing administrative and teaching duties (“such as writing meeting minutes, preparing study notes, and closing materials”), balancing teaching and academic research (“struggling to make breakthroughs in scientific research”), and balancing work and personal improvement (“insufficient time for learning and personal growth”). The allocation and management of time between life, work, and study pose significant difficulties.

The difficulties faced by participants in educating students and managing time can be understood through the lens of SDT. Balancing the demands of teaching, administrative tasks, and personal life requires autonomy in managing one's time effectively. Furthermore, ensuring that all students benefit from class and managing behavioral issues also involves fostering relatedness by building supportive relationships with students and creating a positive learning environment.

Performing out-of-the-ordinary tasks. One participant mentioned that the most difficult experience is being pushed to do insignificant tasks (“such as organizing student participation in activities despite personal resistance”). Another participant mentioned that dealing with COVID-19 is the most difficult experience, including wearing thick protective clothing as a volunteer to assist medical staff in nucleic acid testing and delivering meals to students, resulting in physical and mental exhaustion from lack of sleep. Performing out-of-the-ordinary tasks, such as organizing student participation in activities or dealing with unexpected challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic, can impact one's sense of autonomy and competence. Feeling pressured to perform tasks that are perceived as insignificant may undermine intrinsic motivation and autonomy, while navigating extraordinary circumstances like the pandemic may challenge one's sense of competence and autonomy.

Personal experiences as motivators

The data collected indicate that the personal experiences of teachers contribute to their motivation to teach: (1) achieving balance, (2) continuous learning, (3) striving to become better, (4) seeking personal interests and strengths, (5) achieving and receiving recognition, (6) maintaining discipline, (7) finding sufficient time, (8) receiving support and encouragement, and (9) experiencing change.

Achieving balance. Participants highlighted the significance of maintaining "flexibility and adaptability in the teaching process," emphasizing how "achieving a balance between life and work" and navigating "three job changes" have been pivotal in their career development. Maintaining flexibility and adaptability in the teaching process, achieving a balance between life and work, and navigating job changes are crucial aspects of autonomy. SDT posits that individuals are motivated when they have a sense of control over their environment and choices. By achieving balance, individuals exercise autonomy in managing their professional and personal lives, which contributes to their overall well-being and motivation.

Continuous learning. The commitment to "continuous learning" and "maintaining a state of learning" was identified as crucial. This involves "improving oneself" through "continuous learning and repeated practice" and the resolve to "keep learning." The commitment to continuous learning and maintaining a state of learning reflects the principle of competence. SDT suggests that individuals are motivated when they perceive themselves as competent and capable of mastering tasks. Continuous learning allows individuals to enhance their skills and knowledge, thereby increasing their sense of competence and self-efficacy.

Striving to become better. Professional development and the drive to "strive to be a better teacher" were underscored, with participants noting the importance of "constantly stepping out of my comfort zone" for personal and professional growth. The drive for professional development and the desire to improve align with both autonomy and competence. Striving to be a better teacher involves setting personal goals and pushing oneself to grow and develop professionally. This pursuit of improvement fosters autonomy by allowing individuals to set their own standards and goals, while also enhancing competence as individuals strive to master new skills and knowledge.

Seeking personal interest and strengths. Discovering and pursuing "research interests" and "identified strengths" fuel participants' passion for teaching, making the profession increasingly enjoyable. Pursuing research interests and leveraging identified strengths contribute to autonomy and relatedness. Engaging in activities that align with personal interests and strengths provides individuals with a sense of autonomy and fulfillment. Additionally, sharing these interests with others, such as students or colleagues, fosters relatedness by building connections and fostering a sense of belonging.

Achieving and receiving recognition. The "recognition of students" and the resultant "sense of achievement in work" significantly contribute to the growing affection for their teaching roles. The recognition of students and the sense of achievement in work contribute to relatedness and competence. Being recognized for one's efforts and accomplishments satisfies the need for relatedness by fostering positive relationships with others. Moreover, it enhances competence by validating individuals' skills and contributions, thereby increasing their sense of self-worth and competence.

Maintaining discipline. Emphasizing "responsibility," "patience," "sense of mission," and "professionalism," participants noted these elements as core to their job requirements and personal work ethic. Emphasizing responsibility, patience, and professionalism contributes to competence and relatedness. Demonstrating discipline in one's work reflects a sense of competence and mastery in fulfilling job requirements. Moreover, it fosters relatedness by promoting positive interactions and relationships with colleagues, students, and others in the professional community.

Finding sufficient time. Finding "sufficient time" effectively emerged as a vital aspect of fulfilling their professional duties while maintaining work-life balance. Finding sufficient time for professional duties while maintaining work-life balance is essential for autonomy and well-being. Having control over one's time allows individuals to prioritize tasks according to their needs and preferences, contributing to a sense of autonomy and control. Moreover, achieving balance between work and personal life promotes overall well-being and enhances motivation and engagement in professional roles.

Receiving support and encouragement. Positive interactions with "colleagues," "students," "mentors," "family," and "leaders" play a substantial role in shaping their teaching experiences. These relationships not only offer support and encouragement but also opportunities for learning and growth. Positive interactions with colleagues, students, mentors, and others provide essential support and encouragement, contributing to relatedness. According to SDT, individuals are motivated when they feel connected to others and supported in their endeavors. Positive relationships foster a sense of belonging and fulfillment, enhancing motivation and well-being.

Experiencing change. Encountering and navigating "job changes" and departmental adjustments were highlighted as challenging yet rewarding experiences that "provided new opportunities and insights" and encouraged "self-improvement." Navigating job changes and departmental adjustments involves adapting to new circumstances and challenges, which can foster growth and self-improvement. SDT suggests that

individuals are motivated when they perceive challenges as opportunities for growth and development. Encountering and overcoming obstacles contribute to a sense of competence and mastery, enhancing motivation and resilience in the face of change.

XIII. Lessons from students as Motivators

Lessons from students included (1) inputs on improving one's teaching, (2) new research methods, and (3) international perspective. This aligns with the autonomy aspect of SDT, which emphasizes the importance of individuals feeling a sense of volition and choice in their actions. When teachers receive feedback from students on how to improve their teaching, it empowers them to make autonomous decisions about their instructional methods and pedagogical approaches. By incorporating student feedback, teachers can enhance their sense of autonomy in their teaching practices, leading to increased engagement and motivation.

Acquiring inputs on improving one's teaching. One participant said that he/she/they received feedback that can "improve my teaching" and help one "reflect on my own teaching work". Another found the need to "integrate both Eastern and Western educational approaches" from a student. Learning new research methods corresponds to the competence aspect of SDT, which focuses on individuals' need to feel effective in their interactions with the environment. Acquiring new skills and knowledge, such as research methods, contributes to teachers' sense of competence. As they gain proficiency in research techniques, teachers feel more capable and effective in conducting scholarly inquiries, thereby fulfilling their need for competence.

Learning new research methods. This meant discovering "some research methods" from a student. This aspect relates to both autonomy and relatedness within SDT. When students provide insights into foreign educational philosophies and methods, it offers teachers opportunities to broaden their perspectives and exercise autonomy in exploring new ideas and approaches. Additionally, engaging with diverse perspectives fosters a sense of relatedness by connecting teachers with a global community of educators. By embracing international perspectives, teachers can enhance their sense of autonomy while also strengthening their sense of connection to others in the educational field.

Taking on an international perspective. One participant pointed out that a student enjoined him/her to "a new understanding and perspective on foreign educational philosophies and methods" which can help "broaden his/her/their horizons."

Administrative support as motivator

The data showed that participants had significant values for (1) working in a good environment, (2) improving career development, (3) experiencing humanistic care, (4) receiving resource support, and (5) having a flexible management system.

Working in a good environment. The environment includes living and working conditions. The importance of teachers' working environment cannot be ignored, as it profoundly impacts teachers' career satisfaction, work efficiency, and students' learning outcomes. Some teachers hope that the school will provide a "good teaching environment and exchange learning environment." SDT emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. A positive working environment, which includes supportive living and working conditions, contributes to teachers' sense of autonomy and competence. When teachers feel supported and valued in their environment, they are more likely to experience job satisfaction and exhibit higher levels of motivation, aligning with SDT principles.

Improving career development. Most participants have improved their career development plans, emphasizing the importance of schools paying attention to teachers' professional development, organizing

multiple training sessions, and providing opportunities for exchange and learning. It is essential for schools to provide career development plans for teachers, helping them set career goals, improve teaching skills, expand knowledge areas, and promote personal growth. This not only enhances teachers' job satisfaction but also improves teaching quality and overall educational effectiveness. SDT highlights the importance of competence and autonomy in fostering intrinsic motivation. Providing opportunities for career development allows teachers to enhance their skills, set and achieve goals, and experience personal growth. When schools support teachers' career development, they empower them to take ownership of their professional advancement, enhancing their sense of competence and autonomy.

Experiencing humanistic care. Providing humanistic care for teachers is crucial for building a healthy, harmonious, and efficient working environment. Humanistic care includes respecting teachers' individual value, addressing their emotional needs, and offering comprehensive support for their professional lives. Some teachers mentioned the importance of understanding and caring for teachers' needs, providing affirmation and recognition, offering positive feedback, providing humane assistance, reducing unnecessary workload duplication, and focusing on individual development. SDT emphasizes the need for relatedness, which involves feeling understood, valued, and supported by others. Humanistic care, including respect for teachers' individual value and emotional needs, fosters a sense of relatedness within the workplace. When teachers feel cared for and supported, they are more likely to develop positive relationships with colleagues and administrators, contributing to their overall well-being and job satisfaction.

Receiving resource support. Providing resource support for teachers is essential to ensure teaching quality and promote career development. This support includes financial, venue, technology, and equipment resources. By offering resource support, schools can improve teachers' teaching effectiveness, enhance satisfaction and a sense of belonging, promote professional growth, and advance overall school development. Providing resource support aligns with SDT by facilitating teachers' competence and autonomy. Access to resources such as financial support, technology, and professional development opportunities enables teachers to enhance their teaching effectiveness and professional skills. When teachers have access to resources, they are better equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students and feel empowered to make meaningful contributions to their classrooms and schools.

Having a flexible management system. Providing a flexible management system for teachers means creating a more open and freer working environment that allows teachers to adapt teaching methods and content to their own style and students' needs. Teachers mentioned the importance of a flexible management system, which stimulates creativity and teaching enthusiasm, improves work efficiency and educational quality, attracts and retains excellent teachers, and promotes long-term school development. SDT underscores the importance of autonomy in motivation and decision-making. A flexible management system allows teachers to have greater autonomy in adapting their teaching methods and content to meet the needs of their students. When teachers have the freedom to exercise autonomy in their work, they are more likely to feel engaged, motivated, and satisfied with their jobs, leading to improved educational outcomes and school development.

XIV. Graduate studies as motivator

Taking education to a higher level was seen to make a teacher better as it can (1) improve teaching, (2) enhance research capability, (3) broaden one's horizon, (4) facilitate acquiring varied and in-depth knowledge, (5) expand interpersonal communication, and (6) enrich life experiences.

Improving teaching. Participants felt that graduate school outside of China would improve their teaching, both in terms of teaching content and teaching ideas and methods. One participant expressed the need to "improve teaching content and accept the culture from different countries. I can pass these to my students."

Participants also mentioned improving teaching ideas and methods; this category involves actions such as "improving and giving feedback to my teaching," "reflecting on my own educational and teaching work," "improving my educational and teaching skills," and "integrating both Eastern and Western educational approaches." Pursuing graduate school abroad aligns with autonomy as it allows participants to take control of their professional development and choose opportunities for growth. By enhancing teaching content and methods, reflecting on their own practices, and integrating diverse educational approaches, participants are empowered to improve their teaching skills and efficacy, thereby fulfilling their need for autonomy.

Enhancing research capability. Participants discussed the importance of "training research skills" and mentioned specific actions such as "learning research skills" and "learning some research methods." Engaging in training to develop research skills aligns with competence, as it enables participants to enhance their expertise and proficiency in conducting research. By acquiring new skills and methods, participants feel competent and effective in their roles as educators, contributing to their sense of mastery and accomplishment.

Broadening one's horizon. Participants highlighted gaining a "richer international perspective" through actions like "expanding international horizons" and developing "a new understanding and perspective on foreign educational philosophies and methods." Gaining a richer international perspective satisfies the need for relatedness by fostering connections with educators from different cultural backgrounds and exposing participants to diverse educational philosophies. This broader understanding of global perspectives helps participants feel connected to a larger community of educators, fulfilling their need for social connection and belonging.

Acquiring varied and in-depth knowledge. Participants believe that they can acquire knowledge, including knowledge of disciplines, knowledge of other countries, and some general knowledge. Participants mentioned "acquiring in-depth subject knowledge," "learning English and teaching skills," "learning the latest foreign knowledge," "understanding the education models, teaching concepts, and methods of different countries," "learning advanced foreign teaching methods," and "being more knowledgeable." Pursuing knowledge acquisition fulfills the need for competence as participants strive to expand their expertise and understanding in various domains. By seeking to acquire in-depth subject knowledge, learning new languages, and understanding different educational models, participants enhance their sense of competence and mastery in their profession.

Expanding interpersonal communication. Expanding interpersonal communication was also a factor participants focused on. One participant valued "opportunities to cooperate and communicate with other teachers" and "some excellent people." Valuing opportunities to cooperate and communicate with peers satisfies the need for relatedness by fostering supportive relationships and social connections within the educational community. By engaging in meaningful interactions with other teachers and individuals, participants fulfill their need for social connection and support.

Enriching life experiences. Participants felt that graduate school outside of China is a meaningful life experience. One participant said: "experienced different learnings (and) feelings." Participating in graduate school abroad provides meaningful life experiences that contribute to personal growth and fulfillment. These experiences satisfy the need for autonomy by allowing individuals to pursue their interests and aspirations independently. Additionally, they fulfill the need for relatedness by creating opportunities for shared experiences and connections with others, ultimately enhancing overall well-being and life satisfaction.

XV. Discussion

To further motivate teaching among Chinese graduate students at St. Paul University Manila, several key strategies can be implemented based on the comprehensive understanding of their needs and the principles of SDT.

Emphasizing Multidimensional Learning. St. Paul University Manila can highlight the diverse facets of learning, including understanding academic content, excelling in professional development, and fostering critical thinking skills. By framing learning as a pathway to personal growth and achievement, graduate students are more likely to feel motivated and engaged in their studies.

Inspiring Student Engagement. The university can encourage active participation and meaningful contributions to the academic realm by providing opportunities for students to express themselves autonomously. Creating an environment that fosters motivation and fulfillment will enhance student engagement and overall satisfaction with their graduate studies.

Promoting Holistic Student Development. St. Paul University Manila can enrich students' lives beyond academic achievements by cultivating their cultural, aesthetic, and personal qualities. Emphasizing the importance of forming meaningful connections and fostering a sense of belonging among students will contribute to their overall well-being and motivation.

Fostering Positive Teacher-Student Relationships. Creating a supportive and nurturing learning environment where teachers and students can connect over shared experiences is essential. Encouraging teachers to appreciate students' positive qualities and foster empathy will enhance the overall teaching and learning experience.

Recognizing the Importance of Positive Feedback. Acknowledging and valuing the impact of positive feedback on teachers' fulfillment and satisfaction is crucial. Highlighting the significance of feeling valued and appreciated within the professional role of teaching will contribute to a positive teaching environment.

Facilitating Mutual Growth. Encouraging teachers to accompany students on their learning journey and grow together with them fosters a sense of collaboration and mutual support. Emphasizing the reciprocal nature of the teacher-student relationship and the importance of supportive interactions will enhance student development.

Creating a Supportive Learning Environment. Cultivating a culture of kindness, warmth, and positivity among students and teachers alike is essential. Recognizing and appreciating their good qualities while fostering a nurturing atmosphere that promotes connection and empathy will contribute to a supportive learning environment.

By implementing these strategies, St. Paul University Manila can effectively motivate Chinese graduate students and create a conducive learning environment that supports their academic and personal growth. These approaches align with the principles of SDT, emphasizing autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are crucial for fostering intrinsic motivation and engagement among students.

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