

Work Ethics of the Proficient Teachers: Basis for a District Learning Action Cell (LAC) Plan

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ABSTRACT

It is critical for the teacher, as one of the most indispensable staff in the education system, to foster work ethics and to act as a role model to his/her students. Since there are many societal expectations on teacher, every teacher is directed to do what is right. This study determined the work ethics of the proficient teachers in the West District of the Schools Division of Angeles City. A cross-sectional descriptive survey research design was used to describe the 124 proficient teachers with four to five years of teaching experience from the 12 schools in the said district. Most of the participants obtained very low scores on self reliance, leisure, and morality/ethics. This result indicates that most of them somewhat express that they strive for independence in their daily work and believe in the importance of non-work related activities. Since most of the participants got the lowest score on self reliance, leisure, and morality/ethics, the researchers developed a District LAC plan to fortify teachers' low mean score on work ethics dimensions.

Introduction

The educational system is considered a challenging structure especially in managerial, technical, and financial aspects. Education has recently focused on improving instruction to help students become critical thinkers and to compete in the global marketplace. Teachers are duly licensed professionals who have accountability and responsibility in preparing lesson plans and educating students. Their duties include grading tests, assigning homeworks,

facilitating activities, and documenting students' progress. According to Wormeli (2006), teacher and student have mutual responsibilities: teacher teaches the student, and the students are responsible for their own learning. Teachers usually engage in a profession with an innate desire to do what is best for the students. Although teaching is a highly rewarding profession, it is also a challenging one for it makes teachers encounter countless ethical dilemma (Hutching, 2016).

A teacher's role is to bestow quality education to students. Teachers play a vital role in the lives of the students. Teachers are best known for educating the students (Chan Chan, & Keow Ngang, 2015). They are given a curriculum so that throughout the year, all pertinent knowledge is given to the students. They use a variety of teaching-learning method such as lectures, small group works, and hands-on learning activities. Moreover, the teacher's work ethics spell out a great difference in student's learning. Teachers who value and engage in their task have more successful students (Salleh, 2018).

Apparently, teachers are expected to foster work ethics, and to act as role models to their students. Teachers should possess ethical, moral and professional skills in relation to their practice. They should be able to analyze problems and arrive at solutions concerning ethical issues in their workplace (Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2006). Teachers must not only possess professional competence in their practice, they must also exhibit moral values; making them as examples to their students (Turk, & Vignjevic, 2016).

It is imperative then for teachers to hold and exhibit high ethical standards, and become good examples to the learners. As Campbell (2008) argued, the ways in which teachers react to the daily events should pass through a selection process in which moral ethics is vital. Ethics and teaching seem inherently compatible and unavoidably intertwined (Nikitina & Furuoka, 2012).

Educational institutions, specifically teachers, have the biggest influence in disseminating work ethics among staff and students by focusing on the concept of manner first before education. Values, norms, customs and beliefs are the base foundation of work ethics (Turk, & Vignjevic, 2016). Work ethics is the basis

of individual's behavior towards work, and is the premise to which his or her effectiveness and efficiency are discerned (Salleh, 2018). By complying to the basic rules and concepts of work ethics, the teacher may posit the norms and standards of behavior in education and portray an exemplary behavior to the students (Turk, & Vignjevic, 2016).

Furthermore, Hutching (2016) even stated that the most experienced and committed teachers may not be aware of their ethical decisions no matter how well intentioned they are, putting them at risk and may even ruin their relationship with their colleagues, supervisors and students, eventually affecting the school's reputation. When situation arises, teachers may find themselves facing ethical dilemma without knowing it or not knowing what to do. This situation would prevent them from seeing the long-term effect of their action.

There are several studies conducted addressing the various educational issues; however, the topic on work ethics of teacher is considered a missing element in the field of education. There is no notable attention allotted to this particular field qualifying such as an unexplored territory. The process of introducing work ethics in education was based on the principle of a teacher being a moral agent to his or her students to which the teacher applies ethics in the teaching-learning process (Lumpkin, 2008). Gunnell (2006) highlighted the issues related to a morally upright teacher and work ethics as one of the most underrepresented studies on work ethics. Most studies on work ethics were focused on ways of improving the teaching-learning process.

Framework of the Study

Numerous studies suggested that work ethics play an important role in educational leadership and management. However,



Figure 1. Input-Process-Output for Work Ethics District LAC plan

despite several studies conducted on work ethics, there is a minority on investigating *proficient* teachers' work ethics specifically to elementary public school teachers in the Schools Division of Angeles City. Thus, this study purported the idea of using the findings a bases for designing learning action plan for *proficient* teachers in the West District of the Schools Division of Angeles City.

This study determined the work ethics of the *proficient* teachers in the West District of the Schools Division of Angeles City using the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEP). In this study, the self-report measure (Multidimensional work ethic profile) served as a diagnostic tool to assess *proficient* teacher's work ethics (Input). The tool determined which among the work ethics factors needed to improve. Then, the researchers conducted data collection to elementary public school teachers in the Schools Division of Angeles City (Process). Lastly, the date were analyzed to determine lowest mean scores are the foci and the bases in developing the Learning Action Cell (LAC) plan (Output) (Figure 1).

Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may work ethics be described in terms of the following:
 - 1.1. Self-reliance
 - 1.2. Morality/Ethics
 - 1.3. Leisure
 - 1.4. Hard work
 - 1.5. Centrality of work
 - 1.6. Wasted time and
 - 1.7. Delay of gratification?

2. What District Learning Action Cell (LAC) plan may be developed based on work ethics description?

Method

Research Design

A cross-sectional descriptive survey research design described the participants' work ethics. This design enabled the researchers to observe two or more variables at a given point in time.

Sample and Setting

The researchers employed purposive sampling to *proficient* teachers in the West District of the Schools Division of Angeles City. These *proficient* teachers with four to six years teaching experience in public school, were included in the study *Proficient* teachers are currently holding the position of Teachers I-III in the said district. In this study, the researchers identified 124 *proficient* teachers from 12 different schools in the said district. These

proficient teachers voluntarily participated in the study.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researchers requested for an approval from the committee of College of Education and the Office of the Schools Division Superintendent of Angeles City to conduct data collection. The researchers contacted the principal thru either email and phone call. With the approval of the Schools Division Superintendent, the questionnaires were given to 124 *proficient* teachers of west district schools and were personally retrieved by the researchers. The researchers first explained the details and the nature of study including the potential risks and benefits associated in taking part in this study, as well as their right to refuse and/or withdraw anytime in this study.

Instrument

The Miller, Woehr, and Hudspeth's (2002) Meaning and Measurement of work ethic (MWEP) measured the participants' work ethics. The MWEP is a measure comprising of 65 items and seven dimensions or components. Each dimension has 10 items with the exception of Wasted Time (7 items) and Delay of Gratification (8 items). Responses were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Each dimension score, with the exception of Wasted Time and Delay of Gratification, was calculated as the average of the responses for each of the items assessing that dimension. Scores for Wasted Time and Delay of Gratification were calculated as the average item response across all responses for the specified dimension with the obtained average being multiplied by ten so that these dimensions would remain on the same scale as the other dimensions (Miller et al., 2002). The MWEP's seven dimensions or components are:

1. Self-Reliance refers to individual's

striving for independence in his or her daily work (e.g., "One must avoid dependence on other persons whenever possible"). It may be necessary for him or her to demonstrate the ability to work independently, particularly given a business environment of weakening long-term commitments between employees and employers.

2. Morality/Ethics refers to one's belief in a just and moral existence (e.g., "It is never appropriate to take something that does not belong to you"). Occasionally, morality is used to describe how people act, while ethics is used to define the study of behavior standards, specifically rules of right and wrong.
3. Leisure refers to the attitudes and beliefs regarding the importance of nonworking activities (e.g., "The job that provides the most leisure time is the job for me"). Individual who is highly motivated to seek leisure activities would receive less fulfilment from the work that he or she performs than the individual who has a low interest in leisure activities.
4. The dimension Hard Work refers to a belief that one can become a better person if he or she is committed to the value and importance of his or her work (e.g., "Hard work makes one a better person"). A person who commits to hard work can overcome almost any challenges and can attain personal goals. One of these goals is becoming a better person.
5. The dimension Centrality of Work refers to the importance of the person to his or her opportunity to work. It transcends the need and/or desire for compensation and represents a major frame of reference on self-identification (e.g., "I feel content when I have spent

the day working”). Centrality of Work focuses on conceptualizations: the belief that work is beneficial and provides self-worth; second, the person who has greater work centrality has less interest in non-work activities.

6. Wasted Time refers to one’s attitudes and beliefs reflecting active and productive use of time (e.g., “I constantly look for ways to productively use my time”). The efficient and constructive use of time is consistent with a strong work ethic and its been long understood that improved performance is inexorably linked to efficient use of time. Poor time management and procrastination have been identified as obstacle to productivity.
7. Delay of Gratification refers to one’s orientation toward the future and postponement of rewards (e.g., “The best things in life are those you have to wait for”). It refers to an individual’s ability to sustain a chosen course of action for the achievement of a long-term goal even though there are tempting alternatives that offer short-term gratification.

In this study, the self-report measure (Multidimensional work ethic profile) served as a diagnostic tool to assess *proficient* teachers’ work ethics. The top three lowest work ethics’ sub variables was the focus of the proposed learning action cell plan.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics analyzed the study’s data. Frequency distribution represented the distribution of the participants’ average score of the overall work ethics. Mean determined the average score of the overall work ethics of the participants.

Ethical Consideration

An individual informed consent was secured from the study participants. The researchers explained in detail the nature of the study, including the potential risks and benefits in taking part in this study, as well as their right to refuse and/or withdraw any time. Moreover, the participants were assured that no identifying information was reported in any section of this study.

Results

This section offers a summary of the research findings and analysis. Table 1 shows the *proficient* teachers’ work ethics means score. Table 2 presents the proposed District Lac Plan.

Proficient teachers’ Work Ethics Mean Score

This section presents the findings of proficient teachers’ work ethics. As gleaned from Table 1, most of the participants got a moderately high score on work ethics ($x= 3.65$) indicating that most of them put a greater importance toward their work. Most participants obtained the highest score on hard work ($x= 4.41$), delay of gratification ($x= 4.35$), wasted time ($x= 4.23$) and centrality of work ($x= 3.95$). These results indicate that most of them believe in the virtue of hard work and that one can become a better person if he or she commits to the value and importance of his or her work. In addition, they look for ways to productively use their work time, and express orientation toward the future and postponement of reward.

However, despite their moderately high score on overall work ethics, most of the participants may place less emphasis on work ethics. In addition, most participants scored lowest on self-reliance ($x= 3.69$), leisure ($x= 2.76$), and morality/ ethics ($x= 2.19$) indicating that most of them somewhat

Table 1*Proficient teachers' Work Ethics Mean Score*

Work ethics subvariables	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Self-Reliance	3.69	Moderately High
Centrality of Work	3.95	Moderately High
Hardwork	4.41	Moderately High
Wasted Time	4.23	Moderately High
Delay of Gratification	4.35	Moderately High
Leisure	2.76	Moderate
Morality/Ethics	2.19	Moderately Low
Overall	3.65	Moderately High
N= 124		

Legend:

High: 4.51- 5.00; Moderately High: 3.51- 4.50; Moderate: 2.51-3.50; Moderately Low: 1.51-2.50; Low: 1.00-1.50

express that they strive for independence in their daily work, and believe in the importance of non-work related activities. Low score morality/ ethics indicates that most participants may place less emphasis on belief in a just and moral existence.

Most of the participants got a moderately high score on work ethics indicating that most of them place a good amount of importance in their work. Proponents of a strong work ethic consider it to be vital for achieving goals for it gives strength to their orientation and mindset (Osibanjo, Akinbode, Falola, & Oludayo, 2015). However, when the participants get bombarded in their work or when challenges come, they may place less emphasis on work ethics leading to lack of productivity, accountability, and unhealthy relationship with their colleagues (Vaux, 2018). This may lead to a systemic lack of productivity, accountability, reliability, and growing sphere of unprofessional or unhealthy relationship (Vaux, 2018).

Work ethics must address this fact, stating that teachers should possess ethical, moral and professional skills in relation to their practice. They should be able to analyze the problem and arrive at solutions concerning ethical issues in their workplaces

(Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia, 2006). Individuals who possess strong work ethics embody certain principles that guide their work behavior, leading them to produce consistently high-quality work, and the output motivates them to stay on track. A good work ethic fuels an individual's needs and goals. It is related to the initiative by a person for the objectives. It is considered as a source of self-respect, satisfaction, and fulfillment (Osibanjo, Akinbode, Falola, & Oludayo, 2015).

Most participants obtained very high scores on *hard work, delay of gratification, wasted time, and centrality of work*. This result indicates that most of them believe in the virtue of hard work and believe that one can become a better person if they are committed to the value and importance of their work (e.g., "Hard work makes one a better person"). They are oriented toward the future and postponement of rewards (e.g., "The best things in life are those you have to wait for") (Miller et al., 2002).

This finding implies that most participants can sustain a chosen course of action for the achievement of a long-term goal even though there are tempting alternatives that offer short-term gratification. Most of the participants have attitudes and beliefs

reflecting active and productive use of time. The efficient and constructive use of time are consistent with a strong work ethic and have been long understood as a factor that improve performance which is inexorably linked to efficient use of time. Poor time management and procrastination have been identified as obstacles to productivity (Reynolds and Schiffbauer, 2005).

Most of the participants got low scores in *self reliance, leisure, and morality/ ethics*. This indicates that most of the participants may exhibits lack of reliability, accountability and independency in their work. They may also engages in counterproductive work behavior (more time in non-work-related activity than work-related activities). In addition, they may intentionally do things that may harm their colleagues and the institution itself. This would lead to a growing sphere of unprofessional/unhealthy relationships (Osibanjo, Akinbode, Falola, & Oludayo, 2015).

The low rating in self-reliance, leisure, and morality/ethics, served as the foci of the program. Training on professional ethics helps the teachers to direct the complexities of their role and become knowledgeable of the potential and unexpected consequences of the countless decisions they make every day. Teachers are rarely trained on personality development such as work ethics that help them identify ethical issues early enough to come up with the potential solutions (Hutching, 2016). While suggestions on infusing these skills on faculty development program may have been planned, currently, there are no guidelines on how to assess these skills especially to proficient teachers (Chan Chan, & Keow Ngang, 2015).

District LAC plan for Proficient teachers

Strategies to improve the lowest score factors served as the foci of the program. Thus, the purpose of this District Learning Action Cell (LAC) plan is to enhance

proficient teacher's work ethics and teach them ethical decision-making process to develop appropriate response to the poor work ethics at hand. The designed District LAC plan would help the *proficient* teachers learn how to evaluate work solutions to identify potential ethical problems and conflicts of interest. Teachers may learn how to comply with rules and/or laws governing potential areas of conflict, promote awareness of ethical behavior in work groups, and anticipate the implications of words and actions within work group goals.

The LAC plan would start with the use of self-report measures (pre-survey) as baseline to compare the participants' work with their ethics mean score at the end of the program. The pre- and post- surveys helped monitor the participants' progress, determe whether there was an improvement or not. Strategies to improve the lowest score factors served as the foci of the plan. If possible, a pre- and a post-training 360-degree feedback from the participants may be considered supplementing the self-report measure. Evaluation would take place throughout the program to monitor the participants' progress.

Moreover, the District LAC Plan will be conducted twice a month with one or two topics per session. Each session will require two (2) to three (3) hours. It is recommended to implement the LAC plan within a semester of a particular school year to ensure the continuity of the learning activities. Central to the design of the program were the group activities, facilitated discussions, action planning, and workshops that promote cooperative learning and behavior change. The programs consisted of self-reflection activities such as reflection journals, sharing of personal experience and film analysis which enable the participant to demonstrate reflective, critical thinking and problem solving skills through the ability to investigate issues leading to poor work ethics.

Table 2

District LAC plan for Proficient teachers

Phase	Objectives	Activities	Person Involved	Time Frame	Success Indicator
Planning	To increase the proficient teacher's mean score on Self-Reliance, Morality/Ethics, and Leisure through Self-Reflection activities, brainstorming, film analysis, case studies and Stress Management activities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> The teachers will be asked to share ethical dilemma or issue they previously encountered in their work and present this to the group. The effort should be for the teachers to recognize strategies that were ineffective in dealing with the issue. Ask the participants watch a film and/or read a case and ask their insights regarding how the protagonist surpassed his ethical dilemma. The case starts with a role play of a discussion. After the role play, the participants will be asked for their insights regarding how the protagonist able to deal with the ethical issue. Stress Management activities such as deep breathing, meditation, rhythmic exercise, and yoga. <p>Detailed Activities per domain will be indicate individually</p>	LAC Leader/LAC Facilitator/Principal	Twice a month for 3 months	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance Pictures Reflective journals Survey result Number of issues identified leading to poor work ethics Personalized action plan
Implementation	Conduct strategies on the conduct of District LAC plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and supervise the LAC Implementation Check and review the LAC Plan 	LAC Leader/LAC Facilitator/Principal		LAC committee monitor, supervise and review the LAC implementation
Evaluation	Assess the implementation of the LAC of Schools	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Assess the impact of LAC Identify/document activities that are potentially replicable for improving work ethics in other district/ region Analyze/summarize all evaluation reports Highlight accomplishment and set up rewards systems Check on School LAC Accompli 	LAC Leader/LAC Facilitator/Principal		Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (MWEPE) Post test

Objectives	Strategies/ Activities	Person Involved	Time Frame	Success Indicator
To increase the proficient teacher's mean score on Leisure through Self-Reflection activities, brainstorming, film analysis, case studies and Stress Management activities.	<p>Self-reflection activities The teachers will be asked to share their personal experience on ethical challenges they face or previously encountered in their workplace which affects their Leisure (attitudes and beliefs regarding the importance of non-work related activities) and ask them to present this to the group. The effort should be for the teachers to recognize strategies that were ineffective in dealing with the issue.</p> <p>Film Analysis The teacher will be asked to watch "Doing What Matters?" They will be asked to write a self-reflection paper and share it to the class.</p> <p>Case Analysis The teacher will be asked to read "Pro leisure vs Anti leisure." The teacher will be asked to write a self-reflection paper and share it to the class.</p>	LAC Leader/LAC Facilitator/Principal	Day 1	Attendance Pictures Reflective journals Survey result Number of issues identified leading to poor work ethics Personalized action plan

	<p>Role Play The teacher will be asked to perform a role play regarding person with poor Leisure. After the role play, the participants will be asking their insights regarding how the protagonist able to deal with the issue.</p> <p>Stress Management Stress Management activities such as Zumba, deep breathing, meditation, rhythmic exercise, and yoga.</p>		Day 2	
To increases the proficient teacher's mean score on Morality/ Ethics through Self-Reflection activities, brainstorming, film analysis, case studies and Stress Management activities.	<p>Self-reflection activities The teachers will be asked to share their personal experience on ethical challenges they face or previously encountered in their workplace which affects their Morality/ Ethics (one's belief in a just and moral existence) and ask them to present this to the group. The effort should be for the teachers to recognize strategies that were ineffective in dealing with the issue.</p> <p>Film Analysis The teacher will be asked to watch "What Shall a Man Give in Exchange for His Soul?" They will be asked to write a self-reflection paper and share it to the class.</p> <p>Case Analysis The teacher will be asked to read approach to making ethical decisions: 1. Identify the issue 2. Identify the ethical principles at risk? 3. Investigate the issue 4. Come up with probable solution 5. Implement the plan 6. Monitor and Follow up</p> <p>The teacher will be then given a case to solve applying the approach to making ethical decisions.</p>	LAC Leader/ LAC Facilitator/ Principal	Day 3	1. Attendance 2. Pictures 3. Reflective journals 4. Survey result 5. Number of issues identified leading to poor work ethics 6. Personalized action plan
	<p>Role Play The teacher will be asked to perform a role play regarding person with poor Morality/ Ethics. After the role play, the participants will be asking their insights regarding how the protagonist able to deal with the issue.</p> <p>Stress Management Stress Management activities such as Zumba, deep breathing, meditation, rhythmic exercise, and yoga.</p>		Day 4	
To increases the proficient teacher's mean score on Morality/ Ethics through Self-Reflection activities, brainstorming, film analysis, case studies and Stress Management activities.	<p>Self-reflection activities The teachers will be asked to share their personal experience on ethical challenges they face or previously encountered in their workplace which affects their Leisure (attitudes and beliefs regarding the importance of non-work related activities) and ask them to present this to the group. The effort should be for the teachers to recognize strategies that were ineffective in dealing with the issue.</p> <p>Film Analysis The teacher will be asked to watch "Doing What Matters?" They will be asked to write a self-reflection paper and share it to the class.</p> <p>Case Analysis The teacher will be asked to read "Pro leisure vs Anti leisure." The teacher will be asked to write a self-reflection paper and share it to the class.</p>	LAC Leader/ LAC Facilitator/ Principal	Day 5	1. Attendance 2. Pictures 3. Reflective journals 4. Survey result 5. Number of issues identified leading to poor work ethics 6. Personalized action plan
	<p>Role Play The teacher will be asked to perform a role play regarding person with poor Morality/ Ethics. After the role play, the participants will be asking their insights regarding how the protagonist able to deal with the issue.</p> <p>Stress Management Stress Management activities such as Zumba, deep breathing, meditation, rhythmic exercise, and yoga.</p>		Day 6	

Conclusion and Recommendations

Studies have shown that work ethic plays an important role in educational leadership and management. However, despite several studies conducted on work ethics, there is no study yet studying *proficient* teachers' work ethics specifically to elementary public school teachers. This study determined the work ethics of the *proficient* teachers in the West District of the Schools Division of Angeles City using the Multidimensional Work Ethic Profile (M WEP). The findings of the study served as basis for a District Learning Action Cell (LAC) Plan, which would be recommended to the Schools Division Superintendent through the Public Schools District Supervisor in charge of the West District. Teachers are rarely trained on personality development such as work ethics because most of the faculty development programs are solely focused on curriculum planning, student evaluation, and classroom management. The proposed program will be one of the first faculty development programs focusing on personality development for teachers.

As gleaned from the findings, the study asserts the need to develop a teacher development program enhancing work ethics. Despite teachers' moderately high score on overall work, still most of them may place less emphasis on work ethics such as on self-reliance, leisure, and morality/ ethics leading them to have less independence on their work, believe in the importance of non-work, related activities, and may place less emphasis on the belief in a just and moral existence. This study presumes that understanding one's work ethics is vital to human performance. Even though the primary concern of education is academic performance, there is simply too much convincing evidence that schools and colleges should not and cannot neglect the development of work ethics training program.

For the recommendation of future study, a comparative research of teacher work ethics in another district/ region maybe conducted to support or refute the findings of this study. This would allow for the comparison of a new work ethic score to the participants in this study, allowing researchers to determine if the current study's results hold similar to other school districts. It is also recommended to conduct a longitudinal study to investigate if increase in work ethics would lead to better school performance.

Second, a study using multiple methods such as self-reports, observations, and objective criteria may support the findings. Further qualitative examination, including interviews and observations, might identify factors leading to poor work ethics. Lastly, future studies may look into the teachers' work ethics especially those who are classified as entry level employees. This may help determine variance in work ethics over time.

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