

Harmonization of Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (Praise) Implementation: Teachers' Perception Toward Gawad Sagwan



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ABSTRACT: This study aimed to develop deeper understanding on the perception of ten (10) selected junior high school teachers of Aplaya National High School in the Division of Santa Rosa City, Laguna, Philippines toward Gawad SAGWAN as an Institutionalized Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) Implementation. It posits the significance of awards, incentives, and recognition to encourage creativity, innovativeness, efficiency, integrity, and productivity in the public service by recognizing and rewarding officials and employees, individually or in groups for their suggestions, inventions, superior accomplishments, and other personal efforts which contribute to the efficiency, economy, or other improvements in government operations, or for other extraordinary acts or services in the public interest. Specifically, it aimed to address the following: (1) What are the participants' perceptions in terms of awards and recognition in Gawad SAGWAN? (2) How do the participants perceive the challenges and demands of an award and recognition recipient in Gawad SAGWAN? The study employed the Psychological Phenomenology of Creswell (2017). The verbatim transcriptions revealed four (4) themes. Among the teachers' perceptions that surfaced included knowing oneself, and knowing teachers. The participating teachers perceived the challenges and demands as award and recognition recipients in Gawad SAGWAN through exemplary performance, accountability, and dedication to work. The findings indicate that the proposed Gawad SAGWAN is well-designed and tailored fit to the needs of teachers and administrators of Aplaya National High School in the Department of Education in support of the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) guiding principle and policy that every agency shall establish its employee incentive awards system-PRAISE.

KEYWORDS: awards and incentives, service excellence, Gawad SAGWAN

INTRODUCTION

Fundamentally, the provision of rewards, incentives, and recognition motivates and inspires teachers to better their craft, which is critical in the delivery of quality service to stakeholders, resulting in a brand of good service. Zingheim and Schuster (2000) define rewards as "the thing that increases the frequency of an employee action". This definition leads toward a clear outcome of rewards and recognition: to improve performance. Further, it shows that non-monetary appreciation can be very motivating, helping to build feelings of confidence and satisfaction in employees. In the United States and Australia, recognition is a very rewarding experience for an excellent classroom teacher and his or her students. Recognition for teachers builds off of some of the well-known extrinsic and intrinsic motivational theories. It offers hope for meaningful recognition to the other teachers working to improve student-learning outcomes. Similarly, it brings pride and support from the teacher's students, administration, governing board, and the general public (Andrews, 2011). As educators, Juravich (2021) claimed that recognition for our hard work and dedication is critically important as it fosters continued engagement and validation. Teacher recognition matters as it supports, validates, and encourages them to continue doing what they do best engaging and enriching students' lives.

In their Goal Setting Theory, Locke and Latham (1990) argued that school-based performance award systems improve both teachers' understanding of the goals and their commitment to them. The more a teacher believes that working hard will pay off in attaining goals, the more motivated he or she will be to put up the effort. Additionally, Garcia (2004) emphasized that rewards and incentives benefit employers from increased efficiency, sales, and productivity of the employees. Thus, both employers and employees gain from a positive and productive work environment.

Great teachers deserve great rewards, and nothing is more effective than praise and recognition in the form of a national teacher award. Many organizations and companies around the United States offer such commendations because they recognize the value of excellent educators. With a little time and effort, your multi-talented, innovative staff can be award-winning (Bafile,

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2000). Furthermore, Movsessian (2018) postulated the importance of teacher praise and the impact such recognition can have on teacher commitment and the overall culture of the school. Teachers desire recognition for their actions including advancement in student performance, ability to build relationships, and improvements to the functions of the school.

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones underscored the importance of recognizing the efforts and sacrifices of educators during the Global Teacher Prize Ambassadors' Forum: "Teacher Excellence – A Closer Look at the Global Teacher Prize," (DepEd Press Release 2019). Speaking before the participants from the DepEd Central, Regional, and Schools Division offices, and schools, Briones talked about their chances of winning in both international and local competitions like the Global Teacher Prize (GTP) and Metrobank Foundation. GTP underlines the importance of educators and the fact that, throughout the world, their efforts deserve to be recognized and celebrated. It also seeks to acknowledge the impact of the best teachers – not only on their students but also on their communities.

In addition, to recognize the laudable efforts and outstanding accomplishments of teaching, teaching-related, non-teaching personnel, and 3rd level officials, the Department of Education established the Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) (DepEd Order No. 9, s. 2002). It is in adherence to the provisions under Memorandum Circular No. 01, s. 2001 issued by the Civil Service Commission (CSC) PRAISE Program. Similarly, it also recognizes the exemplary performance of the Schools and Schools Division Offices.

People are influenced by a multitude way of important aspects of organizational performance. They implement and envision the strategies of the organization (Ajila et al. 2017). Rewarding is one of the main organizations policies that can increase the performance of staff and increase the outputs of the organization. In so doing, implementing the strategy competencies is required. These competencies are mostly a role of the knowledge, skills, and experience of individual investment. If the organization care for its employees as an important talent, it has to provide awards and incentives for the exemplary service they rendered.

Moreover, Cromer (2003) posited that employees who receive recognition for their work accomplishments tend to have increased morale and positive workplace attitudes. Employee recognition is an incentive employers utilize to offer feedback and encouragement to employees. Such includes verbal praise, award ceremonies, and public announcements for a job well done. Workplace recognition rewards occur frequently such as at the end of the day, week, or the conclusion of the month.

Understanding the effects of school-based performance award programs on school and teacher performance is particularly important in light of past research on individual performance (or "merit") pay plans for teachers (Hatry, Greiner, and Ashford, 1994). Merit pay plans tend to create a climate of professional collaboration which are very essential in establishing the best schools. Accordingly, Johnson (2015) stated that non-monetary incentives reward employee performance through perks and opportunities. These rewards include flexible work hours and training opportunities. The rewards and incentives are valuable to an employee because they allow workers to learn new skills and pursue advancement opportunities.

Utilizing an employee incentive program is considered essential and paves the way in bringing benefits to the organization. Millar et al (1995) espoused that incentive programs provide employees a reason to stay focused and productive. Likewise, it serves as an opportunity for the company to show their employees that they care and acknowledge their achievements and happiness. Incentive programs are a terrific way to encourage productivity among employees, as it helps them keep track of the goals they're working towards. While company loyalty is not something you can buy from your employees, incentives for consistently good work and productivity go a long way to help secure their dedication and commitment.

Making excellent teaching visible, promoting its reputation, and providing incentives for outstanding academics is a viable strategy for highlighting the central role of teaching and learning (Palmer & Collins, 2006). Providing an effective system of incentives, recognition, and rewards plays a crucial role in encouraging teachers to live up to the standards of their profession. Corollary to this, Roberts (2005) asserted that a strategic reward system creates a balanced offering to employees. It must consist of at least four areas of reward; appreciation, recognition, benefit, and compensation. Motivating employees is very important. Organizations must focus on defining the reward system to institute among the employees a clear understanding of the connection between performance and reward.

Consequently, Scott (2019) concurred that employees and employers both benefit from workplace rewards and incentives. Employee morale, job happiness, and involvement in organizational functions increased when they are rewarded for exceptional performance and productivity. Correspondingly, De Leon (1997) pointed out that many employers offer rewards and incentives through employee assistance programs. These programs help workers maintain a balance between work and home life by supporting their mental and physical well-being so they can remain focused on their jobs while they are at work.

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Teachers' awards and incentives undeniably could help deliver quality services to stakeholders since it perpetuates a collective culture of accountability, responsibility, and excellence. Hence, this study endeavored Gawad SAGWAN as the Program on Awards and Incentives for Service Excellence (PRAISE) of Aplaya National High School.

METHODS

Research Design

The study specifically utilized Creswell's (2017) Psychological Phenomenology. This research design involved in-depth interviews of junior high school teachers to determine their perceived challenges and demands as award and recognition recipients in Gawad SAGWAN as a phenomenon.

Participants of the Study

The researcher selected ten (10) junior high school teachers of Aplaya National High School in Santa Rosa City, Laguna, the Philippines who were awardees and nominees of the Gawad SAGWAN. This number of participants was recommended by Polkinghorne (1989) as cited in Creswell (2017) suggesting that researchers need to interview 5 to 25 individuals who have all experienced the phenomenon. Specifically, they were teachers handling different subjects, who were chosen based on the following inclusion criteria: 1) minimum teaching experience of three years; 2) have no negative records as to mishandling responsibilities in their respective learning areas or departments, and 3) those who signed the waiver/consent of participation. Similarly, the researcher utilized purposive or judgmental sampling which intentionally selects the individuals and sites for study because they could purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study thus providing quality assurance (Huberman & Miles) as cited in Creswell (2017).

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the phenomenological framework of Moustakas (1994) as detailed in Creswell (2017). First, the researchers went through bracketing, the first step to consider, in which they set aside all preconceived thoughts and experiences they had to best understand the experiences of the participating junior high school teachers of Aplaya National High School. After conducting in-depth interviews, the researchers performed horizontalization, by which they built data considering the central questions as well as probing questions in the interview guide. This was done by going through the data, i.e., interview transcriptions, highlighting significant statements which are sentences or quotes that provided an understanding of how the participants perceived the challenges and demands as an award and recognition recipient in Gawad SAGWAN. Then, the researchers developed clusters of meaning from these significant statements into themes which were used to write a textural description of the participants' lived experiences. They also used these significant statements to write a description, called imaginative variation or structural description, of the context or setting that influences how the participants experienced the phenomenon under study. From the structural and textural descriptions, the researchers wrote the composite description that presents the "essence" of facing the challenges and demands of an award and recognition recipient in Gawad SAGWAN.

Verification and validation were used to establish the research rigor of this study in terms of its qualitative feature (Meadows & Morse, 2001). The researchers obtained verification by conducting in-depth interviews, adhering to the phenomenological method of inquiry, suspending previous experiences, keeping research notes and journals, utilizing a sufficient sample of participants (Polkinghorne, 1989 as cited by Creswell, 2017), and conducting in-depth interviews until data were refined. Validation was achieved through data collection, and data analysis using Moustakas' approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the perception of junior high school teachers of Aplaya National High School as regards the challenges and demands of an award and recognition recipient in Gawad SAGWAN.

1) What are the participant's perceptions of award and recognition in Gawad SAGWAN?

Theme 1: Knowing Oneself. As revealed by the participants, this theme focuses on knowing one's self as the most prevalent and reoccurring issue from the perspective of teachers in terms of awards and recognition in GAWAD SAGWAN. Some respondents said it was critical to understand them to be effective leaders. One participant stated that regardless of the environment or task, they retain the same style of behavior (Morgan & Skitka, 2013). Likewise, they claimed that this upkeep allowed others to see what kind of leaders they are as expressed in the following statements:

This award-giving body makes me feel appreciated and gives me the confidence to do my work with enthusiasm. It has provided another source of motivation for me to strive for excellence in this noble vocation (P2).

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When I heard the Gawad SAGWAN, my first reaction was to recognize and acknowledge the efforts and accomplishments of every deserving individual in the field, despite of the challenges that we face (P5).

The conclusions support the perspective of Hammer et al. (2010) affirming that the institutional reward system is one of the factors that influence teaching improvement efforts aside from intrinsic motivation, teaching consultation services, and a teaching-positive institutional climate for teacher improvement. Likewise, the concept of recognizing and rewarding excellent teaching on campus would suggest another potential benefit: the retention of exemplary instructors. One UK center investigated the impact of teaching awards (that included a financial reward) on their campus and found that (according to previous winners) the awards "widened opportunities" by allowing for publications and presentations and that they "increased self-esteem.

Theme 2: Knowing Teachers. The participants disclosed the relevance of prizes and recognition to improve the academic working environment by understanding and applying them effectively. Goodwin and Darley (2018), for example, asked participants to categorize their judgments about knowing the professors into statements: those that reference empirical beliefs, and those that reference social customs. It's critical to understand that teachers are professionals who deserve to be treated as such. It is therefore imperative to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of teachers and counsel teachers in private when addressing negative aspects about the teacher and respect teachers in hopes that they will, in turn, respect him.

I can see that GAWAD SAGWAN aims to promote recognition of the efforts lent by all parts of the teaching process because I believe that one's success is dependent on the collaboration of many. (P7).

My desire to be involved in Gawad SAGWAN emanates from my drive and dedication to my chosen field of work as a teacher, which is to be a good educator. (P10).

The results presented above are coherent with Andrews (2011), suggesting that value has been found in providing recognition and awards programs for excellent teachers. Teachers receiving recognition and awards for their teaching have praised recognition programs as motivating them to continue high-level instruction. Teachers feel that acknowledging their talents and flaws and addressing their negative qualities promotes respect and a climate of trust in the institution. Similarly, Recognition most often serves to reward good work, as well as indicate to the students, faculty members, and administration that good teaching is important. Formal recognition also may contribute to meeting tenure requirements, post-tenure requirements, or promotion for those, not in tenure-track faculty positions.

2) How do the participants perceive the challenges and demands of an award and recognition recipient in Gawad SAGWAN?

Theme 3: Exemplary Performance. As disclosed in this theme, the outstanding achievements of instructors, as well as the principals or school administrators are part and parcel of any institution or organization. Teachers, according to some participants, are the finest representation of interacting with students as their second parents at school, and they are active in the participatory instructional management and decision-making process, which allows the school to explore new ideas and approaches. As a result, teachers' relevant ideas are adapted and utilized as a part of the school's best practices. In addition, the culture of collaboration among school personnel is promoted by exemplifying the sense of oneness to their goals and objectives in the educative process through collaboration. Some participants stated that they sought and relied on teacher input because many of their teachers have extensive experience.

Awards and recognitions encourage and recognize exemplary performance by both teaching and non-teaching personnel and stakeholders who demonstrate teamwork and a culture of shared responsibility. As a result, it inspires them to do and give more for the good of the school community (P3).

Gawad SAGWAN acknowledges exemplary achievements of stakeholders while also operating a merit system that recognizes their efforts, deeds, dedication, and contributions for the the advancement of the school (P6).

Considering the findings of Hativa et al. (2001), who claimed that teachers attained excellence by employing a unique set of effective teaching dimensions and strategies. Similarly, they share a limited set of teaching aspects and approaches that allow them to broaden their perspective in the teaching and learning process, resulting in exemplary performance. Berliner (1994) mentioned that professionals have a unique experiences. Developing professionals learn from experience more than the rest of us in their fields. He also highlighted that competence grew autonomous from experience, although the latter is perhaps the most crucial need for the former. Likewise, it was noted that teachers had a passion for learning and excellence in terms of expectations

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for themselves and their students, the ability to reflect in a self-critical and natural way, a desire to interact and engage with people, and caring behavior towards people and their performance (McDowell 2004).

Theme 4: Accountability and Dedication to Work. This theme encompasses accountability and dedication to work by teachers and administrators in increasing their dedication to GAWAD SAGWAN in terms of leadership and management. Eisenfuhr (2011) postulated that accountability and dedication are processes of selecting from a variety of options to reach the desired goal. A hostile faculty and an indignant community will soon confront the principal or the unfair administrator. Teachers are as concerned with test scores, teacher salaries, parents, and budgets as they are with fairness, equality, justice, and democracy (Strike et al., 2005). One of the participants indicated as follows:

My eagerness and dedication to my work motivated me to carry out my duties and responsibilities as a teacher, and even in the absence of recognition or reward, my accountability to God and the people I serve keeps me doing what I should and must do (P1).

The teachers who were honored are all deserving, and the Gawad SAGWAN is much needed to boost their morale and dedication to their work (P4).

In support of these findings, Mart (2018) argued that passionate teachers are dedicated to student success. Commitment is a necessary component of effective teaching. Committed teachers are concerned with their student's development and struggle much with how to keep students learning. They foster curiosity and enthusiasm for learning. Teachers who are committed to their students acknowledge and strive to fulfill their responsibilities. Dedication to their work distinguishes committed teachers. Teachers that are involved in their work and committed to students and their learning play an important role in students' growth. Accountability, on the other hand, enables teachers to conduct themselves professionally in school (Balkar et al. 2021). Individuals feel responsible for their actions when there is accountability in the workplace, and they are more likely to perform their tasks well and efficiently. It could also increase employee commitment and happiness (Indeed Editorial team, 2021).

Essence. Taken collectively, the narratives of the participants' perceptions revealed two (2) theme clusters that answered the "what" of the phenomenon. The participants addressed the first central question "what are the participants' perceptions of award and recognition at GAWAD SAGWAN" and enumerated the various problems associated with the phenomenon. The problem of knowing yourself and knowing your teachers were presented, along with documentation related to the most common and recurring struggle. As Phalane (2011) also said, this necessitates a greater administrative function to provide advice and support to reach their aim or purpose. All of the participants agreed that validation requires constant growth on their part, but they also raised the issue of teachers' perceptions of awards and recognition. The remaining two theme clusters responding to the second central question on "how" the participants perceive the challenges and demands enumerated the various problems associated with the phenomenon, the most serious of which is dealing with the teachers' exemplary performance and dedication: and accountability. Positive techniques, such as providing support and encouragement, were also acknowledged as useful ways to deal with the scenario that caused the problem by the participants (Hoy and Walker 2016). The participants never indicated a difficulty related to a lack of authority, as identified in the study of Al-Ghefeilli et al. (2018).

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The general conclusion of this study is that all of the participants agreed that teachers' perceptions of rewards and recognition in school are a challenge. Despite the fact that they have shared accolades and praises, they still have difficulty handling their students. Additionally, the Gawad SAGWAN is well-designed and tailored fit to the needs of Aplaya National High School teachers and administrators in the Department of Education, in support of the Civil Service Commission's (CSC) guiding principle and policy that every agency shall establish its employee incentive awards system-PRAISE.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Awards and recognition are critical in creating an atmosphere or environment of acceptance and respect for teachers' unceasing efforts to succeed in their performance and contribute to the betterment of the school community. An awards ceremony shows participants that their efforts are valued. It conveys appreciation and gratitude for each teacher's hard work and notifies individuals that good work will be recognized. It shows others, such as the general public and other staff members, that they are aware of their exceptional accomplishments. Teachers are given the chance through Gawad SAGWAN to participate in collaborative efforts to develop themselves and empower the learning community through consistent best practices in the school.

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As a result, they must continue to bring out the best in themselves to boost their self-esteem and self-worth. Similarly, guidelines must be effectively communicated so that they are aware of the rewards and recognition program, and those who are interested must be allowed to participate. In terms of accountability, school leaders and administrators must establish an effective evaluation committee to ensure that deserving school personnel shall be recognized for their exemplary performance. For teachers to exemplify exceptional performance, accountability, and dedication to their profession, they must live up to the Department of Education's vision and mission which is part and parcel of teachers' mandate and from which awards and recognitions are simply one of its essential facets. Furthermore, teachers must commit to getting to know themselves as well as their peers to foster a collaborative culture that promotes the principles of integrity, responsibility, and accountability, as well as demonstrate the fortitude to withstand educational challenges among them and the school as a whole. This will surely pave the way for the establishment of school culture in which the collective prioritizes the welfare of the students and the school community. The importance of awards and recognition must serve as another venue and motivation for teachers, school leaders, and managers to improve their pedagogical knowledge and managerial prowess in engaging students effectively in the instructional process and their fellow staff respectively in the institution. Further, teachers should view the aforementioned program as a chance to showcase themselves as a form of self-discovery in which they must imbue themselves with the effort and determination to manifest exemplary performance in all dimensions of their duties and responsibilities as teachers. Future academics may conduct another study on the subject based on the demographics of the participants. They may do a follow-up study using other research methods to delve deeper into the program's ramifications and effect on educators' performance.

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