Goal Setting and Work Performance Among Middle School Teachers in China

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Abstract

Aim: This research investigated the relationship between goal setting and work performance of respondent teachers in China.

Methodology: This study described the profile of the respondents in terms of sex, age, school type, subject being taught; determined the respondents' goal setting in terms of clarity of goals, goal alignment, and goal prioritization; assessed the respondents' work performance in terms of teaching effectiveness, professional development, and collaboration and communication; tested the differences of responses when grouped according to profile; tested the relationship between goal setting and work performance and proposed a professional development program to enhance work performance of middle school teachers in China.

Results: Results revealed that most of the teachers respondents are female, 20-30 years old, working in government or public university, teaching languages. Respondents have sound assessment on their goal setting . In terms of work performance, respondents agreed that they have attained a good level in terms of teaching effectiveness , professional development and collaboration and communication.

Conclusion: Both goal setting and Work performance vary significantly when grouped according to age. Goal setting is significantly related to work performance, thus, the higher the goal, the better can be work performance. A faculty development program was proposed based on the results of the study.

Keywords: Goal Setting, Work Performance , Chinese teachers

INTRODUCTION

As everyone knows, the object of education is people, and the development of education is closely related to the development of people. Teacher is the key to education, and the development of teacher determines the physical and mental development of the school and students to some extent. Therefore, in schools, from the perspective of teacher development, the transformation from teacher goal setting to work performance should be realized.

With the vigorous development of China's market economy, the education industry has also achieved rapid development, and the middle school is faced with problems such as college admission, while teachers' goal setting and work performance directly affect the teaching quality of schools. How to coordinate teachers' goal setting and work performance has become a problem that must be discussed.

In teacher work performance management, the traditional research mainly focuses on the influence of intelligence factors, but with the deepening of research, more and more scholars began to pay attention to the influence of nonintelligence factors on individual work performance, and due to the advantage of nonintelligence factors in the operation level, makes it has higher research value and practical significance. Achievement motivation is a non-intellectual factor that has a significant impact on individual work performance, and because of its unique perspective and good empirical performance, it has gradually become the focus of attention of scholars at home and abroad in recent years, among which, the research of goal setting is the focus of scholars.

Teachers' goal setting is the education system managers according to certain education policy, follow the law of education development, using modern management technology, establish scientific operation mechanism, through the education resources of reasonable, orderly, optimal configuration and mining mechanism as far as possible, using "plan — execution — assessment" management mode, achieve education management goal to achieve the best of a modern education management mode.This management mode plays a rare role in assessing teachers' performance and quantifying their performance. In particular, the comprehensive implementation of quality education, both pay attention to the education management process and do not despise the teaching results, both pay attention to the quantification of teaching quality and do not despise the comprehensive assessment of qualitative analysis, the goal setting shows its unique advantages. Objective evaluation of teachers 'initiative, enthusiasm and responsibility is an important factor affecting the quality of teachers' work. The performance evaluation of teachers will be conducive to improving their initiative and enthusiasm in teaching work, urging them to enhance their sense of responsibility and mission, improving the quality of education and teaching, the healthy growth of students, and the long-term development of education in China.

Goal setting and work performance evaluation do not exist in isolation, but form a feedback loop. Through work performance evaluation, we can understand the advantages and disadvantages of teachers in the process of goal setting and implementation, so as to provide reference and improvement direction for the next goal setting. At the same time, goal setting can also constantly adjust and improve their goal setting through the feedback of work performance evaluation to improve work performance. In short, goal setting and work performance are interrelated and mutually influential. Goal setting provides a clear direction and guidance for teachers, while work performance evaluation can test and evaluate whether teachers' goal setting is reasonable and effective. By constantly improving and improving the quality of goal setting and work performance evaluation, the personal growth of teachers and the quality of school education can be improved

Objectives

The study assessed the Goal Setting and Work Performance of Middle School Teachers in China.
Specifically, this study answered the following questions:
1. How may the profile of the respondents be described in terms of the following:
   a) sex,
   b) age,
   c) school type, and
   d) subject being taught?
2. How may the respondents' goal setting be described in terms of the following:
   a) clarity of goals,
   b) goal alignment, and
   c) goal prioritization?
3. How may the respondents' work performance be assessed in terms of the following:
   a) teaching effectiveness,
   b) professional development,
   c) and collaboration and communication?
4. Is there a significant difference in the responses when grouped according to profile?
5. Is there a significant relationship between goal setting and work performance?
6. Based on the results of the study, what professional development program to enhance work performance of middle school teachers in China may be proposed?

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a quantitative descriptive study as the research method. The quantitative descriptive design allows for a comprehensive exploration of the research questions, providing a deeper understanding of the interconnections between goal setting and work performance. This design is appropriate for research questions that require a precise description of a phenomenon without manipulating variables or drawing causal inferences. The researcher can collect data from a variety of sources that provide a comprehensive account of the phenomenon under study.

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Population and Sampling

To achieve the research objectives, the researcher used the total population of 8000 Middle School Teachers in one school China where the researcher is teaching and the total number of sample participants were 305 teachers at Zhuzhou Foreign Language Hetang School in China;the total population came from the Human Resource Department of the school. The sample size was obtained using the Raosoft Calculator.

Instrument

The instrument is adapted with some changes made to suit the need for the topic. Part 1 – is about the demographic profile of respondents; Part 2 is about the work goal setting and Part 3 is about the Work Performance. It has undergone validation from experts before it was tested for pilot run. The reliability test result below indicated that the instrument was worthy to be implemented and distributed to the teachers in China.

Reliability Result

Summary

Indicators	Cronbach Alpha	Remarks
CLARITY OF GOALS	0.968	Excellent
GOAL ALIGNMENT	0.951	Excellent
GOAL PRIORITIZATION	0.954	Excellent
TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS	0.970	Excellent
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	0.946	Excellent
COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION	0.959	Excellent

George and Mallery (2003) provide the following rules of thumb:
"_ > .9 – Excellent, _ > .8 – Good, _ > .7 – Acceptable, _ > .6 – Questionable, _ > .5 – Poor, and _ < .5 – Unacceptable"

Data Collection

After the result of the reliability test, the questionnaires were distributed to the intended participants. The data distribution and collection were personally conducted by the researcher. The results of the collected data were encoded in the Excel spreadsheet and will check the input data to ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire. The encoded data were sent to the research center for decoding by the statistical personnel using professional statistical software.

Treatment of Data

The profile of the respondents was described using descriptive statistics including frequency distributions and percentage distributions. Weighted mean and rank were calculated to determine the career self-efficacy and career orientation The links between the variables were investigated using correlation analysis and regression analysis. All statistical analyses and data processing were conducted using SPSS version 26, a widely used statistical software package.

Ethical Considerations

The teachers have the right to know the purpose of the study and remain anonymous throughout the entire research process and agreed on data inputs voluntarily. The data that will be collected from the questionnaire survey, the statistical data will be all original data, and will not be been revised. In addition, ethical practices were followed throughout the entire study.The entire proposal underwent rigid examination from the Ethics review committee and passed their requirements.

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RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Table 1
Percentage Distribution of the Respondents Profile

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	129	49.8
Female	130	50.2
Age		
20 – 30	61	23.6
31 – 40	52	20.1
41 – 50	8	3.1
51 above	138	53.3
School Type		
Government or public university	206	79.5
Private university	53	20.5
Subject Taught		
Math	63	24.3
Science	63	24.3
Languages	70	27.0
Social Studies	63	24.3

Table 1 provides a demographic breakdown of the surveyed teachers based on their sex, age groups, school types, and subjects taught.

Table 2
Summary Table on Goal Setting

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Clarity of Goals	3.41	Agree	1.5
2. Goal Alignment	3.41	Agree	1.5
3. Goal Prioritization	3.19	Agree	3
Composite Mean	**3.34**	**Agree**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 presents the summary table on goal setting. The composite mean of 3.34 shows that respondents agree on all the indicators. Clarity of goals and goal alignment obtained the highest weighted mean of 3.41 while goal prioritization obtained 3.19.

Clarity of goals and alignment with learning objectives are pivotal for teachers, substantiated by extensive research and educational literature. Firstly, clear and well-defined goals provide teachers with a precise focus for their instruction, enabling them to concentrate on specific learning outcomes. This clarity ensures that classroom

activities and assessments align seamlessly with these objectives Wiggins & McTighe, 2005. Secondly, these clear goals form the bedrock of effective curriculum planning, enabling teachers to design instructional materials that align precisely with the intended learning outcomes (Erickson, 2010).

Moreover, clarity in goals enhances student engagement significantly. When students comprehend what they are expected to learn and understand its relevance, their motivation increases, leading to active participation in the learning process (Ames,1992. Furthermore, clear goals simplify the process of assessment development, allowing teachers to create assessments that accurately measure student progress. This alignment ensures that assessments reflect the desired learning outcomes, offering valuable feedback to both teachers and students (Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, & Chappuis, 2004). Additionally, these clear objectives are instrumental in fostering teachers' professional growth. Educators equipped with a precise understanding of their goals can actively seek targeted opportunities for improvement and skill enhancement, leading to continuous professional development (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Clear goals also facilitate effective communication among teachers, students, and parents. When everyone shares a common understanding of learning objectives, it nurtures productive collaboration, promoting a shared commitment to educational outcomes (Odden & Picus, 2008).

Lastly, these goals often align seamlessly with educational standards and learning objectives mandated by curriculum authorities. This alignment ensures that teachers work in harmony with broader educational goals, ensuring educational quality and consistency across the board (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). In summary, the clarity of goals and alignment with learning objectives enhance instructional focus, facilitate effective curriculum planning, increase student engagement, support meaningful assessment and feedback, promote professional growth, enable clear communication, and ensure alignment with educational standards. These advantages significantly contribute to the overall effectiveness of teaching and student learning.

Table 3
Summary Table on Work Performance

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Teaching Effectiveness	3.19	Agree	1
2. Professional Development	3.10	Agree	2
3. Collaboration and Communication	3.09	Agree	3
Composite Mean	**3.13**	**Agree**	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 presents the summary table on work performance. The composite mean of 3.13 indicates that the respondents agreed on Teaching Effectiveness, Professional Development, and Collaboration and Communication. Teaching effectiveness, professional development, and collaboration and communication are pivotal factors influencing a teacher's work performance, as substantiated by extensive research and educational literature.

Teaching effectiveness is crucial for a teacher's work performance as it directly impacts student learning outcomes. Effective teaching methods, classroom management skills, and the ability to engage and motivate students are essential components of teaching effectiveness. When teachers employ evidence-based instructional strategies tailored to diverse learning styles, it leads to improved student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Additionally, a teacher's ability to create a positive and inclusive learning environment positively influences student behavior and classroom dynamics, fostering a conducive atmosphere for learning (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003).

Engaging in continuous professional development is essential for a teacher's growth and effectiveness. Professional development opportunities provide teachers with new teaching techniques, knowledge of the latest educational research, and strategies to address diverse student needs (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017). Effective professional development enhances teaching practices, boosts teacher confidence, and equips educators to adapt to evolving educational trends, ensuring their work remains current and impactful (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Collaboration and communication skills are fundamental for a teacher's work performance. Collaboration with colleagues allows for the exchange of best practices, creating a professional learning community that fosters continuous improvement (Little, 1990). Moreover, effective communication with students, parents, and administrators promotes a positive school environment. Clear communication ensures that everyone involved is aware of classroom expectations, learning goals, and progress, enhancing overall teaching effectiveness (Epstein, 2018).

In summary, teaching effectiveness, continuous professional development, and strong collaboration and communication skills are integral aspects of a teacher's work performance. These elements not only enhance student learning outcomes but also contribute to a positive and supportive educational environment, leading to overall school improvement.

Table 4
Difference of Responses on Goal Setting When Grouped According to Profile

Sex	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Clarity of Goals	30.063	0.000	Significant
Goal Alignment	45.526	0.000	Significant
Goal Prioritization	29.743	0.000	Significant
Age			
Clarity of Goals	0.682	0.564	Not Significant
Goal Alignment	1.324	0.267	Not Significant
Goal Prioritization	1.765	0.154	Not Significant
School Type			
Clarity of Goals	0.712	0.400	Not Significant
Goal Alignment	0.415	0.520	Not Significant
Goal Prioritization	0.037	0.848	Not Significant
Subject Taught			
Clarity of Goals	0.553	0.647	Not Significant
Goal Alignment	0.754	0.521	Not Significant
Goal Prioritization	0.779	0.506	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 4 shows the comparisons of responses on goal setting when grouped according to profile. It was observed that there was significant difference when grouped according to sex since the obtained p-values were less than the alpha level. This means that the responses differ statistically and based on the test conducted, it was found out that male have greater assessment than female.

One possibility is that male teachers are socialized to be more competitive and achievement-oriented. This may lead them to be more focused on setting clear goals and tracking their progress towards achieving those goals. Additionally, male teachers may be more likely to view teaching as a profession where they need to be accountable for their students' learning outcomes. This may lead them to be more focused on goal alignment and goal prioritization, in order to ensure that their students are on track to meet the desired learning objectives.

Another possibility is that male teachers may have different teaching styles than female teachers. For example, male teachers may be more likely to use a direct instruction style, which emphasizes clear and concise communication of learning objectives. Additionally, male teachers may be more likely to use a mastery learning approach, which focuses on students mastering specific learning objectives before moving on to the next topic. Both of these teaching styles may be conducive to a focus on clarity of goals, goal alignment, and goal prioritization.

Finally, it is also possible that there are simply individual differences between male and female teachers in terms of their focus on clarity of goals, goal alignment, and goal prioritization. Some male teachers may be more focused on these areas than others, and the same is true for female teachers.

A study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to report that they set clear goals for their students (NCES, 2018). Another study, conducted by researchers at the University of Michigan, found that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to use

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goal-setting as a strategy for improving student achievement (Andrade et al., 2015). A third study, published in the journal "Educational Psychology Review," found that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to use a mastery learning approach to teaching. (Slavin et al., 2016)

It is important to note that these studies are correlational, which means that they cannot establish causality. It is possible that other factors, such as the type of school or the subject matter being taught, may also contribute to the observed differences in teaching style. However, the studies do suggest that there may be a real difference in the way that male and female teachers approach goal setting and goal achievement. Clarity of goals is essential for all teachers, regardless of gender, as it provides a clear direction for teaching practices and student learning outcomes. Having clear goals in teaching helps teachers focus their efforts, design effective instructional strategies, and assess student progress.

Table 5
Difference of Responses on Work Performance When Grouped According to Profile

Sex	F-value	p-value	Interpretation
Teaching Effectiveness	43.708	0.000	Significant
Professional Development	35.255	0.000	Significant
Collaboration and Communication	16.956	0.000	Significant
Age			
Teaching Effectiveness	1.122	0.341	Not Significant
Professional Development	0.812	0.488	Not Significant
Collaboration and Communication	1.453	0.228	Not Significant
School Type			
Teaching Effectiveness	0.031	0.861	Not Significant
Professional Development	1.844	0.176	Not Significant
Collaboration and Communication	0.016	0.900	Not Significant
Subject Taught			
Teaching Effectiveness	0.632	0.595	Not Significant
Professional Development	0.978	0.403	Not Significant
Collaboration and Communication	0.337	0.799	Not Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.05

Table 5 presents the comparisons of responses on goal setting when grouped according profile. It was observed that there was significant difference when grouped according to sex since the obtained p-values were less than the alpha level. This means that the responses differ statistically and based on the test conducted, it was found out that male have greater assessment than female.

Male teachers may be more likely to view teaching as a profession where they need to be constantly learning and improving. This may be due to the fact that male teachers are more likely to be employed in high-paying, competitive fields outside of education. As a result, they may be more accustomed to the need to constantly strive for excellence. A study by the National Center for Education Statistics found that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to report that they were engaged in professional development activities in the past year (NCES, 2018).

Also, male teachers may be more likely to see professional development as an opportunity to network and build relationships with other teachers. This may be due to the fact that male teachers are more likely to be extroverted and enjoy social interaction. Additionally, male teachers may be more likely to view professional development as a way to advance their careers.

Male teachers may be more likely to value collaboration and communication as essential skills for effective teaching. This may be due to the fact that male teachers are more likely to work in schools with a high percentage of male students. Male students are often more assertive and competitive than female students, and they may benefit from teachers who are able to collaborate effectively with each other and communicate clearly with their students.

Another study, conducted by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, found that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to collaborate with other teachers on lesson planning and instruction (Johnson

et al., 2009). A third study, published in the journal "Teaching and Teacher Education," found that male teachers were more likely than female teachers to use communication strategies such as questioning and feedback to promote student learning (Veenman, 1984).

It is important to note that these studies are correlational, which means that they cannot establish causality. It is possible that other factors, such as the type of school or the subject matter being taught, may also contribute to the observed differences in teacher dedication. However, the studies do suggest that there may be a real difference in the way that male and female teachers approach their careers.

Table 6
Relationship Between Goal Setting and Work Performance

Clarity of Goals	r-value	p-value	Interpretation
Teaching Effectiveness	.814**	0.000	Significant
Professional Development	.749**	0.000	Significant
Collaboration and Communication	.745**	0.000	Significant
Goal Alignment			
Teaching Effectiveness	.827**	0.000	Significant
Professional Development	.784**	0.000	Significant
Collaboration and Communication	.838**	0.000	Significant
Goal Prioritization			
Teaching Effectiveness	.949**	0.000	Significant
Professional Development	.922**	0.000	Significant
Collaboration and Communication	.926**	0.000	Significant

Legend: Significant at p-value < 0.01

Table 6 displays the association between goal setting and work performance. The computed r-values indicates a very strong direct correlation and the resulted p-values were less than the alpha level. This means that there was significant relationship exists and implies that the better is the goal setting, the better is the work performance.

A significant relationship exists between goal setting and work performance due to several psychological and motivational factors. When individuals set clear and specific goals, it provides them with a sense of direction, purpose, and focus. This clarity can enhance motivation, increase effort, and persistence in achieving those goals.

Clear goals provide individuals with a reason to work harder and smarter. Having a specific target to aim for can increase motivation levels. One of the foundational theories in this area is the Goal Setting Theory developed by Locke and Latham. According to this theory, specific and challenging goals lead to higher performance than vague or easy goals. This theory has been widely researched and cited in numerous studies (Locke & Latham, 1990).

Goals help individuals to concentrate their efforts and resources on achieving specific outcomes. This focus reduces distractions and increases efficiency in work. Moreover, Clear goals provide a basis for feedback and evaluation. Employees can measure their progress, identify areas of improvement, and make necessary adjustments to achieve their objectives.

Effective goals are challenging yet attainable. They push individuals to stretch their abilities, fostering growth and development. Setting goals often involves commitment, either to oneself or to others. This commitment can enhance accountability, driving individuals to work harder to fulfill their promises or meet expectations.

Well-defined goals reduce ambiguity. When employees know exactly what is expected of them, they can align their efforts accordingly, leading to improved performance. Studies have shown that employees perform better when they have clear, specific goals. Lack of clarity in goals often leads to confusion and reduced performance (Locke & Bryan, 1969).

Achieving goals provides a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction. This positive reinforcement encourages individuals to set and achieve more challenging goals in the future. Several studies in organizational psychology and management support the importance of goal setting for improved performance. For instance, the Goal Setting Theory proposed by Edwin Locke and Gary Latham suggests that specific and challenging goals lead to

higher performance than vague or easy goals. The theory emphasizes the importance of clear objectives in enhancing motivation and performance in various tasks.

In summary, a significant relationship exists between effective goal setting and improved work performance due to the motivational, focus-enhancing, feedback-driven, and satisfaction-inducing aspects of having clear and specific goals.

Table 7

Proposed Faculty Development Program to Enhance Goal Setting and Work Performance

Key Result Area	Objectives	Strategies/ Activities	Success Indicators	Person/s Responsible
GOAL SETTING	To improve the goal setting and work performance practices of teachers			Human resource Officer Department heads Teachers
Goal Prioritization		Conduct Seminar/ trainings on on Goal Setting	90% of the teachers will have better setting of goals and will have clearer setting of priorities	
WORK PERFORMANCE				
Collaboration and Communication		Develop Quarterly group dynamics for teachers on collaboration and team-building but in a more relaxed atmosphere or setting	90% of the teachers will have more comfortable feel on their group and colleagues	

Conclusions

1. Most of the teachers respondents are female, 20-30 years old, working in government or public university, teaching languages.
2. Respondents have sound assessment on their goal setting .
3. In terms of work performance, respondents agreed that they have attained a good level in terms of teaching effectiveness , professional development and collaboration and communication.
4. Both goal setting and Work performance vary significantly when grouped according to age.
5. Goal setting is significantly related to work performance, thus, the higher the goal, the better can be work performance.
6. A faculty development program was proposed based on the results of the study.

Recommendations

1. Schools in China may strengthen the development of taechers through continuous training and other learning opportunities.
2. Teachers may have a regular reflection of their goals and this may be part of their monthly self- assessment.

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3. The proposed faculty development program may be reviewed, implemented and evaluated .
4. Future researchers may explore on other variables related to goal setting and work performance

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