THE FACTORS OF TEACHER CAREER SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Career satisfaction as individuals' idiosyncratic evaluations of their own careers can be seen as the main component of career success in actual labor market. Research on career satisfaction has examined different occupational groups, but teachers still are the underrepresented group. For teachers, in particular, job satisfaction is influenced by contextual factors – organizational, interpersonal, or personal levels: extrinsic factors of school leadership and climate, societal factors of status and educational change, and intrinsic factors of facilitating students' achievements and self-growth. Little scientific literature examines the interactions between teachers' emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. The research problem of this inquiry is formulated as – how secondary school teachers perceive the factors of teacher career satisfaction. To compile the empirical research data qualitative content analysis method was used. The findings of the major domains presented were discovered using the method of the interview. The following career satisfaction factors were distinguished: emotional connection to work, emotional work conditions, psychological state and emotional background, personal characteristics and skills, which help to feel the career satisfaction, to control arising emotions, to identify them and to react accordingly.

Keywords: teacher career; career satisfaction; factors of career satisfaction; emotional intelligence.

1 INTRODUCTION

Career success theories [1], [2] assume that the conceptualization of career satisfaction is a contextualized phenomenon. Career satisfaction is defined as the emotional orientation of the employee carrying out work roles, as an experienced satisfaction, positive emotional state valuating self-professional activities. According to Akkermans & Kubasch [3], the #1 trending topic in the career journals between 2012 and 2016 career success was assessed and mostly researched in terms of career satisfaction and the majority of the studies adhered to the concept of career satisfaction as the indicator of subjective career success.

Career satisfaction as individuals' idiosyncratic evaluations of their own careers can be seen as the main component of career success in actual labour market [4]. Career and job satisfaction is crucial, due to its associations with work performance, physical and mental health and career decision [5]. Teachers dissatisfied with their work display lower commitment to work, negative impact on student motivation through emotional contagion and may fail to satisfy their student's needs for autonomy and competence [6]. For teachers, in particular, job satisfaction is influenced by contextual factors – organizational, interpersonal or personal levels: extrinsic factors of school leadership and climate, societal factors of status and educational change and intrinsic factors of facilitating students' achievements and self-growth ([7], [8]). Little scientific literature examines the interactions between teachers' emotional intelligence and career satisfaction. Spurk, Abele, & Volmer [9] suggest it might be important for various research purposes to measure individual career goals or values as an additional parameter when analyzing career satisfaction. Research on career satisfaction has examined different occupational groups, but teachers still are the underrepresented group [9]. The research problem of this inquiry is formulated as – how secondary school teachers perceive the factors of teacher career satisfaction.

Career satisfaction is the satisfaction a person receives from the essential aspects of his or her career, including learning, progress and development [9]. Employee-perceived career satisfaction reflects what they think about their roles, achievements and success in their careers.

Career success involves both objective and subjective criteria. Objective career success usually depends on "landmarks" that can be easily compared between people as a means of assessing success [10]. The definitions of subjective success are much less clear, including the assessment of career progression, the subjective self-assessment of his or her career, the assessment of persons' career perception and emotional reactions ([11], [12], [13], [14]).
Successful career and success experienced in life are seen as an objective fact, not necessarily related to the sense of satisfaction. It is usually composed of less easily identifiable and tangible subjective aspects such as psychological state, emotional background in professional activity, personal well-being and all that is compatible with personal values. The relationship between career satisfaction and these factors is very close [15], so career satisfaction can be studied in terms of personal qualities and personality.

Career satisfaction factors can be divided into internal and external. Internal factors are related to individual subjective reactions to the career, which underlines the perception of satisfaction with the career. External factors can include miscellaneous work experience, salary growth, mentoring, flexible working hours, and career opportunities [16]. It has been observed that internal factors are more motivating for people to choose educator’s profession, and external ones maintain the motivation to work at school [17]. The factors determining career success can be divided into three groups [18]: 1) personality traits. Compliance with features and professional requirements is understood as the basis for successful career; 2) theories of evolution analyze the predictable challenges that a maturing person has to overcome. The balance between work and other social roles is researched as well as social influence on career expression, personal career development paths; 3) features and development are combined in social-cognitive theories: exploring the expression of interests, abilities, values and career paths.

Studies [13], [4], [19] analyzing the success of subjective career progress present the scale of measures for career satisfaction. This scale assesses satisfaction regarding progress toward personal career goals in four areas: overall career, income, advancement, and new skills. Satisfaction seems to be an important part of subjective career success, but that is not enough. The basis of many professional theories is the importance of the compatibility of personal choices and abilities and career environment. In this way, when there is a lack of compatibility, individuals can step out of their careers by pursuing other career paths or adapting their wishes [13].

Researchers who have analyzed teachers’ satisfaction with their work define it as the overall satisfaction of educators, which is assessed by analyzing the interest, creativity, usefulness and complexity of work [20]. Personal qualities such as indulgence, honesty and openness to experience have been found to be directly related to career satisfaction, and the satisfaction of employees in public institutions is determined by overall satisfaction with other areas of their life, mental health and emotional commitment to the organization [20]. Employees who feel satisfied with their work tend to show greater loyalty to the organization, and therefore, according to the teachers’ job satisfaction, the school climate can be predicted ([21], [22]). The school environment is important, but teachers’ job satisfaction is shaped by the relationship between teachers and the level of work commitment.

Teachers who value their work positively also appreciate trust in other members of the school community, their credibility, and the success of the school. Zeffane [23] explored the relationship between job satisfaction and trust, which doing the job influence pride and commitment in the organization. Job satisfaction and the level of commitment to the organization are closely linked. It can be concluded that the commitment must be mutual, both for the employee and for the employer. As the atmosphere of mutual trust prevails, students also feel the confidence that strengthens their feelings of belonging to school [24]. In addition, trust in other school members is positively related to the professional attitudes, collective effectiveness and collaboration of teachers ([25], [24]). Maele, Houtte [24] have identified a positive relationship between teachers’ job satisfaction and the confidence of pupils, parents, colleagues and administrative staff.

Job satisfaction is analyzed by scientists using demographic indicators: age, gender and pedagogical qualification ([26], [27], [28]. The results of the study showed that women educators working with a higher workload feel more stressful at work, especially as a result of student behavior, class management and occupational efficiency factors. Teachers with better class management and self-efficacy, more effective training strategies, feel more job satisfaction. Different school processes – especially career and working conditions, employee collegiality, administrative support, positive student behavior, and teacher empowerment are positively related to the teacher’s job satisfaction [29]. School context variables: supervision and support, relationships with colleagues, relationships with parents, lack of time, and discipline also are related to teachers’ job satisfaction and motivation to quit their job [29]. Emotional work strategy, which interacts with emotional intelligence, influences personal development, economic activity, success of work, the results of work and satisfaction of work ([30], [31], [32]).
Teachers' professional activities are saturated with effective interaction with pupils, colleagues, administrators, parents who require great attention and emotional resources. Teachers need to combine different emotions, enthusiasm, satisfaction and frustration, fear [33]. They need to create an emotionally favorable climate in which students have to and can learn, so it is necessary to develop classroom management skills, create a positive class climate, and interact with students. This is important because a favorable climate in the classroom encourages positive feelings of belonging to the classroom, increases student participation and the level of involvement in learning processes. The mentioned qualities of the teacher are enhanced by the skills of emotional intelligence. Therefore, it can be observed that emotional intelligence determines the relationship between the teacher and the student, the positive climate in the classroom, the improved health of the educators, the well-being and the increased satisfaction [32].

Career satisfactions cognitive component is made up of solutions and beliefs about work, and the emotional component consists of feelings and emotions related to work [34]. Masrek, Osman, Khamis, Paiman [34] have created a job satisfaction model where job satisfaction consists of four clusters: awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. Awareness has three dimensions: understanding emotions, self-esteem, self-confidence. It has been found that emotional awareness affects the performance of work, self-esteem for performance, and there is a positive relationship between these components and job satisfaction. The self-management cluster has six components: self-control, reliability, honesty, adaptation, focus on achievement, initiative. The third cluster includes empathy, service orientation, and organizational awareness. Empathy is especially important when work focuses on interaction with other people. And there is a positive relationship between social awareness and job satisfaction. The fourth cluster, relationship management, has eight components: education, influence, communication, conflict management, leadership, change catalyst, networking, teamwork and collaboration. There is a positive relationship between relationship management and job satisfaction [34]. As job satisfaction is a decisive factor in career satisfaction, it can be said that emotional intelligence interacts with career satisfaction.

Most educators successfully cope with stress by actively solving problems, receiving social and emotional support from colleagues, collaborating with parents, or changing training strategies. The results of the researches show that emotional exhaustion leads to job dissatisfaction [35]. Therefore, emotional intelligence is being explored as a means of improving the quality of life and also feeling career satisfaction. This is especially important for professionals such as educators who have specific emotional qualities and skills [36]. According to Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Dolovey [37], emotional intelligence positively correlates with job satisfaction and is inversely related to adverse effects at work. Teachers with high emotional intelligence are able to combine work duties with the involvement in other organizational matters. Emotional intelligence is a construct that determines success in personal and social life, in professional practice [33]. Educators with less emotional intelligence are more likely to face dilemmas for further behavior in stressful situations, they are more likely to encounter contradictions, feel confronted with situations of fragility, instability, take greater responsibility for performance, worry at work, and have a less open relationship with colleagues and students [38]. All of these problems also affect the quality of general education.

In summary, it can be said that the emotional intelligence of teachers interacts with the feeling of career satisfaction. After the analysis of the scientific literature we can state that the interaction between the teachers' emotional intelligence and the career of satisfaction has emerged: i.e. emotional intelligence and its areas: awareness and social awareness, self and relationship management – affect career satisfaction. These components are also related to career satisfaction factors: job satisfaction, personal qualities and skills, subjective criteria (psychological state, emotional background).

2 METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research strategy was chosen for the research of pedagogical satisfaction factors. The main data collection method was a partially structured interview. Research participants were familiarized with the purpose of the research, the course, information about the researchers. Respondents were asked to answer general questions: what the length of the participant's pedagogical work is, pedagogical qualification and with which class pupils work in general education school. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the respondents. This method of data collection was chosen to accurately capture the content of the conversation, the style of the respondent's speech, and the expression of emotions during the conversation [39]. Interviews were aimed at obtaining information that would help researchers to fully understand the researcher's
attitude or situation and find new areas of research. In semi structured interviews, open questions were presented that allowed to reveal the experience and opinion of the research participants. Only the general interview plan, the main questions, and others were formulated according to the situation during the interview. The advantage of this interview is the acquisition of authentic information from the participant's images [39].

The qualitative content analysis [40] was used to process empirical qualitative research data using a hermeneutic method aimed at achieving a valid understanding of the meaning of the text. The qualitative content analysis of the data obtained during the interview included the following steps: multiple reading of the text, category exclusion based on key words, subdivision of the category content into sub-categories, interpretation of categories and subcategories. Based on the inductive model of categorization, categories were categorized and divided into sub-categories by content. The defined categories and subcategories were interpreted in the context of the phenomenon under consideration. Data analysis was conducted in parallel with data collection, and interview data were analyzed after each interview. The research used the usual method of qualitative research data analysis – coding, where the meaningful units (themes) of research participants’ stories were distinguished, later the themes were categorized, and the highlighted categories were interpreted by integrating the researcher's comments and literature sources [40]. As the data was divided into main topics, in each topic categories and sub-categories were distinguished with statements to prove them. The next step, which helped to reveal the experience of the research participants, was the interpretation of topics and emerging sub-topics.

Survey sample consists of 22 educators. A purposeful selection of sample units was used, using the “snowball” selection method, where the educator participating in the research recommended another person with whom it was appropriate to talk about the topic being analyzed. The teachers involved in the study had one of four teacher qualifications: 8 teacher qualifications, 6 senior teacher qualifications and 8 teacher-methodologist pedagogical qualifications. Pedagogical work experience is from three to twenty-seven years. The participants of the study work with pupils of the following target groups: 1-4, 1-10, 1-12, 5-8, 5-12, 9-12 class (Grade) students. Thus, it can be observed that the experience of the research participants is very different, they work with primary, secondary school students and gymnasium students.

Research ethics [39]. Information was provided to the study participants before the study: they were familiarized with the purpose of the study, the problem, how the data obtained during the study will be used. The time and the place of the interview were combined with the participants of the research. The informants were introduced to the interview process. After the interview, the participants were thanked for the interview. Only volunteers working in general education schools participated in the survey. The study ensured confidentiality and anonymity of the data. Interviews were conducted in accordance with the principle of confidentiality: the actual name of the research participant or other information allowing it to be identified is not disclosed. In addition, the principle of anonymity used does not help to recognize a person who has participated in the investigation without harming the research participant. The participants of the study managed to establish empathy, respect and professionalism based on goodwill.

3 RESULTS

In order to reveal the factors of the teachers’ career satisfaction, the answers of the research participants were analyzed by the method of qualitative content analysis. The section presents the findings of the data analysis.

Teacher career satisfaction factors that encourage teachers to choose a school career are personal qualities: emotionality, reliability, creativity, solidity. Teachers with certain personal qualities that help at work, feel motivated and satisfied with work, career. Such qualities are: reliability: “Work becomes meaningful and important when students express confidence in you as a good teacher or simply an understanding person capable of helping not only with education issues” (M21). Respondents who participated in the study also highlight creativity: “The absence of routine, creativity exists in all spheres of schoolwork Searching for and using creative and original tasks and activities are every day routine” (M5). Since the teacher is a class leader he must be responsible and solid: “I always stand for my class. I protect them against the deputy and against other teachers. I do not hide my opinion or my feelings, never. I both intercede and scold the loved ones. They know they can turn to” (M10).
Working with students, the assessment and success of students, willingness to use obtained skills: the ability to engage, the ability to recognize differences. Not surprisingly, the desire of students to learn as much as possible motivates educators to better communicate their knowledge and find new ways of working. Curious pupils have a higher motivation to learn: “These motivated students motivate to work” (M11); “Maybe because of the children, because working with children, I become more sincere, more open, more flexible. I always feel "younger" in the sense that I want everything more, get infected with such youthfulness” (M13). Strong satisfaction with the career is not only driven by students’ feedback but also by their success. It is important for the teacher to know how his former students are doing and to enjoy it, to be proud of their success in life: “The greatest satisfaction is caused by the knowledge that you have helped a child who had lost his self-confidence, had devalued himself. You may be pleased when the effort you put in was not in vain. It's great fun when... they grow up good people due to your love, understanding, encouragement” (M6). By interacting with each other, pupils and teachers feel positive emotions and that is why feedback is important. At school, it is important for educators to get both the assessment of their work and observations from their students: “but the fact that they are interested is very motivating” (M7); “That response is very strong <...> when I find myself getting a positive emotion from my pupils, when I achieve something” (M8). Every teacher is happy about his work and career, if his trained pupils achieve positive results: “the most important thing for the teacher is students' motivation, when you see the results. When children reach some result, when you see that they have learned something” (M1).

Motivating working environment: sustainable team: teamwork, mutual understanding, peer support, informal activities. Teachers are also motivated by the assessment for work at school: “Positive assessment of student parents and school authorities is also very important” (M20). Not only is the assessment of the leaders important, but also the communication between colleagues, the support of colleagues and mutual understanding: “My relationship with the colleagues, who I can share my positive and negative mood with, is very important to me. It is always important to look for solutions or new methods if you fail to work with one or another class” (M11); “We have methodological groups where a lot of work is done in teamwork. For example we, English teachers, discuss and choose the most suitable textbooks. And working together, realistically, makes your work easier. Plus, we share our experience in groups. This is how we try to learn from each other, to contribute” (M8).

Job satisfaction: positive emotions, empowerment. Most educators to work in general education are motivated by the positive emotions at work "The enthusiasm I get when working with children, their energy are very important (M3); and it is joyful experience", “I go to work willingly, with desire, even singing, I'm glad, I look forward to every day” (M4).

Satisfaction is also encouraged by the knowledge that a teacher can make changes in his or her work: “The thought that being a teacher and in my career, I can influence the changes related to the educational process, I can contribute to solving school community problems, I can contribute to the improvement of pupils' quality of life at school gives great satisfaction” (M22).

Possibilities of professional development: assessment of one's knowledge, preparation for lessons, self-realization. As one of the opportunities for professional development, the educator who participated in the study indicated the possibility to take up higher positions: “I thought I would need a master's degree to work in a gymnasium, and at school, in my secondary school, bachelor's degree was enough. <...> And when you start working and attending lectures, you get a broader viewpoint. <...> It was then just the possibility to work as a deputy. I said why not try it if I did it already” (M17).

Occasionally, more skills are gained not by participating in pedagogical refresher seminars, but by initiating activities in the workplace: “While working in one of the district schools, I received a proposal to gather a group of pupils and participate in the project… Pupils were happy to have a teacher… who engaged with them, together generated project ideas, helped to implement them. At such moments, I feel very much satisfied with my teacher career” (M2).

Teachers point out that there is an interaction between emotional intelligence and a career satisfaction, because the abilities of emotional intelligence help to predict conflicts, help to manage emotions, and help to develop personal qualities.

Relationship management skills and career satisfaction. They help in conflict management, satisfaction in teamwork is gained, they help to feel work satisfaction, ensure effective communication, and help to build relationships: “As children need to be able not to get involved in conflicts, not to become a bullied object and not to show their aggression to that they do not like, the same is with
adults. Only adults have more self-control. They manage those things themselves, control them” (M19): “To manage conflicts, you know, I really don't know how. I'm still here to improve and improve. I can foresee or feel that a conflict is approaching. But how to prevent it wisely I don't know, yet the soil is not yet mine” (M15).

A teacher must be a leader in education and controlling the class: “If you are a teacher, consequently you are a leader. At least in the classroom. You come and lead the class. If you are not able to control your emotions, then all this is passed on to the students…. And you need to know people, because you work with a lot of people and especially teenagers, they are complex” (M1).

**Awareness, social awareness skills and career satisfaction** allow for objective self-esteem, self-confidence, recognition of emotions, confidence in others, and empathy.

The educators who participated in the study noted that working with students in the classroom you have to be self-confident. Teachers who are self-confident emphasize that students trust those teachers who feel bold and confident: “If you do not trust yourself, then you will feel tense. It will be hard. It is therefore essential to have confidence in yourself. [...] Pupils notice this” (M1).

Self-confidence is enhanced by self-esteem, which allows you to distinguish objectively your strengths and weaknesses: “You know what, perhaps the man who beats me most is – myself. And when the results come to me, I always sit like on the needles ... feel scary and they appear to be fine. And then I take a breath and think that it turns out I'm doing fine” (M4).

Self-management skills and career satisfaction – self-control, credibility are helpful very much to express honesty. Talking about the feeling of satisfaction with their career, the research participants confirmed that self-control abilities help to feel joy and success at work: “A teacher has to be himself, necessarily authentic. If you play a role you will be revealed. Students notice that” (M4).

The participants of the research, when talking about the **obstacles of the pedagogue's career**, emphasized that educators should be able to overcome the obstacles at work: hostility and sadness, lack of self-control, emotional exhaustion and the sense of competition. Factors that impede the achievement of positive professional outcomes are anger, hostility, and sadness: “Anger when you are unable to motivate students for work. [...] there is sadness when the results you were waiting for or expecting did not meet your expectations. Moreover, I would say that it is like a feeling of disgust, no longer willing to go to those classes where you can't find or don't seem to have common interests there” (M11). The lack of self-control also hinders to achieve positive results: “It is difficult to concentrate on the most important things, because the attention is drawn to the extra work at school. [...] I notice that I do not have time to do everything and I do not remember what I have planned to do” (M12). Work can become unfavorable when there is no consensus in the school collective, hostility and competition prevail: “But sometimes there is too much competition. I think we are all colleagues; we all have to be friends. But always appear people who oppose. Resist others” (M9). Disagreements with colleagues and negative emotions experienced can lead to emotional exhaustion of educators: “Frustration, disbelief that you can achieve or change something, lack of purposefulness, introversion and nervousness do not help” (M5).

The educators who participated in the study pointed out that feeling their satisfaction with their careers is also impeded by the distrust of their students’ parents: “We feel hostility from parents. When they do not trust, they do not allow you to decide what is better. [...] Then there is a desire to control or follow what teaching methods are used. Restraint occurs, observation” (M5). It is not easier to communicate with students, especially when the classes are large: “Large classes of students (30 pupils), you need a great deal of time just to check students’ works, and it is difficult to manage such a class. And, of course, to teach all these children to maintain a relationship with everyone”(M9). With a lot of workload, educators get involved in their professional activities little by little and forget to enjoy the things and activities that give pleasure: “Only work and work [...] Somehow, I say, you need to have an activity that is not related to work. I have. Well, I do sport; go dancing with my husband, sport dances. We are amateurs, but we really like it” (M3).

### 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

According to Spurk, Abele, Volmer [9], several societal, organizational, and personal factors of teacher career satisfaction were revealed. Analyzing the experience of the research participants, it can be concluded that they have expressed their satisfaction with their career, because they are able to communicate constructively with others, and in the work of the teacher they are especially needed.
Respondents said that relationship management skills help them to manage conflicts, work in a team, and feel a sense of satisfaction with their careers, ensure effective communication and build relationships to feel career satisfaction. Awareness and social awareness skills are helpful. According to the research participants, having these abilities you are able to assess yourself objectively, to trust yourself and others, to be empathetic. Analyzing the research data, interaction between awareness and social awareness and career satisfaction has been observed. Respondents said that self-management skills help to achieve a sense of achievement, which ensures better quality of work and a stronger sense of satisfaction with the career. According to the research participants, it is important for an educator at work to recognize and control emotions, because then it is possible to anticipate conflicts, manage emotions and it helps to develop personal qualities that are necessary for a happy and successful teacher, i.e. the ability to recognize the needs of others helps to feel positive emotions and make the right decisions in complicated situations. These abilities help you to feel your career satisfaction by being able to respond positively to circumstances and situations.

Teachers pointed out that their career motivation is motivated by their personal qualities, positive emotions and job satisfaction. Other pedagogues indicated that they were motivated by professional development and self-realization opportunities, sustainable team (effective teamwork, mutual relations, support of colleagues). Responding to the question of the qualities and skills required for a successful career as a teacher, the research participants confirmed that emotional intelligence interacts with career satisfaction. The participants identified the following qualities and skills: tolerance, professionalism, intuition, good mood, self-management skills, patience, respect, creativity, responsibility, openness, flexibility, curiosity, as well as the ability to overcome problems: sadness, lack of self-control, emotional exhaustion.

The research findings show that the better the emotions at work are experienced by educators, the stronger their satisfaction with their career. Teachers pointed out the strong interaction between self-management skills and career satisfaction. Respondents emphasized the skills that help to anticipate conflicts and manage emotions and help to develop their own and pupils' personal qualities.

The study has limitations. The results of the research represent only the research group; subjective relationships were analyzed and evaluated by the participants of the research.

Hirschi and Freund [41] found that perceived social support and positive emotions are related to career engagement. The authors of this article support their belief based on the theoretical and practical importance of teacher career satisfaction. For career engagement, more research needs to be done to investigate the underlying factors that promote teacher career engagement.

REFERENCES


