



PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION OF TEACHERS FROM KINDERGARTEN. PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Abstract. Professional development is a topic of great interest for all those who are involved in educational field, makers and teachers. It's approached closely related to organizational development, both representing a result of continuous changes in education. At individual level, professional development has both an internal determination (a need to perform), but it is conditioned by the new requirements of teaching and learning activity. An important variable is also the professional satisfaction. The main objective of the study is to determine the level of professional satisfaction of teachers from Kindergartens from Galati, Romania, and the relationship between this one and teaching degree. The study is based on empirical research conducted on a sample of 124 subjects, teachers from different kindergartens from Galati, Romania. The partial results seem to indicate that, generally, the teachers from kindergarten have different levels professional satisfaction: some of them believes that adaptation to the new professional requirements generate professional satisfaction and professional development, other believes that professional success can be achieved with less involvement. School efforts for professional development of teachers become insufficient if they are not correlated with teachers' efforts. We believe that is necessary shifting focus off career management on self-management career, which involves assumption of professional becoming at individual level. In the context of deepening of educational reforms, promotion of some effective policies of teachers' professional development is absolutely necessary, especially they are the main driver of the Romanian school reform.

Keywords: professional development, career, professional satisfaction, lifelong learning, professional involvement

1. Introduction

Numerous studies in the field confirm that the problematic of job satisfaction is a concern of experts all over the world. They are interested in underlining those variables able to influence the level of professional satisfaction of employees in various fields of activity. But what is job satisfaction? There are many definitions and they emphasise various aspects. Hoppock (1935, cf. Aziri B., 2011) discussed the satisfaction at the workplace, defining it a sum of physiological, psychological and environmental elements making a person content with his work. The author noted the fact that, although determined by external factors, the workplace satisfaction remains an internal issue, sighting what the employee actually feels. In the same tone, Spector (1997, p. 2) defined the workplace satisfaction as the way in which people feel about their workplace and its aspects. It is the extent to which people like or dislike their workplace.

We have found an interesting approach in David et al. (1985), who has defined job satisfaction as a set of positive or negative feelings employees have towards their work. It is marked by their needs, wishes and expectations. In their opinion, the behavior at the workplace is strongly influenced by the level of professional satisfaction. Definitions analyzed have in common the affective footprint of professional satisfaction. George et al. (2008) considers that satisfaction at the workplace is influenced by the feelings, but also by the opinions of the individual in respect to their current workplace. The novelty is in that job satisfaction is not a static variable, on the contrary, it is a dynamic one fluctuating in relation to the employee's workplace. It may fluctuate from extreme satisfaction to extreme discontent and may result in various interpretations, according to each individual. Thus, Spector (1997) singles out three job satisfaction characteristics. Firstly, job

satisfaction is tightly connected to the way in which companies deal with their employees, to the importance they grant to human values. In this respect, job satisfaction may be a good barometer of the mental and emotional state of the employees. Secondly, the efficiency in an organisation depends on the employees' job satisfaction. They may get more or less involved in the professional activity. Thirdly, the job satisfaction level may determine changes at the organisational level. Therefore, we can conclude that productivity is directly dependant on job satisfaction.

None the less, Luthans (1998) claims that we cannot know for sure if satisfaction leads to performance or performance determines job satisfaction. In this respect, some studies have revealed that the relation between productivity and satisfaction is not too strong. Although job satisfaction may be low, loyalty and rewards may suffice to generate productivity. The individual's motivational level may influence that of job satisfaction, even though, as Mullins (2005) claims, the two are not overlapping. In his opinion, satisfaction at the workplace is rather an attitude, an inner state. It can be associated with a feeling of accomplishment, either qualitative or quantitative.

Another variable that may influence job satisfaction is age. The research conducted by Clark et al. (1996) has emphasised that generally younger people have a higher level of job satisfaction. It decreases with ageing, but gets higher when employees reach 60 years of age. A possible explanation is that elder people settle in workplaces with features closer to their needs. On the other hand, elder people reduce their horizon of expectations significantly, which makes them less unhappy at the workplace.

Yet another variable, as important as the others, is the profession itself. Thus, if we refer to teaching, situation may differ in relation to the social and cultural context. For example, a study conducted by Tsigilis et al. (2006) has revealed that the Greek teachers in public kindergartens present a level of emotional exhaustion above average. They are content with the nature of their work, but less content with their wages. The situation is reversed in the private kindergartens.

2. Research design

2.1. Objectives and hypotheses

Starting from the outcomes of studies in the literature in the field, the objectives of our research have been:

- a) To reveal the level of job satisfaction for teachers from kindergarten;
- b) To establish a relation between the level of job satisfaction, teaching degree, seniority in education and age.

In order to make these objectives operative, we have started from the following hypotheses:

1. There are significant differences according to teaching degree in what job satisfaction is concerned for teachers from kindergarten;
2. There are significant differences in relation to age in what job satisfaction is concerned for teachers from kindergarten;
3. Job satisfaction in the case of teachers from kindergarten is in relation to their seniority in education and their age.

2.2. Methodology (participants, procedure, instruments)

The statistic processing of the results has been conducted with SPSS 16 software. The statistic operations were:

- frequency analysis for the illustration of the subjects group composition;
- median determination for the variable job satisfaction;
- ANOVA one-way for checking the influence of the teaching degree variable upon the job satisfaction variable;

- ANOVA one-way for checking the influence of the age variable upon the job satisfaction variable;
- t test for individual samples to compare the average of the job satisfaction variable in relation to the teaching degree variable;
- t test for individual samples to compare the average of the job satisfaction variable in relation to the age group variable;
- Pearson correlation coefficient to check the correlation between job satisfaction, seniority in education and age.

Should be mentioned that the research conducted was an empirical one, which has not had in sight experimental manipulation. The research is in progress, however, at this point, we shall analyse only the results obtained from a group of 124 teachers from more kindergartens in Galați County, Romania.

After the age variable, the subjects group consists of 64 subjects under 40 years and 60 over 40 years. Differentiated by area of residence, the subjects group consists of 66 subjects reside in urban area and 58 subjects, in rural area. Differentiated by education variable, the subjects group consists of 54 subjects are university graduates and 70 subjects are postgraduates. Differentiated by teaching degree variable, the subjects group consists of 22 subjects are beginner teachers, 28 teachers with permanently degree, 33 teachers with second degree and 41 teachers with first degree. Also, 61 subjects have an executive position, while the other 63 subjects are not involved in management. The average of seniority in education is 15 years.

During this research, we have had the following variables in sight:

Job satisfaction – sights the extent to which the employee is content /satisfied with his/her work, as far as the organisation is concerned and in respect to the rewards obtained for his/her activity and the interpersonal climate of the activity;

Age categories: till 40 years and more than 40 years;

Teaching degree: four levels (beginner, permanently degree, second degree, first degree);

Seniority in education.

In order to measure the job satisfaction variable, we have applied the Job satisfaction questionnaire, drafted by Ph.D. Constantin Ticu. This is a standardised instrument consisting of 32 items structured in 4 factors: payment and promotion; management and interpersonal relationships; organisation and communication; general satisfaction.

The subjects who have scored high in this questionnaire are content with their professional activity, believing that it provides them a certain comfort and the possibility of personal development, of professional merits recognition, of working in a pleasant environment. The Cronbach-Alpha coefficient on the whole questionnaire is 0.872.

2.3. Data analysis, results

We must reiterate that the first hypothesis is that there are significant differences according to teaching degree in what job satisfaction is concerned for teachers from kindergarten. In order to check this hypothesis, we have applied the ANOVA one-way method. Based on the statistical analyses, we have noted significant differences in relation to the teaching degree in what the teachers' from kindergarten job satisfaction is concerned ($F(3, 120) = 14.236, p < .001$).

In order to observe between which groups are the differences more significant, we have applied the t test for individual samples. The results are presented below:

There are significant differences between teachers with first teaching degree and those with the second teaching degree in what job satisfaction is concerned ($t(72) = 2.915, p < 0.05$), in that the subjects with second degree display a higher level of job satisfaction than the subjects who have the first degree;

There are significant differences between teachers with first teaching degree and teachers with the permanently degree, in what job satisfaction is concerned ($t(67) = 7.079$, $p < 0.001$), in that the subjects with the permanently degree display a higher level of job satisfaction than the subjects who have the first degree;

There are significant differences between teachers with first teaching degree and the beginners in what job satisfaction is concerned ($t(61) = 2.810$, $p < 0.05$), in that the beginners display a higher level of job satisfaction than the subjects who have the first degree;

There are significant differences between teachers with second degree and teachers with permanently degree in what job satisfaction is concerned ($t(59) = 3.482$, $p < 0.001$), in that teachers with permanently degree present a higher job satisfaction than the subjects with second degree;

There are not significant differences between teachers with the second degree and beginner teachers in what job satisfaction is concerned ($t(53) = 0.153$, $p = .879$);

There are significant differences between teacher with permanently degree and beginners in what job satisfaction is concerned ($t(48) = 2.890$, $p < 0.05$), in that subjects with permanently degree have a higher level of job satisfaction than beginner teachers.

The results are also present in the following diagram (Figure 1).

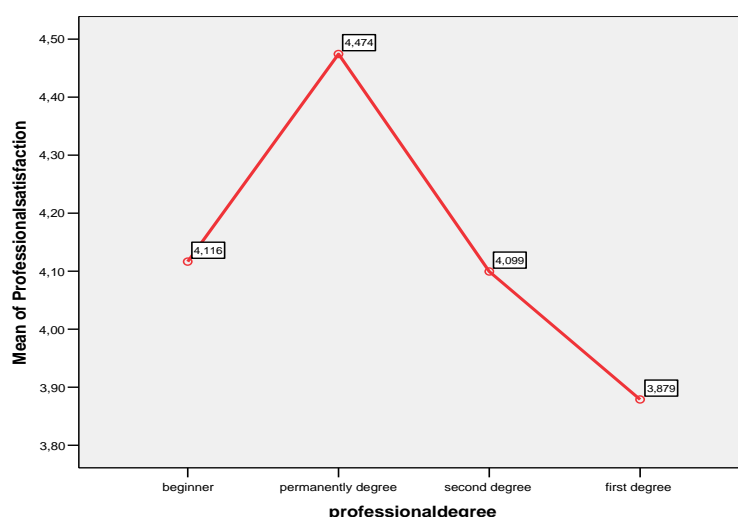


Figure 1. Comparative outline of the averages for job satisfaction in reference to the teaching

Analysing the results, we can assert that our first hypothesis is proven valid. Indeed, teachers from kindergartens' job satisfaction varies according to the level of their professional development.

The second hypothesis of our research has sighted the fact that there are significant differences in what job satisfaction is concerned in relation to age of the teachers from kindergarten. In order to check for the validity of this hypothesis, we have applied the ANOVA one-way method. Based on the statistical analyses, we have noted significant differences in relation to age in what the job satisfaction of the teachers from kindergarten is concerned ($F(1, 122) = 23.269$, $p < .005$). In order to observe between which groups are the differences more significant, we have applied the t test for individual samples. The results have proven that there are significant differences in what job satisfaction is concerned between kindergarten teachers under 40 years and the ones over 40 years ($t(122) = 4.824$, $p < 0.001$).

The results are also displayed in the diagram below (Figure 2).

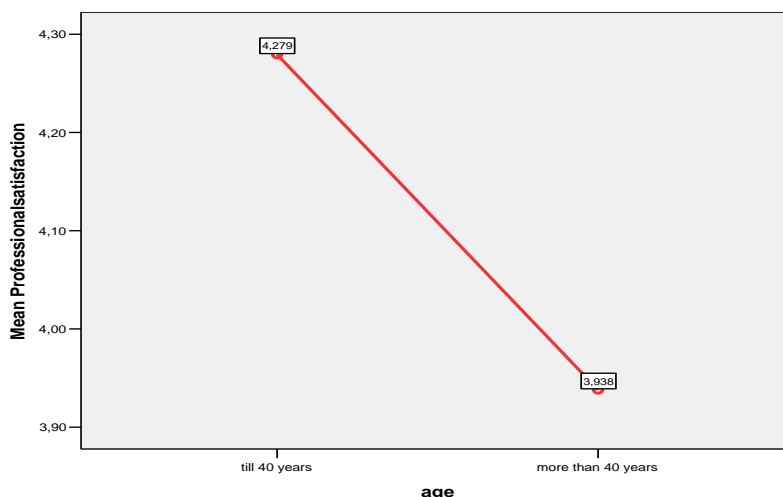


Figure 2. Comparative outline of the averages for job satisfaction in reference to the age variable

Thus, subjects under 40 have a higher degree of job satisfaction that subjects over 40 years. These results validate the second hypothesis.

The third hypothesis of our research has sighted that job satisfaction in the case of teachers from kindergarten is in relation to their seniority in education and their age. In order to check for a relevant statistical correlation between job satisfaction, seniority in education and age, we have calculated the r Pearson correlation coefficient. The condition of the normality of distribution for variables has been verified with the help of Kolmogorov-Smirnov z test, the results for the variable job satisfaction being K-S $z = 1.631$, $p > 0.05$. As the result is statistically insignificant, it results that the variable is normally distributed. Having fulfilled the application conditions, we calculated the r Pearson correlation coefficient (table 1).

Table 1. The Pearson correlation coefficient between professional satisfaction and the variables age and seniority in education

Variable	1	2	3
1. Professional satisfaction	-	- 0.400**	- 0.360**
2. Age		-	0.758**
3. Seniority in education			-

**p < 0.001

The statistical analysis of the results conforms that there is a significant negative correlation between the variables job satisfaction and age ($r = -0.400$, $p < 0.001$) and a significant negative correlation between the variables job satisfaction and the seniority in education ($r = -0.360$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, with ageing and the increase in the number of years in education, job satisfaction tends to decrease in the case of teachers from kindergartens. The results acquired confirm that the third hypothesis is also valid.

3. Discussions and conclusions

The present research started from the premises that job satisfaction in the case of teachers from kindergarten is determined by a set of variables such as: teaching degree, age, and seniority in education. The results obtained have proven that, in general, the hypotheses have been confirmed. Thus, the analysis of the influence age has over the level of job satisfaction of teachers from kindergarten (under 40, over 40) showed us that:

a) In the case of the teachers under 40, the level of job satisfaction is very high, which confirms Clark's research (1996). The explanation might be found on the one hand in this category of subjects' lack of experience, on the other hand, in the nature of the profession, the social role the subjects are aware of at this moment. Another possible explanation could be found in the content of having a job;

b) In the case of teachers over 40, the level of job satisfaction decreases, which also confirms Clark's research. In other words, compared to the first part of the professional activity, after 15 years of work, the teachers from kindergarten do not have the same level of job satisfaction. A possible explanation may be that, after a certain age, the tendency to analyse the degree of satisfying the needs and expectation is higher. The individuals in this segment feel the disadvantages of this profession more poignantly in relation to their rewards. This aspect is also confirmed by the analysis of the impact of the teaching degree variable on the job satisfaction in the case of kindergarten teachers. It has been noted that, in general, teachers with first degree have a lower level of job satisfaction compared to teachers with second degree and permanently degree. Also, with ageing and increase in seniority in education, the level of job satisfaction tends to decrease.

Our research has had certain limitation, imposed primarily by the number of teachers we had in sight. Nevertheless, the results, even partial, should be a wake-up call for the decision-makers in education, but also for those involved in the management of pre-school institutions. It is a fact that teaching implies a high degree of mental and emotional depreciation, which is why the implementation of an open organisational environment, granting rewards and creating multiple possibilities of assertion and professional development must represent a constant concerning for the decision-makers.

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