



International research on teachers and their job satisfaction – an analysis of research approaches and intents

Abstract: The study presents theoretical starting points and research approaches dedicated to the teaching profession in an international context. It provides interesting insights into the relationship between teachers' workload and their life satisfaction. The research presented in this study is focused on primary and pre-primary teachers. The authors present the results of a theoretical survey of the current studies and identify the intents of the research objective. They plan to expand the research objective to include a comparison of cross-cultural data between teachers from Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic. The findings are intended to provide valuable knowledge and inspiration for improving the working conditions of teachers. In addition, they can contribute to the innovation of undergraduate teacher education and lifelong teacher education programs. The current international research is aimed to find out how teachers in the early stages of children's education, i.e. teachers of primary and pre-primary education, manage the demands of their profession through the lens of their specific professional activities. Subsequently, the obtained results are compared with the feeling of satisfaction in their life. The aim of this research is to provide an international comparison of teachers from Slovakia, Poland and the Czech Republic.

Keywords: international comparison, teaching as a profession, subjective workload, teachers' life satisfaction, research on teachers' job satisfaction

Research on teachers, the teaching profession and teachers' views and opinions on various areas related to their work is a relatively frequent topic of educational, psychological, and sociological studies. The significance of international comparative research in both education and social sciences is in-

creasing, and as pointed out by Nowakowaska-Siuta (2023), pedagogy follows the trend of established methodological concepts of important philosophical schools. This is a review article focused on presenting the theoretical foundations of the planned project.

The co-authoress of this paper has published articles on these research topics (Kasáčová, 2017; 2018). This subject has a significant impact both at the national and international level. The department the authoresses work at is currently conducting a scientific research project: VEGA 1/0415/22 Subjectively Perceived Difficulty Of Teachers' Professional Activities Versus Their Life Satisfaction. The research aim of international comparison is deeply rooted in academic traditions. There have been several international research projects carried out in recent years. The current project follows up on the research *The Profession of Pre-primary Education Teacher and Primary Education Teacher within Dynamic Concept* (by Kasáčová et al., 2011), which provided a detailed analysis and comparison of findings from a professiographic survey focused on how much of their time the teachers from the three countries dedicated to their particular work activities. The aim of the current international research is to determine how teachers in the early stages of children's education, i.e. teachers of primary and pre-primary education, cope with the demanding nature of their profession through the lens of their particular professional activities. After that, the state determined by the research is going to be compared with the sense of fulfillment in their lives. This research aspires to provide an international comparison of teachers from Slovakia, Poland, and the Czech Republic. The choice of these three countries has several reasons: 1. similar cultural, social and pedeutological traditions; 2. previous joint international studies and research comparisons; 3. inspiring research carried out in Poland and the Czech Republic

Theoretical background for the research into the sense of life satisfaction and workload

There are different interpretations of the terms: *(teachers') professional workload, teachers' fitness, teacher's burnout syndrome, (teachers') job satisfaction and (teachers') life satisfaction*. Kravčáková et al. (2013, p. 124) in general defines *job satisfaction* as a psychological category, "as a work attitude expressing a person's ability to cope psychologically with their job and work, with the work attributes and features. It affects the sense of well-being at work, loyalty, and employees' health. It determines their behavior and performance."

Herzberg, Mausner and Snyderman (via Pardee, 1990), on the basis of their studies on job satisfaction, created the motivation-hygiene theory, otherwise known as the Two-Factor Theory. It distinguishes two factors influencing job satisfaction – motivational factors (motivators) and hygiene factors (frustrators). Motivators acting as inner stimulators include: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, career progression, professional growth; frustrators, coming from the influences of the outside environment, include: company policy, supervision as means of control, working conditions, interpersonal relations, salary, status, job security, personal life.

Job satisfaction is the subject of psychological research, but our intention will be to determine the level of teachers' job satisfaction and its relationship to other defined constructs. Valica (2001, p. 6) defined teachers' job satisfaction as *"a complex psychological phenomenon based on a subjective assessment of the conditions and requirements of the teaching profession"*. He attributes the level of teachers' job satisfaction to the attitude teachers have towards their profession and the related motivation to become and remain a teacher, despite previous negative experiences. Průcha (2002, p. 75) considers *job satisfaction to be an important determinant affecting the way the teaching profession is being performed*. He claims that in the case of teachers dissatisfied in their job, one cannot expect them to succeed in their profession. Teachers' job satisfaction is a more complex construct filled with various characteristics.

The authors specifying the factors that cause the decline in the attractiveness of the teaching profession and teachers' (dis)satisfaction with their job, defined some common areas influencing this. Looking at the older studies, the research analysis by (Kika, 1993) brought a very inspiring insight into the areas that significantly affect teachers' job satisfaction:

- *remuneration* – in particular teachers' salaries, financial appreciation of the quality of their work,
- *material and technical equipment of schools* – poor personal equipment of teachers, insufficient equipment of learners – including teaching texts or textbooks, special equipment for certain subjects,
- *work environment* – number of students in the classroom, lack of space for high quality teaching, space for teachers,
- *selected characteristics of the teaching profession* – the psychological stress in teachers' work, insufficient opportunities for professional development and career advancement, the limited financial resources of schools for the professional growth of their teachers,

- *failure to meet teachers' professional expectations* – these result from the above factors affecting teachers' job satisfaction (Kika, 1993).

In the text, the context will be presented in which teachers' job satisfaction has been studied by using an international level research. The overview also provides the determinants affecting the level of teachers' job satisfaction highlighted by the research findings. At the same time, our aim is to present various research procedures and tools the authors used in the relevant research endeavors.

The job satisfaction of teachers can be a subject of qualitative or quantitative research, as well as of a combined inquiry. The table below presents the current research tools that focus on investigating teachers' work and life satisfaction, as well as their professional competence. The analysis of approaches to the research into the teaching profession was the inspiration for the current research project.

Table 1. Overview of the tools for researching life and work satisfaction

| Author source | Year | Title | Item focus/questionnaire form |
|--|------|--|---|
| Weiss, D.J., Dawis, R.V., England, G.W. Lofquist, L.H. | 1967 | Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) | Is developed in two different variants – Short-Form and Long-Form. The Short-Form contains 20 items focusing on: employees' work activities, confidence in employees' abilities (independence), colleagues, career development, the employer, working conditions, salary conditions and getting feedback ((<i>MSQ</i>) <i>Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire</i> , n.d.). Scale Questionnaire 1–5 (1 I am very dissatisfied with this aspect of school; 5 I am very satisfied with this aspect of school). |
| Maslach, CH. Jackson, S.E. | 1981 | Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (MBI – Educators Survey) | Is focused on professional burnout and is used to measure three factors: emotional exhaustion (9 questions), depersonalization (5 questions), lower work performance (8 questions) (Křivohlavý, 1998). For measuring teachers' burnout, the MBI tool has been specially modified into the form of an MBI-ES from 1986 (<i>Maslach Burnout Inventory – Educators Survey (MBI-ES)</i> , n.d.; Szigeti a kol., 2017). Scale Questionnaire time scale 1–6 (1 a few times a year or less; 6 every day) intensity 1–7 (1 very mildly, barely noticeable; 7 very intensively, significant). |
| Gibsonová, S. Dembo, M, H. | 1984 | Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES) | Is used to self-report the level of professional efficacy perceived by teachers, there are 2 dimensions of professional self-efficacy: <i>The teachers' belief in their abilities</i> and <i>Potentialities of teaching as perceived by teachers</i> . <i>Scale questionnaire 1–6 (1 fully disagree; 6 fully agree)</i> . Slovak adaptation by Gavora (2012). |

| Author source | Year | Title | Item focus/questionnaire form |
|---|-------------|---|--|
| Lester, P. E. | 1987 | Teacher's Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (TJSQ) | Contains 66 items (9 dimensions) – 14 items on management, 10 items on colleagues, 7 items on working conditions, 7 items on salary, 8 items on responsibilities, 9 items on the work itself, 5 items on professional growth, 3 items on safety and 3 items on feedback (Lester, 1982; Paula E. Lester a Lloyd K. Bishop, 2000; Troeger, 2021). <i>Scale questionnaire 1–5 (1 fully disagree; 2 partly agree and disagree; 3 agree; 4 fully agree; 5 unable to assess).</i> |
| Fahrenberg, J., Myrtek, M., Schumacher, J. Brähler, E. | 2001 | Life Satisfaction Questionnaire | Monitors 10 factors: <i>health, work and job, financial situation, spare time, marriage and partnership, relationship with one's own children, own person, sexuality, friends and acquaintances, housing</i> – each of these areas contains 7 items for measuring the level of satisfaction (Fahrenberg a kol., 2001). <i>Scale questionnaire 1–7 (1 very dissatisfied; 5 very satisfied).</i> Czech adaptation: Rodná, K. – Rodný, T (2001) |
| Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy | 2001 | The Ohio State Teacher Efficacy Scale (OSTES) | Focused on issues in teaching, that include the following areas: <i>ability to motivate learners, ability to apply teaching strategies, ability to manage classroom.</i> <i>Scale questionnaire 1–9 (1 nothing at all; 9 very much).</i> Slovak adaptation: Gavora (2011). |
| Pepe, A., Addimando, L., Veronese, G. | 2011 / 2017 | Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale (TJSS-9) | Contains 9 items, focused on determining the level of satisfaction <i>with colleagues, with learners' behavior and with learners' parents</i> (Pepe at al., 2017) and this has carried across to the field of education, leading to a research focus on the work-related satisfaction of teachers. Today, a myriad of organizations continue to assess employees' job satisfaction on a routine basis (Liu, Borg, & Spector, 2004). <i>Scale Questionnaire 1–5 (1 I am very dissatisfied with this aspect of school; 5 I am very satisfied with this aspect of school).</i> |
| IEA – TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center | 2016 * | Teacher Job Satisfaction Scale PIRLS | Focused on the reading literacy of learners in the fourth grade of primary education, includes items that determine the job satisfaction of teachers while investigating the school climate (Mullis at al., 2017). <i>Scale questionnaire 1–4 (1 very often; 2 often; 3 sometimes; 5 never or almost never).</i> |
| OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development | 2018 * | Teaching and Learning International Survey TALIS | Monitors the working environment and conditions of teachers and principals in schools. Focused on examining the evaluations of teachers' work, qualification requirements, work duties, attitudes they hold (<i>TALIS – The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey – OECD, n.d.; TALIS 2018: Teacher Questionnaire, 2018</i>). <i>Scale questionnaire, simple and multiple choice of answers, filling in answers, dichotomous questions.</i> |
| https://fr.surveymonkey.com/r/XZGST6L | 2022 * | Teachers Dropout – Job satisfaction questionnaire for school principals | Focused on determining satisfaction of school principals using 22 items – working conditions, relationships at school and outside of school, teacher-oriented questions, benefits and challenges within fulfilling the principal's role (<i>Teachers Dropout – Job satisfaction questionnaire for school principals, n.d.</i>). <i>Questions – scale, open questions, dichotomous questions, simple choice.</i> |

| Author source | Year | Title | Item focus/questionnaire form |
|---|------|----------------------------|--|
| Kasáčová, B., Babiaková, S., Cabanová, M, Lynch, Z. | 2022 | Perception Of Job Workload | Focused on the subjective perception of physical and mental stress during individual activities in the teaching profession. The scale includes descriptions of 18 activities – always from the perspective of mental and physical stress (Kasáčová, Babiaková, at al., 2022). <i>Scale questionnaire 0 and 1–4 (0 Does not apply to me/I don't know; 1 No burden; 4 Unbearable burden).</i> |

* Does not refer to the year the measuring tool was compiled, but the year in which the measuring tool acted as a source for acquiring data within that research

Source: own elaboration.

A brief overview of relevant research in the national and international context

What seemed the closest to our research aim was the inquiry into job satisfaction in correlation with life satisfaction of teachers in primary schools (a research sample of 50 teachers) and special primary schools (a research sample of 53 teachers) in Slovakia (Kačmárová, 2011). This research confirmed “a positive correlation of the overall job satisfaction with life satisfaction and with all exogenous and endogenous factors of job satisfaction” (Kačmárová, 2011, p. 94). The research did not confirm the predicted negative correlation between the length of teaching experience and teachers’ job satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Furthermore, no significant differences were found in the overall satisfaction based on gender (Kačmárová, 2011; Kačmárová and Baraniová, 2010). Although the research sample was small, the aim was to settle whether the findings would remain consistent after thirteen years. Specifically, we aimed at monitoring closely the correlations between the perceived burden of specific activities and life satisfaction. Afterwards, individual subjective factors will be examined which contribute to life satisfaction and the overall perception of workload.

The review study (Kasáčová et al., 2022) examined the factors affecting job satisfaction or dissatisfaction of teachers by analyzing 48 foreign studies. On the basis of the analyses of selected studies, it can be stated that the factors contributing to job dissatisfaction include: salary, social status, administrative workload, and working conditions. Apart from the above factors, many authors associate job dissatisfaction with the burnout syndrome, but this lacks a clear description of the cause-effect relation. On the contrary, job satisfaction is attributed to the quality of school management and administration.

Teachers' job satisfaction is also the subject of research in an international context, either as the primary research subject (Baroudi et al., 2020; Crisci et al., 2019; Fuming and Jiliang, 2007; Guoba et al., 2022; Lam and Yan, 2011; Lopes and Oliveira, 2020; Ma and MacMillan, 1999; OECD, 2020; Shabbir et al., 2014; Schroder, 2008), or as a subject studied in different contexts – in connection with working conditions at schools and teachers' personality traits (Toropova et al., 2021); with life satisfaction and job workload (Paulík and Gajda, 2006); with professional efficacy, life satisfaction and teachers' burnout (Pyżalski and Merecz, 2010; Telef, 2011); with the school environment (Marinette and Hui, 2021) or in connection with the balance in personal life (Gedvilienė and Didžulienė, 2019), management, quality of the working environment and the curriculum. Jakimiuk (2022) also notices the link between teachers' working conditions and job satisfaction, considering it a crucial factor influencing the quality of their work performance. Other authors (Adamek and Bałachowicz, 2019) described the specific qualities of work of a teacher of small children and the creative nature of teacher's competences. Joanna Madalińska-Michalak (Madalinska et al., 2022), Head of the Department of Didactics and Pedutology at the University of Warsaw, is engaged in international teacher research. Among other pedeutological topics, she investigated (via mixed methods of international and cross-cultural study) the motivation factors for choosing the teaching profession and staying in it.

International measurements as an indicator of comparable data

These phenomena also play an important role at the international level, where job satisfaction is monitored via TALIS studies (NÚCEM, n.d.). The measurements monitor the working environment and conditions of teachers and principals in schools. Apart from the above, they are also aimed at exploring the methods for assessing teachers' work performance. They monitor the qualification requirements teachers must meet, their job responsibilities, and the attitudes they present. TALIS studies are conducted cyclically at 5-year intervals. The Slovak Republic already participated in these studies when they were conducted initially in 2008. The study involves all persons engaged in regular and independent teaching at the 2nd level of primary schools and the corresponding grades of eight-year grammar schools /*gymnasiums*/ (ISCED 2). As there is still not enough information about teachers of pre-primary and primary education, our aim is to study this category of teachers within our research.

The findings of the TALIS 2018 measurement, including 3,300 teachers from Slovakia (NÚCEM, 2023), prove a close connection between the motivation to become a teacher and teachers' satisfaction with how they do in their job. This connection is primarily observed in the context of their first choice when selecting a preferred career.

Conclusion

A comprehensive set of electronic research tools is currently in the final stages of development. In addition to the Faculty of Education at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, the research will involve colleagues from the Faculty of Arts and Educational Science at the University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland, and the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Ostrava, Czech Republic. The collection of respondents' data (approx. 2,000) is to be conducted between June and December 2023 using an e-questionnaire. The research tool was created on the basis of the analysis of various tools (Table 1) with the aim of obtaining answers to the question *how factors of life satisfaction correlate with the subjective feeling of burden due to work activities*. The findings will help to understand the phenomena that cause the negative facts occurring in the teaching profession.

Table 2. Planned set of tools for researching teachers' workload and life satisfaction

| Author | Title | Number of items | Areas | Form: e-form combined with a printed form |
|--|---|---|--|--|
| Kasáčová, B., Babiaková, S., Cabanová, M, Lynch, Z. | Perception Of Job Workload | 19 | Professional activities in 5 subgroups | Scale questionnaire 0 and 1–4 0 It does not apply to me; 1 No load; 4 Unbearable load). |
| Fahrenberg, J., Myrtek, M., Schumacher, J. Brähler, E. | Life Satisfaction Questionnaire <i>CZ adaptation</i> <i>Rodná, K. Rodný, T (2001)</i> | 63 9 factors, each containing 7 statements | Health, work and employment, financial situation, free time, marriage and partnership, relationship with own children, own personality, friends and acquaintances, housing | Scale questionnaire 1–7 1 Very dissatisfied 5 Very satisfied |

| Author | Title | Number of items | Areas | Form: e-form combined with a printed form |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|---|---|
| Kasáčová, B., Babiaková, S., Cabanová, M, Lynch, Z. | Demographic data of respondents | 7 factors | Age, professional age, gender, degree of qualification, job position, place of operation, region, marital status e.g. | a choice of options |

Source: own elaboration.

The long-term monitored problems of the teaching profession: feminization, exodus from the profession, financial undervaluation, work under stressful conditions, decreasing social status of teachers, increasing qualification and lifelong learning requirements, increasing administrative workload in the profession as well as the increase of new challenges for the teaching profession – such as: inclusive education, digital transformation of educational processes and communication and especially the ongoing efforts of constant reform (Szafránska, 2022) – seek insights from teachers who play a key role in education. Hence, we firmly believe that investigating the relation between life satisfaction and subjectively perceived workload in professional activities can provide valuable insights in an international comparative context. This research will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the field of pedeutology, while also offering valuable insights for enhancing and developing university curricula. The obtained results can be linked in a meaningful context with previous research findings of other authors or international measurements, e.g. TALIS.

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