

## JOB SATISFACTION AND PERFORMANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL REFORM

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**Abstract:** The implementation of the curriculum reform in Romania has both the expected and side effects. One of these side effects is the teachers exodus to other professions, which prompted us to study their professional satisfaction correlated with job performance. The participants were 54 teachers from Braşov. The research method was an investigation based on a questionnaire, to discover teachers' attitudes on satisfaction in their work. To obtain the performance data of the teachers, we used the method of documents study. The results show a low level of overall satisfaction, which is an indicator of the phenomena that correlate.

**Keywords:** teachers, motivation, professional satisfaction, performance, educational reform.

### 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

Education is the key in finding the way for the desired change. "It is education and education alone that can bring about changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, appreciations and understanding things around us. (...) The keystone in the educational edifice is doubtless the teacher. On him depends much more than any other, the progress and children prosperity. Nobody can effectively take his place or influence children in the manner and to the degree it is possible, for him alone to do" [1].

The present research started from the empirical observations on the current situation of the educational system in Romania. We refer to the implementation of the new education law, the new restructuring taking place in the context of educational reform. We are seeing a steady exodus of skilled and well trained teachers to other professions, a situation faced by other countries, too [2]. We considered that demotivation observed on them, would be the main cause of this phenomenon, which led us think of studying issues that affect job satisfaction.

A significant part of our life is dedicated to work, so that job satisfaction is an important aspect of professional activity, with significant consequences on both the organization in which work is carried out and on the personal life. Among the first authors who have investigated the factors that influence job satisfaction are included F. Herzberg, B. Mausner and B. N. Snyderman since 1959 apud. [3].

There are many studies and literature about job satisfaction. But there are very few on teachers' job satisfaction. Since 1998, Linda Evans „identified the factors affecting the teacher's job satisfaction in some levels.

Level I: Policy and condition of service.

Pay structure. A well pay structure brings more satisfaction.

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Level II: Leadership style. (Of head teachers or the senior teachers) organizational climate. It includes the pattern of management of the schools, method of accountability of the teachers, level of local people interference, freedom of teachers etc.

Level III: This level suggested determinants of job satisfaction are, typically, individuals needs fulfilment, expectations fulfilment or values congruence. Individual's norms, values, personality and emotion reflect in this level" [4].

Job satisfaction was defined as *positive emotional state resulting from an employee's personal opinion on the work or the climate in which they operate* [5]. In another sense, Johns G. [6] find that job satisfaction is "*a collection of attitudes that people have on their work*". Job satisfaction is concerned with different aspects such as: *salary* (level, fairness / equity, satisfaction), *promoting* (opportunities, support, discrimination / nondiscrimination), *recognition*, *working conditions*, *organizational unit policy*, *management* (fairness, style), *interpersonal relationships* (quality, influence), *organization* (rules / procedures, goal / policy of the school, work tasks), *communication* (general quality, vertical communication, horizontal communication).

The general attitudes toward work strongly influence how work is accomplished. At the individual level, we speak of an attitude toward work that can be evaluated using questionnaires or attitude scales, while talking about the mindset of society towards work, which can be understood as a stable orientation of the human mind, a grid reading of social phenomena, a filter, a decode that is interposed between the individual, social group and society [5]. Mentality, "reunite and synthesize between the collectivity's vision and the individual's"[7].

Job satisfaction is the equilibrium state when the individual reaches full charge of conscious or unconscious needs and expectations. In the literature, the following are considered as factors determining job satisfaction:

- the work itself regarded as a set of activities;
- the ability to learn or to master a task well;
- the payment with all its forms;
- the promotions or opportunities for professional development;
- the recognition of the good results;
- the social benefits;
- the working conditions;
- the management style;
- the interpersonal relations and teamwork - the human factor and the performance of the organization;
- the policies and culture of the organization;
- the job proximity to home;
- the organization's reputation and importance.

Zlate M. [3] grouped the factors that influence job satisfaction in three categories: *organizational factors* (working conditions, promotion), *group factors* (cohesion, group morale, relationships with peers, relations with heads), *personal factors* (sociodemographic like: age, sex, race, socio-professional like: work experience, vocational training and the personality characteristics).

We prefer, for the purpose of this research, grouping factors influencing satisfaction / dissatisfaction on work in two categories:

1. *extrinsic factors* coming from the organizational context (salary, policies practiced in the organization, working conditions, autonomy and control, job security, interpersonal relations) that are found under the name of *ambiental factors*, *the contextual factors*;
2. *intrinsic factors*, related to personal experience and to the relationship with the work environment (recognition by others, responsibility for own work and others work, advancement, personal fulfillment), factors that have been named valuation or content factors.

While the intrinsic factors can motivate people to become teachers, extrinsic conditions can influence satisfaction in this position and their desire to pursue a teaching career, to remain in the system [8]. In this area literature, *teacher job satisfaction*, the most frequently was studied in relation to: motivation [9], performance, adaptation, organizational and mental health, personality traits [5]; [10]; [3], working conditions [2]. The state of satisfaction / dissatisfaction has been approached in several ways: as an indicator of motivation, as a cause / effect of this, or as a *moderator* in its relationship with performance. Most studies on mental health of employees and on the organizational health focused on the relationship between occupational stress, coping and job

satisfaction. Other studies have shown that the location of internal control is positively correlated with high levels of job satisfaction [11].

Other variables related to job satisfaction were found in terms of individual personality: "as a psychological dimension, job satisfaction can be viewed not only as a dominant attitude, dependent on the organizational context, but as a personality factor or trait (...) on one hand, there are people which, regardless of the circumstances, come to "put the soul" in what they do, finding a vocation in the profession they exercise, declaring themselves as professional satisfied, and, on the other hand, people who never have the feeling that they do what they like, although they change several jobs and even professions, always declaring themselves unsatisfied" [5].

In this research we chose to study, from the multitude of factors that may influence the job satisfaction, the relationships that exist between job satisfaction and performance at work.

The concept of performance is often used as high performance, referring to arts and sports results above average. In the context of employment, the term refers to the quantity and quality of work product (Pitariu, apud. [12]). Performance is the degree of fulfillment of tasks that define the position held by an employee. Performance refers to the contribution that employees make to achieve organizational objectives.

"The performance level at work is the result of multiple determinations of which the most important are motivation, competences, persistence and the amount of effort, which vary from one person to another. A high level of competence in performance does not guarantee the absence of a consistent motivation vector, just as a strong motivation may not be sufficient if the task is not well understood or lacks the skills involved" [12].

Work performance is determined by two categories of variables: situational (physical, environmental, organizational, social) and the individual (age, gender, skills, personality characteristics, value system, cultural background, etc.). "In addition to objective external criteria of success, the personal criteria are important as they affect the level of individual motivation and satisfaction" [12]. Each person has their own definition of success, depending on the level of aspiration, of their values. Thus, "the same professional behavior can be considered as performant, or, conversely, unsatisfying, as it matches or not the individual expectations" [12].

## 2. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the main question to ask is whether the "overall satisfaction is positively correlated with performance at work".

### 2.1. Research hypotheses

1. Satisfaction of teachers with salary level significantly correlate with the level of workplace performance.
2. Satisfaction with opportunities for promotion within the institution significantly correlate with job performance level.
3. Satisfaction with the quality of management significantly correlate with the work performance level.
4. The quality of interpersonal relations at work significantly correlate with the teacher participation level in training activities.
5. Satisfaction with the organization in the institution level significantly correlate with performance at work level.
6. Satisfaction with quality of communication within the institution significantly correlate with job performance level.

### 2.2. Methods and instruments

For this research we used as a research method an investigation based on a questionnaire to discover teachers' attitudes on personal satisfaction with their work. To obtain the real performance data of the teachers participating in the research, we used the method of documents study.

We examined the following documents: the school's records of grades, the files of teacher training committees, the annual activity reports (2009-2010), extracting information about students' promotion, the number of courses followed by research participants and the number of performant results of their students, these three dimensions are considered **indicators of teachers' work performance** in their external evaluation.

The questionnaire was developed by adapting the version proposed by Constantin, T., 2004, called "Job satisfaction". The author started his survey from the "Job Satisfaction Survey", proposed by P. E. Spector, in

1997, an instrument which had 36 items evaluating nine aspects of job satisfaction: payment, promotion, supervision, secondary benefits, potential rewards, regulations, coworkers, the nature of work and communication. Constantin Ticu applied the 32-item questionnaire on a population of 566 subjects reporting the following internal consistency coefficients obtained: payment and promotion 0.820, 0.760 leadership and interpersonal relationships, organizational and communication 0.738, throughout the whole questionnaire Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.872.

The questionnaire that we developed by adapting the above mentioned data, contains 34 items, with the following internal consistency coefficients for each factor separately: payment 0.808, promotion 0.752, 0.757 management, interpersonal relationships 0.784, organization 0.772, communication 0.767, general satisfaction 0.835 and for the whole questionnaire, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.803. We have grouped the items in the following factors: payment (level, fairness / equity, satisfaction): items 2, 3, 9, 15, 18, 19; promotion (opportunities, support, discrimination / nondiscrimination): items 4, 5, 10, 27, 30, management (accuracy, style): items 6, 11, 20, 24, 25, 28, 31, 33, interpersonal relationships (quality, status): items 7, 12, 16, 23, 26, 34; organization (rules / procedures, goal / policy of the school, work tasks): items 8, 13, 14, 17, 18, 24; communication (general quality, vertical communication, horizontal communication): items 1, 21, 25, 29, 32, 33, the last factor being the overall satisfaction, which method of calculation is the sum of scores obtained on all items.

### 2.3. Group of participants

The participants in this study were 54 teachers from the county of Brasov: 19 teachers' from "Mihail Săulescu" High School in Predeal, 20 from Halchiu General School and 15 Primary School Vulcan teachers. The group of participants consists of 81% women and 19% are men, of whom 74% are from urban areas and 26% rural. Educational degrees obtained by them are as follows: 41% of participants have Teaching certificate, 30% had level II and 29% were level I. In terms of seniority, our group of participants consists of 22.3% teachers with one to five years of experience, 18.5% are between 5 and 10 years of experience, 24.1% have a length between 10 and 20 years of experience, 35.1% with a length of between 20 and 42 years.

### 2.4. Results

Regarding our main concerns, namely the level of professional satisfaction, the results shows a low level of overall satisfaction (Fig.1), which is an indicator of the phenomena that correlate. The minimum value of the results for this variable is 86 and the maximum is 154, the average being 113. Kurtosis coefficient value is - 0.293, indicating greater frequency of low scores, a low degree of satisfaction of teachers participating in the research.

Through the statistical analysis performed we obtained the following results:

The variable "training courses", followed by the research participants, negatively correlated with factor 4, "interpersonal relationships" ( $r: -0.399^{**}$ ,  $p: 0.003$ ) and positively correlated with factor five "organization" ( $r: 0.384^{*}$ ,  $p: 0.037$ ). In other words, teachers' that participated to more training courses, have poorer interpersonal relationships compared to their colleagues.

Professional development courses weigh more in upgrading categories and merit payment. These financial rewards are given to a relatively small number of teachers. Therefore, frequently, it hover around these courses a higher potential conflict. Thus, these questions would fit perfectly here:

What is the relationship of teachers with the school administration/management?

Who promotes these courses in school and what is the status of the top participation to these courses?

To what extent the courses conducted had as group target, the members of the school management and to that extent the courses were focused on professional development of teachers without managerial responsibilities?

What is the financial contribution of participants and what percentage of these expenses were covered by the institution's financial resources?

These questions are meant to highlight a situation known to the "microclimate of teacher's office". Many times people with management responsibilities or those close to them, have easier access to information about partially or fully subsidized courses. On the other hand, teachers without managerial responsibilities may be less willing to bear the costs of these courses. It follows a high potential conflict that jeopardizes the quality of teachers' interpersonal relations. In the light of this interpretation, the result supports the hypothesis no. 4 of our study. Also we note that the hypothesis no. 5 was confirmed, so that the level of satisfaction on the institutional organization influences performance at work.

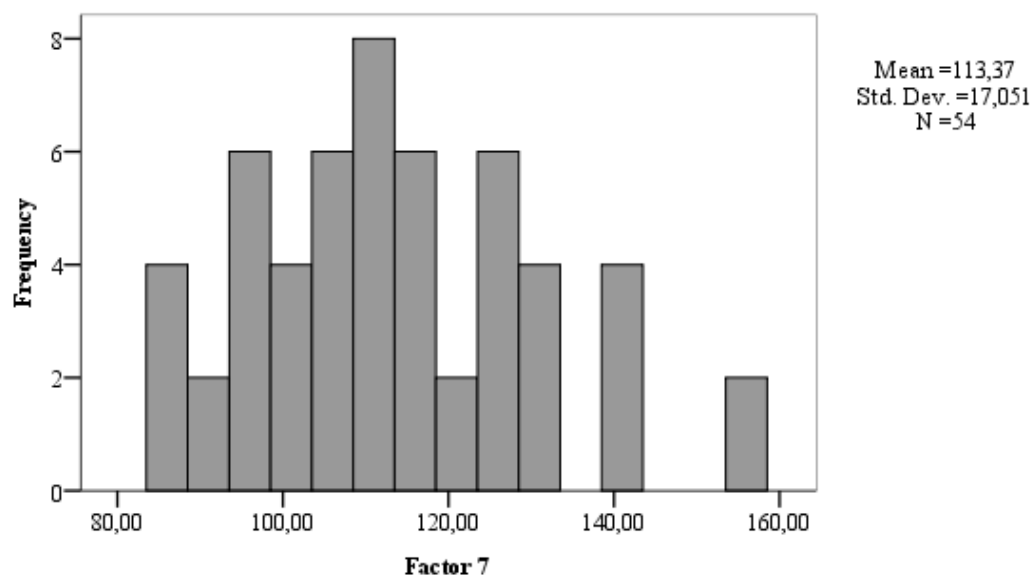


Fig. 1. Teacher satisfaction level in the group of participants.

The "good results" indicator of performance at work, meaning getting outstanding results in competitions, students competitions, did not correlate with any variable in the research design, few such results were communicated to researchers, allowing us to believe that there were no such concerns in the study group and perhaps there was a lack of representativeness of this indicator for the chosen schools. Hypothesis number 2 and 3 weren't confirmed, there is no relationship between the studied variables.

The variable "graduation", representing the number of students that pass on the subjects taught by teachers participants to this research, significantly strongly correlated with the F4, "interpersonal relationships" ( $r: 0.352^{**}$ ,  $p: 0.009$ ) and F6, "communication" ( $r: 0.454^{**}$ ,  $p: 0.001$ ), significantly correlated with the variable "experience" ( $r: 0.347^{*}$ ,  $p: 0.010$ ) and significantly negatively correlated with F1, "remuneration" ( $r: -0.306^{*}$ ,  $p: 0.009$ ).

The existence of a strongly positive correlation, between variables "passing" and "interpersonal relationships" supports the idea that an educational microclimate, characterized by good interpersonal relationships, and has a positive impact on student performance. Students' performance is reflected in the percentage of graduating students, their performance was the result of combined efforts of many teachers. Interpersonal relationship of teachers positively influences student performance and thus their exam passing rate. Thus, we say that the hypothesis no. 4 was confirmed on this dimension of performance, passing rate.

The highly significant negative correlation between the variables "graduated" and F1, "remuneration" ( $r: -0.306^{*}$ ,  $p: 0.009$ ) confirms the hypothesis number one, showing a clear trend of lack of interest for education quality within the meaning of discriminative quality of its assessment, as the salary is less incentive.

A highly significant positive correlation between the variables "graduation" and F6, "communication" ( $r: 0.454^{**}$ ,  $p: 0.001$ ) confirms the hypothesis number 6, showing the dependence of obtaining good results on the quality of communication at work in the institution, both with colleagues, students and superiors.

In the participants group, following the factorial analysis, we observed that there are four second-order factors responsible for 72% of the variance. The first secondary factor (FSF 1) is responsible for 35% of the variance. This second factor includes the satisfaction factors: promotion (opportunities, support, discrimination/nondiscrimination), management (correctness, style) interpersonal relationships (quality, status); organization (rules/procedures, goal/ school policy, work tasks); communication (general quality, vertical communication, horizontal communication) and overall satisfaction.

The second secondary factor (FSF 2) is responsible for 16% of the variance. This second factor includes variables: age, environment and gender. The third secondary factor (FSF 3) is responsible for 12% of the variance. This second factor includes variables sex and two dimensions of performance, followed by the number of improvement courses and the number of children with high results. The fourth secondary factor (FSF 4) is responsible for 9% of the variance. This second factor includes variables like: educational level, satisfaction with the remuneration and promotion rate.

### 3. DISCUSSION

The results of this study partially confirmed our hypotheses. But more interesting is that, indirectly, it revealed the dependence of the analyzed variables on a mediating variable, which we didn't take into account at the beginning of our study. This variable is motivation. We consider our research results to be valuable, but the even more valuable are ulterior discovered relationships between variables. Thus, for our next study we will take into account these relationships between variables

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