

**14th Edition of the International Conference on Sciences
of Education. Learning for Life - ICSED 2016, 12-13
May 2016, Suceava (Romania) & Chernivtsi (Ukraine)
Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education
Editors Otilia CLIPA & Constantin-Florin DOMUNCO**

ISBN: 978-973-166-435-4; e-ISBN: 978-973-166-475-0

Aspects regarding teaching staff's motivation and satisfaction – from theory to practice

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pp.11-20

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Selection, peer review and publishing under the responsibility of the editors.

How to cite: Balanescu, R. C. (2016). Aspects regarding teaching staff's motivation and satisfaction – from theory to practice. In O. Clipa & C. F. Domunco, (eds.), Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education (pp. 11-20). Iasi, Romania: Editura LUMEN.

Aspects regarding teaching staff's motivation and satisfaction – from theory to practice

Ramona – Cristina BĂLĂNESCU¹

Abstract

The teacher status in contemporary society should grant prestige. We need devoted and competent teaching staff with a calling and endowed with special personal and professional qualities. The teaching corps is an employee category whose performance is related to motivational factors.

This article seeks to perform not only a theoretical analysis of some aspects regarding the teaching staff's motivation and performance management, but to especially factually identify motivational factors determining the teaching corps' satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

Highlighting these aspects resulting from the performed research can help taking measures to increase the satisfaction and professional performance level of the teaching corps in the Romanian educational system, and thus, the pupils' academic performance and success.

Keywords

Motivation, satisfaction, inducement, performance, teaching corps.

1. Introduction

It is common knowledge that a nation's development and progress is related to the characteristics of the educational system in the respective country, to the education offered to its citizens. In order for the instructive-educational process to have a high quality, the teaching corps must have a solid training, from the scientific, psycho-pedagogical, methodical point of view, be passionate about their profession, endowed with multiple abilities, enthusiastic, happy with the work they do, and the teaching activity must constantly offer them the motivation they need.

One of the essential responsibilities of any School Manager consists of identifying the most appropriate ways of determining the subordinates to obtain high performances in their work. The motivation stimulation

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continues however to be an art related to every Manager's craftsmanship and gift of teaching.

Furthermore, according to Atkinson's observations (2000, apud Panisoara, 2005, p.148) the correlation between the pupils' motivation and the teaching corps' motivation is statistically significant. Thus, having a motivated teaching corps is having motivated pupils, but having a demotivated teaching corps can also determine the occurrence of a lack of motivation in the pupils they work with.

In this context, it is particularly useful to investigate the opinions of the ones currently working in the educational system, in order to be able to identify both the satisfactory aspects, and the dissatisfaction sources.

The teaching corps is a category of employees whose performance is related both to the conditions specific to the educational system, and to many other motivational factors, included on a list identical to that of the employees in other fields. We therefore consider it necessary for this paper to list some concepts specific both to the general, organisational psychology, and to the human resource management.

2. Conceptual clarifications

The concepts we refer to are: motivation, inducement, performance, work satisfaction and dissatisfaction, respectively, as well as the correlations between them.

The motivation is the fact that "at the foundation of human condition is always a group of motives-necessities, tendencies, affects, interest, intentions, ideals-supporting the accomplishment of certain actions, deeds, attitudes" (Bonciu, 2002, p. 43). Moreover, the motivation is the sum of motives determining the people to do certain things, to choose certain behaviours from amongst several options. (Stanciu & Ionescu, 2010)

The motivation is considered to be an analysable concept both at individual, and at micro- or macro-group level, being a highly important success factor for the organisations. Thus, in the organisational context, the motivation is a conditioned factor for the performances of every organisation component, the stimulus driving it to act in a certain way, an internal condition there of fuelling and determining its behaviour, and the inducement is the process whereby the Managers determine their subordinates to achieve high performance, by providing them with good reasons to act as such (Craiovan, 2006, p. 54). We notice the distinction between the concepts of motivation and inducement. The inducement process aims, in the organisational context, at stimulating the employees to

reach performance. The performance can read as the extent to which an organisation member contributes to reaching the organisation goals (Craiovan, 2012, p. 65), and as concerns the relationship between motivation and performance, it is obvious that the motivation influences and determines the performance.

Furthermore, the relationship between the inducement and the work satisfaction raised the interest of specialists in fields such as economy, psychology, sociology, human resource management, being the topic of many theoretical and case studies in the specialised literature, both in our country, and abroad. We shall refer to some of them hereinafter.

In a strict sense, work satisfaction is an agreeable, positive emotion resulting from the performed work assessment (Mathis, Nica, & Rusu, 1997, p. 52). Satisfaction refers to a worker's feelings towards the own occupation or professional requirements related to the previous experiences, current expectations or alternative savailable (Balzer et al., 1990), being an agreeable affective state resulting from the assessment of the workplace or workplace-related experiences (Locke, 1970, apud Igret, p. 132). According to Mielu Zlate (2007, pp. 462-463) the following 3 statements can be uttered about motivation and satisfaction: The state of satisfaction/dissatisfaction is a motivation indicator. Motivation and satisfaction- a double causality: cause and effect. Both motivation and satisfaction relate jointly to the activity performance that they can influence, either positively, or negatively.

Amongst the researches on identifying the satisfaction/dissatisfaction factors, we refer to The Theory of F. Herzberg, B. Mausner, B. B. Snyderman (1959, p. 25), well-known in social psychology, and which generated a multitude of experimental research esaiming at verifying it. The above-mentioned authors set two categories of factors, some leading to satisfaction, while others to the dissatisfaction. Thus, 5 factors, called valuation or content factor (achievement, recognition, work per se, responsibility, promotion) generate satisfaction, drive sustainable attitude changes and the other 5 factors, called environment or content factor, cause dissatisfaction (unit policy, technical competence, remuneration, interhuman relations, work conditions) drive short-term attitude changes, given that they refer to the person's relations to the work environment. The two factor categories are independent from one another, in the sense that each one of them produces specific effects (some factors are satisfactory, and other dissatisfactory), therefore having a unipolar character.

3. The Research Methodology

The approach through a concrete investigation of the issues concerning the motivation and the satisfaction of the teaching corps was suggested to us by the importance this has in the school and university practice, particularly as concerns the qualitative improvement of the didactic process in the Romanian higher education, which can generate higher performance for its beneficiaries.

3.1. The Research Purpose

The study aims at performing an analysis of the aspects of the motivation, inducement and satisfaction amongst the teaching corps in the pre-university educational system.

3.2. The Research Objectives

O1: to identify the *motivation dimensions(motivation forms)*amid the teaching corps in the Romanian pre-university educational system;

O2: to identify the motivational factor categories influencing their work satisfaction;

O3: to identify the motivational factor categories influencing their work dissatisfaction.

3.3. The Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis1: Does the wage scale of the investigated teaching corps generate their work satisfaction?

Hypothesis2: Do the context or organisational factors generate the satisfaction of the investigated teaching corps?

3.4. The Sample

This study was performed on a *sample of 95* teaching corps in the pre-university educational system, in the counties of Prahova(58%), Valcea (22%), Arges (14%) and Bucharest (6%).

The participation in the study was voluntary, the non-probability sample allowing us to make a comparison between the various Teachers' attitudes and appreciations so, to formulate specific conclusions. The participants in the study are aged between 25 and 65 ($M_{age} = 39.9$ years old). The sample gender structure is unbalanced, in women's favour (95%). A relevance element in the overall research is the sample distribution related to the obtained teaching certification level. Most respondents (75.5%) hold the teaching certification level I, while the teachers having obtained the permanent teacher certification and the

teaching certification level II amount to 27.3%. The beginner teacher segment is less represented in the sample (2.1%).

3.5. Research methods and tools

The method used in this investigation was the *enquiry*, and the chosen tool was the *questionnaire*, which was prepared by the author of this paper.

The applied questionnaire includes 22 *items* and it contains the following *types of questions*: *closed questions with two-choice answers* and *multiple-choice answers*, *open questions* (whose answer is offered, completely build by the Subject) and *multiple-choice questions* (pre-coded). So, the applied *questionnaire* is *mixed*. In the case of some of the questions, the Subjects had to make up a hierarchy of certain indicators, in the order of their preferences, or to provide examples for certain scores. Depending on their type, the questionnaire questions were considered as variables being awarded scores on a certain scale, for instance, scores from 1 to 5 for the items with 5-choice answers or scores such as 1 and 2 for the items with YES/NO answers, etc. As regards the open-questions, the interpretation was made from the qualitative perspective, analysing the received answer versions. The questionnaire required no pretesting. The developed research tool has a good *internal reliability score*, calculated by means of the Cronbach alpha index: $\alpha = .87$

3.6. Data analysis

The data analysis and interpretation were performed by recurring to qualitative methods (analysis, synthesis, comparison) and quantitative ones (statistical analysis).

The statistic processing was based on the application of descriptive analyses. Depending on the type of question and on the analysis requirements, various types of *graphical representations* were used (histograms, areola diagrams etc.). Their role is not only to visualise the gathered data, but also to synthesise and condense them.

3.7. Results

By synthesising the information analysed for every item within the questionnaire, and taking into account also the data correlation manner, the following was found:

As concerns the importance granted to some **factors to succeed in life (item 1)**, the respondents placed on top 3 places: having a family, having an interesting job, offering many satisfactions and opportunities, and having a successful career. What should be highlighted is that these

appreciations are made by teacher having a certain life experience, but also teaching experience, as results from the sample characteristics, as described above. As regards the **factors determining them to choose a teaching career (item 2)**, the 3 most favourite factors are: the love of children; the profession beauty and charm; the passion for the taught subject. We notice that the main vectors having played in favour of starting a teaching career are strongly subjective and vocationally-oriented.

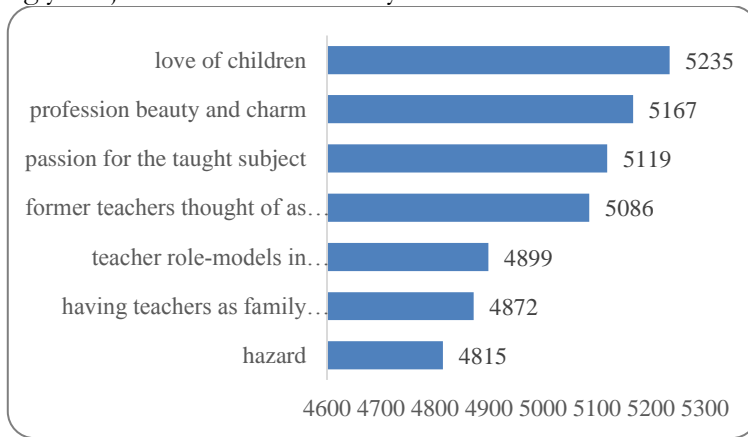


Figure 1. Factors having played in favour of starting a teaching career and obtained scores. Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is the sum of all weighted rank counts.

If they were to choose their profession, now, 77.9% of the teachers **would opt again for the teaching career**, compared to 9.5%, whose answer was “No”, and 12.6 % said they did not know. Regarding the 2 latter categories, the causes generating these answers are related to (item 4): defective operation of the educational system (76.2%); low wages (42.9); obsolete social and professional status of the profession (33.3%). Out of those having answered “Yes”, 89.2% believe they have the necessary abilities to be a good teacher and can thus contribute to shaping the new generations; 81.1% think they like to work with pupils (also confirmed by item 2, when they assigned the first place to the “love of children”), and 47.3% believe the teacher’s mission is extremely important from the social point of view.

While making a hierarchy of the reasons limiting their choosing a teaching career, in today’s society (item 6), the respondents assign the top places to inappropriate wage (56.8%) and inappropriate social recognition of the teaching profession (37.9%), as also confirmed by item 4.

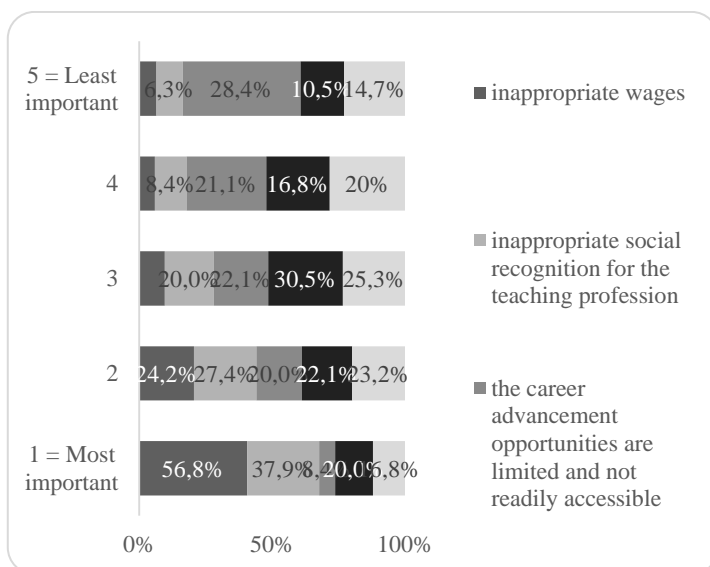


Figure 2. Negative motivations in the teaching career (N = 95)

As concerns their **skills**, teachers consider they still need to give priority to study in the **managerial**(63.2%), **psycho-social** (41.1%) and **accessibility-raising** (21.1%) ones. However, all the respondents stated they wish they further developed their skills in the subject they teach (13%) and that they are competent at the workplace. 52.6% of the respondents believe the **collegial relationships** stimulate them in their professional activity. Further more, the **professional (organisational)climate** is perceived as being good (48.4%) and very good (36.8%), and the **relationships built amongst colleagues (horizontal relationships)**are mostly of cooperation (69.5%), but also of competition (13.7%) and sympathy (8.4%).

The nature of the relationships between the school managers and the teaching corps(vertical relationships) in the school unit where they work is generally democratic(71.6%) and friendly (50.5%),rather than strictly formal (14.7%) or authoritarian (9.5%).

The inefficient communication at the workplace generates stress(71.6%), poor relationships(46.3%), decrease in the level of motivation(45.3%), and decrease in the professional performance level(26.3%).

Concerning the **feedback** within the educational institution where they work, it is always offered in 40% of the cases, sometimes for 55.8%of them, or never (4.2%).

Related to the received **wage**, only 7.4% of the respondents are happy, 50.5% are somewhat happy, and the remaining 42.1% are unhappy. None of the beginner teachers said to be happy with the received wage. Only 9% of the teachers holding the teaching certificate level I state they are happy with the remuneration they receive. We can assess that the wage can potentially turn into a major factor of workplace dissatisfaction. The correlation between the two variables is however not statistically significant. Moreover, besides the wage, other aspects making them unhappy at the workplace are: working conditions, their colleagues' attitude or their superiors' attitude.

As concerns item19, “**What would you change in the educational institution you work in, if you had the opportunity to do so?**”, the highest percentages were scored by the wage policy (39%), and the equipment (technical and material facilities)-37.9%.

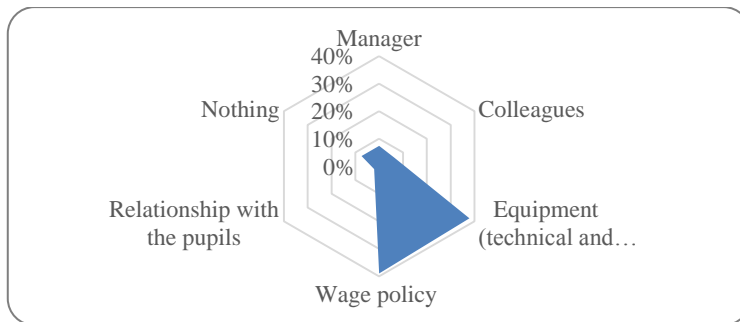


Figure 3. Aspects concerning the improvement of the organisational environment quality (N = 95)

I21: The things the teacher would like to have in the educational institutions they work in, which are not existent at the moment: rewards for special achievements, respect to the employees, a set of very clear rules, etc. **They believe they would work more if...**the other colleagues would be more engaged, as well (48.4%); they were delegated more authority and given more trust (23.2%), they had a more agreeable atmosphere in the educational institution (19%), the School Manager appreciated them more(9.5%).

3.8. Research conclusions

Depending on the triggering element, the motivation can take various forms and sizes. Amongst the best-known ones in the specialised literature, we only refer to the ones relevant for this study (Stanciu, Ionescu,

Leovaridis & Stănescu, 2003, pp. 249-250). Thus, the intrinsic motivation of the investigated teaching corps mainly has three sources: work nature (the work per se is the purpose of one's getting a job, which generates pleasure or satisfaction); social purposefulness of the work (the respondents target certain results for the work they do, designed to satisfy certain social needs), and personal accomplishment.

The respondents are characterised by positive extrinsic motivation, because it aims at acquiring benefits or utilities resulting from their successfully doing their job: financial and material rewards, guarantees regarding the workplace security, obtaining titles, being given trust, followed by the delegation of competences, appraisal and manifest content, promotion or acquisition of higher positions, social and professional prestige, etc.

The economic, professional and psycho-social motivation. The money, financial, economical stimuli are triggers for the economic motivation; the work, professional activity (the conditions it is performed in, its purpose) triggers the professional motivation; the interaction amongst the workgroup members (its nature, quality and intensity, etc.) triggers the psycho-social motivation.

The determining factors for the work dissatisfaction we identified are as follows: inappropriate wage, obsolete social and professional status of the teaching profession, ineffective communication at the workplace, lack of feed-back from the superiors, inappropriate working conditions, limited and not readily accessible career advancement possibilities, difficulty of the work with the pupils, position insecurity, etc. However, there are also employees who are somewhat happy with the offered wages, even though the percentage is low (7.4%). So, the wage can also be a work satisfaction factor. Furthermore, the workgroup is one of the most important components of the satisfaction. The friendly, caring and tolerant colleagues, but especially the helpful ones, contribute to obtaining work satisfaction. The positive professional and organisational climate and the relationship the School Manager has with the subordinates are also factors of the work satisfaction, thus confirming the second research hypothesis. As regards the wage, many researches and studies found a positive relationship between income and work satisfaction. The higher the remuneration, the higher the satisfaction or vice-versa, a low wage generates a low satisfaction or, more precisely, work dissatisfaction. So, there is a negative relationship between the two, thus invalidating the first hypothesis of our study.

The Teaching Corps' motivation and satisfaction are intimately correlated. They play a double role, both of cause and of effect. Both motivation and satisfaction are jointly related to the activity performance which they can influence either positively, or negatively (Stanciu, Ionescu, Leovaridis & Stanescu, 2003, pp. 264-265).

Conclusions

Nowadays, the education purposefulness, manifold and complex, can only be accomplished with the support of a devoted and solidly trained teaching corps, endowed with valuable personal and professional qualities. The Teacher holds key position in the activity of scheduling, organising, performing and assessing the educational process and this is precisely why the motivational factors should ensure the work satisfaction and, implicitly, The School Managers must motivate their employees, inspiring them with commitment, will to act and encouraging their creativity, since the Teachers' motivation is one of the most important components of a high-performance educational system.

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