

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISATION AND SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

The findings of the present study suggested that teachers have moderate level of teacher professionalisation and job satisfaction. The study also found that job satisfaction has a strong positive correlation with job environment, positive moderate administrative involvement, and administrative authority. There was no correlation between job satisfaction and perceived problems.

Keywords: Professionalisation, job satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher professionalisation (i.e. the movement to upgrade the status, training, and working condition of teachers) has received a great deal of interest in recent years (NCES, 1997) especially in the United States. According to NCES (1997), since the mid-1980s, a growing number of educational reformers, policymakers, and researchers have argued that many of the well-publicized shortcomings of the elementary and secondary education system in the United States are, to an important extent, due to inadequacies in the working conditions, resources, and support afforded to school teachers. Proponents of this view hold, for example, that teachers are underpaid, have too little say in the operation of schools, are afforded too few opportunities to improve their teaching skills, suffer from a lack of support or assistance, and are not adequately rewarded or recognized for their efforts. The key to improving the quality of schools, these critics claim, lies in upgrading the status, training, and working conditions of teaching, that is, in furthering the professionalisation of teachers and teaching. The rationale underlying this view is that upgrading the teaching occupation will lead to improvements in the motivation and commitment of teachers, which, in turn, will lead to improvements in teachers' performance, which will ultimately lead to improvements in student learning (e.g., Carnegie Forum 1986; Darling-Hammond 1984; Rosenholtz 1989; Sergiovanni and Moore 1989; Weis et al. 1989; Conley and Cooper 1991; Holmes Group 1986; Darling-Hammond 1995; Talbert and McLaughlin 1993).

Job satisfaction has long been identified as a factor which is related to many aspects of behaviour in organisational constructs. Research on job satisfaction has been conducted since Hoppock's (1935) work. Job satisfaction deals with whether employees find their employment sufficiently satisfactory to continue in it, either permanently or until they have prepared for greater responsibilities (Hoppock, 1935).

Davis and Newstrom (1985) states that one of the surest symptoms of deteriorating conditions in an organisation is, low job satisfaction. Low job satisfaction is usually associated with strikes, work slowness, absences, and employee turnover. It also may be linked to low performance, poor product quality, employees' theft, disciplinary problems, grievances and other difficulties. Higher job satisfaction, on the other hand, is usually associated with lower turnover, fewer absences, older employees, and higher occupational levels.

Locke (1976, p. 1300) defined job satisfaction in a general sense as a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences". As such, job satisfaction is presumed to be a global construct encompassing such specific facets as satisfaction with work, pay, supervision, benefits, promotion opportunities, working conditions, co-workers, and organisational practices. That is, these various facets are assumed somehow to aggregate into an overall orientation termed job satisfaction (Griffin and Bateman, 1986).



1.1 Relationship Between Teacher Professionalisation and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been shown to be a factor in professionalisation. Teacher job satisfaction is a predictor of teacher retention, which is a determinant of teacher commitment and this has an effect on school effectiveness. Teacher job satisfaction studies nevertheless, reveal wide ranging differences in determining factors contributing to job satisfaction. Teacher job satisfaction influences job performance, attrition and ultimately students' performance. Hall, Pearson, & Carrol, (1992), in their study on the area found that teacher who plans to leave teaching can be distinguished from those who plan to stay by the pattern of their work related to attitudes, perceptions and their reactions. Borg & Riding, (1991), conducted a study on stress in teaching. These researchers investigated occupational stress, job satisfaction and career commitment among primary school teachers. Their study attested to the multidimensional nature of stress, and their finding revealed among others that about one-third of the 710 Maltese primary school teachers rated their job as either very stressful or extremely stressful. Subsequently, the findings also revealed that job satisfaction and teacher stress are related.

Other researcher found that effective teacher place significant emphasis on student-teacher relationship (Gay, 1995). Heller, Rex, & Cline, (1992), reported that variance in teacher satisfaction can be accounted for by satisfaction in meeting students' achievement. Ability to interact with colleagues was also cited as the most value form of professional stimulation (Yee, 1990). Further research work on the area also reveals that support and interaction have some influence on satisfaction and retention among teachers (Bloland & Selby, 1980; Theobald, 1989). In their investigation, Popkewitz & Mydral, (1991), found that teacher collaboration leads to increased feelings of teacher effectiveness and satisfaction. From these studies there seem to be a pivotal link between teacher job satisfaction in the chain of educational reform and on teacher commitment. As such, it is not surprising that most research work on job satisfaction also displayed great interest in the study of job commitment. In this particular study, the main aim is only to examine the relationship between a teacher professionalisation and job satisfaction of teachers.

1.2 Research Questions

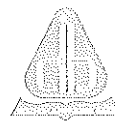
Based on the discussion above, three research questions have been formulated: (1) What is the level of professionalisation of teachers? (2) What is the level of job satisfaction of teachers? (3) What is the relationship between professionalisation and job satisfaction of teachers?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a survey research. The method used for collecting data in the present study was the self-administered questionnaire. The respondents consist of primary school teachers. A total of 3400 questionnaires were distributed to respondents from 340 selected schools around peninsular Malaysia. The biggest problem with mail questionnaires is getting back enough usable responses. To reduce this problem, the "Total Design Method" of mail survey (Dillman, 1977) was employed.

2.1 Assessment Instruments

Rather than being an explanatory study that generates its own items, the measures were selected from established sources. This was done for several reasons (1) these measures have already demonstrated an appropriate level of reliability in previous studies, (2) De Vaus (1990) states that researchers should try evaluate the many well-established and tested scales, as they may need updating or rewording to fit a particular context or a particular sample, and (3) using well-established indicators has the advantage of enabling comparison of results with those of other researchers. This can be helpful in building up a cumulative body of knowledge rather than each person carrying out their own idiosyncratic research with idiosyncratic measures.



2.2 Teacher Professionalisation

Professionalisation was measured using the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (NCES, 1997) which consists of credentials, inductions, professional development, authority, and compensation. For the purpose of the present study, only the authority component of the measure is used. The authority component in this case includes perceived authority, involvement in decision making, perceived problems, and job environment. Since the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) (NCES, 1997) is an American-developed instrument, the other components of professionalisation were not used in this study because the aspects of the components are not applicable in the Malaysian context. A Likert's scale ranges from 1 to 5 was used (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree).

2.3 Job Satisfaction

The job satisfaction measure that was used in this study is part of the School and Staffing Survey (SASS) (NCES, 1997). It includes aspects of job satisfaction such as satisfaction towards teaching career, and intrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction.

A set of items asking about demographic information data was prepared to establish the profiles of the respondents.

3. ANALYSIS

In seeking answers to the research questions, descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations was used to compute by using SPSS software. A Spearman's Rank Coefficient Correlation between variables was computed for all respondents. Internal consistency of the scales was tested by using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). To test the effect of demographic variables on the constructs used in the study, a series of two-tailed independent group t-tests and one-way between groups ANOVA with post-hoc comparison, were carried out.

3.1 Teachers: Profile

A total of 3037 teachers (respondents) around peninsular Malaysia were involved in this study. Majority of the respondents were Malays (94.1%), hence this also gives an immediate effect on the religion outcome or result with the same percentage. In general the respondents age are mainly between the range of 31-44 (62.4%), followed by the age group of less than 31 and over 44 years old with the percentage of 18.8%. The statistics also show that 90.2% of the individuals are married. Majority of the respondents (75.1%) were in the range of RM1000-RM1999 salary bracket.

3.1 Teachers: Analysis

Tables 1 - 4 below show the means of the variables used in the present study.

i. Level of administrative involvement and authority

Table 1 indicates the responses of the respondents on the level of involvement and authority for various administrative tasks.

More than ninety per cent were involved (responded 1 to 5) in setting discipline policy (93.9%) and determining the content of teachers' development of the school (92.5%). However, a lower proportion of them are involved in deciding on the school budget spending (81.0%) or evaluating the performance of teachers and other staff (66.6%). These measures indicate that the level of involvement is moderate for setting discipline policy (mean>3.0), but low (mean<3.0) for the other three tasks, giving an overall low level (mean=2.97) of involvement. All of them said that they had the authority in matters related to their teaching such as selecting textbooks, content and students' assessment. The level of authority varies but on the average it is also

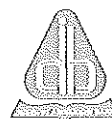


moderately high as indicated by the median values of 4.00 for all tasks which indicate that more than half said so. Comparing the mean values, the respondents felt that they have a higher authority for tasks directly related to their classrooms (mean >4.0) but not on matters outside the classroom such as selecting materials and topics to be taught or selecting which textbooks and other instructional materials to be adopted.

Level	Task	% Involved	Median	Mean
Involvement	a) Setting discipline policy	93.9	4.00	3.37
	b) Determining the content of teachers' development of the school	92.5	3.00	3.18
	c) Deciding on the school budget spending	81.0	3.00	2.68
	d) Evaluating the performance of teachers and other staff	66.6	3.00	2.74
	Overall	-	3.00	2.97
Authority	a) Evaluating and grading students	100	4.00	4.29
	b) Selecting teaching techniques	100	4.00	4.24
	c) Disciplining students	100	4.00	4.08
	d) Determining the amount and nature of students' homework assigned	100	4.00	4.00
	e) Selecting content, topic and skills to be taught	100	4.00	3.80
	f) Selecting textbooks and other instructional materials	100	4.00	3.25
	Overall	-	4.00	3.90

ii. Perceived Problems Related to Students and the School

The overall mean for perceived problem is 3.64 (Table 2). The respondents were also asked to rate the extent of problems related to students in their schools. The mean scores are arranged in ascending order in order to rank them from the least serious to the most serious. The percentage of respondents who responded with a scale of 4 or more indicates the proportion that consider the item as a problem. Lack of racial interaction is not a problem in most schools as less than half of the respondents (42.5%) rated it as a problem. However, majority of the respondents feel that their schools face various problems, ranging from poor health (50.1%) to poor command of English among their students (85.0%). Poverty (53.4%) is also a problem but not as prevalent as those related to students' indiscipline: tardiness (64.2%), theft (61.2%), physical conflict (64.7%), disrespect for teachers/headmasters (67.5%) and vandalism of school properties (69.1%). The above results are further supported by the respective median and mean values.

**Table 2: Teachers - Perception on the Extent of Problems Faced by the School**

Problem		% with 4 or more	Median	Mean
1.	Lack of racial interaction	42.5	3.0	3.11
2.	Poor health among students	50.1	3.0	3.26
3.	Poverty	53.4	4.0	3.38
4.	Student tardiness	64.2	4.0	3.46
5.	Theft	61.2	4.0	3.55
6.	Physical conflict among students	64.7	4.0	3.62
7.	Student disrespect for teachers /headmaster	67.5	4.0	3.72
8.	Vandalism of school property	69.1	4.0	3.75
9.	Lack of parents involvement	75.2	4.0	3.84
10.	Student absenteeism	77.3	4.0	3.90
11.	Student apathy	77.7	4.0	3.92
12.	Students come to school unprepared to learn	80.1	4.0	3.94
13.	Lack of competitiveness for academic excellence	82.6	4.0	4.00
14.	Students having problems with the command of English	85.0	4.0	4.85
Overall		-	3.65	3.64

A large proportion of them are also concern about the lack of parents' involvement (75.2%), students' absenteeism (77.3%) and students' apathy (77.7%). The three most serious problems are related to students' communication ability and attitude. They are: (1) the command of English (85.0%; 4.85), followed by lack of competitiveness for academic excellence (82.6%; 4.00) and coming to school unprepared to learn (80.1%; 3.94). However, the standard deviation for the communication skill (8.10) is a few times larger than those of the other items due to a very high proportion who said that this problem is prevalent among their students as indicated by the mean score of 4.85, which is the highest among the fourteen items rated. The above statistics indicate that in general the teachers feel that they are faced with a multitude of students' problems, with communication skills and attitude towards learning as the most serious.

ii. Job Environment

The overall mean for job environment is 3.65 (Table 3). The respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction towards various aspects related to their profession.

A high percentage (more than sixty per cent) of the respondents is satisfied with most aspects related to their work environment (11 out of 17). In particular, they are most satisfied with the efforts made by the headmaster in managing the school, setting the missions (94.2%), goals and priorities (93.6%), enforcing rules (88.9%) and communicating with the staff (88.8%). The opinion is approximately divided for three other aspects with only slightly more than half said that: (1) they plan with the librarian for the integration of the library services into their teaching (57.3%); (2) they are satisfied with their salary (53.2%); and (3) students' problems such as tardiness and absenteeism in the school do not interfere with their teaching (52.9%).



Table 3: Teachers - Job Environment

Statement	% with 4 or more	Median	Mean
1. The principle knows what kind of school he/she wants and has communicated it to the staff	94.2	4.0	4.32
2. Goals and priorities for the school are clear	93.6	4.0	4.19
3. My principal enforces school rules on students	88.9	4.0	4.15
4. I make an effort to coordinate the content of my subject with that of other teachers	88.8	4.0	4.09
5. Most of the colleagues share my views about what the central mission of the school should be	86.3	4.0	4.00
6. Student's misbehavior does not interfere with my teaching	83.0	4.0	4.07
7. I believe that school's rules and procedures are administered fairly	80.3	4.0	3.90
8. In this school, staff members are recognized for a job well done	76.1	4.0	3.89
9. The headmaster does a good job of getting resources for the school	74.5	4.0	3.87
10. The headmaster frequently hold discussions on my instructional practice	72.1	4.0	3.74
11. I never feel it is a waste of time to try to do my best as a teacher	64.7	4.0	3.68
12. I plan with the librarian for the integration of the library services into my teaching	57.3	4.0	3.47
13. I am satisfied with my salary	53.2	4.0	3.23
14. The amount of student tardiness and absenteeism in the school does not interfere with my teaching	52.9	4.0	3.24
15. Library materials are adequate to support my instructional objectives	44.3	3.0	3.02
16. Rules in the school do not conflict with my best professional judgment	38.7	3.0	3.07
17. Routine duties and paperwork is not a problem	21.4	2.0	2.32
Overall			3.65

On the other hand, the majority feels that: (1) the amount of library materials is not sufficient (54.7%); (2) the rules in the school conflict with their best professional judgment (61.3%); and (3) routine duties and paperwork interfere with their work (78.6%). From the above responses, it can be gathered that teachers do not have much involvement in decisions regarding the school's library which in turn explain the low level of satisfaction towards the materials provided.

3.2 Job Satisfaction

The summary statistics for the respondents' satisfaction on various aspects of their career are presented in Table 4. Overall, a large proportion of the respondents (85.3%) are satisfied or very satisfied with their teaching career. This is further supported by the overall job satisfaction mean score of 3.92. However, based on the average score of the fourteen individual items (except for the overall score), on the average the level of



satisfaction is much lower with a mean score of 3.61 and a median of 3.67. This is due to varied ratings on the individual items being evaluated which indicate differences in their ratings of the various items as discussed below.

They were most satisfied with eight of the fourteen items evaluated as indicated by the high percentage of those who responded with a score of at least 4. Among them are: (1) the support from their family (85.8%, mean = 4.03); (2) safety of the school environment (87.4%, mean = 3.94); and (3) general work conditions (84.1%, mean = 3.88). They were also satisfied with the intellectual challenge they faced in teaching (82.3%, mean = 3.88), and the amount of supervision received (80.1%, mean = 3.81). On the other hand, they were not very happy with promotion opportunity (mean = 3.09) and procedures for performance evaluation (mean = 3.33). The teaching load (mean = 3.37) and class size (mean = 3.42) are also of concern to the respondents.

Table 4: Teachers - Job Satisfaction

<i>Item</i>	<i>Percent with 4 or more</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Mean</i>
1. Safety of school environment	87.4	4.00	3.93
2. Support from family	85.8	4.00	4.03
3. General work conditions	84.1	4.00	3.88
4. Intellectual challenge	82.3	4.00	3.88
5. Amount of supervision received	80.1	4.00	3.81
6. Opportunities for further studies	77.7	4.00	3.89
7. Recognition and support from administrators	76.7	4.00	3.83
8. Availability of resources and	76.4	4.00	3.70
9. materials/equipment for			
10. teaching			
11. Class size	65.4	4.00	3.42
12. The public's perception towards the teaching	65.1	4.00	3.55
13. Profession			
14. Teaching load	55.2	4.00	3.37
15. Procedures for performance evaluation	53.6	4.00	3.33
16. Benefits	52.6	4.00	3.33
17. Opportunities for promotion	41.6	3.00	3.09
Overall job satisfaction	85.3	4.00	3.92
Overall score	-	3.67	3.61
Reliability coefficient = 0.805			

3.3 Relationships between Variables

In seeking answer to the third research question, i.e, the relationships between professionalisation, and job satisfaction of teachers, an analysis on the said variables was conducted and summarized as shown in Table 5.



Table 5: Correlation Analysis between Job Satisfaction and Other Variables

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Spearman's Rank Coefficient</i>
Involvement	0.231**
Authority	0.261**
Problem	0.031
Job environment	0.523***

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

As can be seen in Table 5, job satisfaction has a positive moderate correlation with job environment. The other variables, the correlations are either positive but weak correlations or negative but weak correlations or no correlations at all. It should be noted that the relationships depicted and discussed between the variables do not imply causality but indicate association. There is no correlation between satisfaction and their opinion on problems faced by the school.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

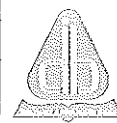
Overall, the findings of the present study have provided answers to the research questions. The findings suggest that teachers have low to moderate levels of professionalisation, and moderate level of job satisfaction. In terms of correlations of variables, job satisfaction appears to have a strong positive correlation with job environment.

The results of this study are important for a number of reasons. Firstly, they provide empirical corroboration of the theoretical perspectives (NCES, 1997) on teacher professionalisation. Secondly, they may be of interest and assistance to management of schools, policy-makers, or the Ministry of Education who need to manage the academic staff to improve on the level of professionalisation and to understand the differences in their work behaviour and work attitudes. Thirdly, by examining the results in details may provide some insights to management in terms of how management may approach teachers' job satisfaction and to improve the level of teacher professionalisation in Malaysia.

Teacher professionalisation is still at a low level. This is supported by the low to moderate level of professionalisation as perceived by the teachers. More efforts on the part of the relevant authorities are needed.

The study's findings contribute to a growing body of research that illustrates the need to take a multidimensional approach to the study of teacher job satisfaction. Management needs to determine how their schools can inspire and nurture teacher satisfaction. Management no longer need to bribe, cajole, or humour people into being satisfied and more loyal to the school. Rather they must try to craft management strategies around the most valuable assets of the schools, i.e., the human resources. Understanding the behaviour of individuals, groups, and organization is of utmost importance for any organization to gain the most from its human resources.

It is important to interpret this study's results with some caution for several reasons. First, the relationships estimated between the variables do not imply causality but indicate associations. Second, although a number of the relationships are of statistical significance, none of the relationships can be described as strong. The objective of the analysis was not to provide a comprehensive explanation of job satisfaction. There are many factors affecting teachers' job satisfaction, of which only a sample is measured in this study. Third, job satisfaction is only one of the many important outcomes in school. The factors that were related to job satisfaction may not be related to other equally important teacher and school outcomes. Likewise, a lack of relationship between other characteristics of professionalisation, such as job involvement, perceived problems, job environment, and organizational support, does not mean that these kinds of professionalisation are not



important, or that they are inconsequential for teachers or schools. Although job satisfaction may be only one of the many important outcomes in school, it is widely recognized as an important aspect of teacher behaviour, quality, and performance and is one that is expected to be directly affected by teacher professionalisation.

More studies on this area need to be conducted. When done on a regular basis, this will provide the schools and relevant authorities with feedback about teacher professionalisation and job satisfaction, and schools from the teachers' perspectives. Finally, a possible limitation of the study is some bias resulting from the use of a common instrument (questionnaire). However, this is unlikely to be a serious problem because Spector (1987) has shown that method bias is generally not a problem with well-developed instruments. The high alpha levels are evidence of the soundness of the instruments in the present study. Nevertheless, future research should combine the use of questionnaire method with observation, and field experimentation. In addition, longitudinal investigation could be conducted to determine whether variable effects change over time.

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that future studies on teacher professionalisation and job satisfaction, should also include the study on relationship between parents perception and role with the schooling community roles and how these factors may relate in helping to determine better future teacher professionalisation and job satisfaction over school performance.

Teaching professionalisation is the final area that will need improvement in order to increase the teachers' satisfaction and reduce attrition rate in Malaysia. Teacher professionalisation is the movement to upgrade the status, timing, and working conditions of teachers. Professionalisation refers to the degree to which particular employees and their workplaces exhibit the attributes, characteristics, and the criteria identified with professions and professionals. Teacher professionalisation must originate with the educational leaders and it must be demonstrated and valued at all levels of the educational bureaucracy. Teachers must be reimbursed for continuing education tuition fees and fees, given decision-making power, and paid on a level commensurate to their education and value to the society as a whole. Policy-makers and the educational administration at the state and federal levels must work diligently to increase the levels of satisfaction of the teachers, and to reduce the number of teachers that are leaving the profession.

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