Psychosocial working conditions vs. self-efficacy and job satisfaction in the teaching profession

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Abstract. Teaching is one of the most challenging, yet valuable types of profession. Teachers are responsible for training and educating the next generations. Their authority is increasingly being undermined, and research on this professional group focuses mainly on the phenomenon of occupational burnout, highlighting an excess of duties and functioning in a highly stress-inducing environment. The present article deals with the problem of psychosocial working conditions and a sense of efficacy and professional satisfaction of teachers in the changing market realities. The theoretical part concerns selected aspects of the professional career of teachers, presenting its determinants, specificity and difficulties experienced by this group. The author’s own research is devoted to defining the relationship between selected elements of the working environment of teachers (organizational climate of schools and support from superiors and co-workers) and their sense of self-efficacy and job satisfaction. The research group included 100 teachers working in three types of schools, i.e. a primary school, a lower secondary school and a general secondary school. In order to verify the hypotheses, the following research methods were used: Psychosocial Working Conditions: Support Scale by Widerszal-Bazyl and Cieślak; Kolba's Organizational Climate Questionnaire, translated by Kożusznik and Jezierski; General Self-Efficacy Scale by Schwarzer, Jerusalem and Juczyński; and Job Description Questionnaire by Neuberger and Allerbeck, adapted by Zalewska. The analysis of empirical material shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between psychosocial working conditions (i.e. support and organizational climate of schools) and job satisfaction of teachers. Moreover, support from superiors and co-workers positively correlated with teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. Only a type of school constitutes an important factor in relation to the analyzed data and affects the perceived level of job satisfaction. On the basis of the results obtained, it can be concluded that it is mainly subjective assessment of the support received and positive attitude to the atmosphere at school that correlate positively with both the perceived professional efficacy and job satisfaction. Additional analyzes show that the higher the number and frequency of rewards and the less work experience and responsibility, the greater the satisfaction of teachers.

Keywords: teacher, psychosocial working conditions, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, support and the organizational climate of schools
**Introduction**

Teaching belongs to one of the most challenging, yet valuable kinds of profession. Teachers take great responsibility for training and educating the future generations. In most cases, however, their efforts and dedication are not appreciated. Teachers are not sufficiently respected and their authority is diminishing every school year. Research on this professional group focuses mainly on the phenomenon of occupational burnout and functioning in a highly stress-inducing environment. Therefore, the research has been devoted to two dimensions of the working environment of teachers, i.e. the organizational climate that prevails in schools and the support received in the workplace. The aim of the study was to present the neglected issue of the role of individual psychosocial working conditions in shaping a sense of the efficacy of teachers and their job satisfaction.

Teachers being role models for students should have specific qualities or skills, such as the ability to show understanding, sincerity, trustworthiness and authority. It is important that they are empathetic and treat each student with respect. Teachers should also develop an awareness of a certain gap in the student-teacher relationship, avoid favouritism, thus ensuring the application of dialogue at work (Łukasik et al., 2013). A feature typical of good teachers should be their passion, favouring greater involvement of students and forming a kind of essence of teaching (Day, 2008). Therefore, while currently thinking about good teachers, attention is paid both on moral virtues and psychological characteristics of educators, such as integrity, courage, care, objectivity, common sense, wealth of personality, dutifulness, the creative act, a sense of responsibility, kindness to people, readiness to give advice and assistance, as well as the ability to establish contacts with others or active participation in solving social problems related to teaching and education (Kuźma, 2005). A contemporary and modern teacher is also a person who has professional competence, of which the most important are: factual competence (being familiar with teaching content and its complete mastery), psycho-pedagogical (extensive knowledge which enables preliminary identification, teaching as well as educational activities), diagnostic (the ability to get to know students and their environment), didactic and methodical (possession of knowledge about the nature, principles and methods of implementing the educational process), communication, media and technical competence (the ability to organize workshop), competence in planning and developing teaching activities, as well as skills for the control and assessment of students, programs and textbooks. Self-education also proves the true vocation to be a teacher (Strykowski et al., 2007). The more skilful the teacher, the greater the impact on students and the contribution to their effective development.

While defining psychosocial working conditions, it should be stressed that they relate to the methods and effects of work organization. It is analyzing the relationship between the quality of work and the quality of individuals' lives that is one of the main objectives of psychological research (Bańka, 2007). Focusing on the environment of teaching, it is worthy noticing that it applies to both the nature of the tasks performed and employee relations.

One of the most important elements of psychosocial working conditions of teachers is social support (from colleagues, family and friends). The social network that surrounds every human being constitutes a guarantee that an individual has the ability to operate effectively in the workplace, make all kinds of relationships and derive satisfaction (Poprawa, 2001). In addition, there are several basic types of
support, i.e. emotional (positive attitude towards others, showing care and understanding), informative (enables better understanding of the situation thanks to collected information), instrumental (readiness to give complete operational instructions and coping with problems), substantive (conscious material assistance), spiritual (assistance provided in situations of existential crisis, often dominated by distress and anxiety). Each person individually selects a predominant type of support as the most effective for oneself (Sęk, 2003).

In the teaching profession, the most important are support from the managers of educational institutions, care of good relations in the teaching staff, support for the educators beginning work and using other sources of support, such as various types of courses, training and inspection aimed at introducing adjustments in curricula (Pyżalski, 2010). The conditions for success and job satisfaction of teachers are provided not only by the necessary knowledge and techniques to transmit it, but also a good atmosphere at work. The appropriate organizational climate brings benefits to all persons associated with school – students, parents, teachers and other employees (Petlák, 2007).

Albert Bandura (2007) defines self-efficacy as the belief that one can motivate their own behaviour in such a way as to achieve the set goals. The author emphasized that it is a subjective feeling of an individual that forces to behave in a certain way under the given circumstances. In the teaching profession, a sense of efficacy is identified with an expectation of the ability to influence changes in the students in all planes simultaneously, i.e. intellectual, emotional and social (Gaś, 2002). The sense of self-efficacy consists of several factors which determine the evaluation of one’s own resourcefulness in solving the problems encountered. Among these factors, Bandura (2007) includes the emotional state of an individual, observing the behaviour of others, verbal persuasion, external circumstances and successes in the performance of tasks. The determinants of the sense of efficacy in the teaching profession can be traced to three main areas, namely:

- variables related to the teacher – a higher sense of efficacy is typical for women; people of better teaching and educational preparation and richer professional experience;
- characteristics associated with the students – a sense of teachers’ efficacy is getting higher as the students become more pro-social and active, their preparation for the lesson is better, as well as when the educators work with teenagers, and not with younger children;
- institutional aspects in the teaching profession – a sense of efficacy of educators is favoured by the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes on the quality of school activities, and when they experience a friendly and safe climate in the institution (Gaś, 2002).

Educational Research Institute presented the report on self-efficacy of teachers, highlighting its impact on school education. It is identified with the skills of work organization, better adaptation to changes, the challenges of everyday life as well as the modernization and effective implementation of modern technologies in the teaching profession. A strong sense of efficacy not only protects educators against job burnout, but also fosters a positive assessment of the organizational climate in an educational institution. The charges of teachers who are characterized by a higher sense of efficacy, not only perceive them as more engaged and helpful, but they achieve better results, they are more ambitious and gain new knowledge more willingly and rapidly (Piwowarski & Krawczyk, 2009). Therefore, a high sense of
teachers’ efficacy affects their relationship with the students and can contribute to a more satisfactory cooperation.

If employees feel satisfied with their tasks, they work more efficiently and effectively. In addition, they more eagerly engage in the life of an organization and ensure its development and stability. Definitions of the concept of job satisfaction highlight the positive or negative feelings of employees and their attitudes to work, company and individual co-workers (Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Research shows that a high level of satisfaction improves the quality of the tasks in two main areas, namely:

- in the sphere of thinking and decision-making – satisfaction from the professional activities manifests itself in an innovative approach to a problem, making fast and accurate decisions, and unusual ideas to overcome difficulties;
- contacts with other people – satisfied employees have much more positive interpersonal relationships (Czerw, 2010).

A separate classification of features that determine the perceived job satisfaction takes into account some of the main elements, i.e. age, race, sex, cognitive abilities, professional experience, ability to use skills, as well as the appropriateness of work and its status. The research results relating to the personality traits of employees indicate that more satisfied employees have better adaptation and greater emotional stability (Schultz & Schultz, 2002). Therefore, teachers characterized by high job satisfaction feel better among the teaching staff, can communicate with the students and their parents more easily, as well as mitigate emerging conflicts more effectively.

Methodology of the research

Research tools

The tool giving possibility to measure the sense of support that an individual believes to receive from the workplace is Support Scale, a part of Psychosocial Working Conditions questionnaire by Cieślak and Widerszal-Bazyl (2000).

Kolba’s Organizational Climate Questionnaire, translated by Kożusznik and Jezierski (1984) is a tool which allows to measure the organizational climate in which the respondents work. The climate prevailing in an organization is determined on the basis of several dimensions, i.e.: conformism, rewards, responsibility, requirements, managing, organizing, and the sense of warmth and support.

General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) has also been used in the research. Thanks to it, it was possible to take measurements of individuals’ beliefs concerning not only the level of self-efficacy, but also coping with difficult situations and obstacles. Polish authors of this scale are Juczyński, Schwarzer and Jerusalem (Juczyński, 2009). Additionally, Job Description Questionnaire by Neuberger and Allerbeck in Polish adaptation of Zalewska has been applied. This method enables to measure job satisfaction and it is also used to measure overall satisfaction with life. The questionnaire allows to examine job satisfaction, taking into account seven components, such as: colleagues, development, superior, job content, remuneration, working conditions, organization and management. This tool also includes two questions that concern the level of satisfaction with working time and assessment of the possibility of job loss.
The research sample

The study involved n=100 female teachers working in three types of schools, i.e. a primary school, a lower secondary school and a general secondary school in the town of Dąbrowa Górnicza in the Silesia region, Poland. As many as half of the teachers surveyed work in primary schools (50% of all respondents), while the remainder educates young people in a lower secondary school and a general secondary school, i.e. 25% respectively. Most of the study group (72%) were women with a degree of a certified teacher. Only 16% of people participating in the study, who correctly filled questionnaires were appointed teachers. The smallest group was the contract teachers – 12%. An important aspect of job included in the questionnaire was the amount of so-called full-time and overtime hours worked in each workweek. The subjects mostly worked in 18-hour working time. This group accounted for 64% of all respondents. The remaining part of the teachers indicated that they work more hours per week than specified in their contracts. In addition, in as many as 36 cases (36%), teachers did not have any working hours beyond those classified as the basic working time in the Teacher’s Charter. It is worth stressing that a total of 44 people worked 1, 2 or 4 hours overtime per week (44%). The research group is characterized by diversified work experience with a predominance of people who have 16 to 30 years’ work experience (62% of all respondents). Only 4% of the respondents have worked in education for more than 31 years. The 48 educators (48%) declared “to be fairly certain” of their employment, and 30 teachers (30%) were of the opinion that “they are unlikely to be dismissed”. There were up to 13 women (13%) uncertain about their future or absolutely certain that they would be dismissed. Only 9 educators (9%) did not fear for their job and fully believed that they would continue working in the current place.

Summing up the analysis of the research sample composed of teachers, it is clear that these were only women, half of whom taught in primary schools. The vast majority of them were certified teachers. On this basis, a conclusion can be drawn that the answers to the test questions were given by people with great work experience and considerable educational achievements. It should also be noted that the amount of additional hours slightly differentiate teachers. This is due to the fact that more than half of the respondents have basic working time guaranteed by the Teacher’s Charter. Moreover, among the respondents were people of objectively long seniority and a sense of professional instability.

The results of the research

By making descriptive statistics of the entire group, special attention has been paid to measures of central tendency: the mean, median and fashion for each of the research tools, i.e. Organizational Climate Questionnaire (OCQ), Job Description Questionnaire (JDQ), General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) and Support Scale – Psychosocial Working Conditions (PWC). In the case of satisfaction measured with the use of Job Description Questionnaire the modal value is 46 and is greater than the median, which is 44.5 being in turn greater than the mean of 42.7. These data can indicate a certain tendency to receive higher results by respondents. A similar relationship was obtained for other variables. The analysis involved the variance and
standard deviation as measures of the dispersion of the results around a central point of distribution. They pointed out that the values of GSES variables (SD: 4.01, SD²: 16.08), PWC variables (SD: 10.86, SD²: 117.94) and JDQ variables (SD: 8.29, SD² 68.72) are most heavily concentrated around the mean values. The greatest dispersion of results around the mean values can be seen in subscales of OCQ and in global result of OCQ. For all the variables, as much as 50% of the teachers surveyed have above average values, as evidenced by the higher value of the variance compared to the average sample in each case. In order to describe the shape of the distribution, attention has also been drawn to the skewness and kurtosis. After analyzing these measures of symmetry, it may be concluded that the skewness of the variables measured is slightly negative: -0.2 for the GSES; -0.23 for PWC; -0.58 for JDQ; for OCQ the most negative value -1.23 had “sense of warmth and support” variable. This proves negative skew, which is the tendency to obtain higher results, while low values of kurtosis prove the scatter around the mean value. Among the PWC and JDQ variables, there are cases not centred around the mean for which kurtosis was -0.07 and -0.02 respectively.

Overall results demonstrate convergence to a normal distribution. Therefore, parametric tests of significance have been used for further analysis, namely the correlation coefficients of Pearson and Spearman, a one-way ANOVA and multiple regression.

The analysis of empirical data shows that there is a statistically significant (r=0.324, p=0.001)² relationship between the result of the PWC and the result of the GSES. This means that the higher the support, the stronger the sense of self-efficacy in the teaching profession. It is worth emphasizing that the organizational climate of a school (OCQ) and its various dimensions do not correlate in a statistically significant way (r=0.062, p=0.541) with a sense of self-efficacy (GSES) in the teaching profession. The study also shows a relationship between the result of PWC and the result of JDQ (r=0.654, p<0.01), and between the result of OCQ and the result of JDQ (r=0.249, p=0.013). This means that job satisfaction in the teaching profession (JDQ) increases with increasing support. Moreover, the stronger psychosocial working conditions (climate in this case), the higher job satisfaction (JDQ). Regarding the relationship between the various dimensions of the organizational climate of a school (conformism, rewards, responsibility, managing, requirements, organizing, the sense of warmth and support) and job satisfaction among teachers, it is the strongest in the case of two dimensions of the organizational climate – management and rewards. Statistically significant (r=0.250, p=0.012), the higher the results on the requirements scale, the slightly higher the results on the satisfaction scale of JDQ. The situation is similar in the case of the scale of rewards (r=0.341, p=0.001), the scale of the sense of warmth and support (r=0.259, p=0.009) and the scale of managing (r=0.363, p<0.01).

In order to assess the impact of socio-demographic variables on self-efficacy and job satisfaction of teachers, a one-way ANOVA analysis has been made. The results testify to the fact that teachers working in three types of schools do not differ in terms of GSES self-efficacy. A similar situation is when it comes to promotion in rank. This variable does not affect the differences in GSES self-efficacy among teachers. Three types of schools vary in the level of JDQ job satisfaction. Teachers working in

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¹ SD – standard deviation, SD² – variance
² r – correlation coefficient, p – level of significance
primary schools has significantly higher levels of JDQ job satisfaction ($\bar{x} = 42.08$) than educators teaching in lower secondary schools ($\bar{x} = 38.80$). In addition, teachers working in a lower secondary school have lower results in JDQ than teachers who teach in a general secondary school ($\bar{x} = 44.96$). The promotion in rank does not differentiate significantly their level of JDQ job satisfaction. In order to verify the assumed relationship of variables: self-efficacy (GSES) and job satisfaction (JDQ) and the variables: work experience, number of basic and overtime working hours, Spearman correlation coefficients were calculated. The results for the GSES variable are as follows: work experience $\rho = 0.139$, $p = 0.479^4$, number of basic working hours $\rho = 0.079$, $p = 0.914$, overtime hours $\rho = 0.120$, $p = 0.279$. The results for the JDQ variable are: work experience $\rho = 0.186$, $p = 0.073$, number of basic working hours $\rho = 0.017$, $p = 0.712$, overtime hours $\rho = 0.060$, $p = 0.157$. The calculated values testify to the fact that there is no significant correlation with both GSES variable and JDQ variable.

A number of further analyses have also been carried out to obtain more data which would explain in more detail the issues in question. For the GSES (self-efficacy) and JDQ (job satisfaction) dependent variables, multiple regression analysis has been made. The analysis of the redundancy of independent GSES and JDQ variables showed that all variables have a tolerance of $>0.1$. Therefore, a regression model has been adopted, the analysis of which provides information on which of the characteristics most strongly determines the values of the dependent variables. Variability of self-efficacy (GSES) explains only the result of the “support” variable (PWC). The increase in the PWC result ($b^* = 0.324$, $t(88) = 3.394$, $p < 0.01$) affects the growth of the GSES. In the case of JDQ job satisfaction variable, statistically significant $F(3.96) = 9.8647$, $p < 0.0001$, the higher the results on the scale of rewards OCQ 4. ($b^* = 0.594$) and the lower the results on the scale of responsibility OCQ 2. ($b^* = -0.325$) and the shorter the work experience in years ($b^* = -0.219$), the higher the results on the scale of satisfaction. On this basis, it can be concluded that job satisfaction among teachers will increase with decreasing responsibility, shorter period of work experience and the increase in the bonuses received and praise. The strongest impact on the JDQ variable has the OCQ 4. (rewards), since its value of the beta $b^*$ is the highest.

Using Ward’s method of cluster analysis as well as 1-r Pearson measure, similar characteristics of the teachers surveyed has been grouped. The results of PWC (“support” variable) and JDQ (“job satisfaction” variable) are most similar among teachers. They are in turn closely linked with the GSES (“self-efficacy” variable). Quite different group is the climate OCQ 2. -7. and the overall result of OCQ (“the organizational climate of a school” variable). There is an interesting correlation of OCQ 1. (conformism) with basic working hours, work experience and overtime hours.

Figure 1. Agglomeration diagram of cluster analysis (source: own research)

Tree diagram / Ward’s method / 1-r Pearson

Work experience (in years)
Overtime working hours

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3 $\bar{x}$ – mean
4 $r$ – rank correlation coefficient, $p$ – level of significance
5 $b^*$ – model coefficient, $t$ – a statistic indicating the significance of a given factor, $p$ – significance level for $t$
Discussion

The role of psychosocial working conditions seems to be crucial for the job satisfaction perceived among teachers. Positive correlations with satisfaction were observed both in terms of support and the organizational climate. In addition, the research has shown that psychosocial conditions are also relevant in relation to professional self-efficacy. A dominant influence on the sense of self-efficacy has only the support received from relatives or superiors. The role of assessing the climate in schools is insignificant. On the basis of the research findings, it is concluded that teachers are more satisfied with implementation of their duties, if they think their actions are right and just, and when their work is properly rewarded. Not only praises and all sorts of bonuses contribute to the growth of professional satisfaction, but also friendly and warm relations with colleagues and a sense of control over their actions and decisions about personal plans have a great influence.

With respect to the perceived self-efficacy, the research have not shown significant correlations in terms of socio-demographic variables. Surprisingly, the analysis of the empirical material showed no positive correlation between self-efficacy and the sense of work experience. In the case of the assessed work satisfaction, socio-demographic variables proved to be significant. It is a type of school that have a statistically significant impact on the efficacy of teachers. Educators assessing their job satisfaction, unconsciously divided themselves into groups associated with a type of school in which they work. This may be due to the fact that the biggest educational problems are faced while working with young people from lower secondary schools. Teachers working in primary schools had significantly the highest level of job satisfaction, educators from a lower secondary school were in the second place and teachers teaching in a general secondary school were characterized by the lowest level of job satisfaction.
Further analysis showed that job satisfaction of teachers increases together with greater amount of bonuses, the decrease in responsibility and shorter period of work experience. First, teachers who highly evaluated support they receive, also highly defined their job satisfaction and, subsequently, a sense of efficacy. Secondly, the organizational climate of a school manifests the most visibly through such dimensions as organizing and a sense of warmth and support, and the least visibly depends on conformity. Thirdly, among the socio-demographic variables, overtime hours manifested the most strongly in this area.

To sum up, it is worth mentioning that highly probable is a relationship between self-efficacy and job satisfaction perceived by the individuals. It can be linked to both the private and professional sphere of every human being. To verify this supposition, it is necessary to conduct a series of subsequent experiments. Additionally, further works should focus on selecting the determinants of the sense of professional efficacy, as well as those that can play an important role in raising the level of job satisfaction, felt not only in the teaching profession.

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