

Thematic Article

The Impact of The Prestige of Institution Type on Professional Satisfaction

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Abstract

Teachers are doing their job despite notoriously low pay, and the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that keep them in the profession are the subject of national and international research. In the present study, we investigate the subjective sense of professional success of teachers in secondary vocational education in the light of the type of institution in which they teach. Their questionnaire survey was carried out online (N=166) during the pandemic period, having been adapted to the situation. We wanted to assess factors of their sense of professional success, which are partly related to the classical role of a teacher, such as knowledge transfer, education of or cooperation with other actors in education, but also to hypothetical factors such as self-training and creativity. Our hypothesis that the prestige of the institution type and the professional satisfaction of the teacher are related was not confirmed, but the identified factors played a different role to varying degrees.

Keywords: type of institution, professional satisfaction, ranking, vocational education

Introduction

Act LXXX of 2019 on Vocational Education has fundamentally reorganised the secondary vocational education system. The types of training and the training institutions have been renamed (innumerable times in the last decade), practical education and dual training have been strengthened, the system of scholarships and student loans have been broadened, and the training structure has become more transparent.

In Hungary, the following types of institutions offer the opportunity to complete secondary education after finishing primary school:

- secondary grammar school (gimnázium), which is a form of education primarily designed to facilitate progression to higher education, typically 4 years of study leading to a baccalaureate (ISCED 3A)
- secondary vocational grammar school (szakgimnázium), which prepares students for advancement to higher education, typically of 5 years' duration, culminating in a sectoral baccalaureate (ISCED 3A)
- secondary technical school (technikum), typically of 5 years' duration, leading to a baccalaureate and a vocational certificate (ISCED 3A)
- secondary vocational school (szakképző iskola), 3 years of vocational training with reduced general knowledge content, culminating in a vocational certificate (ISCED 3C)
- secondary vocational training school (szakiskola), which is a 3-year vocational course of reduced general knowledge, culminating in a vocational certificate, typically a pathway for pupils with special educational needs (ISCED 2C)

Of the types of programmes listed, the secondary technical school and vocational schools are covered by the Vocational Training Act, which are types of vocational training programmes, while the others are covered by the National Public Education Act.

In this ever-changing system, the role of secondary vocational education teachers has been of particular importance as they continue to develop their professional competencies in line with current educational policy

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requirements. Due to the new Vocational Education Act, their former status as civil servants has been modified from teachers to instructors, and the public wage grid and the teacher career model have been repealed. The regulatory environment has also changed the qualifications required for certain jobs. Teacher qualifications, which were required, have lost their importance in vocational education.

In this paper, we introduce the results of a pilot study focusing on the subjective perception of the professional success of vocational education teachers. The main question of our research regards the extent to which the prestige of the institution type in which they teach plays a role in the teachers' perception of professional success and whether there are differences between the factors influencing the teachers' perception of success in different types of programmes (Vályogos, 2023).

Factors protecting teachers against career drop-out

Teachers, as key players in the education sector, have been the subject of much national and international research. The inherent contradiction of the teaching profession, which is a socially very important activity with a notoriously low salary, makes this duality an interesting research topic. Research tends to approach teachers from two angles, firstly, what extrinsic and intrinsic factors play a role in their career choice and, secondly, what factors can act as protective factors against career drop-out. As a career choice motive, we can mention that this profession offers intellectual challenges and developmental opportunities in working with children and young people (Paksi et al., 2015a; Chrappán, 2010, 2013; Ashiedu-Scott-Ladd, 2012; Barmby, 2006; Kocsis, 2002; Manuel-Hughes, 2006), while employment stability is also an important factor (Kilinc-Watt-Richardson, 2012; OECD, 2009).

Low wages, which in Hungary are low compared to average graduate wages (Chrappán, 2010; Polónyi, 2004; Thiering, 1996; Petróczi et al., 1999), and the reduction of teachers' professional autonomy (Nagy, 1998), as well as the stress and overload associated with the job (Thiering, 1996), are the main reasons for leaving the profession. However, Chrappán's (2010) results suggested that if the career choice decision was made knowing the expected negatives, these risk factors were less likely to have an impact.

It is relevant to our topic to focus specifically on the particular situation of professional educators within the teacher society. It is of paramount importance to secondary vocational education that their up-to-date knowledge, which can be put to good use in the labour market, be well invested in the education sector. However, it is precisely because of this knowledge, which can be put to good use outside the education sector and which offers them opportunities for significantly higher income than standard teaching, that they differ somewhat from the average teacher. Lower wages and limited career opportunities in the education sector have been cited as reasons that professional educators turn away from teaching (Bacsá-Bán, 2019; Paksi et al., 2015a, 2015b). The difficulty of filling professional educator positions in secondary VET is not a domestic phenomenon but is a problem in many OECD countries, such as England and Sweden (OECD, 2021). Because the teaching profession is ageing, and the shortage of teachers and trainers in VET is also present particularly in the UK and the US (OECD, 2021). To address this problem, recruitment methods to meet the demand for VET teachers should be used to effectively attract teachers from industry with marketable skills (OECD, 2010).

This raises the question of what factors determine the extent to which teachers feel successful in their profession and to what extent that feeling of success actually reaches. Teachers' perceptions of professional success are influenced by both individual and institutional factors. An important individual factor is their professional self-image, which is strongly influenced by their sense of achievement. One indicator of this is student academic success, meaning that teachers in vocational education without a baccalaureate are the least satisfied (Hercz, 2005). The proportion of children in a given type of education programme not supported by their families in improving their academic performance can also be a determinant (Cedeno et al., 2016).

Though individual factors can play a big part in teacher drop-out, there are institutional factors that must also be considered. Institutional factors include working conditions (Toropova-Myrberg-Johansson, 2020). Johnson and colleagues (2012) have shown that teacher satisfaction is determined by interpersonal factors such as trust, successful collaboration with colleagues and leaders, by receiving support and respect from them, these immaterial criteria being desired to a greater extent than by material esteem. Hercz (2005) mentions the type of institution as an institutional determinant, on which we base our research hypothesis.

The aim and hypotheses of the research

The types of secondary education in Hungary can be ranked according to their popularity and prestige (Csákó, 1998; Fehérvári & Liskó, 1998), with secondary grammar schools, secondary technical schools and secondary vocational grammar schools at the top, followed by secondary vocational schools and finally, secondary vocational training schools². Our research aims to investigate the gender distribution of teachers in each type of school, their professional characteristics (qualifications and teaching experience) and their perception of professional success. Based on the literature, our research has generated four hypotheses, which are as follows:

H1: We hypothesise that vocational training types with higher prestige (secondary technical schools and secondary vocational grammar schools) will have a higher proportion of men and of those with a vocational certificate and at least ten years of teaching experience than vocational training types with lower prestige (vocational schools) because, the proportion of women is inversely related to the prestige of the occupation (Polónyi&Timár 2001).

H2: We postulate that those who also teach in an institution type of lower status than the highest prestige secondary technical school have a different gender distribution and less practical experience than those who teach only in this type of institution, and among them there is a lower proportion with a vocational certificate.

H3: We suppose that the professional satisfaction of teachers in types of institutions with higher prestige is significantly higher than that of those teaching in types with lower prestige.

H4: We presume that different factors play a significant role in the perception of professional success of those working in different types of institutions (Vályogos, 2023).

Research design and Methods

In the 2020/2021 school year, our online questionnaire survey targeted teachers of vocational training centres in the North Great Plain region. However, due to the online forums, trainers from other regions also completed the questionnaire (N=166). 92% of the responses came from vocational training centres in the North Great Plain region, furthermore, an additional 8% of the respondents came from other regions of the country due to online submissions. Due to the constraints of the pandemic, convenience sampling was used, so the sample is not representative. According to the Central Statistical Office (2020), the feminisation of the teaching profession is also evident in the field of vocational education: in the 2020/21 school year, 73% of teachers in vocational schools, 62% of teachers in secondary technical school and secondary vocational grammar schools and 51% of teachers in vocational schools were women. 56% of those who completed the questionnaire were female. This is not a trend, but it is slightly below the proportion of female teachers in secondary technical school and secondary vocational grammar schools, according to the CSO data mentioned above (Vályogos, 2022, 2023).

The questions of our questionnaire were based on the measurement instruments of previous research (Paksi et al., 2015a, 2015b, 2015c; Fűzi, 2012; Chrappán, 2010, 2011). After questions exploring the demographic data and education of the respondent, the relevant items of the questionnaire were related to professional success, which was measured using a five-point Likert scale. In our research, we aimed to measure subjective success, where teachers could indicate their perceived success in the following areas: overall sense of success, success in two key elements of teachers' teaching and learning (knowledge transfer and socialisation/value formation), two areas of teachers' collaborative success (success in working with parents and with colleagues), the success of the teacher's professional innovativeness, creativity/problem-solving and self-learning (Vályogos, 2022, 2023).

In the survey, teachers were asked to indicate the type of curriculum they teach. The majority of respondents teach in more than one type of programme at the same time, the reason being that within the same VET institution, there are often different levels of training in the same sector (ISCED 3A and ISCED 3C). There is a tendency that, while a few decades ago there was an invisible line between VET teachers, who were prestigious in their respective institutions for teaching exclusively at higher levels, there is now an expectation that modern knowledge is transferred to students in all types of programmes, thus raising the quality of education. However, the very fact that most teachers teach in several types of curricula at the same time makes it difficult for us to assess the prestige of these types of curricula. It is therefore necessary to examine our data in two different

² The prestige ranking of secondary technical school and secondary vocational grammar schools was based on the level of the job that can be obtained with the vocational qualification, which is a middle management qualification (Eurydice, 2021).

groupings. Our aim was to show the differences between the two types of ISCED 3A programmes “secondary vocational grammar school” and “secondary technical school”. Therefore, in the first grouping, we divided the respondents into 3 subgroups. The first subgroup was composed of those who teach in a “secondary technical school” and those who teach in other types of programmes besides secondary technical school. The second subgroup was composed of those who teach in “secondary vocational grammar school” or simultaneously in another type of programme, and the third subgroup was composed of those who teach in “secondary vocational school” (Vályogos, 2022, 2023) (Table 1).

Table 1. I. grouping

Program type	N	%
secondary technical school+	125	75.3
secondary vocational grammar school+	13	7.8
secondary vocational school	28	16.9

(Source: Vályogos, 2022, 2023)

Then, in order to investigate whether there is a difference in the training and practice time between teachers who teach only in the secondary technical school and teachers who teach in other types of programmes in parallel with the secondary technical school, we created our second grouping. In this second grouping, we divided the respondents into four subgroups. The first subgroup consisted of teachers who teach only and exclusively in the “technical school”, the second subgroup consisted of teachers who teach in another type of programme in addition to the “secondary technical school”, the third subgroup consisted of teachers who teach in a “secondary vocational grammar school” and in another type of programme in parallel, and the fourth subgroup consisted of teachers who teach exclusively in a “secondary vocational school” (Table 2).

Table 2. II. grouping

Program type	N	%
secondary technical school	79	47.6
secondary technical school+	46	27.7
secondary vocational grammar school+	13	7.8
secondary vocational school	28	16.9

(Source: Vályogos, 2022, 2023)

Results

We used cross-tabulation analysis and Chi-square statistics to test our first hypothesis that the types of training with higher prestige have a higher proportion of men, those with a vocational qualification and those with more teaching experience. The data from grouping I show that the proportion of women is the lowest in the secondary technical schools, and the correlation between the types of institutions and the gender of teachers shows a trend-level relationship according to the results of the Chi-square test ($\chi^2(2) = 5.11$, $0.05 < p < 0.1$). This result aligns with previous research findings that the proportion of women is inversely correlated with the profession’s prestige, because, the proportion of women is inversely related to the prestige of the occupation (Polónyi & Timár, 2001). Contrary to our first hypothesis, the proportion of those with a vocational qualification is lowest in the secondary technical schools, and the connection is also at the trend level in this case ($\chi^2(2) = 5.56$, $0.05 < p < 0.1$). However, no significant difference was found between the types of institutions in the proportion of those who have been teaching for at least ten years ($\chi^2(2) = 1.43$, $p > 0.1$). Regarding participation in the disadvantage compensation programme, our results showed that the proportion of participants was the lowest among those working in a secondary technical school. Still, the association was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(2) = 4.03$, $p > 0.1$) (Vályogos, 2023).

The proportion of men, those with specialisation and more than ten years of professional experience, is higher among those teaching in the highest prestigious institutions than those teaching in other lower prestigious institutions. In assessing this hypothesis, we analysed the data from Grouping II, which yielded different results compared to the previous, broader technician cluster. In this grouping, gender ratios by institution type do not

show significant differences between teachers ($\chi^2(3) = 5.11, p > 0.1$). It can also be said that the proportion of those working exclusively in secondary technical schools is significantly higher for those without a specialisation compared to other types of institutions ($\chi^2(3) = 9.81, p < 0.05$), and that the proportion of those working in secondary technical schools is significantly lower for those in disadvantage compensation programmes compared to other types of institutions ($\chi^2(3) = 11.55, p < 0.05$). The results also indicated that the proportion of staff who had been teaching for at least ten years did not differ significantly between types of institutions ($\chi^2(3) = 1.79, p > 0.1$). Our second hypothesis was not confirmed. (Vályogos, 2023).

In our third hypothesis, we supposed that the job satisfaction of those working in types of institutions with higher prestige would be significantly higher than that of those working in institutions with lower prestige. To test this hypothesis, we used types of institutions as independent variables (in two groupings) and “How successful do you feel in your job?” as a dependent variable. The responses to the Likert scale³ were used as the dependent variable. The employees’ responses in each type of institution were compared using a one-way ANOVA test. However, our results showed no significant differences in the perception of success of employees working in different types of institutions using either grouping I ($F(2) = 0.03, p > 0.1$) or grouping II ($F(3) = 0.48, p > 0.1$) (Vályogos, 2023).

In our fourth hypothesis, we posited that different factors determine the sense of professional success of teachers of different types of institutions. The hypothesis was evaluated using linear regression analysis (variable selection method ‘Enter’), where we separately analysed “How successful do you feel in your job?” on a Likert scale. Our results confirmed our hypothesis, as the regression analyses conducted according to Group I showed that different factors determine the sense of success of teachers in each type of institution. For the secondary technical school+ group, i.e. the group of teachers who teach in other programme types in addition to the secondary technical school, the sense of success is significantly influenced in a positive direction by the success of knowledge transfer, the success of professional innovation and the success of collaboration with colleagues. In the secondary vocational grammar school+ group, i.e. those teaching in other types besides the secondary vocational grammar school type, the role of all factors was found to be significant, with knowledge transfer, professional innovation and creativity, as well as cooperation with colleagues, being negatively related to the overall sense of success. In contrast, the success of values formation, collaboration with parents and self-education were positively associated with the overall sense of success. It can also be said that, in this group, those with a vocational qualification have a lower sense of overall success. In comparison, those in a disadvantaged compensation programme and men have a higher sense of overall success (Table 3) (Vályogos, 2023).

Table 3. Factors influencing subjective professional sense of success

	Secondary technical school +				Secondary vocational grammar school +			
	B	Std. Error	β	p	B	Std. Error	β	p
knowledge transfer	0.248	0.083	0.264	0.003**	-1.833	< 0.001	-2.302	< 0.001
professional innovation	0.208	0.076	0.228	0.007**	-1.042	< 0.001	-1.721	< 0.001
collaboration with colleagues	0.165	0.078	0.148	0.036*	-1.75	< 0.001	-1.535	< 0.001
value formation	0.095	0.08	0.105	0.239	2.125	< 0.001	3.174	< 0.001
collaboration with parents	0.106	0.055	0.163	0.057	1.25	< 0.001	2.051	< 0.001

Note: significant factors were marked in bold, source: Vályogos, 2023, Table 3.

Conclusion

We examined our results in two types of program classifications. In the case of the broader program types (Table 1.), our findings were consistent with previous literature, which suggests that the proportion of women is inversely related to the prestige of the occupation (Polónyi & Timár, 2001). However, our results contradicted the previous findings of Hercz (2005), as among teachers exclusively teaching in the highest prestige technical school program, the proportion of those with specialized qualifications was the lowest. Additionally, we did not find significant differences in the proportion of teachers with at least 10 years of teaching experience or in

³ 1 = not at all, 5 = absolutely

the subjective sense of success among teachers based on the prestige of the program types they teach in, suggesting that teachers' sense of professional success is not dependent on the prestige of the program type (Vályogos, 2023).

As a limitation, it should be noted that our sample is not representative, so increasing the sample size is necessary.

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