EPISTEMOLOGICAL BENCHMARKS OF THE TEACHER'S ROLE

Hila BALALIS, *Valentina BODRUG-LUNGU*

Moldova State University

This article emphasizes the issue of epistemological benchmarks of the teacher's role, thus presenting different approaches to the subject. Teachers play several roles in school but also at community/society level. Over the years, the role of the teacher has undergone significant changes, being adapted to social requirements. Beyond the progress in the field of education, the continuous discussions on the role and competences of the contemporary teacher, it is certain that the efficiency of the teaching and learning processes depend, to a large extent, on the activity of the teachers. At the same time, the results of our study indicate the importance of determinant such as "job satisfaction".

Keywords: teacher, role, effective teaching, job satisfaction.

REPERE EPISTEMOLOGICE ALE ROLULUI PROFESORULUI

În acest articol sunt elucidate repere epistemologice cu referire la rolul profesorului, fiind prezentate diferite abordări ale subiectului. Profesorii îndeplinesc mai multe roluri nu doar în școală, dar și la nivel de comunitate/ societate. De-a lungul anilor, rolul profesorului a suferit transformări semnificative, fiind adaptat la cerințele sociale. Dincolo de progresele în domeniul educației, de discuțiile continue privind rolul și competențele profesorului contemporan, este cert faptul că eficiența proceselor de predare și învățare depinde în mare măsură și de profesori. Totodată, rezultatele studiului realizat de noi indică importanța determinantei „satisfacție la locul de muncă".

Cuvinte-cheie: profesor, rol, predare eficientă, satisfacție la locul de muncă.

Introduction

Philosophers and educational figures have discussed the nature of education in schools and the definition of teacher's roles since the inception of the public-school system in the United States in the beginning of the 19th century. The matter of the teacher's tasks and expected duties is contextualised by the educational goals of the school system and the societal image of the optimal 'adult'. Cuban (2003), for instance, demonstrated that the concept of a "good school" cannot be uniform and shared by all, but is rather the result of the educational ideologies that construct the image of the ideal adult, and subsequently, the school's goals and criteria for measuring success [1].

Today, prompted by massive revolutions in knowledge, information technology, and public demand for better learning, schools are undergoing significant restructuring. At the same time, teachers are playing greater roles and given bigger commitments in the profession. However, effective teaching and learning processes require well-trained teachers, positive learning environments and high-quality learning materials [2].

Rethinking the Role of the Teacher

Some scholars assume that the principal, foremost task of the teacher, which distinguishes their profession from others, is the pedagogical-didactic mission. As part of their service to society and the younger generation, the teacher is charged with introducing students to a wide range of knowledge that is perceived as significant to the development of the student as an individual and a member of society, by the society in which the teacher lives and works. The teacher is therefore required to be well versed in the curriculum, to create lesson plans, and to assess students' achievements. Good-quality teachers are the key to an effective school and a successful education system [3].

Based on several resources [4,5], the following main teacher's roles can be identified:

1. Resource person. Once the teacher has given the information to the student, he or she will often have to guide the student on how to explore the information, how to link with other resources.
2. Mentor. Students look up to teachers and may pattern their own behaviour and work ethic to match the instructor.
3. Learner. A teacher should be open to new knowledge/new challenge with a new task that will help them grow into a better professional.
4. Classroom Manager. A teacher should have abilities to make efficient use of lesson time, to coordinate classroom resources and space, to create friendly classroom environment, and contribute to manage students' behaviour according to the rules.

Teacher's roles are focused on effective teaching. Schools currently use a number of frameworks that describe the core elements of effective teaching. Teacher's beliefs and professional behaviour can be mentioned as important elements [6]. A teachers' adopted practices and tools, the purposes they aim to achieve, their theories about the learning process and their conceptual models of the nature and role of teaching in the learning process all seem to be important. At the same time, teachers' participation in professional development, supporting/mentoring colleagues, liaising and communicating with parents should be considered when assessing the teaching quality.

On the other hand, teacher's beliefs and professional behaviour are strongly determined by the motivation and professional satisfaction of teachers, their professional environment.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as a conglomerate of feelings and beliefs employees have towards their profession [7]. Employees' level of satisfaction can range from extreme satisfaction to extreme dissatisfaction. Beyond the attitudes that employees develop towards the work itself, there are some additional aspects that influence satisfaction such as the attitudes towards the type of work employees perform, their colleagues, superiors, subordinates, and more.

The four factors that may influence job satisfaction [8]:
1. *Personality*: An individual's personality is an influential factor in terms of the feelings and thoughts one has towards their work, and whether one has a positive or negative general approach to their job.
2. *Values*: Values influence satisfaction as they reflect a person's beliefs and influence their behaviour. There is a distinction between intrinsic values (in a professional context – the approach to the nature of the work itself) and extrinsic values (outside of a professional context – the outcome and rewards related to the work). Those who have strong intrinsic values are usually more satisfied with a job that is interesting and meaningful, and conversely, those with strong extrinsic values are usually satisfied with a well-compensated job.
3. *Working conditions*: An important aspect of job satisfaction is related to the tasks a person performs (interesting or boring), the people with which they work, and their working relationships, along with the physical and organizational conditions in which they work, in terms of their rights and obligations.
4. *Social influence*: The influence individuals or groups have on the disposition and behaviour of the individual. Colleagues have a highly significant effect on job satisfaction.

According to Steers and Black [9], there are five parameters by which we define job satisfaction:
1. The work itself – To what extent are the tasks performed by the employee interesting, and do they provide learning opportunities and cultivate a sense of accountability.
2. Wages – Fair wages and forms of compensation.
3. Promotional opportunities – Are there opportunities for advancement in the workplace – a component of the organization's investment in the employee.
4. Supervisors – The degree to which supervisors are considerate and concerned with the needs of their employees.
5. Colleagues – The level of support and care among colleagues.

In the context of significant transformation of/within the education system, teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by several factors such salary and economic statute, professional development opportunities, school management and organizational culture, work-life balance. At the same time, teachers also face challenges within the teaching profession itself which range from students' discipline, parents' involvement, school facilities, access to ICT, teachers' competences, including digital competency and teacher's own economic security.

Hence, if teachers have a high level of job satisfaction, it can be assured that a more enjoyable, energetic and effective school environment can be developed which indirectly will give positive effects on the students' academic achievement [10].

It is worth mentioning some theories in the field as a theoretical and methodological framework to understand the main factors that influence job satisfaction.
- *The Equity Theory* [11]: This theory deals with the interrelationship between employee input (investment in the work), e.g., effort, prior experience, training, knowledge, etc., and employee output (earnings as a result of work), e.g., wages, status, friends, and more. According to this theory, the employee will be satisfied when their compensation corresponds with their investment, i.e., if the employee believes their

compensation reflects the proportion between their work-related input and output. A state of imbalance (lack or excess) between employee compensation and investment will cause the employee to express dissatisfaction.

- *Herzberg's Motivator - Hygiene Theory* [12]: According to this theory, every employee has two types of needs and demands – Motivational needs – these refer to the work itself and the challenges it poses, such as interest in the work, responsibility, and independence, all of which relate to needs that influence motivation among employees. Hygienic needs – these refer to the physical and psychological conditions in the work environment such as cleanliness, comfortable location, management, salary, job permanence, and a sense of security at the workplace, all of which satisfy hygienic needs. It is possible for the employee to be simultaneously satisfied and unsatisfied, if their motivational needs are met while the hygienic conditions are inadequate. According to Herzberg, satisfaction and dissatisfaction are not opposites, but two separate dimensions: one ranges from satisfaction to dissatisfaction and the other ranges from dissatisfaction to lack of dissatisfaction. According to this theory, hygienic factors related to the work environment affect dissatisfaction. Motivational factors related to the work itself affect satisfaction. As noted above, these are two distinct spectrums: one is a spectrum of intrinsic factors (satisfaction) and the other is a spectrum of extrinsic factors (dissatisfaction). Often, individuals attribute success (satisfaction) to themselves and failure to external factors.

- Other relevant theory is the *Maslow's hierarchy of needs*. The theory usually is presented as a pyramid with the physiological needs at the bottom and self-actualization is located at the peak. According to Maslow, the fulfilment of the need at the lower level of the hierarchy will motivate individuals to work towards the fulfilment of the needs at the next level up the hierarchy.

- *The Facet Model of Job Satisfaction* [13]: This model applies to the components of different work-related factors, and the investigation of employee satisfaction from every angle. According to this theory, job satisfaction is a sum of all related parameters. This model is highly significant as it allows executives to understand every facet of the job's impact on the employees. In this model, each parameter has a certain weight, depending on the role and the employee. In relation with teacher's role, the different aspects include: Utilization of ability – to what extent can the teacher apply their range of skills and abilities in the role. Achievement – the teacher's sense of accomplishment in their work. Activity – how busy and involved is the teacher with their work. Promotion – opportunities for advancement. Institution (school) policy – does the policy suit the teacher. Compensation – the payment the teacher receives for their work. Creativity – to what extent does the teacher generate new ideas. Moral values – how do these compare to the moral values of the teacher. Recognition – is the teacher recognized for their work. Responsibility – the degree of responsibility the teacher has in terms of decision-making and taking action. Security – to what degree does the workplace provide stability and security. Social service – teacher's contribution to society. Social status – how the teacher's role is perceived by the community. Superior's human relations – the manager/director's interpersonal conduct. Superior's technical abilities – the superior's technical skills in relationship to their work. Diversity – how diverse is the role and what it entails. Working conditions – physical conditions, location, comfort, and so on. Finally, teachers rate each of these components, and the final sum in relationship to the components' significance to the teacher's role indicates overall job satisfaction.

Conclusions

- Today's dynamic and ever-changing environment has led to the wide-spread awareness that human resources (teachers) should be well-trained and encouraged to develop positive attitudes towards the organization for which they are employed, which affects their performance and inclination to go beyond what is officially required of them.

- A teacher who is satisfied with his or her profession can positively influence the students, colleagues, parents and perform better its roles. As such, teacher who possess high level of satisfaction in his/her work can be a source of motivation to the students to succeed in their studies.

- Job satisfaction is an important determinant of effective teaching process. In relation with the education system, job satisfaction can be considered as the main indicator of the teacher's level of commitment and productivity in his or her profession.

- In addition, all mentioned determinants can be explored based on comparison between the public and private secondary school in terms of job satisfaction.

References:

1. CUBAN, L. *Why Is It So Hard to Get Good Schools?* New York: Teacher College Press, 2003. 112 p.
2. TIBBITTS, F. *Curriculum development and review for democratic citizenship and human rights education*. UNESCO, Council of Europe, OSCE, Organization of American States. 2015
https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000234386
3. COE, R., ALOISI, C., HIGGINS, S. et al. *What makes great teaching?* Review of the underpinning research, 2014. Available at: https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/What-Makes-Great-Teaching-REPORT.pdf
4. *Roles for a Teacher Leader*. Tips for teachers and classroom resources. [updated december 9], 2020.
https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/5-roles-for-a-teacher-leader/
5. *Ibidem*.
6. *Ibidem*.
7. GEORGE, J.M., JONES, G.R. *Understanding and Managing Organizational Behavior*. Prentice Hall, 2002. 728 p.
8. *Ibidem*.
9. STEERS, R.M., BLACK, J.S. *Organizational Behavior*. New York: Harper Collins College Publisher, 1994. 423 p.
10. ARIFFIN, A., HASHIM, H., SUEB, R. *Identifying Teachers' Job Satisfaction*. Conference: International Language and Education Conference, 2013.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282062708_Identifying_Teachers'_Job_Satisfaction
11. ABAYOMI, O.A., ANIEBIET, E.S., OBIAJULU, N.A.U. Influence of Perceived Co-Worker Involvement and Supervisory Support on Job Satisfaction. In: *IFE Psychologia*, 2011, 19, 2, p.28-42.
12. HERZBERG, F. *Work and the Nature of Man*. Cleveland, OH: World Publishers, 1966. 320 p.
13. WU, C.H., CHEN, L.H., TSAI, Y.M. Investigating Importance Weighting of Satisfaction Scores from a Formative Model with Partial Least Squares Analysis. In: *Social Indicators Research*, 2009, 90, 3, p.351-363.

Data about authors:
Hila BALALIS, Israel, PhD student, Moldova State University.
Valentina BODRUG-LUNGU, PhD, Associate Professor, Moldova State University.
E-mail: valbodrug@mail.ru