

## WORK SATISFACTION AND TEACHING STYLE WITH ROMANIAN TEACHERS

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**Abstract:** *The study has investigated 191 Romanian teachers, pertaining to all educational levels. Nearly a third of the participants present a low level of job satisfaction, the most satisfied being the ones who work in kindergartens. Total satisfaction is higher for the teachers who hold the first degree and in the case of beginner, except for the satisfaction generated by the 'relationship with students' which is higher in the case of first degree holders. These teachers use the methodical teaching styles, displaying a high-level of socio-affectivity, behaviour which converges with the pattern of professional development.*

**Key words:** *job satisfaction, teaching style, teaching career stages.*

### 1. Introduction

In the postmodern age the teaching profession is characterised by the isolation of the professional act, conservative individualism, the balkanisation of groups competing for power, reduced trust and support between teachers and their colleagues [12], [16], [25]. This predominantly negative image is promoted despite the fact that the need of education is constantly growing and its importance is repeatedly highlighted [9]. In Romania, the detrimental image of the professions in the educational system has increased in recent years, the ineffectiveness of most of the reforms introduced in the 90's being stated more and more frequently as a main reason.

Five percent of the Romanian emigrants

are professors and the effects of this phenomenon are the migration of young towards the external education and the decrease of consideration for the national education [13]. The decrease of the vacancy rate by the activity of the national economy ranged from 1.43% in 2008 to 0.17% in 2010 [3]. However, it does not express open interest towards this sector of economy, free will or real desire towards the teaching profession but rather a last resort option for the qualified personnel who have been fired from other professions. In spite of this negative background the press present case studies of some passionate teachers who obtain excellent results with their students and carry on working in schools, but the scientific basis for these claims remains unclear.

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## 2. Correlates of satisfaction in the teaching profession

The teaching profession is performed in uncertain conditions; it does not involve cognitive capacities exclusively but rather entails affective, strategic, ethical and motivational variables [26]. Job satisfaction is a multidimensional concept, covering areas such as type of work, interpersonal relations (especially the interaction with the students), working conditions, salary, promotion opportunities and administrative tasks [7], [18]. Satisfaction is defined as pleasure, contentment, and sense of fulfilment of conditions or desires one has for a job based on individual needs or expectations [33]. Consequently, there wouldn't be any direct connection between the job characteristics and satisfaction, the latter depending rather on particularities of the ones involved in the process [25].

Job satisfaction, as well as motivation are key components in the teacher's activity and influence his/her ability to teach, both being essential components in satisfying his/her needs and improving his/her performance [30]. Numerous researches, either older or more recent, have emphasized the relationship between job satisfaction and individual variables such as gender, length of service and personal values. Considering the gender variable, the results are divergent: (1) some researchers state that female teachers and male teachers are equally satisfied with their job [32]; (2) others have concluded that female teachers declare themselves more satisfied with their job as compared to male teachers, irrespective of the criteria [25]; (3) studies conducted with Chinese teachers show that female job satisfaction is greater than male job satisfaction for the following dimensions: type of work and interpersonal relations. On the other hand,

male teachers are more satisfied with working conditions, salary, promotion opportunities and administrative tasks [18]. The age variable also generates contradictory results, probably based on the particular conditions in which the research subjects conduct their activities [10], [18], [28].

The absence of unanimous results is also due to the influence of the marital status and of the experience on job satisfaction [2], [32]. Other studies add that the qualifications held, the experience in the field and the place of residence may influence job satisfaction, mentioning nonetheless that age, experience or the number of children are not independent variables [11].

The teachers' job satisfaction is associated with higher autonomy at work, support from peers, and adequacy of resources, relationships with students, parents and colleagues, proposed work engagement and teacher efficacy [17]. The positive predictors of job satisfaction are found in years of teaching experience, salary, opportunities for promotion, professional challenge, working conditions, emotional intelligence and organizational commitment [10]. Other aspects which can increase satisfaction can be professional interest and career commitment [19]. Other researcher demonstrated that the feeling of belonging and the emotional exhaustion were predictive of job satisfaction, while emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction were predictive of motivation to leave the teaching profession [39].

It has been emphasized that teachers' satisfaction is influenced by factors such as interpersonal relations, self-fulfilment, social recognition, opportunities for training and development whereas dissatisfaction is triggered by the low salary, difficulties in being promoted, the poor physical conditions of work, the poor quality of students, and the high

level of stress that the job entails [18], [35]. In order of the importance given in relation to job satisfaction, the first place is held by the relationship with students, followed by the relationship with and the appreciation of parents [36]. Some studies show that the satisfaction levels (17%) differ from one school to another so satisfaction would also depend on the school climate [37]. There are also studies explaining that the teachers report more often peer interaction during teaching activities than interactions with partners with a higher hierarchical position, as a consequence of the relatively flat organizational characteristics of educational organisations [20].

Apart from being perceived as a little valued profession among other social categories, the teaching profession has become a difficult inside job [29]. The 2013 Euridyce Report [9] shows that in Romania the length of service needed to reach the maximum salary at all International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels is the highest in Europe, though the increase is about 90%, being unattractive for beginners. In recent years, a decrease in job satisfaction is registered for the teachers in the USA as well, among the most evoked factors being the cutting down of school budgets, the increase of the number of students in a classroom and the lack of involvement of parents in their children's educational process [46].

Low job satisfaction is due to factors such as the feeling of being useless, disillusioned, the vulnerability and negative perceptions upon one's own value, the monotony of daily activities, the students' lack of motivation and the lack of help and support from the part of colleagues and the school administration [16], [44]. Stress, depression and burnout are significant and negative predictors of job satisfaction and intentions to quit [4],

[8], [10], [17], [42]. Recent studies show that in the past decades burnout was specific to the teaching profession but present studies focus less on burnout and more on the demoralization, frustration, discouragement and lack of hope, which are stated more frequently as dissatisfaction factors in recent decades [34].

The teaching styles are defined as 'the personal manner of interacting with the students and managing the learners' group, as a pattern of relatively constant behaviours through which the teaching activities are conducted [21], reflect a dominant teaching style but exclude a pure, absolute one. This study focus on a Romanian model which relies on two dimensions: 'improviser versus methodical', and 'rational versus emotional'. By combining the two axes, the following teaching styles are obtained: emotional-improviser, emotional-methodical, rational-improviser and rational-methodical [15]. Without neglecting the difficulty of building a complete and at the same time synthetical image on such a complex reality as the teaching styles, we add a new dimension to the two axes, which focuses on the emotional involvement of the teacher in the pedagogic relationship, synthesized in high positive socio-affection vs. low negative socio-affection [43].

One of the characteristics of the effective teacher is the capacity to alternate teaching behaviours and strategies, as there are no ideal styles for all learning contexts, but rather punctual styles fit for a particular situation. Regardless of the teaching styles model used in various researches, correlations have been found between the teaching styles and the students' learning performance [24], [15], their aggressive or victimization behaviour, as well as an evolution of the teaching styles across a teacher's professional life [14], [40].

### 3. Stages of the didactic career in Romania

In any educational system, the teacher, considered as a professional undergoing continuous development, must follow successive training and evaluation stages. In the Romanian system, the teaching career assumes three professional promotion phases: definitive degree (after a two year teaching experience), second degree (after six years) and first degree (after 10 years) which is the highest professional degree possible [45].

In order to work as a teacher one must obtain the definitive degree. Except for the definitive degree, the other stages of the teaching career are not compulsory; this type of professional development is an individual decision of the teacher. The teachers are motivated to make efforts for training and self-training in order to pass the exams, because professional development and school status are associated with the promotion into the next level, a better salary and enrichment of knowledge in the field.

There are two career patterns for the Romanian teachers: teachers who have a certificate issued by a pedagogical training institute and have exercised the teaching profession from the beginning and teachers who have considered this option later, after having worked in the industry field for various periods of time. The latter tendency has become more obvious, even specific to the times after 1999, when the Romanian industry has registered a massive regression and has engaged in waves of redundancy amongst highly qualified personnel. A large number of those left unemployed considered the teaching profession, enrolling in the teacher training programmes and trying to integrate in the system.

### 4. Methodology

The current article presents a correlational study and aims to found the relations between the results of the teachers' external evaluation in the course of the three professional promotion phases, teaching satisfaction, teaching styles and values. Criteria such as gender, length in service, career stage, and school cycle shall be used in the analyses.

#### 4.1. Hypothesis

H1. We suppose that there are differences as far as job satisfaction is concerned, depending on the stage of the career, gender, school cycle, length in service and age.

H2. We assume that the teacher's job satisfaction is associated with the results obtained in professional evaluations.

H3. We suppose that there is professional satisfaction variation according to the teaching styles used.

H4. There are significant differences as far as the level of satisfaction is concerned between the participants who worked only in the educational system and the ones who previously worked in other activity sectors.

#### 4.2. Participants

The participants in the study were 191 teachers (89% females and 11% males) working in institutions from urban areas or rural areas. The average age of the participants is of 37.65 years and their length in service varies between 2 and 38 years. As far as the school cycle is concerned, the percentage is relatively balanced: secondary school and high-school-38.2%, primary school- 32.9% and kindergarten-28.8%. Regarding the career stage, most participants hold the definitive degree (39.6%), the second degree is held by 34.7% and the first

degree by 25.5%. 79% of the participants worked only in the educational system, whereas 21% left their previous jobs for becoming teachers.

### 4.3. Instruments

The following instruments were used in order to verify the above mentioned hypotheses:

The teaching satisfaction questionnaire –TsaQ [24], comprising 19 items and measuring the following dimensions: the relations with the students, relations with school colleagues and leaders, the work context, the type of work and the social recognition of one's profession.

The teaching styles questionnaire-TSQ [24] comprises eight styles: methodical vs. improviser, rational vs. emotional, permissive vs. directive, positive vs. negative from the socio-affective point of view. The instrument describes 24 teaching situations associated with two contrasting answering possibilities, to which the participants distribute 5 points if the behaviour described by the item suits their style. The teaching satisfaction questionnaire is structured on a five-point Likert scale (1=extremely dissatisfied or strong disagreement; 5= extremely satisfied or strong agreement).

The socio-demographic data obtained referred to age, gender, years in practice, and the area in which the school is placed. We also used the marks obtained at the exams for the definitive attestation in education, second teaching degree and first teaching degree. The study was conducted between the years 2009-2011.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Psychometric qualities of the used instruments

The TSaQ initially has a good internal

consistency ( $\alpha = .72$ ) which grows up to .84 after the deletion of the item regarding the satisfaction generated by the relations with the parents of the students, item which was not included in the factorial analysis. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficients for each factor were .78, .77, .65, .58, and .56 respectively. The exploratory factorial analysis, conducted on the 19 items based on the Varimax method has highlighted a five-factor structure, corresponding to the five dimensions of the questionnaire (Table 1).

The KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) method has revealed a satisfactory degree of the sample as far as heterogeneity is concerned (KMO = .80). Bartlett's sphericity test is statistically significant to a point of  $p < .001$ , which confirms the fact that the use of factorial analysis is proper, because the items of the scale correlate among themselves. According to the Varimax rotation, the five factors cover 58.76% of the variance together in the following manner: the first factor covers 14.49% of the variance, the second factor covers 12.91% the third one 11.57%, the fourth one 10.67% and the fifth one 9.09% of the total variance (table 1). The satisfaction factors comprise 4 items each, except for the last one which only comprises 3 items. They were named as follows: Factor 1 (F1) 'relation with the students', Factor 2 (F2) 'Relations with colleagues and school management', Factor 3 (F3) 'Working conditions in the school unit', Factor 4 (F4) 'Nature of work' and Factor 5 (F5) 'Social Recognition of the profession'.

For the Teaching Styles Questionnaire-TSQ [24] the first six scales, methodical, improviser, rational, emotional, permissive, directive comprise 7 items while the last two scales, namely positive socio-affectivity and negative socio-affectivity comprise 5 items, the alpha Cronbach coefficients ranging between .39 and .65.

*The Factorial Structure of the Teaching Satisfaction Questionnaire*

Table 1

Items (short sentences)	Factorial Saturations					Communalities
	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	
Recognition from the students	.829					.733
The students' educational results	.758					.650
Interactions with the students inside the school	.741					.640
Appreciation on the part of parents	.679					.574
Appreciation on the part of the school principal		.773			.316	.715
Relation with superiors		.723				.661
Appreciation of colleagues		.718				.691
Relations with the colleagues		.639			-.326	.663
Being overwhelmed by extra- curricular activities			.681			.573
Help given by colleagues in view of professional development			.677			.599
Facilities offered by the Institution			.590			.538
Task allocation in school			.524			.394
Schedule				.747		.600
Professional development opportunities offered by the school where he/she works				.612		.430
The interesting and stimulating characteristics of the job				.563		.453
The job in itself	.417			.525		.519
The social status of the profession					.672	.610
The salary					.666	.528
The workload			.524		.553	.593
Eigenvalues	2.75	2.45	2.20	2.02	1.72	
% of Variance	14.49	12.91	11.57	10.67	9.09	
Alfa Cronbach	.78	.77	.65	.58	.56	

## 5.2. Analysis of results

As compared to the general satisfaction score (total satisfaction) of the entire sample, 27.1% of the participants declared a low level of satisfaction, 42.5% a medium level of satisfaction and 30.4% a high level of satisfaction. The teachers that only hold the definitive degree are more satisfied than the ones that hold the second degree, and the teachers that hold

the first degree are more satisfied than those that hold the second degree. All differences are significant to a point of .01 (table 2). We note that job satisfaction as a total score does not increase linearly along the teaching career, but rather in a U-shape. Likewise, pre-school teachers tend to be more satisfied than those in the junior-high and high-school cycles, ( $F = 2.18, p < .05$ ).

Similarly, beginner teachers seem to be

more satisfied than both the ones who have medium length in service and the experienced ones; the latter ones are more satisfied than the ones with medium length in service, the results being distributed on a U-shaped curve, but in this latter case the results are not statistically significant. In the current study there are no satisfaction differences based on the area where the school is placed (urban or rural) or on the gender variable.

The analysis of the significance of average differences, detailed on the five dimensions of satisfaction, based on the career stage criteria and school cycle where the participants teach indicates the presence of statistically relevant significations concerning 'the relationship with the students' ( $F = 7.6, p < .01$ ), 'the nature of work' ( $F = 8.5, p < .01$ ), 'the social

recognition of the profession' ( $F = 6.7, p < .01$ ) and the total satisfaction ( $F = 7.4, p < .01$ ). The 'relationship with colleagues' factor does not yield statistically significant differences related to the stage of one's career. The collected data confirm the first hypothesis, as shown in table 2, but the difference sign changes according to the analysis criteria and the dimensions of satisfaction (table 2).

According to the length in service criteria, the Games-Howell test reveals statistically significant differences only for the 'relationship with students' dimension, the experienced teachers registering the highest level of satisfaction as compared to the beginner or medium-length in service teachers (Games-Howell = 2.66,  $p < .05$ , respectively Games-Howell = 2.46,  $p < .05$ ).

Table 2

*One way ANOVA for the differences in professional satisfaction according to career stage and school cycle*

Dimensions of satisfaction	Criteria	Mean	St. dev.	df	F	Sig.	Eta <sup>2</sup>
F1 Relationship with students	Definitive degree	16.81	2.71	2,177	7.672	.001	.080
	Second teaching degree	16.43	2.30				
	First teaching degree	18.03	1.72				
	Pre-school cycle	18.01	2.67				
F3 Nature of work	Primary school cycle	17.33	2.52	2,184	9.090	.001	.090
	Junior-high and high-school cycle	16.28	1.94				
	Definitive attestation	15.01	2.40				
F5 Social recognition of the profession	Second teaching degree	13.04	2.28	2,178	8.533	.001	.089
	First teaching degree	13.87	2.93				
	Definitive attestation	9.85	2.17				
	Second teaching degree	8.40	1.89				
First teaching degree	9.01	2.25					

Dimensions of satisfaction	Criteria	Mean	St. dev.	df	F	Sig.	Eta <sup>2</sup>
Total satisfaction	Definitive attestation	80.11	8.06				
	Second teaching degree	74.02	7.89	2,175	7.403	.001	.079
	First teaching degree	80.14	11.04				
	Pre-school cycle	81.57	11.62				
	Primary school cycle	78.31	8.65	2,178	4.019	.020	.043
	Junior-high and high-school cycle	76.77	7.64				

The verification of the second hypothesis leads to the following conclusions: according to the results obtained in the promotion exams, there is a slight but nonetheless statistically significant difference for F5 - social recognition of the profession ( $r = .21$ ,  $p = .02$ ), only for the definitive degree career stage. For the teachers who obtained the second or the first degree, there are no statistically significant associations for any of the satisfaction dimensions.

These data could be the result of the very close level of grading in the exams

for the first degree, where the average of given grades is of 9.76. As far as the supposition that age is connected to a growth in work satisfaction is concerned, it is confirmed only for the dimension 'relationship with students' ( $r = .24$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

Only the methodical teaching style and the high socio-affective style are directly associated with the level of satisfaction on high levels of significance in the case of four factors, the exception being factor number 5- 'the social recognition of the profession' (Table 3).

Table 3  
*Correlational coefficients between the dimensions of teaching styles and satisfaction factors*

Teaching Style	Methodical	Improviser	Emotional	High socio-affective level
Relationship with students	.198**	-.196**	-	.309**
Relationship with colleagues	.247**	-.245**	-	-
Context of work	-	-	-	.170*
Type of work	.208**	-.206**	-	-
Social recognition of the profession	-	-	-.158*	-
Total satisfaction	.212**	-.210**		.213**

The improviser teaching style, which is opposed to the methodical style, is indirectly associated to the same factors. There are no significant correlations

between the scores of the satisfaction factors and the rational, directive, permissive and low socio-affective teaching styles.



According to the third hypothesis, we assumed that there are differences between the teaching styles used by the teachers who present a high level of satisfaction as opposed to the ones that present low levels of satisfaction.

By analysing table 4 we come to the conclusion that only some of the teaching

styles (methodical vs. improviser and high socio-affectivity vs. low socio-affectivity) make a difference between the highly satisfied teachers and those who are little satisfied with their work, the effect being medium (methodical vs. improviser), respectively weak (socio-affectivity).

Table 4

*The difference of signification of averages between the teaching styles according to the job satisfaction criteria*

	Teaching Style	Methodical	Improviser	High socio-affectivity style	Low socio-affectivity style
satisfaction	average	79.17	73.43	79.13	76.76
	Ab. St	8.12	9.06	8.80	8.30
	N	93	71	88	75
	t		2.05		1.76
	p		.042		.080
	d Cohen		0.67		0.27

In order to verify the fourth hypothesis, we have analysed the answers given by the people who worked in other economic sectors prior to being teachers. The higher their length in service in other sectors of economy as compared to their length in service in the teaching profession is, the lower grades they obtain in the definitive degree exam ( $r = -.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ), they are less satisfied with the relationship with their students ( $r = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and they perceive fewer professional development opportunities ( $r = -.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## 6. Discussion and conclusions

The study aimed at identifying the job satisfaction of Romanian teachers who found themselves in different stages of their career, taught in different school cycles, and were of different ages and had different professional performances. 72.9% of the participants are very satisfied and medium satisfied by their profession, the percentage being quite close to the one obtained in Belgium, where 67.9%

declared themselves to be satisfied with their jobs [22]. The items concerning the satisfaction as a result of ‘the interactions with students’, ‘the appreciation of colleagues’ and ‘the appreciation of the school principal’ obtain the highest median and the highest mode (5). The lowest median and the lowest mode (3) are obtained by the items considering the satisfaction produced by the salary and the social perception of the profession. A Romanian study dating from 2011, conducted in the urban area shows that 68.9% of the teachers are medium to highly satisfied with their job [27], a percentage resulting from the students’ low interest in the learning process, as explained by the authors. The same research shows that for the whole sample, the relationship with one’s colleagues generates the highest satisfaction degree, a fact which is not confirmed by our research. The differences between the data obtained in 2011 and the ones we have obtained could be explained, as shown in recent studies, by the variables concerning

the school climate or area of residence, as researches from the world literature demonstrate [37].

In line with the first hypothesis, satisfaction differs according to one's career stage, the scores being distributed on a U-shaped curve; the teachers found at the extremes of the curve, beginners and first degree holders respectively, are more satisfied with their job as compared to the second degree holders. The data are similar to those obtained by Clark [6], related to the satisfaction levels and the age of the teachers. The 'age' and 'stage of career' variables are not independent. Similar results reported that teachers in the first year of teaching were moderately-satisfied to highly-satisfied with their experiences [1].

Unlike other researches which report a higher level of professional satisfaction in the case of women as compared to men [1], [5], [22], the current research does not register gender differences.

Concerning the total satisfaction, the highest scores are registered with the teachers who hold a definitive degree and are predominantly younger, thus confirming other studies. The explanations state as reasons the possible professional routine of the older teachers, their difficulty in dealing with the numerous changes in national politics [18] or the initial enthusiasm of the young, who have not experienced a large number of jobs. An exception is the 'relationship with the students' factor, where experienced teachers declare themselves significantly more satisfied as compared to those with medium and little length in service.

The analysis based on the school cycle where the participants work reveals the decrease of total satisfaction from the pre-school cycle to the primary and secondary school ones. The results converge with other studies which found that the group of primary school teachers declare themselves to be more satisfied than the ones who

work in the superior cycles, but the sample of these studies did not include pre-school teachers [11], [16], [22].

For the 'relationship with students' dimension, higher average scores are obtained by the subgroup of teachers who hold the first degree, which is the highest professional status in the teaching career in Romania. For the 'nature of work' and 'social recognition of the profession' dimensions, higher scores are obtained by the teachers who only hold the definitive degree.

The teachers who are most satisfied with their work tend to be first degree holders, predominantly use the methodical teaching styles, based on a high level of socio-affectivity; they do not improvise and get involved in the relationships with students. The teachers with lower levels of professional satisfaction do not get affectively involved in the teaching-learning process and improvise more. We suppose that the training for the promotion of the highest teaching degree triggers behavioural changes, resulting in a higher level of emotional involvement and lack of directedness towards the students. We can assume that the assimilation of psychopedagogical knowledge and its practical use requires a lot of time, the change being similar to an identity one. The difficulty of engaging in such a change is even greater considering the fact that psychopedagogical knowledge pertains to the socio-humanities field, entailing the teacher's social identity, expressed in the relationships with students, parents or colleagues.

This study has not identified an association between job satisfaction and the results obtained in professional evaluations, except for the dimension 'social recognition of the profession' for the beginner teachers. The teachers who previously worked in other economic sectors get lower grades in the definitive

exam, depending on the length in service they had in other sectors before becoming teachers. They are less satisfied with the relationship with their students and perceive less professional development opportunities.

If we were to portray the Romanian teacher who is satisfied with his/her job, we conclude that he/she can be either male or female, most of the time holds the first teaching degree, is satisfied with the relationships with his/her students, has a methodical teaching style, gets affectively involved in his professional activity and most often teaches at the pre-school cycle. The values for which he/she stands are 'honest', 'responsible' and 'family security'.

The possibilities to generalise the conclusions of this study are reduced, the number of male participants barely reaching the limit of statistical correctness: 21 male participants as compared to 170 female participants. The percentage reflects the accentuated femininity in the Romanian educational system. We could not exclude the possibility of some errors connected to the self-evaluation of one's teaching style and of the preferences for certain values, as well as the existence of some imperfections in the psychological instruments used. The possibility of biased results due to the exaggeration of the importance that the teachers give to their students or due to the unconscious involvement of values has already been highlighted in some studies [16], [41]. In favour of the validity of the current research, we state the fact that its results converge with the ones of other similar researches in the field. These data, as well as some psychometric characteristics validate the adequacy of the Teaching Satisfaction Questionnaire, which was designed to this aim for the Romanian population.

Our research subscribes to the context of national and European concerns regarding the decrease in job satisfaction in the case of teachers, of their demoralisation and decision to quit the educational system, in line with a paradoxically simultaneous growth of the demand for quality education [9]. Effective professional development and work satisfaction could enhance teachers' skills which could improve students' learning [23].

An in-depth knowledge of some characteristics of the personnel working in the Romanian educational system could constitute the premises of some reparatory actions.

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