

Theses of Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

**THE PROFESSIONAL LIFE QUALITY OF
HUNGARIAN TEACHERS IN HARGHITA
COUNTY**

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The Professional Life Quality of Hungarian Teachers in Harghita County

Aims of the Dissertation and Circumscription of Topic

The subject of my dissertation is the professional life quality of Hungarian teachers in Harghita district.

That scientific material that appears in the field of education, approaches this subject mostly from the point of view of the students, performance or the efficiency of the system. I believe that it is important to turn the attention to the life quality as well, because both performance and system functionality are basically determined by the efficiency and life quality of the teachers. At the same time the educational system influences to a great extent the life quality of teachers. On the part of the teachers this raises a new type of question in our society. Several modernisation theories (Giddens, 2013, Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007, Beck, 2003) call the attention to the insecurities of contemporary ontology, to the appearance of new types of risks, to the mistrust in professional knowledge, which bring about changes in contemporary institutions. The way they function with individuals and other institutions changes, the way they relate to social activists changes, and, in certain cases, they also undergo structural changes. According to the structuration theory of Giddens, individuals are not mere passive participants of institutional activity and social processes (Giddens, 2013; Sik, 2013), the way objectivist sociology suggests it, but individual action has an impact on the way structures work. Before the beginning of this process the ways in which the individual can adjust to the institutions were simply and rigidly stated. But nowadays this allows for more complex ways to relate to, both on the part of the individuals, and of the institutions. The institution may become more reflective, or more controlling (Renyi et al. 2014), the way the individuals react may be more „emancipatory” or “pathological” (Giddens, 1984).

This new kind of relationship between individuals and institutions, which is of a tremendous importance in the process of modernization, is, to my mind, measurable in the professional life quality of the teachers.

The questions that are at the core of life quality research, are as follows: "What makes one happy?", "What is the life quality of people belonging to different groups, societies?", "What are

the premises for a good life?". In our society these questions cannot be separated from the connection between the individual, the society and institutions, from the way in which the individuals react to institutional frames and operation modes. The life quality of the individuals depends to a great extent on what social context they live in, on the ways in which they sense and live the effects of institutional systems. It also depends on their inner resources, their adaptability, capacity for reflection. All these make it possible to a different extent the individual adaptability to the complex, impenetrable institutional systems.

Thus, the way teachers relate to the education system or to the narrower school environment regarded as a structure, raises the issue of the necessity of studying their professional life quality.

In Romania, the most in - depth research on the issue of life quality of the average population and youth was carried out by Baltatescu (2014) In Transylvania, research on this topic is only at its beginning. In the case of such a special category as that of teachers, scientific material is unknown to exist. I personally sense this fact as a shortcoming, on the one hand, because the level of life quality is an important indicator of the development of a certain society, and, on the other hand, those employees who are content can much better integrate into institutions and society (Uusiautti, Maatta, 2011). Welfare brings about greater performance and better health (Lyubomirski et al. , 2005; Cole, 2006). Life quality is subjective and the measuring of its self - evaluated level is particularly important in the case of a profession which has a tendency to lead to burn out, and whose members use as their main work tool their own personality. Transmission of culture depends on the quality of their work, and they also have a society - forming role (Hatos, 2006). This holds good even in the situation in which the status and prestige of the teachers within the society, as well as the emerging representations within the social milieu do not reflect it.

The other important reason for choosing this topic is, that, we deal with a layer of such a large number of intellectuals, whose members take part on a daily basis in the formation of society, by the fact that they mold the personality of the children , thus marking the direction in which the globalizing society develops (Hankiss, e.n.).

I am studying the teacher as a person in the context of 3 connection systems. One is the narrow, school psycho - social circumstances system: children, colleagues, superiors, and parents. The second is the education system, as an entity reflected in the consciousness of the teachers . This

is also the frame of the work to which the teacher is to a certain extent connected, even if his representatives do not form the narrow part of the professional connection netting.

The third level is the way it relates to the social appreciation of the larger medium. As we will see, in the crossfire of all this stands the teacher.

I analyse the professional life quality of the teacher along the lines of certain specific contradictions.

1. The contradiction between the social value and social assessment of the profession of teaching.
2. The contradiction between the bureaucratic¹ formal institutional form, and the informal, personality - based pedagogic work.
3. The contradiction between safety and insecurity. The education system offers final, so called "titulary"² jobs and this goes with a fixed remuneration. This, unequivocally lays the basis for the safety of the job. But owing to the bureaucratic structure of the education system (Crozier, 1981) and the low professional autonomy, teachers can experience significant insecurity (Ritzer, 1983).
4. It is a feminine³ job (requiring care, helpfulness, personality development) in a society favoring masculine values (spirit of competition, authority, power) (Hofstede, 1980; Bakacsi, 2007)
5. In its essence it is the institution of transmission of knowledge, but compared to other intellectual jobs it is less adaptable to the society of knowledge , whose characteristic is the quick stream of information (Olle et al., 2013; Prensky, 2001)

When dealing with this topic, from the life quality models offered , I used the ones of Herzberg (1968) and Robertson and Cooper (2011). I described the features of the professional life quality

¹ In this case I use the term "bureaucratic" not in its common negative sense, but as a scientific category , to point to a certain type of organization set up. I mostly rely on the meaning given by Crozier (1981)

² The "titulary" job (taken from the Romanian language) means a job one can get after passing a certain type of exam .There are minimal chances to lose such a job during the career

³ Although the adjective "feminine" does not refer to the gender of the members performing the job, it coincides with its feminized character.

of the teachers of Harghita county in connection with other areas of life quality (health, social support, religion). Finally I underline the main group level features of this small teacher population of Seklerland (suppositions, ways to relate, roleplays). Based on these things I attempt to create types of teachers.

Primer level questions with a descriptive character

- How do the Harghita county Hungarian teachers experience their school environment (objective and personal conditions)?
- How do they experience that education system in which they are embedded and work?
- What are the physical and emotional aspects characteristic for the teachers of Harghita county?
- What social support defines them?
- How do they regard their own financial situation?
- How important is religion for them, and in what forms of manifestation?
- To what extent are they content with their own life?

On a middle level I am looking for connections among the studied fields

- What connection is there between professional life quality and gender, age, family status, rank and specialization?
- Is there, and if yes, what is the connection between professional life quality and satisfaction in the rest of life areas?
- Can teachers be organized into types, according to their professional life quality, and according to how they present themselves in their professional role?
- What are the factors that mostly define the professional life quality of the teachers?

Methods

My aim was to take representative samples and thus I used the random starting pointed, systematically organized sampling⁴, where the sampling interval is 5.5575 and the random starting point is 4. I used 4 layer generating variables in the process of sampling, which could be reached on the basis of the database. These variables are: gender, age, region, and type of school. The number of people selected is 355, out of which 328 answered the questions (92 %).

The basic method of my research has a quantitative character. Because there are no available data about Seklerland, and within it, the Harghita county teacher population, there was need for a founding, quantitative and descriptive in its character.

In the question - based survey, the main indicator of professional life quality is the scale used by Renshaw TSWQ (Teacher Subjective Wellbeing Questionnaire) (Renshaw, 2015; Renshaw and Cook, 2015). This scale was made on purpose for teachers. It has two sub - scales: the teacher efficiency scale and the bonding to school scale. I myself translated the scale containing 8 items, into the Hungarian language. This scale is not yet standardized and it has been relatively rarely used in international research. According to a Turkish analysis (Arslan, 2018) , which mostly covered teachers working in primary school and high school, those who obtained higher points on the TSWQ scale were better functioning as teachers than those with lower points. I thoroughly studied the objective and psycho - social circumstances at the workplace. I also studied in detail how much the teachers feel social appreciation and to what extent they agree as regards their view on teaching, with the aims stated by the education system. One of the questions deals with the greatest difficulties encountered in working as a teacher and another question deals with the resources. Finally, there is one question in the questionnaire, which has a symbolical and a projective character, because i would have liked to get information about experiencing the teaching role, beyond the cognitive side of things. My question referred to what would that symbol or metaphor be, that the person could use to express himself /herself as a teacher. I analysed the self - evaluated level of physical and emotional health of the teachers by using the questions asked by the National Population Health Evaluation of 2000. The two

⁴ In the activity of sampling I was given methodological help by Julia Koltai , co-worker at MTA , the Sociological Center of Research

indicators of physical health are: the self - evaluated health and the presence of different illnesses (OLEF, research Report, 2002). The part of research that deals with the social support, is also based on the questions contained by OLEF. The components of the questions concerning the religious elements are: religious affiliation, confessed or lived faith, church going habits, belonging to a certain church community. The questions referring to the global life quality contain the 5 items WBI - 5 scale (Well - being Index - 5) (Susansky et al., 2006) and also the question referring to this topic from the ESS (European Social Survey, 2014). The question refers to the general well - being in life.

In order to deeper analyse professional life quality there was need for qualitative methods as well. This is why I used the method of half - structured interview. From the 16 interviewed people, 6 were primary school teachers (ages 33, 52, around 40, 45 - from town and ages 44 and 43, from the village). 6 were teachers (ages: around 30, 35, 34, around 50 - from the village and aged 48, from town, and around 30, developmental teacher), 2 people were leaving the job (age 41, male, worked in town, age 35, female, taught in the village), 2 of the interviewed people were retired (age 71 - woman, age 73, man).

The processing of data obtained from the questionnaire analysis used statistic methods from the 22nd version of the SPSS program. I processed the data obtained from the interviews with the help of content analysis.

Results

Characteristics of the representative sample of Hungarian teachers in Harghita county.

- The gender division of Harghita county teachers is characteristic to the "pink collar" jobs: 78.6% are women and 21.4% are men. This ratio typically deviates from the ratio that can be noticed in the case of average population. In the case of Harghita county this ratio for the average population is: 51% women, 49% men (data regarding Harghita county - from the Romanian Statistical Office, [www.harghita, insse.ro](http://www.harghita.INSSE.ro)). In the light of the data one can notice the phenomenon of vertical segregation. Although only 21.4% of the teachers are men, almost half of those in leading positions (45.5 %) are men, meaning that, compared to their ratio within the population, they are represented almost threefold among the

leaders. In the teaching pattern the ratio of women is 78.6%, but within the group of leaders only 54.5% are women. It is characteristic to these women that they are between 51 - 60 years of age, with an experience of about 30 years in the profession with academic studies and having a First Degree.

- The sample included teachers between the ages of 22 - 69. Their greater part are between the ages of 30 - 50. By dividing them into 3 major age groups (young: up to 35), middle - aged (36 - 55) and elderly (56 and above), we can see that 60.6% of the teachers are middle - aged. Young adults are predominant, the average age is 41 and the average also belongs to this realm, while dispersion is 9.796.
- The interviewed teachers have been on the job for 18.3 years on average. Most of them (57.4%) have between 11 - 30 years of service. Beginners in the profession are relatively few, (12%) and this is also the case for those near retirement (16.6%). This roughly matches the age characteristics of the sample: because it is around the age of 30 that a teacher reaches the First Degree⁵ it is understandable that this level of qualification is prevalent.
- The majority of Harghita county teachers have academic studies (79.3 %) and 11.4% of the teachers have collegiate school studies.⁶
- 62.3% of the interviewed teachers work in upper school, while 38.7% work in lower school, 36% are primary school teachers and 2.7% are school counselors, developmental educators and speech therapists). 61.3% of high school teachers are in their greater part language teachers (19.8%), followed by those teaching Mathematics, Informatics, Nature Studies, Arts and Physical Education. Because the curriculum has a low rate of Social

⁵ In Romania the stages in the profession are: "veglegesito/definitivat (a theoretical and practical exam), Second Degree (theoretical and practical exam), First Degree (theoretical and practical exam and a scientific - methodological thesis), master's (MA), doctorate.

⁶ Until the 1999 / 2000 school year, in Romania there existed only secondary education in training college. It took place in the Pedagogical High Schools. It is then that higher forms of education were introduced, and starting with the 2005 / 2006 school year academic qualification began. The retraining from collegiate school to academy level is a one- year complementary training (it worked between 2007 and 2010). After finishing this training, the teachers obtained a university- level diploma.

Sciences and Religious Education classes, the teachers teaching these subjects represent between 3 and 5.5%.

- It is typical for the teachers who took part in the research that most of them work in elementary school. In Harghita county the 2 basic types of school – rural and urban schools - are divided as follows: 60% are rural schools and 40% are urban schools (Romanian Statistical Office, with reference to the Harghita county data; www.harghita.INSSE.ro). The studied sample is relevant from this point of view as well, as we can see the following ratios: 57.3% of the interviewed teachers said that they work in a rural school, while 42.7% work in urban schools.
- From the point of view of family status data show that most teachers (64.8%) are married and 13.1% live in settled relationship (cohabitation and visitation relationship) 69.1% of the interviewed teachers have children .30.1% have an only child, 56.6% have 2 children and only 13.3% have 3 or more children. 31% of the teachers have primary school aged children and they have toddlers, teenagers, young, and adult children in a ratio of 10 - 20 %.
- From the point of view of place of residence the situation is reversed than that for the workplace. While 57.3 % of the teachers work in the village and only 47.2% of them work in town, 53% of them have urban residence and 47.1 of them have rural residence. That means that about 10% of the teachers commute from the town to the village.
- The points that can be obtained at the TSWO scale are between 17 and 32. 17 points are for the person who answers to all the questions with "almost never" and 32 points are for the person who answers to all questions with "almost always". The average points obtained by the representative sample of teachers from Harghita county is 26, 26. Owing to the fact that this scale has not been standardized yet either on Hungarian or on Romanian teacher population, there are no means for comparisons and deeper deductions. But we can state that, if the maximum of points is 32, then the obtained 26.26 points can be regarded as a solid middle rate. Based on the points of the scale I established the following levels:

17 - 20 points - low professional life quality

21 - 28 points - medium professional life quality

29 - 32 points - good professional life quality

- The greatest part of teachers (90.8%) often or almost always consider themselves as belonging to their own school, and about 2 / 3 of them feel that they can be themselves within the school and that they are cared for at the workplace.
- About 80% of the teachers consider that they are efficient professionally.

The objectual and individual conditions of the workplace

- The teachers of Harghita county are the most content with the relationship they have with the children (96%) but they also consider that they have a good relationship with their colleagues and the parents. Their contentment as regards the directorate is not so high, but they see it as appropriate. The professional life quality is mostly defined by the relationships at the workplace, and within them the relationship with the children is the defining element ($B = 0.874, p > 0.01$).
- About one third of the teachers are content with the financial aspect of their work, the rest consider that this aspect could be improved. Quotidian discourses as well as those appearing in the media suggest that the teachers are dissatisfied with their remuneration. In 2016 the remuneration of the teachers in Romania was way below that of other jobs that require a diploma, and it was very far from the European Union average remuneration. Thus, it was a logical assumption that this was going to be one of those workplace factors that causes the greatest dissatisfaction for the Harghita county teachers. It came as a surprise that things are not quite so, because 37.5% of the teachers are content, 34.2% are discontent and there is a large number of those who did not express any opinion on the subject. Moreover, this is one of those factors that, from a statistical point of view, does not show any connection with the professional life quality measured by the TSWQ. If my question was not referring to remuneration but generally to the financial situation of the person, the answers show that people were content to a greater extent with it. This led me to the conclusion that teachers still need an additional income that they can get either from their companion, or from other, out -of -school sources. In an interesting way, contentment with remuneration does not prove to be in the least a decisive factor. According to my findings, this factor doesn't have an impact on the professional life quality of the Harghita county teachers.

- It seems that among the defining factors of professional life quality at the workplace, teachers are the most dissatisfied with the different aspects of the education system. Such factors are the transparency of the system (54.6%), the predictability of changes (76.8%) and the feeling of security given by the system (57.7%). Teachers are most discontent with the predictability of changes occurring in the system, and yet, this fact is not connected from the point of view of statistics, to the professional life quality measured by the TSWQ. With these questions there was a strikingly great number of people who either did not express any opinion or were undecided. This leads to the assumption that they are latently discontent. These particularities of the education system - although more than half of the teachers are irritated by them - do not prove to be defining factors in the regression model. They move alongside with the professional life quality, but they do not influence it. Because the indicators of professional life quality are the two sub-scales of TSWQ, bonding with school and teacher efficiency - both being defined by relationship factors - it is most likely that the factual school environment can keep off in many instances the negative influences of the education system. The characteristics of the system, the changes occurring at higher levels, jurisdiction, are filtered through the factual school environment, namely through its personal factors. This points to the big role played by school management. Depending on how school management mediates between the system and the teachers, it can have a protective effect, or it can increase discontentment. Even more decisive proved to be, in my research, the relationship of the teachers with the children, colleagues and parents. The interviews allowed for such a model to take shape, in which those teachers who worked during the Communist regime sense to a lesser extent these problems as being hardships, because they have a completely different benchmark than those teachers who have socialized after the fall of the regime.

A synthesis of the above discussed connections can be seen below (diagram 1).

Contentment regarding objectual and personal conditions at workplace	Average points	Relationship with the professional life quality measured by the TSWQ scale	
		R	P
Relationship with children	4.4	0.420	0.000
Relationship with colleagues	4.3	0.336	0.000
School atmosphere	4	0.386	0.000
Leadership	4	0.333	0.000
Relationship with Parents	4	0.348	0.000
Material equipment	3.6	0.266	0.000
Remuneration	2.9	0.114	0.043
Transparency of the education system	2.5	0.233	0.000
Security given by the education system	2.3	0.185	0.001
Predictability of changes in the education system	2	0.111	0.049
Extent to which individual view on educational aims corresponds to those declared by the education system	2.3	0.354	0.000
How is social appreciation of the	2.5	0.458	0.000

teachers sensed by the individual			
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Diagram 1. Contentment as regards the material and psycho - social conditions at workplace and its connections with the results of TSWQ. Source: personal research data (2015, N = 328)

Connections between professional life quality and other factors

- Because insecurity is one of the greatest menaces of life quality (Drobnic et al. 2010; Selye, 1966; Piko, 2002) I assumed that within the circle of teachers the rate of psychosomatic illnesses (heart and cardiovascular system, gastric ulcer, anxiety) is higher than with the national average population.⁷

We have to deal with great caution the data connected to this hypothesis, because they are not the data belonging to the Ministry of Health (their data were unavailable). It was proven that in the Harghita county teachers' sample the rheumatoid arthritis (psychosomatic illness) and anxiety occur at a higher rate than in the case of the national average population. If we add to this the information that within the sphere of emotional health situation the teachers admitted having problems only at those questions dealing with sleeping issues and tension, we can state that there is a psychic tension in their circle. This tension manifests itself in different way .

My analysis shows that most of the teachers are content or very content with their health (71.1 %). The relativity of self - evaluated health condition is shown by the fact that the greatest part of those people who struggle with anxiety or rheumatoid arthritis considered their own health condition as being good.

- They are basically content with their social support and this is more so in the case of those who live in villages. It has proven to be a correct assumption that the teachers in Harghita county are basically content with the quantity and quality of social support. An exception to this is the level of instrumental support given by acquaintances, because the teachers felt it as being deficitary. It was revealed that the measure of support given by friends did not differ greatly from that given by the family, and this means that in this region friendship refers to rather close ties. Residence plays a role in that those living in

⁷ Insecurity and unpredictability increase the probability of these illnesses, through the learned inability and resistance.

smaller villages are less content with the happiness generated by friends, while those who live in towns get less support than they would like to, from their partner. With all this, there is no clear strong connection between residence and social support. Social support moves to a lesser extent, yet significantly, with the sub - scale referring to bonding to school, of the TSWQ scale ($p > 0.001$, $R^2 = 0.79$).

- Godliness plays an important part in the life of teachers and they experience it as a resource. 93.8% of the teachers in Harghita county consider themselves as being believers and for most of them this is a resource and influences their decision taking, even if only 41.8% of them are regular church goers and only a few of them belong to any religious community. The importance of religious belief in this area is also shown by the fact that the teachers mentioned it in their enumeration as a factor representing resource, right after the family and friends factors.
- The professional life quality is significantly connected to global well-being. The results obtained from the representative sample of Harghita county teachers strengthens the data of European Social Survey and the references in the Sekler Happiness Index. The points obtained by the teachers, 8.36, are similar to the values of other professions with a helping character (priests, nurses), and they are much higher than those of the average population both in Romania and Hungary. (see the chapter about the correlation between professional life quality and global well - being). Both indicators of global well - being are tightly connected to professional life quality and most likely, influence it, although the analysis could only notice that the two go well together. The results of WBI - 5 are significantly correlated ($p = 0,375$, $r = 0.000$) to the professional life quality measured by TSWQ. The linear regression model shows that the well -being measured by WBI - 5 significantly predicts the level of professional life quality. ($R^2 = 0.140$). One of the item questions of ESS (How contented are you with your life on the whole, on a 1 - 10 scale?) is also in a positive correlation with professional life quality ($r = 0.283$, $p = 0.01$) and it explains this by filtering out all the other factors ($R^2 = 0.061$).
- The subjective approach proved to be useful in the study of life quality. This is supported by the fact that the indicators of life quality of the Romanian average population are better than those of a few economically better developed countries, like Hungary (Helliwell et al., 2018; WHR 2015 - 2017), that Romanian Seklers feel happier (Szabo,

2018) and that within this group, the representative sample of Harghita county teachers have an even better subjective life quality. I explain this striking feature by the life quality increasing effect of school education (owing to the fact that we compared an average population with an intellectual group). I raise two hypotheses. The first is that, being a minority group, and under the influence of the Communist regime, the Seklers developed a resistance against pressure. They also developed such a tackle mechanism which allows them to positively relate to any life circumstance. The second hypothesis is that, in understanding and evaluating their situation, it is not the more developed countries that stand as points of reference, but for the older generations it is the former regime, while for the younger ones it is a kind of minimal cost of living. None of the interviewed teachers compared his/her job to any other intellectual profession. We can come across the power of subjective interpretation here as well. In the light of the data at hand we can see that within the country only the remuneration of those working in agriculture or in industry is lower than that of the teachers' (2016). As regards the remuneration of the teachers, Romania is under the average European Union level. Yet, during the interviews, the teachers did not compare their own professional life quality with these factors. Within this group one can still notice a certain arrangement of roles within the family where the man is the provider and the woman only adds to this by perhaps undertaking tasks at the labour market.

"I think about the salary that it is good....Who wouldn't like to have more?...But I think that as the salary of a woman this is not bad at all..." We can thus notice that women teacher in their 40's accept with conviction gender differentiated salaries.

- In interpreting their situation the teachers perceive mostly the shortcomings of the education system and the decrease of social appreciation. These points of view are evident both from the quantitative and the qualitative results. It is also unequivocally characteristic to this group that the administrative burdens , the disfunctions of the system, the difficulties encountered, are counter - balanced by the love for children, the good relationship with them, and this becomes the main reason one sticks to the job. Life within the walls of the classroom gives power while life outside of it has in many cases a

negative impact. But this depends to a great extent on the relationship with colleagues and superiors.

- The central role of relationships has proved true. Moreover, regression analysis showed that from among the factual and personal conditions at the workplace this is the one and only condition that significantly correlates with the level of professional life quality. We can also state that attachment to school is explained by the relationship with colleagues and parents⁸ while professional efficiency is best explained by the relationship with the children. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative data strongly point to the direction where the influence of personal relationships is the greatest.

"In this whole system, it is worth working for the children" (village primary school woman teacher, aged 34)

"I come in here...and these looks...we have such classes that I wouldn't exchange them for anything...this is obvious...that hug...that "teacher, I love you"... (town primary school woman teacher around 45)

"I went into the secretary's office, because I had something to say...It is better there, because I feel that I get warmth there, and understanding" (town primary school woman teacher, 52)

- I assumed that taking professional life quality into consideration, teachers can be arranged into different types. Before the change of the regime the group of teachers seemed to be very unitary, but the next time period showed that teachers represent a segmented group characterized by diversity (Fonai, 2010). Although this study deals only with elementary school teachers, we can assume that even within this group there is no unitary image. There can exist distinct layers whose professional life quality differ. I attempted to organize types of teachers with cluster analysis but I was not able to find distinct patterns. The Harghita county teacher community proves to be homogeneous. Teachers roughly share the same view on difficulty and resource factors and during the interviews they mentioned similar topics. They think similarly about the particularities of the education system. Most of them consider that the relationship with children is the

⁸ The fact that the nature of the relationship with parents defines attachment to school, sustains my view, according to which relationship with parents, alongside with the relationship with children and colleagues, can be ranked among relationships at the workplace.

cohesive element in the tackle with the system - level factors. I was not able to organize teachers into different types from the metaphor choice point of view. I can thus state that the metaphors interpreted as symbols describe properly the professional life quality patterns in the case of teachers. It is surprising to see the homogeneity of this group of teachers, considering the fact that the representative sample included several sub - types: primary school teachers, secondary school teachers, as well as school counselors, speech therapists and developmental educators. I explain this by the fact that the institutions of a society are the organized manifestations of a group, and the members of this group overtake each other's attitudes (Mead, 1934, 263).

Main topics emerging from the interviews

- too many administrative duties
- lack of professional autonomy and of appreciation
- the feeling of helplessness
- increased parental expectations, passing on of parental functions to school responsibilities

Summary

My research in the Seklerland area is the first to scientifically deal with the situation of teachers and their professional life quality, with the use of quantitative and qualitative methods.

The quantitative analysis was carried out on a representative sample, this is why some observations can be made.

Most of the Harghita county teachers are women, with an average age of 41, which shows a younger teacher group than that of the national teacher population. About one third of the teachers work in primary school, the rest work in high school and only a small fraction of them have supporting jobs.

Harghita county is typically rural and this is reflected in the division of schools and teachers: more than half of the teachers work in rural area.

Considering the regions, the Udvarhely area is predominant. It is from this region that most teachers took part in the sampling. Udvarhely is followed by the Csik and Gyergyó region, and Gyimes but to a much lesser extent.

Based on the TSWQ scale one can state that the professional life quality of these teachers is solid medium. From the workplace factors they are most content with their relationship with the children, followed closely by their relationship with colleagues and parents. From the point of view of remuneration, one third of them are content, and from the point of view of their overall financial situation they are very content. So, data do not support the quotidian "low remuneration in the education system" narrative. From the workplace factors, they sense as the greatest problem the unpredictability and lack of transparency of the system, as well as its lack of security. It is only to a lesser extent that they agree with the proposed teaching aims of the education system. More than half of the teachers are discontent with the social appreciation. Going beyond the findings, the interviews showed that the greatest difficulty encountered by the teachers is the too much and useless administrative work, the "paperwork", the feeling of helplessness and the altered expectations on the part of the parents, as well as passing on of parental roles into the responsibility of the school. In sensing these difficulties there is a difference between those whose professional socialization took part in the Communist regime and those who represent the younger generations. The former react more moderately to extant difficulties, because they have a powerful negative ground for comparison.

The global wellbeing of the teachers is better than that of teachers in Hungary or that of the Romanian average population. There are hints that within the area of Seklerland teachers refer to an outstanding subjective life quality. I explain this with the life quality increasing effect of qualification and the subjective experiencing of the economic situation. I also explain it with the high level of social support and the strong traditional godliness. This is also shown by the fact that teachers considered to the greatest extent these two factors as being their resource.

The most important result of the research is that from among the background factors of the Harghita county teachers' professional life quality, it is only the factors with a social character that are statistically significant. The strongest connection is given by the relationship with children, followed by the effect brought about by the relationship with colleagues and with parents.

Professional life quality is not relevantly influenced either by remuneration or by the negative factors of the education system. It is relevantly influenced only by relationship factors. The choice of metaphors also points to the positive character of the relationship with children and its defining character of pedagogical identity. The most often used metaphors are "light", "giving of love" and "colorfulness". During the interviews the teachers stated that it is worth staying in the system only because of the children.

But if this relationship gets harmed, there is not much retaining power left, and this is shown by the discussions with those who are leaving the job. The interviews also point to the fact that in regarding teaching as a vocation and in choosing a certain domain, a tremendous importance can be assigned to the old teacher ideal, whose words, attitudes, even clothing style, can be overtaken.

Thus, we are faced with a young middle aged, feminized group activating mostly in rural area, whose members, despite the difficulties generated by the system and the altered parental expectations are, and stay in the profession because of the children.

My research, owing to the lack of data, is mostly descriptive in character, but the revealed connections trace out certain further research aspects.

Because the sample is representative, steps ahead can be taken not as much with the expansion of the population, although this is possible, but mainly through a deeper analysis that takes into consideration the minority situation and the characteristics of the Seklerland region social features.

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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)

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