

Making It Work: the Impact of Work Culture on Teacher Satisfaction

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Background

Recently, the Netherlands has been ranked #1 in the world for work-life balance, meaning that Dutchies typically have a high level of satisfaction with the amount of time they spend at work and the expectations at their jobs. Work-life balance and job satisfaction are aspects of wellbeing that help determine our life satisfaction.

This project delves into how Dutch work culture directly relates to teacher satisfaction at an MBO school in Zuid-Holland through qualitative measures, and draws comparisons between Dutch and US work cultures to look at how work culture impacts teacher satisfaction and retention.

Research Questions

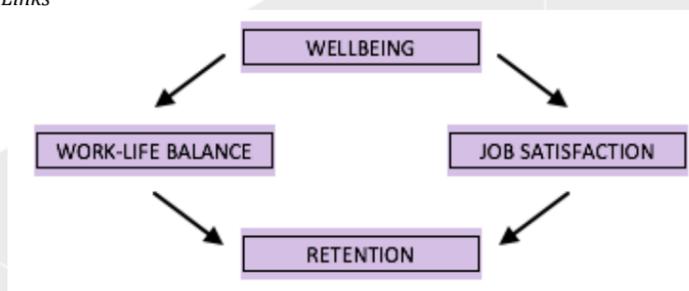
- How does a school's work culture impact teacher satisfaction and retention?
- How does the perceived role of the teacher impact teacher satisfaction?

Process

- Literature review on wellbeing, work-life balance, job satisfaction and teacher retention
- Survey by teachers in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Survey by teachers in Delft, Netherlands

Results

Concept Links



Typical Teaching Day

United States

- 8:00 – 17:00, Monday-Friday; additional evening hours at home; 35 hours/week contracted, no overtime
- Duties include: advisory, 5 courses (25 hours/week), lesson planning, grading, weekly meetings; additional duties: dean's office, coaching, sponsoring extracurricular activities

Netherlands

- 8:30-16:00; little/no evening hours; all hours contracted; ~32 hours/week
- Duties include: mentor, course load varies based on full- or part-time status, lesson planning, grading, weekly meetings

Purpose of Education – What is it? And what is the teacher's role?

United States

- "The purpose of education is to groom students into active citizens of our world who can problem solve, research, and communicate with others"
- "Ideally: facilitate students directing their own learning and constructing their own knowledge. Realistically: prepare students to pass tests so they can graduate and get into college so they can theoretically learn stuff relevant to what they want to do as an adult"
- "An effective teacher pushes students to make personal choices about their learning and stretch and explore beyond their comfort zone, taking ownership over the expression of their learning"

Netherlands

- "Preparing students for their future jobs and giving them useful tools to get through life/work"
- "Prepare young people for life. Not just with the subjects that they are being taught, but also through interacting with other students. Social skills and responsibilities. The written and unwritten rules of society"

Job Satisfaction – When have you thought this is the right career for you?

United States

- "It doesn't happen often because teachers get very little respect in our society"
- "When I feel I created a connection with students, not necessarily on the subject I teach"

Netherlands

- "When I can reach students. When I can see a student grow and perform"
- "The connection with the students, giving them feedback and trying to get them a realistic view of their future job and knowing themselves and what is in their possibilities"

Job Dissatisfaction – When have you thought this is not the right career for you?

United States

- "When it seems my hard work is not respected, be it by 440 [central office] or individual students"
- "Having to be 'on' practically the entire time I'm at work is very mentally and physically draining for me. There are many days when I wish I could sit at a desk and do some work without having to be responsible for engaging/managing 150 teenagers"

Netherlands

- "When I have to follow rules I don't agree with. When I feel more like a police officer than a teacher"
- "Never"

Literature Review

Wellbeing

European Social Survey (2015)

- multidimensional concept: evaluative, emotional, functioning, vitality, community, supportive relationships
- Netherlands ranked 6th overall out of countries surveyed

OECD (2017)

- When asked to rate their general satisfaction with life on a scale from 0 to 10, Dutch people gave it a 7.4 grade on average, higher than OECD average of 6.5

Gallup (2017)

- The national Well-Being Index score for the US in 2017 was 61.5 – a decline from 62.1 in 2016

Work-Life Balance

European Social Survey (2015)

- How individuals integrate paid work with the rest of their life and balance the demands of different roles
- Predictable working hours that are not too long, employee autonomy, and the ability to decide start/finish times and working during the standard working week are all likely to enhance work-life balance
- In the Netherlands, working hours are lower, and job flexibility and feelings of job control higher

OECD (2017)

- Less than 1% of employees regularly work very long hours, the lowest share in the OECD

Job Satisfaction

IBF International Consulting (2013)

- The image of the teaching profession is "rather good" in general, but not so good for teachers in vocational schools
- In a recent poll, "teacher" ranked 2nd after "surgeon" among the well-esteemed professionals, but the teachers do not have a good image of themselves

Society for Human Resource Development (2016)

- In 2015, 88% of US employees reported they were satisfied with their job overall
- 5 top job satisfaction aspects: respectful treatment of all employees at all levels, compensation/pay overall, benefits overall, job security, trust between employees and senior management / opportunities to use skills and abilities (tied for 5th place)

Retention

Den Brok, Wubbels, van Tartwijk (2017)

- In Netherlands, estimates report annual attrition at 12% for primary and 13% for secondary after 5 years
- Studies in the US report that teacher attrition 5 years after graduation from teacher education may be as high as 30%, rising up to 50% in high-poverty areas.
- Compared to other professionals, teachers say more often that they work more hours than they should according to their contract. Teachers find their work more hectic than other professionals.
- Teachers report they are more satisfied with the opportunities to learn.
- Main reasons for attrition are: job dissatisfaction, low salary, a weak school organization, lack of autonomy resources, lack of opportunities to participate in decision-making, burnout, difficulties to adjusting to teaching demands,

Conclusions

- Wellbeing tied to teacher job satisfaction and retention; Dutch teachers have higher levels of wellbeing
- Teacher attrition, although an issue in the Netherlands, is a more significant issue in the US
- Teachers need to feel respected, have autonomy, and opportunities for professional growth to be retained