

POSITIVE EMOTIONAL ATMOSPHERE OR TECHNOLOGY-BASED TRAINING: TEACHERS' PRIORITIES DEPENDING ON THEIR PERSONALITY

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Abstract

Positive classroom atmosphere is one of the most powerful tools to enhance and promote students' learning. Moreover, a modern teacher is encouraged to keep up with technology and use it in the teaching process. From the perspective of professional roles multidimensionality approach, psychologists emphasize that we cannot perform all roles equally. Because each role involves different contexts, relationships, responsibilities and likely different personality characteristics. This study aimed to identify teacher's personality characteristics (personality traits and professional identity), which determines the teachers' priority in classroom. 436 vocational teachers from Lithuania filled up a self-administered questionnaire. It consisted of the Teachers' Professional Identity Questionnaire (Beijaard et al., 2000), Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 2008) and two items to clarify VET teachers' priorities in the classroom. The results revealed that two completely different characteristics of personality are related to different preferences in the classroom. The personality trait of agreeableness is significant in predicting preference to favor a good emotional atmosphere ($p < .01$), and the didactical expert role predicts teachers' preference to favor technology-based training ($p < .001$).

Keywords: *Vocational teachers, professional identity, personality traits, technology-based training, classroom atmosphere.*

1. Introduction

Researchers emphasize the teacher's personality in the process of successful education. The activities of a modern teacher, innovativeness and creativity are an important incentive to motivate society to progress. There is enough evidence that students' learning achievements are related to teacher's experience, the style of teaching, the teaching tools used and the initiatives of a teacher (Blazar, 2016). With appearance of new technologies (photography, film, radio, television) and the whole social life has taken up by the media (Masschelein & Simons, 2015), teachers have got greater opportunities for showing ideas in different ways, while presenting new materials and thereby motivating students to learn (Jokic, et al., 2009). On the other hand, "teaching cannot be reduced to a technical or instrumental action that results in learning gains with students" (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 751). Social, emotional, and moral support for students, positive classroom climate, and student well-being are essential for teaching and learning. Creating a positive and engaging classroom atmosphere is one of the most powerful tools teachers can use to enhance, promote, and encourage students' learning and prevent problem behaviors (Wilson-Fleming & Wilson-Young, 2012).

Two of the most common characteristics of teachers for successful or effective education: personality traits and professional identity. *Professional identity* formation is a dynamic process, where teachers constantly organize their personal and professional "selves" based on their experiences (Crues et al., 2015; Kavanoz & Yüksel, 2017). Professional identity encompasses the teachers' perceptions of themselves as teachers (Canrinus, 2011). Why is professional identity so important? Clarity of professional identity leads to a sense of meaning in activity (Morgan, 2017). Also, professional identity is important for various work processes and outcomes, such as motivation, engagement, innovative behavior and creativity, relationships, work efficiency, etc. (Kavanoz & Yüksel, 2017; Schutz et al., 2018). Teachers' professional identity determines teaching methods, attitudes towards professional development, preparation to meet the educational challenges in their teaching practice, the quality of education, the ability to promote change and foster innovation (Sardabi et al., 2018; Thomas & Mockler, 2018).

Personality traits are identified as important factors in various working situations, because they define stable personal characteristics and determine behavior (Mount et al., 2005). Personality traits, as well as professional identity, are one of the most important elements in the education, because the researchers emphasize personality traits as substantial to positive processes and results of any professional activity (Eryilmaz, 2014; Paleksić et al., 2017; Rusbadrol et al., 2015). Teachers' personality traits are related with their job satisfaction (Paleksić et al., 2017), work performance (Rusbadrol et al., 2015), subjective wellbeing and students' academic performance (Eryilmaz, 2014).

The current study attempted to reveal what psychological factors of a teacher (i.e., personality traits and professional identity) predict preferences of positive emotional classroom atmosphere or technology-based training. A more thorough understanding of the significance of teacher's psychological characteristics for working preferences in classroom is relevant, because different professional roles require different skill sets and attitudes. Thus, the analysis of the predictive value of the teachers' personality characteristics (personality traits and professional identity) for their preferences (for technology use or positive emotional atmosphere) were chosen in this article.

2. Methods

The data were collected in 2016 and 2017 as part of a large national survey of vocational teachers in Lithuania. 436 vocational teachers completed paper-based self-administered questionnaires and returned to researchers in sealed envelopes. Teachers' Professional Identity Questionnaire (Beijaard et al., 2000) was used to measure three professional roles of teachers: subject matter expert ($\alpha = .637$), pedagogical expert (.692), and didactical expert (.700). Big Five Inventory (BFI; John et al., 2008) was used to assess vocational teachers' personality traits: extraversion ($\alpha = .671$), agreeableness (.584), conscientiousness (.739), neuroticism (.676), and openness to experience (.558). Also, preferences for good emotional atmosphere or technology-based training were assessed by asking to answering two items: "I try to create a good emotional atmosphere in lectures" and "I try to use training based on information technology" in 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = *do not use at all* to 5 = *often use*).

3. Results

The analysis of descriptive statistics and correlations presented modest correlations among good emotional atmosphere and professional identity (.239; .264; .255, $p < .01$ in all cases), as well as personality traits (.159; .246; .235; -.170; .188, $p < .01$ in all cases). Modest correlations were also found between technology-based training and professional identity (.171; .248; .111, $p < .01$ in all cases) and were not related with personality traits. Vocational teachers more often tend to favor a good emotional atmosphere in the classroom ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .656$) rather than using training-based information technology ($M = 3.83$, $SD = .908$).

Two regression equations were conducted to identify psychological factors that are important for the preferences to favor a good emotional atmosphere (Model 1) and technology-based training (Model 2) by vocational teachers in their lectures. Both regression models are statistically significant ($F(8) = 8.091$, $p < .001$; $F(8) = 3.893$, $p < .001$). The results of the regression analysis revealed that the personality trait of agreeableness ($\beta = .140$, $p < .01$) is significant in predicting vocational teachers' preference to favor a good emotional atmosphere in classroom. Also, the analysis highlighted that didactical expert professional role of vocational teachers predicts their preference to favor technology-based training ($\beta = .267$, $p < .001$). The results showed that vocational teachers' altruism, inclination to help others, the ability to understand and sympathize with others are the psychological characteristics of teacher who creates a positive school atmosphere and emotionally healthy classroom environment; second, a didactical expert is a teacher who bases his or her work on knowledge and skills regarding the planning, execution, and evaluation of teaching and learning processes and this ensures the use of advanced and innovative technology-based teaching in lectures.

4. Discussion and conclusions

A teacher's work is strictly regulated and defined in written documents according to global and local standards from the one side. From the other side, a teacher is expected to be creative and able to think and work in an innovative manner (Duobiene, 2017), decreasing of studying durability, faster matter update, providing constant availability of data and information, individualization of course (Jokic et al., 2009). The results of this study revealed that two completely different personalities of teachers are related to their different preferences in the classroom. Whereas we can't do everything equally well because of

our personality peculiarities, so we give priority to the activities, roles or functions we perform. Thus, managers of educational institutions should not expect teachers to be good in all areas. Therefore, it is recommended to form school personnel and to assign tasks according to the peculiarities of teachers' personality. Also, teamwork provides opportunities to learn from each other and achieve desired results, motivate society to progress, etc.

Summarizing the results of this study, it can be said that further research in this topic is desirable. It would be useful to explore other psychological characteristics of teachers that are related to their preferences for activities in classroom. In addition, it would be useful to include a learning achievement variable and see what is more effective – using modern technologies in the education process or maintaining a supportive classroom atmosphere that encourages students to feel comfortable in the teacher-student relationship.

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