

Submission: Mofet 2019 – Tel-Aviv (Israel)

Format: paper

Is the teaching profession really good for work-family integration?

Swiss and Israeli pre-service teachers' perceptions

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Conference theme (first choice) – Ways for recruitment, induction and encouragement of high quality teachers to persevere

Conference theme (second choice) – Clinical preparation, school-based teacher education

Presentation category – lecture.

ABSTRACT

(up to 250 words)

Research literature points out that difficulties in integrating career and family demands are some of the central stress factors in teachers' life around the world. The negative consequences of work-family conflict are numerous and influence teachers' wellness in careers as well as in family lives. It seems that pre-service teachers are not fully aware of this fact, rather quite the opposite, while studies describe one of the main motivations for choosing the teaching profession as the hope to reconcile private and professional lives. Due to the importance of the subject for the future teachers' well-being and due to the lack of studies focusing on this issue, the objective of the current research is to investigate the pre-service teachers' anticipated perspectives of work-family relations in order to accommodate the pre-service teachers' programs to response to this issue. To widen the understanding of the subject, the research relates to

samples of pre-service teachers and teachers from Israel and Switzerland. We conduct a mix-method research, based on initial quantitative research using a questionnaire measuring the pre-service teachers' future perceptions regarding work-family conflict and facilitation and the attribution of importance to life roles. Main results indicate that the levels of the Israeli sample regarding conflict, facilitation and importance attribution to life-roles are consistently higher than the levels in the Swiss sample. The Israeli in-service teachers demonstrate higher levels of conflict than the pre-service teachers. Israeli pre-service teachers express higher levels of Family to Work Conflict than Swiss pre-service teachers.

Introduction or theoretical background (100-200 words)

Much of the research related to the work-family interface has focused on the conflict between work and family and often mentioned in terms of work to-family conflict (WFC) and family-to-work conflict (FWC) (Frone, 2003). The conflict between the teaching profession and the home sphere is described as one of the central stress factors in teachers' work (Alvarado & Bretones, 2018; Cinamon, Rich & Westman, 2007). A teacher unable to spare enough time for his/her family due to heavy workload and obliged to take it home might lead to WFC. Teachers having to push work aside due to child care and household tasks might lead to FWC (Alvarado & Bretones, 2018; Demirel & Erdamar, 2016). Both WFC and FWC are associated with numerous negative outcomes that affect individuals. Never the less, literature is lacking research about anticipated work-family relations among pre-service teachers. In some cases, the issue is mentioned in research focusing on the career choice motivation of pre-service teachers. The teaching profession characteristics are expected by pre-service teachers to suit the family demands and to positively influence the work-family relations (Azman, 2013). The gap between these expectations and the reality of teachers' lives might provide an additional stress to novice teachers.

Research questions / hypotheses / main purpose (up to 100 words)

The study aims at answering the following research question: Would there be any differences between pre-service teachers' anticipated WFC/FWC and teachers' WFC/FWC perceptions levels within and between the two countries? Our hypotheses are the following: in-service teachers in both countries will demonstrate higher levels of WFC/FWC than pre-service teachers; women will express higher levels of anticipated WFC and FWC than men within the two countries; there will be differences between female and male pre-service teachers at the same stage of their studies regarding their levels of anticipated WFC/FWC and WFC/FWC within the two countries.

Research methods (20-150 words)

The research implies a sample of 728 pre- and in-service teachers of all disciplines and grades in Israel and Switzerland. The Swiss sub-sample includes 389 participants in the University of Teacher Education BEJUNE;

the Israeli sample include 339 participants from the Beit Berl College. A questionnaire has been administered in both countries to measure the teachers' perceptions regarding work-family relations. It includes four parts. The first concerns respondents' personal information (age, gender, marital status). The second part measures the attribution of importance to life roles. The third part measures work-family conflict and facilitation relations attitudes. The fourth part included open questions regarding the perspectives the participants had about work-family integration while choosing the teaching career. For the quantitative data, statistical tests have been performed to compare participants according to conflicts, facilitations, and attribution of importance to life roles. The qualitative data was analysed by a content analysis method.

Main results (100-250 words)

The main results indicate that in-service teachers in the global sample of the two countries demonstrate significantly higher levels of work to family conflict in two of the items: "*Stress at work makes you irritable at home*" and "*Your job makes you feel too tired to do the things that need attention at home.*" Within the countries, we found that the Israeli in-service teachers demonstrate higher levels of WFC/FWC than the pre-service teachers. In Switzerland, there are no significant differences in WFC/FWC between in-service teachers and pre-service teachers. Comparing the Israeli pre-service teachers to the Swiss pre-services teachers, the Israeli pre-service teachers have significantly higher levels of FWC. Also, we found that all facilitation attitudes' levels are significantly higher among the Israeli pre-service teachers than the Swiss pre-service teachers. The Israeli in-service teachers demonstrate significantly higher levels of general conflict relations and FWC than Swiss in-service teachers. All facilitation attitudes levels are significantly higher among the Israeli in-service teachers than the Swiss in-service teachers. Concerning the gender, women express more facilitation attitudes than men in the general sample of the two countries and express more facilitation and conflict attitudes than men at first year of studies in the general sample and within the Swiss group.

Discussion, theoretical or practical implications, importance of the research (100-200 words)

The current study demonstrates that the perception of pre-service teachers in both countries of the anticipated WFC and FWC is often under-evaluated comparing to in-service teachers. This result is in line with previous research dealing with teachers' career choice motivation (Azman, 2013). This aspect emphasizes the gap between the expectations of students who chose the teaching profession and the reports of in-service teachers. This distance is apparently due to a lack of understanding of pre-service teachers about demanding life-patterns related to a teaching and confirms findings of previous studies focusing on teachers (Cinamon et al., 2007; Demirel & Erdamar, 2016). We find the lack of awareness of this aspect among pre-service teachers constitutes a potential disturbing factor, especially in light of the phenomenon of teachers' drop-out in the first years of employment. The difficulties connected to the integration of family and career demands might be an additional stress factor for novice teachers, who are rarely prepared to cope with it. These findings invite us to reassure the need of addressing this aspect in teacher education programs and novice teachers' supervision.

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Keywords: work-family conflict; work-family facilitation; teacher education, pre-service teachers, novice teachers.