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Veteran teachers' job satisfaction as a function of personal demands and resources in the relationships with their students

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ABSTRACT

Many teachers experience their profession as stressful, which can have a negative impact on their job satisfaction, and may result in burnout, absenteeism, and leaving the profession. The relationship with students can have both positive and negative implications for the job satisfaction of teachers, both early and later in their careers. The current study focused on the relationship between veteran teachers' job satisfaction and their aspirations in teacher-student relationships. Data were gathered among 12 Dutch veteran secondary school teachers, including interviews, the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction, and the Questionnaire on Teachers' Self-Efficacy. Veteran teachers' job satisfaction appeared to be positively related to the extent to which their aspirations in teacher-student relationships had been realized. Teachers who had failed to realize their aspirations in teacher-student relationships showed relatively low job satisfaction, or avoided feelings of low job satisfaction by reducing the number of tasks that were directly related to teaching students. An implication for coaching veteran teachers is the need to pay more attention to the teacher-student relationship so that they can adhere to the way they would like to teach students.

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Job satisfaction; Veteran teachers; Self-efficacy in the teacher–student relationship; Aspirations in the teacher–student relationship

Introduction

Many teachers experience their profession as stressful (Johnson et al., 2005), which can have a negative impact on their job satisfaction, and may result in burnout, absenteeism, and leaving the profession (Betoret, 2006; Greenglass & Burke, 2003). Several factors may cause teachers to experience the teaching profession as stressful. Examples are work overload, low job status, and the demands of administrators, colleagues, students, and parents (Greenglass & Burke 2003). Of these causes, disruptive student behavior and poor relationships with students are the most significant (e.g. Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Problems with classroom management and disruptive student behavior are not only important causes of teacher attrition early in the career (Spilt et al., 2011), but they can also cause teacher

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stress and feelings of burnout later in the career (Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003). However, the relationship with students can also be a major positive motivation to become a teacher and to stay in the profession (Sinclair, Dowson, & Mcinerney, 2006), and can be positively related to teachers' job satisfaction (Grayson & Alvarez, 2008).

The relationship with students, therefore, can have both positive and negative implications for teachers' job satisfaction. The association between teacher–student relationships and teacher job satisfaction might be mediated by teachers' perceptions of the demands put on them by their relationships with students and the resources they feel they possess to cope with these demands. This balance between demands and resources might be especially delicate for veteran teachers as their relationship with students often has been changed over their teaching career. In the current study, among 12 veteran teachers, we elaborated and applied the Job Demands–Resources model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) to explore the associations between teachers' relationships with their students and their job satisfaction.

Job Demands–Resources Model

According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Demerouti et al., 2001), two broad categories of work characteristics can be distinguished that interactively influence job satisfaction: job demands and job resources. Job *demands* refer to those aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological (i.e. cognitive or emotional) effort, and are, therefore, associated with physiological and/or psychological costs. Job *resources* refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs. The JD–R model proposes that high job demands and a lack of job resources form a major cause for teachers' stress and diminishing job satisfaction (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Xanthopoulou and her colleagues (2007) found that job resources are related to personal resources such as employees' self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism and made them feel more capable of controlling their work environment. Presumably, as a result, they are more confident and proud of the work they do, find meaning in it, and stay engaged. Employees who have personal resources are confident about their capabilities and optimistic about their future, and thus may identify or even create more aspects of their environment that facilitate them to reach their work goals; this strengthens their work engagement. The authors also concluded that personal resources play a significant role in the JD–R model since, together with job demands and job resources, these personal resources contribute to explaining variance in burnout and work engagement. In the current study, the JD–R model including personal resources and demands was used to examine the association of teacher–student relationships and other factors with veteran teachers' job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction of veteran teachers

Veteran teachers' job satisfaction has been investigated extensively. Hargreaves (2005), for example, distinguished four types of elementary, middle, and high school teachers based on the later years of their teaching careers in a Canadian sample: (1) the teachers who are able to keep finding challenges beyond *and* within their classrooms; (2) the positive focusers who concentrate their efforts in the small world of their own classrooms where they

can pass their wisdom on to young people in the autumn of their careers; (3) the negative focusers who have always managed to protect their self-interest rather than the interests of the students. In their later careers, they find ways to get the easiest timetables and classes; and (4) the disenchanted, who typically committed themselves to educational reforms earlier in their careers that were discarded later. As a consequence, they have lost their ideals and motivation. Most veteran teachers were found to be in one of the last three types.

Several studies of types of veteran teachers have shown that the personal resources of veteran teachers play a crucial role in the demands they experience during their teaching career (Day & Gu, 2010, Eilam, 2009). Not only do the different types of teachers differ in the demands they see in their job, but they also vary in the resources they use to cope with these demands. Chang (2009) and Spilt et al. (2011) showed that the emotional involvement of teachers with their students is a primary explanation for the high stress in teaching, but that interpersonal relationships between teachers and students have been understudied in research on teachers' job satisfaction.

Personal demand: teacher–student relationships

Individual relationships with students are both a major reason to choose for the teaching profession (Sinclair, Dowson & Mcinerney, 2006) and a source of teacher work stress (Spilt et al., 2011). Hargreaves (2000) observed that secondary teachers' positive emotions mostly came from acknowledgment, respect, appreciation, and gratitude from their students. In his landmark study on school teachers, Lortie (1975) already noted the importance of establishing meaningful personal relationships with students. He found that these relationships were more important for teachers' job satisfaction than controlling the students. Friedman (2006) presented teachers' expectations about their work on a dimension, ranging from 'giving' (teaching, caring, and/or friendship) at one end to 'receiving' (respect and appreciation of the students) at the other. He argued that one major cause of teacher work stress and burnout is the mismatch between giving and receiving. These findings are backed up by the research of Grayson and Alvarez (2008), who found that teachers who succeed in maintaining a positive relationship with their students are also more likely to stay motivated and enthusiastic and to enjoy their work. So there seems to be a relationship between, on the one hand, teachers' aspirations in maintaining a good relationship with students as part of their profession and, on the other hand, their satisfaction with the teaching job. We regard teachers' aspirations in teacher–student relationships as a personal demand.

Personal resource: teacher self-efficacy

Feeling able to realize the aspiration to have positive teacher–student relationships can be described as teachers' self-efficacy, in realizing the aspired relationship, which may be crucial for the job satisfaction of most teachers. Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as 'people's judgements of their capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances'. Although Bandura (1997) stated that self-efficacy beliefs are relatively stable, other researchers (e.g. Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998; Woolfolk-Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005) found changes in teachers' self-efficacy across the teaching career. In a study among 1430 practicing teachers in Western Canada, Klassen and Chui (2010) found that teacher self-efficacy was influenced nonlinearly by

years of experience. Teacher self-efficacy regarding engaging students, managing student behavior, and using effective instructional strategies grew with experience in the early and mid-career stages, and declined in the late career stages. They found that teachers with lower levels of self-efficacy for classroom management also reported more feelings of stress caused by student misbehavior.

Incorporating teacher-perceived personal demands and resources (cf., Xanthoupoulo et al., 2007) into the Job Demands–Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001) may help understand the mechanisms operating between veteran teachers' personal demands and personal resources, and their job satisfaction. This is particularly the case with relationships with students, which is not only an under-researched aspect of teachers' job satisfaction but which might also be an aspect that changes over the teacher career. We applied the Job Demands–Resources model to answer the following research question:

> How do veteran teachers' aspirations, their realized aspirations, and self-efficacy with respect to the relationship with their students relate to their job satisfaction?

Methods

A multiple-case study design was used to examine the job satisfaction of 12 Dutch veteran secondary school teachers.

Sample

To select teachers for these case studies, we used a pool of Dutch teachers who had participated in earlier research on teacher–student relationships (Brekelmans, Wubbels & van Tartwijk, 2005). Data on these teachers' relationships with their students were gathered among about 600 teachers and their approximately 25,000 students. These teachers taught in about 100 different secondary schools throughout the Netherlands. We selected veteran teachers from among these 600 teachers by identifying teachers who had been teaching for more than 25 years and were 54 years of age or older. Sixty-four teachers met these criteria. Unfortunately, we succeeded in contacting only 21 of these teachers because contact details for the majority of them were no longer correct. Of these 21 teachers, 12 agreed to participate: 4 male and 8 female teachers, ranging in age from 54 to 64.

Instruments

In Table 1, we summarize the relationship between the four main variables of our study and the instruments used to gather the data. We used three questionnaires in this study:

Table 1. Overview of variables and instruments.

	Int. 1	Int. 2	TSES	QTI	ASI
Job satisfaction	x				x
Teacher–student relationships aspirations		x		x	
Teacher–student relationships realized aspirations	x	x		x	
Teacher–student relationships self-efficacy		x	x		

Note. Int.1 = Interview 1; Int. 2 = interview 2; TSES= Teachers' Sense of efficacy Scale; QTI = Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction; and ASI = Job Satisfaction Index.

the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (TSES: Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001), the Questionnaire on Teacher Interaction (QTI: Wubbels, Brekelmans, den Brok, & van Tartwijk, 2006), and the Job Satisfaction Index (ASI: Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 2003). Additionally, the teachers were interviewed twice to gather data on their job satisfaction, their aspirations in teacher–student relationships, and their self-efficacy in teacher–student relationships.

Interviews

The first author interviewed the 12 teachers twice; first about their job satisfaction and their realized aspirations in the relationships with their students, and second about their aspirations for these relationships and their self-efficacy in realizing these aspirations. Each interview lasted approximately one-and-a-half hours. All interviews were transcribed and summarized in a table, organized around the variables aspirations and realized aspirations in teacher–student relationships and job satisfaction. Member checks were done by presenting the resulting table to the teacher and asking if he or she was cited correctly, and if any corrections, revisions, or additions were needed.

In the first interview, the teachers were asked how they judged their job satisfaction, if they had perceived changes in their teacher–student relationships in the last years, and how they perceived the quality of their teacher–student relationships at the moment: their realized aspirations.

In the second interview, we focused on the teachers' aspirations and self-efficacy in teacher–student relationships. We asked the participants to explain the differences between their ideal and their self-perception of their teacher–student relationships. Further, we asked them if they thought that these differences had changed recently, if they felt they were capable of realizing their ideal (i.e. their self-efficacy), what constraints they experienced, and how they could be helped to realize their ideal.

Questionnaire on teacher interaction

In the first interview, we asked the 12 teachers to complete a 50-item version of the QTI (Wubbels et al., 2006). The QTI can be used to measure perceptions of teacher–student relationships by asking questions about patterns in the teacher's interpersonal behavior, which are indicative of teacher–student relationships (Wubbels et al., 2006). Underlying the QTI is the model for interpersonal teacher behavior. The model is based on two independent dimensions that have been proven to be both necessary and sufficient to describe perceptions of the interpersonal meaning of behavior (e.g. Kiesler, 1983; Tiedens & Jimenez, 2003). In the model for interpersonal teacher behavior, these dimensions are referred to as control and affiliation (Wubbels et al., 2012). Control describes the degree of influence the teacher has over what goes on in the classroom. Affiliation refers to the degree in which teacher and students interact in harmony or disharmony. In the model, these two dimensions underlie eight types of interpersonal teacher behavior, referred to as Steering, Friendly, Understanding, Accommodating, Uncertain, Dissatisfied, Reprimanding, and Enforcing. In the QTI, items are divided into eight scales corresponding with the eight types of behavior. Items take the form of statements about the teacher. Two sample items are 'This teacher is

friendly' (Friendly Scale) and 'This teacher is strict' (Enforcing Scale). Answers are given by scoring on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 'never/not' at all to 'always/very'. Each completed questionnaire yields a set of eight scale scores. Scale scores equal the sum of all item scores, and are then rescaled to be reported in a range between 0 and 1. From these scale scores, the dimension scores (control and affiliation) can be obtained using the formula given in endnote 1. After completing the questionnaire, each teacher had a control and an affiliation score for their aspirations (ideal perception) and their realized aspirations (self-perception). Reliability and validity of this version of the QTI were found to be satisfactory (Wubbels, Brekelmans, den Brok, Levy, Mainhard, & van Tartwijk, 2012).

We hypothesized that the lower the difference between veteran teachers' self-perceptions of their teacher–student relationships and their ideal teacher–student relationships, the more they had realized their aspirations in the teacher–student relationship, and the more they would have the feeling of being capable of developing a satisfying relationship with their students

Teachers' sense of efficacy scale

We used the Dutch translation of the short Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Mainhard et al., 2008) of Tschannen–Moran and Woolfolk Hoy (2001). The scale consists of 12 items, and has 3 subscales: efficacy in student engagement, efficacy in instructional strategies, and efficacy in classroom management. Items take the form of questions about being able to do or achieve something. Examples of items are the following: 'How much can you do to control disruptive behavior in the classroom', 'How well can you implement alternative strategies in your classroom', and 'How much can you do to get children to follow classroom rules'. Answers are given by scoring on a seven-point scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'very good/well'. The reliability of the scale (Cronbach's α) was 0.78 (Mainhard et al., 2008).

Job Satisfaction Index

To measure job satisfaction, we used the Job Satisfaction Index (Arbeidssatisfactie Index, ASI) (Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 2003). The questionnaire consists of 30 items; for example, ' I have a lot of freedom in my work', ' I regularly look for another job', and ' I have the feeling that my colleagues appreciate my work'. All items were answered on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'very unsatisfied' (1) to 'very satisfied' (5) (Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 2003). The reliability of the scale (Cronbach's α) was 0.90.

Results

In Table 2, the results from the questionnaires for the 12 teachers are summarized.

On the basis of the teacher scores for realized aspirations in the relationship with their students and job satisfaction, we distinguish four groups (see Table 3): (1) the teachers with relatively high job satisfaction and a low difference between their aspirations (ideal perceptions) and their realized aspirations (self-perceptions) regarding the teacher–student relationships; that is, those who realized their aspirations in the relationship with their students, (2) teachers with relatively high job satisfaction who did not realize their

Table 2. Overview of the questionnaire results.

	Job satisfaction	Self-efficacy	Self-efficacy in classroom management	Control self-perception	Control ideal	Affiliation self-perception	Affiliation ideal
Ellen	123	7.17	6.43	.86	.41	.71	.98
Kevin	129	6.75	7.07	.83	1.06	1.19	1.59
Harry	124	7.07	7.39	.81	1.30	1.43	1.59
Rose	77	7.16	8.36	.34	1.05	.25	1.25
Mary	81	6.75	6.43	1.80	1.00	1.80	2.10
Mimi	94	6.75	8.04	1.00	.91	−.04	.85
Rob	96	7.00	7.71	.88	1.40	.88	1.42
Hans	121	7.16	7.71	1.05	1.08	.15	.88
Maggie	123	6.75	7.17	.10	1.01	.16	1.49
Ada	132	6.75	8.03	1.30	.67	.00	.88
John	112	6.43	6.11	.43	1.29	1.59	1.71
Lars	89	6.43	6.43	.40	.82	1.47	1.57

Table 3. Classification of teachers on job satisfaction and difference between self-perception and ideal teacher–student relationships.

	Job satisfaction	
Realized aspirations[a]	Low ≤ 104	High > 104
Yes	Lars[b]	Ellen
		Harry
		Kevin
No	Mary	Maggy
	Rose	Ada
	Rob	John
	Mimi	Hans

[a]Realized aspirations, Yes : difference between ideal and self-perception ≤ 0.49 on affiliation and/or ≤ 0.55 on control; No: difference between ideal and self-perception > 0.49 on affiliation and/or > 0.55 on control (mean scores of teachers with 25–38 years' experience: 0. 55 on control; 0.49 on affiliation (Mainhard, unpublished data-set).
[b]Names are fictitious to ensure privacy.

aspirations, (3) teachers with relatively low job satisfaction who realized their aspirations in the relationship with their students, and (4) one teacher with relatively low job satisfaction who did realize his aspirations.

Teachers with relatively high job satisfaction

Teachers who have realized their aspirations in teacher–student relationships

Three veteran teachers with relatively high job satisfaction realized their aspirations in their teacher–student relationships: Ellen, Harry, and Kevin. In the interviews, they reported that a major source of their job satisfaction was their contact with students. They all mentioned that they had managed to have good relationships, which they defined as including honesty and mutual respect. This is illustrated by the following quote from an interview:

> I think respect is very important, respect for you as a person; you are an example for students, a role model. Students have to respect that, and have to approach you in line with that. (Harry)

All these teachers mentioned problems they sometimes had with students, but nevertheless, they considered the relationships to be rather good. These three teachers were all involved in the school community: they were teaching full-time, and were also involved in other activities in the school.

Two teachers (Harry and Kevin) reported that they felt capable of having their ideal relationship with students. These findings were congruent with the results from the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Scale: they both had mean to high scores (compared with the other teachers in our study), especially for self-efficacy in classroom management.

One of the teachers (Ellen) reported that she usually reached her ideal relationship, but she also mentioned she would like to score a little lower on control and a little higher on affiliation. To explain this, Ellen reported that she really wanted to be in charge in class; she didn't want it to be too cozy, but she didn't like it to be too strict either:

> Sometimes I have problems with a class. Students can be very noisy, and they have a lot of fun. I can manage that, I can make them quiet, but I don't like to do it. (Ellen)

Concerning her self-efficacy, she reported that as she became older, she found it more difficult to handle younger students. For this reason, she tried to avoid teaching in the lower grades. Comparing these findings with the results from the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Scale, we noticed that she had a mean score for overall self-efficacy, and a slightly lower score for self-efficacy in classroom management.

Teachers who have not realized their aspirations in teacher–student relationships

Four teachers with relatively high job satisfaction did not realize their aspirations in their teacher–student relationships: Hans, John, Maggy, and Ada. Three of them (Hans, Maggy, and Ada) had chosen to limit their teaching tasks to maintain high job satisfaction. Hans did other work outside school, Ada became a counselor at her school, and Maggy decided to work part-time and deal with the consequences of having a lower income. They all mentioned that students and contact with students were very important for their job satisfaction, but they no longer felt capable of coping with the challenges of relating to students the whole week. These teachers mentioned that they did not succeed in realizing their aspirations in teacher–student relationships because they experienced difficulties in managing the students. The emotional distance between themselves and the students had increased over time, as students had changed and their own energy levels had decreased. They reported that they had become more insecure and were more afraid of losing control than in the past. Three interview excerpts illustrate this finding:

> My children left home a long time ago; since then I know less about their lives, for instance, the music they like. The distance between myself and the students has increased. (Ada)

> I don't succeed in reaching some students. I am not able to find a solution for this. Students sitting in class and looking at me as if to say, you have to motivate me, do your best … I can't cope with that. I feel so insecure in those situations. (Maggy)

> I set my standards high, I want to learn my students something. Especially students in lower levels don't like that. And that has an impact on the relationship. In the past I had fewer problems in this field. (Hans)

Maggy pointed out that if she had had more support from the school management in learning to manage student behavior, she still might have had full-time teaching tasks. Only John was still working full-time as a teacher. He admitted he did not care so much about the relationship with students. His motivation to teach was his love for his school subject.

> In the past, the relationship with students was more important to me. Now the school subject, Biology, is more important. I notice my energy levels are lower than in the past. I often think: let go … Yes, I think I'm a bit lazy nowadays …(John)

Comparing these findings with the results from the Teachers' Efficacy Scale, we saw mean to high scores for self-efficacy and, especially, for classroom management in three cases (Maggie, Hans, and Ada). These scores did not support the findings from the interviews and the QTI. Only for John our interview findings were in line with the scores on the Teachers' Efficacy Scale.

Teachers with relatively low job satisfaction

Teachers who have realized their aspirations in teacher–student relationships

The teacher who realized his aspirations in teacher–student relationships, but had low job satisfaction (Lars), mentioned as the cause of his dissatisfaction his severe problems with the school board: he didn't feel appreciated. This was why he had withdrawn from all other tasks in school besides teaching.

> The only joy I have at school is in the classroom, with my students. I try to avoid all other activities at school. I disagree with many decisions of the school board. (Lars)

Contact with students was important for his job satisfaction. For him, the important characteristics of teacher–student relationships were mutual acceptance and friendship.

> I want to have a friendly relationship with my students; I want the students to accept me just the way I am, and I want to accept them. Usually I manage to have such relationships. (Lars)

He reported that the emotional distance between himself and the students had increased in recent years. He also noticed that the relationship improved as he had been with students for several years. He reported that he was able to create his ideal relationship with students. Nevertheless, his scores on the self-efficacy scales were lower than the average scores of the teachers in our study.

Teachers who have not realized their aspirations in teacher–student relationships

Four teachers with relatively low job satisfaction did not realize their aspirations in their teacher–student relationships: Mary, Mimi, Rose, and Rob. All of these teachers had full-time teaching tasks. As the origins of their low job satisfaction they mentioned problems with the school organization, reorganization of the school, and difficulties in coping with educational reforms. Two interview excerpts illustrate these findings:

> In the past I could be a real teacher, I could lecture… Nowadays, after the educational reforms, I have to be more of a coach for the students, and I have to take into account all those differences between the students. I think it's very hard to cope with that. (Mary)

> I have a severe problem with my school board. It's about my salary. That problem is the reason I don't like it any more at school. (Rose)

They all mentioned that they had good relationships with students, but the relationships had been better in the past. They all mentioned the growing emotional distance between themselves and the students as the cause of this change. Three of the four teachers (Rose, Mary, and Mimi) mentioned that they had become stricter than they would like to be:

> I would like to be less strict, but I will not accept phones in class. Less strict means deterioration and I cannot accept that! (Mimi)

> I want to be in control. Students have changed, and I often feel insecure in managing their behaviour.. I miss support in this from the school board. I've been working at this school for 38 years now, perhaps that's too long. I really want to manage the class in a more relaxed way, just like in the past. (Mary)

Setting high standards was the explanation for his strictness for another teacher (Rob).

> I am strict, more than I like to be perhaps. But I set high standards, for the students and for myself. I want to teach the students; and I will not negotiate with them about it. I would like it be different, but I manage myself; I don't lack any support in this from the school board. (Rob)

The scores on the Teachers' Self-Efficacy Scale were not in line with our other findings for three teachers (Rose, Rob, and Mimi): they have relatively high scores for the self-efficacy scales, especially for classroom management. For the fourth teacher (Mary), the scores were in line with the interview findings.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide insight into the relationship between veteran teachers' aspirations and self-efficacy in their teacher–student relationships, and their job satisfaction. We found that teachers who succeed in maintaining a relatively high job satisfaction and perceive their relationship with students positively are still teaching full-time. Teachers with a relatively high job satisfaction who perceive their relationship with students less positively have chosen for other tasks outside of teaching. Teachers with a relatively low job satisfaction mainly refer to factors concerning the school context. An example is the lack of support from the school board. Only after asking specifically about their relationship with students, these teachers admitted that they have problems with this relationship too. They report that they do not feel capable anymore to realize their aspirations regarding the relationship with students. Because of the fact that the relationship with students is a major cause of motivation for being a teacher and job satisfaction (e.g. Grayson & Alvarez, 2008; Sinclair et al., 2006; Spilt et al., 2011; Tatar & Horenczyk, 2003), it might be painful to admit not being able anymore to realize a positive relationship with students.

We distinguished four groups of teachers in our sample: two groups who had realized their aspirations in their teacher–student relationships (one with relatively high job satisfaction and one with relatively low job satisfaction), and two groups who had not realized their aspirations in their teacher–student relationships (again, one with relatively high job satisfaction and one with relatively low job satisfaction).

Four teachers in our sample had succeeded in realizing their aspirations in their teacher–student relationships. All had full-time teaching tasks. They all mentioned the importance of having good relationships with students as the major source of their job satisfaction. This finding is in line with the findings of earlier research (Byrne, 1999; Friedman, 2006; Grayson & Alvarez 2008; Spilt et al., 2011), which showed that positive relationships with students are a major source of motivation for teachers. Three of these teachers had relatively high job satisfaction as well. In terms of Hargreaves's (2005) typology, these are the teachers who are able to keep finding new challenges within and beyond their classrooms. They belong to the group of veteran teachers distinguished by Day and Gu (2010) who remain motivated, as a result of good teacher–student relations and student results. In general, these teachers feel capable of developing the teacher–student relationships they would like to have. In terms

of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007), the personal job demands (creating positive teacher–student relationships) are in equilibrium with the personal job resources (realizing aspirations and self-efficacy in their teacher–student relationships) for these teachers.

One teacher who succeeded in realizing his aspirations in teacher–student relationships nevertheless reported relatively low job satisfaction. He mentioned contact with students as a major source of his job satisfaction, but his severe problems with the school management negatively influenced this. He belongs to the group of veteran teachers, distinguished by Day and Gu (2010), who have lost their motivation. In terms of Hargreaves's (2005) typology he is a positive focuser: he concentrates his efforts on his classes. In terms of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, this teacher shows a balance between the personal demand of creating positive teacher–student relationships and the personal resources of realizing his aspirations and self-efficacy in teacher–student relationships. However, there seems to be a lack of balance in other job resources such as supervisory support and social climate (e.g. Friedman, 1991).

Eight of the 12 teachers did not succeed in realizing their aspirations in the teacher–student relationship. Four nevertheless had relatively high job satisfaction. These teachers felt that the quality of their relationships with students was lower than in the past. They no longer felt capable of creating their ideal teacher–student relationships. Three had chosen to adjust their work conditions to this new situation by working part-time and engaging in other tasks at school or outside school. In doing this, they managed to be positive focusers (Hargreaves, 2005). In terms of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R), by diminishing their teaching tasks, they managed to keep a good balance between, on the one hand, the personal demands of creating positive teacher–student relationships and, on the other hand, the personal resources of realizing their aspirations and self-efficacy in the teacher–student relationship. Perhaps if they had received more support in coping with the difficulties they experienced in teacher–student relationships in this phase of their career, they would not have reduced their teaching tasks.

One teacher, who taught full-time, admitted that he had less energy nowadays. He had withdrawn from all other tasks at school besides teaching. In Hargreaves's (2005) terms, he is a negative focuser. According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, he did not find the right balance between the personal demands of creating positive teacher–student relationships and the personal resources of realizing his aspirations and self-efficacy in the teacher–student relationship; he dealt with this imbalance by focusing on the importance of another job resource: the joy derived from his school subject, in which he is in control.

The four teachers who had not succeeded in realizing their aspirations in the teacher–student relationship and had relatively low job satisfaction, referred to private circumstances (bad health), governmental measures (educational reforms), and problems with the school board. They belong to the group of veteran teachers who has lost their motivation (Day & Gu, 2010). They had all withdrawn from all other tasks at school besides teaching. In Hargreaves's (2005) terms, they are negative focusers. When asked explicitly about the quality of their teacher–student relationships, these teachers reported that they did not manage to create the relationships with students that they would like because they feared losing control in class; they were stricter than they would like to be. In terms of the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model, they did not manage to keep a balance between

the personal demands of creating positive teacher–student relationships and the personal resources of realizing their aspirations and self-efficacy in the teacher–student relationship. For the source of their low job satisfaction, these teachers referred to the lack of supervisory support and inadequate social climate (e.g. Friedman, 1991).

Limitations

In spite of its valuable outcomes, this study has some limitations with respect to generalizability of these outcomes. In addition to the sample size, we administered the general questionnaire on teachers' self-efficacy (Mainhard et al., 2008; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy (2001). In the three scales of self-efficacy, items that are specifically focused on the quality of the teacher–student relationship are missing. In the interviews, the teachers provided more detailed information on their self-efficacy which was not captured with the questionnaire. For example, teachers who did not realize their aspirations in the teacher–student relationships mention elements from their individual biography as cause for being less successful in creating a positive relationship with their students, such as their children growing up and leaving home, what made it difficult to empathize with students. In addition, some of them mentioned the influence of the school context on their self-efficacy, such as a lack of support of the school board.

Conclusion

Using the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001), including the personal demands and resources (Xanthoupoulo et al., 2007), in this study helped us get a better understanding of the relationship between teachers' aspirations for creating positive teacher–student relationships (personal demands) and realizing these aspirations and self-efficacy (personal resources). We found that teachers who do not manage to keep a balance between these personal demands and resources, and who nevertheless have a large teaching task, have relatively low job satisfaction.

The findings of this study reveal that it might be important to take into account the quality of teacher–student relationships, as perceived by the teachers, in the discussion about the job satisfaction of veteran teachers. Teachers who are not succeeding in realizing their aspirations in the teacher–student relationship report that they don't feel capable of doing so. Based on our results, it might be worthwhile to pay attention to teacher–student relationships in the guidance of veteran teachers. Through supporting these teachers in coping with the growing gap between veteran teachers and students, these teachers might be helped to develop strategies to reach their aspirations in these relationships. Moreover, more veteran teachers could continue teaching, instead of reducing their teaching tasks as soon as they see an opportunity to do so. In this way, teaching experience and expertise are saved, and students can benefit longer from these experienced teachers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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