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Teachers' sense of their professional identity

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Summary of the results

In this dissertation, teachers' job satisfaction, self-efficacy, occupational commitment and change in their motivation have been used in their combination as indicators of teachers' sense of their professional identity. A total of 1214 secondary school teachers located throughout the Netherlands completed a survey containing questions on these indicators, their perceived opportunities for professional development, their perceived level of autonomy and their educational beliefs. Based on these teachers' data the relationships between the indicators of teachers' sense of their professional identity have been investigated. The observed relationships were similar for beginning, experienced, and senior teachers. Teachers' relationship satisfaction (referring, for instance, to teachers' satisfaction with the support they receive or their satisfaction with their co-workers) and teachers' classroom self-efficacy play a pivotal role in the relationships between the indicators. Strengthening a teacher's sense of professional identity would be possible by influencing these two constructs, as these constructs influence, in their turn, the other indicators.

Furthermore, the data of the 1214 teachers were used to empirically investigate whether distinct professional identity profiles could be observed. Indeed, three distinct professional identity profiles were presented: 1) an unsatisfied and demotivated identity profile consisting of teachers who scored relatively low on the six indicators, 2) a motivated and affectively committed identity profile consisting of teachers who scored relatively high on the indicators, and 3) a competence doubting identity profile consisting of teachers with a more diverse score pattern. No differences were found between these profiles in teachers' amount of experience, their perceived professional development opportunities, their perceived level of autonomy, or their reasons for becoming a teacher.

Differences were found in various features of teachers' appointments and in teachers' educational beliefs about the importance of qualification and schooling and stimulating personal and moral development. Regarding the features of teachers' appointments, the results showed that teachers with a motivated and affectively committed identity profile have, compared to the other teachers, more often a permanent appointment. Furthermore, these same teachers have, compared to teachers with a competence doubting identity profile, more often extra tasks besides teaching. Lastly, teachers with a competence doubting identity profile have, compared to the other teachers, smaller appointments. Regarding the educational beliefs, it was concluded that teachers with a competence doubting identity profile agreed significantly more with statements regarding the importance of qualification

and schooling and stimulating personal and moral development than teachers with one of the other two identity profiles.

External observers and pupils rated a selection of teachers on the teachers' effective teaching behaviours. The external observers' data showed no differences between teachers belonging to the three identity profiles regarding their teaching behaviour. Contrary to this, the students of these teachers perceived significant differences between their teachers' behaviours. From the students' perspective, teachers belonging to unsatisfied and demotivated professional identity profiles appear to differ in their efficient classroom management and in the extent to which they provide clear instruction.