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Self-concept and teachers' professional roles

Blagica Zlatković, Snežana Stojiljković, Gordana Djigić*, Jelisaveta Todorović

Teachers' Faculty in Vranje, University of Niš, Partizanska 14, 17500 Vranje, Serbia
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18000 Niš, Serbia
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18000 Niš, Serbia
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Ćirila i Metodija 2, 18000 Niš, Serbia

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the association of teachers' self-assessment of the effectiveness in different teachers' roles performing and their self-concept. The study was conducted on a sample of 120 teachers who were given the Self-concept scales (Opačić, 1995) and the Inventory of teachers' roles, designed for the purposes of this research. The results show that self-assessed effectiveness in all teachers' roles is significantly correlated with global competence – dimension of self-concept that indicates subjective feeling of capability for any action and its successful performance. Other dimensions of self-concept are in correlation with self-evaluated success in some of investigated teachers' roles.

Keywords: self-concept; teachers; professional roles; research

1. Introduction

The quality of teachers' professional activities is influenced by numerous factors. Some authors emphasize the explanatory power of internal factors – teacher's abilities, personality traits, motivation etc. (Bernard, 1972; Deci & Ryan, 1987) while some others emphasize external factors – school equipment, legislation etc. (Edmonds, 1983). According to Ryans (1970), there are three most important dimensions of teacher's personality: 1) warm-heartedness opposed to coldness and self-centeredness, 2) responsibility opposed to unreliability and inconsistence in behavior, and 3) imaginativeness and enthusiasm opposed to routine behavior. Recently, the concept of classroom management style (Djigić & Stojiljković, 2011) encompasses all these factors and has become central theme in educational psychology research.

Self-concept is rarely seen as a very important factor of teacher's professional activities, although it could be expected it is related to both internal and external factors of effective teaching. Some researchers (Sommer &

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* Corresponding author: Assistant, University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Psychology, tel.: +381 18 514 311, fax: +381 18 514 310, E-mail address: gordana.djigic@filfak.ni.ac.rs.

Baumeister, 2002) pointed that there is an extensive literature concerned with the impact of self-concept on the establishment of goals, expectations and behavior.

It could be expected that it establishes a correspondence of internal and external factors, recognizing and assessing them, and then individual takes further actions on the basis of these findings and assessment. Some researchers (Sommer & Baumeister, 2002) point to the extensive literature concerned with the impact of self-concept on the establishment of goals, expectations and behavior.

Being focused to the metacognitive level, i.e. to the organized scheme of all experiences that individual has about itself (Opačić, 1995), in this paper we are concerned with investigation of teachers' self-concept and their self-assessment of the success in different teachers' roles performing. The structure of the hierarchical model of self-concept (Marsh and Shavelson, 1985) indicates that the domains of self-concept are formed through the integration of specific elements that are lower in the hierarchy, and that different levels of the construct are inter-related. Starting from this theoretical standpoint, this research is aimed at determining the relationship between the two levels of teacher self-assessment: of various aspects of self-concept and of effectiveness in the performance of particular teachers' roles.

1.1. Self-concept

Among the earlier definitions of self-concept, it is usually emphasized Ramy's determination (Ramy, 1943, according to Purkey, 1988), in which the self-concept is simply defined as what a person believes about himself, or a map that each person consults in order to understand himself, especially during moments of crisis or situations in which he makes a choice. In the context in which we deal the self-concept in this paper, it is especially important Musek's determination (Musek, 1986). He believes that the self-concept is a fundamental internal standard or criterion of personality that, as a referent function, regulates and directs the behavior and activities of the individual.

In designing the structure of self-concept different models were used. The conception of general self-concept is the oldest and simplest one. During the sixties researchers used better metric-based instruments to measure self-concept. The results of these studies have convincingly demonstrated that the self-concept is a multidimensional construct that consists of many specific aspects (facets) and that these aspects are inter-related, but still different enough.

Model defined by Marsh and Shavelson (1986) presents self-concept as a hierarchical and multidimensional structure. At the top of the model there is a quite stable overall self-concept that is originated from the integration of so-called academic and nonacademic self-concept, that present the lower strata in the hierarchy. In the non-academic domain it could be differed social, emotional and physical self-concept. Each of these domains integrates specific elements that are lower in the hierarchy and that are less stable and more dependent on the situation.

The aspects of teacher's self-concept investigated in this study are perceived as higher domains in the hierarchy in comparison to the self-assessment of the effectiveness in different teacher's roles performing that looks like lower-level self-assessment. The expectation of the correlation between these two levels is based on hierarchical model of self-concept. In addition, self-assessment in the teacher's roles can be broken down into more specific elements, i.e. to the self-assessment related to specific situations in the roles performing. Such elements are contained in the items of Inventory of teachers' roles, used in our study.

1.2. Teachers' roles

Teacher is certainly more than a lecturer (Harden & Crosby, 2000). Consideration of teachers' roles is important because their implementation in the educational process ensures the quality of human and social resources of society (Zlatković & Petrović, 2011). Teacher's self-assessment of the effectiveness in performance of some of his professional roles can influence his behavior in the realization of educational activities.

Teacher has numerous roles and they can be grouped in various ways. Consideration of the school as an institution that should contribute to the overall development of each student influenced the increasing in number of roles that a teacher has to realize. On the other hand, the teachers' roles can be seen in the realization of teaching process, and beyond, in cooperation with parents, local community, social organizations, etc. In this paper, we are focused on teachers' roles relating to the teaching process. Ivić et al. (2001) have compiled an inventory of teachers' roles in the teaching process by grouping them into six categories:

- Teaching role in the narrowest sense (teacher as a lecturer, teacher as a lesson organizer, teacher as a partner in educational communication, teacher as an expert in his own subject area);
- Motivational role (motivating the students and then maintaining their interest, teacher as a model for students' professional identification);
- Role of the evaluator (evaluation of knowledge, assessment of students' behavior and personality);
- Cognitive-diagnostic role;
- Role of the regulator of social relations in the classroom as a group;
- Role of the partner in affective interaction.

2. Method

2.1. Purpose of the study

If self-concept is the dimension that significantly determines the choice of activities in which a person enters, and the success of their performance, then the consideration of teachers' self-concept is justified. Researches have shown that teachers with high self-esteem, which is the evaluative dimension of self-concept, are more successful in their profession (Schultz & Hausafus, 1982). However, despite the recognized effects of positive self-concept on behavior, it is surprising that not enough attention is paid to teachers' self-concept and their professional success (Marsh & Roche, 2000).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between dimensions of self-concept and teachers' assessments of their own success in the performance of teachers' roles. Also the research was directed toward determining the significant differences in the dimensions of teachers' self-concept and self-assessment of performance of teachers' roles regarding to gender, age, working experience in education, training cycle they work in, the level of their education and passed in-service trainings.

The results could be a starting point in designing the initial education of teachers and their professional development.

2.2. Participants

The study was conducted on a sample of 120 teachers - 83 (69%) female and 37 (31%) males. According to the education cycle in which they work, the allocation is as follows: 37 teachers (31%) work with lower grades of primary school, 58 (48%) work with higher grades of primary school, 14 (12%) work in secondary school, and 11 teachers (9%) realize the educational process at least at two levels of education. Most participants (63%) completed four years basic studies, 28 of them (23%) completed two or three years lasting studies, and there are those with higher education - specialization, master or doctoral degree (12%).

2.3. Instruments

Self-concept Questionnaire (Opačić, 1995) was used for the assessment of self-concept domains. According to Opačić (1995), following dimensions of self-concept are distinguished:
1) Global competence - indicates subjective feeling of capability for any action and its successful performance; as opposed to it, general incompetence is characterized by global non-confidence, anxiety and doubt about the success.
2) Body image - refers to the physical attractiveness and satisfaction with body image.
3) Physical self-concept - refers to the perception of someone's own physical ability.
4) Social evaluation - subjective assessment of someone's own social value and the adjustment to social framework and relationships, i.e. it indicates information about ourselves that we get from the others.
5) Global self-esteem - a predominantly evaluative component of self-concept that refers to believing that the person is capable, significant, valuable and successful; it indicates the level of self-confidence, self-satisfaction, the satisfaction with our own abilities and characteristics.

6) Emotionality-rationality - indicates the global sensitivity and expressed sensibility versus rational acceptance of the environment, also points to the tendency to explain the failures with the excessive sensitivity and inability to control emotions.

7) Intellectual self-concept – refers to the awareness of our own intellectual abilities and confidence in them.

Inventory of teachers' roles were designed (by the authors of this article) for the research purposes. The instrument consists of 13 items for self-assessment on a five-level scale. It is intended to measure self-assessed effectiveness in performing the following roles: teaching role in the narrowest sense, motivating role, role of the evaluator, cognitive-diagnostic role, role of the regulator of social relations in the classroom, role of the partner in affective interaction.

2.4. Procedure

The application of the instruments was conducted in groups of participants (18 to 25 subjects per group) by competent researchers. Participants were told that data will be used only for research purposes and that the anonymity is guaranteed.

2.5. Reliability of the measures

Reliability of self-concept scales, assessed by Cronbach Alpha coefficient, was satisfactory in all dimensions: global competence (Alpha=0.887), body image (Alpha=0.891), physical self-concept (Alpha=0.837), intellectual self-concept (Alpha=0.876), social evaluation (Alpha=0.869), global self-esteem (Alpha=0.636), emotionality-rationality (Alpha=0.887).

Reliability of the Inventory of teachers' roles is also quite satisfactory (Alpha=0.887).

3. Results

The assumption that there is a relationship between dimensions of self-concept and self-assessment of success in the performance of teachers' role is partly confirmed.

Firstly, we will present the results on particular dimensions of the observed variables, and then data about their relations. Also, we will present correlation of the observed variables, self-concept and self-assessed success in performing the teachers' roles, with control variables: gender, age, working experience in education, training cycle they work in, level of their education and passed in-service trainings.

3.1. Self-concept of teachers

The first task of the research was to find out what is the extent of the dimensions of self-concept in teachers' sample. Precisely, we wanted to know how teachers assess themselves in some domains of self-concept (Table 1).

Table 1. Dimensions of self-concept in teachers' sample

Dimensions of self-concept	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Global competence	1.70	5.00	4.12	0.55
Body image	2.46	5.00	3.61	0.55
Physical self-concept	2.00	4.91	3.42	0.59
Social evaluation	1.93	4.79	3.71	0.45
Global self-esteem	2.90	5.00	3.96	0.43
Emotionality-rationality	2.00	4.56	3.33	0.57
Intellectual self-concept	2.38	4.92	3.64	0.49

Results show that teachers evaluated themselves positively on all of the observed dimensions of self-concept. They estimated themselves very high on dimensions of global competence and global self-esteem (4.12 and 3.96 on five points scale respectively). These high estimations of self-concept could be attributed to the fact that teachers are generally better educated and therefore they are more competent part of the total population. Since they are performing a complex job, they are referred to continually building of their professional competences. They constantly improve their general personal competences as well. Also, it could be assumed that such results are partly related to the tendency of non-critical self-assessments and giving social desirable answers (this is the risk we face whenever research data are based on self-assessment).

3.2. Teachers' self-assessment of effectiveness in teachers' roles performing

Teachers' estimation of their success in performing professional roles was also high. All mean scores were above 4 points on a five-level scale (Table 2).

Table 2. Teachers' self-assessment of effectiveness in professional roles performing

Teachers' roles	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Teaching role in the narrowest sense	3.00	5.00	4.32	0.51
Motivational role	2.50	5.00	4.46	0.54
Role of the evaluator	3.00	5.00	4.34	0.55
Cognitive-diagnostic role	3.00	5.00	4.37	0.70
Role of the regulator of social relations in the classroom	2.00	5.00	4.42	0.72
Role of the partner in affective interaction	2.33	5.00	4.23	0.62

These findings could be explained in a similar way as the results concerning self-concept.

3.3. Correlation between dimensions of self-concept and self-assessed effectiveness in teachers' roles performing

General competence was the only dimension of self-concept that has significant positive correlation with the self-evaluation of all teachers' role performing, although the obtained correlations were of low intensity (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation between general competence and self-assessed effectiveness in teachers' roles performing
(** $p< 0.01$; * $p< 0.05$)

	Correlation with general competence
Teaching role in the narrowest sense	r = .345 (**)
Motivational role	r = .359 (**)
Role of the evaluator	r = .394 (**)
Cognitive-diagnostic role	r = .267 (**)
Role of the regulator of social relations in the classroom	r = .237 (*)
Role of the partner in affective interaction	r = .241 (*)

In addition, some other dimensions of self-concept are significantly (at least at the 0.05 level) associated with self-assessed success in some teachers' roles performing. Social evaluation was positively correlated with four of the observed seven teaching roles (correlation coefficients ranged from .288 to .335); there were no significant correlations with cognitive-diagnostic role and with role of the partner in affective interaction. The intellectual dimension of self-concept is related to the teaching role in the narrowest sense, motivational and cognitive diagnostic role (correlation coefficients ranged from .207 to .363). Teachers' body image was associated with three

of professional roles: teaching role in the narrowest sense, role of the evaluator and regulator of social relations in the classroom (correlation coefficients ranged from .229 to .245). Physical self-concept was associated with role of regulator of social relations in the classroom (r = .238), self-esteem dimension with the role of evaluator (r = .220).

The most significant finding, in our opinion, was the connection between general competence, as reffered to the total strength of someone's personality, and teachers' estimation of the effectiveness in the performance of professional roles.

3.4. Control variables and self-concept

In this study it was also assessed the connection between several control variables and self-concept. The results indicated significant connection only between self-esteem and two control variables. Correlation between age and self-esteem (Pearson's correlation coefficient = - .258, p<0.01) indicated that older teachers had lower scores on self-esteem, and teachers with longer working experience had also lower self-esteem (Pearson's correlation coefficient = - .207, p <0.05).

This finding is understandable having in mind that our sample consisted of adults who already have developed and relatively stable self-concept. On the other hand, except for gender and age, the sample was relatively homogeneous in regard to other control variables. It is important to know that observed teachers were attended some kind od professional training and were not representative for teachers' population in whole.

3.5. Control variables and teachers' roles

Analysis of variance showed that there is significant difference between males and females in the self-assessment of effectiveness in the performance of cognitive-diagnostic role: females in teachers´ sample evaluated higher their effectiveness in the cognitive-diagnostic role (F = 6.313, p< .013).

In relation to the level of education of teachers, it is found significant difference in self-assessment of performing the teaching role in the narrowest sense: teachers who have completed specialization have better self-evaluation compared to teachers who have three or four-years professional education (F= 2.438; p< 0.039).

Older teachers were self-evaluated as more successful in the role of regulator of social relations in the classroom (r = .188, p <0.05), as well as in the role of partner in affective interaction (r = .224, p <0.05). Accordingly, teachers with longer experience in education were self-evaluated as more successful in role of a partner in affective interaction (r = .211, p <0.05). Elementary school teachers were self-evaluated as the most successful in the role of a partner in affective interaction (F = 3.061, p<.008) in comparison with others (subject teachers). These findings suggested that teachers with longer life and professional experience, and also with the appropriate professional education, felt as more competent to perform roles related to social relationships in the classroom and affective communication.

An unexpected finding was negative correlation between the number of passed in-service teacher trainings and the self-evaluation of the of motivational role in teachers´ sample (r = - .226, p <0.05). This would be explained with assumption that the teachers who are more involved in trainings are more critical in assessing their own competences, and at the same time this is probably the reason why they were attended more training.

4. Conclusion

The results showed that teachers have a relatively positive self-perception - obtained values of all dimensions of self-concept are above average. Results on the global competence and self-esteem are the greatest, while the values of the dimensions that are related to specific areas of self-evaluation are somewhat lower. However, given that the average value in any dimension could be expected on a random sample from a population, it is necessary to consider desirability of obtained values for the teaching profession. Probably the teachers' results would be perceived differently in comparison with the self-concept of active or prospective members of socially more desirable profession (Zlatković, 2006).

On the Inventory of teachers' roles teachers were asked to evaluate their effectiveness in performing the activities related with teachers' roles. They assessed themselves very high – all average grades are above four (on the five points scale). Namely, teachers are familiar with the requirements of their profession and it could be assumed that

they made estimations that create socially desirable image of themselves as professionals. Such results point out the need for clear operational defined criteria for teachers´ objective self-assessment of the success in different professional roles. This way their self-criticism in the field of professional activity could increase.

Correlations between dimensions of self-concept and teachers' self-evaluated effectiveness in performing teachers' roles are low. There are statistically significant correlations between global competence and all teachers' roles. The result agrees with the expectation that global competence is the basis for the large number of teachers' professional competencies. Self-assessed performing teachers´ role is more frequently associated with social and intellectual self-concept, than with the other dimensions of self-concept.

There were no significant correlations between self-concept and control variables, except the correlation of self-concept with age and length of working experience.

Analysis of the relation between self-assessed efficacy in different teachers' roles and control variables did not provide significant insights. Only a few significant differences in effectiveness in some teachers' roles were found in respect to gender, age, working experience, the level of education and educational cycle teacher works in.

The results suggest that teachers' pre-service education and in-service training should content programs which could upgrade their self-concept to some extent. On the other hand, it is necessary to strengthen teachers' capacity to monitor and critically evaluate their own professional practice. Our recommendations are also derived from findings that the best international practice requires self-concept to be a key component in teachers' education (Marsh & Roche, 2000) and from some previous studies that have indicated a reciprocal relationship between teachers´ self-concept and outcomes of their professional activity.

Acknowledgements

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