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Teacher Morale and Moonlighting: An International Comparison

Abstract. *This study investigates the trends in regard to teachers and moonlighting, the perceived effects of teacher moonlighting on classroom instruction, and attitudes of teachers toward their salaries and moonlighting. Besides the results of the research conducted in Texas, USA, we have also included results of a small pilot survey conducted among teachers in a few schools and in the Center of the Children's Creativity in Kirov, Russia. The findings demonstrate that teachers would stop moonlighting if their salaries were higher, and the teachers perceive that their instructional practices would be better quality if they were not moonlighting.*

Key words: *moonlighting, teachers, morale, education, international experience.*

Introduction

There are few studies that investigated the phenomenon of teacher moonlighting (part time work held concurrently with a full time teaching position), but some report that it is a common occurrence (Johnson, Rice, Sullivan, Maninger, & Beard, 2010; Bell and Roach, 1988; Bobbitt, 1988; Maddux, 1980). There is much more in the literature in regards to teacher morale. This study hopes to be the first of many that takes an in-depth look at comparisons between American teachers (in this specific case, teachers in the state of Texas) and Russian teachers.

Teachers lead all occupational groups in holding moonlighting jobs. One study of second-job-participation found that an average of 4.8% of all employed workers held more than one job (Wisniewski and Kleine, 1984). Studies of teachers and moonlighting reveal numbers that range from 15 to 72% of public school teachers hold moonlighting jobs (Hilty, 2008; Bobbitt, 1988, 1990; Bell and Roach, 1988; Wisniewski and Kleine, 1984). *The morale of teachers has been on a decline for more than thirty years* (Johnson, Rice, Sullivan, Maninger, & Beard, 2010).

This current study was the seventeenth in a series of biennial surveys of Texas Public school teachers conducted by the authors and sponsored by TSTA. This year the authors made the decision to include a group of Russian educators from the area around Kirov, Russia. The intent of this report is to compare the findings between the two regions.

Methodology

The participants in this study consisted of a representative sample of public school teachers PK-12 in the state of Texas and in the Kirov, Russian region. A survey was released to a random sample of at least 8,000 teachers who are members of the Texas State Teachers' Association (TSTA), with a return of 306. The same survey was translated into



Russian by one of the authors and offered to over 250 teachers in Russia, with a return of 61. The results were then translated back into English for comparison and interpretation.

The first section of the survey asked participants to indicate their age, gender, marital status, employment of their spouse (if applicable), highest degree, major breadwinner in the household, type of district in which they teach, grade level they taught, years of experience, and salary. The second section recorded various working conditions in their workplace, including discipline and morale questions. The third section of the instrument was devoted to questions about their moonlighting practices if they worked outside the classroom. Some survey questions were singular choice items, some were multiple item selection questions, and others were short answer items.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

It might be considered that the “average” teacher in Texas is a 49 year-old female who is married, holds a Bachelor’s degree, teaches elementary education in an urban setting, is the major bread winner for the family, and has 17 years of experience. While the “average” Russian teacher is a 49 year-old female who is married, holds a Master’s degree, teaches elementary education in an urban setting, and has 16 years of experience. That alone sets a tone for the number of similarities, as well as a few differences.

Similarities

The number of teachers that reported they were married was very similar. Texas teachers reported that 70% were married while Russian teachers reported that 62% were married. The highest percentage of participants reported that they were elementary teachers (46% Texas and 41% Russian). Years of experience, on average, was also very similar. Texas teachers reported 17 years of experience and Russians reported 16 years of experience. Gender was similar, but somewhat higher for the Russian teachers. Texas teachers were 80% female, while Russian teachers were 92% female. Both the Texas teachers and the Russian teachers are involved in moonlighting practices (30% of Texas teachers and 48% of Russian teachers). Plus, both pools of participants reported a realization that they would like to stop their moonlighting practices (83% of the Texas teachers and 86% of the Russian teachers) if their salaries could be raised to compensate for the difference.

Differences

The Russian teachers reported having, on average, more education (90% of Russian teachers hold a Master’s degree and 40% of Texas teachers hold a Master’s degree). Interestingly enough the same statistic holds true for the number of urban teachers (40% in Texas and 90% in Russia). The Russians reported that 89% of their spouses work outside the home, while Texas teachers reported 64% of their spouses work. Texas teachers identifying themselves as seriously considering leaving the teaching profession out-paced their Russian counterparts 60% as compared to 39%. Both populations reported that discipline and paperwork were the worst problems in their schools. However it was in opposite order. The Texas teachers reported discipline at 49% and paperwork at 28%, while the Russian teachers reported paperwork at 61% and discipline at 28%.

There was a large difference in the reported annual salary for each group. The Texas teachers reported an average annual salary at \$50,967 while the Russian teachers reported an annual salary at \$4,800. There is an explanation for this large difference.

1. In Russia, there is no need to buy medical insurance because the basic medical expenses are covered by the government.

2. Taxes on property are very low and in some cases may not exist. This is because property value was established when the country was a part of the USSR and in most of



the places, it is still the same. For instance, property taxes on a one bedroom apartment in Moscow could be about \$100 a year. As it is known, Moscow is one the most expensive cities in the world to live in.

3. Some/most teachers live in apartments or homes that they or their parents received earlier from the government during the time of the Soviet Union and they do not have any mortgage to pay for it.

4. Car insurance is much lower in Russia than in the United States.

5. In relationship to the cost of living, a teacher's salary in Russia is much lower than a teacher's salary in the United States.

Discussion

This study explored relationships between teachers' self-reported moonlighting practices and morale issues as reported by two completely different population pools. One group of teachers reporting were from the state of Texas in the United States, while the other population was from the region around and including Kirov, Russia.

One item that stands out is the preponderance of females in the teaching profession. Is that possibly because salaries are so low that a one bread winner can no longer support a family? Is that the reason a high percentage of respondents reported that both spouses work and also moonlighted? Or are there other reasons not discernible that lead to this disproportionate balance of the gender in the teaching profession?

Another item that stands out with the Texas teacher data is the amount of money earned in a moonlighting job, \$5931, and what respondents said would take for them to quit moonlighting (\$9,188). If salaries were raised to that level would this effectively reduce the moonlighting rate to those of other occupations? Would a raise of this amount (which would only place the state of Texas, salary-wise, in the top half in the nation) allow these teachers more time to spend on their planning and instruction, making them better teachers? They self-report at 83% that the answer to that would be, yes.

It was also very interesting to compare the similarities between the two countries and note similar issues were present in both countries and the similarities in the characteristics of the teachers who responded. There were some differences in salary and educational level, but the similarities far outweighed the differences. For example, teachers in both countries agreed that moonlighting affected their teaching performance, yet felt they had no choice but to continue.

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Аннотация. Данное исследование было призвано изучить результаты работы учителя по совместительству в рамках обучения в классе, отношение учителей к данному вопросу, а также к вопросу оплаты труда. Кроме исследования, проведенного в Техасе (США), были получены результаты пилотного исследования среди педагогов некоторых школ и Центра детского творчества с изучением прикладной экономики города Кирова (Россия). Итоги работы показали, что учителя готовы отказаться от совместительства, если повысится оплата труда, а также это положительно скажется на качестве работы учителей.

Ключевые слова: образование, мораль учителя, работа по совместительству, сравнение российского и американского опыта.

Раздел: (01) педагогика; история педагогики и образования; теория и методика обучения и воспитания (по предметным областям).

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