Wellbeing of Different Generation English Teachers in Their Professional Practice

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Abstract. The topicality and the context of this research are related to the phenomenon of wellbeing of different generation English teachers, trying to identify the key factors of promoting teachers’ wellbeing. The aim is to study and analyse experience of different generation English teachers with regard to wellbeing in their professional practice, and to identify the key factors of promoting teachers’ wellbeing.

The first years for the teachers are a special time in their professional practice because during this period the experience of what the teacher is and what is his/her potential is formed. But it is also important for experienced teachers not to lose the focus, concentrate on continuum of professional development, improve knowledge, follow the latest trends in education, share experiences with the new teachers and to gain new knowledge from them, as well as to broaden the horizons not only in the frame of teaching subject, but also in general. Wellbeing has a great importance in the teacher’s profession in order to create teacher’s satisfaction with life, positive relationship towards others, as well as positive and successful learning environment.

Keywords: wellbeing, hedonism, eudemonia, influencing factors, different generations, professional practice.

Introduction

Often teachers at the beginning of their professional career feel unsafe, scared and they encounter with different challenges – lesson planning and management, various unexpected forms of expression from the students, lack of good relationships
with students, their parents and colleagues, as well as other factors. Wilbert McKeachie (2002) points out that when seeing the class for the first time, it is like meeting strangers who will affect teacher’s wellbeing. Moreover, it is exciting and anxiously at the same time both for teacher and the students. Therefore, it is important to examine the factors that obstruct and promote wellbeing, as well as analyse what can be done in order to improve the learning environment and the teacher’s psychological and subjective wellbeing.

The theoretical framework is designed by the assumptions and conclusions published by the researchers: E. Diener et al., C. Ryff & C. Keyes, M. Seligman & M. Csikszentmihalyi, E. Holmes, R. Slavin, G. Svene.

The level of wellbeing differs not only among different generations, but also among people in general. However, it is important to find out whether development of wellbeing and its related aspects among different generations of English teachers diverge or not, namely, whether the age directly determines the development of wellbeing and how the young and experienced teachers overcome challenges or daily life problems at school, or this condition is more secondary. It is very important that the teachers can find a balance between work and private life, and develop not only professionally, but also emotionally, mentally and spiritually. If the young teachers sometimes need to find a way, how to create wellbeing at the beginning in their professional practice, the experienced teachers must think of how to maintain it and find a way to gain positive emotions, inspiration and energy, despite the long years of service and avoiding routine.

Seeking for happiness or subjective wellbeing, as well as psychological wellbeing, and factors that influence it, is one of the fundamental issues in this research, thus the main focus is both on eudemonic approach (according to Collins English Dictionary (2012) – (philosophy) an ethical doctrine holding that the value of moral action lies in its capacity to produce happiness) and hedonistic approach (according to Collins English Dictionary (2012) – (ethics) the doctrine that moral value can be defined in terms of pleasure/the pursuit of pleasure is the highest good).

The research is based on phenomenological research method by collecting 9 in-depth interviews. As this is a qualitative research, the main focus is on a qualitative research interview, thus, research base and group is based on in-depth interviews of the English teachers of three different age groups including also international experience. The classification of generations is based on Jane’s Hart (2008) classification; therefore, three generations are taken into account: Baby Boomer, generation X and generation Y. In each generation there are three individuals in a different age who were selected at random; all the names are encoded in order to get truer and deeper answers. The average duration of the interviews is 48.27 minutes, and shows serious research as well as allows to examine indeed in-depth experiences and reveals interesting findings. The findings are compared not only among different generations, but also taking into account the experience of two distinct countries – Latvia and Austria.
It is important to understand, how educational institutions can attract professional teachers and do not let them quit the job. Therefore, it is essential to discuss the problem how to resolve this issue not only at the individual, but also at the national level, taking into account the phenomenon of wellbeing – encouraging and supporting young teachers as well as experienced ones and focusing more on positive psychology.

**Wellbeing and its Influencing and Obstructing Factors**

Each person has a need of happiness and satisfaction, and the phenomenon of achieving wellbeing has been a topical issue since the beginning of philosophy and psychology. While there are still wide discussions about the term *wellbeing* trying to find what it includes, however, it is certain that wellbeing is transferred from philosophical field to more scientific studies, including the factors that influence and promote wellbeing, as well as the quality of different people’s experience in their life leading up even to neuroscience.

Moreover, it is essential not only to define wellbeing as a whole, but also to define teacher’s wellbeing, and to try to understand what factors promote it and what obstruct it. There are few teachers who maybe do not understand what stress and burn-out means, but most of them are aware of the pressure of teacher’s job, and of frequent necessity to take work home. However, it is important to find the balance between work and life, and be aware of your strengths and weaknesses, therefore, promoting wellbeing not only at school, but also in the teacher’s personal life.

Before specifying the term “wellbeing” the authors would like to pay attention to the concept “positive psychology” which is quite a new branch in psychology. One of the founders of the positive psychology is Martin Seligman, as well as his colleague Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. According to Seligman’s and Csikszentmihalyi’s (2000) one of the early works on positive psychology, it is obvious that psychology first of all concentrates on a healing. The dominant focus is on pathology, negative impulses, thus, forgetting about happiness, creativity, positive emotions. Positive psychology allows to look at life differently, highlighting a change in the focus of psychology – valued positive experiences of the people as well as positive qualities. “The field of positive psychology at the subjective level is about valued subjective experiences: well-being, contentment, and satisfaction (in the past); hope and optimism (for the future); and flow and happiness (in the present); at the individual level, it is about positive individual traits” (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, 5). Therefore, psychology needs to deal also with positive emotions and positive experiences, concentrating not only on the healing process and the bad emotional experiences, but more over on happiness, creativity, valuable experience, development and satisfaction with life, environment and other people, especially it should be more appreciated in teachers’ profession because teachers have to deal with various tasks – they need to be not only good teachers, but also good psychologists, friends, parents, managers.
The phenomenon of happiness and aspirations to define it is one of the fundamental problems in psychology because “happiness is one of the most important human core values” (Kalvāns, 2012, 877). Psychologist and professor of psychology Eric Kalvāns explains that “the essence of the phenomenon of happiness, its influence on the functioning of personality, as well as the research of the factors influencing this phenomenon have been explored by many leading personalogists of the 20th century” (Kalvāns, 2012, 877), and also positive psychology followers. Moreover, the author admits that the concept “happiness” is a synonym of the concept “subjective wellbeing” where the latest is more often used in the context of positive psychology.

But there is another concept of wellbeing – psychological wellbeing – which has to be taken into account when focusing on teachers’ wellbeing. Elizabeth Holmes points out, “Looking after teachers’ wellbeing should be honourable enough as a goal without needing to use improvements in pupil performance as an excuse for its priority” (Holmes, 2005, 3).

Since positive psychology in Latvia is known a little bit more than 10 years there is still confusion in the context of defining wellbeing. Guna Svence points out that the “concept wellbeing cannot be applied to all cases and translate it as subjective wellbeing. Moreover, there have been a number of positive psychology conferences, and the authors of positive psychology have decided that there should be two main concepts – eudemonistic approach and hedonistic approach of wellbeing” (Svence 2009: 17-18).

Diener et al. (2012) explain that hedonic wellbeing is based on both physical and mental pleasure. “Positive and negative emotions are typically thought of as aspects of hedonic well-being because they are inherently pleasant or unpleasant” (Diener et al., 2012, 334). Meanwhile, eudemonic wellbeing is based more on exercising virtues such as developing potential, gratitude, and acting to the best of one’s ability. However, it is not clear that the life satisfaction, what is cognitive element of the subjective wellbeing, is more hedonic in nature than eudemonic.

Opinions vary whether both eudemonistic and hedonistic approaches can be considered as completely separate or correlative concepts; nevertheless mostly they are seen as complex conception composed of several parts. Historically it is believed that wellbeing consists of two distinct but mutually correlative aspects – eudemonistic (psychological wellbeing) and hedonistic (subjective wellbeing) (Svence, 2009). For some of the authors it is important to analyse these two concepts as distinct aspects while others believe that they should be seen as two similar aspects that influence not only each other but also the whole nature of the human being. Nevertheless, focus should be more on seeing both concepts in a holistic way – if in the centre there is a teacher, the research should be based on examining not only individual experience, but also see it holistically, taking into consideration all wellbeing influencing factors and not dividing them (due to belonging to one or the other approach).

Svence (2009) admits that one of the main authors in the field of subjective wellbeing – Ed Diener together with his colleague Richard Lucas, concluded that subjective
wellbeing consists of three major components: satisfaction judgments, positive emotions and moods, and lack of negative emotions and moods. While psychological wellbeing followers Carol Ryff and Corey Lee Keyes offer six key factors that create psychological wellbeing. According to Ryff and Keyes (1995, 720) “the convergence of multiple frameworks of positive functioning served as the theoretical foundation to generate a multi-dimensional model of well-being”. Description of dimensions includes:

- positive evaluations of oneself and one’s past life (Self-Acceptance),
- a sense of continued growth and development as a person (Personal Growth),
- the belief that one’s life is purposeful and meaningful (Purpose in Life),
- the possession of quality relations with others (Positive Relations with Others),
- the capacity to manage effectively one’s life and surrounding world (Environmental Mastery),
- a sense of self-determination (Autonomy).

These six psychological wellbeing factors are important to the teachers in order to have a sense of wellbeing; however, it is also important to talk about influencing factors of subjective wellbeing such as positive emotions and moods, satisfaction with life and job, thus once again it shows that both concepts are very important and should be seen holistically.

When defining wellbeing Holmes (2005) agrees with other authors who have said that wellbeing is a complex concept, but it has an increasingly dominant place in person’s mind. She points out that when a person has a sense of wellbeing it means the person has a sense of control over a work, life and even destiny; he/she does not feel a stress and is not bored or under stimulated pressure. Therefore, in order to define the scope of wellbeing both in the classroom and the wider context, Holmes (2005) offers to divide it into four sub-categories: physical wellbeing, emotional wellbeing, mental and intellectual wellbeing, and spiritual wellbeing. Furthermore, Holmes explains “While the intrinsic elements of well-being can be extracted from the concept, it is important to take a holistic approach to it” (Holmes, 2005, 7). Taking into account not only the physical wellbeing, but also emotional, mental and even spiritual wellbeing is a key element to every person’s life, but especially for teachers’ personal growth and professional development. Wellbeing affects not only the teachers themselves but also students they are teaching, i.e., the whole teaching-learning process is in the centre, and it affects the effectiveness of the students’ learning and the teachers’ work.

Since wellbeing at work is essential, it is important to look at factors obstructing wellbeing of teachers in their workplace. There are several internal and external factors obstructing wellbeing, e.g., mental and emotional demands of the job, students’ behaviour, excessive workload, workplace environment, even public image or prestige of the teachers and lot of others. Stress is the major aspect that influences wellbeing negatively. It would be only fair to say that stress can affect all components of wellbeing – if the teacher feels stress it affects not only the mood, but also the sense of purpose in life, positive relations
with others, work effectiveness and also the students’ awareness of effective learning process. But first of all it is necessary to understand if the stress inconstant phenomenon or it is psychological, and could it help to prevent further negative consequences.

But it is important to understand that stress can also be a factor that promotes well-being. Holmes (2005) explains that there are obvious and hidden causes of stress, and not always stress is only bad. There is also a positive stress what motives the people to continue the work, to be creative, as well as to be able to handle all demands and to be successful. Problems arise when the teachers do not feel motivated anymore, and they start to see more negative aspects of their profession than the positive ones.

Balancing work and life is the biggest challenge in every profession, but especially in teachers’ profession. Robert Slavin (2006) questions what makes a good teacher – is it humour and empathy, or planning, hard work and self-discipline, or maybe love of learning and teaching, as well as enthusiasm. He adds that knowing the subject matters, as well as the teacher has to master the teaching skills. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that in order to promote wellbeing several factors need to be taken into account, and if the teachers are aware of them, there is no obstacle that prevents them from building a positive and successful atmosphere at work and in their lives.

Despite some negative factors the teachers may encounter in their professional practice that can obstruct their wellbeing, as Seligman says, “to understand wellbeing then we also need to understand personal strengths and virtues, because when wellbeing comes from engaging our strengths and virtues, our lives are imbued with authenticity” (Seligman, 2003, 9). Because the feelings can change, they are not permanent, as well as negative or positive characteristics that “recur across time and different situations, and strengths and virtues are positive characteristics that bring about good feeling and gratification” (Seligman, 2003, 9).

Although defining wellbeing may seem not an easy task, and lot of authors still face the problems concerning this issue, however, the content prevails over the form, i.e., the most essential part is to explore what factors promote subjective and psychological wellbeing, how to get harmony between person’s mind and body, how to become an optimistic, happy and satisfied person, not forgetting also about self-realization, personal growth, as well as purpose in life because every experience is priceless, and it affects also the professional activities of the teachers.

Since the teaching profession often involves a variety of situations that can create high stress level, it depends only of the person himself how to overcome stress situations and how to see that sometimes stress can help one achieve more. Ability to respond on different stress situations also shows how big the balance between the body and mind is. However, it is important, firstly, to acknowledge that the teacher may feel under the stress, and secondly, to be aware of the stress level because sometimes it can affect more than the teachers think, and this is why it is particularly essential not to ignore obvious signals what body may give, and to think of wellbeing both beforehand and during the
professional practice. Stress is one of the major factors obstructing wellbeing, and it influences in direct way teachers’ physical, mental and emotional health, as well as ability to fulfill all duties. It is particularly important while taking into account that the teachers’ wellbeing affects students’ learning process, as well as their wellbeing, and today’s learners are tomorrow’s society, and the majority wants happy, healthy and optimistic society.

The Research on Wellbeing of Different Generation English Teachers

The research is based on phenomenological research method by collecting in-depth interviews of three different generation English teachers. The classification of generations is based on Jane’s Hart (2008) classification. According to her there are five generations, and for the first time in history four of them are still in the workforce. Nevertheless, the research is based on three generations:

- Baby Boomers (1946–1964),
- Generation X (1965–1979),

Respondents: in each generation there are three individuals in a different age who were selected at random; all the names are encoded in order to get truer and deeper answers, starting from R1 till the R9, namely,

- R1, R2 and R8 – Generation Y (aged from 20–35),
- R3, R4 and R7 – Generation X (aged from 36–50),
- R5, R6 and R9 – Baby Boomers (aged from 51–69).

More information about the respondents involved in the research, their occupation and work experience as well as the duration of the interviews can be found in the table below.

Table 1. Respondents involved in the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Duration of the interview</th>
<th>Work experience at school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gen Y</td>
<td>Primary and Secondary school teacher</td>
<td>44 m 41 s</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gen Y</td>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
<td>60 m 12 s</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>Primary school teacher</td>
<td>47 m 34 s</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>Special education teacher</td>
<td>39 m 12 s</td>
<td>17 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R5</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Special education teacher</td>
<td>52 m 49 s</td>
<td>29 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Special education teacher</td>
<td>40 m 23 s</td>
<td>31 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Gen X</td>
<td>Secondary school teacher</td>
<td>51 m 44 s</td>
<td>30 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Gen Y</td>
<td>Secondary school teacher</td>
<td>46 m 03 s</td>
<td>9 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R9</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Baby Boomer</td>
<td>Secondary school teacher</td>
<td>53 m 32 s</td>
<td>35 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although J. Hart highlights that four generations are still in the workforce, the fourth generation (Veterans) are at the age of 70 and up, and taking into account that mostly people at that age are already retired, and it was very difficult to find English teachers of this generation, three above mentioned generations are chosen.

**The process of the interview:** The purpose of the research is to examine different generation English teacher professional practice in connection to their wellbeing. The in-depth interviews are carried out to find out in-depth, detailed and reasoned respondents’ opinion on their activities in professional practice and in daily life, meanwhile recording the respondents’ emotions and non-verbal language, therefore leading to the findings on wellbeing. The interview is semi-structured, namely, the interview includes list of questions divided into three sections: lead-in questions (all together 6 questions), basic questions (all together 25 questions and 2 additional questions), and concluding questions (all together 9 questions). Possible additional questions are asked depending on the respondents’ answers.

**Findings, analysis and conclusions.** The research is based on different generation English teachers’ judgments of experience about the wellbeing in their professional practice, taking into account the aspects of psychological and subjective wellbeing, namely, six-factor model of psychological wellbeing (or eudemonia) offered by Ryff and Keye, as well as major components of subjective wellbeing (or hedonia) offered by Diener, Lucas and Seligman, which is also very important aspect because teacher’s profession is one of those where emotions and feelings are involved, as well as the pleasant and unpleasant experience in reaction to life. Therefore, it once again confirms the proposed idea that eudemonia and hedonia are interrelated and should be seen in a holistic way.

Before analysing the findings, several categories were defined, taking into account the aspects of psychological and subjective wellbeing. The findings were compared not only among different generations, but also taking into account the experience of two distinct countries – Latvia and Austria. In this research, gender was not taken into account as a criterion.

The framework of the interview questions is based on main aspects of psychological and subjective wellbeing, thus eight categories are defined, which in some parts are very closely related, meaning – some of the questions include both psychological and subjective aspects of wellbeing. During the data processing eight categories were defined:

1. Self-acceptance,
2. Positive relationship with others,
3. Environmental mastery,
4. Autonomy,
5. Personal growth,
6. Purpose in life,
7. Satisfaction judgements,
8. Positive emotions and lack of negative emotions.
**Self-acceptance** is one of the major aspects on the way to wellbeing, i.e. if the people accept themselves as they are as well as their personalities, if they are aware of their strengths and also weaknesses, if they are satisfied with the chosen profession, they want constantly to develop, and they know the meaning of concepts ‘self-criticism’ and ‘self-improvement’ there are no obstacles in order to have positive relationship with others, be good at environmental mastery, see the purpose in life, and in general be satisfied with life and feel positive emotions and sense of wellbeing.

Summarizing the findings in this category, the results show that mostly self-acceptance among nine different generation English teachers is in a high level. When talking about the professional experience as an English teacher the length of service varies among all nine respondents from generation to generation.

Two respondents from the Generation Y (R1 and R2) with the shortest work experience admit that they like to be an English teachers but they constantly feel very tired, and they consider the idea to change a profession in the future, therefore they accept themselves as the teachers at some point, but according to scales of wellbeing are somewhere in between high score and low score level (Ryff and Keyes, 1995, 727). R1 points out that she has already been working as an English teacher for four years and recognizes that she loves her job; she feels constant need of her work in her profession. This is related to the fact that the permanent tendency is determined by the specific conditions or aspects which are revealed in the interview, but the respondent admits that it is not possible to work long-term in this profession if there is no sense of wellbeing.

To get to know more how respondents accept themselves as the professionals and what was the reason why they chose to become teachers – was it intentional or unconscious choice – the respondents needed to answer to two questions – *Why did you choose to become a teacher? Who or what influences you to become exactly an English teacher?* The findings show that only two respondents became associated with the teaching profession already since childhood. R7 and R9 share their thoughts:

<...> Since I was a child I admired my teachers <...> I knew that my social competence was that high, and it was a dream job for me (R7).
<...> I have always been interested in children <...> I just didn’t know if I have to choose primary school or secondary school <...> I like the language, and I like the land a lot <...> So, I preferred English (R9).

Findings of the other respondents show that the choice was not planned in advance, for example, R4 admits that her choice was determined by the fact that she is the fourth generation teacher in her family, but she did not know which language to choose, although the answers show that the respondent already accepted herself as a teacher, meanwhile R2 bitterly says that she chose to work at school because she needed a job. The R1 and R8 also admit that at the beginning they did not want to become an English teacher. A small break, while thinking and focusing on thoughts, and afterwards providing an answer, again confirms that the choice to become a teacher of English is not intentional,
but more like coincidence of several factors, namely, in the case of R1 it is the will to study the language, then search for a work, and suddenly she was offered to start her work at school as an English teacher, likewise the R4 and R5 explain that the choice was determined by life and specific circumstances such as lack of knowledge in science education.

In this context, looking from the perspective of empirical observations, it may be concluded that there are situations that already in the childhood the individual is aware of the desired profession (in daily life called ‘dream job’ or ‘dream profession’), and is willing to endure various difficulties to get this job and maintain it. However, there are various cases when the profession is chosen due to number of circumstances – because of will to learn the language in-depth, getting to know more about this profession, or just because most of family members in several generations were and are teachers.

According to Ryff and Keyes (1995) high level self-acceptance includes positive attitude toward oneself, acknowledgment and acceptance of multiple aspects, including good and bad qualities, and having positive feelings about past life. If the teachers have a lack of these qualities or they have a low score in self-acceptance point (e.g., feelings of dissatisfaction with themselves, they are disappointed with what has occurred with past life or they are troubled about certain personal qualities and would like to be the other person or would like to change a profession), it can influence both psychological and subjective wellbeing. Nevertheless, the respondents overcame all challenges and still continue to work in this profession despite initial difficulties. It shows a big patience and ability to overcome stress situations, as well as to move forward in order to achieve set goals. Moreover, lot of the respondents acknowledge that they are good professionals, they love their job and they love what they are doing even when they encounter challenges or problems in their professional practice, and it shows high level of self-acceptance.

Summarizing the answers of the question – *how do you evaluate a status or prestige of a teacher in your country* – results show unpleasant truth: most of the respondents think that the status of the teachers’ profession is low, and the main reason for that is the lack of education of the society and the reflection of false or misinterpreted information from the mass media. According to the R1 the prestige of the teacher in society is low, and she does not feel evaluated by the society – *I think that the job, that teachers do, is not evaluated.* The respondent acknowledges that the main problem is not the small salary, but more society’s and children’s attitude towards the teachers. And there is a dilemma, on the one hand there are parents who believe that the teachers’ responsibility is to do the maximum and even more in their professional practice and on the other hand there is a teacher, who often is overworked and wants to be evaluated from the society. As a possible solution there could be more work with a public education explaining more about the teachers’ work and their duties.

Nevertheless, some of the respondents argue although the prestige is not very high it will be better (R5). Other respondent agrees with this point of view, pointing out that,
<...> for me a teacher is a profession that can I think change a world, change society <...> we can make impressions on children, we can inspire them, we can make them to be the better person, but still, I don't think that attitude from the society is very good against teachers (R2).

The teachers feel more positively when they can see, how the contributed and performed work develops the children. According to Ryff and Singer (2008) self-acceptance as a professional aspect takes long time, and it is not always easy to be aware of both personal strengths and weaknesses already at the beginning of professional practice. The profession choice of respondents was determined by various factors such as will to develop and improve the knowledge, advice from family member, admiration of the other teachers since childhood etc. Respondents pointed out that very often at the beginning of their professional practice they felt unsecured or unsafe of the new situation, of the knowledge or students they need to teach. Therefore, taking into account fear and insecurity in the context of wellbeing, the most important aspect is the question about the time period what is needed to overcome factors obstructing wellbeing in order to proceed the professional practice and not to give up. Although some respondents feel overworked, exhausted and not evaluated from the society, in general all of them are aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and accepts themselves well in teaching profession. The biggest part of the respondents acknowledges that the teacher's job is not evaluated from the society and the biggest problem is that often society does not accept teachers or their work, and it can lead to a reduction of wellbeing, and there should be more focus on educating the society. In general it can be concluded that the length of the service or teacher's professional experience does not affect the teacher's professionalism because it is more about enthusiasm and liking of the chosen profession, and sometimes with less experience, but positive attitude and enthusiasm teachers can achieve very good results, thus, the sense of wellbeing grows, as well as self-acceptance that the teacher is in the right place and can do a lot. It is necessary to find out what the conditions are or what help is needed in order to reduce fear and insecurity level, especially at the beginning of the teacher's professional practice. Some of the respondents point out that despite good practice during the studies, the main concern is that there is not enough support and help at the beginning, sometimes the teachers do not know how to handle certain situations. The one solution is the support of more experienced colleagues that can also establish positive relationship which is one of the aspects to reach psychological wellbeing. Unfortunately, not always the new teacher can rely on colleagues who are more experienced – often they do not have time or they can even see the competitor, therefore, it can promote negative experience and stress situation. As one solution could be special courses for young teachers where more experienced teachers talk about their experiences, as well as special events for the staff in order to strengthen friendship among colleagues and promote positive thinking in the working place, thus creating wellbeing already at the beginning in teacher's professional practice.
Wellbeing can be promoted by establishing friendly relationship with students in the classroom, or with the colleagues and administration at school, as well as by positive thinking. Therefore, **positive relations with others**, trust and empathy also need to be taken into account in order to promote wellbeing. If the first experience with the students is positive, there is a high probability that the teacher will continue to feel secure and confident in the profession, and develop successful career.

Findings from the interviews show that there are different opinions on too close or too friendly relationship between teacher and students as well as concerning the respect. R9 strictly separates the distance between the teacher and the students, saying

<…> I am not a friend, not such a friend of the pupils. I am the teacher, and there is a distance. I always want a distance. They should know that I am not their friend to play cards with them <…> (R9).

R5 from the special education school admits that the relationship with students are more or less okay while her colleague sadly announces that the relationship is not very good, but mostly because students have learning difficulties and in fact they are like different <…> from the other children and have behaviour problems (R6). Although the work at special education field is more difficult and each day the teachers need to face different challenges, it does not prevent the teachers to continue work at the school already for a long time. Despite some problems in a relationship between the teacher and the students, as well as sometimes their parents, other respondents express positive emotions while talking about the relationship and respect.

Findings show that the respect from both students and their parents is essential, and it shows not only good relations, but also professionalism of the teacher, i.e. if the students respect their teacher it is based on teacher’s work and his/her attitude towards people, life and things in general. Once again it is visible that appreciation of the teacher’s work and mutually good relationship give a positive impact and promotes wellbeing.

Analysing positive relations with other in general among three different generations there are no big difference, for example, between youngest and oldest generations. Almost all of the respondents admit that overall relations with the students and their parents are good with some exceptions, as well as they feel respected. Bigger difference is seen between different schools, namely, mostly the problems with showing respect and creating positive relations are in special education school. Nevertheless, in order to create positive atmosphere at school and create wellbeing, it is necessary to develop positive relations also with colleagues and administration. All respondents admit that the relationship with colleagues is good or even excellent, there is a mutual exchange of information almost every day, and they always can rely on the colleagues. But when talking about the administration, some respondents show disappointment.

Therefore, it may be concluded although respondents use different approaches there is no one key approach how to make positive relations with students and their parents because it may depend on the situations. Sometimes if the students experience stress or
fear, they can show aggression or inappropriate behaviour as a defence mechanism that negatively affect relationship in the classroom and lesson, so the teacher’s action (action or inaction) shall be pointed to make the students feel secure and to reduce potential conflict situations.

Every day the teachers encounter different challenges and sometimes problems and it is not always an easy task to deal with environmental mastery. But in order to fulfil professional abilities that are focused on sustainable development, and feel the effectiveness in what they are doing, and how they are dealing with different challenges and problems that also match with their needs and values, teachers need to improve their environmental mastery as well as autonomy. On the question – Identify the most common problems you are facing in your professional practice every day and how to deal with them – the most common answers were about technical issues and students’ behaviour (see the Fig. 1).

![Most common problems in the professional practice](image)

Fig 1. Most Common Problems in the Professional Practice of the Teachers

More than half (60 %) of respondents point out that the biggest problem is students’ behaviour whilst the other biggest problem is a lack of resources (20 %). Although some of respondents indicate some other problems like lack of discipline or management problems which all cause behavioural problems, it is necessary to point out solutions which respondents offer. Some of the examples of best practice are:

- Reflect on the own style of teaching (R2),
- Secret student in the class (R2),
- Educate the students and motivate them to go on and reflect on their own actions (R7),
- Talk with the students about the main things which are important to them (R9).

One of the environmental mastery indicators is implementation of the requirements of daily life. Various school-related organizational issues and laws and regulations that teachers have to follow, have a significant impact on how the teachers are satisfied or dissatisfied with their job, life and mutual relationships, and how it affects their wellbeing.
Satisfaction with life is one of the aspects of hedonia, however, environmental mastery (which is one of the aspects of eudemonia) is closely related to satisfaction/dissatisfaction because the way how the teachers can implement requirements of daily life gives an impact on their satisfaction/dissatisfaction level, as well as influences their wellbeing.

It is necessary to look also at the autonomy of the teacher, how the teachers fulfil environmental mastery at the same time maintaining academic freedom and being free in their thoughts and activities. This is important aspect that should be taken into account while thinking in terms of wellbeing. In general it may be concluded that the opinion and help from the colleagues are very important factors in the teachers’ professional practice.

On the one hand, it can indicate to a low sense of autonomy, but on the other hand, it shoes the respect towards colleagues as well as positive relations with them because it is considered not as a lack of autonomy but more as personal or mutual gain maybe for others in order to improve their environmental mastery or just a sense of wellbeing. Findings show that there are more differences between countries than generations. R7, R8 and R9 all admit that the parents are involved in their students learning process, and R7 even adds that it is some kind of reflection of her job and is very necessary for improving her teaching as well.

There is also visible a triangulation between the teacher, the students and action of the parents (activity or inactivity), i.e., if the parents are involved in the learning process and helps their children as much as possible, the work of the teacher reduces, but if the parents are not involved into the learning process and they do not pay attention to their children, the amount of the teacher’s work is growing. At the same time it is important that the teacher can affect the parents, for example, with advice on how to help the children effectively at home or by giving the feedback and reflection to the teachers saying what indeed helps and what is good, or what activities improve the knowledge and skills of their children because it helps in all levels – to the teacher, to the students and also to the parents. Nevertheless, findings show that there is a small difference between generations with regard to autonomy of the teacher. It may be concluded that with years the autonomy only grows. The teachers become more independent and sure about their work, help is not needed so much anymore and they are less controlled while respondents with a smaller professional experience feel more need for help and are not satisfied with the involvement of the parents in the learning process, and some of them even feel that there is a quite big control over their work. Svence (2009) also admits that it is completely normal process that the autonomy and the environmental mastery increase over the years whilst personal growth and purpose in life decrease because more experienced generations do not think about the future so often anymore.

Other important aspect to promote wellbeing is personal growth which is very close connected with another aspect of psychological wellbeing – purpose in life. These two aspects of the psychological wellbeing are the most closely correlated because one of the indicators of the personal growth is that the respondent is able to achieve set goals both
in professional and private life. There are a number of important aspects in order to reach the aim/aims such as acquisition of new knowledge, including the acquisition of education and experience, as well as self-improvement. Finding show that it is not always important to achieve the aim or achieve it at the full amount, but most important is to moving towards it. The ability and skills to adapt to the current situation and if necessary to put forward new priorities in life are very important.

Taking into account the results of the research, it is generally concluded that the respondents are interested in their personal development as well as take steps to improve and implement the growth as much as possible by attending seminars, gaining the experience abroad, reading the latest publications and books. But the main problem for lot of respondents is the lack of time and limited funds that affect personal growth and obstruct their wellbeing.

When analysing if there are any differences between generations with regard to personal growth, Ryff and Keyes (1995) suggest that this aspect decreases quite significantly over the years, while self-acceptance, for example, stays almost at the same level. But findings of this research show other results. Comparing generation Y and Baby Boomers it is visible that respondents with many years of teaching experience are more aware of how important is to attend seminars and read latest publications, i.e., to think of the professional development and to find time for that. Meanwhile younger respondents with less teaching experience admit that they do not have so much time for attending seminars or reading publications (e.g. R1, R2).

Analysing answers with regard to purpose in life, it may be concluded that this aspect is very important in all generations, and is not decreasing so dramatically as in the research carried out by Ryff and Keyes. This could indicate that the teaching profession is different from the other categories of respondents discussed in the research of Ryff and Keyes (1995). The teaching profession as a whole is focused on continuous development, following the latest trends in the field of education, as well as social changes in the society. Taking into account that the personal growth is closely linked to the attempt to reach purpose in life, the teachers need to set the goals or aims in life in order to work at this profession successfully and for a long time, as well as to be able to develop individually and professionally. When asking more specifically about the current aim in life, findings show that the respondents can name at least one or nearest aim/-s in their life.

Results show that among generations there are no differences with regard to having an aim in life, the difference is in the type of aim, i.e., the young teachers focus more on definite aim fulfilment like getting the degree and qualification or seeing the children growing and building a house, while aims of experienced teachers are more based on eudemonistic and somehow philosophical aspects such as being satisfied and happy in general. Although it may be concluded that the respondents from Baby Boomer generation see their future with the ability to retire, and it could mean that the purpose of life and personal growth aspect is decreasing, however, the results show that they are more
satisfied with their professional life and their aims in life are more based on aspects connected to eudemonic or subjective wellbeing. This is very important aspect when taking into account that more experienced teachers could think that they have fulfilled the maximum in their professional and personal life and there is nothing left in order to develop or see the purpose of life, but for the teaching profession it is essential to have aims, to follow the latest trends, to maintain optimism and sustain own development, thus, promoting wellbeing and having a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction.

This leads to the last two defined categories of wellbeing with regard to subjective wellbeing – satisfaction judgments and positive emotions and lack of negative emotions. With regard to positive emotions, the answers refer to a number of interview questions because the positive emotions of the respondents appear in different ways and different circumstances. The findings are viewed systematically looking at all the questions as a whole, for example, the question about what makes the teacher professional English teacher includes also the definite level of positive emotions, i.e., if the teacher has higher level of self-acceptance it is more likely that he/she will also have higher level of positive emotions and lack of negative emotions. However, not always it shows that the level of satisfaction also will be high. There are lot of other factors influencing not only wellbeing but also level of satisfaction and positive emotions. Since subjective wellbeing focuses more on how the person evaluates his or her life and is more seen at the individual level, however, in the context of this research the evaluations of the respondents are analysed more widely, taking into account cognitive evaluations, such as satisfaction judgments, and affective evaluations – emotions and moods when the respondents tell about their reactions to what is happening in their life and how it affects their life and wellbeing in general not each particular case separately because there are lot of other components affecting the quality of life, level of satisfaction as well as wellbeing.

Very important question what shows the level of satisfaction as well as determines the level of self-acceptance at some extent is how satisfied the respondent is with the salary and why. Assumptions predicted that there will be differences between all generations, but the facts show that the main differences are more between countries than the generations. Since the aim of the research is to find out similarities or differences among generations in general not at the individual level, it may be concluded that mostly all the respondents are not satisfied with the salary, especially the respondents from Latvia, with one exception, and the amount of salary widely differs. The differences can also be found by analysing answers on the question – how satisfied are you with the current situation in the field of education? Findings in the category of environmental mastery already showed what the necessary changes at the national or school level are according to the respondents. Nevertheless, the level of satisfaction shows that the respondents of Latvia are not satisfied with the changing ministers and changing programmes, while the respondents of Austria point out to the growing interference of the media into the education system, as well as lack of parents’ involvement into the learning process of their children. Thus,
it may be concluded that the level of satisfaction should be viewed not only with regard to separate individuals but also as a whole nation, taking into consideration the current situation and problems at the national level.

Findings show that more than half are satisfied with both life and chosen professional field. None of the respondents agrees that he/she is dissatisfied. And only 3 respondents cannot give the direct answer, but two of them admit that it is how it is, and if there will be “desperate need to change something”, they will do it.

To sum up all above mentioned, it is concluded that factors of the psychological wellbeing as well as factors of the subjective wellbeing are interrelated, but they may differ not only among generations but more specifically among individuals because the phenomenon of wellbeing includes different aspects and set of circumstances. The positive relations with others are mostly good or excellent (with rare exceptions), and environmental mastery and personal growth just develop from year to year, and it all depends on the personality and characteristics of the respondents. Although Ryff and Keyes point out that the factors as autonomy and environmental mastery increase over years while personal growth and purpose in life decrease, this research proves that it depends not only on the circumstances, but also on the individuals and the specific of teaching profession. Some of the factors indeed increase over the years and some of them decrease, but with one exception – it depends also on the components of subjective wellbeing such as satisfaction with life and positive emotions and others, e.g., it may be concluded those respondents who pay attention also to the physical activities and development of mental and emotional wellbeing are more satisfied with the life and have more energy and ideas, therefore, it affects not only teaching-learning process but also creation of more positive relations towards others. Meanwhile, the respondents who feel stressed and do not have high level of environmental mastery are more dissatisfied with several aspects of life and professional practice, their relations are less positive (especially with authorities), and they admit having burn-out, and even consider to change something in their life.

Of course, there are also other side of the coin, i.e., it should be considered more from the educational institution and especially from the state what should be done in order to promote teachers’ wellbeing taking into account also personal growth and development. Findings show that most of the respondents try to attend seminars and look for the recent publications every day, and would be glad to attend also courses abroad. This shows that the respondents are interested in their personal growth and would like to explore new experiences and gain more knowledge, but sometimes they feel that there is not enough involvement from the state in order to promote their wellbeing and level of satisfaction. Certainly, the level of wellbeing and satisfaction differs not only from generation to generation but also from individual to individual. However, general age trends revealed higher scores among the experienced generation (particularly in environmental mastery, personal growth and level of positive emotions and lack of negative emotions), than younger generations, but it depends also on the personality, current situation and
even nations because also the state and the society as a whole can promote or obstruct well-being and growth of an individual.

**Conclusion**

Sources of happiness vary across individuals and generations, and the evidence of the research suggests that self-acceptance, positive relations with others, environmental mastery, personal growth, as well as physical and emotional health, and even leisure time are the most important sources, while autonomy and work experience are less important. However, it depends also on the personality, current situation and even society and nation in general.

Although the concept *wellbeing* is adaptable concept in Latvian psychology science and is created by one of the main psychologists in the field of positive psychology in Latvia – Guna Svonce, it still creates confusion because the concept has similar but distinct connotations; it can be described as positive emotions that promote psychological wellbeing, as well as meaningful sense of life, self-determination, positive relationship with others or level of satisfaction and happiness, therefore, the authors of positive psychology have decided that there should be two main concepts – eudemonistic approach and hedonistic approach of wellbeing. Nevertheless, defining the scope of wellbeing with regard to teachers’ wellbeing, Holmes suggested divide more subcategories, talking about physical, emotional, mental and intellectual, and spiritual wellbeing. Findings of the research show that all subcategories are important into the teaching profession, and stress is one of the main aspects which has the strongest relationship to perceiving wellbeing and creating a positive atmosphere. Therefore, better understanding of factors promoting and obstructing wellbeing, as well as links between professional activities of the teachers and the quality of life can help improve not only the teachers’ wellbeing, but also the learning environment as a whole.

Quality of life is a multi-dimensional and it includes more than just standards of living. Physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health, as well as teaching-learning environment, leisure time, satisfaction with life and job, positive emotions and other important aspects are also taken into account. But it all depends not only on psychological and subjective aspects, but also on personalities of the individuals and on the characteristics of the environment and society in general.

One of the main ways to improve the learning environment and create positive atmosphere and wellbeing, is to be aware of own identity, strengths and weaknesses, thus the focus should be also on the quality of teacher’s professional learning and professional practice – what makes a good teacher, what the professional qualities and competencies are, and why it is important to reflect one’s own professional practice, to be interested in lifelong learning and improve teaching-learning process, and how it all affects wellbeing.
References


Online resources


Skirtingų kartų anglų kalbos mokytojų gerovė jų profesinėje veikloje

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Santrauka

Gerovē turi didelę reikšmę mokytojo profesinėje veikloje, siekiant sukurti mokytojo pasitenkinimą gyvenimu, teigiamus tarpusavio santykius, tarp pat teigiamą ir sėkmingą mokymosi

Mokslinių tyrimų išvados rodo, kad geros savijautos ir pasitenkinimo lygis skiriasi ne vien tik tarp skirtingų kartų, bet ir tarp asmenų bei skirtingų šalių; laimė ar subjektyvus gerovės ir pasitenkinimo lygis yra suvokimo ir filosofijos klausimas, todėl priklauso daugiausia tik nuo paties žmogaus. O psychologinės gerovės veiksniai (pvz., autonomija ar aplinkos pažinimas) gali padidėti įgyjant daugiau profesinės patirties; taip pat daugiau dėmesio turėtų būti skiriama toms sąvokoms (subjektyvumas ar psychologinė gerovė), laikant jas holistiškomis, bet ne jas atskirių. Asmeninis augimas ir raida taip pat yra svarbus norint tapti labiau veiksmingų, jausti gyvenimo prasmę ir išnaudoti potencialą taip, kad jaustis patenkintas ir laimingas. Nes tik patenkinti, laimingi, optimistiški, kūrybiški ir profesionalūs mokytojai gali suteikti studentams daug naudos bei pateikti teigiamą ateities perspektyvą švietimo srityje. Taip pat mokytojai turėtų žinoti, kad per savo profesinę veiklą jie gali sukurti ne tik teigiamą atmosferą, bet ir skatinti gerovės požiūrį.

**Esminiai žodžiai:** gerovė, hedonizmas, eudemonija, lemiami veiksnių, skirtingos kartos, profesinė veikla.

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