Work engagement of junior secondary school English teachers in Yogyakarta

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**Introduction**

- Teachers’ work engagement has received important responses nowadays due to the worldwide high attrition and turn-over among teachers.

- Surprisingly, such cases does not seem to be a problem in Indonesia, where cases of teacher leaving their profession is rare.

- In Indonesia context, there is a gap between the professional demand and work satisfaction (the salary & academic recognition) of teachers.

- English Teachers in Indonesia are often blamed for the low student achievement in English.
What is work engagement?

- **Work engagement** is defined as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by **vigor**, **dedication** and **absorption** (Schaufelli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma, & Baker, 2002).

- **Vigor** is characterized by high level of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest efforts in one’s work and persistence in the face of difficulty.

- **Dedication** is one’s sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride and challenge.

- **Absorption** refers to the state in which one is highly concentrated and happily engrossed in works so that s/he feels time passes quickly and is difficult to detach from work.

- Engaged teachers, therefore, feel strong and vigorous at work, enthusiastic and optimistic about the work and very often get immersed in their work.
Questions

- How are Junior School English teachers in Yogyakarta engaged in their work?

- What factors influence such level of teachers’ work engagement?
Research Sample

Sample for the research is taken using the purposive sampling technique resulting in:

- 152 teachers consisting of 52 (34.2%) male and 100 (65.8%) female teachers
- ages ranging from 23 – 57 years old
- 21 (13.8%) of the sample has < 5 years teaching experience, 68 (44.7%) has 5 - 15 years teaching experience, and 61 (40.1%) has > 15 years teaching experience
- 119 (78.3%) teachers are civil servant, 10 (6.6%) teachers are fulltime private teachers, and 20 (13.2%) teachers are part time teachers
- 199 (78.3%) teachers teach in public schools, and 33 (21.7%) teachers teach in private schools
- 22 (15.5%) from Yogyakarta municipality, 27 (17.8%) from Sleman regency, 33 (21.7%) from Kulonprogo regency, 25 (16.4%) from Bantul regency, and 45 (29.6%) from Gunungkidul regency.
Measures

- Short form of Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES 9) developed by Schaufeli, Baker, and Salanova (2002), consisting of:
  - three items measuring vigor
  - three items measuring dedication
  - three items measuring absorption
Findings (1)

- Results suggest that teachers’ work engagement is generally higher than mid point (overall Mean=5.04, SD=1.13 on the 7-point Likert-type scale; $M=4.99$, $SD=1.13$ for vigor, $M=5.44$, $SD=1.08$ for dedication, and $M=4.71$, $SD=1.03$ for absorption).

- Reliability in the Indonesian context was high (alpha=.91 overall; alphas=.76, .83, .79 respectively, for component vigor, dedication, and absorption subscales).
Findings (2)

Multivariate test of ANOVA revealed that:

- there was no significant difference in work engagement of male and female teachers \((F(57, 152)=0.176, p>0.05)\).
- differences in age did not have significant effects on subjects’ work engagement \((F(177, 139)=0.983, p>0.05)\).
- differences in educational background did not have significant effects on subjects’ work engagement \((F(57, 149)=0.131, p>0.05)\).
- teaching experience did not have significant effects on subjects’ work engagement \((F(116, 150)=0.305, p>0.05)\).
- there was no significant differences in work engagement among civil servant, full time private teachers and part time teachers \((F(116, 149)=0.613, p>0.05)\).
- there was no significant difference in work engagement between teachers teaching in public and private schools \((F(57, 152)=0.442, p>0.05)\).
- the districts where teachers sample taught did not have significant effects on the work engagement of the teachers \((F(177, 152)=0.914, p>0.05)\).
- There is no interaction effects found.
Interpretation and discussion

- It is to some extent surprising that the work engagement of teachers are still relatively high even though teachers have been sincerely critiqued in the media for being low in quality and producing low student achievement.

- It is also surprising when viewed from the fact that teachers are not paid well.
There are at least two possible causes why teachers are highly engaged.

1) The social status of teachers, which result in high perceived responsibility among their work.
2) The effect of high level of job demand.
Social recognition for teachers in Yogyakarta

Although academically they are criticized, teachers are still highly respectable in the society with Javanese culture. Teachers are always the place to ask, teachers know everything, teachers get rewards.

- The high social status of teachers results in an important (perceived) role-model function. Teachers maintain highly engaged because the society expect them so, or at least the think that being highly engaged will fit with the expectation of the society.

- Role-model function of teachers in Javaness-rooted society is also reflected from the acronym the society has attached to the word teachers, guru which is a famous acronym for digugu (being obeyed in whatever they say) and ditiru (being modeled by the society).
Teachers’ job demand

- The maintained high work engagement of teachers can also be viewed from the perspective of the effect of job demand. Although not very strongly, Mauno, Kinnunen and Ruokolainen (2007) found that there are effects of job demand on work engagement, especially on the dimensions of absorption and dedication.

- This effect could be very contextual, and might be even stronger due to the higher perceived role-model function in the society.

- Job demand for Yogyakarta English teachers is even broader than that is defined in literature when talking about teachers in the West. In the society like in Yogyakarta the professional demand for teachers is not bound merely with school work. Teachers are always teachers even outside the school. With this, teachers are considered know everything, can solve any problems and thus deserve high respects.
Conclusion

- The high work engagement of teachers in Yogyakarta is not due to demographic aspects as gender, age, teaching experience, and educational background, but to a certain extent due to the internal nature of the profession especially in the form of a combined effect of teachers’ perceived social role-model function and job demand.

- These two aspects keep teachers highly engaged in their profession regardless of the low academic recognition and financial satisfaction.
References


