086 - Hope and Zest: Important Predictors of Teacher Satisfaction

Polona Gradišek

University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Character strengths represent an important research topic in the area of positive psychology. They are defined as positive individual traits that are morally valued. Research on general population samples has shown numerous beneficial outcomes of individuals’ knowing their character strengths and using them in their everyday lives. As teachers have an important impact on learning and on personal development of their students, teachers’ character strengths were examined in a classroom context. The research sample consisted of 408 primary and secondary school teachers (80.8% female) and 1151 students (53.3% female) from 39 schools across Slovenia.

Two of 24 character strengths proved especially important for teachers: hope and zest. Teachers with higher endorsement of hope and zest reported higher levels of satisfaction with life and work and were more likely to perceive teaching as a calling. There were positive outcomes on the side of students as well: students were more satisfied with teachers who reported higher endorsement of hope and zest and they assessed classroom management of these teachers as more efficient.

Findings suggest important implications for teacher education. Teachers should be stimulated to learn about their character strengths and to learn how to use them in different ways to increase their well-being. Moreover, the importance of teachers’ character strengths in the classroom and their contribution to the well-being of students should be stressed. Special emphasis should be given to the introduction of strategies for teachers to develop the strengths of hope and zest. The endorsement of these two strengths decreased with the increasing years of service in the present study; therefore, such strategies would represent an effective way to increase teachers’ satisfaction at work and perception of teaching as a calling through all the stages of professional development.