Teacher stress and strain: Methodological issues

Teacher stress has been researched a lot. A number of studies have been conducted, particularly, to unravel the emotional consequences of teacher stress, such as burnout (Bauer, Stamm et al., 2006; Friedman, 2000; Krause & Dorsemagen, 2007; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005; Rudow, 1999). There is now widespread agreement in research that a teacher’s work is psychologically stressful. However, there is a lack of knowledge when it comes to understanding the sources of stress. Why do so many teachers suffer from burnout whereas others do not? Is it the teacher personality or are external factors responsible for stress? Although several studies suggest a variety of factors (e.g., personal factors such as self-efficacy) they usually fail to provide empirical evidence for their impact on explaining the causes of stress (Vandenberghe & Huberman, 1999).

Observational stress analysis at school: Classroom teaching as an example of interaction work

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Abstract

This article shows that action theory can be successfully applied to the analysis of interaction work. There are both theoretical and methodological arguments for analysing work stressors using instruments based on action theory. For example, data of self-reports on perceived stressors cannot provide insights into the causal effects of work conditions and stressors on psychological strain. Therefore, adequate methods for analysing work-related stressors are necessary. Especially for service work, there is a need for the construction of job analysis instruments that explicitly define the requirements and stresses of interaction work without relying on self-reports or other subjective data alone. Action theory provides an approach for developing such instruments (RHIA-instruments – instruments to identify regulation barriers) that can be applied to interaction work.

The approach of the RHIA-instruments was tested and applied to teaching (RHIA-Unterricht). The instrument allows regulation barriers and capacity-overtaxing factors in classroom teaching to be analysed. It can be used for process analysis of stress during teaching, for statistical analysis of correlations between work stress and other working conditions, such as class size or teaching methods, and for the analysis of single lessons, for example, in school development processes. Reliability and validity of RHIA-Unterricht is comparable with existing RHIA-instruments.

Keywords: