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An Analysis of the Secondary School Education System in Mauritius: The Changing Role of Teachers and its Impact on Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT: Over the past two decades, the Mauritian Education System has turned out to be more and more complex. The teaching profession has become increasingly challenging as teachers have to respond to the ongoing demands of policymakers, administrators, headmasters, students and parents. The teaching profession has evolved into a multi-layered ecosystem which brings constant challenges and new demands as teachers' progress through different stages of their careers. The enormous change for teachers in teaching, school culture and teaching autonomy (Xia et al., 2022), roles and responsibilities (Sherpa & Bachhar, 2018; Tiwari & Pant, 2017) have change drastically, which have impacted teachers' job satisfaction. COVID-19 pandemic has painted a new picture of the teaching strategies around the world and has forced teachers to rethink their teaching strategies and adapt to blended learning (Sutarto et al., 2020; Mali & Lim, 2021). Thus, this study depicts the evolution of the secondary education system and examines the job satisfaction of experienced teachers and identifies factors that may influence their job satisfaction over time. It analyses the level of job satisfaction of teachers over the course of their career in Mauritius. The quantitative data has been collected from 126 state secondary school teachers in four educational zones of Mauritius using an adapted version of the Teachers' Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Lester, 1987). The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to compare the mean value of general job satisfaction between the beginning and middle of a career and between the middle of a career and the current point in time. It revealed that Teachers' overall satisfaction with their work decreases over the period of time.

Introduction

The teaching profession has become increasingly challenging as teachers have to respond to the ongoing increasing demands of policy makers, administrators, headmasters, students and parents. The work of teachers has turned out to be more complex as they evolve in a multi-layered ecosystem consisting of a number of contextual elements, such as the organisational set-up of the school, administrative demands, accountability mechanisms, changing student profiles, curriculum changes, educational reforms and the values of the education system. The change in the teaching and learning process has brought challenges and new demands as teachers' progress through different stages of their careers. Philipp and Kunter (2013) noted that teachers spend a lot of time teaching. In addition, they further claimed that they have a variety of tasks such as planning, lesson preparation, preparing and correcting tests, keeping records of student performance, project work, meeting with parents, attending school conferences, and administrative work (Philipp & Kunter, 2013). With the changing times, teachers' work has intensified (Fitzgerald et al., 2019; Lawrence et al., 2019; Pacaol et al., 2021). In addition, factors such as working conditions

(Baroudi et al., 2022), school culture and teaching autonomy (Xia et al., 2022), roles and responsibilities (Sherpa & Bachhar, 2018; Tiwari & Pant, 2017; Gazi et al 2025) have changed over the past two decades, which have impacted teachers' job satisfaction, especially in a rapidly advancing world where their tasks have changed enormously. Thus, the Mauritian secondary education system has been examined in term of evolution in the secondary school system and its impact on job satisfaction of experienced teachers over time. Factors that may influence their job satisfaction over time has been identified. It scrutinizes the hypothesis "Has the overall level of job satisfaction of teachers changed significantly over the course of their career?"

Changing roles and responsibilities of teachers in Mauritius

In order to keep pace and adapt with the ever changing international needs and demand, it can be noted that over the years, Mauritian teachers have experienced changes such as curriculum changes, integration of ICT, intensification of work, changing roles, and some specific dynamics in Mauritius may also have affected their job satisfaction over the course of their careers. The study scrutinizes thoroughly the Mauritian secondary education system and the changes that Mauritian teachers have experienced over the last two decades. It is essential to comprehend to what extent the system has changed so as to then discuss that these alterations may have influenced Mauritian teachers' job satisfaction over time.

Changes in the Mauritian Secondary education system

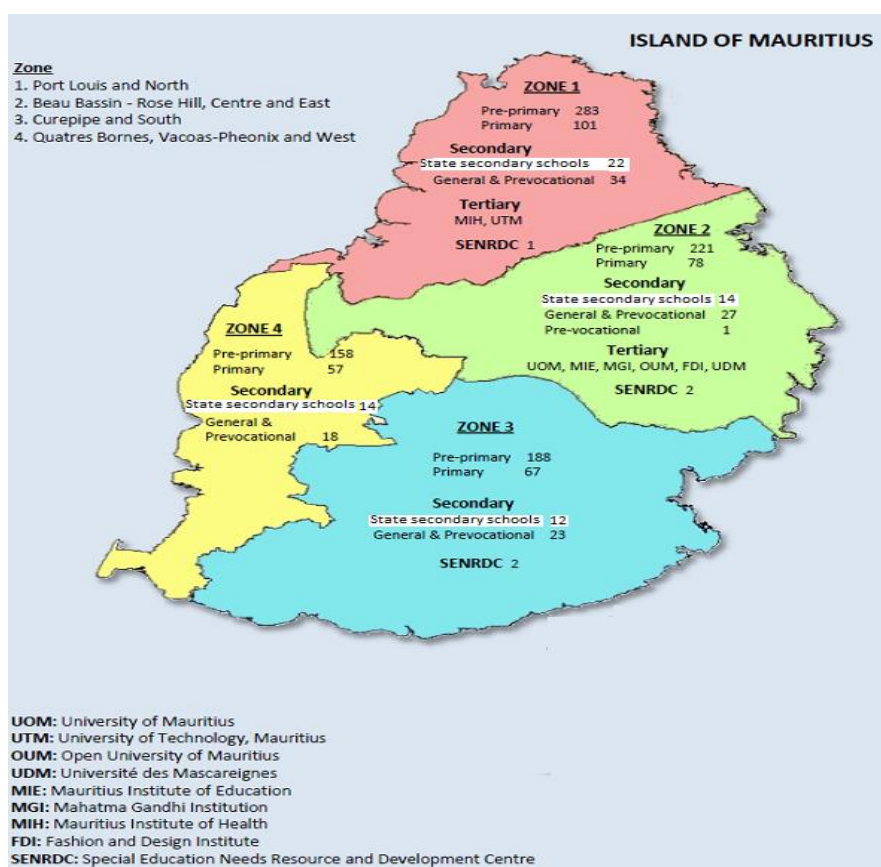
Mauritius is a small island developing state in the Indian Ocean. The Mauritian education system is ruled by the Education Act of 1957 (Pay Research Bureau [PRB], 2021). It encompasses free pre-primary education, primary education (Grades 1 to 6, formerly Standards I to VI), secondary education (Grades 7 to 13, formerly Form I to Form VI) and tertiary education. The current vision of the Ministry of Education is mainly steered by the principles of equity, equality and social inclusion (PRB, 2021). The education system aims to offer engaging and quality education. In Mauritius education is compulsory until the age of 16 and the government provides free education from pre-school to higher education.

The structure of secondary education section is mainly under scrutiny, which is particularly appropriate to this study. Government secondary schools, private aided secondary schools and private unaided secondary schools are the three types of secondary schools in Mauritius. Government secondary schools and private aided secondary schools are free of charge. Nevertheless, some private and unaided fee paying schools are not governed by the same rules and regulations as government secondary schools. Figure 1 displays the number of government secondary schools in each of the four education zones in Mauritius.

Before 2020, state secondary schools were categorised into low, average and high performing schools depending on the performance of the students at the time of admission. The high-performing students were enrolled in high-performing schools (Star Schools), while the low-performing students went to low-performing schools. The three categories of schools run classes from Class 7 to Class 13 (formerly Class I to Class VI). The schools were also divided into boys' and girls' schools.

As from 2020, government secondary schools in Mauritius has been classified into two categories: regional schools and academies (previously high-performing schools). At the end of Grade 6, students take part in the Primary School Achievement Certificate (PSAC) examination and then they are enrolled in the nearest regional secondary school based on their choice of the listed school and their results. In 2019, there were 62 state secondary schools with approximately 6000 students enrolled in Grade 7.

Figure 1 Education zones in Mauritius



Note: Adapted from Education card (Ministry of Education and Human Resource [MOEHR], 2017, p 2).

At the end of ninth grade, students take part in the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examination. Normally, those who achieve the best results were transferred to one of the 12 academies based on their results and choice of academies where they enter the tenth grade. The remaining students now have the choice of either continuing their academic education in the regional school where they were enrolled in Grade 7 or opting for a vocational specialisation in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. Usually the most of the students who failed to pass the NCE exams are enrolled in the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions.

Currently, only the academies are mixed schools at the state secondary level and they only have classes from grade 10 to 13. The class size is around 40 to 45 students for all grades in both the academies and the regional schools. On average, there are about 60 teachers per school depending upon the population of the schools and the subjects offered by the schools. However, approximately 30% of the teachers are temporary teachers (on a contract basis, not permanent) commonly known as “Supply Teachers”. Teachers are normally subjected to be transferred to any category of state secondary school within their respective education zones.

The Ministry of Education is responsible for the development, management and funding of government secondary schools. According to the Pay Research Bureau (PRB, 2016) report, the government aims to promote a

Mauritian society in which every child has his or her rightful place for personal growth and overall development, and to enable the young people of Mauritius to develop into rational, autonomous individuals capable of constantly adapting to changes in all walks of life while maintaining moral integrity and a sense of caring for all other members of society (PRB, 2016, p. 330).

In addition, the Mauritian Ministry of Education has the mandate to:

- Develop a culture of achievement and excellence by promoting an efficient and effective education and training system that is inclusive and integrated, comprehensive and holistic.
- Promote innovation and create new knowledge for the socio-economic and sustainable development of the nation.
- Ensure that learning opportunities are accessible to all, provide learners with values and skills that enhance their personal development, strengthen their critical and enquiring thinking and encourage them to innovate and adapt to change in an increasingly globalised environment. (PRB, 2016, section 22.2, p. 339).

In recent decades, the Mauritian education system has been continuously remodelled through various educational reforms (as described above). In addition, the educational reforms have gradually changed the working conditions and workload of state secondary school teachers. For example, the Master Plan 2000 (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, MOEHR, 2000) introduced additional formalities such as the preparation of the School Development Plan (SDP) and the Departmental Development Plan (DDP). The SDP and DDP are now prepared annually by teachers and administrators, proposing strategies to improve the overall performance of the school. Teachers are also required to attend regular meetings to implement their development plan.

The Education Reform in Action 2008-2014 (MOEHR, 2008) brought with it the inclusion of children with special needs and teachers had to develop new teaching methods. In addition, activity periods were added to teachers' schedules to balance academic lessons and give students the opportunity to develop their hidden talents. With the construction of computer laboratories in state schools, the work of typists gradually shifted to teachers. The introduction of the nine-year school system in 2017 (MOEHR, 2014) also meant that the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examination is conducted in every school, increasing the workload of teachers in terms of correction, marking and reporting of results.

In line with the Public Service Commission (PSC, 2019), teachers' duties had been expanded in recent years. Apart from teaching, preparing schemes of work, weekly plans, lesson plans, continuous assessment, examination and reporting of results, the following additional duties have been assigned to secondary school teachers in Mauritius over the years (PSC, 2019):

- Conducting extension courses, holiday courses and other extra-curricular activities as directed.
- Assisting in the preparation and writing of curricula for secondary school or other post-primary institutions and recommending the use of appropriate textbooks.
- Ensuring the overall development of students – intellectually, emotionally and morally.
- Participate in workshops and seminars to improve the teaching/learning process and keep abreast of new trends and developments in education as required.
- Advise on issues related to educational principles and practises at all levels and promote related activities.
- Supervise the E-Govt Unit as required.
- Carry out related duties as may be assigned.

Two decades ago, many secondary school teachers entered service with only a Higher School Certificate (HSC) or Diploma as qualification, which they later upgraded to degrees. Furthermore, teachers did not need a professional qualification to work in secondary schools. Recently, the PGCE (Postgraduate Certificate in Education) has become a requirement for the post of secondary school teacher (PRB, 2016).

In addition, secondary school teachers with at least ten years of teaching experience can apply for the post of QAD (Quality Assurance Division) officer, and teachers with at least fifteen years of teaching experience can apply for the post of deputy headmaster (PSC, 2019). Therefore, few teachers have more than twenty years of experience in the same position as in-service teachers. Those who are in service as teachers can apply for the post of senior teacher after twenty-four years of service. The duties of senior teachers are different from those of teachers. They have fewer teaching hours and are more involved in administrative work.

Perhaps even society's perception of teachers' work has gradually changed. It is becoming increasingly difficult to work with the new generation whose parents assume that teachers are public servants who are paid to look after their children during the

day. Moreover, as a small island with only one institution (Mauritius Institute of Education, MIE) that trains teachers in the education sector, people know each other personally or professionally. It is likely that connections with influential people are an advantage for some teachers when seeking promotion. However, for those outside the networks, this can be frustrating as they may not receive support from insiders. Also, on a small island, there are limited opportunities for advancement and mobility.

Teachers are important assets to schools and are deployed to government secondary schools in Mauritius depending on the staffing needs of the schools. A Mauritian teacher usually works at the same school for about five years and is then transferred to another government secondary school. This has been criticised as teachers have to adapt to a new school climate every five years. The Quality Assurance Division (QAD) has proposed that from 2020 there must be at least ten years between two consecutive transfers. This change is likely to discourage transfers by influential people, stabilise school culture and encourage affiliation. The career cycle of teachers is about forty years and in Mauritius, a teacher who has been working for two decades is likely to be transferred at least four times. However, the workload of teachers varies in different categories of schools, which may affect teachers' job satisfaction differently.

There have been significant changes in the Mauritian education system. Teachers have witnessed many developments at different levels over the last 20 years, from policy changes and the introduction of ICT to changing perceptions of teachers in society and how their careers will develop. The roles and responsibilities of teachers have changed. Educational reforms have continually increased the burden of paperwork, which has been accompanied by an intensification of their work that may have affected their job satisfaction over time.

Ultimately, different factors can weaken or strengthen teachers' job satisfaction at different stages of their careers. For example, a teacher who is satisfied with their job at one point in their career may no longer be satisfied later. The pattern of job satisfaction can therefore fluctuate and lead to peaks, troughs and swings over time. Furthermore, many teachers like their job despite the ups and downs that accompany it. Therefore, job satisfaction of Mauritian teachers has been jeopardizing as they are regularly transferred from one school to another.

Changes in Mauritian schools

There have been significant changes in Mauritius over the last two decades: New schools with modern infrastructure have been built; whiteboards and markers have replaced chalk and blackboards; some schools also have projectors and laptops, and teachers make soft copies of their lesson notes. In addition, some schools have online mark sheets that allow teachers to complete students' report cards online at their own pace. However, although Mauritius is a small island, not all schools have the same facilities, resources and infrastructure. The working conditions, the school climate and even the type of students are different in each school. This frustrates teachers working in other schools (Ramdonee, 2017). The differences between schools in Mauritius also affect teachers' job satisfaction.

As in other countries, Mauritian teachers face enormous professional challenges (Kisto, 2020). The implementation of continuous educational reforms and the revision of curricula over the past two decades have brought many changes to the education system that have impacted the job satisfaction of secondary school teachers. A significant change took place in 2003 when government secondary schools were reorganised into two categories: Form V and Form VI (Obeegadoo, 2002). After completing Form V, students transferred to Form VI schools. Form V schools run classes from Form I to Form V, while Form VI schools include only Lower Six and Upper Six classes. A minority of teachers were selected to work in Form VI schools, although all teachers were qualified and authorised to work with Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth students. The workload of teachers in Form VI schools differed from that in Form V schools, leading to frustration and dissatisfaction among teachers. A few years later, the Ministry of Education decided to revert back to the previous system and re-categorise all government secondary schools into Form I to VI.

Another important change was the abolition of ranking and the introduction of regionalisation of schools, which also affected the teachers' assignment (Reddi, 2015). The ranking system divided schools into high-performing, average and low-performing schools. Teachers taught only one category of students at a time. Different schools used different textbooks depending on the ability of their students and lesson notes were prepared accordingly. However, with the abolition of the grading system and the introduction of regionalisation, teachers were faced with the challenge of teaching students of different abilities in the same class. Many state secondary schools were built and more students were given access to the schools closest to their homes, regardless of their results. This affected the quality of admission to government secondary schools and ultimately the quality

of teaching in the classroom (Chidambaram, 2016). In the same class, high-performing students were given extra assignments while low-performing students were only given extra tuition, which led to unrest and indiscipline in the class as students did not work at the same pace.

Since the introduction of the nine-year school system in 2017 (Betchoo, 2017; Ramdonee, 2017), all regional secondary schools consist of mainstream classes (Grade 7 to Grade 13) and extended classes (Grade 7 to Grade 9). Students in the mainstream programme pass Grade 6 in primary school and progress to Grade 7 in secondary school. However, students in the extended programme are those who fail Grade 6 or achieve very poor results but are still promoted to Grade 7 to ensure continuous basic education up to the age of 16. Meanwhile, ordinary teachers are forced to teach in the extended programme classes, although several unions have fought against the government's decision. Before 2017, only teachers with special training were assigned to the Extended Programme. This problem of the Extended Programme is causing considerable dissatisfaction among teachers (Ramdonee, 2017). The new criteria for selecting teachers to teach in these extended classes are still unknown.

In addition, from 2017, state secondary school teachers will have to teach physically and mentally disabled students together with high-achieving and low-achieving pupils in the same class as part of inclusive education. Before the introduction of nine years of schooling, students who required special support and care attended specialised schools. Currently, Mauritian teachers have to play multiple roles simultaneously to cater to the needs of each student in a class. In addition, from 2021, some selected secondary schools, formerly known as "Star Schools", will be run as academies. After Grade 9, the best students on the island began attending the academies. Teachers working at the academies are only required to teach grades 10 to 13, while teachers at the other state schools teach grades 7 to 13, as the average and underperforming students continue to attend the same school after grade 9. Nevertheless, there are differences between teachers working at different schools as their duties are different.

With the establishment of the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) in 2012, Mauritian teachers also receive regular classroom visits every month from Quality Assurance Officers who provide pedagogical counselling. They inspect classes with regard to teachers' professional development and identify training needs. Teachers must also submit additional documentation to these officers. They must: keep a separate record of student attendance and tardiness for each class; prepare reports on underperforming students and develop appropriate support plans; prepare student profiles categorising students into underperforming, average and high performing students; plan three different types of homework/classwork for these three categories. At the end of each term, in addition to manually completing the report cards that are given to them, students are required to complete two separate electronic mark sheets for each class in two different formats: the first for school purposes and the second for the quality assurance officers. In addition, the QAD has recently introduced a system of colour coding to rate the effectiveness of schools. For example, the school is labelled a green school if results are exceptional. If performance is adequate, it is a yellow school; if results need improvement, it is a red school (Quality Assurance Framework, 2019). Consequently, teachers working in red zones work under enormous pressure as quality assurance officers closely monitor the lessons delivered by these teachers.

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative data was collected from 126 state secondary school teachers in four educational zones of Mauritius using an adapted version of the Teachers' Job Satisfaction Questionnaire (Lester, 1987).

Mapping job satisfaction

Descriptive statistics and Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were used to identify statistical differences in job satisfaction under the three conditions (early career (b), mid-career (m) and at the present time of the study (p)).

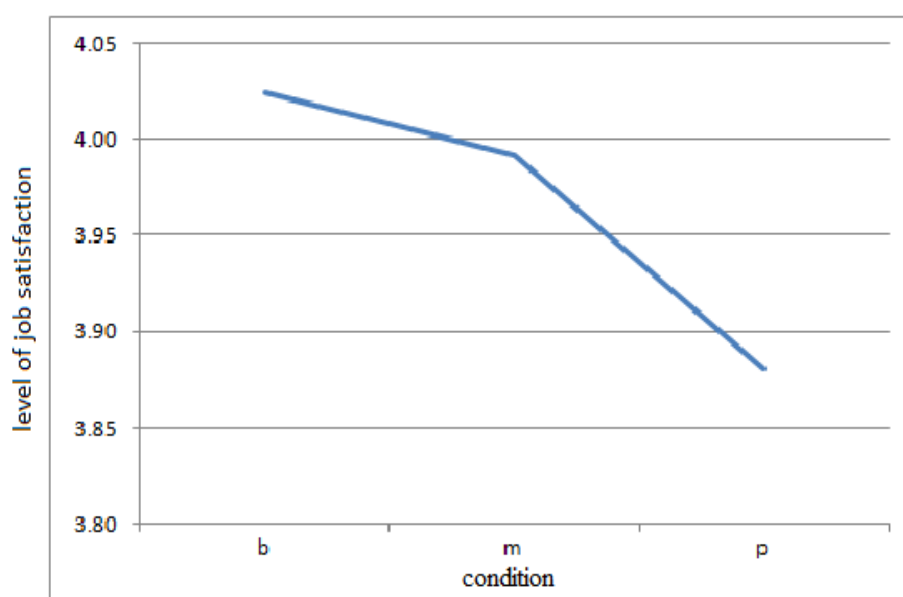
General job satisfaction of teachers

The following hypothesis "Has the overall level of job satisfaction of teachers changed significantly over the course of their career?" has been studied.

Overall job satisfaction trend

Figure 2 shows the general trend in job satisfaction from the start of the career to the current point in the career.

Figure 2 Overall job satisfaction trend



Note: Total $N = 122$

Teachers' overall satisfaction with their work was highest at the beginning of their career ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.72$) and lowest at the current point in their career ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.78$).

The values were tested for normality in order to plan the further phases of the data analysis and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test revealed that the distributions were not normal under the three conditions.

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to compare the mean value of general job satisfaction between the beginning and middle of a career and between the middle of a career and the current point in time. The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test revealed a significant difference in the level of job satisfaction between mid-career and current career and between early career and current career (Table 1).

Table 1 Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test at beginning, middle, present

	beginning –middle	middle –present	present - beginning
Z	-1.01 ^b	-2.63 ^b	-2.20 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.31	.01	.03
a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test			
b. Based on positive ranks.			

The Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test indicates that the job satisfaction of the participating teachers differs significantly over a period of about twenty years. This supports hypothesis 1 (i.e., teachers' overall job satisfaction varies significantly over the course of their career) and was accepted.

CONCLUSION

The Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test revealed a significant difference in the level of job satisfaction between mid-career and current career and between early career and current career. It concluded that Teachers' overall satisfaction with their work was highest at the beginning of their career and lowest at the current point in their career. Thus, based on the evolution of the Mauritian education it can be inferred that satisfaction decreases over the period of time. Moreover, the study found that teachers were

exposed to a variety of factors such as contextual situations, leadership styles of rectors, different categories of students, different types of schools, teacher autonomy, teachers work itself, pay, responsibilities, the incentive to be promoted to a higher post and working conditions that continuously affected their job satisfaction at different stages of their career. Other studies have analyzed teachers' job satisfaction with, for instance, performance (Locke, 1970), self-efficacy (Kasalak & Dağyar, 2020, Ortan et al., 2021), school culture (Duan et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2021), school climate (Dutta & Sahney, 2016; Malinen & Savolainen, 2016; Van Beurden et al., 2017), school context (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2009), commitment (Perera et al., 2018; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2014), and student behaviour (Kengatharan, 2020; Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2006), which show that teachers' job satisfaction is influenced by multiple factors.

However, in the present study, it can be deduced that there is a decline in the job satisfaction of the teachers over the period of time. This may be due to the leadership styles and the conditions of work prevailing in the secondary schools. The limited opportunity for promotion and the long number of years of service required to be qualified for competing for higher post may also contribute to poor job satisfaction. In contrast, it can be highlighted that in almost all the ministries across Mauritius the minimum required number of years to compete for higher post is 4 to 5 years and its only for the secondary teachers that they need to have at 15 years of experience as educators plus a Post Graduate Certificate in Education to be able to compete for the post of Deputy rector as per the PRB Report 2016. Moreover, some of the teachers are promoted to higher post due to their political belongings and proximity. This can be further sustained by the fact that there is an ongoing case on the recruitment of Deputy rectors in the Supreme Court of Mauritius against the Public Service Commission and the Newly appointed Deputy Rectors Le Mauricien (2024).

Moreover, the Leadership style of the school leaders in the schools plays an important role in affecting the degree of Job Satisfaction in an Institution. This can be further sustained by the fact that Subrun & Subrun (2022) study concluded that the leadership skills of the rectors greatly affect the learners' performance and job satisfaction.

This study strengthens and provides a new overview of the evolving Mauritian Education System and its impact on teachers Job Satisfaction. It provides a new way of investigating the impact of policy change and evolution in the education system that affects the Job satisfaction of teachers.

Moreover, this study can be used as a benchmark in future research in relation to job satisfaction and change in the education system. Since gauging and evaluating job satisfaction in institutions have become an extremely delicate process and a huge number of scholars have been investigating impact of leadership style of school leaders on job satisfaction, thus this study will provide a way in gauging job satisfaction. This study tries to analyse job satisfaction from a different perspective as compared to the tradition way of relating job satisfaction with leadership style. Neglecting the perception of change on job satisfaction of teachers may have caused many severe problems to research and research findings. Data has been distorted, since many researchers just try to relate job satisfaction of teachers with leadership style. Thus, the present research provides a new perspective of relating change over job satisfaction in any organizations. Moreover, the findings underscore and validate that change is an important factor that affect job satisfaction of teacher over time, while also reinforcing the pool of existing data. Thus, the scholars would be able to conduct research and interpret findings of the study accordingly with a new perspective of investigating job satisfaction of teachers and at the same time limiting the degree of biasness.

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize several limitations for this study. The study's geographic concentration on the schools and teachers in Mauritius may have limited applicability to other areas with varying degrees of environmental consciousness. Second, by the job satisfaction may differ among other teachers exposed to different school context and leadership style of the school leaders. Third, the data may add common method bias, such as acquiescence bias where the respondents regardless of their view agree or disagree with the statements.

Future research should address the limitation of this study by deploying mixed-method techniques to validate the impact of evolution in the education system on job satisfaction of teachers over time. The rationale behind the suggestions is to ensure the researchers gain a more valid and reliable data to better understand impact of job satisfaction over time. Furthermore, this provides scope of future study to analyze the job satisfaction in relation to other criteria like mental health, organisational culture, productivity and leadership style. This survey can be paired with qualitative interviews to gain in depth understanding of job satisfaction of teachers over time and evolution in workplace.

Moreover, the study of job satisfaction over time among the teachers and work evolution could be further enhanced by investigating other factors affecting job satisfaction over time. In conclusion, the strategic importance of studying job satisfaction over time in relation to change is reaffirmed in this study, offering a foundation of a valid data collected for understanding impact of evolution on job satisfaction and guiding future endeavours toward a topic of concerned for investigating the importance of job satisfaction. Ultimately, the present study tries to highlight effect of the evolution in the Mauritian secondary schools' system and its impact on job satisfaction over time.

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