



Generation Z teachers' quality of work life: Measurement and enhancement guidelines

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Abstract

Quality of work life (QWL) is a critical issue for organizations in the education sector for recruiting and retaining qualified young teachers. This study aimed to develop an empirical construct for teachers' QWL and to develop a guideline to enhance the engagement and work-life balance of Generation Z teachers (Gen Z). This study used a sequential exploratory mixed-method paradigm. The samples were: 12 key informants for a face-to-face interview and 12 key informants, who were policymakers in charge of teacher welfare, for focus group discussion, directors and deputy directors from public schools, Gen X-Gen Y and Gen Z teachers from public schools; 400 Gen Z teachers from public schools. Descriptive statistics, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and content analysis were used for the data analysis. The QWL of Gen Z teachers is made up of organizational culture and climate, relation and cooperation, training and development, wages, rewards and fairness, work condition, workspace, and facilities. Furthermore, the results of this study provided guidelines for enhancing QWL to improve teacher engagement, maximize the utilization of young teachers, and gain a sustainable competitive advantage in education.

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Introduction

Gen Z refers to persons born from 1993 to 2005, and such has become known as “The Great Resignation.” More than half of Gen Z respondents in Adobe's study said they planned to seek a new job within the next year, 59 percent were dissatisfied with their jobs, 56 percent

were unhappy with their work-life balance, and 62 percent were stressed while working during office hours (Smart, 2021).

Across the globe, many countries are dealing with a growing teacher dropout problem. In the United Kingdom, the Teacher Wellbeing Index 2018 showed that two out of five newly qualified teachers struggled with mental health and well-being; 52 percent left the profession in less than five years. In the United States, over half of US teachers considered quitting due to low pay, burnout, and workload (Clay, 2021). This is also happening in Thailand; more than 20,000 teachers resign per year, but less than 20,000 teachers enter the profession each year. Furthermore,

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education opportunities do not match teacher demands. Teachers also face increasing debts, financial and family responsibilities. Thai teachers spend 13 hours per week doing non-teaching work. During school holidays, teachers have to attend school meetings and prepare for the next semester (ThaiPBS, 2020).

QWL is a way to reduce teacher turnover and stress, a significant concern in many countries. Gen Z is a new generation with entirely different priorities, values, and needs from previous generations (Stahl, 2019). Gen Z teachers' QWL is a new concept being studied to inspire teachers with a wide variety of working conditions and ensure education systems meet Gen Z teacher's needs. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze empirical constructs essential for Gen Z teacher's QWL and develop guidelines for enhancing the teaching profession, work conditions, benefits, and welfare to promote the engagement and work-life balance of Gen Z teachers.

Literature Review

QWL reflects employee engagement, motivation, and commitment to job-related activities (Srivastava & Kanpur, 2014). By utilizing management and implementation methods, QWL helps employees achieve organizational goals and satisfy their needs and wants throughout their careers. Work engagement and burnout are strongly related to QWL, and are influenced by worker's needs and working conditions (Sinval et al., 2019). Fulfilling the needs of employees can improve productivity and efficiency (Leitão et al., 2019).

Gen Z, those born from 1993 to 2005, following Generation Y (Gen Y), has grown up with technology, the internet, and social media. They are highly confident, desire freedom, and are very opinionated when compared to previous generations (Andrea et al., 2016). To construct QWL for Gen Z teachers based on their overarching characteristics, perspectives, and styles, a literature review led to the identification of seven factors for developing the QWL of Gen Z teachers as: Organizational culture and climate; Relationships and cooperation; Work condition; Wages, rewards, and fairness; Training and development; Workspace and Facilities (Bhende et al., 2020; Swamy et al., 2015). The hypothesis and conceptual framework of this study were the following:

H0: The seven factors are not the components of the QWL of Gen Z teachers.

H1: The seven factors are the components of the QWL of Gen Z teachers.

Scope of Study

The scope of the study was mainly conducted with Gen Z teachers in the secondary level and belonging to the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) in Bangkok, Thailand.

Table 1 The factor loading of CFA model of the QWL for Gen Z Teachers

	Component	Factor loading
1.	Organization and climate	0.87
	Involved in decision	0.73
	Equal	0.53
	Open minded	0.51
	Respect	0.57
2.	Relation and cooperation	0.80
	Cooperation	0.61
	Social consolidation	0.62
	Relied on	0.55
3.	Support	0.66
	Training and development	0.90
	Proper skill	0.68
	Opportunity	0.57
4.	Challenge	0.71
	Encourage	0.55
	Wages, reward and fairness	0.91
	Wages	0.63
5.	Fair	0.65
	Fridge Benefit	0.63
	Reward	0.66
	Work condition	0.84
	Stability and security	0.63
6.	Employee benefit	0.61
	Transfer	0.54
	Work-life balance	0.52
	Workspace	0.86
	Work remotely	0.62
	Environment	0.64
7.	Adequate facility	0.65
	Health and physical	0.59
	Flexible time	0.60
	Facilities	0.91
	Convenient access	0.62
	Commuting and travel	0.64
	Parking lot	0.65
Life activities	0.59	
Vacation leave	0.60	

Methodology

Face-to-Face Interview

The 12 key informants were recruited by using purposive sampling from 8 from policymaker level, who were in charge of teachers' welfare in the regional education office, the secondary educational service area office, the authority of OBEC; 2 deputy directors and 4 Generation Z teachers from public schools. The interview process was conducted for 30–45-minutes with semi-structured interviews. The interview guidelines focused on preferences about QWL of Gen Z teachers, problems, and obstacles about working contexts and perceptions towards government welfare programs. The IOC was 1.00.

Survey

The sample was 400 Gen Z teachers recruited by simple random sampling from public schools under OBEC in Bangkok. The sample size was determined following Hair et al. (2006), who stated that the suggested rate of observation/items should be 10:1. In this study, there were 30 variables, so the sample size had to be at least 300 observations ($10 \times 30 = 300$). The study used a self-administered online survey questionnaire with 32 items and a 5-point Likert scale with ratings from the "highest" to the "lowest." The survey was developed through a synthetic approach based on a literature review and face-to-face interview data. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. In the first section, demographic characteristic of the participants was collected through three questions (such as gender, and school size). The second section focused on exploring the QWL of Gen Z's teachers with seven constructs: organizational culture and climate, relationships and cooperation, work conditions, wages, rewards, fairness, training and development, workspace, and facilities. The IOC was 0.66–1.00 and Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.74.

Focus Group Discussion

The study recruited 12 key informants by using purposive sampling from 4 policymakers in charge of teachers' welfare in the Office of the Welfare Promotion Commission for Teachers and Educational Personal (OTEP), Ministry of Education (MOE), and OBEC; 2 school directors and 6 Gen X - Gen Y- Z teachers from

public schools. The focus group discussion focused on enhancing the QWL of Gen Z teachers and how to understand and support Gen Z teachers in achieving their personal and professional goals.

Data Analysis

Qualitative approach

Content analysis was used to analyze the data from interviews and focus group discussions.

Quantitative approach

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the demographic factors via SPSS, and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the model via AMOS

Results

Empirical Construct for Designing Gen Z Teachers' Quality of Work Life.

Interview results indicated that Gen Z teachers are satisfied with their current welfare because it covers their basic needs until retirement including insurance benefits, medical care, dental, ophthalmic care, particular interest rate loans, and pensions. They are generally concerned about school climate, working space and work life balance. The majority of teachers stated that "Age diversity is a problem in every school, so bridging that gap will help to resolve it." "A comfortable space for teachers to work together is essential for the sharing of knowledge." "It is difficult for teachers to have a balanced work-life balance since they need to fulfill the needs of students, deal with their families, prepare lesson plans, grade tests, and take care of administrative tasks. This leads to a high rate of teacher burnout and lower levels of motivation." The administrators and policymakers stated, "To ensure teachers are happy and productive, our primary goal is to look after them. To avoid burnout and teach successfully, the school decided to gain an understanding of generational differences and find ways to improve teachers' QWL."

The result from the literature review and face-to-face interviews were synthesized into 7 components of Gen Z teachers' QWL, namely: (1) Organizational culture and climate, which was the perception of Gen Z teachers about an organization's values, vision, norms, and emotional support, equality, respect, open-mindedness, and trust at work, which affect motivation, delegation,

authority, feedback, and attitude; (2) Relationships and cooperation, which was communication between supervisors and Gen Z teachers by encouraging collaboration, problem-solving, concerning workplace decision and acceptance without consideration of race, gender, or physical appearance; (3) Work condition, which was perception of Gen Z teachers about job security, working hours, job rotation, interest, comfortability and satisfaction on job performance; (4) Wages, rewards, and fairness, which were motivational factors that encourage Gen Z teachers' to work hard to achieve both organizational and individual goals by rewarding them for their best performance; (5) Training and development enabling Gen Z teachers' to participate in educational or developmental activities to enhance their ability in order to fulfill organizational and professional goals; (6) Workspace, which was freedom and flexibility of work and decision-making that is given to Gen Z teachers; and (7) Facilities, which was physical and emotional needs that can satisfy Gen Z teachers such as insurance, transportation, parking, security, online environment, activity, and work safety.

The QWL of Gen Z teacher was in the high level (Mean = 3.36). All components were also in the high level: Organizational culture and climate (Mean = 3.37) Relationship and cooperation (Mean = 3.32) Training and development (Mean = 3.38) Wages, rewards, and fairness (Mean = 3.39) Work condition (Mean = 3.38) Workspace (Mean = 3.33) and Facilities (Mean = 3.33). The full model fit of the CFA test results showed full fit, which means that the seven constructs complied with the goodness-of-fit criteria. Based on the goodness-of-fit statistics, the results met the required model fit criteria ($\chi^2/df = 1.46$, GFI = 0.92, AGFI = 0.91, CFI = 0.99, NNFI = 0.99, RMR = 0.047, RMSEA = 0.03) (Hair et al., 2006; Hoyle, 2012) and the CFA model of the Quality of Work Life for Generation Z Teachers was as follow:

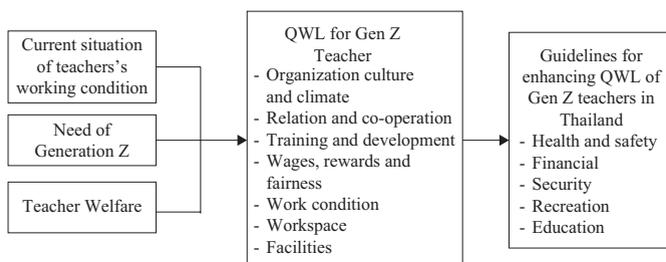


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

Guideline for Designing the Teaching Profession, Work Conditions, Benefits, and Welfare to Encourage the Engagement and Work-Life Balance of Gen Z Teachers

The interview, survey, and CFA results were used to design the guidelines for the teaching profession, improving work conditions, benefits, and welfare to encourage the engagement and work-life balance of Gen Z teachers in the focus group discussion process.

In total, key informants agreed to provide additional guidance for the current welfare, referred to as “flexible benefits packages. The majority of key informants stated that “The flexible benefit is essential to meeting the needs of teachers in each generation.” Teachers with flexible benefits packages can choose from five types of plans: health and safety, financial aspects, security, recreation and community, and education as follows.

Health and safety

The health and safety packages for Gen Z teachers should cover physical and psychological health. Health services should enable teachers to be treated at public hospitals after office hours. Teachers should be able to choose or manage premium health services using copay plans. In addition, the state should provide accidental death and dismemberment insurance.

Financial aspect

The financial group is about providing loyalty gifts, special hardship allowances, and overtime pay. It should be the result of partnerships with financial institutions or banks to educate teachers about investment and various saving plans that yield worthwhile rewards. Furthermore, lending organizations should collaborate with the National Credit Bureau to verify teachers' credit ratings. This will help reduce the problem of complicated loans. There should also be emergency loans to help alleviate urgent financial needs that are the result of incidents, such as disasters, natural disasters, and personal and family sickness. There should also be loans for personal development.

Security

Security is about providing flexible retirement benefits, including a vesting requirement for pension and contribution rates by offering flexible schedules for a pension account, which is a defined benefit pension plan and retirement mutual fund. This ensures that teachers will have long-term savings that they can use after they retire. This can be done by cooperating with financial institutions so that teachers can invest in various assets,

such as stocks, government bonds, financial markets, debt instruments, and gold at a special price.

Recreation and community

Schools should provide new facilities, such as co-working spaces and fitness centers for teachers. These facilities should be in the school common area to enable teachers to meet, socialize, and work together in an engaged and informal community of young and senior teachers. Alternatively, there could be activities free of charge, such as birthday holidays, themed clothes during festivals, or informal clothes on Fridays, so that teachers can relax.

Education

OTEP should provide workshops for life and professional skills, such as second careers, training for financial planning, training for saving and investment to increase teachers' income. It should also create a central research database system for teachers to maintain and deliver useful knowledge to anyone who needs it. To decrease the gap between generations, it is necessary to support tutoring projects for older and younger generations to promote knowledge management in schools. Teachers can gain new knowledge and skills from senior teachers. Finally, schools should offer opportunities for teachers to attend seminars and exchange programs abroad. This method will help teachers to enhance their competence, language skills, and personal and professional development.

Discussion

The Empirical Construct for Designing the Quality of Work Life for Generation Z Teachers

The literature review and in-depth interviews contributed to the synthesis of the seven constructs of QWL for Gen Z teachers and were tested by CFA. The seven constructs (namely, organizational culture and climate, relationships and cooperation, work conditions, wages, rewards, fairness, training and development, workspace, and facilities) detected a significant and positive influence of QWL for Gen Z teachers. These factors correlate and correspond to the needs of Gen Z teachers, which differ from those of previous generations of teachers. There are also problems faced by all teachers, including relationships, financial, health, and mental problems. Therefore, these factors should be used to develop guidelines to help build a better QWL for all

teachers, and not just Gen Z teachers. Positive feelings toward work lead to a greater desire to teach, which is driven by the improvement of quality of life and growth of people (Perangin-Angin et al., 2020). Our findings are consistent with previously published studies, such as Pandey and Tripathi (2018), who argued that QWL encompasses a safe work environment, occupational health care, appropriate working hours, and a fair salary, which includes job satisfaction, motivation, productivity, health, welfare, safety, and security. According to Leitão et al. (2019) to achieve QWL, four components must be present: a safe work environment, occupational health care, appropriate working hours, and a wage that fulfills the teacher's need. The results of the synthesis of the seven factors confirmed that all seven constructs may affect the QWL of Gen Z teachers, which helped us develop guidelines for the teacher profession, focusing on work conditions, benefits, and welfare, which are aimed at encouraging engagement and work-life balance of Gen Z teachers.

Guidelines for Designing the Teaching Profession, Work Conditions, Benefits, and Welfare to Encourage the Engagement and Work-Life Balance of Generation Z Teachers

After the data collection and analysis, guidelines were developed to address the teaching profession, work conditions, benefits, and welfare to encourage the engagement and work-life balance of Gen Z teachers. Additional "extensive benefits packages" were considered to encourage teachers to be more productive and responsive to the educational organization. The focus group believed that the flexible benefits packages that can fulfill the needs of teachers can benefit educational organizations in terms of productivity and commitment because the current welfare is not flexible and is not appropriate for the current society and economy. Hence, it is best to provide teachers with options that are flexible where they can choose their benefits based on their choices, lifestyles, and interests (Prachachat, 2018; Schooley, 2020).

For teachers to be able to develop their potential and skills, the education aspect of teachers' welfare could provide overseas opportunities for teachers, such as seminars abroad and exchange programs. This will allow teachers to learn and develop their knowledge and skills by sharing their experiences. Serin (2017) stated that an excellent opportunity to develop teaching skills is a working abroad program. It enables teachers to receive training in new teaching methods and, then, apply and

transfer them to their countries, as well as learn how to use technology effectively in the classroom, learn about other cultures and share these experiences with their students to foster a positive learning environment. Wilson (1984) studied the experiences of teachers who went to Tanzania and Zimbabwe in Africa and found that these experiences had very positive effects on them as they became very enthusiastic about the teaching profession. The opportunity to learn seems to be a method to help develop quality teachers further. This is consistent with Mohamad and Mohamed (2012), who stated that opportunities for career advancement will contribute to teachers' career success.

Recommendations

Recommendations from the Study

1. MOE and public schools can consider the Guidelines from this study to design the flexible and additional benefits and welfares for Generation Z teachers.
2. Private schools have flexible policies and teachers' welfare. They can design new welfare for Gen Z teachers by selecting components in high demand by teachers and suitable to schools' budgets and resources.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study was conducted with Gen Z teachers in public schools under OBEC. Further studies should be conducted with teachers at other schools, university lecturers, alternative or primary school teachers, or teachers from private schools, and such studies should explore different contexts.

The guideline from this study could also be implemented in schools for a long-term study that ranges from one to two years, where there is an evaluation for teachers' satisfaction and engagement.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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