



Teachers' remaining career opportunities: The role of value fit and school climate



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HIGHLIGHTS

- P-S value fit influences the perceptions teachers have of their career future.
- School climate affect teachers' experienced fit with the school in terms of values.
- School climate enhances the perception of remaining opportunities via P-S value fit.
- In order to enhance teachers' career, schools should convey their vision and goals.

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ABSTRACT

In light of an aging teacher population, this study investigates the influence of school climate and person-school (P-S) value fit on teachers' perspectives regarding their career futures. The results, based on a sample of 147 teachers, indicate that P-S value fit is positively associated with remaining career opportunities, over and above the negative effect of age. In addition, both climate for performance/academic press and climate for socialization affect teachers' future career perspectives through a P-S value fit mechanism. These findings imply that schools can enhance teachers' perceived remaining career opportunities by creating strong school climates and improving perceived value fit.

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1. Teachers' remaining career opportunities: the role of value fit and school climate

Attracting motivated and talented people into the teaching profession is a recurring issue in educational practice and academic literature alike. At the same time, concerns are raised in many parts of the world with regard to teaching quality and teacher quality, as current teachers are increasingly approaching retirement (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Schleicher, 2012). Hence, maintaining employee motivation to work toward school objectives at high levels over their entire career is an important but challenging task in the educational sector. In this study, therefore, we concentrate on the

perceptions teachers have of their career futures, as these perceptions are likely to affect the remaining years they practice their profession (Thomson, Turner, & Nietfeld, 2012; Wöhrmann, Fasbender, & Deller, 2016). More specifically, the recently developed concept of the occupational future time perspective by Zacher and Frese (2009), and in particular, the perception of the remaining opportunities in one's career, will be applied to teachers.

Literature on teaching emphasizes the future time perspective as an important factor related to teachers' motivations and beliefs, aspirations for teaching and professional plans about teaching (Eren & Tezel, 2010; Eren, 2012). Here, future time perspective is mostly studied as an independent variable or factor mediating a relationship. However, so far little is known about the predictors of perceived remaining opportunities in the teaching profession (e.g., future time perspective as a dependent variable). In particular, the role of contextual factors that might affect perceived remaining opportunities is unknown. One established finding is that for age, a robust negative effect is found (Kochoian, Raemdonck, Frenay, &

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Zacher, 2017; Zacher & Frese, 2011; Zacher, Heusner, Schmitz, Zwierzanska, & Frese, 2010). This study therefore aims to contribute to the knowledge about factors affecting teachers' perceived remaining opportunities that are more easily influenced by school policies and practices than teachers' age. To this end, this study explores the role of two contextual factors predicting perceived remaining opportunities at work: person-school (hereafter P-S) value fit and school climate.

In particular, this study investigates the extent to which P-S value fit is associated with perceived remaining opportunities at work. This type of fit is known to positively affect work attitudes (Chatman, 1989; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005; Wöhrmann et al., 2016), and people also actively strive to enhance fit with their organization (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984; Hirschi, 2010). The Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis & Lofquist, 1984) explains that a minimum of correspondence is needed to stay in the same (work) environment, while subsequently allowing the individual to look for opportunities to stabilize this fit. This theory leads us to predict a positive relationship between P-S value fit and perceived remaining opportunities in one's career.

In addition, this study pays attention to how the feeling of P-S value fit is influenced by school climate. In a school's climate, the values of the school become explicit (Schein, 2000), allowing teachers to identify the school's ambitions and purposes. In this study, the effects of a school climate for performance/academic press and a school climate for socialization (Shouse, 1996) are explored, as we expect that different climates can be formed within one school depending on the strategic foci (Schneider, 1990). We draw upon the organizational climate literature to examine the role of P-S value fit as key processes through which these two climate types affect perceived remaining opportunities (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998). Following signaling theory and its extensions (Spence, 1973), we argue that a school climate for performance/academic press and a school climate for socialization strengthen feelings of P-S fit by enhancing employees' awareness of its core values and goals and what the work context stands for (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011), which in turn are linked to enhanced perceived remaining opportunities.

To contribute to the relevant literature, we capture teachers' future time perspective and the role of P-S value fit and school climate in the context of Dutch schools. According to an Organization for Economic and Co-operation Development (OECD) report (2005), teacher shortages and teacher quality issues are important problems concerning the teaching profession. The teacher shortage issue differs from one country to another but is a challenge for the Netherlands (Ministry of Education, 2011). In addition, delaying retirement for the current teacher cohort is not an easy option for employers. In the Netherlands, collective bargaining agreements ensure that retirement age is mostly fixed, with options for earlier, but not for later, retirement.

In sum, this study aims to add to our knowledge on how P-S value fit and climate may offset the decrease in perceived remaining opportunities typically found among aging teachers. From the perspective of schools, knowledge on how age influences perceived remaining opportunities in careers among teachers is relevant, but there is not necessarily much that the schools can do to prevent this negative effect of age. Therefore, it is important to investigate the factors that can influence teachers' perceptions of remaining opportunities over and above the negative effect of age that are more malleable by school policies and practices. Our paper will therefore focus on more contextual factors, specifically the feeling teachers have about value fit with their specific school context (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), as well as school climate (Shouse, 1996).

1.1. Occupational future time perspective and perceived remaining opportunities

People can have different expectations and attitudes towards the future. This idea is defined in the concept of future time perspective. Future time perspective (FTP) is the sense people have about the future, which is constructed differently at different points in their lives and is influenced by personal and social contextual influences (Leonardi, 2007). It describes how much time people believe they have left in their future and how they perceive this time, therefore providing a basis for organizing and planning future possibilities and setting personal goals (Eren, 2012; Zacher & Frese, 2009). FTP can serve as a strong motivator to engage in activities that are instrumental for future outcomes (McInerey, 2004).

The theory on FTP states that the amount of time people perceive to have left is linked to their social motivational system (Cate & John, 2007). As the ultimate end, death automatically connects aging to individuals' social motivational systems (Carstensen, Pasupathi, Mayr, & Nesselroade, 2000). Nonetheless, other social end points can also be of importance (Cate & John, 2007), for example, the ending of the employment contract. In the organizational context, FTP is seen as important for organizational behavior and career decision making (Marko & Savickas, 1998). Occupational future time perspective (OFTP) is defined in terms of remaining opportunities and remaining time at work (Zacher & Frese, 2009). These two concepts are particularly relevant for the educational sector. First, the sector is known for its limited career possibilities, which gives an extra disadvantage regarding the number of opportunities left at work. In addition, the educational sector is known to be aging, and more and more people are facing retirement (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Schleicher, 2012). These factors are associated with OFTP and especially with remaining time at work (Zacher & Frese, 2009). Studies show that age appears to be the main predictor of the latter (Zacher & Frese, 2011), especially when retirement age is fixed (which is the case in the Netherlands). Therefore, in line with other scholars (Zacher & Frese, 2011; Zacher et al., 2010), this study will focus solely on the perceived remaining opportunities. This study describes "how many goals, options, and possibilities employees generally believe to have left in their personal work-related futures" (Zacher et al., 2010, p. 375).

1.2. Person-school value fit

Values are the beliefs one has about desirable end states, which guide the selection and evaluation of behaviors, people and events. Furthermore, they are ordered by relative importance (Johnson & Jackson, 2009; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987; de Clercq, Fontaine, & Anseel, 2008). Several studies have investigated values related to the work context via the concept of work values (e.g., Sverko & Super, 1995; de Vos, Buyens, & Schalk, 2005). Work values are expressions of more general human values in the context of the work setting (de Vos et al., 2005). Having a positive feeling about the work setting one is in is likely to influence one's work attitudes (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This idea is the cornerstone of the person-organization fit (hereafter P-O fit) approach, which states that a match between a person and the organization (i.e., a good fit) will result in better work-related attitudes and behaviors than when a person does not fit the organization he or she is working in (Gibson & Borges, 2009; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Ostroff, 1993). One of the most important forms of P-O fit is value fit. Value fit or value congruence is the fit between one's personal values and the organization's values (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). Translating this to the school context, the concept of person-school (P-S) value fit is more appropriate.

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