Moral distress in secondary school teachers

How can secondary school teachers grow from moral distress to moral resilience?

CONTEXT

- One in seven teachers drops out after 5 years in Flanders (Pano, 2018)
- Emotional exhaustion under the heading of stress is an important factor (Werkbaar werk in het onderwijs – werkbaarheidsmonitor 2016, Nota 10 mei 2017)
- Fenstermacher (1990) describes teaching as a profound moral activity. On the one hand because it contributes to the (co-)formation of a future generation. On the other hand, because certain moral judgments are continually formed in interactions with children, their parents or others (Hargreaves, 1995).

METHOD

- Practice-oriented scientific research
- Literature study
- Qualitative research
  - focus groups
  - semi-structured in-depth interviews

RESULTS

Recognizing moral distress

Values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Global values</th>
<th>Moral duty and responsibility</th>
<th>Higher aim: pupils</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Trust, responsibility, faith in your pupils, commitment&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I want to prepare the pupils for the future&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;I find it important to bring out the positive in pupils&quot;</td>
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Moral indignity

"I lost my magic wand …"

Frustration

- "Every child has the right to follow the lessons in a peaceful way. What angers me is that frequently classmates breach this universal right."

Constraints

- "Fear, yeah, that all of a sudden I'd have another class like that..."

Coping

- "The pupils are sent away if they have a question, because the teacher is working on something else. That drives me crazy..."

Identifying resources for moral resilience

My prof. Self-understanding

Moral reward

PUPILS

INDIVIDUAL teacher

TEAM

RESOURCES

GOVERNANCE

ORGANISATION

Create motivating Context

Colleagues

Humor, nice moments

Social support, safety

Ventilation

Dialogue and reflection

Experience, advice

Vision

Standards, directives

Support of the principal

Involvement and shared decisions making

Authority

Feedback and expression

Infrastructure and finances

Supportive measures

"A place where you can say what you want to say without negative consequences."

"I think along with the school and that’s appreciated."

"A vision gives peace and consistency. The school must develop a vision. But then you have to keep the same vision for a number of years in order to give people and teams the chance to roll it out."

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