Grunn- og leikskólastjórar á Íslandi – kulnun í starfi?

Markmiðið rannsóknarinnar var að kanna hvort grunn- og leikskólastjórar á Íslandi upplifðu kulnun (e. burnout) í starfi. Skoðað var hvort skólastjórar upplifðu persónutengda kulnun, starfstengda kulnun eða kulnun tengda þeim hópum sem eiga aðild að skólastarf in. Detta voru nemendur, foreldrar og starfsfólk skólanna, þ.m.t. kennarar. Notaður var kulnunarmæli-kvárdinn Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. Spurningalisti var sendur með tölvupósti til allra leik- og grunnskólastjóra og var svarhlutfalli um 50%. Niðurstöður rannsóknarinnar benda til þess að talsverður fjölda skólastjóra upplifi einkenni kulnunar. Munur var á svörum grunn- og leikskólastjóra. Persónutengd kulnun kom fram hjá 13% grunnskólastjóra og 24% leikskólastjóra, 15% grunnskólastjóra og 28% leikskólastjóra upplifðu starfstengda kulnun og 16% grunnskólastjóra og 29% leikskólastjóra upplifðu kulnun tengda starfsfólk. Niðurstöðurnar gefa mikilvægar vísbendingar fjyrir fagstéttina. Starfsumhverfi skólastjóra skiptir mál og mikilvægt er að koma í veg fjyrir kulnun því að hún dregur úr starfsánægju og skilvirkni í starfi.

Efnið: Kulnun, leikskólastjórar, grunnskólastjórar
An exploration of burnout amongst principals in preschools and compulsory schools in Iceland

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent preschool and compulsory school principals in Iceland experience symptoms of burnout. According to Maslach et al. (2001), burnout has been an important concept since the 1970s and is currently an established field of study, which has focused on the issue in various occupational areas. These authors also claim that burnout is a stress-related disorder, usually classified in three major levels ranging from (1) mild symptoms of impaired occupational functioning (distress), to (2) serious distress symptoms and temporal loss of occupational role (nervous breakdown), ending in (3) neurasthenia and long term loss of occupational role (burnout).

Maslach and Leiter (1997) state that burnout is an individual experience influenced by work context. They claim that individuals respond differently to work settings, based on factors like age, experience, and personality. Furthermore, they claim that individual characteristics seem to have a stronger influence on burnout than situational factors. As reported by Friedman (2002), research indicates that major factors influencing burnout among school principals are work overload, and demanding interactions with staff and parents.

Various instruments have been developed to measure levels of burnout. One of them, the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory (CBI), was used for this study. The CBI has been adapted to cultural conditions in Nordic countries (Kristensen et al., 2005). It has also been translated into Icelandic, as well as being adapted and verified for that context. The CBI measures symptoms of burnout according to three dimensions: personal issues, work related issues, and client related issues.

The CBI was sent as a web-based questionnaire by email to all registered compulsory school principals in The Association of Headteachers (Skólastjórafélagi Íslands), totaling 165 individuals, and to all registered principals in The Association of Headteachers in Preschools (Fælagi stjórnenda leikskóla), totaling 214 individuals. The response rate was 50% for both groups. A few questions were added to the CBI in the questionnaire, concerning background information as well as particulars about school climate.

One of the major findings of this study was the difference in measured burnout between preschool and compulsory school principals. Out of the preschool principals, 24% have experienced personal burnout and 13% of the compulsory school principals; 28% preschool principals have experienced work related burnout and 15% of compulsory school principals; 29% preschool principals and 16% of compulsory school principals have experienced staff related burnout. Of all the principals 79% showed no signs of burnout related to students, and 63% experienced no burnout symptoms related to parents.

The findings revealed a significant difference in burnout among compulsory school
principals according to types of further education; that is, principals with master’s level education in other fields than school management, showed less signs of burnout than principals master’s level education in other fields, or bachelor’s education. Also, a significant difference was found amongst compulsory school principals based on geographical location; that is, personal burnout symptoms were more frequent outside the Reykjavík capital area.

This study shows considerable burnout symptoms among compulsory and preschool principals. It also indicates that symptoms of burnout are more common among preschool principals on all three dimensions: the personal dimension, work dimension, and client dimension. These findings have to be studied more extensively, but the working environment of preschool principals seems to create more stress than is desired. Also, the findings suggest that it is of considerable importance for local educational authorities to create support mechanisms for school principals in order to prevent occupational burnout.

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