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Research paper

The importance of an explicit, shared school vision for teacher commitment

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the relationship of different explicit school visions and the presence of a shared school vision among teachers with teachers' personal commitment to their work. Multilevel analyses of four types of schools show that teachers in schools with an explicit school vision more strongly share the school vision and this shared vision is positively related to their affective and normative commitment. The practical implications of this are discussed.

1. Introduction

Committed teachers are important for ensuring the quality and continuity of education. Committed teachers contribute positively to how pupils learn (Meyer et al., 2019; Park, 2005; Sun, 2015), are absent less often (Meyer et al., 2002), are off sick less often (Ostroff, 1992) and are less inclined to leave the profession (De Neve & Devos, 2017; Morin et al., 2015).

A number of factors determine teachers' commitment, including the school context in which teachers work (Hulpia et al., 2011). When it comes to schools as professional communities, a common school vision is one of the most important characteristics of the school context, as it can provide teachers with a sense of ownership (Kools, 2020). For this reason, this study focuses on the role that a school's vision plays in the commitment that teachers feel. Studies in the American and Asian contexts show that an explicit school vision relates positively to commitment (McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al., 2015), McInerney, Ganotice, King, et al., 2015 and that there is a positive correlation between teacher commitment and the degree to which teachers share their school's vision (Edwards, 2003; Nguni et al., 2006; Reyes, 1990; Riehl & Sipple, 1996). In the American and Asian contexts, however, schools with an explicit vision are often private schools, mainly accessible to the children of wealthy parents, thereby raising suspicions about the validity of the conclusions in other contexts. The educational context in the Netherlands is a more suitable one to investigate the relationship between an explicit and shared school vision and teacher commitment. This is because schools in the Netherlands with a philosophical or

specific pedagogic school vision must by law receive government funding in the same way as public schools (Dutch Educational Council, 2019), which allows all pupils and parents to choose a school that aligns with their personal values, irrespective of their financial position. Teachers, too, may apply to schools whose vision appeals to them, and are appointed by the school management, not by the government as is the case for example in France, Spain and Switzerland. This means that school leaders in the Netherlands have a choice when it comes to staff: teachers are not simply 'allocated' to them, but where there are multiple applicants they can select the candidate that they consider to best fit the school. This policy has resulted in a large variety of schools with various school visions. However, very little research is available on the relationship between commitment and school vision in contexts such as that in the Netherlands (Razak et al., 2009). In an exploratory, qualitative study we found differences in commitment between experienced teachers at a Waldorf school with an explicit vision and teachers at a mainstream school with a more implicit vision (Authors, date). The objective of the current study was to verify this working hypothesis on a greater scale. The research question is whether and how the commitment of teachers at 24 schools in the Netherlands relates to an explicit, shared school vision.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Commitment: three components

The commitment of employees refers to the motivated connection

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that people have with their work (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The nature of this commitment impacts the functioning of organizations, which is why so much attention has been paid to this concept in work and organizational psychology in the past 30 years. This study is based on the three-component model of Allen and Meyer (1990), which was also applied in recent research (McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021) and in Dutch research (Jak & Evers, 2010). According to this model, employee commitment consists of affective, normative and continuance commitment.

Affective commitment to the profession is seen when teachers continue to teach because they want to – teaching gives them satisfaction (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jak & Evers, 2010). This form of commitment correlates positively with employee performance in various sectors (Meyer et al., 2002) and specifically in education: compared with teachers with normative and continuance commitment, teachers with affective commitment make the greatest contribution to their pupils' learning (Meyer et al., 2019; Park, 2005; Sun, 2015). Affectively committed teachers have a higher level of well-being (McInerney, Ganotice, King, et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2019), feel emotionally exhausted less often (Wang & Hall, 2019), are absent less often (Meyer et al., 2002) and have less intention of leaving the profession (De Neve & Devos, 2017; Morin et al., 2015) than teachers who continue to teach because they feel they have no other options.

The second component of commitment in the Allen and Meyer model (1990) is normative commitment, which is when employees feel morally obliged to stay with an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jak & Evers, 2010). This might be the result of a sense of moral responsibility towards pupils or colleagues or due to the high level of investment of an organization in its employees, causing them to feel they need to do something in return (Allen & Meyer, 1990). There is a positive correlation between this type of commitment and employee performance too, but the correlation is less pronounced than for affective commitment (Meyer et al., 2002). Meyer and Maltin (2010) found a correlation between normative commitment and the mental well-being of employees (Meyer & Maltin, 2010), but the teacher study of McInerney, Ganotice, King, et al. (2015) found the correlation not to be very strong.

The third component of commitment is continuance commitment, which is when employees perceive that they lack alternatives and therefore consider that they have no choice but to stay in their current job (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Jak & Evers, 2010). Becoming a teacher is often an ideological choice, but remaining a teacher can be – to a certain extent – a pragmatic choice, in which job security, work-life balance, autonomy in the classroom or fear of the new may be reasons to remain in the profession (Dutch Educational Council, 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Karakus & Aslan, 2009; Marshall, 2015). Commitment built on a perceived lack of alternatives is not conducive to high-quality work (Meyer et al., 2002, 2012) and is a negative predictor of the well-being of employees (McInerney, Ganotice, King, et al., 2015; Meyer et al., 2002, 2012; Meyer & Maltin, 2010), and this also applies specifically to teachers (McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al., 2015). Teachers who rate job security highly are less satisfied with their work and more often emotionally exhausted than teachers who consider job security to be less relevant (Wang & Hall, 2019).

2.2. Explicit school vision

A vision is a school's way of explaining why it organizes education and teaching in the way that it does and the goals it wishes to achieve (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 62; Gurley et al., 2015). Schools that have an explicit vision generally base this vision on a philosophy or a pedagogical concept. Schools with an explicit philosophical school vision in the Netherlands include Christian, anthroposophical, Islamic or Orthodox Jewish schools (Dutch Educational Council, 2019). Schools that provide education based on an explicit pedagogical school vision are Montessori, Dalton, Jenaplan or Freinet (also known as 'traditional

educational renewal') schools and schools based on the principles of, for example, natural learning, kunskapsskolan or iPad-based learning ('modern educational renewal'). Waldorf schools, also considered to be part of traditional educational renewal, form a special category because their vision is based on anthroposophical principles and on the resulting pedagogical school vision. Not all schools have an explicit vision. In fact, most schools in the Netherlands have a vision that is formulated in general terms without setting out concrete goals or painting a concrete picture of the ideal school.

Since Coleman et al. (1982) published their findings, the effects of an explicit school vision on pupil achievement have been studied regularly. Coleman et al. (1982) concluded that Catholic schools in the United States are more successful at improving the educational opportunities of pupils from disadvantaged groups than public schools, partly due to the climate in these schools, which Coleman associates with their explicit Catholic views. Coleman and Hoffer (1987) argued that Catholic schools would form a value community: a social network with more or less shared values that could create a positive and stimulating climate in schools.

More recently, McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al. (2015) showed that the commitment of teachers in schools in Hong Kong with an explicit school vision differs from that of teachers in public schools with a more implicit school vision. Affective commitment was greater at religious schools, while normative commitment proved to be greater at public schools. Dutch studies into the relationship between an explicit school vision and the achievement of pupils do not confirm the idea of Coleman et al. (1982). Studies at Protestant Reformed Christian schools (Reformed schools) (Dijkstra, 1992), Waldorf schools (Steenbergen, 2009) and traditional educational renewal schools, more specifically Dalton schools (Sins & Van der Zee, 2015), showed no or hardly any effect on the achievement of pupils. The relation between an explicit school vision and the commitment of teachers has not yet been studied in the Netherlands.

2.3. Shared school vision

A school vision is considered to be 'shared' when the experience of teachers is that their own values and beliefs are aligned with the vision of the school (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). A study performed at Catholic schools in the United States showed, for example, that teachers shared the Catholic vision and found it important to be able to teach Catholic values (Bryk et al., 1993; Squillini, 2001). In the Netherlands too, we expect that Christian schools will attract teachers with an affinity with Christianity, Montessori schools will attract teachers with an affinity with the ideas espoused by Montessori, and Waldorf schools will attract teachers with a connection with anthroposophy. We therefore expect that schools with a more implicit school vision will attract teachers with more diverse values and beliefs. At schools with an explicit school vision, we expect the school vision to be shared by the teachers to a greater extent than at schools with a more implicit school vision.

Various studies have shown that a shared organizational vision correlates positively with employee commitment, for example in the case of civil servants (Jensen et al., 2018) and commercial sector employees (Zang & Bloemer, 2010). With specific reference to teaching, a Norwegian study found that teachers who experienced alignment between their own values and the school vision were more motivated than teachers who did not experience this alignment (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). This is in line with the Chinese study by Li et al. (2015), which showed that teachers whose views coincided with the school vision were more engaged. Moreover, the Norwegian study found that teachers at schools with a vision that reflected their personal beliefs felt emotionally exhausted less frequently (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011). An Australian study showed that teachers who shared the school vision far less frequently expressed the intention to leave the profession (Whipp & Salin, 2018). As many schools in the Netherlands have an explicit school vision and are accessible to all pupils, it is interesting to investigate in

this context whether an explicit school vision correlates with affective, normative and continuance teacher commitment and, if so, whether it matters what the school vision is based on (philosophical or pedagogical views). In a prior qualitative study we explored this question by comparing teachers at a Waldorf school with those at a mainstream school (Moraal et al., 2020). This showed that teachers at the Waldorf school shared the school vision to a greater extent than those at the mainstream school. In a second exploratory study at these schools we showed that teachers at both schools were affectively committed (although the objects of their commitment varied), but that more teachers at the mainstream school described continuance commitment than at the Waldorf school (Authors, date). The outcome of this exploratory study has yet to be verified at a larger scale, and it must be ascertained whether it matters whether the vision is based on philosophical or pedagogical views. At Waldorf schools, these views are inextricably connected, while at some schools the explicit school vision is based on philosophical grounds only or pedagogical views only.

2.4. Experience and gender

Certain teacher characteristics are known to play a role with regard to commitment, such as work experience and gender. In their meta-analysis, Meyer et al. (2012) concluded that the correlation between commitment and work experience was much stronger than that between commitment and personality traits. Like McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al. (2015), they recommended including work experience when analyzing teacher commitment. McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al. (2015) additionally recommended including gender when analyzing teacher commitment.

Regarding work experience, the longitudinal study by Day et al. (2007), that largely confirmed previous findings by Fessler and Christensen (1992) and Huberman (1993), provides relevant insights. Their study involving 300 teachers in the United Kingdom showed that, in the initial stages of their careers, teachers are busy ‘surviving’ more than anything else (Day et al., 2007). After the first few years, teachers start to get a clearer idea of what their profession entails. Didactic competences are consolidated during these years (Huberman, 1993) and there is room for enthusiasm and growth during, broadly speaking, the first 15 years in the profession (Day et al., 2007). After about 15 years of work, usually around the age of forty or forty-five, teachers enter the phase known as ‘midlife’ (Cooper & Mackenzie, 2011). It is during this phase that work-life balance problems can arise, since this is the phase in which many teachers have relationships and/or families and need to divide their time and energy between work and home (Cooper & Mackenzie, 2011; Day et al., 2007). At this stage of life, for teachers who have a partner or a family, job security in education can be one of the reasons to continue teaching (Dutch Educational Council, 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015). Day et al. (2007) showed that this period can be seen as a crossroads phase: for some teachers, professional development and good results lead to a further increase in their commitment compared with the previous period; for others, this remains the same and for a third group, the workload, disagreements with superiors and career stagnation lead to reduced commitment and effectiveness in this phase. Broadly speaking, two groups remain after 25 years of experience: a group of very motivated and committed teachers and a group of teachers approaching retirement who lose commitment and perhaps even reach a dead end (Day, 2019; Day et al., 2007). In our previous qualitative small-scale study, the respondents were experienced teachers, who differed as to commitment depending on the school they were working at; the experienced teachers at the Waldorf expressed less continuance commitment than the experienced teachers at the regular school (Authors, date).

Studies that consider the role of gender paint a less clear picture than those that consider experience. In the United States, Singh and Billingsley (1998) found a small but significant gender effect: female teachers felt a greater connection with their profession than male

teachers. In a study involving novice teachers in Belgium, De Neve and Devos (2017) found that male teachers left the profession more often than women. Men who left the teaching profession mostly did so because they could earn more in a different profession, while for women the predominant reason was reduced affection for the job or the organization (De Neve & Devos, 2017). Cooper and Mackenzie (2011) showed that for female teachers who have considered leaving the profession, the ability to balance work with a family in the ‘midlife’ of their career is one of the reasons for remaining in the profession. In a recent Australian study, Collie et al. (2020) found no effect of gender on commitment.

2.5. Research questions

Our main aim in this study is to investigate the relationship between the commitment of teachers and the degree to which the school has an explicit and shared vision. In addition, we explore the role of gender and work experience, by means of the following questions.

1. A. Does the degree to which the school vision is shared by teachers at schools with an explicit school vision differ from that at schools with a more implicit school vision?
B. Does the basis of the vision, pedagogical or philosophical, matter in this regard?
2. Does the degree of affective, normative and continuance teacher commitment differ between schools with different school visions?
3. Are differences in teacher commitment related to the degree to which the school vision is shared?
4. Does the degree of affective, normative and continuance teacher commitment differ between men and women and between teachers in different stages of their careers?

3. Method

3.1. Data collection

To investigate the extent to which an explicit school vision determines the degree to which the vision is shared and teacher commitment, data was collected at 24 schools across the Netherlands towards the end of the 2019–2020 school year and during the 2020–2021 school year. Schools were selected based on the description of their vision on their website and in the school guide and allocated to one of four categories based on information on their vision or philosophy and objectives, as summarized in Table 1.

To explore the findings of our exploratory study on a larger scale, our aim was to include in our sample both small and large schools, both urban and rural schools and all education levels offered in the Netherlands. For this we selected six schools per category. One Reformed school indicated that its participation in the study was hampered by Covid-19 restrictions, which meant that five schools remained in this category. Allowing for possible ‘no shows’, we approached seven mainstream schools, which ultimately all participated in the study.

To improve the chances of getting an acceptable response rate, the first author visited every school personally or by means of a video message to explain the study prior to distribution of the questionnaire (Kaplowitz et al., 2004). At the schools visited by the first author, the teachers received an envelope containing the questionnaire, an informed consent form, a privacy statement and a return envelope from the researcher during the meeting. At the schools where the research was introduced with a video message, the teachers received this envelope from the school administration. Participation was voluntary and teachers were requested to give informed consent for participation in the study. The time required to complete the form was approximately 15 min. Teachers returned the completed documents to the researcher in the return envelope within a few weeks. Some of the data collection took place during the first Covid-19 wave, which meant that it did not

Table 1
Four school categories in this study.

Schools	Vision	School size (students)	Degree of urbanization	Education level ^a			
				bb/kb	tl	h	v
Mainstream schools	More implicit vision	1054	Strongly urban		x	x	x
		964	Moderately urban		x	x	x
		970	Rural			x	x
		835	Very strongly urban				x
		206	Strongly rural	x	x	x	x
		1400	Very strongly urban			x	x
		227	Very strongly urban	x	x		
Traditional renewal schools	Explicit vision based on pedagogical views	496	Strongly urban		x	x	x
		1060	Very strongly urban			x	x
		317	Very strongly urban	x	x	x	
		118	Very strongly urban	x	x		
		1359	Strongly urban		x	x	x
Reformed schools	Explicit vision based on philosophy/beliefs	224	Rural	x	x	x	
		901	Rural	x	x	x	x
		290	Strongly urban	x	x	x	x
		590	Very strongly urban	x	x		
		265	Strongly urban	x	x	x	x
Waldorf schools	Explicit vision based on philosophical <i>and</i> pedagogical views	1091	Very strongly urban	x	x	x	x
		893	Very strongly urban		x	x	x
		1163	Strongly urban		x	x	x
		160	Very strongly urban	x	x		
		703	Strongly urban				
		907	Rural		x	x	x
		807	Strongly urban		x	x	x

^a bb/kb: preparatory secondary vocational education – basic and advanced vocational tracks, tl: preparatory secondary vocational education – theoretical track, h: senior general secondary education, v: pre-university education).

proceed optimally. In some cases, only some of the teachers attended the information meetings. The total number of respondents per school varied from 6 to 34. A total of 415 teachers filled in the questionnaire. The data from two of the teachers were not imported because their responses to questions on two pages of the questionnaire were missing.

The ethics committee of the University of Groningen Teacher Training Department approved the study and the use of the questionnaire.

3.2. Variables

3.2.1. Explicit school vision

Waldorf schools constitute the first category. These schools have a school vision based on explicit philosophical as well as pedagogical beliefs. The origins of Waldorf schools are found in anthroposophy and their pedagogical ideas are based on the beliefs regarding inner development of Rudolf Steiner, the founder of anthroposophy (Kraai, 2013; Nijhuis, 2011). The mission of Waldorf schools can be described as reaching the spiritual world through personal development. The goal is to teach pupils to think, feel and will. This triad is translated into a curriculum for four-to eighteen-year-olds that forms the foundation of this education (Nijhuis, 2011). The vision of the Waldorf schools that were selected can be seen for example in how they start the day, when pupils and teachers recite a verse by Rudolf Steiner. In the timetable, the vision is apparent from the range of subjects, which not only includes subjects that prepare pupils for the matriculation examination, but also subjects aimed at personal development: eurhythmic and creative subjects such as smithing. Six Waldorf schools were selected for this study.

The second category is that of Reformed schools, which have an explicit vision based on faith. Similar to reformational and evangelical schools, Reformed schools have a conservative Christian profile. The mission of Reformed schools can be described as encouraging pupils to flourish as Christians. Teachers have Christian beliefs, and God and the Bible are central to their teaching. The schools that were selected have an identity document in which the vision is set out. When parents enroll their child, or the first of their children, a meeting is held with them in which Reformed education and how it will be given is discussed.

Teachers are also expected to endorse the identity of the school, and to belong to a religious community. In practice, the vision can be seen in the fact that every school day starts with prayer and that religion is one of the subjects on the timetable. Six Reformed schools were selected for this study.

The third category of schools comprises traditional educational renewal schools, which have an explicit pedagogical vision. Our sample includes a total of six schools: four Montessori schools, a Dalton school and a Jenaplan school. These schools grew from renewal movements dating from the early 20th century, and while the concept on which each was built differs slightly, they all have the mission to utilize the potential of each individual pupil as well as possible in order to prepare them to function in society. These schools do not subscribe to teacher-led classroom education and advocate education that involves more than merely achieving cognitive goals. The vision of these schools is evidenced by the fact that pupils work at their own level and at their own pace and that a lot of attention is devoted to working independently and to collaborating.

Seven mainstream schools with a more implicit vision form the reference category, included for comparisons with the other three categories. The mainstream schools that were selected do not have an explicit philosophical or pedagogical profile, do not substantiate their mission in these terms, and state their educational vision in general terms such as ‘self-development’ or ‘personal attention’ without formulating concrete goals or painting a concrete picture of the ideal school.

3.2.2. Shared school vision

A shared school vision refers to the degree to which teachers perceive their own values and beliefs to align with the vision of their school. We use the scale of Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) with the items translated into Dutch to measure the shared school vision. An example of an item regarding shared school vision is: ‘My views regarding upbringing and education align with the vision of this school.’ All of the items were formulated on a five-point scale, with the following as potential responses – depending on the phrasing of the items: not or to a very limited degree (1), to a limited degree (2), neutral (3), to a large degree (4), and always or to a very large degree (5), or: totally disagree (1), largely

disagree (2), neutral (3), largely agree (4) and totally agree (5).

3.2.3. Commitment

We used items based on the items of [Allen and Meyer \(1990\)](#) and the items translated into Dutch of [Jak and Evers \(2010\)](#), which are also based on the Allan and Meyer model, to determine affective, normative and continuance commitment. The items were specified for education. An example of an item about affective commitment to the profession, which is when teachers wish to continue teaching because they do not want to do anything else, is: 'I couldn't do without teaching'. An example of an item about normative commitment, which is when teachers feel morally obliged to stay at their school, is: 'Even if it were to my advantage, I wouldn't consider it right to leave this school now.' An example of an item about continuance commitment, which is when teachers have the impression that they have no option but to remain teaching, is: 'It would be difficult to find another job with my qualifications'. All of the items were formulated on a five-point scale, with the following as potential responses: not or to a very limited degree (1), to a limited degree (2), neutral (3), to a large degree (4) and always or to a very large degree (5).

3.2.4. Gender and work experience

For the best possible estimate of the effects of an explicit and shared school vision on the three types of commitment, we – in line with the recommendations of [McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al. \(2015\)](#) – took into account two relevant background characteristics of teachers: their gender and their number of years of experience.

Regarding 'gender', teachers could choose between 'man', 'woman' and 'other/no reply'. Experience was measured in ten units of five years, starting with a category for '0–4 years' experience' and ending with '25 years' experience or more'. Four groups were formed on the basis of the literature on the career phases of teachers ([Day et al., 2007](#); [Fessler & Christensen, 1992](#); [Huberman, 1993](#)): 0–4 years, 5–14 years, 15–24 years and >24 years.

3.3. Factor structure of the questionnaire

To determine the construct validity of the concepts, we first carried out an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on the first half of the data set. The number of factors was selected according to the Kaiser-Guttman rule (eigenvalues greater than one method), interpretation of the scree plot and the content of the factors. Because we assumed correlation between the various factors, we used an oblique rotation (promax). Items with a loading higher than 0.50 were retained. Items with a double (approximately equal) loading (maximum of 0.10 difference between the two loadings) were not retained. After the EFA, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the R package lavaan ([Rosseel, 2012](#)) was performed on the second half of the data set to confirm the results of the exploratory analysis. In each instance, we started with a model consisting of the number of factors and items from the EFA. The comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) and the standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) were used as measures of goodness of fit. Based on the recommendations of [Hu and Bentler \(1999\)](#), our target values were around 0.95 for the CFI and TLI, smaller than 0.06 for the RMSEA and smaller than 0.08 for the SRMR. In the CFA, a model with four factors produced a good fit (CFI = 0.972, TLI = 0.964, RMSEA = 0.048 and SRMR = 0.041). The reliability of the scales ultimately formed was verified by means of Cronbach's α and the corresponding item analyses, with an α of 0.7 regarded as sufficiently reliable. The definitive scales are shown in [Table 2](#).

3.4. Data set

The data set contains data from 413 teachers from 24 schools in four categories: Waldorf schools, traditional educational renewal schools,

Table 2
Items and scales for shared school vision and commitment.

Scale	Items	α
Shared school vision	The vision of this school means a lot to me.	0.92
	I feel at home at this school because I agree with its vision.	
	I value the ideas regarding education that this school adheres to.	
Affective commitment	My views regarding upbringing and education align with the vision of this school.	0.85
	I believe that teaching is a wonderful profession.	
	I couldn't do without teaching.	
	I identify with the teaching profession.	
Normative commitment	Being a teacher is part of who I am.	0.77
	If I had to choose a profession again, I would choose to become a teacher.	
	I feel an obligation to this employer to stay here.	
	Even if leaving were to my advantage, I wouldn't consider it right to leave this school now.	
Continuance commitment	If I were to be offered a job halfway through the year, I would not consider it fair towards my colleagues to leave.	0.92
	I have many other job options elsewhere.*	
	It would be difficult to find another job with my qualifications.	
	My experience makes it tricky for me to find a different job.	

Reformed schools and mainstream schools with a more implicit vision. There are two levels to the data: at the teacher level, we measured gender and experience, affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment and shared school vision; at the school level, we distinguished between the four school categories according to the school vision. Data on one or two items were missing for 35 teachers. For these teachers, missing data were imputed using the R package MICE ([Van Buuren & Groothuis-Oudshoorn, 2011](#)). To allow comparison of the scales for affective, normative and continuance commitment, the total score was divided by the number of items in the scale. [Table 3](#) shows the descriptive statistics for this data set.

3.5. Analyses

To investigate the relation between the variables taking account of the hierarchical structure of the collected data, and to avoid type I errors (incorrect rejection of the null hypothesis), we performed multilevel analyses with the lme package in R. Multilevel analysis takes into account the possibility that, due to their shared background, teachers from the same school might have more similar opinions than teachers from other schools, also known as the cluster effect.

The first research question of this study relates to differences in perception of a shared school vision between teachers in schools in the four categories. To answer the first research question, multilevel analysis was performed with shared school vision as the dependent variable and school vision as the fixed factor. The second, third and fourth research questions in this study relate to differences in commitment between teachers in the four school categories and the possibility of explaining these with reference to differences in shared school vision and teacher characteristics (gender and experience). To this end, we used three explanatory models to investigate whether the teacher- and school-level variables influenced each of the forms of commitment. For these analyses, shared school vision was used as a predictor for estimating intercepts, and for this reason was centered in this analysis. The effects of the explicit school vision and shared school vision variables were evaluated by testing differences in the log likelihood of the increasingly complex models, in which each variable was included in turn, using a chi-squared test. If an explicit school vision correlates significantly with the degree to which the school vision is shared and/or commitment, this means that there are differences in mean added value between schools with an explicit school vision (in this study: Waldorf

Table 3
Descriptive statistics.

	Mainstream schools (N = 113)	Traditional educational renewal schools (N = 98)	Reformed schools (N = 111)	Waldorf schools (N = 91)
Gender	43.3% man 50.4% woman 6.2% other/no reply	44.9% man 53.1% woman 2.0% other/no reply	56.8% man 39.6% woman 3.6% other/no reply	34.1% man 58.2% woman 7.7% other/no reply
Experience				
0–4 years	10.6%	22.4%	17.1%	5.5%
5–14 years	26.5%	31.6%	25.2%	40.7%
15–24 years	31.0%	20.4%	30.6%	34.1%
>24 years	31.9%	25.5%	27.0%	19.8%
Shared school vision	M 3.25 SD 0.83	M 3.91 SD 0.77	M 4.01 SD 0.65	M 4.36 SD 0.64
Affective commitment	M 4.11 SD 0.67	M 4.03 SD 0.64	M 3.97 SD 0.64	M 4.03 SD 0.70
Normative commitment	M 2.56 SD 0.89	M 2.86 SD 0.92	M 2.79 SD 1.07	M 2.81 SD 0.96
Continuance commitment	M 2.6873 SD 0.63	M 2.69 SD 0.70	M 2.6186 SD 0.63	M 2.4872 SD 0.61

schools, traditional educational renewal schools, Reformed schools) and mainstream schools with a more implicit school vision.

4. Results

4.1. Shared school vision at schools with an explicit school vision

The results of the multilevel analysis for the first research question with shared school vision as the dependent variable are shown in Table 4. The degree to which teachers share the school vision is significantly greater at schools with an explicit school vision than at mainstream schools with a more implicit school vision. It does not matter whether the explicit vision is based on pedagogical views, on a philosophy or on both.

24.6% of the variance in shared school vision can be explained by differences between schools. The effect size ω^2 is 0.68, which is a large effect (Field, 2013).

4.2. Commitment at schools with different school visions

4.2.1. Affective commitment

Table 5 shows that, model A, which incorporates the variable explicit school vision, reveals no significant differences in teachers' affective commitment in the schools with different explicit school vision and the schools with only an informal vision. Model B, which includes the degree to which the school vision is shared, does give a statistically better model compared with model A ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 7386$ $p = .006$). Adding gender and work experience to model C, lowers the fit compared with model B ($\Delta\chi^2(5) = 9.012$, $p = .109$), from which we can deduce that these factors do not significantly impact teachers' commitment and that only teachers' shared school vision determines the degree of affective

Table 4
Multilevel analysis of shared school vision.

	Value	SE	DF	t-value	p-value
Intercept	3.323	0.107	389	30.080	0.0000
Mainstream schools ^a					
Traditional educational renewal schools (pedagogical school vision)	0.708	0.159	20	4.448	0.0002
Reformed schools (philosophical school vision)	0.800	0.161	20	4.964	0.0001
Waldorf schools (pedagogical and philosophical school vision)	1.112	0.161	20	6.923	0.0000
School-level variance	.048				
Residual variance	.497				

^a Reference group: mainstream schools with a more implicit school vision.

Table 5
Multilevel analysis of affective commitment.

	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	4100 (0,094)***	4204 (0,102) ***	4133 (0,136)***
School level			
Mainstream schools ^c			
Traditional educational renewal schools (pedagogical school vision)	−0,065 (0,139)	−0,183 (0,149)	−0,170 (0,144)
Reformed schools (philosophical school vision)	−0,130 (0,140)	−0,265 (0,152)	−0,268 (0,147)
Waldorf schools (pedagogical and philosophical school vision)	−0,075 (0,140)	−0,264 (0,155)	−0,289 (0,150)
Teacher level			
Shared school vision		0.043 (0.011) ***	0.044 (0.011)***
Gender^a			
Woman			−0.072 (0.068)
Other/no reply			−0.001 (0.151)
Experience^b			
5–14 years			0.195 (0.104)
15–24 years			0.145 (0.104)
>24 years			0.042 (0.106)
Random effects			
School-level variance	0.035	0.042	0.037
Residual variance	0.411	0.395	0.396
Log of likelihood	−416.413	−412.720**	−417.226

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

^a Reference group: man.

^b Reference group: 0–4 years' experience.

^c Reference group: mainstream schools with a more implicit vision.

commitment in schools. The effect size ω^2 is 0.04, which indicates a small effect (Field, 2013). There is a positive correlation between a shared school vision and affective commitment to the teaching profession. The more teachers perceive their own values and beliefs to align with the vision of the school, the more they indicate that they remain teachers because teaching gives them satisfaction.

4.2.2. Normative commitment

Model A (see Table 6) shows that normative commitment does not differ between schools with explicit school visions and schools with only an informal vision. Adding the degree to which the school vision is shared among teachers in model B, gives a statistically better model compared with model A ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 18,600$ $p = .000$). This means that

Table 6
Multilevel analysis of normative commitment.

	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	2.588 (0.195)***	2.780 (0.193) ***	3.058 (0.236)***
School level			
Mainstream schools^c			
Traditional educational renewal schools (pedagogical school vision)	0.188 (0.288)	-0.034 (0.284)	-0.093 (0.293)
Reformed schools (philosophical school vision)	0.234 (0.298)	-0.014 (0.293)	-0.031 (0.303)
Waldorf schools (pedagogical and philosophical school vision)	0.291 (0.290)	-0.050 (0.290)	-0.031 (0.298)
Teacher level			
Shared school vision		0.077 (0.015) ***	0.075 (0.015)***
Gender^a			
Woman			0.011 (0.092)
Other/no reply			-0.019 (0.202)
Experience^b			
5–14 years			-0.207 (0.140)
15–24 years			-0.414 (0.140)**
>24 years			-0.323 (0.142)*
Random effects			
School-level variance	0.216	0.204	0.220
Residual variance	0.761	0.717	0.706
Log of likelihood	-550.656	-541.356***	-542.370

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

^a Reference group: man.

^b Reference group: 0–4 years' experience.

^c Reference group: mainstream schools with a more implicit vision.

teachers who share the school's vision feel more morally obliged to remain with the school. After adding gender and work experience at the teacher level in model C, it becomes clear teachers with 15–24 years' experience and teachers with 25 years or more experience both report less normative commitment than teachers with 0–4 years' experience. Although model C does not provide a significant improvement ($\Delta\chi^2(5) = 2028$ $p = .845$), it is important to notice that experience has a negative effect on teachers' normative commitment.

An explicit school vision does not affect normative commitment. There is however a small effect size ($\omega^2 = 0.02$) for experience and a medium effect size ($\omega^2 = 0.06$) for a shared school vision (Field, 2013).

4.2.3. Continuance commitment

Model A (see Table 7) only yields no significant effects for explicit school vision. Adding the factor shared school vision to the model at school level does not result in a better model ($\Delta\chi^2(1) = 0,442$, $p = .507$). Adding gender shows that the continuance commitment of female teachers and teachers who do not specify whether they are male or female is significantly smaller than that of male teachers. Experience has no significant effect. Model C fits the data less good for continuance commitment ($\Delta\chi^2(5) = 1.559$ $p = .906$). We can assume that model A is adequate, and that a shared school vision, gender and working experience are not relevant to continuance commitment.

5. Conclusion and discussion

In this study, we investigated whether an explicit and shared school vision and two teacher characteristics (gender and experience) relate to teachers' commitment. Our first conclusion is that there is a positive relationship between an explicit school vision and the degree to which teachers share the school vision. An explanation for this could be that

Table 7
Multilevel analysis of continuance commitment.

	Model A	Model B	Model C
Intercept	2.723 (0.111)***	2.653 (0.115)***	2.871 (0.145)***
School level			
Mainstream schools^c			
Traditional educational renewal schools (pedagogical school vision)	-0.079 (0.164)	0.000 (0.168)	-0.022 (0.167)
Reformed schools (philosophical school vision)	-0.086 (0.168)	0.004 (0.172)	-0.043 (0.172)
Waldorf schools (pedagogical and philosophical school vision)	-0.197 (0.165)	-0.073 (0.173)	-0.057 (0.172)
Teacher level			
Shared school vision		-0.028 (0.011)*	-0.022 (0.011)*
Gender^a			
Woman			-0.180 (0.065)**
Other/no reply			-0.304 (0.144)*
Experience^b			
5–14 years			-0.177 (0.099)
15–24 years			-0.064 (0.099)
>24 years			-0.097 (0.101)
Random effects			
School-level variance	0.061	0.063	0.062
Residual variance	0.370	0.364	0.356
Log of likelihood	-398.905	-399.126	-399.905

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

^a Reference group: man.

^b Reference group: 0–4 years' experience.

^c Reference group: mainstream schools with a more implicit vision.

schools with an explicit school vision succeed in attracting and retaining teachers with similar values and beliefs, because they endorse the philosophy and/or because they feel drawn to the pedagogical views on which the school vision is based. In line with the reasoning of Coleman and Hoffer (1987), these schools would be value communities. Mainstream schools with a more implicit vision are less successful in this, possibly because the absence of a clear vision and explicit goals does not give teachers a lot to commit to. Additionally, it is possible that teachers who choose to join (and stay with) a mainstream school find an explicit pedagogical and/or philosophical school vision less important, but perhaps find the length of their daily commute, the scope of their duties or autonomy in the classroom more important reasons to commit and stay committed to a school.

Despite the positive relationship between an explicit vision and the level to which teachers share a common vision, our conclusion is that an explicit school vision does not correlate with commitment: the affective, normative and continuance commitment of Dutch teachers does not differ between schools with an explicit school vision (Waldorf schools, traditional education renewal schools, Reformed schools) and schools with a more implicit school vision (mainstream schools). This deviates from the study of McInerney, Ganotice, Kind, et al. (2015), which found more affective commitment at schools with a philosophical school vision in Hong Kong and more normative commitment at public schools. An explanation for this may be sought in the difference between the Dutch context, in which schools with an explicit school vision are accessible to all pupils, and that of Hong Kong, in which it is mainly the children of wealthy parents who attend religious schools. Teachers who teach children of wealthy parents have a less complex body of pupils, which is why they might be more inclined to indicate that they 'couldn't do without teaching', while teachers at public schools whose pupils include a greater number of children from lower socioeconomic classes might be more inclined to feel 'morally obliged' to stay.

There is however a correlation between a shared school vision and the affective and normative commitment of teachers. At schools where teachers feel a connection with the school's vision, teachers more often say that they would miss the satisfaction they receive from teaching, which indicates affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jak & Evers, 2010) and also that they would not consider it fair towards their employer and/or their colleagues to leave the school, which indicates normative commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Jak & Evers, 2010). The fact that a shared school vision contributes positively to commitment aligns with earlier studies in other sectors (Jansen et al., 2018; Zhang & Bloemer, 2010) and with studies in education that indicate a relation between a shared school vision and motivation (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) and engagement (Li et al., 2015). The fact that a shared school vision has no correlation with continuance commitment could be seen as confirmation of the correlation that we found between shared school vision and affective and normative commitment. A shared school vision seems to mean something to teachers in terms of how they experience their work and the connection they feel with it, while continuance commitment constitutes hardly any connection with the work itself but rather with job security and work-life balance (Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Marshall, 2015).

Regarding commitment to work, teacher characteristics such as experience and gender were shown to matter. Experience was shown to have an effect on normative commitment. From the 15th year of experience onwards, teachers seem to feel less obliged to their employer or their colleagues to stay in their job. This is in line with earlier findings of Day et al. (2007), which indicate that some teachers lose commitment after the crossroads phase. For continuance commitment, we found an effect for gender: women appear to have less continuance commitment than men. For men, it appears that remaining a teacher is more of a pragmatic choice, and job security may be a reason to remain in the profession (Dutch Educational Council, 2013; Howes & Goodman-Delahunty, 2015; Karakus & Aslan, 2009; Marshall, 2015). This is in line with the study of De Neve and Devos (2017), which showed that men leave the profession more often than women because they can earn more elsewhere, while women mainly leave the profession due to a lack of commitment to the organization.

We also used this study to further investigate the results of two exploratory qualitative studies that we conducted at a Waldorf school and a mainstream school (Moraal et al., 2020; Authors, date). The picture that we gained from the first study (Moraal et al., 2020) is confirmed in this study: the school vision is shared by teachers more at schools with an explicit school vision than at schools with a more implicit school vision. The current study also clarifies that it does not matter what the school vision is based on: philosophy or pedagogical ideas or both. This could not be established from the results of the first exploratory study (Moraal et al., 2020), because in that study we compared a mainstream school with a Waldorf school, where philosophy and pedagogics are inextricably linked.

The current study also clarifies the findings of our second exploratory study (Authors, date) which were that a shared school vision is linked to positive forms of commitment. As far as the commitment of teachers is concerned, what is important is not so much that the school vision is explicit, but that it is shared by the teachers. We did not find any confirmation in the current study of the negative relation between an explicit school vision and continuance commitment that we found in the exploratory study.

This study contributes to existing research into the role of an explicit and shared school vision, specifically in the context of the Netherlands, but more research is needed to gain a full picture of the role that an explicit and shared school vision might play in attracting and retaining teachers. This is because the selection of schools constitutes a limitation. To gain a fuller picture, other schools with an explicit philosophical basis, for example reformatory, Orthodox Jewish and Islamic schools, should be included in the schools with an explicit philosophical school vision category in addition to Reformed schools. In this study, the

schools with an explicit pedagogical school vision category comprises only traditional educational renewal schools. Other educational renewal schools, such as schools for natural learning or Agora schools, might also be added. This would give a fuller picture.

A more complete picture and more in-depth understanding of teacher commitment would also emerge by adding sources of commitment to the scales for affective and normative commitment, like *students*, *colleagues* or the *school vision*. Specifically for the Dutch context, where schools with an explicit vision are accessible to students with high and low social backgrounds, extending the model to include sources of commitment could provide more insight into teachers' reasons for continuing to teach. Interviews or observations can be used to identify potential sources of affective and normative commitment.

The results of this study are of interest to teacher education and to school leaders. A first implication of this study for teacher trainers is that they can better assist pre-service teachers in choosing a suitable school by having them make explicit their own vision on learning and by providing insight into the kinds of schools there are. This is currently not part of teacher training in the Netherlands, although it would make sense to include it, as not all pre-service teachers are familiar with, for example, traditional reform schools, Reformed schools and Waldorf schools.

A second implication applies specifically to school leaders of mainstream schools. A shared school vision matters and, in order to arrive at a shared school vision and collective ambitions within the team of teachers, school leaders of mainstream schools with a more implicit school vision should formulate an explicit school vision that describes what the school stands for and its objectives. After all, it is hard to share a school vision if this vision is implicit or insufficiently concrete. In this regard, we emphatically advise school leaders to allow the team members to make explicit their own values and views and to formulate a school vision based on these, which then expresses the collective identity. A school vision formulated by the leadership generates resistance among those colleagues who do not subscribe to it (Jansen et al., 2018).

A third implication concerns the recruitment and selection of teachers. School leaders in the Netherlands are not allocated teachers by the government but may recruit and select teachers themselves. We recommend to school leaders of all types of schools that in the recruitment and selection of teachers they look not only at teachers' educational levels and skills, but more particularly at the values and views of a candidate and at how these square with what the school stands for. A school that is able to attract teachers that share the school's vision can expect to have more committed teachers, and this is likely to improve the quality of education it provides.

Declarations

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Declaration of competing interest

There's no financial/personal interest or belief that could affect author's objectivity.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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