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STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR THE TEACHING CAREER

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Abstract

The present study deals with the motivation for the didactic profession of psycho-pedagogical module students'. Motivation is closely linked to a range of variables in education such as students' motivation, educational reform, teaching practice, the fulfillment and psychological well-being of teachers. The educational system is not only interested in attracting candidates to the didactic profession, but more importantly, it needs to attract those students suitable to the teaching profession. That's why, through this study we wanted to explore the motivational level of current students within the psycho-pedagogical module, the motivation types that prevail, the students' expectations from a possible didactic career and the contribution of the university to the initial teaching training programmes, in order to optimize students' motivation to enter the teaching profession. The exploratory research was conducted on a group of 64 students from a university from Romania. We find out that psycho-educational module students' are interested in the educational environment and consider teaching to fit them. They are also strongly influenced by the model offered by other teachers, and are also largely attracted to education due to holidays and working conditions. The teaching profession is not the first choice for the majority of the questioned students, but it is considered to be the second preferred job, as well as a spare profession. Students want to be offered a competitive remuneration for the teaching profession, they expect to improve their expertise and they wish to be appreciated and respected by society.

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1. Introduction

The importance of the research of future teachers motivation of future is obvious because it is an essential factor closely linked to a range of variables in education such as students' motivation, educational reform, teaching practice, the fulfillment and psychological well-being of teachers. It is therefore useful for teacher trainers to determine how to attract potential teachers and how to keep them in the process of teaching. We consider that the professionalization in the teaching activity demands not only a strong intrinsic motivation, but also compliance with certain educational standards and requirements.

Professionalization of the didactic activity is not limited to the systematic assimilation of some competences described by professional standards, but supposes their heuristic and creative use, in educational situations and contexts, that require this. Professionalization should include (besides professional knowledge and skills) also schemes of thinking/reasoning, interpretation, hypothesis, anticipation and decision making (Petrovan, 2014).

Professional standards for teachers are for educators a reference system in their own self-evaluation skills. Each educator, knowing these standards can reflect on his own training and pedagogical practices; is able to identify the strengths of their skills and areas of professional training that need improvement. Thus, based on self-assessment, teachers can identify the domains of competencies on which to focus in career, they can design a professional development plan under which to choose various forms of training and improvement: consulting specialty materials, training courses and training, exchange of experience, participation in thematic conferences etc. Concern for improving pedagogical practice and training is a constant of the teaching profession and professional standards; it is a support tool in increasing the quality of educational services (Trif, 2015).

On the other hand, motivation refers to why people decide to do something, as long as people are willing to support their activity and overcome obstacles in their activity.

In terms of teacher motivation, Sinclair (2008) defined it as attraction, retention and concentration "what attracts individuals to teaching as long as they remain in initial teacher training and later in the teaching profession, assuming continuous training and the status of professor "(p. 37).

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2001, 2011) identified two dimensions to define the motivation about which most researchers would agree: the direction and the magnitude of human behavior. According to the authors, there are also two dimensions of teacher motivation, according to their conceptions of motivation, namely the motivation to teach and the motivation to remain in the profession.

By reviewing the literature we came to the conclusion that there are four components of the teacher's motivation:

- ✓ A prominent intrinsic motivation that is closely related to the inherent interest in teaching;
- ✓ Contextual social influences related to the impact of external conditions and constraints;
- ✓ The time dimension, with emphasis on lifelong commitment;
- ✓ Demotivating factors from negative influences.

2. Problem Statement

The need to address teachers' motivation also derives from the lack of teachers, reported by many Western countries, including the US, Australia and European countries such as Britain, Germany and Norway (Kyriacou & Kunc, 2007; Weiss, 1999).

In the research *Motivation to Teach: Psychometric Perspectives Across the First Semester of Teacher Education* (Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006) it is noticed that attracting new candidates for the teaching profession as well keeping them (after they have been attracted) inside this career are of critical importance. The primary motivation of this difficulty is given by the fact that two key elements in motivating the profession: salary and professional status, are not as well fulfilling in the teaching profession compared to other professions.

Another interesting aspect is that, as the three authors point out, we are not only interested in attracting candidates to the didactic profession, but more importantly, of those suitable to the teaching profession.

Examining the literature, Sinclair, Dowson and McInerney (2006) note that among the reasons for which a didactic career is followed is: (a) "love" for children or the desire to work with children and adolescents; (b) the perceived value of the teacher, to teach others; (c) the desire to help others; (d) dissatisfaction with others previous careers; (e) collateral benefits perceived as deriving from the didactic framework (such as flexible program and holidays); (f) the fact that entering the didactic profession is perceived as easier compared to access to other professions; (g) intellectual motivation such as love for the teaching field combined with the desire to share with others this knowledge; (h) influences from other people (such as family, friends, teachers, members of the community of origin, etc.) in choosing their careers; (i) the status of the teaching profession; and (j) the pleasure of practicing a profession that requires frequent interactions with others (affiliation motivation).

A renewed interest in the research on teachers' motivation to teach and continue teaching over the last decade has highlighted the possible causes of the current shortage, such as early teacher weariness, reduced learning capacity and imbalance between high demands and little rewards, the loss of job security and social prestige (OECD, 2005; Richardson & Watt, 2005, 2006; Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair, Dowson, & McInerney, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt, Richardson, Klusmann, Kunter, Beyer, Trautwein, & Baumert, 2012).

Recently, Richardson and Watt (2010) conducted a review of research on teaching motivation, focusing on their FIT-Choice program for students who are preparing for the teaching career. The authors identified a number of consequences of increased motivation for the teaching career, such as students' results, the psychological health of teachers and their well-being.

Research into the characteristics of motivation for teaching generally suggested that intrinsic, altruistic and extrinsic motivations were major reasons for awareness of the decision to teach, and intrinsic and altruistic motivations were essential to the satisfaction and sustainability of the classroom career in developed countries (for example, Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Karavas, 2010; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000).

However, early motivation could not predict motivation for the teaching career, and initial enthusiasm for teaching would diminish over time (Bess, 1977). This is based on issues related to the

increased weariness of teachers, (OCDE, 2005; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt, Richardson, Klusmann, Kunter, Beyer, Trautwein, & Baumert, 2012).

3. Research Questions

Through our research we aim to find out the answers to the following questions:

- What is the motivational level of current students within the psycho-pedagogical module?
- Which motivation types predominates among the students regarding the debut in the teaching profession?
- What are the students expectations from the psycho-pedagogical module, from a possible didactic career?
- How can the university contribute through the initial training programmes, to optimize students motivation to enter the teaching profession?

4. Purpose of the Study

Because motivation is what determines our actions and pushes us towards certain decisions, in accordance to our values and beliefs, this research aims to:

- a. Highlight the main motivational factors for the teaching career, of students from the psycho-pedagogical module.
- b. Identify the students expectations from a future teaching profession.

5. Research Methods

We investigated a group of 64 students from the psycho-pedagogical module at the "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, regarding the motivation for a debut in the didactic career.

To collect the data, we conducted a survey based on a questionnaire built by us as follows: a multiple choice item to identify the type of motivation (extrinsic, intrinsic, altruistic); a semi-objective item with Yes/No questions, about teaching as the first career choice; a subjective item regarding expectations from a future teaching career. At the last item subjects were asked to build the answers themselves.

6. Findings

To analyze the data we obtained, we calculated the frequency and percentages for each given response. The results are presented in the synthetic tables, so as to illustrate the intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivational factors that may influence the choice of a teaching career by students from the psycho-pedagogical module; identifying the option for the teaching career as the first professional choice and the explanation of arguments;

The first item of the questionnaire was aimed at identifying the main factors influencing the choice of students from the psycho-pedagogical module to follow a didactic career. The results are presented in the table below, in terms of frequencies and percentages (Table 01).

Table 01. The intrinsic motivation for the possible choice of a teaching career

Answer options	Frequencies	Percentages
It's an ideal profession	13	20,31%
Interest in the educational environment	30	46,88%
Respect for science and Romanian language	16	25%
Teaching is right for my personality	25	39,06%

In order to study the intrinsic motivation regarding the possible choice of a didactic career, we presented to the students from the psycho-pedagogical module the answer options in table 4.1. Out of the 64 questioned subjects, only 20.31% consider the teaching profession as an ideal profession, while 46.88% declare they have an interest in the educational environment and this is a factor for a possible didactic option. Regarding respect for science and Romanian language, 25% of students consider it a factor influencing their decision for a didactic career. Another factor that might influence the choice of students from the psycho-pedagogical module to follow a teaching career, is the fact that 39.06% of the subjects consider teaching as appropriate for their personality.

Synthesizing the aspects related to the intrinsic motivation of the students from the psycho-pedagogical module of the "1 Decembrie 1918" University in Alba-Iulia, we can say that most of the questioned students are interested in the educational field and perceive themselves as being suitable for this environment.

Table 02. External motivation regarding the possible choice of a teaching career

Answer options	Frequencies	Percentages
High social status and prestige of the teaching profession	12	18,75%
Working conditions	23	35,95%
The holidays	24	37,50%
Salary	2	3,13%
Model provided by other teachers	30	46,88%
Family support	11	17,19%

Among the external factors that could influence the decision for the didactic career of the questioned students, are in the preferences order: the model provided by other teachers, indicated by 46.88%, the holidays, indicated by 37.95%, the working conditions, indicated by 35.95%, followed by the high social status and the prestige of the teaching profession, indicated by 18.75%, then by the family support, indicated by 17.19% and finally the salary, is considered motivating by only 3.13% of the respondents (Table 02).

Therefore the model offered by other teachers can be an inspirational model for many of those who attend the psycho-pedagogical module, which gives the current teachers the role of professional and why not personal guide. Also, comparing the motivation for the debut in the didactic profession, we can say, that the questioned students are equally intrinsic and extrinsic motivated. The main internal motivational factor is represented by the interest for the educational environment, and the main external motivational factor, is the model offered by other teachers.

Table 03. Altruistic motivation regarding the possible choice of a teaching career

Answer options	Frequencies	Percentages
Devotion to science and Romanian language, the desire to teach them to others	8	12,50%
Support for others to learn	31	48,44%
Love for children	38	59,38%
Changing society for the better	37	57,81%

Regarding the other factors that could influence the decision for a didactic career of the students from the psycho-pedagogical module, is the love for the children, indicated by 59.38%, followed with 57,81% by changing society for the better, than with 48,44% by the support offered others to learn and ultimately the dedication to science and Romanian language and the desire to teach it to others with 12,50%.

Thus, love for children is the most altruistic motivational factor indicated in this item, which would influence the decision of the students for a didactic career (Table 03).

Making a multi-level comparison, regarding intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation, we can conclude that from this research it results that the altruistic motivation, is most often invoked by the students from the psycho-pedagogic module, as being the main factor in choosing a teaching career.

The next item aimed to identify if the didactic career is the first professional option for the students. The choice had to be argued and the results are presented in table 04.

Table 04. Teaching career, first professional choice, arguments.

YES - 25% Because	NO - 75% because
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ I like kids ✧ It appeals to me, it suits me ✧ Model provided by their own teachers ✧ I'm patient ✧ It is a stable and youthful job ✧ Family model ✧ I want to help the children learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✧ I'm working in another field ✧ It is the second favorite job, is backup ✧ Teachers do not work in a team ✧ In education there are too many rules, and there is bureaucracy ✧ Students are indisciplined, disinterested in the study ✧ Politics does not respect education ✧ Students have more rights than teachers ✧ The salary is low ✧ Lack of endowments

Analyzing the students' answers to this item, we note that only 25% of the respondents express their willingness to pursue a teaching career, while 75% do not want to follow this path, although they attend the psycho-pedagogical modules. We were also interested in finding out the reasons behind these options. This is how we found out, that those who responded YES, love children, they are attracted to this career and believe that this profession suits them, they have an inspiring model represented by their own teacher or a particular teacher, they believe the didactic career is providing stability and interaction with young people, they have a family model and last but not least, they want to help children learn.

From the most students who have responded NO, we have found out that they are already working in another field, that the teaching profession is on the second place in their preferences order and they

consider it to be a reserve profession. The students claim that the teachers do not have a team spirit, they also say that in education there are too many rules, and there is bureaucracy, and they do not agree to work in this area because pupils are indisciplined and disinterested in the study. Among the reasons why students from the psycho-pedagogical module, would not choose the teaching profession are both arguments like, political involvement in education, the fact that pupils have more rights than teachers, the salary is low and there is a lack of endowments.

Through the last item of the questionnaire we wanted to investigate the main expectations of the students from the psycho-pedagogical module from a future didactic career. Responses to this subjective item are presented in Table 05.

Table 05. Main expectations of students from the psycho-pedagogical module from a future teaching career

Expectations	Frequencies	Percentages
To be remunerated for performance	9	14,06%
To become a professional teacher, devoted to the profession	9	14,06%
To be appreciated and respected for what I do	9	14,06%
Better relationship with students	9	14,06%
To help society evolve through the formation of a new generation	8	12,50%
To be nice to the kids	7	10,93%
To maintain students interest in school and the new	6	9,37%
A favorable work environment without teacher-student stress	5	7,81%
To make my contribution to the childrens formation	5	7,81%
To receive positive feed-back from the children and their good results	5	7,81%
I have no expectations	5	7,81%

Regarding the psycho-pedagogical module students' expectations from a possible didactic career, we have found out that, 14.06% wants to be remunerated for their performance, 14,06% expects to become a professional teacher, devoted to the profession, also 14,06% expects to be appreciated and respected for what they do, and 14,06% wants to have a better relationship with students. About 12,50% wants to help the society to evolve through the formation of a new generation, than 10,93% expects to be nice to the children, 9,37% wants to be able to maintain students' interest in school and the new, 7,81% expects a favourable work environment without teacher-student stress, while 7,81% expects to make their contribution to the children formation and also 7,81% expects to receive a positive feed-back from the children and in the same time good results. Therefore, the most frequent responses refer to students' expectations from the society, related to performance-related remuneration, personal expectations, related to the development of expertise in this field, and expectations of others, about gaining appreciation and respect. Analyzing from a different perspective, six of the ten expectations invoked by students from the psycho-pedagogical module, excepting those who have no expectations, reveal that the expectations of others prevaie (to be remunerated according to performances) prevaie; to be appreciated and respected for what they do, a better relationship with the pupils, to be nice to the children, a favorable working environment without teacher-student tensions, to receive a positive feed-back from children and their good

results), fact that leads us to an extrinsic motivation, so dependent on what others can offer.

Thus, an average motivation to enter the educational system can either result in a large fluctuation of the teaching staff or the lack of teachers in the Romanian educational system. Finally, we want to mention the limits of this study due to the number of questioned subjects, although some of the results coincide with the data provided by other studies in the literature, namely research carried out in 2005 by the OECD and 2012 by Watt et al., which reveals the lack of teachers in the educational system of some European Union countries, as well as the US and Australia, and cites causes such as early teacher weariness, reduction of learning capacity, imbalance between high demands and few rewards, less safety of the work place and low social prestige.

7. Conclusion

Finally, part of the psycho-pedagogical module students from “1 December 1918” University of Alba-Iulia, as indicated in the section above, are interested in the educational environment and consider teaching to fit them. They are also strongly influenced by the model offered by other teachers, and are largely attracted to education due to holidays and working conditions.

Therefore the model offered by other teachers can be an inspirational model for many of those who attend the psycho-pedagogical module, which gives the current teachers the role of professional and personal guide. Also, comparing the motivation for the debut in the didactic career, we can say that the subjects are equally intrinsic and extrinsic motivated, and the main internal factor is represented by the students' interest for the educational environment, and the main external factor, is the model offered by other teachers. Thus, love for children is the most altruistic motivational factor indicated in this item, which would influence the decision of the students for a didactic career.

Making a multi-level comparison, regarding intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motivation, we can conclude that from this research it results that, the altruistic motivation, is most often invoked by the students from the psycho-pedagogic module from our University, as being the main factor in choosing a teaching career.

The teaching profession is not the first choice for the majority of the questioned students of the University of Alba-Iulia, but it is considered to be the second preferred job, as well as a spare profession. Although, the reasons for choosing a teaching career, are: love for the children, attraction to the teaching career and believe that this profession suits them, an inspiring model represented by their own teacher or a particular teacher, the believe that the didactic career is providing stability and also interaction with young people, the family model and last but not least, the wish to help others to learn.

The arguments for not choosing teaching as a future career, refer to students perception, that the teachers do not have a team spirit, there are too many rules in education, there is bureaucracy, and pupils are indisciplined and disinterested in the study. In the same order, psycho-pedagogical students from our University dislike, political involvement in education, the fact that pupils have more rights than teachers, the low salary and the lack of endowments.

As far as expectations are concerned, students want to be offered a competitive remuneration for the teaching profession, they expect to improve their expertise and they wish to be appreciated and respected by people around them.

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