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Teaching Identity, Professional Plans and Engagement of Pre-service Teachers in Partium Region1

Abstract
Recent researches show that in many European countries teaching profession is chosen by women from less affluent families, with worse academic performance. However the students' gender or performance has no or little effect on engagement: more important what he/she think about the prestige of the teaching profession and which values he/she prefers. Our analysis is based on the HERD research study database: interviewed 2 728 students. Results show that long-term engagement to teaching is affected by the opinion about prestige, autonomy, payment, power, asserting options, dignity and public participation. Male students are much more uncertain to choose teaching as a career, but there are no gender differences in the long-term engagement.

Keywords: gender, higher education, pre-service teacher, teacher training

Introduction

In connection with problematic issues of the teaching profession – such as negative self-selection, a great number of beginner teachers who are leaving the profession and feminization – there are three explanations which we can often hear: falling prestige, low salaries and the stereotypical idea that the teaching profession is more suitable for women. But it seems simplification to mention them as causality. In many cases there are no differences between pre-service teachers by gender: important values are helping others, caring and the usefulness of work (for both men and women). Engagement rather enhance by intrinsic motivations, e.g. one would like to work with children, and extrinsic motives – such as salary and prestige – affect those people who leave the profession (Drudy, 2007; Kovácsné, 2008; Smulyan, 2006; Watt, Richardson and Tysvaer, 2007).

Gendered discourses on teaching

Teaching profession is strongly linked to gender stereotypes. Women entered teaching at the beginning of the massifiaction of education. Middle-class women were governesses in their home at first and when the other sectors of education expanded, they entered to education as kindergarten and elementary teachers. There were two different jobs constructed than: kindergarten and lower grade teacher's tasks concerned with reproduction e. g. caring for children contrarily the teachers at higher levels of schooling, focusing on their subject, were mainly males. This gap can be found in all European countries and in the USA. That is why women entering the profession are expected above all to develop personal relationships with their students and a more intense emotional attachment, while male teachers are expected to embody the traditional cultural image of masculinity, for instance by being sportier and showing interest in technological disciplines (Smulyan, 2006; Weiner and Kallós, 2000).

Aligned with feminization the discourse of care becomes more and more prominent. Caring is generally associated with women's role. Although in a number of countries care is a central value of the teaching profession: e. g. in Ireland the Codes of Professional Conduct says: teachers' role as carers is central to their professional value system. It appears as an ethical dimension, and / or is responsible for the quality of relationships (Drudy, 2008; Hargreaves, quoted Nagy, 2007; Weiner, 2001).

Research has proven that – regardless of their gender – students who choose teaching, philology and medicine as a profession prefer feminine work values like useful work that improves the quality of

[1] In this case Partium is the cross-border region of Hungary, Romania and Ukraina.

life and which society as a whole can benefit from, or the opportunity to help others. Students in teacher training find altruistic motivations as having the utmost importance. Meanwhile, students who choose technology, economics or law – men and women equally – place importance on masculine work values like high social status, high income or the establishment of personal authority (Kovács, 2007; Kovácsné, 2008).

Men who choose teaching face dual expectations, which put them into a difficult position. Most of them have caring attitude: they find problematic that caring behavior is automatically associated with feminine roles, thus, if they grow closer emotionally to the children, society considers it a sign of weakness, or maybe homosexuality, or, in extreme cases, they would be accused of pedophilia. Some of them find the caring and the complex teacher role – focused on looking after the children – quite hard; they admit that it has been easier for them to keep a greater emotional and physical distance with the students, a behavior associated earlier with an education oriented teacher role (Smith, 2004).

There is slight gender difference in altruistic attitude but the progress on the academic ranks is more important for men. On higher educational levels there are also a high proportion of women, because of the expansion of education. In secondary schools girls have better academic achievement than boys but it usually subsides in higher education: by the fourth year more male students have publications and PhD programs are considerably more attractive to men. Female students plan to study after their graduation but they tipically want another of the same type of diploma, and not to take part in PhD programs (Fényes, 2009).

In recent years the so called scientific literacy has been in focus which makes important to take part in PhD programs. In addition the teaching profession should be seen as academic career: now it has a low status in most European countries and teacher education is not a real choice for talented students (Niemi, 2008). Pre-service teachers tend to choose colleges, rather than universities, where it is possible. Another problem is that the third – in some countires the half – of beginner teachers are leaving the profession, usually those who has a university degree. Some of them, who teach, considering to choose a different profession. As Hargreaves and Fullan wrote: students encounter less and less satisfied teachers and a high proportion of them would rather be somewhere else. On this way not created professional capital which has three components: human, social and decisional capital. Latter is defined as the knowledge of complex situations and the capacity of analyzing and solving problems (Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012).

The factors influence engagement to a teaching career were examined in a number of countries. Women are more intended to stay in teaching profession by the results of a study made in Netherlands. Those who are satisfied with their training and have positive experiences during the teaching practice would like to teach. Students with extrinsic motives indicated having had negative teaching experiences and they intended to remain in the profession for shorter periods. (Bruinsmaa and Jansena, 2010). A Swiss study found that first generation students in higher education, mostly women choosing teacher training institutions. This self-selection is motivated by short duration of training, the practical orientation and the lack of scientific interest (Denzler and Wolter, 2008). A study that reviewed three Australian universities found that typically young women from less affluent families choose teaching as a profession. Researchers examine whether there are empirically identifiable types among beginner teachers at the outset of their career and develop profiles based on professional engagement and career aspirations. They can establish three clusters based on these dimensions. There are no differences between the clusters by gender: age and social background show a slight difference (Watt and Richardson, 2008).

Hungarian researches suggest that there are no significant differences between pre-service teachers and other students by social background or the level of their parents' education (Varga, 2005). However, researches of Fényes show that the feminine scientific and educational fields – as well as the teacher training – male students have better social backgroud and they show less mobility (Fényes,

2011). Male beginner teachers more often start their career in another profession or leaving teaching profession. There are no academic achievement gap between the pre-service teachers and other students in university-level teacher training, but among college students Varga found that one who has worse academic performance more likely apply to college-level teacher training (Varga, 2007).

Recent research on the effectiveness of educational systems underscores the importance of good teachers in ensuring the quality of an educational system (Mourshed and Barber, 2007; Mourshed, Chijioke and Barber, 2010). At the same time we can see that pre-service teachers have poorer academic performance and less interests in PhD studies than other students in most European countries. Discussions often linked these facts to the feminization of teaching profession. But maybe it is not that obvious, because the long-term engagement and caring attitudes of pre-service and beginner teachers only slightly affected by gender.

Differences between pre-service teachers and other students

Our analysis is based on the HERD research study database. Surveys were carried out in a crossborder Central-Eastern-European region, called "Partium". The sample includes full-time students – both state founded and tuition paying – who are participating in the 1st and 3rd year BA/BSc, the 1st year MA/MSc, and the 1st and 4th year integrated programs. The sampling technique was a combination of stratified group sampling and clustering – after the stratification of the population per faculty, stratification was applied for educational levels and year per each faculty. From the group interviewed within the HERD survey (N=2 728) 204 students have completed pre-service teacher's inset at faculties that educate teachers, from the following higher education institutions in the Partium: University of Debrecen, Hungary (64 people), Ferenc Kölcsey Reformed Teachers' Training College, Hungary (17 people), Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary (2 people), College of Nyíregyháza, Hungary (17 people), Babeş-Bolyai University - Extension in Szatmárnémeti, Romania (50 people), Ferenc Rákóczi II Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, Ukraine (53 people); one respondent did not specify any institute. Because of the incidental completion of the inset, the teachers' sub-sample does not follow the distribution of the whole sample, thus the sub-sample's sampling is not representative for anything by itself. For this reason, our findings do not generally apply for all students in teacher education within the region, yet our data may significantly contribute to knowing them better.

The inset mentioned above includes questions about satisfaction with training, commitment, future career plans and also 36 questions about how important it is for the student to achieve the goals set during teaching. In addition to the previous variables, we studied the following ones: gender, field of study/subject and social background of the respondents.

Hypothesis 1: among students the pre-service teachers have worse financial conditions and less cultural capital than non-teacher training students, and their learning achievements are worse.

Hypothesis 2: there are gender differences by future training and professional plans among pre-service teachers, and there are no differences in the values which are important to them.

Hypothesis 3: male students are more likely have intetion to leave the teaching profession, however important factors will be the satisfaction with their training, such as opinion about the reputation and prestige of teaching profession and future visions related to teaching.

In the whole sample 30.8 percent of the respondents are men, and 69.2 percent are women. As one would expect, the proportion of women among the students in teacher training is higher than throughout the whole sample, namely: 79.7 percent versus 20.3 percent men. The students' cultural capital does not distinguish between pre-service teachers and others: the highest level of education of both parents are similar in the whole sample.

The questions sought to uncover objective and subjective material conditions of students' families. There was no difference between the pre-service teachers and the rest of the sample by their

subjective situation: how to judge the student circumstances of her/his family in comparison to national average, to friends and to classmates.

The objective index has been complied on the basis of durable consumer goods, of which eleven were listed in the questionnaire. Thus, if the person's family has all of them, the aggregate index is 11, if they have not any of them, then the index is 22. Financial situation of students who are not in teacher training is better: their index is 16.58, while the pre-service teachers' is 17.74 (significance = 0.000).

The questionnaire measured the student's learning achievements by several indexes. Such as if the student got scholarship or any award for academic achievement in secondary school, and if she/he got additional points for state language exams and extra learning achievement, also was asked about grants and academic activities during their higher education.

Pre-service teachers seem less successful than the rest of the sample: several variables show a significant difference.

More non-teacher training students got scholarships from academic achievement in secondary school.

More non-teacher training students have intermediate and advanced state language exams. Advanced languge exams gap is reduced during the higher education but in the number of intermediate exams remain a significant difference.

Table 1. High school academic awards by fields of studies (%)

	Have award	Do not have award	Total
Pre-service teachers	31.9	68.1	100
Other students	39.0	61.0	100

significance = 0.022

Table 2. Intermediate state languge exam by fields of studies (%)

	Have exam	Do not have exam	Total
Pre-service teachers	26.9	73.1	100
Other students	50.7	49.3	100

significance = 0.000

Table 3. Advanced state languge exam by fields of studies (%)

	Have exam	Do not have exam	Total
Pre-service teachers	5.8	94.2	100
Other students	11.7	88.3	100

significance = 0.002

In contrast, significantly more pre-service teachers took part in the National Secondary Schools Competition (so called OKTV). But this special interest disappears in higher education: there are no differences between pre-service teachers and other students who take part in the competition which called National Student Conference.

More pre-service teachers have their own reserch topic or field and it is not just a mere interest because many of them have a publications as well.

Table 4. "OKTV" attendance by fields of studies (%)

	Have OKTV	Do not have OKTV	Total
Pre-service teachers	11.9	88.1	100
Other students	4.9	95.1	100

significance = 0.000

Table 5. Have their own research topic by fields of studies (%)

	Have	Do not have	Total
Pre-service teachers	39.7	60.3	100
Other students	24.9	75.1	100

significance = 0.000

Table 6. Have a publication by fields of studies (%)

	Have	Do not have	Total
Pre-service teachers	7.8	92.2	100
Other students	4.5	95.5	100

significance = 0.015

The first hypothesis partly seems to be verified: students in teacher training have worse financial background than the other students and their academic achievements are worse too. But there is no difference in student's cultural capital: more than a half of them are first generation students in higher education. The reason can be the characteristics of Partium region. It sholud be noted that the only indicator in which the pre-service teachers are better in the secondary school competition attendance. More than one out of ten comes to the universities to extremely interested in a subject or a special topic. But this interest disappears during the higher education, at least they do not take part in academic competitions.

Values and professional plans of pre-service teachers

As it was mentioned the proportion of women among the students in teacher training is 79.7 percent versus 20.3 percent men. Proportion of future to be kindergarten teachers is 22.4 percent and basically just women chose these courses (there is only one man among them).

As for fields of studies women tend to choose feminine, while men tend to choose masculine fields, but we can see the most significant divergence in the kindergarten teacher training. Examining only the teacher training participants, the discrepancy is still significant, but choices are much more flexible: four-tenths of each gender chose the "not typical" subject or field.

Table 7. Pre-service teachers specialziation choice by gender (%)

	Feminine specializations	Masculine specializations
Women	60.7	39.3
Men	41.6	58.4
Total	55.3	44.7

significance = 0.003

Teaching in elementary school is preferred mostly by female students than males: almost one half of the latter group wishes to work in secondary schools or tertiary education. Among the students who aim at higher educational degrees, men would choose higher education in a slightly higher proportion than the women, but the difference is not significant here. It seems that female students are more reluctant to teach in secondary schools than male students are, when it comes to elementary schools although – according to the other researches – the prospective role conflicts would seem more powerful in keeping them away from there.

Table 8. Preferred school levels by gender (%)

	Students who would like to teach in elementary school	Students who would like to teach in secondary school or tertiary education
Women	74	26
Men	52.2	47.8

significance = 0.001

Relatively few students have decided not to choose teaching as a profession: 2.9 percent of respondents. However, a significantly higher proportion of the students remained undecided, since they do not know yet if they want to teach first or try to find a job in a different field. The proportion of undecided is significantly higher among men. But there is no gender difference among those who want to teach, but perhaps leave the profession later: 19 percent of men and women think that they are not necessarily going to teach for a long time.

Table 9. Plans of choosing teaching as a profession by gender (%)

	Definitely want to teach	No or I am not sure yet
Women	54.7	45.3
Men	33.8	66.2

significance = 0.003

For the financial background of the students who choose teaching there is not a significant difference by gender or by field of studies or by choosing teaching profession. However there are gender differences by parents' educational level. The male students have more cultural capital and typically their mothers' educational level is higher than their fathers'. The difference is mainly due to the fact that more than three-quarters of women who study to be a kindergarten teacher have parents with maximum final exam. If we only see the students in the teacher training, there are no significant difference by educational level of fathers, and less difference by the educational level of the mothers. Interestingly, whose mothers also have a higher education degree, would prefer to teach.

Table 10. Father's education level by gender (%)

	Final exam at the most	College, university degree
Women	74.8	25.2
Men	57.8	42.2

significance = 0.009

Table 11. Mother's education level by gender (%)

	Final exam at the most	College, university degree
Women	66.3	33.7
Men	40.6	59.4

significance = 0.000

Students consider almost every goal set during teaching as important, in a proportion that exceeds 80 percent, but very often even 90 percent. This may also result from finding everything equally achievable during studying – which is a slightly idealistic view – and pre-service teachers begin to select only after starting their career. Thus, we examined if there are linking tasks, goals and whether there are types of teachers among the students.

Because the group of pre-service teachers was the least homogeneous according to taking part in teacher training or kindergarten teacher training, so it seems appropriate to examine how to form the value choices, if we look only students in teacher training.

According to the important values and goals we found three clusters. The main difference is that how important the goals over all. The members of the first cluster wish to achieve all goals while in the third cluster there is nothing eminently important, and for the members of the second cluster the tasks are more or less important.

Prominent differences between the clusters, while the first group want to use a wide range of teaching methods and following the pedagogical innovations, till the members of second and third cluster think that following the pedagogical innovations or follow-up assessment of lessons are the least important aims. The second cluster is dominated by traditional educational values, and the members of third cluster prefer frontal teaching methods, which does not require (self)reflection.

Table 12. Clusters by important values and goals, only among students in teacher training

	Innovative	Traditional	Frontal methods
Most important goals	Using wide range of teaching methods (4,00) Awakening of intellectual curiosity (4,00) Develop students' communication skills (4,00) Support the inefficient students (4,00) Following the pedagogical innovations (3,95)	Awakening of intellectual curiosity (3,69) Moral education (3,66) Develop basic skills (3,65) Develop students' personality (3,53) Develop intelligence of students (3,53)	Awakening of intellectual curiosity (3,20) Develop basic skills (3,15) Support understaing the world around us (3,11) Support the inefficient students (3,08) Preparation for further study (3,08)
Least important goals	Preparation for academic competitions (3,52) Contact with parents (3,52) Support physical development of students (3,53)	Using wide range of teaching methods (3,00) Following the pedagogical innovations (3,00) Follow-up assessment of lessons (3,01)	Follow-up assessment of lessons (2,78) Following the pedagogical innovations (2,80) Take part in-service trainings (2,81)

There is a significant gender difference and difference by choosing teaching as a profession in these three clusters. There are relatively few students in the first (innovative) cluster and they are mostly women. Most of the men belong to the third cluster, while women into the second. In other words, women prefer traditional values such as developing knowledge, personality and morality and men prefer frontal teaching methods, emphasizing knowledge transfer. Also they both neglected the objectives for professional development, or using a wide range of teaching methods.

Table 13. Clusters by gender, only among students in teacher training (%)

	Innovative	Traditional	Frontal methods	Total
Women	88	73	51	67.6
Men	12	27	49	32.4

significance = 0.002

The second cluster is dominated by those students who want to teach in any case, while the members of the other two clusters are uncertain. This is consistent with expectations of complex teachers' role, however, the professional development, that is required in needs of in-service trainings and follow-up assasment of lessons are missing from goals of the most engaged students.

Table 14. Clusters by plans of choosing teaching as a profession, only among students in teacher training (%)

	Innovative	Traditional	Frontal methods	Total
Definetely want to teach	50	66.7	42.3	54.6
No or I am not sure yet	50	33.3	57.7	45.4

significance = 0.029

There are 9 items in the questionnaire which ask what the students think about the teaching profession: its prestige, autonomy, payment, power, future, asserting options, interest enforcement skills, dignity and public participation. To the fact that the student wants to teach at all, only the prestige of the teaching profession correlates. The fact that who wants to teach, and not leave the profession later is related to the factor set all mentioned item. The payment itself does not show correlation to leaving the teaching profession and there are no gender differences either.

In relation to the satisfaction of the training the questionnaire included questions about theoretical and practical training, transfer of scientific and methodological knowledge and preparation teacher's role. More than 80 percent of the students are relatively satisfied with the quality of the education expectations and there are no gender related differences in this aspect. However a factor is formed from specifically practical training elements, it turns out that students who want to teach are significantly less satisfied. So it seems that it is not the excellent training motivate for teaching, the students who definitely want to teach would rather need more practical knowledge.

Table 15. Relationship between satisfaction with the training and teaching intentions

	Average	N
Definitely want to teach	-.3913	82
No or I am not sure yet	.2756	140
Total	.0000	222

significance = 0.000

Both gender groups plan to participate in continuous education programs in about equal proportions and there is no significant variation regarding the possibility of applying to Master programs in the future, either. Moreover, in agreement with existing research results which show that it is more important for men to ascend on the academic ranks, PhD programs are considerably more attractive to male students.

Table 16. PhD study plans by gender (%)

	Plan to participate in a PhD program	Do not plan to participate in a PhD program
Women	33.5	66.5
Men	50.0	50.0

significance = 0.007

Most of the pre-service teachers do not reject to work in small settlements, disadvantaged regions or with children with special needs, although in the two latter cases, the proportion of those who would not take on such responsibility is rather high, 40 percent, and men and women are both represented among them. If a factor is formed from variables which describe a disadvantaged situation there is a special relationship between choosing teaching as a profession, staying in the teaching profession and this factor. High proportion of students who want to teach would like to work in more favourable conditions. Those who do not want to leave the teaching profession in the future would work in any

circumstances, but who might leave the profession think they would go away if they have had to work in worse conditions.

Table 17. Relationship between disadvantaged situations and choosing teaching as a profession

	Average	N
Definitely want to teach	-.5255	82
No or I am not sure yet	.3702	140
Total	.0000	222

significance = 0.000

Table 18. Relationship between disadvantaged situations and staying in teaching profession

	Average	N
Definitely want to teach	.1024	159
No or I am not sure yet	-.4383	60
Total	.0000	219

significance = 0.000

Conclusions

According to previous international and national studies, this research shows that students in teacher training are mostly women, they have worse financial background than the other students and their academic achievements are worse too. But – maybe because of the characteristics of Partium region – there is no difference in a student's cultural capital: more than a half of them are first generation students in higher education. It should be noted that the only indicator in which the pre-service teachers are better is the participation of the National Academic Competition. This special interest in higher education disappears: future researches would be worth to examine the influence of higher education institutions and teacher training itself.

Regarding the teaching profession as a whole, one can notice that significant part of the students identify with the feminized, complex teacher role approach. Two variables show significant gender difference: more men are uncertain about whether they want to teach or not and more men plan to participate in PhD program. But the intention of staying on the teaching profession is not affected by one's gender. The long-term engagement is significantly affected by the perception of the teaching profession's prestige, autonomy, payment, power, future, asserting options, interest enforcement skills, dignity and public participation. The choice of teaching as a profession is affected by one's opinion about the prestige of teaching and by gender: male students are much more uncertain than female students.

The satisfaction with teacher training shows the opposite effect as the cited studies results: the reason can be that more than 80 percent of students were pleased. However students who want to teach are significantly less satisfied: it is possible that the less engaged students do not need more knowledge because of their own uncertainity.

Who prefers frontal teaching methods and instrumental knowledge transfer is – regardless to his or her gender – the least confident that he/she wants to teach. But there is a bit more male student in this cluster, while female students think that children's knowledge and personality both should be developed. So the intention of leaving the teaching profession is affected indirectly by gender roles: men tend to identify with priority to the knowledge transfer process, and therefore may be more difficult for them to implement the complex, expanded teacher's role.

It can be confirmed that there is no gender difference by taking potentially worse conditions: uncertain pre-service teachers may leave the teaching profession but who wants to teach in the long run are not shrunk back by these tasks.

Suprisingly the use of wide range of teaching methods and the follow of the pedagogical innovations are more important for female students: these goals are essential components of professional capital. So feminization of the teaching profession would not be an obsticle to innovation and research-based training and at the same time the prestige of the teaching profession could increase.

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