Student teachers' self-evaluation and perceived social evaluation of their future profession in South Tyrol – Italy

L'autovalutazione e la percepita valutazione sociale della professione dell'insegnante da parte degli studenti delle Scienze della Formazione in Alto Adige – Italia

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the student teachers' evaluation of the prestige of their future profession is needed to include this aspect of the professionalization process in teacher education and training. Hence, knowledge on student teachers' perceptions is of fundamental worldwide relevance for universities to make the teaching profession more attractive to a wider pool of candidates. Research has shown that the teaching profession has a low social prestige, especially in the Mediterranean area, but there is no evidence on whether the perceived social prestige of the students' future profession coincides with the students' personal esteem of the profession. Therefore, this paper gives new insights in the self-evaluation and perceived external, social evaluation of the prestige of the teaching profession among student teachers in one Italian university (Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, N = 154). The results show that student teachers' self-evaluation and perceived external, social evaluation considerably and significantly diverge. Finally, implications for decision makers and university stakeholders will be discussed in this paper.

I futuri insegnanti, oggi studenti di Scienze della Formazione, necessitano di concentrarsi sulla percezione del prestigio della loro futura professione per includerla come uno degli aspetti salienti del processo di professionalizzazione all'interno della loro formazione. A motivo di ciò le università devono curare a livello mondiale la comprensione, da parte dei futuri insegnanti, della rilevanza della loro professione quale aspetto di fondamentale importanza, anche al fine di rendere la professione docente più attraente per un più ampio spettro di candidati. Le ricerche hanno dimostrato che la professione dell'insegnante ha un basso prestigio sociale, specialmente nell'area mediterranea, ma non vi è alcuna prova che il prestigio sociale percepito della futura professione degli studenti coincida con la valutazione che il singolo soggetto ha della sua professione. Questo articolo fornisce pertanto nuovi risultati sull'autovalutazione e la valutazione sociale del prestigio della professione percepita da parte degli studenti delle Scienze della Formazione alla Libera Università di Bolzano (N = 154). I risultati dimostrano che l'autovalutazione degli studenti e la valutazione sociale percepita differiscono in modo considerevole e significativo. Questo contributo tratta inoltre le implicazioni per i decisori e gli stakeholder universitari.

KEYWORDS

teacher education; social prestige; professionalization; higher education; perception.
Formazione degli insegnanti; prestigio sociale; professionalizzazione; istruzione superiore; percezione.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Teaching as a profession and its struggle

According to Keiner (2011), professions describe particularly privileged occupational groups "that fulfil specific, central and systemically relevant functions for a society. They regulate their functions and services largely autonomously and secure stable employment relationships, social status and prestige[1] for their members, as well as corresponding income" (p. 199, translated by the author). The classical professions include doctors, lawyers and theologians. Precisely because of the high dependence on the state-regulated education system and the strong influence of the churches, especially on elementary schools, which lasted well into the 20th century, the teaching profession was not considered a profession in the profession-theoretical considerations of the 1980s. On the other hand, however, it fulfilled a central social, school-organized function and ensured its reproduction through knowledge cultivated at universities and corresponding examinations. The teaching profession was therefore described as a semi-profession (Keiner, 2011).

The teaching profession is socially determined (see e.g., Alessandrini, 2012; Costa, 2010; Margiotta 2019) and continues to struggle with defining itself in relation to other professions (Goodwyn, 2010). Although teaching meets the criteria of what constitutes a profession in terms of knowledge, responsibility, autonomy, and organization, the concept of the "professional" within education remains debated and contested. As Lundgreen (2011) underlines, professionalization is commonly characterized by a) knowledge, b) professional identity, c) public image of offered indispensable services, and d) legal privileges. The author argues that in this regard especially for educational professions some problems arise. For example, which is the necessary knowledge that justifies the privileging competence in this field? The fact that pedagogy only was a part of studies and was not studied as main subject until the 1960s partly explains its difficult legitimization. Moreover, as also emphasized Lundgreen (2011), the public image or status characterizes a profession. Status, when used in relation to occupations and professions, typically refers to the social standing of various groups and is connected to the prestige, rewards and desirability of various occupations. Professions with high social status also tend to have high social prestige because of perceptions relating to the knowledge required to "do the job" (Winch, 2010). Research by Hall and Langton (2006) suggests that the main factors for status are power, money and fame. When secondary drivers of status, namely training, skill, expertise and social influence, are not seen as contributing to the more important primary drivers, attempts to raise the status of teachers could be seen as ineffective.

Many factors cause the low prestige of the teaching profession compared to other professions. Rothland (2016) summarizes them and mentions the following:

- The size of the professional group: the number of professionals initially increases the prestige, but decreases above a certain threshold; due to the large

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1   According to Hoyle (2002), the *status* of an occupation refers to its abstract characterization, for example, as a profession, following an underlying conceptualization and related criteria, while the *prestige* refers to the reflection on the significance of the profession to be evaluated for society in comparison with other professions.

number of pupils, a correspondingly large number of teachers is required, and this leads to the teaching profession being one of the less exclusive professional groups.

- A high proportion of women has a status-reducing effect.
- Uncertainty about teaching objectives, roles, effects and causality.
- The relationship between pupils and teachers represents a permanent intermediate position (between the world of children and adults; between the world of school and work; between school values and the values of the adulthood; between the worlds of knowledge transfer and knowledge generation), which has a negative impact on the prestige of the teaching profession.

1.2. Student teachers' and perceived social evaluation of the teaching profession

The discourse about the social position of the teaching profession is not new. Already Adorno wrote in 1965 that the teaching profession enjoys a low social standing compared with other academic professions. Today, this is – although with different degrees – a common assumption in most European countries and beyond.

Hargreaves, Cunningham, Hansen, McIntyre, and Oliver (2007) found that teachers still feel there is a significant gap between the status of teaching and other high-status professions, particularly in relation to teaching being a respected and valued authority. Moreover, what for teachers mattered most was the status and esteem afforded by colleagues and partners rather than that of public opinion. However, also public opinion, local and national media, and government's perspectives toward the teaching profession are determinant for the status of the teaching profession. A study conducted by Fuller, Goodwyn, and Francis-Brophy (2013) has shown that the teachers' sense of professional identity (i.e., the aspect of teacher's identity that is most influenced by changes in local and national policy, roles and responsibilities), the status and esteem strongly reflect external and objective recognition of the teachers' skills and expertise. The authors presume that teachers develop an awareness of their own identity from an understanding of the perceptions of others of them.

Teaching is the first-choice profession for university graduates in most European countries (e.g., Institute for Public Policy Research, 2001). However, the social esteem is influenced by its relatively low power – if compared with other professions. As Mertes (2011) points out, the teaching profession does not represent any social or political power. Career opportunities are limited, and the teacher's domain is limited to the classroom. Power over children and young people is conferred on the teaching profession only by society; teachers do not therefore act on their own authority, but on the basis of a mandate articulated in the form of curricula, themes and educational standards. The social esteem has been changing over the years; as emphasized by Ünsal, Agcam, and Korkmaz (2017), a decrease of the status of the teaching profession is observable in European countries due to economic crises. The authors underline that working conditions and income are the most important criteria for the self-image and status of the teaching profession. Tartuce, Nunesco, and De Almeida (2010) emphasize that a low social status of the teaching profession also depends on the fact that many teachers – especially in the past and in some countries and areas even today – have no specific training or professional preparation, and this contributes to the stereotype that anyone can teach and that for this job no specific qualification is necessary. Moreover, the low status may, according to Monteiro (2015), be attributed to the lower salaries than most professions with a high status. Monteiro states that it is

an easily accessible profession with lower income and low autonomy, and that the big class sizes, low resources and negative working conditions influence its status. Not only historical reasons influenced and influence the social esteem of the teaching profession, but also the geographical position. From research (Chistolini, 2010) we know that the teaching profession has a lower social prestige in the Mediterranean area: from the comparison of the results from eight countries (Belgium, Cyprus, Italy, Libya, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey, and United States of America) emerged that the teaching profession receives the lowest social prestige in Italy. Moreover, Fischer (2010) compared data collected by the Italian institute IARD on teachers' perceived social prestige of their profession and emphasizes that teachers perceive a decreasing social prestige. He mentioned different factors influencing this low social prestige: the mass phenomenon school and its connected increase of general education; the low political appreciation of schools and education, especially in Italy; and the dissemination of negative images of schools through mass media. From this data emerges that female teachers seem to be more pessimistic than their male colleagues. Furthermore, teachers from higher educated families are less pessimistic compared to teachers from less educated families. This result turned out to be more pronounced in the north of Italy than in the south of the country, where this profession in the public sector seems to bring more respect for the profession. Further, the author states that in Italy, in contrast to the past, the role of a teacher, that is its social function, is valued as being more important than the teachers' professionalism. The author concludes that this is not surprising in an era of crisis in the educational system.

Although tensions exist between the social esteem and teachers' own views about teaching, there is little doubt that the perception of an overly regulated and poorly remunerated profession has important implications for teachers' overall sense of professional status, morale, recruitment and retention (e.g., Ingersoll & Perda, 2008). The teachers' perceived lower social status compared to other professions affects teacher job satisfaction with negative repercussions on teacher recruitment and retention (Swann et al., 2010).

As Rothland (2016) underlines in his paper, the social external esteem of the teaching profession – which is not particularly high but also not particularly low and all in all assessed as positive – is countered by the self-image of the teacher or prospective teacher, which points to the existence of a discrepancy between external evaluation and self-perception. These discrepancies also seem to have increased over the years, following the Eurydice report (2015) that focuses on almost two million lower secondary education teachers employed in 36 European countries. The report reveals that teachers do not correctly evaluate the public perception of the recognition of their profession in a European comparison: society rates the profession higher – stating that it is a highly skilled and intellectually demanding profession – than teachers perceive. For example, the report states that

> 90.2 % of teachers in the EU stated that they were satisfied with their job and 90.1 % with their school environment. However, only 18.4 % of teachers perceive their profession to be valued by society at large. Countries with the lowest percentage of teachers who believe that their profession is viewed positively are Spain (8.5 %), France (4.9 %), Croatia (9.6 %), Slovakia (4 %), and Sweden (5 %). Despite their perception that society does not rate it highly, the great majority of teachers themselves in these countries are highly satisfied both with their job and their school. (p. 104).

Hence, in Spain only 8.5% of teachers believe in a positive social evaluation of the teaching profession while data show that in this country society attributes the

same social prestige to the profession as to other highly skilled intellectual professions – for example, economists, lawyers, and psychologists. In Italy, society attributes an even higher social prestige to teachers. The professions' prestige is considered close to that of managers running medium-sized enterprises and of entrepreneurs.

Even if some research has shown that the social esteem of the teaching profession is lower than in other professions, it seems that research cannot confirm the negative social evaluation of the teaching profession but only the negative perception by teachers of the external, social status of the teaching profession and the teachers' need to justify themselves for the privileges of the profession. It is not yet clear how student teachers self-evaluate their future profession and if a perceived negative external, social evaluation also exists among student teachers. It is precisely for this reason that it is important to examine how student teachers rate their own future profession and how they perceive social status. Hence, hereafter, the focus is on the self-evaluation of prospective teachers about their future profession, on the perceived social evaluation, and on a comparison of these two evaluations.

1.3 Research aims and questions

The literature review has shown that teachers perceive the social prestige of their profession as lower than it is. However, there is no data on student teachers. Since the teaching profession seems to be losing popularity, knowledge on student teachers' perceptions is of fundamental worldwide relevance for universities in order to make the teaching profession more attractive to a wider pool of candidates, as emerged as one of the policy implications from research conducted by the European Commission (European Commission, 2015). Thus, a better understanding of students' perceptions should assist teacher educators in preparing teachers to deal with this image problem. Although research studied the social prestige of the teacher profession, there is no evidence on whether the perceived social prestige of the students' future profession coincides with the students' personal esteem of the profession. With the purpose of an efficient design of teacher training, it is therefore necessary to endeavor answers to the following questions:

1. How do student teachers rate their future profession?
2. How do student teachers perceive the external, social evaluation of the teaching profession?
3. Are there differences in the student teachers' evaluation of the future profession and the perceived external, social evaluation of the teaching profession?

2. Methodology

2.1 Sample and sampling method

Data for this article were obtained from a larger study on student cultures in South Tyrol, Italy. Data were collected in July and August 2017 and at the Faculty of Education at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano through an online questionnaire (N = 154). While nearly 83% of participants were female student teachers, about 17% were male students. Nearly fifty-eight percent of students were attending year one

or two of their studies, while the rest of students were enrolled in year three or four. While some participating students were attending a professional in-service training (University Vocational Training Course; these students are secondary school teachers which are specialized in a subject and need a pedagogical qualification to get an open-ended employment contract), most students attended the German-language Master's degree study course (the Faculty of Education at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano offers a German, an Italian and a Ladin Master's degree study course), which qualifies future kindergarten and primary-school teachers.

2.2 Instrument

An online questionnaire was constructed by the adaptation and revision of the following instruments:

- Keiner (2000a; 2000b): engagement and passion, student motivation and performance as well as students' interest in teacher training;
- Peitz and Fthenakis (2007): students' study motivation and satisfaction and the view of the child;
- Cramer (2012): performance motivation at school and understanding of school and education.

The final questionnaire included the following sections: students' background, view of pedagogy, engagement and passion, student motivation and performance motivation, students' interests in teacher education, prestige of future profession, view of the child, and teamwork. For this paper, in order to answer the research questions, items from the section "prestige of future profession" were analyzed.

This part of the questionnaire is following the methodological approach of a research conducted by Keiner, Kroschel, Mohr and Mohr (1997), who studied the relationship between educational studies and pedagogical work from two different perspectives: a) the prospective ideas of students of Educational Sciences about their future profession and b) the retrospective evaluations of former students of Educational Sciences with regard to their previous studies. The analyzed section of the questionnaire for the here-presented research consists of two questions with 30 pairs of bipolar adjectives. To analyze data, a semantic differential scaling (developed by Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum 1957) was used. Within this method pairs of adjectives of opposite meanings are presented and the participant has to place a mark at an appropriate point between the two bipolar adjectives. In the case of this study, 5 points were presented, whereby 3 indicates a neutral position or that the participant perceives the adjective as inapplicable to the concept. Values of 1 and 5 are regarded as extremes: the adjective is perceived as accurately describing the phenomenon in question. On one item from the present research (Q38: How do you think the public sees the educational profession?) a participant might respond as follows:
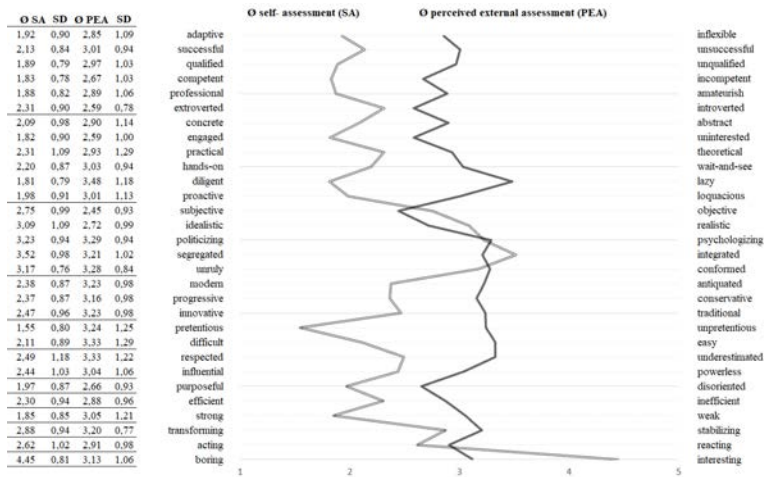
demanding   O X O O O   undemanding

2.3 Data collection and analysis

Data for this paper were obtained from a larger study on student cultures in Italy (South Tyrol). Data collection took place in July and August 2017 at the Faculty of

Education of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano through an online question-naire (N = 154). In total, data from 128 participants could be used as they answered all the here-analyzed items; 26 participants had to be excluded because of missing data. After analyzing the data in SPSS 25 (descriptive statistics and a factor analysis) the above-described semantic differential scaling (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957) was created in Excel. These analyses were used to answer the first two research questions, while independent samples t-tests were conducted in SPSS 25 to answer research question 3.

3. Results

Ø SA	SD	Ø PEA	SD			
1,92	0,90	2,85	1,09	adaptive		inflexible
2,13	0,84	3,01	0,94	successful		unsuccessful
1,89	0,79	2,97	1,03	qualified		unqualified
1,83	0,78	2,67	1,03	competent		incompetent
1,88	0,82	2,89	1,06	professional		amateurish
2,31	0,90	2,59	0,78	extroverted		introverted
2,09	0,98	2,90	1,14	concrete		abstract
1,82	0,90	2,59	1,00	engaged		uninterested
2,31	1,09	2,93	1,29	practical		theoretical
2,20	0,87	3,03	0,94	hands-on		wait-and-see
1,81	0,79	3,48	1,18	diligent		lazy
1,98	0,91	3,01	1,13	proactive		loquacious
2,75	0,99	2,45	0,93	subjective		objective
3,09	1,09	2,72	0,99	idealistic		realistic
3,23	0,94	3,29	0,94	politicizing		psychologizing
3,52	0,98	3,21	1,02	segregated		integrated
3,17	0,76	3,28	0,84	unruly		conformed
2,38	0,87	3,23	0,98	modern		antiquated
2,37	0,87	3,16	0,98	progressive		conservative
2,47	0,96	3,23	0,98	innovative		traditional
1,55	0,80	3,24	1,25	pretentious		unpretentious
2,11	0,89	3,33	1,29	difficult		easy
2,49	1,18	3,33	1,22	respected		underestimated
2,44	1,03	3,04	1,06	influential		powerless
1,97	0,87	2,66	0,93	purposeful		disoriented
2,30	0,94	2,88	0,96	efficient		inefficient
1,85	0,85	3,05	1,21	strong		weak
2,88	0,94	3,20	0,77	transforming		stabilizing
2,62	1,02	2,91	0,98	acting		reacting
4,45	0,81	3,13	1,06	boring		interesting

Figure 1: Polarity profile of students' self-assessment and perceived external assessment of their future occupation, ordered according to self-assessment factors.
The left columns indicate the arithmetic mean (Ø) and standard deviation (SD) of the scale values (scale values: 1-5; N=128).
Ø self-assessment   (Ø) perceived external assessment

Figure 1 shows the mean values of the students' evaluation of given adjectives that should – at various degrees – represent their future profession as well as their evaluation of the perceived external social evaluation. In the questionnaire adjectives were presented randomly and were here ordered according to the results obtained through the factor analysis on the self-evaluation of the teachers' profession. A first factor analysis with nine extracted factors explained 70% of the variance, while the here displayed first six factors explain 60% of the total variance. Intentionally distractors have been included, that is, adjectives that describe the profession in a more positive way were generally – but in fact not always – displayed on the left side.

3.1 Student teachers' self-evaluation and perceived external, social evaluation of their future profession

To answer the first and second research question, the method proposed by Keiner et al. (1997) was used. The authors state that due to the dichotomously conceived

dimensions, the comparative results are to be interpreted as deviations of one from the other expression. In the following, only those items are mentioned that deviate most from the alternative expression on the scale.

Figure 1 shows that students evaluate their profession in a generally positive way. The first factor – which explains nearly 33% of the total variance with factor loadings from .503 to .835, = 0.86 – shows that future teachers describe their future profession and themselves in this profession as adaptive, successful, qualified, competent, professional, and extroverted. This factor bundles adjectives that could be a description of the professional competence while the second factor (with factor loadings from .523 to .788, = 0.86) describes more practical aspects of the profession (concrete, engaged, practical, hands-on, diligent, and pro-active). The third factor (with factor loadings from .512 to .618, = 0.55) contains the adjective pairs subjective-objective, idealistic-realistic, politicizing-psychologizing, segregated-integrated, and unruly-conformed and may be described as factors that have a particularly high impact on social development. The fourth factor (with factor loadings from .773 to .808, = 0.85) includes the adjective pairs modern-antiquated, progressive-conservative, and innovative-traditional. Hence, they indicate values of openness versus values of conservation. The fifth factor (with the factor loadings .638 and .701, = 0.64) summarizes pretentious-unpretentious and difficult-easy. The professions' degree of complexity is accordingly at the center of attention here. The last factor (which loads on .541 and .785, = .52) contains the adjectives respected-underestimated and influential-powerless and indicates power influences of the profession.

The descriptions "interesting" and "pretentious" have achieved the averages closest to their equivalent pole. Self-evaluation and perceived external, social evaluation of the future profession tend to show similar patterns, whereby it emerges clearly that the perceived external evaluation tends consistently toward the more negatively oriented adjectives.

Overall, the values of the perceived external evaluation have a higher standard deviation and show a higher tendency toward the middle than those of the self-evaluation; these observations indicate that the student teachers are more at ease with the self-evaluation.

3.2 Differences in student teachers' evaluation and perceived social prestige

As already mentioned above, self-evaluation turned out to be considerably milder than the perceived external evaluation. Particularly strong deviations are apparent in some adjectives:

- diligent and lazy: students describe themselves as diligent while the perceived perception of others tends toward lazy;
- pretentious and unpretentious: the self-evaluation clearly tends toward pretentious while the external evaluation tends toward unpretentious;
- boring and interesting: the self-evaluation clearly goes in the direction of interesting while the external evaluation can be located in the middle of the scale.

The statistical analysis has revealed significant differences (see Table 1) in the teacher students' self-evaluation of their future profession and the perceived external social evaluation of the teaching profession in all but two pairs of adjectives, which are: politicizing-psychologizing and unruly-conformed.

Adjective pairs		t	p
adaptive	-inflexible	-7.444	<0.01
successful	-unsuccessful	-7.898	<0.01
qualified	-unqualified	-9.413	<0.01
competent	-incompetent	-7.356	<0.01
professional	-amateurish	-8.527	<0.01
extroverted	-introverted	-2.660	<0.01
concrete	-abstract	-6.096	<0.01
engaged	-uninterested	-6.475	<0.01
practical	-theoretical	-4.153	<0.01
hands-on	-wait-and-see	-7.332	<0.01
diligent	-lazy	-13.305	<0.01
proactive	-loquacious	-8.032	<0.01
subjective	-objective	2.499	<0.01
idealistic	-realistic	2.843	<0.01
politicizing	-psychologizing	-.511	.61
segregated	-integrated	2.480	<0.05
unruly	-conformed	-1.099	.27
modern	-antiquated	-7.338	<0.01
progressive	-conservative	-6.820	<0.01
innovative	-traditional	-6.268	<0.01
pretentious	-unpretentious	-12.883	<0.01
difficult	-easy	-8.807	<0.01
respected	-underestimated	-5.599	<0.01
influential	-powerless	-4.593	<0.01
purposeful	-disoriented	-6.130	<0.01
efficient	-inefficient	-4.884	<0.01
strong	-weak	-9.181	<0.01
transforming	-stabilizing	-2.979	<0.01
acting	-reacting	-2.320	<0.05
boring	-interesting	11.195	<0.01

Table 1: t- and p-values of the statistical analysis on the differences between self-assessment and perceived external social evaluation

4. Discussion

From this paper it emerged that the rather negative perception of the social prestige of the teaching profession also persists among student teachers. While students themselves describe their profession as interesting and pretentious, they perceive that society considers teachers to be lazy and subjective. The results have shown significant differences in all but two items regarding the self- and perceived

external evaluation of the teaching profession.

The perceived negative image of the teaching profession has a long tradition and such stereotypes are difficult to break. Media presentation of the teaching profession is not conducive to this, as teachers are mainly presented as low-working and high-earning. Nevertheless, the question must be addressed to what extent the perceived external, social evaluation of the teaching profession corresponds to the real evaluation of the teaching profession by society. Rothland (2016) tries to explain the discrepancy between perceived external evaluation – and now it is clear that this not only applies to in-service teachers but also to student teachers – and observed external evaluation as follows: surveys presented to society on the prestige of teachers are not about the holder of the profession and the privileges she or he enjoys, but about the abstract teaching profession, its social significance and function. It is therefore not a question of the recognition of the individual, nor of concrete experiences with teachers on which the image of the teaching profession is based. The evaluation of teachers as individuals is usually ambivalent and highly emotional, what may shape the reputation of the "real" teacher as the holder of the profession. The concrete reputation of the teacher is therefore less likely to be determined by the difficulty and complexity of the occupation than by negative experiences and disappointments. When the teaching profession and its social relevance are evaluated without considering the individual holder of the profession, then it is perceived as quite demanding and difficult. These discrepancies are also the source of the continuing complaints about the lack of professionalization of the teaching job and a blurred professional image. The teaching profession and teacher training are characterized by uncertainty, and the value of teacher training consists in the acquisition of competences in dealing with uncertainties (Keiner, 1997), including the uncertainty about the social correspondence between the appreciation of the complexity of the teaching profession and the appreciation of individual teachers.

5. Conclusion

As teachers and future teachers still perceive their profession – or future profession – as not being a high status profession in society, teacher training should focus on the empowerment of student teachers; student teachers and in-service teachers need recognition for their skills and expertise. Recognizing and valuing the role of teachers is essential in supporting teacher retention as it allows highly accomplished teachers to continue to do their job appropriately, and consequently, to spread their positive vision, attitudes, motivation and competence to students and society (for the need of working on educational relationship and school motivation in pre- and in-service teacher education, see Tempesta, 2018).

Even if discrepancies between perceived and observed social status of the teaching profession persist, research has shown that the observed social status is lower than for other professions.

However, empowering student teachers will not change the society's evaluation of the teaching profession and of single teachers. To increase the teaching professions' status, policy decisions should be implemented by authorities who are specialized in educational sciences. Moreover, while many European countries, for example Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, and Spain, have implemented campaigns to enhance the social image of the teaching profession, other countries such as Italy, Austria, and Portugal are not providing any (Eurydice, 2017). Hence, also in Italy campaigns that promote the teaching profession and its status

should be implemented to a higher degree by targeting prospective student teachers (this is already done at single universities, for example, at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano) and especially by targeting the broader public.

In conclusion, some limitations of this research should be mentioned. In this research only the perceived social status and a small sample from only one university in Italy has been included. Further research should investigate territorial differences and compare the status with other disciplines. A comparison with high status professions could provide further insights.

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