Motivation for teaching career

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Las motivaciones para la carrera docente

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Abstract

The article «Motivation for teaching career» analyses the motivation why people choose the didactical career, starting from a theoretical approach to finalise with practical conclusions obtained researching motivation factors in didactical career and modern teacher's profile in interior of a globalise society, marked by accelerated changes. Thus, the research is designed to determine the similarities and diversity of the motives for choosing this profession. There were between subjects three groups – those without jobs (students who only project their motivation), people who worked for three to fifteen years and people who worked only in the educational public field. There are oppositions between teachers and another categories of people who work regarding motives for doing that career they have. There is a dominant aspect resulted from our research, there is a specific profile of person who choose to become professor, intrinsic motivated and it is pretty similar in all studied counties.

Keywords: Teacher motivational, teaching career, professional development.

Resum

L'article «Les motivacions per a la carrera docent» analitza els motius pels quals les persones decideixen fer de professors, partint d'una aproximació teòrica, per acabar amb conclusions pràctiques obtingudes a partir de la investigació dels factors que motiven la carrera didàctica i el perfil del professor modern en el marc d'una societat globalitzada, caracteritzada per canvis accelerats. D'acord amb això, la investigació s'ha dissenyat per tal de determinar les similituds i la diversitat de motius existents per escollir aquesta professió. En la investigació, hem diferenciat tres grups: (a) persones sense pràctica laboral (estudiants que només compten amb la seva

motivació), (b) persones amb experiència laboral d'entre tres i quinze anys) i (c) persones que treballen només a l'àmbit educatiu públic. Aprofundirem en la diferència entre mestres amb vocació i altres categories de professors que treballen per altres motius, com, per exemple, la necessitat d'exercir una professió, i es troben obligats a exercir com a docents. Un dels aspectes dominants, resultat de la investigació, és que existeix un perfil específic del professor que escull aquesta professió per motivació intrínseca i aquest perfil es repeteix amb freqüència en tots els països analitzats.

Paraules clau: motivació del professor, carrera docent, desenvolupament professional.

1. Theoretical foundations/framework

The issue of motivation for teaching career is one of present interest for the contemporary society; however the studies carried out in the field are far from being enough, while existing in fact an increased need for finding new arguments to make contact with the accelerated changes of contemporary world. The analyses could be much more profound if we take into consideration the students' motivation for the school activity: this is why, although, in general, such a perspective, for motivating the student for learning, might be –in certain limits– directed towards the motivation for the teaching career. However, significant differences might undermine the whole process.

Let's take a look at the nature of the phenomenon we are dealing with. As such, at the definitions level, there might be helpful a set of tools adopted from the specialised literature:

«Motivation is what energises, directs and supports behaviour» (Steers and Porter apud Saal, Knight, 1988, p. 256).

«Motivation refers to the interior factors of an individual which stimulate, maintain and channel behaviour in relation to a goal» (Huffman, Vernoy, Williams and Vernoy, 1991, p. 381) – according to this definition:

«Motivation refers to the dynamics of behaviour, the process of initiating, supporting and directing the organism's activities» (Goldenson apud Coon, 1983).

The three definitions underline:

⇒ Dynamics: motivation (1) initiates/energises/stimulates; (2) directs/channels; and (3) supports/maintains a behaviour, everything being a dynamic, fluent process;

⇒ Motivation «is being made» by means of forces that lie within us;

⇒ The behaviour generated by motivation is directed toward needs satisfaction (which generically were named «goal»).

These definitions can be seen in a developing manner together with those offered by Evans and Johns:

«Motivation refers to the influences which govern the initialisation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour» (Evans, apud Bernstein, Roy, Srull, Wickens, 1991, p. 431).

«Motivation represents the degree in which a persistent effort is directed in order to achieve a goal» (Johns, 1998, p. 150).

Thus we ask ourselves: what mechanisms, what scopes are those which could direct the teacher to submit to a persistent effort towards her/his goal: an efficient teaching process, educated students which in their turn are motivated?

2. Motivation for teaching career – comparative study

As we noticed in the beginning of this paper, in the recent years the problem of motivation for the teaching career became a compelling condition not only for the development of the educational system as such, but we can assert –without being afraid of any exaggeration– that even the social progress in a positive direction can be understood from the point of view of this area of research. More precisely, as Atkinson (2000) notices in *An Investigation into the Relationship Between Teacher Motivation and Pupil Motivation* (author S. Atkinson, Educational Psychology, Mar. 2000 Vol. 20, No 1; p. 45) the conclusion according to which there is a positive relationship between the students' motivation and the teachers' motivation is statistically significant. This means, motivated teachers lead to motivated students. It is obvious that the reverse of this affirmation is troubling: teachers who are not motivated might easily lead to the appearance of the lack of motivation in the students they are working with.

This is why we should investigate in much more detail the issue of motivation for the teaching career: more precisely, what kind of instruments can we use for increasing the attractiveness of this profession for the young graduates (in order for the valuable human resources to desire a teaching career), but also for the professional retention of the practicing teachers, holding experience and vocation. More than that it is important to analyse the way in which we can increase the motivation base for the teaching staff already attracted by the system (and which neither has as an option leaving the teaching career) so that the activity carried out by this category to be of highest level, fulfilling the whole potential of those persons.

First of all we should take a look at what we are dealing with. Are teachers a distinctive social-professional category? Are there some core underlying elements both at national and international level? A set of studies seem to admit that we are right, to confirm such an assertion: for example, R. Zimmerman (1968) describes the structure of teachers' motivation in the following terms: (1) high educational expectations; (2) economical motivation and financial expectations; (3) need for high ethical standards; (4) need for communicating facts and ideas to other persons at interpersonal level.

In the UNESCO study, named *Teacher Motivation, Compensation and Working Conditions, International Institute for Educational Planning*, Paris, 2006, the following reasons are satisfactory for teachers as elements of balance and support of the progress in career: (1) dedication for the profession and the activity with children; (2) the success gained in the classroom – the professional rewards the teacher receives by observing the students' achievements; (3) the status gained within the community because she/he is practicing a well respected profession; (4) the training gained through pre-service and in-service programmes; (5) favourable work conditions necessary for practicing their profession (which includes both the availability of the teaching resources and the support offered by the school management, parents' involvement, etc.) and (6) the possibility of promotion and progress in career.

Why do subjects choose the teaching career? In the study *Why did you select teaching as a career? Teachers of colour tell their stories*, the author J. Gordon (The Educational Resources Information Centre – ERIC, 1993) identified the following reasons:

— influence of subjects' families;
— influence of friends;

— influence generated by a teacher who acted as a positive model;
— influence generated by a teacher who acted as a negative model;
— necessity to "make a difference" – meaning to support the community they come from, to offer equal chances of development to students;
— «the call» of the teaching career (or the educational vocation);
— love for children/people/passion for teaching;
— long vacations and the joy to learn.

In 2001, the questionnaire *Status of the American Public School Teacher* developed under the care of the National Education Association asked the target group to answer by selecting from a list with 3 choices such important elements for the decision to primarily choose the teaching career as well as three elements decisive for their present decision to stay within this profession. The three major values identified were in order: (1) Desire to work with young persons (73% from those who answered to the questionnaire chose this motive); (2) Value and significance of education within society (44%); and (3) Interest for a certain field (36%).

Another study reveals a similar perspective. As such, in the research *To be or not to be… a teacher? An analysis of Pre-service Teachers motivation for career choice*, the author noticed that the main reasons for choosing the teaching career are: pleasure to work with children, desire to help children to have success and show passion for the subject/discipline of study. For our study it is important to underline that there has been also developed an analysis of the motivation for which persons do not wish to professionally develop within teaching area – these take the following aspects: working conditions (not attractive), the income/economic considerations and opportunities offered by other jobs.

A closely similar perspective is offered in *Determinants of teaching as a career* (author Beng Huat See, University of New York, paper presented at British Educational Research Association Annual Conference, University of Manchester, 2004); the results of this study underline the fact that the main attractive factors for the teaching career are: (1) the opportunity given by this profession to share with others the accumulated knowledge; (2) the satisfaction offered by the teaching profession; (3) length of vacation; (4) chance to pursue her/his interest in a field of study; (5) security offered by such a job.

We can notice that the reasons join in a quite high sphere of synonymy. But to restrain ourselves only to noticing these reasons is not by far enough. Our analysis should be taken much in depth in order to understand the mechanisms that make a person choose (or not) a teaching career. This thing is especially important as – just as S. Rosenholtz and M. Smylie noticed, in their study *Teacher Compensation and Career Ladders* (1984) there can be identified an alarming thing for the future of schools – «the students who have the most chances to be successful in the teaching career are also the less willing to enter and to remain in the teaching profession» (p.150). The authors stated the fact according to which the persons who decided against entering the teaching career point out among the main reasons for their option the small income and the low status of the profession. Consequently, the persons who choose to enter the teaching career, noticed the two authors, are rather motivated by intrinsic motivations than by extrinsic motivations. The main intrinsic motivation presented by the specialised literature (the two authors quoted the work of Lortie, 1975 and Wood, 1978) and which is underlined by this study is the importance of the activity with children and the support offered in order for them to learn. Such a motivation is preserved even when we are not talking about attracting

someone towards teaching career, but about those things that make the persons who have already chosen the teaching career to hold on to it and not to head for other careers. The two authors notice that in fact the persons most tempted to leave the teaching career are those who do not have the possibility to enjoy a total feeling of self-efficiency, of positive results and of success in working in the classroom.

There become obvious some important elements for developing a model for attracting and retaining the most valuable human resources in the teaching career (which are however the product of the same educational system). A suggestion for analysis is provided by Davis and Wilson who quote the cognitive model developed by Thomas and Velthouse regarding motivation; according to this one we can talk about four important factors: impact, competence, significance/importance and option/choice (Davis, J., Wilson, S.M., *Principals efforts to empower teachers: Effects on teacher motivation and job satisfaction and stress*, The Clearing House, Washington, Jul/Aug 2000, Vol. 73, Is. 6, pp. 349-353). The impact shows the level to which ones behaviour is seen as producing the intended effects while solving a task. Competence refers to the degree in which each person believes that she/he is efficiently performing the activities involved by a task, when she/he is supposed to do that thing. It is obvious, just as the quoted study showed, that when a person sees herself/himself as less competent in a field, she/he will avoid that area of activity in which might have less chance of success. Significance/importance refers to the value the tasks receive in the individual's eyes. A low level of significance makes the individual apathetic and detached while a raised level of importance will make her/him focus all the energies in order to achieve the tasks. Finally, option/choice supposes the conscious selection (and not accidental!) of the necessary actions in order to reach the desired results. A high level of option/choice induces flexibility and initiative, while by contrast a low level of option/choice induces the feeling of being controlled, negative emotions, and low self-esteem.

If we take a look at the four indicators, they are fully necessary in order for a person's motivation for a job to be strong enough. From the point of view of the decision for the teaching career, we notice that the impact and the significance/importance are the strengths of this choice, while the competence (placed under question by the first crisis moments of the career, in the first years of activity in the classroom) and the choice for some subjects (who attend the psycho-pedagogical module without truly wishing to enter the classroom, placing on the last place this choice, but who are compelled by life to make this step) rather represent question marks. This analysis underlines that there is necessary a long lasting effort in order to make positive these two indicators.

3. Map of resources

Because of the considerations expressed above and noticing the importance of new aspects that should be explored in attracting highly valuable resources for the teaching career, we would like to underline by means of succinct experimental process, the strengths and the weaknesses in building up a career in the field. In conceiving the first steps of the research we considered important to underline the main valorised variable that should be taken into consideration in order to cover an area of results as larger as possible and to obtain a more profound investigation. From the discussion with teachers, the main area of investigation would cover:

— classroom management;

— communication;
— solving the educational conflicts;
— activity with difficult personalities;
— cooperation with students;
— teaching, learning, evaluation.

There could be noticed a strong detractor of resources for evolution in career in the initial/début moments, underlined by the lack of some concrete strategies to handle educational situation of crisis.

Experimental process

In our research we tried to grasp three possible aspects of motivation for teaching career:

(a) students' motivation enrolled in the Department for Teacher Training in order to follow a teaching career;

(b) practicing teachers' motivation who have already built up a career management in education;

(c) motivation for choosing a teacher career for those who attend the psycho-pedagogical module of studies in the form of post-university education (those who did not choose the teacher career during the faculty).

The first two experimental processes extended on three dimensions, trying to bring together both the potential offered by quantitative methods of socio-psycho-pedagogical research and the shades of using some qualitative methods of research in the same area. In the first place we followed the way a group of 237 students the profile of the teacher in order to make an analysis of the manner of career development in their eyes. In the second place, we followed the determinant factors of the career that a target group made up of 128 students (from last years of study, year IV or year III according to the Bologna process) identifies as necessary needs for evolution and choice.

In the third place the same process (even if there was used another tool of research) was observed by means of the feedbacks offered by a group of 90 practicing teachers, with experience in the field.
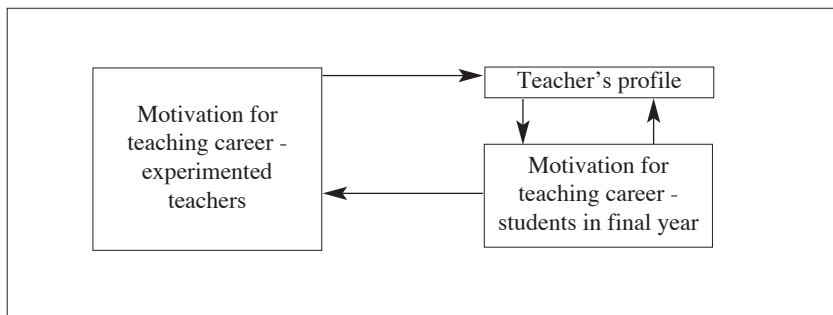

Figura 1. Crossed variables of the intersection areas between the issues in question.

In order to analyse the necessary profile of a successful teacher (although implicitly motivator for participating persons) and it was required to the group of students involved in this research to describe the characteristics mentioned in two phases: in the first place each of them should give a mark between 5 and 7 to the characteristics that they consider individually as important. In the second place there was organised a focus-group with 5-7 participants who tried to notice those common and differential elements. In the third place the groups came to negotiating of a unique list defined by consensus and understanding of each identified aspect and placed under discussion. Following the centralisation of the data there was underlined the following hierarchy:

1. Scientific (professional) competence and communication skills (with equal scores);
2. Empathy (the possibility to understand the others «from inside»);
3. Correctness/objectivity in treating the students and in evaluating their progress;
4. Flexibility;
5. Authority/Capacity to impose respect to cursists.

These data represent a feedback for further development of the competency profile the teaching career involves and the manner in which there can be grafted a motivation system for the teaching career on these competences by the proposed equilibrium between the system of pre-service and in-service training.

The second indicator was structured on two grounds of analysis, although with a central, common process: of identification of the motivating elements for the teaching career both on vertically (questioning students attending the psycho-pedagogical module in the last year, facing the decision to follow or not to follow a teacher career) and the horizontal (obtaining a deep feedback from the practising teachers regarding the motives for which they can be retained within the profession).

As far as the first part of the research is concerned taking into consideration that the students in the last years have not yet crystallised the motivation for following or not a teaching career (which founds itself at the first moments of certification, in evolution) it was required that within the study to be followed an action of investigation in the specialised literature of the already consecrated indicators for the teaching career as for the students to have an action of adherence to one or another of the indicators depending on their own personality, according to their own grid of values. There was, however, necessary the argumentation of the choices made.

In investigating teachers the mechanism used was a different one. Taking into consideration the hypothesis according to which the practicing teachers have already proved a consolidated motivation for their own career, these subjects did not have the possibility to relate to values or indicators already established by the specialised literature. They had to answer to a set of questions and to choose the most important indicator for which they choose to stay within the career and the most important factor for which they would leave the profession. This dual table was necessary in order to obtain a balanced image of the whole system of motivation, a holistic perspective that comprises the advantages and disadvantages. The results distribution was the following one:

The motives for which they would remain in the teaching profession:

1. Contact with children/young which would be extremely positive for teachers;
2. Passion for the field of study they teach;
3. Help they can offer for the students' development;
4. Social responsibility for building up the future of the country;
5. Free time (for example vacations) and flexibility of schedule.

The motives for which they would leave the teaching profession:
1. Inadequate salary (financial motivation);
2. Bureaucratisation of the teacher's activities (too many «papers» that they are supposed to do);
3. Lack of adequate appreciation from society;
4. Students' and parents' lack of motivation for education;
5. Frequent changes that occur within the educational system.

Regarding the third experimental process in the research on 63 adult cursists, possessing a licence degree and attending the post-university module for developing psycho-pedagogical and didactic skills, the motives for such a late decision are:
Motives for choosing the teaching career:
1. Pleasure to work with students, contact with the young;
2. The fact that they did not know about such a module of study during the faculty/did not have the chance to attend such a course/they attended the module but not completely, missing disciplines of studies and this not receiving the certificate for teaching training;
3. Late discovery of the vocation following an accidental, but positive experience in the classroom.

Fears that they face when entering the teaching career:
1. Insufficient financial support (inadequate salary);
2. Fear of lack of professional growth, because of the routinely activity;
3. Climate and mentality from schools (negative and stressful climate from schools, stress created by the students' lack of discipline).

Performing a short comparative analysis we can notice some interesting things able to offer us an image and a set of indicators for the way in which we can develop efficient tools for motivating the most valuable human resources for the teaching career. Thus we notice that the pleasure of contact with students (children and the young) continues to represent a strong indicator of the teaching career. At the other end, the inadequate salary represents a fear for those who decide later for such a career, even if they make this choice more conscious (in comparison with students). Both the fact that the graduates did not know of such a course during faculty and the fact that some of them discovered their vocation later on shows that it is necessary a better marketing among students of the psycho-pedagogical module underlying the attractive factors (such as the pleasure of working with students). All these are just some of the elements in a larger and more complex process of rethinking and designing the motivation for teaching career as a coherent and integrated process in the operational projects of the Departments for Teacher Education.

Another analysis presents the comparative point of view to which we referred before. Is the teacher career a specific determinant, completely different from other careers? From the points of view presented above, it seems that things convey in this direction. In order to have a more accurate image we refer to the study developed by Don Elizur in 1989, a cross-cultural study based on a questionnaire with a configuration that cover the main theories of motivation (Maslow, Herzberg, McClelland, Hackman and Oldham, etc.), comprising in its final form a number of items that proposed answers that had to be selected on a scale from «very non-important» to «very important» (apud Corbett, 1994). The motivating factors have been placed in a hierarchy as it follows (1- the most important factor, 10 – the less important factor):

	USA	UK	Germany	Netherlands	Taiwan	Korea	Hungary	China
Interesting work	1	2	1	1	2	3	6	5
Achievements	2	6	7	2	1	1	2	1
Promotion	3	7	10	6	4	7	10	6
Personal recognition (self-esteem)	4	5	9	9	3	9	7	3
Use of skills	5	4	6	6	8	4	5	2
Autonomy in work	6	9	5	4	7	10	9	4
Job safety	7	8	4	8	5	2	8	10
Good manager bun (attentive and right)	8	10	3	7	6	6	1	7
Good income	9	3	8	10	10	8	4	9
Good colleagues (agreeable)	10	1	2	3	9	5	3	8

	Teacher
Interesting work	1
Achievements	4
Promotion	9
Personal recognition(self-esteem)	5
Use of skills	2
Autonomy in work	3
Job safety	6
Good manager bun (attentive and right)	7
Good income	10
Good colleagues (agreeable)	8

Within the mentioned answers we could not remark the placement on the last place of the «good income», fact that made us –during the discussions with the participating teachers in the investigation– wonder about the motivation of this perspective. The answer one teacher offered us is symptomatic for our analysis and confirms the Zimmerman words from the beginning of this paper: «If we wanted substantial income, we would have not become teachers» –from which derives the intrinsic motivation and assuming of vocation– elements of good augury for the development of a national process for motivation for the teaching career.

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