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The role of the initial psycho-pedagogical training in structuring motivational and attitudinal dynamic toward teaching career

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Abstract

The diminishing interest in teaching as a career was related, in the literature, to a specific dynamic concerning teachers’ motivation, attitudes and expectations. Our research results show that there are significant changes in the attitude toward teaching determined by the initial psycho-pedagogical training. The qualitative analysis of the students’ responses (N=180) to the open question: motives for wanting/ not wanting to be a teacher, reflected changes of percentage for intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic motives at the end of the training.© 2011 Published by Elsevier Ltd. Selection and peer-review under responsibility of PSIWORLD 2011

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1. Problem statement

The social, cultural, economic and political contexts of contemporary society are marked by profound changes with accelerated dynamics which sets human evolution on different coordinates. Teaching profession is also a subject to all these influences and undergoes profound changes that may affect the career options. The current literature mentions a number of issues regarding teaching career options: the shortage of candidates for teaching training programs, many cases of people who abandon teaching career after a short period of time after their job entrance, a considerable number of teacher education graduates who do not enter teaching profession (J. Rots at al., 2010). A series of studies developed by Chapman...
(1984) and Chapman & Green (1986) propose an explanatory model of the relationship between the initial teaching commitment and the early teaching experiences that determine future career options. This model was extended by Rots et al. (2010) in a research on teacher education graduates’ decision about whether or not to take a teaching position upon graduation.


We identified, as an investigative concern in romanian literature, the intention to develop a conceptual model for understanding, investigating and training the prospective teachers’ attitude toward teaching and to build a valid scale for measuring students’ attitude concerning teaching career, SATC, structured on three dimensions: the attitude toward self as a prospective teacher, the attitude toward others as teaching partners and the attitude toward teaching as activity (Schipor & Bujor, 2011). We consider that all the above arguments claim the necessity of investigating the teaching profession choice/ rejection reasons, of the students enrolled in a teaching training program from a specific higher education institution and the possibility for developing a predictive model that could improve the prospective teachers’ selection process and the initial teaching training program.

2. Purpose of study

In this study we intend to demonstrate the influence of the initial psycho-pedagogical training program on the attitude toward teaching career (measured at the beginning and at the end of the program) of the students/ graduates at the Teacher Training Department (TTD) of Suceava „Stefan cel Mare” University (the 2008-2011 class).

Hypothesis1: The attitude toward teaching career (entire scale score and each of the three subscales score) presents significant differences in accordance with the evaluation moment (at the beginning of the program - 2008 year and at the end of the program - 2011 year).

Hypothesis2: The attitude toward teaching career presents significant differences in accordance with the area type: urban, rural (for each of the two evaluation moments).

Hypothesis3: The attitude toward teaching career presents significant differences in accordance with the gender: male, female (for each of the two evaluation moments).

3. Research methods

The Tool for Psychometric Evaluation of Students’Attitudes Concerning Teaching Career- SATC (Schipor & Bujor, 2011) was administered to a number of 180 students (first moment: SATC was administered in the first semester of the 2008-2009 academic year in the Educational Psychology classes, second moment: SATC was administered in the second semester of the 2010-2011 academic year after the final exam for the initial psycho-pedagogical training program graduation - the first training level).
The students/graduates evaluated the 19 items of SATC (statements type) arranged on a five-point Likert scale with the following choices: Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat (3), Agree (4), Strongly agree (5). The SATC application was held in paper-pencil version, without time limit (the average completion being in ten minutes), for TTD students from four faculties of Suceava University: Physical Education, Language and Communication, History and Geography, Economical Sciences.

The psychometric tool properties shows a very good Alfa Cronbach reliability coefficient ($\alpha = 0.88$) for the entire scale (19 items) and for the three subscales: the reliability coefficient for the subscale attitude toward others is $\alpha = 0.82$; the internal consistency coefficient for the subscale, attitude toward teaching as activity is $\alpha = 0.79$ and the internal consistency coefficient for the subscale attitude toward oneself as a teacher is $\alpha = 0.55$ (Schipor & Bujor, 2011).

Statistical distribution normality for the two measured dependent variables (attitude toward teaching career at the beginning and at the end of the training program) indicated by the value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test ($p_1= 0.42 > 0.05; p_2= 0.13 > 0.05$) allows us to use SPSS 17 parametric tests for increasing the research scientific validity (Sava, 2004).

The investigated sample of 180 students was selected using a systematic sampling design from the population of students enrolled/who graduated the initial teaching training program (the 2008-2011 class). The experimental between subjects design, with repeated measurements, requires the same subjects in both experimental groups distributed according the main independent variable: the initial psycho-pedagogical training program. The selected sample of subjects N= 180 (the same at the beginning and at the end of the teaching training program), was distributed by secondary variables as it follows: gender (136 female, 44 male) and the area type (92 rural, 86 urban).

4. Findings

Hypothesis 1 is confirmed (for the entire scale score and two subscales scores). We used in this case the Paired Samples Test. The attitude toward teaching career (entire scale score) presents significant differences between the mean values of the two evaluation moments: $t(179)= 2.52, p< 0.05$; the mean value for the attitude on teaching career at the beginning of the program is significantly higher (74.98) than at the end of the program (73.02). The attitude toward others as partners in teaching subscale score presents significant differences between the mean values of the two evaluation moments: $t(179)= 2.02, p< 0.05$; the mean value for the attitude toward others as human resource involved in teaching is significantly higher at the beginning (35.48) than at the end of the program (34.80). The attitude toward teaching as activity subscale score presents significant differences between the mean value of the two evaluation moments: $t(179)= 2.10, p< 0.05$; the mean value for the attitude toward teaching as an activity is significantly higher at the beginning (23.45) than at the end of the program (22.34). The attitude toward self as a prospective teacher subscale score does not present significant differences between the mean values of the two evaluation moments: $t(179)= 0.92, p> 0.05$; the mean value for the attitude toward self as a prospective teacher at the beginning (16.04) is not significantly different than at the end (15.87).

Hypothesis 2 is confirmed. Attitude toward teaching career (entire scale score) presents significant differences between the mean value of the male and female students both at the beginning of the training program: Independent Samples Test- $t(178)= 2.47, p< 0.05$ and at the end of it $t(178)= 2.55, p< 0.05$. The mean value for attitude toward teaching career at the beginning is significantly higher in male students (77.90) than girls (74.03). The positive attitude toward teaching career of male students at the beginning remains the same until the end of the program, the mean value for male students evaluation (75.61) is significantly higher than the mean value for female students (72.18).

Hypothesis 3 is confirmed. Attitude toward teaching career (entire scale score) presents significant differences between the mean value of the urban and rural students only at the end of the initial teaching
training program: Independent Samples Test \( t(176) = 2.38, p < 0.05 \). The mean value for the attitude toward teaching career at the end is significantly higher in urban students (74.51) than the mean value in rural students (71.72). Concerning the beginning of the initial teaching training program, there are no significant differences between urban and rural students evaluation.

In the qualitative analysis of students’ responses to the open question: “motives for wanting/ not wanting to be a teacher” we used those three categories of reasons identified by Brookhart & Freeman (1992): intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic.

Intrinsic pro teaching motives subcategories were distributed at the beginning (B) and at the end (E) of the program according the following frequencies: passion for the profession (29-B, 13-E), pleasure of working with children (75-B, 78-E), pleasure of giving explanations/ teaching the others (9-B, 19-E), personal and profession satisfaction (19-B, 21-E), personal and professional development (33-B, 26-E), intellectual satisfaction (2-B, 3-E), professional goal (6-B, 3-E), pleasure of interaction (29-B, 19-E). Two subjects mentioned fear of working with children (2-B) as an intrinsic motive against teaching.

Extrinsic pro teaching motives subcategories were distributed at the beginning (B) and at the end (E) of the program according the following frequencies: previous experiences (4 – B, 5–E), job stability (6-B, 4-E), using previous studies, knowledge, competencies (14 – B, 12 – E), parental model (9 – B, 4 – E), profession characteristics/ specificity (29–B, 28–E), professional status (11-B, 6-E), salary (1-B). Extrinsic against teaching motives subcategories were distributed at the beginning (B) and at the end (E) of the teaching training program according the following frequencies: lack of experience (1–E), job instability (1-B, 5-E), profession characteristics/ specificity (32–B, 30 – E), profession disregard (13-B, 12 – E), small salary (52 – B, 89- E), difficulties in relationship with school authorities (1-B, 3-E), poor material conditions (3- B, 8- E), frequent changes in education (1-E), students’ characteristics (22-B, 15 – E), politicization of education (1-E), difficulties in relationship with colleagues (1-E), difficulties in relationship with parents/ community (3-E), educational system characteristics (6-E), corruption (1-E).

Altruistic pro teaching motives subcategories were distributed at the beginning (B) and at the end (E) of the program according the following frequencies: desire to help, to guide and to train others (50-B, 22 – E), desire to make changes in the system (10- B, 8–E), desire to transmit passion for the subject matter (2 – B), desire to influence the young generation, the entire society (21-B, 8–E).

A synthesis of previous results expressed in percentage adds a new category of motives determined by students’ responses, motives regarding selfevaluation of personal characteristics compatibility with the teaching profession requirements, at the two times of evaluation (at the beginning- B and at the end of the teaching training program- E): Intrinsic motives (37.63%- B, 37.06% E), Extrinsic motives (36.53%- B, 47.87%- E), Altruistic motives (15.31%- B, 7.73%- E), Selfevaluation (10.51%- B, 7.33%- E).

5. Conclusions

The attitude toward teaching career, as a predictive factor for career decision (Rots et al., 2010), proved itself in this study, as a dynamic construct, structured due to different variables action. The initial training program determined, during three years of training, an attitudinal reconfiguration toward an increased awareness of the teaching career importance and of the responsibility that comes with it.

At the beginning of the training program, the evaluation of the attitude toward teaching career (the entire scale score), of the attitude toward others (as partners in teaching) and of the attitude toward teaching as activity is significantly higher than at the end, at the time of graduation. The professional self instead, pretty well-defined at this age, doesn’t determine any variations on the subscale - the attitude toward self (as a prospective teacher).

Motivational dimension involvement in analysis of relationship between the attitude toward teaching career at the beginning and the attitude toward teaching career at the end of the initial psycho-
pedagogical program, could reveal new explanations for the dependent variable. From all reasons (intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic – each on pro teaching career or against teaching career perspective, at the two evaluation moments), the extrinsic motive – small salary - represents the most cited one against teaching career option. If in the beginning of the teaching training program the intrinsic motives dominated, at the end of the program we identify an increased number of extrinsic motives against teaching career option and the altruistic motives dropped to half the initial number. Motives related to self-evaluation of personal characteristics compatibility with the teaching profession requirements diminishing at the end of the program (only 19 graduates mentioned it compared to 31 beginners) could sustain a possible explanation for the attitude change toward the teaching career between the beginning and the end of the initial psycho-pedagogical training program (with a lower score at the end).

An analysis of the students’ cited motives specificity reveals the implication of the social perspective as an external pressure factor that reconfigures internal and internalized dimensions with visible implications in choice/rejection behavior concerning career orientation.

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