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## Attitude towards teaching profession

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### Abstract

*Attitude towards teaching profession* paper aims at achieving a correlational study to identify attitudes towards teaching profession of the prospective teachers. The sample of subjects involved in this study is comprised of graduate students in educational sciences. For the substantiation of this study, an analysis of the specialized literature was made. Particularly the studies of social psychology established that generally the concept of *attitude* is approached from the perspective of Gordon Allport theories. Thus, most definitions consider *attitude* as an individual predisposition to evaluate a social element (concept, event, person) considering it favorable or unfavorable, and thus showing a certain behavior to it (Kartz, 1960, Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, Doron & Parot, 1999). To identify the level of attitudes towards the teaching profession to prospective teachers, we used a research method based on questionnaire investigation. A Likert scale with five points was used, containing 34 items. To explore attitudes towards teaching profession of the future teachers, a correlational design was elaborated aiming at identifying the relationship between the components of attitude (cognitive, affective and behavioral). The data obtained show that there is a significant positive correlation between the cognitive and the affective dimension. At the same time, the study demonstrates that there is no significant correlation between the size of the behavioral and cognitive dimensions and also emotional dimension. Therefore, the conducted study hypothesis is partially confirmed.

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### 1. Theoretical background

Attitude is defined in specialized literature, especially in the works of social psychology, based on the theories of Gordon Allport. Thus, most definitions consider attitude as an individual predisposition to evaluate a social element

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(fact, event, person) considering it favorable or unfavorable, and therefore showing a certain behavior to it (Kartz 1960, Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, Doron & Parot, 1999). Also converging with the opinions of the authors mentioned, Abric (2002) considers attitude as a mental and neurophysiological state determined by experience, and which exerts a dynamic influence on the individual, preparing him to act in a specific way.

Authors such as McGuire (1989) and Wood (2000) believe that attitudes are formed and manifested at the level of three fundamental dimensions: *cognitive, affective and behavioral*. The cognitive component of attitudes includes perceptions, beliefs and assumptions of the individual facts and events. The affective component describes emotional experiences and emotional responses to various facts and events. Regarding the behavioral component, it shows intentions and predictions of the way a person can act in relation to a fact or event based on his assumptions and beliefs.

Anderson (1980) points out that attitudes are formed after receiving various information about facts, events or people. Thus, the nature of the attitudes that an individual forms is determined by how information is received and combined, in the sense that to certain details of the information may be granted more attention than to others. Therefore the importance given to different pieces of information, the order in which they were perceived and the values assigned, will contribute to shaping attitudes.

Completing Anderson's theory, Pratkanis & Greenwald (1989) have developed the socio-cognitive model of attitude's structure. Thus, attitude formation is related to social cognition, the two authors distinguishing three main elements through which a particular attitude is represented in memory: a label and its application rules, an assessment or appreciation and a cognitive structure that supports the assessment performed.

Based on the analysis above, we can consider pedagogical attitudes as representing individual predispositions to assess - as favorable or unfavorable - various issues relating to the educational field. This way forms a set of beliefs and therefore manifests an adhesion or rejection behavior to it or certain aspects of it (Andronache, 2013). Starting from this definition, it is important to point out that in the teaching profession attitude is an important variable because it can seriously influence the effective manifestation of knowledge and skills appropriate to teaching profession. In other words, we believe that lacking a positive attitude towards the teaching profession, knowledge and skills, even if they are formed at a very high level, they will not express coherence. Otherwise, the definitions of many authors (Parry, 1996, Mirabile, 1997, Dooley, et al., 2004 Bocoş, 2008; Potolea & Toma, 2010) converge to consider competence as a whole not only of knowledge and skills but also integrating attitudes which selected, interacted and used properly, allow the successful achievement of tasks in professional and social contexts (Andronache, 2013).

Furthermore, we consider important to point out that if future teachers have a positive attitude towards their profession, they may more easily develop their future students' intrinsic motivation for learning, they will be able to establish a more efficient communication with them and they will be more involved in the diversification and personalization of learning situations.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Participants

A number of  $N = 82$  participants was involved in the research conducted, students at masters in science education who intend to pursue a teaching career. 72% of the participants are licensed in educational sciences. Their average age is  $M = 23.81$  years, and 64% of them come from urban areas.

### 2.2. Research design

To explore attitudes towards teaching profession of the future teachers, a correlational design was elaborated aiming at identifying the relationship between the components of attitude (cognitive, affective and behavioral). The assumption of the study was the following:

*There is a positive correlation between the development of the three attitude dimensions towards the teaching profession (cognitive, affective, and behavioral).*

The obtained data were statistically descriptive analyzed by calculating mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation coefficient, using IBM SPSS™ software.

### 2.3. Measures

To identify future potential teachers' attitude towards teaching profession it was used a Likert scale with 5 points, where 1 represented total disagreement and 5 strong agreement to various statements about the teaching profession. The proposed scale contains a series of 34 items aiming at evaluating the level of the three main dimensions of attitude: cognitive, affective and behavioral. Note that the construct validity of the scale was assessed by two independent experts from the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

### 2.4. Procedure

In the research were involved only those masters students who intend to pursue a teaching career and were excluded those who have already been employed as teachers at different levels of education.

A paper and pencil version of the scale was distributed and completed by the participants in the school environment without interfering with the normal didactic activities. The participants were explained that their participation in the study is voluntary, and their consent was completed in the questionnaire. The researcher was the one who organized the demarche of distributing and collecting the questionnaires.

## 3. Results

Concerning the identification of future teachers' attitude towards teaching profession, it was resorted to calculate an average of the participants' responses for each of the three dimensions of attitude (cognitive, affective, behavioral). The data obtained are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The average value of the attitude dimensions towards teaching profession

Attitude dimension	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Lower	Higher
Cognitive	82	3.82	0.87	2	5
Affective	82	4.03	0.76	2	5
Behavioral	82	2.71	1.04	1	5
Total		3.52			

In order to establish correlations between the three main dimensions of attitude towards teaching profession, it was used the calculation of the Pearson correlation index  $r$ . Thus regarding the correlation established between the cognitive and the affective dimension it is found that there exists a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.871$ ,  $df = 80$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the higher the positive value of cognitive dimensions, the higher the positive value of the affective dimension and vice versa.

Following the established correlation between the cognitive and the behavioral dimension, it is found that between them there is no significant correlation ( $r = 0.124$ ,  $df = 80$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Therefore, the data obtained show that the value of the cognitive dimension does not affect in any way the behavioral dimension value. Also, regarding the correlation between the behavior and the affective dimension is established that between them either does not exist a significant correlation ( $r = 0.096$ ,  $df = 80$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Therefore, the affective dimension does not influence in any way the behavioral dimension. We present in Table 2 the correlations established between the three dimensions of attitude towards teaching profession:

Table 2. The correlations established between the dimensions of attitude towards teaching profession:

Attitude dimension		Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural
Cognitive	Pearson correlation	1	.871**	.124**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.269
	N	82	82	82
Affective	Pearson correlation	.871**	1	.096**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.392
	N	82	82	82
Behavioral	Pearson correlation	.124**	.096**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.269	.392	.000
	N	82	82	82

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4. Discussions and conclusions

The major objective of this study was to identify and analyze the specific level and attitude towards teaching profession of future teachers. The analysis of participants' responses, as presented in Table 1, shows that future teachers' attitude towards teaching profession is generally positive. On Likert scale with 5 points, used for research, it appears that the (favorable/ positive) attitude of future teachers has an average  $M = 3.52$ . However, it is noteworthy that despite the favorable average there is a major difference between the behavioral dimension of attitude towards teaching profession and the other two dimensions - cognitive and affective.

Given the above data, our study revealed only one significant positive correlation - between the cognitive and the affective dimension, among other dimensions there are no correlations.

Analyzing the results of the correlations provided in Table 2, it can be noted that the dimensions level between the cognitive attitude towards the teaching profession and the affective dimension there is a significant correlation ( $r = 0.124$ ,  $df = 80$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Therefore it can be said that the assumptions and beliefs of prospective teachers about the teaching profession, significantly affect their emotional experiences. In other words, the existence of a positive set of cognitions and beliefs can result in the formation of emotional experiences and positive emotional responses concerning the teaching profession. For example, cognitions such as "I believe that being a teacher is an attractive profession" will cause emotional feelings and emotional responses such as "I enjoy the fact that one day I will be a teacher."

Although, between cognitive and affective dimension of attitude towards the teaching profession there is a significant positive correlation, yet at the same time, study demonstrates that there is no significant correlation between the size of the behavioral and cognitive dimensions ( $r = 0.124$ ,  $df = 80$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ) and also emotional dimension ( $r = 0.096$ ,  $df = 80$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Therefore, the conducted *study hypothesis is partially confirmed*.

Based on the data presented, we can say that the future teachers, although they have a belief and positive affective experiences system, regarding the teaching profession, and thus realize the values associated with teaching attitude, they do not equally manifest intention to exercise the associated behaviors. It is noteworthy, in this regard that in teacher training there is a need for explicit directions concerning the transition from the declarative level to the action level. So the transition from generalization of cognitive dimension to its integration with the affective and the behavioral one becomes important. Therefore, the goals pursued under the initial and continuous training of teachers' subsystems must consider cyclical and spiral processuality implied by attitudes formation.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the formation and manifestation of future teachers' attitude is achieved as a process. Such a process involves: (1) the acquisition of a comprehensive system of cognitions, beliefs and assumptions regarding teaching profession → (2) the acquisition of a comprehensive system of affective experiences regarding teaching profession → (3) formation and manifestation of appropriate behavior according to cognitions and affective emotions. Referring to the conducted study, according to the statistical data obtained it is worth noting that practically in the process of forming attitudes, difficulties occur in the step (3) and at the level of integration

with other steps. However, it is noteworthy that the behavioral manifestations of attitude towards the teaching profession may be directly influenced and dependent on context. Moreover, contextualized experiences become important, in the sense that not only the context itself may influence the manifestation of attitude but also subjective experiences of individuals, determined by relative context.

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