

WLC 2016 : World LUMEN Congress. Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty 2016 |
LUMEN 15th Anniversary Edition

(Non)interest of Students for the Teaching Profession in the Romanian School. Perspectives of Interpretation

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Abstract

<http://dx.doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2016.09.7>

This paper starts from the premise that quality of education is related to the degree of motivation of those who choose to become teachers in the Romanian school. In this way, our paper capitalizes on the results of an investigation which was attended to the students who chose or did not choose the psycho-pedagogical training module. The analysis of these responses revealed some observations that are important for the academic environment. These observations attract attention to issues pertaining to curriculum, to relevance and to specific training of courses and of seminars.

The paper proposes several particular solutions by attracting students to teaching careers. By means of them, we hope, the number of those who choose to practice in the education field will increase, and, also, that will increase the quality of their training.

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Keywords: Education; teaching; primary school; motivation; curriculum.

1. Introduction

The didactic profession has always been a challenge, but equally an attraction, both on the level of theory, and also in real practice in the Romanian educational process at least. This situation can be generally explained through the perspective of the rapid and varied changes (Tudorică, 2004) that are taking place all around the world. These changes have direct effects on man and the relations developed with himself, the others and the environment he is living in. Despite the predictive character of education, with the purpose of harmonizing these progressive elements, there are still plenty of issues that can only be solved individually and included in the conscience and the conduct of the actors involved in the educational – instructive process.

Such a problem is motivation, given the fact that it bears a strong personal print, manifesting itself especially as a factor that justifies the decisions taken and fuels the decision of fulfilling them. "I want to learn", "I want to be a model to others, I want to be appreciated" etc. are just a few of the examples of such personal decisions, the result of which depends on how much the own wish is identifiable with the effort the person is willing to take for his success.

The choice for the didactic profession is also an option that is motivated on the individual level, but also influenced, in different degrees, from the outside (Pollard, 2002). This is why, like for other professions, in the didactic one is required to know its details, its problems and fulfilments involved, the personal qualities required and the risks that need to be taken. Maybe more than in other cases, the choice for a didactic career is influenced by the personal experience of each of us during school, when, as a student, one has been in the position of observing and judging through one's own experiences some „patterns” of didactic behaviour. This experience will transform into a strong stimulus that will motivate and steer towards or away from the didactic career (Oprescu, 1996). Fortunately, there are also some other motivational factors involved, which the student will be aware of, so he will have all the internal motivation for maintaining interest for the chosen profession (Mark, 2007) and also for the gaining of the highest satisfaction from it.

One discussion about the interest or noninterest of students for didactic profession is very important for educational research. It is necessary to know why the Romanian students like or dislike to teaching in pre-schooler or primary school. If we can to present this problem, then will be possible to found the ways of solving them. The response of this problem shows some specific aspects of the Romanian educational system. In conclusion, we can include this objective in the problem of the quality of life.

2. Hypothesis, Objectives And Observations

Our study begins from the fact that students' interest for the didactic profession is related to their individual expectations, which bears two forms of manifestation:

- on the personal qualities which can or cannot be confirmed through performing the educational process;
- on the level of one's understanding of success in life, as a reply to the previous socio-professional experience or to the individual aspirations, or as a duty felt towards himself or the others.

We considered necessary to correlate the (non) interest of students in the didactic career with their didactic education, being convinced that this relation can be cultivated. Also it involves responsibility throughout their psycho- pedagogical education and their practice. In this way we ensure a durable and consistent fundament for the development and the improvement of the didactic profession. In conclusion, we have planned to:

- identify the degree of personal satisfaction of students towards the didactic profession;
- identify the amount in which the external satisfactions are influencing the choice for the didactic career;
- name some possible explanations for the way in which the students are perceiving the educational process;
- suggest some theoretical – applicative solutions for the development of students’ or future students’ interest in the didactic career.

We have made a little research based on the questioning of students and on the systematical observation of them during the lectures and seminars. We have used two study groups, both comprised of:

- 25 students from the first year in bachelor’s studies on elementary and kindergarten education (Group 1);
- 25 students who did not choose this domain and neither a didactic profession (Group 2).

Both categories are comprised of students with the ages between 18 and 35 years old, women. The main issue around which the other issues have been organized was focused on the question “why being a teacher?” We have made the analysis of the answers received and we have accompanied it by some possible explanations.

The conclusions are as follows:

Table 1. Results of the questioning of students

Respondents	Approximate percentage	Observations
<i>When choosing the didactic profession, the most important fact is to have the personal human and social qualities</i>		
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 94% students are agree with the affirmation – 6% students consider that most important in choosing the didactic profession are personal interests, the dynamism of actual world, in generally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 72% students who were agree with affirmation considered that all the qualities from the questionnaire are necessary – the others (28%) considered that they are not the most important and they give another qualities
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 44 % students are agree with the affirmation – 10 % refused to respond 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 56% students consider that the other aspects (economic, social and cultural aspects) are more important than personal qualities
<i>The selection and the hierarchy of the professional qualities required for teaching on the elementary and kindergarten level</i>		
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 56% have proposed on the top three positions: love for children, patience, and tolerance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 28% have proposed other qualities: enthusiasm, playful nature, optimism, faith religious.
Group 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 75% have agreed with all the proposed qualities, their hierarchy being quite different 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 25% have considered that the qualities presented in questionnaire are not important, but they have not specified their. One possible explanation might be the fact that the students did not reflect much on the didactic profession, because it did not consist in a choice to them.
<i>The external factor that can influence the decision to enter and stay in the educational system as didactic personnel</i>		
Group 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – more 76% have considered that the economic factor was very important in their decision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The arguments for the answers provided are related: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – to the small salaries paid in education

	– the rest of the respondents considered that this factor is not more important than the desire of becoming a teacher or the social statute gained within society, the others' acknowledgment of being an intellectual.	– the lack of or the insufficient financial extra stimulus that other professional categories are enjoying – the high price of the didactic materials – the long time required for the preparation of lessons and materials, for the evaluation of the pupils' activity and for the performance of extracurricular activities
Group 2	– 85 % have agreed that the economic factor is important in the desire of becoming a teacher	– the attire for teachers, who need to be a model of decency and aesthetics.
<i>What other profession would they choose if the profession they are preparing now for would not be amongst the ones offered by society?</i>		
Group 1	– more 77% have mentioned the different professions – 2 % have not responded – 21% have responded that they did not thinking to another profession	– 35 % have indicated the economic professions
Group 2	– the answers have been tightly related to the profiles they had opted for	

By analysing the data gather from the questionnaire, we might conclude that:

- when choosing the didactic career, both the social competences, which allow the establishment of quality interpersonal relations, and the financial reward are of importance;
- the inner motivation of students who choose to become teachers is linked to the personal qualities which are helping in the relations with the others, especially the capacity to manifest patience and love for children;
- the financial aspect constitutes an important factor threatening the continuity in the education system of those who have chosen to become teachers;
- “the new generations entropy”, the pressure generated by the quick changes taking place on the level of the bio-psycho-behavioural development of students, and also of those specific to the contemporary world are putting to the test the intensity of the inner motivation of teachers;
- other professions than the didactic one are bringing immediate advantages, by being simpler because the professional stress has nothing to do with interpersonal relations, and the responsibility is professional and less social.

According to the observations made, we may say that the fluctuation seen in education and the young generation's disinterest for the didactic career is caused not only by the lack of financial stimulus, but most of the times, but by the stress associated with this profession. This stress is linked to the self-esteem in relation to the image one has portrayed about the pupils, parents and colleagues.

As a result, we think that the training for the didactic profession must begin long time before the future students/ students enrol in the study programs that will train them in this respect (Havârneanu, 2000). In other words, in order for a teacher to have a successful didactic career and not to abandon this profession for which he has trained, he needs to have a great knowledge of himself. Also he needs to know the risks and the means to decrease and prevent them. Therefore, to save this situation, we propose the following aspects which we are grouping according to their application level

- a. *before to choose the didactic profession:*

- to undertake with students formal and informal activities that are in accordance with their school and professional orientation and during which to identify the personal level of each student, the risks and the advantages of the didactic career;
- to identify the problems and to come up with solutions regarding the individual and collective capacity to intervene at the class level;
- to build up and develop in students the ability to relate with others, to get involved in the collective life in order to prevent or diminish the conflicts; to cultivate an optimistic, harmonious, relaxed, pleasant environment, based on collaboration and friendship;
- to undertake activities of self-knowledge, of developing a real and optimistic self-image, a better knowledge of one's qualities and defects and also of the means to manage them, be it in order to use them, or to improve/change them;
- to use active and interactive teaching-learning methods, based on collaboration, on case studies and role play;
- to prepare the students for the dynamic of the contemporary world, to educate them in the direction of change.

b. during the training curricula for the teaching profession:

- to build up and to develop skills regarding both the organization and the use of time, and the management of professional stress; these skills must be associated with content units from different subjects approached during school or they should be introduced as a new subject under the following name: *The Management of Time and Stress*;
- to introduce a mandatory subject in *curriculum* which should allow students a good knowledge of themselves, a self-professional development under the motivational, emotional and psychological aspect;
- to undertake applicable activities, both during the lecture and the seminar hours, regarding the development of professional qualities, especially the social ones;
- to get the students accustomed with reflective activities by means of which they should give a greater importance to increase their own responsibilities regarding the didactic career;
- to establish online communities that will allow students and graduated to keep in touch, to have a space for reflection and comments, in which they can find emotional and strategic support on what concerns the difficulties encountered during their didactic activities.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, we think that the students' guidance towards the didactic profession and their remaining in the system after graduating the training modules depends on the means in which they have trained until they reached university that is the way they know themselves and this profession. Also important is the way in which the students are prepared for the didactic career, the degree in which they were empowered and involved in their professional training. We also consider significant the psychological support (Yongue, Burton & Todd, 1983) that the students and, later on, the teachers must receive during their activity. First, this is necessary, both for keeping a healthy relationship with

oneself, and also for optimizing the interpersonal relationships. In this way, the future teachers and those that already practice this job can control better the stress associated with the didactic career, can find new inner resources to be motivated to continue the work for which they have trained and to practice it at superior standards.

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