

THE TEACHER'S PERSONALITY. STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIONS

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Abstract: *The professionalization for teaching career is generally analyzed in terms of a process of initial and continuous training of teachers, on the basis of national and international professional standards/skills. We note, however, that preparing for a teaching career does not guarantee anybody that they will become a good teacher, a more careful approach to other factors which take part in an eventual success being necessary. From this perspective, in the present study, we propose to identify the representations of students related to: motivation considered for a teaching career, self-perception regarding career suitability, personality characteristics of successful teachers, aspects of self-evaluation of their personality.*

Key words: *professionalization, standards, skills, teacher personality.*

Introduction

Education reform projects after 1989 have included drafting approaches for didactic profession standards, developed through the actions organized by the National Council for Teacher Preparation (since 2001) that attempted to capitalize on the ideas contained in the main normative documents pertaining to the work of teaching staff from Romania.

In this regard, we emphasize the concern of the National Council for the preparation of teachers *to create a system of professional standards for teaching, which aim to ensure the future teacher the right of access to the best training, in specialized institutions, and to the practitioner teacher the possibility to be continually supported with training programs updated and forward-looking for the needs of the Romanian citizen of tomorrow. The teacher needs to know what is expected of them and must have the professional competence to act responsibly. Professional standards create a fundamental marker from which all these derive*(Gliga, L., 2002).

The National Council for Teacher Preparation prepares a system of standards for the teaching profession, formulated as *a set of expectations and demands,*

explicitly formulated, relating to knowledge, skills and attitudes that a teacher is required to prove in his work with students, so that it can be considered that he fulfills his professional duties at a level acceptable to the society. Subsequent contributions will demonstrate both the need for detailing the skills/standards of the teaching profession and of other factors (including personality traits) of successful teachers.

Theoretical Justification

Professional standards of teaching *represent statements on the expected qualitative level of professional activities of teachers, differentiated by functions, capacities and levels of expertise.* (Potolea, D., Toma, S., 2013, p. 11)

Currently, the system of skills on which are based the professional standards of evolution in the academic career, it picks up and adapts to the specific nature of the teaching profession and the demands of Romanian pre-university classes and skill levels with which they operate in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Qualifications Framework in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the National Framework of Qualifications in Higher Education of Romania (NFQHER).

"The professional development of teaching staff, management, guidance and control staff and professional requalification are based on professional standards for the teaching profession." (LEN. art. 244, para. 5).

A new model of definition and description of professional skills/standards targets: "the professionalization of the teaching career; placing the training system in the context of continuous professional development/lifelong learning and training and orientation of the training system towards mobility and career evolution and professional development" (Continuous Training Methodology, art. 90); Initial preparation and continuous training for teachers "is based on the model of the approaching by skills and on the concept of cumulative development of the level of competence of the teaching staff" (Continuous Training Methodology, art. 6.)

The system of definitory skills for evolution in the teaching career is made up of three categories of skills: *specialty skills* (defined according to the NFQHER Methodology and are made public by the website www.ncis.ro); *professional skills* (these are: designing of teaching, management and monitoring the learning process; the assessment of educational activities; using digital technologies; knowledge, counseling and differential treatment of pupils; management of the class of students); *transversal skills* (such as: institutional development of the school and of the school-community partnership; career management and personal development; applied educational research).

However, beyond the analysis of the standards and skills that define the evolution in the teaching profession and, in general, the large amount of preparation for the formation of a teaching career, doesn't guarantee anyone that they will become a good teacher.

Taking these considerations, in this study we aimed to identify aspects of self-assessment in relation to the teaching career, characteristics of their own personalities and identify the characteristics of successful teachers. Complementary to these elements, specialty literature also identifies factors such as: social support in the long term, by a group or an individual, for the chosen career; the feeling of autonomy in order to feel „in the right place” in the profession; identification with the profession of teacher, reached when the person feels that they have acquired the skills needed to practise at a good quality standard (Thompson, J. G. 2002, pp. 278-279).

The ideal characteristics of successful teachers' personality would be: sociable, empathetic and altruistic; modest and fair play; open, curious and optimistic; patient and persevering; moral and progressive; analytical, with a sense of humour (Stronge, J. H., 2007; Goodlad, J.I., McMannon, T. J., 2004).

These personality traits are expressed in various attitudes and actions, such as: care towards the student, sympathetic listening to pupils (Feldhusen, Hansen (1994; Lee Corbin & Denicolo, 1998; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002; Vaille & Quigley, 2002); granting respect to the pupil (Collinson et al., 1999, apud. Stronge, J. H. (2007), p. 25) trusting him (including on his desire to learn); concern in relation to the school and off-school situation of the student; creating a supportive climate in the classroom, preferring to work with students, while maintaining the structure of the teacher-student relationship; allowing students to participate in decision making; understanding of cultural differences; exhibiting enthusiasm and mobilizing the students; willing to take chances and capable of self-criticism; investing in their own training (Wenglinsky, H. 2000. Apud. Stronge, J. H. 2007).

Methods

Objectives targeted:

- Identifying the characteristics of a successful teacher in conjunction with professional and personality factors;
- Identification of significant differences of averages from the criterion of the experience and the of the subjects of the study.

Sample

108 people were tested, aged between 18-50 years old. The variable *age* (*2gr*) was achieved by separating the main group into two subgroups, the first comprising persons aged up to 25 years (inclusive) and the second

comprising persons aged over 25 years. The *experience* variable has identified whether or not people have experience in teaching. The *seniority* variable refers to the length of service (years) gained by people active in the teaching career. This variable had values between 1 year and 32 years. The *degree* variable identified four categories (0-None 1-final degree 2-2nd degree 3-1st degree).

Table of mean and SD for the variables: age, experience and seniority

	age	experience	Seniority
Mean	25,88	0,49	3,59
SD	8,132	0,502	7,054

Table of frequencies for the variables: age 2gr, experience and degree

Age(2gr)	experience	Degree
Group1 (0-25) N = 63	Group1 (none) N = 55	0- none N = 83
Group2 (26-50) N = 45	Group2 (with) N = 52	1- final degree N = 11
		2- 2 nd degree N = 4
		3- 1 st degree N = 9

Instruments

The study was based on data collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaire applied has watched several types of information:

- demographic and professional achievements (age, experience, seniority, degree)
- teaching career motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic motivation, the age at which it was decided to follow a teaching career)
- self-assessment in relation to the teaching career (feeling in tune with the teaching career, wanting to practise in the field, the desire to move forward, satisfaction toward completed studies, the desire to finish the started studies, expectancies relating to career success)
- identifying the characteristics of some successful teachers. A list of 13 features identified in the literature, was made up, to which were added other 13 features common to teachers but not confirmed as helping to practice successfully. A separate question assessed the subjects' opinion regarding the weighting of the practice/theory for achieving the formation of successful teachers.
- self-description of their own personality characteristics. There were questions concerning: the general orientation of the person (cautious, realistic or idealistic, denoted by -1, 0 and 1), tolerance of others, empathy, distributive capacity (problem solving), the level of satisfaction towards their own person, the level of assumption of their own success.
- assessment of the perception regarding the necessity of the discipline in class.

Statistical analyses

For the processing of the data collected was used the SPSS 15 software.

Lack of data in some questionnaires has not been replaced.

Starting from the data collected additional variables were created to be used in processing statistics:

-age2gr (described above).

-theor./pract. processes 2gr (group 1 with <50% theory and group 2 \geq 50% theory). In group1 N = 53, in group2 N = 54, a person did not respond to this item).

-rapport (the ratio between the number of verified features/number of random characteristics was calculated)

The statistic methods used were: descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency), correlations, mean comparisons.

Results

Distribution of results

The subjects of the study have selected an average of seven verified characteristics ($M = 7.01$, $SD = 2.840$) to only about three random characteristics ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.976$). As frequency, the study participants have identified between 1-13 features checked and selected between 0-10 random features.

Correlations

Two analyses were made using the method of correlation, the first included all persons in the group while the second was done separately for each age group (age2gr). All variables have presented multiple significant statistical correlations, but still only the most relevant of these shall be listed:

-the variable estimating the ability to recognize the characteristics of a successful teacher correlated statistically significant, per group, with the variable age ($r = 0.284$, $n = 107$, $p = 0.003$), intrinsic motivation variable ($r = 0.210$, $n = 107$, $p = 0.030$). There was also a statistical significant inverse correlation with variable relating to the ratio of the need for theoretical/practical knowledge to become a good teacher ($r = -0.212$, $n = 106$, $p = 0.029$). In the subgroup aged up to 25 years there has also been a significant inverse statistic correlation with the variable estimating the need for discipline imposed on students ($r = 0.262$, $n = 62$, $p = 0.039$).

The method of partial correlation was used to check the influence of some associated variables (age, experience, degree) on the correlation between age and identifying verified characteristics. None of these associated variables influenced significantly the initial correlation ($r = 0.266$, $n = 98$, $p = 0.008$).

The coefficient of correlation between the age variable and the ratio variable ($r = 0.313$, $n = 103$, $p = 0.001$) was also calculated.

-the variable of random characteristics attributed to teachers, per group, presented a marginal correlation but statistically significant with tolerance variable ($r = 0.196$, $n = 105$, $p = 0.045$). In the sub-group aged over 25 years, also there was a correlation with the variable estimating the distributive capacity of the person ($r = 0.429$, $n = 40$, $p = 0.006$).

Semmnificative differences between means

a) Comparing the means using the experience variable does not indicate semmnificative differences.

b) Comparing averages based on age2gr (sub-group1 $N = 63$, sub-group2 $N = 45$) indicates semmnificative differences in the associated variables (experience, seniority, degree) but also in other variables:

- intention to teach, $p = 0.047$ ($M = 0.87$, $SD = 0.340$ fata de $M = 0.98$, $SD = 0.149$)

- identifying verified characteristics, $p = 0.016$ ($M = 6.45$, $SD = 2.678$ to $M = 7.78$ $SD = 2.907$)

- emotional influence, $p = 0.047$ ($M = 8.55$, $SD = 1.511$ to $M = 7.89$ $SD = 1.886$)

- ratio of verified features/random characteristics, $p = 0.005$ ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 1.162$ fata de $M = 3.11$ $SD = 2.323$)

Discussions

Inthis study it was found that if you analyze the ratio of about 2/1 between identification of characteristics specific for successful teachers and the selection of random features, it is evident that the subjects have identified more correct than incorrect features. Most often were selected 8 correct features and 3 incorrect features. All subjects selected at least one correct option and there were subjects that didn't select any incorrect option.

This ability to discern the characteristics of success was associated primarily with the subjects' age. The more advanced was the age the more increased was the number of features identified. In the sample examined, this association was not significantly statistically influenced by the experience, length of service or degree of the subjects.

Also, analyzing the correlation coefficient obtained between the age variable and the ratio variable it is found that a more advanced age is associated with a more favorable ratio, meaning older ones have selected several characteristics checked and fewer random features.

Although in the sample examined the relationship between age and identification of the characteristics of successful teachers is statistically significant and it does not seem to be influenced by other variables measured (experience, seniority, degree) however, in the absence of a control group (preferably a sample without training in the pedagogical field) cannot be

stated with certainty that the association identified was not influenced by specific knowledge or practice in school of which benefit those within preparation for the teaching career. This hypothesis of the influence of specialty knowledge or school practice is partially supported by the correlation identified between the identification of checked characteristics and the variable estimating the share of practice/theory that subjects believed to be optimal in the formation of a successful teacher. In our sample, those who considered that there is a need for more practical (and less theoretical) knowledge to form a successful teacher were the ones that have identified more verified characteristics of a successful teacher.

Also, in this sense, an additional argument about the complexity of the relationship between age and identification of the verified characteristics is provided by the inverse correlation identified in the age group over 25 years. In this subgroup the persons who have identified several verified characteristics have been those who considered that the need for discipline in class may have lower levels than the maximum ones (in our study, this item's maximum was 10pc.).

Related to selecting random features, in this study there were two variables with which showed statistically significant direct correlations: the level of tolerance and the ability of the distributive capacity. These results indicate that there is an association between choosing the wrong features and tolerance but also, with self-assessed ability to execute simultaneous tasks.

Although some authors have highlighted the importance of teachers' expertise in their process of improvement however, in this study comparing means obtained from the various variables after the level of experience does not indicate significant differences. On the other hand, in the present study age was shaped like a variable that appears in multiple significant statistical relationships.

Limits

- the relative small number of persons in the sample (per group/subgroups).
- there was no control group (without training in the didactical/pedagogical field)
- collecting data only from those enrolled in the university
- collecting only data resulted from self-assessment

Conclusions

According to the results of this study, in terms of identifying the characteristics of a successful teacher, life experience, maturation appear to be a more relevant variable than experience gained through teaching in school. The difference between age groups found out can have multiple sources but the relatively small size of the sample and the absence of a control group makes it difficult to identify them accurately.

Recommendations

Additional studies are necessary for the verification and deepening of the found results.

Once confirmed certain results must be applied in the process of teacher training for its improvement.

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