



STUDENTS' DEGREE OF SATISFACTION TOWARDS THEIR SPECIALIZATION AND MODE OF EDUCATION

Carmen Popa*

University of Oradea, Romania

Abstract

This descriptive study focuses on understanding the degree of satisfaction of students enrolled in Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, in blended weekend classes, at the University of Oradea (N=58) towards their specialization, as well as their motifs for choosing their career. Research tool was the questionnaire-based investigation. Research results point out that most students choose this specialization without being influenced by external factors, but for personal reasons. The reasons for becoming a teacher (for choosing this specialization) are linked to the fact they prefer to work with children/pupils, they want to retrain or they follow the example of a teacher they had in school. Their reasons for choosing this mode of education are given by the fact they have already started a new family, they have a full-time job, they live at great distances or they are already working as teachers, but they need the higher education graduation diploma. A higher percentage of students believe this specialization is the most suitable option for them, and they would recommend both, the specialization and mode of education to other future students. Students believe blended weekend classes mode of education is offering them various opportunities for their professional training, is suitable, student-centered, encouraging, accessible, practice-based, centered on group work (cooperative learning).

Keywords: choosing career; student; education faculty; blended weekend classes

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to:

*Ph.D., University of Oradea, Faculty of Socio-Humanistic Sciences, The Science of Education Department, Universitatii st., no. 3, Oradea, Bihor, Romania, 410087; E-mail: carmen_berce@yahoo.com

Introduction

Which are the students' reasons for choosing to become a primary school teacher? Why have they chosen to study in a blended weekend classes study program? These are the question we want to find an answer for with the help of this research conducted on a subject lot of 58 students in blended weekend classes at the Faculty of Social Humanistic Studies, University of Oradea.

Over the last three decades, the reasons for choosing teaching as a career have been a research topic, and it is likely to be an ongoing issue for scholars as long as efforts continue to be made for the recruiting and retaining of teachers (Yüce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013). Scholars believe it difficult to motivate young people for teaching profession (Yüce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013). The students who choose teaching as a career come from generally poor, middle class and crowded families that is why teaching is a profession of economically lower or middle classes (Balyer & Özcan, 2014).

Hacıomeroglu and Taskın (2010 *cited in* Balyer & Özcan, 2014) underlined that the reasons for choosing the teaching profession was because they either liked teaching others, or they believed that the profession was respectable; they also liked longer holidays, employment opportunities, working hours and conditions as well as job security.

Manuel and Hughes (2006) (*cited in* Curtis, 2012) asked pre-service teachers about the factors that influenced their decision to become a teacher. Their findings were the following: almost 71% chose to teach for personal fulfillment reasons, 70% said that they enjoyed the subject, while 66% stated that they liked working with young people. On the other hand, Lai, KO, and Li (2000) (*cited in* Balyer & Özcan, 2014) showed that teachers chose the profession as it provided career opportunities and contributions to the society.

There are a series of studies that tried to find the differences on career choice motifs according to gender variable (Foster & Newman, 2005; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; Smedley, 2007). According to the results, the female students tend to value teaching as a profession more highly than their male counterparts (Newby, Smith, Newby, & Miller, 1995; Balyer & Özcan, 2014).

We agree with Yüce, Sahin, Kocer, and Kana (2013), believing that teaching is a profession that requires a high degree of responsibility and

altruism. Some studies underlined that female teachers choose this career with intrinsic reasons different from male ones (Saban, 2003; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; Balyer & Özcan, 2014). While altruistic motives are very dominant for females, mercenary-based extrinsic motives are dominant for males (Yüce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013). The difference between “salary” and “working with children” factors in terms of gender is also important: women prefer working with children, while males prefer the salary (Balyer & Özcan, 2014).

In general, teacher education literature, point out three types of motivation in relation to choosing teaching as a career (Bastick, 2000; König & Rothland, 2012; Kyriacou et al., 2003; Moran et al., 2001; Saban 2003; Sinclair, 2008; Yüce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013): (1) extrinsic motives - job guarantee, money, holidays, social security, appointment, and ease; (2) intrinsic motives - interest, personal satisfaction, and desire and love of profession; (3) altruistic motives - being in the service of people, society, and country. Thus, there are some researchers that tried to group teacher career choice motifs in the above mentioned categories: extrinsic, altruistic, and intrinsic motivations.

Tataroglu, Ozgen, and Alkan (1998 *cited in* Balyer & Özcan, 2014) underline that the students who are driven by intrinsic motifs are those characterized by interest and love in teaching, they see the profession as an appropriate, respectable and blessed work. Those who consider teaching is offering enormous contribution to society, good salaries and good working conditions are usually driven by extrinsic motifs in career choosing. Specialists also enlist as extrinsic motifs: the security of employment offered by teaching and the attractive working hours and longer holidays (Balyer & Özcan, 2014).

But there it was a series of controversies about the items that should or should not be included in these three categories, which made it difficult to set a theoretical framework for these motif groups. To give just one example, the desire to work with children has been frequently nominated as a form of intrinsic motivation (Young, 1995 *cited in* Watt & al., 2012) but also as a form of altruistic motivation (Yong, 1995 *cited in* Watt & al., 2012).

In 2012, Watt et al. (2012) design *FIT- Choice model* which taps both the “altruistic” type motivations as emphasized in the field literature (Serow & Forrest, 1994), as well as more personally utilitarian motivations, intrinsic motivations, and ability-related beliefs. It also taps individuals’ perceptions about the demand and reward aspects of this profession, and gives a measure of

career satisfaction and commitment. This study (Watt & al., 2012) was applied across international samples from Australia, United States, Germany, and Norway. It underlined that the highest rated motivations for the choice of a teaching career were consistently of intrinsic value: perceived teaching ability, the desire to make a social contribution, to work with children/adolescents, and having had positive prior teaching and learning experiences. One of its findings was that that contextual country features did not produce greatly different patterns of motivations.

Alongside with the identification of motifs for choosing primary school teaching career by students enrolled in Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, in blended weekend classes, we intended to point out the aspects related to the factors that interfere in choosing this mode of education and to the way the students see it. There are now courses being offered online by colleges and universities (Khalid & Quick, 2016). According to Allen and Seaman (2006) (*cited in* Ma'arop & Embi, 2016) blended learning is emerging as a major global trend in educational context. It is seen as a better approach due to the fact that it conceptualizes learning as a continuous process rather than single time event and it also encourages students to be independent learners outside the classroom (Johan Eddy et al., 2014 *cited in* Ma'arop & Embi, 2016). As evidenced by research (Bolliger & Martindale, 2004; Howell, Jeffrey, & Buck, 2012; Swan, 2001; Szabo, 2015; Khalid & Quick, 2016), student satisfaction is critical to the success of an online course. That is why instructors and intuitions must meet the needs of their students in order to reach the goals of the learning environment. Student satisfaction is defined as “an emotional response that can be induced by actual product, service, or process quality or some combination of product and service quality” (O’Leary & Quinlan, 2007, p. 135 *cited in* Khalid & Quick, 2016), and also as “a concept that reflects outcomes and reciprocity that occur between students and an instructor” (Thurmond, Wambach, Connors, & Frey, 2002, p. 176 *cited in* Khalid & Quick, 2016).

Method

I used questionnaire method. The subjects filled the questionnaires individually, being assured of the confidentiality of their answers.

Participants

The participants were students from Faculty of Socio-Humanistic Sciences, the Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education program, blended weekend classes. 53,4% of participants are married, 29,3% are single, 10,3% are in a relationship and 1,7% are divorced, while 3,4% did not answer the question. (Chart 1) The background area of participants was: 63,8% are from the rural area and 31%, from the urban area, while 5,2% did not give an answer (Chart 2).

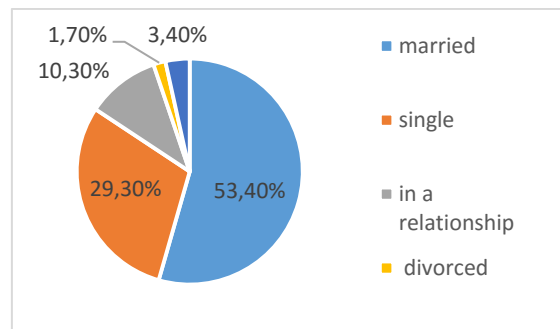


Chart 1. Subjects' marriage status division

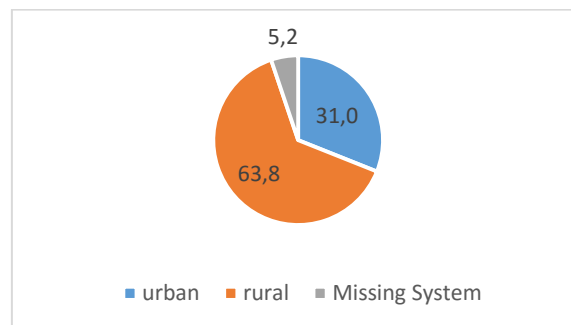


Chart 2. Subjects' background area division

Sampling procedure

The questionnaires were given to all the students of the program. The participation was voluntary and anonymous.

Sample size

Research was conducted on a number of 58 students enrolled during the academic year of 2015-2016 in Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, in blended weekend classes, in the 1st year (37,9%), the 2nd y. (41,4%) and the 3rd y. (15,5%) (Chart 3).

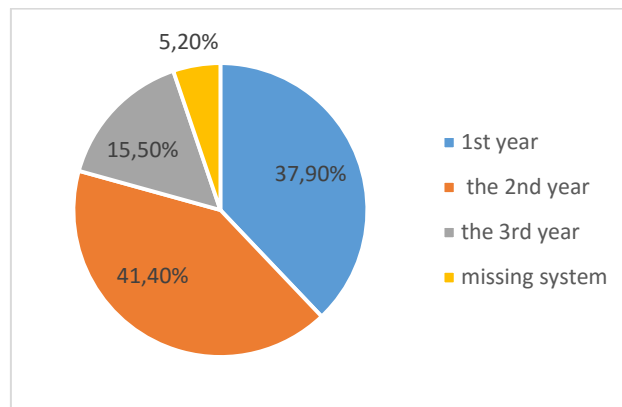


Chart 3. Subjects' year of study division

Measures

A 7-item questionnaire was design for collecting research data (each item included several subcategories). The answers were of two types: choosing the most suitable answers from those enlisted below each question and choosing the most suitable variant on a 5-variant Likert scale.

Results

Data analysis is presented and interpreted as percentages or, depending on particular cases, as averages and standard deviations.

According to *career influencing factors* (chart 4), a high percentage of students (84,5%) said they had personal reasons for their choice. External factors as, family, parents and relatives had less influence: family for 10,3%, friends for 5,2% and former teachers for 1,7%, while for the rest of 3,4% there were other factors involved.

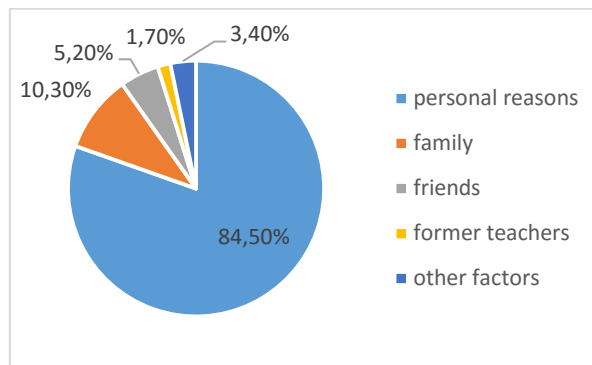


Chart 4. Factors influencing career choice

According to *specialization choice motifs*, in other words, to their future profession, a high percentage of questioned students said: *I like to work with children* (65,5%). The next motif is *The role model of some teachers made me choose to become a teacher* (22,4%), the following being: *I have followed a different training that I don't think it suits me anymore, and now I am following this specialization because I consider it right for me* (15,5%).

A well-balanced income and I want to gather knowledge that should help me raise my our children are the reasons of 12,1% of the subjects. Low percentages are for the following statements: *Being a teacher offers me more spare time outside work* (6,9%), *I am also following other trainings and along the way I am going to decide upon one* (1,7%), *Labor market can include more graduates of this specialization as compared to other fields of training* (1,7%).

I wanted to have a higher education diploma, no matter the specialization was not chosen by any of the questioned students.

According to *mode of education choice reasons*, the highest percentages were for the following items: *I have family* (34,5%), *I work full-time* (29,3%), *I live at a great distance* (29,3%), and *I am already working as teacher and I want to have a higher education diploma* (27,59%).

Low percentages of subjects had answered like: *I can study two specializations in the same time* (5,2%), *Blended weekend classes mode of education was not my first option when I applied for college, but due to my low entrance average score, I could only enroll in Pedagogy of Primary and*

Preschool Education (3,4%), *I want to have more spare time* (1,7%) and *I am looking for a secure job* (1,7%).

For the item *Would you recommend this specialization to someone else?*, 98,3% of the questioned students said “yes”. The same percentage (98,3%) was also present for *Do you think this specialization is right for you?* All of the questioned students said they would recommend this mode of education.

For the item *How would you characterize blended weekend classes mode of education?*, the highest average is for *Providing opportunities for professional training* (m=4,222, SD=.816, mod=5). There were also high averages for: enjoyable, student-centered, encouraging, practice-based, group work-centered, and flexible. Low averages were only for: undesirable, rigid, criticizing, passive, competition-centered, passive teaching approaches.

Table 1. The mean and standard deviation of the item *How would you characterize blended weekend classes mode of education?*

| Items | N | Mean | SD |
|---|----|-------|-------|
| Providing opportunities for professional training | 54 | 4,222 | .816 |
| Enjoyable | 55 | 4,055 | .911 |
| Student-centered | 56 | 4,053 | .861 |
| Encouraging | 57 | 4,035 | .844 |
| Accessible | 57 | 4,017 | .896 |
| Practice-based | 55 | 3,963 | .719 |
| Group work centered (cooperation) | 54 | 3,944 | .855 |
| Flexible | 56 | 3,910 | .879 |
| Knowledge-centered | 54 | 3,870 | .912 |
| Centered on skill development | 55 | 3,836 | .855 |
| Active teaching approaches | 54 | 3,777 | .924 |
| Centered on online information sources | 56 | 3,696 | 1,043 |
| Individual work centered | 56 | 3,696 | .989 |
| Suitable | 58 | 3,672 | 1,032 |
| Centered on student need for independence | 56 | 3,392 | 1,003 |
| Demanding | 55 | 2,945 | .950 |

Table 1. The mean and standard deviation of the item How would you characterize blended weekend classes mode of education? *continued*

| Items | N | Mean | SD |
|--|----|-------|-------|
| Centered on providing traditional sources of information | 53 | 2,811 | .833 |
| Teacher centered | 55 | 2,781 | 1,181 |
| Controlled (authoritarian) | 55 | 2,618 | 1,045 |
| Under permanent control | 55 | 2,564 | 1,101 |
| Passive teaching approaches | 56 | 2,428 | 1,141 |
| Competition centered | 55 | 2,381 | 1,340 |
| Difficult | 56 | 2,071 | 1,185 |
| Criticising | 54 | 1,666 | .971 |
| Rigid | 55 | 1,636 | .910 |
| Undesirable | 56 | 1,142 | .483 |

Discussion

Research subject lot had a number of 58 female students enrolled in Pedagogy of Primary and Preschool Education, in blended weekend classes at the University of Oradea, Romania. There were no male students among the questioned students due to the fact that their number is scarce for this specialization. This is a fact that follows the findings of several researches in the field that underline that teaching is perceived as a feminized profession (Saban, 2003; Johnston, McKeown, & McEwen, 1999; Balyer & Özcan, 2014).

Our findings on the reasons for choosing primary school teaching as a career are in accordance with field research results, both pointing out that one of the most important motifs that make students choose this specialization is the desire and pleasure of working with children (Balyer & Özcan, 2014). Their motivations are linked to the fact that they rather perform activities with pupils/children, they want a retrain and the role model of former teachers.

Most of the subjects of this study have chosen this specialization without being influenced by external factors, like: family, friends or teachers, but out of self motivation. Their reasons for choosing this mode of education are given by the fact they have already started a new family, they have a full-time job, they live at great distances or they are already working as teachers, but they need the higher education graduation diploma.

Our findings can also be viewed through the legislative framework on the status of primary and preschool teacher, which was implemented starting

with 2012. According to Government Emergency Ordinance no. 92/2012 “primary and preschool teachers who are employees of the national education system have the right to continue their work activity in kindergarten and primary school only if they graduate a BA study program, with the same specialization as that required by their job description, in no more than 6 years from the implementation of the hereby emergency ordinance” (Romanian quote rendered in English in our own translation).

A higher percentage of students believe this specialization is the most suitable option for them, and they would recommend both, the specialization and mode of education to other future students.

Students believe blended weekend classes mode of education is offering them various opportunities for their professional training, is suitable, student-centered, encouraging, accessible, practice-based, centered on group work (cooperative learning). Our findings for this aspect are following the studies that underlined the fact that blended learning has not only improved pedagogy, access and flexibility, but also learner engagement and participation.

For further researches we intend to use research tools validated on Romanian population that should outline the aspects concerning the career choice of students in both modes of education, full time and blended weekend classes. The need for these studies is underlined by the fact that according to worldwide research results, the interest for this profession is becoming lower and lower.

References

- Balyer, A., & Özcan, K. (2014). Choosing Teaching Profession as a Career: Students' Reasons. *International Education Studies*, 7(5), 104-115.
- Bastick, T. (2000). Why teacher trainees choose the teaching profession: Comparing trainees in metropolitan and developing countries. *International Review of Education*, 6(3), 343-349.
- Bolliger, D. U., & Martindale, T. (2004). Key factors for determining student satisfaction in online courses. *International Journal on E-learning*, 3(1), 61-67.

- Curtis, C. (2012). Why Do They Choose To Teach - And Why Do They Leave? A Study of Middle School and High School Mathematics Teachers. *Education, 132*(4), 779-788.
- Foster, T., & Newman, E. (2005). Just a knock back? Identity bruising on their route to becoming a male primary school teacher. *Teachers and Teach: Theory and Practice, 11*(4), 341-358.
- Howell, G. F., Jeffrey, M., & Buck, J. M. (2012). The adult student and course satisfaction: What matters most? *Innovation High Education, 37*, 215-226.
- Johnston, J., McKeown, E., & McEwen, A. (1999). Primary teaching as a career choice: The views of male and female sixth-form students. *Research Papers in Education, 14*(2), 181-197.
- Khalid, M. N., & Quick, D. (2016). Teaching Presence Influencing Online Students' Course Satisfaction at an Institution of Higher Education. *International Education Studies, 9*(3), 62-70.
- König, J., & Rothland, M. (2012). Motivations for choosing teaching as a career: Effects on general pedagogical knowledge during initial teacher education. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 40*(3), 289-315.
- Kyriacou, C., Kunc, R., Stephens, P., & Hultgren, A. (2003). Student teachers' expectations of teaching as a career in England and Norway. *Educational Review, 55*(3), 255-263.
- Ma'arop, A. H., & Embi, M. A. (2016). Implementation of Blended Learning in Higher Learning Institutions: A Review of the Literature. *International Education Studies, 9*(3), 41-52.
- Moran, A., Kilpatrick, R., Abbott, L., Dallatt, J., & McClune, B. (2001). Training to teach: motivating factors and implications for recruitment. *Evaluation & Research in Education, 15*(1), 17-32.
- Newby, D., Smith, G., Newby, R., & Miller, D. (1995). The relationship between high school students' perceptions of teaching as a career and selected background characteristics: implications for attracting students of color to teaching. *Urban Review, 27*(3), 235-249.
- O.U. nr. 92 / 18.12.2012 privind Luarea unor măsuri în domeniul învățământului și cercetării, precum și în ceea ce privește plata sumelor prevăzute în hotărâri judecătorești devenite executorii în perioada 1 ianuarie-31 decembrie 2013, publicat în: Monitorul Oficial nr. 864 din 19 decembrie 2012 [*Emergency Ministerial Ordinance No. 92/2012 on taking certain measures in the field of education and research, as well as with*

- regard to the payment of the amounts provided by court decisions that became enforceable between January 1 and December 31, 2013, published in: Official Monitor no. 864 from December 19, 2012].*
- Saban, A. (2003). A Turkish profile of prospective elementary school teachers and their views of teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 19*, 829-846
- Serow, R. C., & Forrest, K. D. (1994). Motives and circumstances: occupational change experiences of prospective late-entry teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10*(5), 555-563.
- Sinclair, C. (2008). Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 36*(2), 79-104.
- Smedley, S. (2007). Learning to be a primary school teacher: Reading one man's story. *Gender and Education, 19*(3), 369-385.
- Szabo, Zs. (2015). Better together: teams and discourse in asynchronous online discussion forums. *Journal of Psychological and Educational Research, 23*(1), 73-83.
- Swan, K. (2001). Virtual interaction: Design factors affecting student satisfaction and perceived learning in asynchronous online courses. *Distance Education, 22*(2), 306-331.
- Watt, H., Richardson, P. W., Klusmann, U., Kunter, M., Beyer, B., Trautwein, U., & Baumert, J. (2012). Motivations for choosing teaching as a career: An international comparison using the FIT-Choice scale. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*, 791-805.
- Yüce, K., Sahin, E., Kocer, O., & Kana, F. (2013). Motivations for choosing teaching as a career: A perspective of pre-service teachers from a Turkish context. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 14*, 295-306.

Received July 10, 2016

Revision received July 20, 2016

Accepted July 30, 2016