



Original Contribution

THE CHOICE OF A PEDAGOGICAL PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The choice of a profession is extremely important for the prosperity of the person. The freedom to decide what to devote our lives to, is a primary right which we should take advantage of. The right choice of profession should be in accordance with our inner motives, abilities, attitudes and needs. The pedagogical profession is characterized by its social directedness and connection to the spiritual, intellectual and emotional growth of the adolescent person. The influence of outside factors when choosing a profession decreases the motivation of the person when mastering and practicing it.

Key words: choice of profession, social directedness of the pedagogical profession, motivation when choosing a profession

INTRODUCTION

The looking back in time gives us the conviction that studying is an immanent characteristic of the human existence.

During the primitive human existence the learning system was simple. The gained working, cognitive and behavioral experience was passed from the older generation to the younger one. The suitability of the individual for social life was established by specially organized initiation rituals, during which the young man was called upon to demonstrate his or her skills for survival – making fires, archery, fishing, pursuing animals, etc.

Later on, the training and education of the individual was performed in the famous philosophical schools of Ancient Greece by great personalities like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle.

In the XVII -th century the Czech educator Jan Amos Comenius, owing to his epochal work "Great didactics", justified the need to educate children of both sexes and established a structure of teachers' professional work of two components - training and education.

Nowadays, we are witnessing dynamic social changes that leave a lasting mark on the education of the younger generation. They are projected on the teaching profession and modify the specifics of the teachers' work.

No matter whether the training is done in a simple way, by way of imitation and practical learning from the human experience, accumulated in time, or in a modern educational environment, through advanced teaching technologies and e-learning software, the objective retains its relative constancy. In all periods of the historical development of humanity, education has been directed to preparing a young person ready for his or her full social integration and realization. In the modern times the challenge to prepare the individual for the competitive conditions of the labor market becomes more and more important.

Society puts this complex and responsible task before the school which, as a social institution, is called upon to implement it successfully. This would not be possible to happen if in the learning arrangement well motivated and professionally incompetent teachers were not working.

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This has been interpreted by the scholars in the field of pedagogy. Many scientific studies have been devoted to the personality of the teacher and the specifics of his work.

In the past two decades, which are characterized by the long transition from totalitarianism to democracy, the prestige of the teaching profession in Bulgaria was greatly reduced. The promoting of examples of quick accumulation of riches and the raising of the standard of living of not-so-well educated individuals contributed to the devaluation of education as something of value in the minds of the young person. This fact, as well as the low payment of teachers, helped to lead to a retreat from the teaching profession in that period.

The contemporary reality indicates that the pedagogical universities are working hard to dignify the teaching profession and to overcome the crisis for the qualified personnel in the field of education. Evidence to this is the growing number of prospective students in the Faculty of Education at Trakia University who wish to master the profession of the teacher, as well as the practicing teachers who permanently enhance their professional competence through training in graduate programs, training and further qualification courses or specializations.

This provoked us to focus our research attention to establishing the awareness of the career choices of the individuals who are trained in the Faculty of Education at Trakia University.

METHODOLOGY

In order to establish the level of the professional orientation of the students, we used a testing questionnaire, developed and approved by T. D. Dubovitskaya.

We decided to use this questionnaire because the questions in it are intended not only to establish the level of professional orientation and choice of the future profession but because through it we may also highlight the consistency of the individual in mastering the chosen profession, as well as their desire to practice it.

By using the test, we determine the level of the professional orientation of the students, which is reflected in the degree of expression of the effort to master the profession and the desire for

further professional development in the specialty.

In the opinion of T. Dubovitskaya, "the vocational orientation is above all a set of motivational formations like (interests, needs, aptitudes, aspirations, etc.), related to the professional activity of people and affecting in particular the choice of profession, the striving towards practicing it and satisfaction with her professional activity"(1).

The social essence of the profession "teacher"

The nature and the specifics of the teaching profession in the Bulgarian educational literature are presented in detail by St. Zhekova et al. They promote the idea of a generalized structural model of the system teacher (teaching profession), in which they identify four subsystems: "teacher-students, internal environment, external environment, senior management bodies" (2).

The teacher and the specific characteristics of his or her work cannot be seen outside of their interaction with the students, as they are equivalent subjects involved in education.

We cannot ignore its interaction with the elements of the internal environment (the teaching team, the working conditions in the school, etc.), nor can we ignore those of the external environment (parents, community organizations, etc.).

In his professional activity the teacher interacts with and takes into account a number of regulations created by superior bodies, in order to implement an effective educational process.

All of these sub-elements are interlinked and interdependent. The implementation of the teaching profession requires interaction at all levels of the subsystems.

If we need to determine the distinguishing characteristics of the profession "teacher", we would have to put forward its social nature. In this respect, we share the opinion of S. Zhekova et al., according to whom "all its elements – a subject, participating components and mechanisms, final goal and multiple tasks, have a social content" (2).

Because the teaching profession is socially oriented, as I have pointed out above, its projections can be found in the preparation of the young generation for life and its adequate functioning in the labour market.

This complex task, related to training and education, should be entrusted to teachers who dedicate their lives to the benefit of society, to individuals who have made a conscious career choice and are ready for permanent self-improvement and qualification.

As Emile Durkrem points out, "Education is the impact of the older generations on those who are not yet ready for social life. It aims to build and develop in the child a set of physical, intellectual and moral qualities which both the political society as a whole and the specific environment for which it is destined, in particular, demand from it "(3). Emile Durkrem regards education not only as a union between education and training. The content of the concept of education, according to him, includes a wide range of effects aimed at forming positive qualities in different areas (intellectual, moral, physical, social, etc.), through which the individual functions as a member of society. As he puts it: "What follows from the previous definition is that education consists of methodical socialization of the younger generation."(3).

This directs our attention to the idea that the purpose of education is to create the appearance of a social being in all of us.

As the Y. Merdzhanova puts it, the professional self-determination of the personality is a dynamic process in which a number of personal substructures interact with each other. As such, she points out: the focus, the interests, the goals, the values, the attitudes, the stereotypes, the prejudices, the skills, the talents, the personal experience, the professional consulting of the individual (4).

When choosing a profession for their future life, the person should take a conscious approach and be driven by motives that arise as a result of the complex interaction of the above substructures. A key role in the choice should be the concept of freedom. The individual must choose a profession to devote his or her future life to without any interference, unregarding factors

such as the condition and the specifics of the national economy, the material cost, and the public attitudes toward this type of work or whether there is a certain suitable university in their place of residence. If the motivation for the choice of the future profession is externally oriented, this would lower the efficiency in the phase of its mastering, as well as the satisfaction when practicing it. The professional activities must provide a personal satisfaction according to the hierarchical structure of the basic needs developed and presented by E. Maslow, in which the highest level in the pyramid structure is self-actualization and self-esteem. In this aspect the factor - a free and conscious choice of profession- plays an important role.

The testing questionnaire, developed and trialed by T. Dubovitskaya, aims at investigating and establishing the level of vocational orientation and the strive for further activity in the mastered professional performed by the students of psychology at Moscow State Psychological and Pedagogical University.

We adapted the test to the specificity of the mastering of the teaching profession by students of the Faculty of Education at Trakia University.

The present study included students from four freshmen courses in the accredited specialties of the faculty - Preschool and Primary School Education, Primary School Education with a Foreign Language, Social Education, Special Education. The total number of the students included in the survey was 80 - 20 students from each of the above mentioned subjects.

For greater accuracy of the results, the test was given to be anonymously completed by the students, while they were only required to indicate the specialty in which they are being educated.

RESULTS

Following the instructions for processing the results of the testing questionnaire, submitted by T. Dubovitskaya, we differentiated between three levels of vocational orientation of the surveyed students-to-be-teachers.

Low level of the focus of the individual making a choice of his or her future profession was found in 2% of the prospective

teachers who are trained in the Faculty of Education at Trakia University.

Taking into account the specificity of the test, we found out that these students have not consciously approached the choice of a major and a university.

Their training is influenced by random factors. At this stage they do not see good prospects for themselves in the studied profession. They think that they would rather be realized successfully in other professional fields.

Despite the small proportion of students with low levels of vocational orientation, the university teachers should make a special effort to change their orientation to the addressed profession. Training should be so organized and realized that the students would change their attitude regarding their professional choice, find positive aspects in the essence of the mastered profession that will allow them to make the most of their abilities and the originality of their personality.

Average level of vocational orientation was found in 28% of the surveyed students. They say they made a conscious choice of the institution and the faculty. In mastering the profession they are driven by the desire to succeed as professionals. At this stage of their training, they said that still the practicing of their hobbies and leisure activities is not subject to the specifics of their future profession.

These students see a good professional perspective for themselves and believe they have made a good choice for their life.

High level of vocational orientation was found in 70% of the students covered in the survey. These students stated that, if given the opportunity to start learning again, they would

choose the same specialty in which they are being trained now. They indicated that their desire to master their chosen profession and later to practice, it is well justified and sustainable. On their own initiative, they read additional literature relevant to their future career.

Many of these students, if given an opportunity, expressed their readiness to become familiar with the specifics of the work of professionals in the field of their future profession. They believe that the work in this job would help them in the future to express themselves and their abilities at the highest possible level.

CONCLUSION

The results we obtained in our test make us hopeful that the majority of students who study at the Pedagogical Faculty of Trakia University made a conscious choice of a future profession. This would help achieve a high quality of academic learning during their studies. The accumulation of theoretical competence from extra auditorium and auditorium activities would contribute to the formation of practical skills in the field of pedagogical practice and would contribute to good professional development of the teaching staff who will be called upon to train and educate the future generations of young people.

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