

EXPECTATIONS, ATTITUDES AND SKILLS - THREE PREDICTIVE FACTORS OF SUCCESS AT THE TEACHER TENURE EXAM IN THE CASE OF STUDENTS ATTENDING THE PEDAGOGICAL MODULE

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Abstract: The criteria on which the opting for a teaching career depends on are often subjective, and as a result, the number of graduates who undertake and pass the tenure examination right after graduation is quite low. The Speciality Departments with Psycho-pedagogical Profile should pay more attention to the selection of the students who attend the first level of the pedagogical module and to keep track of their evolution during the three-year training in this field, as to ensure a good correlation between their expectations and the whole formative approach. In this paper I describe a three-year study on the way expectations regarding initial teacher training, involvement in the training activities and psycho-pedagogical skills of the students attending the pedagogical module can influence their success at the teacher tenure exam.

Keywords: expectations, attitudes, skills, initial training, psycho-pedagogical module, teacher tenure examination, results.

Introduction

The Romanian higher education has been noted over the years through its rich offer of study programs and the quality of training of specialists in various fields of activity. The current controversy over the quality of the Romanian education urges us, the specialists in education sciences, to take a closer look at the way in which the initial and continuous teacher training is carried out, providing the general public with concrete data, relevant to the possible shortcomings of the educational process, their causes and improvement measures, where needed.

To a great extent, the questions that lead to the evaluation of the quality of education are relevant:

1. How well prepared are those who train and educate in school institutions?
2. How interested are the young people with psycho-pedagogical skills in a teaching career?
3. How do they evolve during the psycho-pedagogical training and how do they integrate into the educational system?
4. To what extent do teachers assume responsibility for the success of the teaching process?

In a study made four years ago on a sample of 100 young people, aged between 15 and 20, we tried to identify the preferred models of the young people when choosing a profession. The conclusions were as follows:

- 31,25% prefer as models businessmen;
- 19,05% chose as models science men;
- 16,5 % state that they prefer as their models, television stars;
- 11,2 % prefer to choose models from literati;
- 7,5% choose as models teachers;

- 6, 5% of the students choose their models from their families;
- 3,16% have no model for the present time;
- 2,54% state they choose as their models, politicians;
- 2,3% prefer sportsmen as models.

It can be observed that a very small number of the young people have as models teachers, which raises questions about the way this profession is perceived and promoted. Many of the youth skilled to do training and education are not properly trained in this area, and often many young people with no other professional option, end up in the system.

Out of the nine concepts present in the curriculum map of the academic learning, two are extremely important from the point of view of their effects (I. Neacșu, 2013):

- Quality*: evolving concept, dynamic, socially relevant, rich in determinations. In defining quality in education, at least two aspects are to be taken into account: a) Higher education is not a factory, its products incorporate much higher added value than any finished product; b) philosophy, pedagogy, and total quality management are correlated with the expression sustainable development, the synergy of the 3 P triad - Human potential - Processes - Products / Performances.
- Expertise*: represents the psychological dimension of the objectives of a mature and responsible academic study, which aims at cognitive, emotional, procedural and action capacities. Competencies are acquired in time, are confirmed at performance level and expressed through different categories specific to certain fields of knowledge, research, and human creation.

Based on these considerations, we have proposed a more detailed analysis of the way students are opting for the teaching career during their undergraduate studies, attending the first level of the pedagogical module, as well as the factors that influence the success of the teacher tenure examination.

Objectives

This study presents some aspects regarding the psycho-pedagogical training of the students who opt for a teaching career within the Department of Specialty with Psycho-pedagogical Profile, at the North University Center of Baia Mare. The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. *an inventory of the students' expectations and needs regarding psycho-pedagogical training;*
2. *the analysis of the way students engage in teaching activities in order to meet their training needs;*
3. *the assessment of the skills specific to the teaching profession;*
4. *the analysis of the relationship between expectation – pedagogical skills – involvement – results.*

Sample and time period

The sample of students who took part in this study was selected from the three faculties of the North University Center of Baia Mare: the Faculty of Letters, the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering. We chose to analyze all three categories of students because psycho-pedagogical training is addressed to all those who want to opt for a didactic career, regardless of their field of specialization. Thus, from each faculty were selected 50 students, from different specializations.

The study period was of 3 years, during which 4 phases were completed:

1. during the enrollment phase to the pedagogical module, the needs, and expectations of the students regarding psycho-pedagogical training were recorded; also at this stage a

- psychological evaluation of each student of the study group was made, in order to determine the skills level and the personality traits necessary for the teaching profession;
2. the second phase consisted of tracing the students' attitudes towards psycho-pedagogical training/involvement in training activities; At this stage, we also analyzed the way in which the training activities meet the needs registered in the first phase;
 3. the recording phase of the data regarding the success of the students who undertook the teacher tenure examination;
 4. the last step was assigned to the analysis of the relationship between the factors pursued during the study: expectations – skills - involvement - results.

Methods and instruments

The research methods and tools used in this study were adapted to the four phases involved. In this respect, in the first phase, an interview was conducted with each student on the basis of a set of 4 questions concerning the interest in the teaching career, and the expectations regarding the training within the pedagogical module.

At this same stage, we used psychological tests to assess the students' skills and personality traits, analyzing then, to which extent these correspond to the teaching profession. The tests used have measured the following capabilities: general learning ability (analytical reasoning, analog transfer, cognitive inhibition and short-term memory, working memory, cognitive interference, switching of attention), verbal skill (understanding of texts), decisional capacity, personality questionnaire CP5F, emotion assessing scales (PDE, DAS, USAQ, ABS-II, EMAS).

In the second phase, we appealed to *the systematic observation* of each student, an *observation grid* being used, where data regarding the students' involvement in learning activities during the three years of psycho-pedagogical training were recorded (presence, accomplishing tasks, engaging in debates).

In the third stage, we recorded the students' results at the teacher tenure examination, taking into account their grades.

In the fourth phase, we performed a frequency analysis, calculated for the following aspects:

- The students' need to choose a teaching career as a first option, and the conviction that they will develop the necessary skills within the pedagogical module (according to specialization);
- The existence of aptitudes evaluated by psychological tests;
- The degree of involvement in didactic activities (according to specialization);
- The higher grades than 7 obtained at the teacher tenure exam.

Results

At the stage of enrollment at the 1st level pedagogical module, 73.2% of the students stated they wanted to learn within the pedagogical module: how to teach pupils, how to behave with them, how to make them learn, how to contribute to the increase of performance in education, how to design a didactic activity. These responses were generally valid for all specializations, with no significant differences depending on the students' area of study.

Out of the 150 investigated students, 78% expressed their need to prepare for the teaching career, as the first option for their professional future, the others opting for this kind of training only as a professional alternative.

Here is a summary of the results regarding the degree of participation, skills and results obtained at the teacher tenure exam.

Taking into account the degree of involvement in the learning activities by the students from the three faculties, we present below the chart with the percentages obtained.

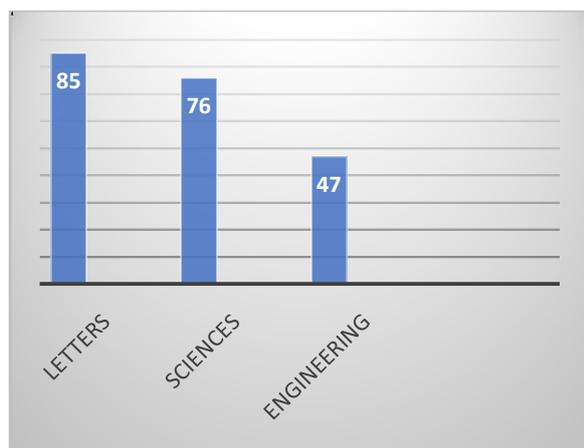


Figure 1 The frequency of the students with good participation in didactic activities

We can observe that the differences between the students of the Faculty of Letters and those of the Faculty of Sciences were not significant, but the students from the Faculty of Engineering were less involved in didactic activities, compared to the other two categories. This aspect was reflected in the results of the formative and summative assessments.

Interpreting the results of the psychological tests applied in order to assess the skills required for the teaching profession, we found that:

- 84.6% of the students who wanted to attend the pedagogical module, with a teaching career as a first professional option, did have the necessary skills, 71.6% of them being from pedagogical specialties (Philology, Pedagogy of Primary and Pre-school Education, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology);
- Out of the students who did not have a didactic career as their first option, only 43.4% did not have the skills necessary for this profession.

Below we chart the results of the psychological assessments, according to the faculties.

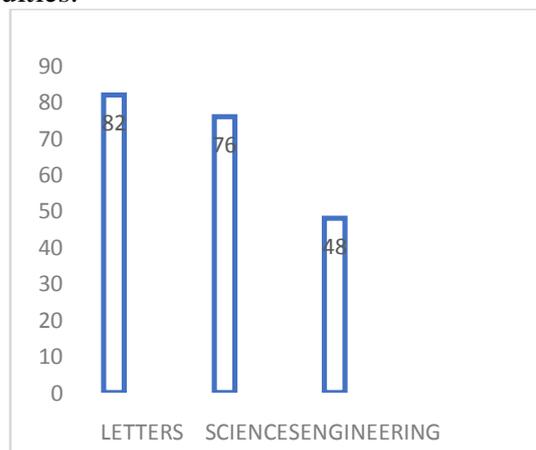


Figure 2 The frequency of the students with pedagogical skills

From the chart above we observe once again that the students of the Faculties of Letters and Sciences are closer to the teaching profession in terms of aptitude, compared to the Engineering students.

Starting from their expressed needs, their skills, and the way they have prepared during the three-year psycho-pedagogical training, we have noticed that there are differences when it comes to the undertaking of the teacher tenure examination.

The presence of the students from the three faculties at this examination, in the year of their graduation, was different.

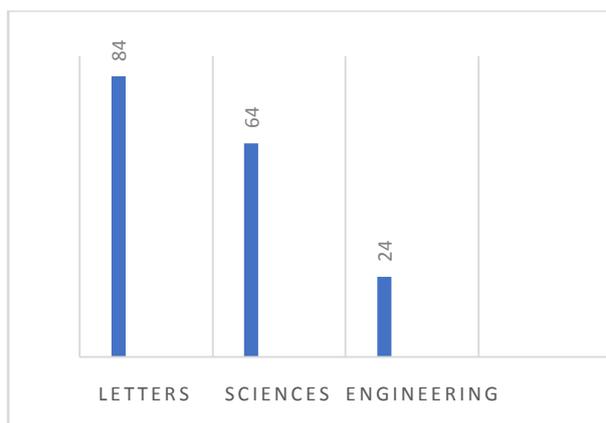


Figure 3 The frequency of the students at the teacher tenure examination

It can be noticed that the lowest attendance was among the Engineering students (for whom a teaching career was only a professional alternative, from the very beginning) and the highest was among the students from the Faculty of Letters, who had the highest expectations and the greatest involvement in the psycho-pedagogical training.

Analyzing the results of the exam, we found that:

- 78% of those who have attended the examination have obtained higher grades than 7;
- 92.5% of those who took this exam, was part of the group of students who had the necessary skills to work as teachers;
- 85.3% of those who have passed the examination have graduated specializations with a pedagogical profile (Philology, Pedagogy of primary and preschool education, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology);
- 88.4% of the students who obtained higher grades than 7 at the teacher tenure examination were involved in all the teaching activities during the 3 years of study (course, seminar, practical activities), and had good exam results.

Regarding the frequency of the students who obtained grades over 7 at the tenure examination, according to the faculty graduated, the situation was the following:

- The students from the Faculty of Letters achieved the highest percentage, among them the graduates of the Pedagogy of primary and preschool education specialization was at the top of the ranking, with grades between 8.50 and 10 (63%), followed by the philologists (27%);
- The students from Faculty of Sciences obtained higher grade than 7 in a smaller number, compared to the students of the Letters, and the Mathematics graduates achieved a higher score, with grades between 8.50 and 10 (43%), compared to the graduates of the other specializations of this faculty;
- Engineering students obtained the lowest percentage in passing this exam, with only 2% getting grades between 8.50 and 10.

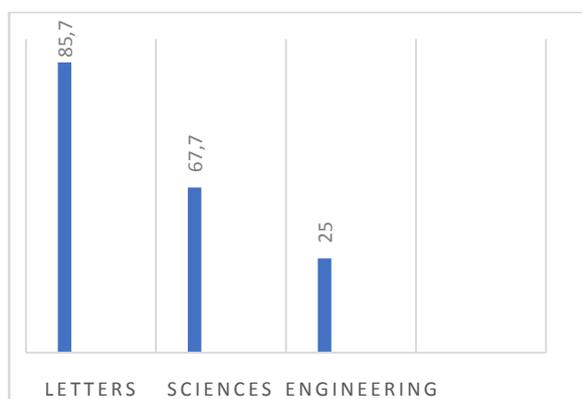


Figure 4 The frequency of the students getting higher grades than 7 at the tenure examination

As I have already mentioned, in this study our aim was to see to what extent there is a concordance between the psycho-pedagogical skills, the degree of involvement in the didactic activities and the success at the teacher tenure examination. The results obtained and reflected in the chart below show that there is a close relationship between these three aspects.

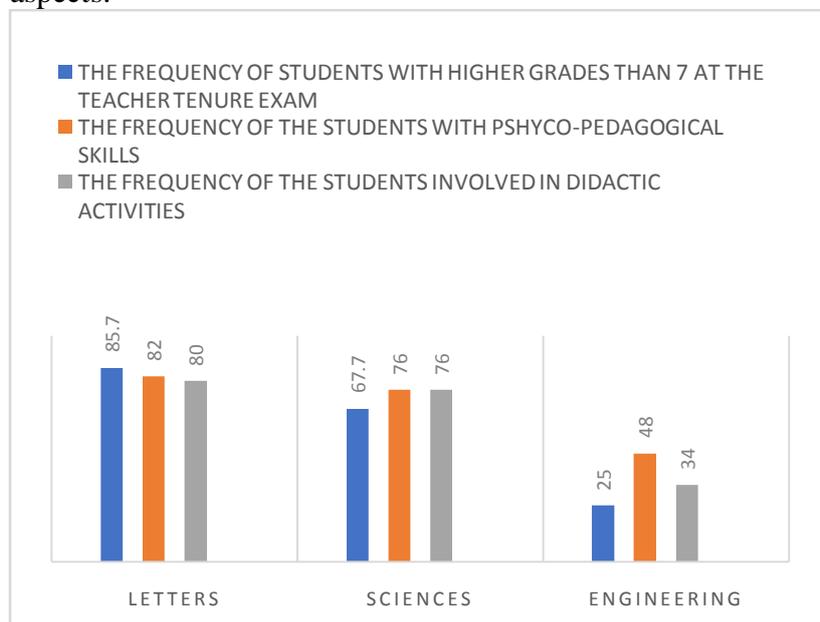


Figure 5. The relationship between the involvement – skills – performance degrees

We can notice that there is a close relationship between the skills level, the degree of involvement in learning activities, and the passing of exams, for all three categories of students. As a result, we consider that careful monitoring of students during the study years is important, as well as an adequate selection for the admission to the pedagogical module.

Conclusions

The nowadays Romanian education needs quality human resources in all Romanian schools, the main actors performing the increasing of efficiency of the educational process, being the teachers.

Regardless of the specificity/university study programs, it is necessary to approach the theoretical and practical content, starting from the psychological profile and the training needs.

Analyzing the results obtained from this study, we can appreciate that:

- the psychological assessment at the admission to the pedagogical module provides teachers, and especially students, with a feedback regarding the success of the latter at the teacher tenure exam; it is not enough to want to be a teacher, one must also have the skills needed for this job;
- on the way students engage in didactic activities depend on school performance, successful examinations, and certainly the quality of the future teachers;
- the specializations of the undergraduates influence the option for psycho-pedagogical training and performance in this field; perhaps the small number of positions for technological disciplines or the reduced number of hours in certain disciplines in the science domain may determine engineers and scientists not to opt for a teaching career;
- the desire to be a teacher, and especially a good teacher, is correlated with the specific aptitudes needed for this profession (a good engineer can be a good teacher if he has skills in this field, and especially if he wants to practice in this field more than in others).

An important conclusion of this study is that higher education has the mission to ensure, among other things, the performance of the entire education system by providing training and education specialists. The universities' Departments of Specialty with Psycho-pedagogical Profile represent the means for achieving this mission, and as a result, they have the duty to select, initiate and perfect future and current teachers.

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