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UDC: 37.048.4:371.15

371.213

DOI: 10.19090/zop.2022.31.23-36

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## **WHY IS IT GOOD TO BE A PART OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION?\***

**Abstract.** The aim of the paper is to review the opinions of students who are in the initial preparation phase for the teaching profession, about why they have chosen this profession and whether something has changed for them during these years of studying this profession. The research included a total of 72 students from the study programs: Preschool Education, Primary School Education and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Goce Delcev University in Shtip, Republic of North Macedonia. The survey was conducted in June 2022. An online survey questionnaire was prepared, in which the questions (open and closed type) were grouped into three parts: general information about students, motivating and demotivating factors for choosing the teaching profession, initial education – preparation for entering the teaching profession.

**Key words:** preschool teacher, primary school teacher, pedagogue, motivation, profession.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Teachers are the creators of our society, past, present, and future. They provide the fundamental knowledge and skills of future teachers, lawyers, economists, doctors, engineers... Future educators, teachers have a highly

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\*\* Thanks to the students from the Faculty of Educational Sciences who expressed their views and opinions about the teaching profession anonymously

responsible role in the social context. Students start with initial education and continue to invest in themselves through professional development, and by investing in themselves, they also invest in the generations they will prepare to be active participants in the society.

Teachers have the power to make a difference in the academic and life achievement of children (students). Investing in teachers means investing in the entire education system (Gorard, Ventista, Morris & Huat See, 2021).

Extrinsic, intrinsic, and altruistic motives for choosing a teaching career are mentioned in the literature. Salary, status, and working conditions are aspects that are not specific to immediate work (extrinsic motives). Passion for teaching, subject knowledge, and expertise are inherent aspects that are encompassed by intrinsic motives. Altruistic motives imply the perception of teaching as a valuable and important profession and the desire to support childrens' development and to make a difference in the society (Bergmark, Lundström, Manderstedt & Palo, 2018).

Numerous studies point out that the most important reasons why teachers decide to enter the teaching profession are: to consider teaching socially meaningful - altruistic motivations, and to enjoy the work - intrinsic motivations (Davies & Hughes, 2018).

### *Attractiveness of the teaching profession*

The teaching profession is generally more attractive among women. In England (Howson, 1999 as cited in Thornton, 2002) women made up 83% of the primary teaching force, and at that time getting more men into teaching was recognized as a key concern of the Teacher Training Authority. The dominant presence of female teachers at the lower level of education is still present today. In 2017, 72 % of the almost 6 million people working as school teachers in the EU were women (Katsarova, 2020).

Members of the male gender are more present at the higher levels of the teaching profession, while the lower levels of the teaching profession are generally dominated by members of the female gender. Women represent 97% of teaching staff at pre-school level, and 83% at primary level, they make up 60% at upper secondary and only 44% at tertiary level on average in OECD countries (OECD, 2019).

The attractiveness of a given profession is determined by a number of factors. The factors that determine the attractiveness of the teaching profession in the European Commission report are grouped into three groups, namely:

- Factors that can be more easily influenced by political decisions: Quality of information about the teaching profession; Salaries and other financial incentives; Material working conditions; Recruiting methods (conditions and criteria); Quality of initial teacher education; Responsibilities of teachers; Early career support (induction); Continuous professional development; Qualitative human resource management (assignment, assessment); Helping teachers in difficulties (teachers need psychological and professional help, – the possibility for diseases caused by stress);
- Factors that are more difficult to influence through politics: Social status and prestige of teachers; Pupil/teacher ratio: number of pupils per teacher and number of pupils per teaching group.
- Contextual factors that are very difficult to influence, but must be taken into account: Economy and labor market conditions; Development of expectations and requirements of interested parties, especially parents; Evolution of mentality, attitudes and behavior of students (digital natives); Competition in new media and new learning tools (European Commission, 2013)

It seems that today the teaching profession has lost its attractiveness and that becoming a teacher is less and less appealing as a career choice (Katsarova, 2020). Numerous studies suggest that the teaching profession is less attractive today than it was a few decades ago. Namely, education is affected by major social, demographic, cultural, scientific, economic, and technological changes that impose increased demands, responsibilities, and expectations on teachers, and such a situation affects the well-being of teachers and the attractiveness of the teaching profession. (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2021) (Yeni, Aivaloglou & Hermans, 2020).

## METHODOLOGY

The paper explores the opinions and attitudes of students about the teaching profession. The research included a total of 72 students from the study programs: Preschool Education 19 students, Primary Education 23 students and Pedagogy 30 students at the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Goce Delchev University in Shtip, Republic of North Macedonia. The research was conducted in June 2022. An anonymous online survey questionnaire was prepared, in which questions (open and closed type) were grouped into three parts: general information about students,

motivating and demotivating factors for choosing the teaching profession, initial education – preparation for entering the teaching profession. The data were processed qualitatively and quantitatively.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

We processed the results of the research in three parts, as the questionnaire itself was formulated as follows: general information about students, motivating and demotivating factors for choosing the teaching profession, initial education – preparation for entering the teaching profession. The data were processed qualitatively and quantitatively.

### *General data*

The research included students from three study groups at the Faculty of Educational Sciences in Shtip, namely: 26.4% from the study program for Preschool Education and education that prepares future educators who work with preschool children, 31.9% from the study program for Primary education that prepares future teachers who work with children from the first to fifth grade in primary education, and 41.7% were included in the study program Pedagogy that prepares future pedagogues who can be employed as pedagogues in educational institutions, and by law also as educators and teachers (Chart 1).

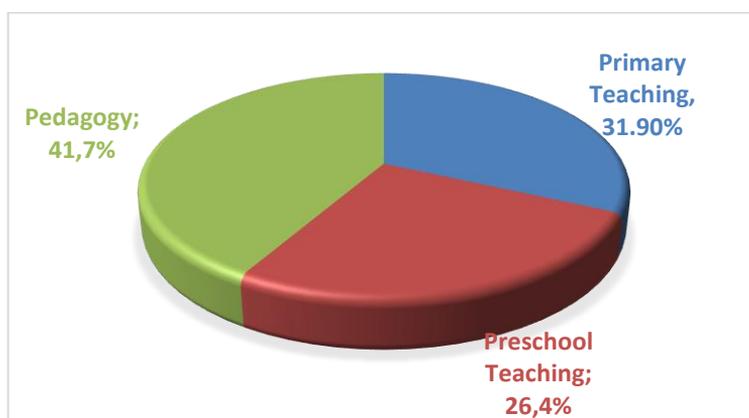


Chart 1. *Study program*

The majority of students who enroll in the three study programs: Preschool education, Primary education, and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Educational Sciences are women, so the number of female respondents (95.8%) is higher in our research than the number of male respondents (4.2%). (Chart 2).

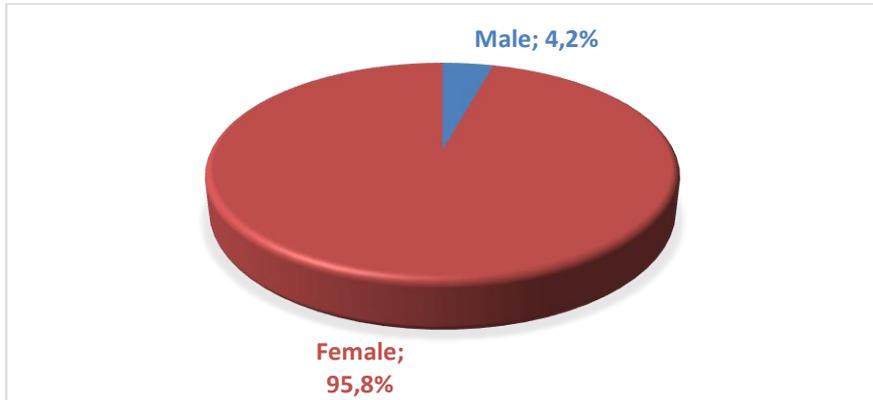


Chart 2. *Gender*

The aim of the research was to see if the student's choice for the teaching profession is related to the profession of their parents, that is, if their parents are engaged in the teaching profession, so that it affects the motivation and choice of students for this profession. However, only eight students (Chart 3) have one of their parents working in the field of education. Accordingly, for the majority of students, there is no connection between their parents' occupation and their choice for this profession.

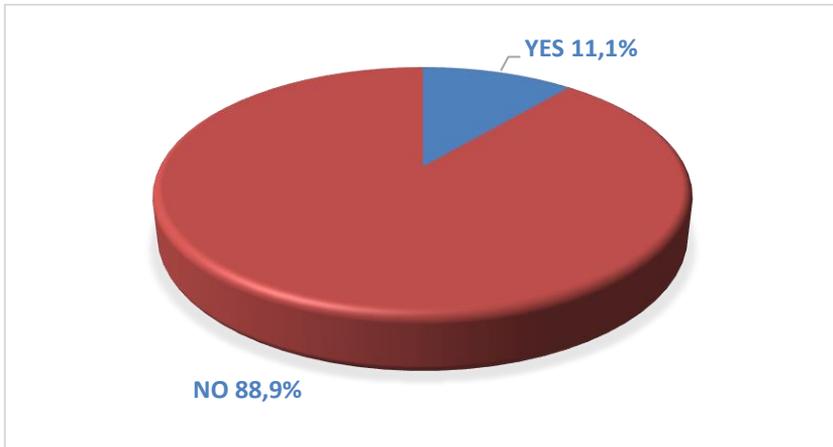


Chart 3. *The parents' occupation in the field of education*

The majority of surveyed students (Table 1) live in a city (77,8%), and a smaller number of the students live in the countryside (22,2%). Through SPSS statistics, we have determined that there are no statistically significant differences between the students' place of residence and factors they list as motivating and demotivating for choosing the teaching profession.

Table 1. *Place of residence*

	f	%
<b>City</b>	56	77,8%
<b>Countryside</b>	16	22,2%
<b>Total</b>	72	100,0%

More than half of the respondents (66.7%) have no previous experience in working with children, while a smaller number of respondents, which is not negligible (33.3%), have indicated that they have previous experience in working with children.

Using SPSS statistics, we have determined that there are no statistically significant differences between the respondents' previous experience in working with children and the factors they list as motivating and demotivating for choosing the teaching profession.

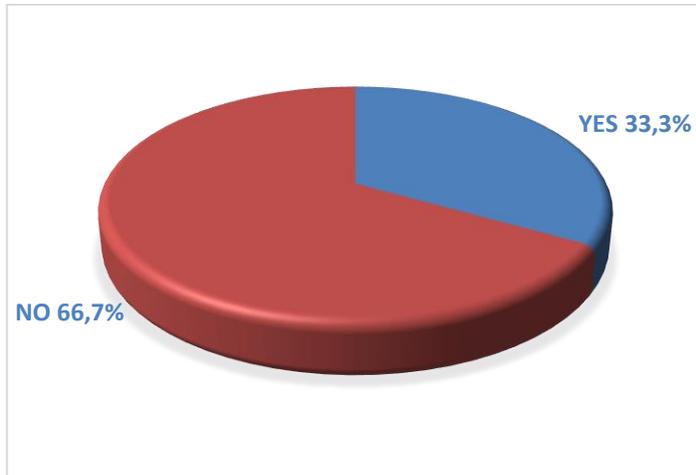


Chart 4. *Previous experience in working with children*

#### *Motivating and demotivating factors for choosing the teaching profession*

There are numerous factors that can motivate or demotivate students to choose the teaching profession. Sixty-seven respondents emphasized that working with children was the first and biggest thing that encouraged them to become educators, teachers, pedagogues. The second encouraging motive emphasized by 41 respondents was the status of a teacher. When it comes to salary, 30 respondents believed that the salary discouraged them, 19 respondents believed that the salary encouraged them, and the rest of the respondents did not have an opinion regarding this issue. Workload was encouraging for 28 respondents and discouraging for 11 of them, while the majority of respondents did not have an opinion on this issue. 20 respondents considered documentation encouraging, and 7 respondents considered documentation as a discouraging task (Chart 5).

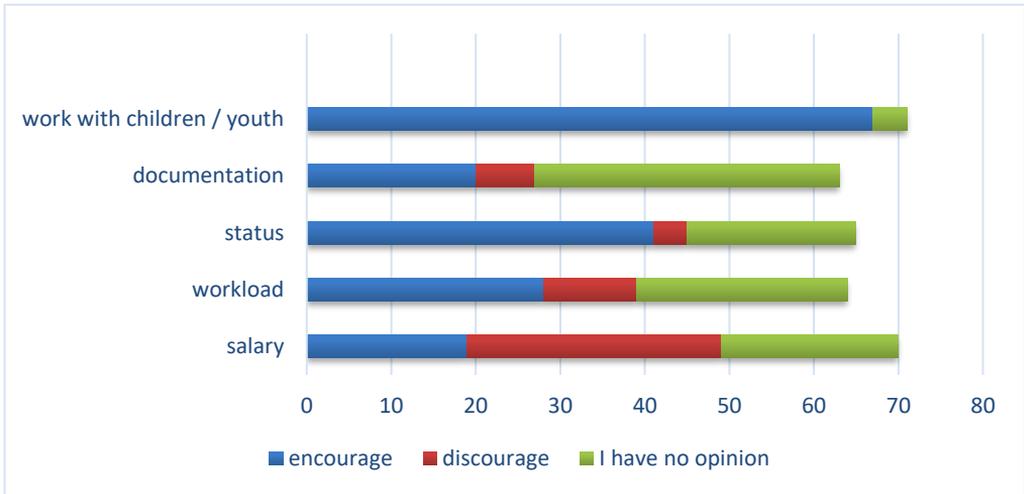


Chart 5. *Motives that encourage and discourage people to become teachers*

Love, professionalism, commitment, creativity, respect, communication, motivation are important and significant characteristics that a good teacher should possess. These respondents emphasized these attributes, associating these characteristics with the concept of a good teacher. Most of these characteristics are emphasized by all respondents. Table 2 shows the most important motives emphasized by these respondents as a characteristic that a good teacher should have.

A good teacher should love his/her profession, love children, and take care of them. A good teacher should be an expert in his/her field, be full of knowledge and know how to transfer his/her knowledge in the most appropriate way, using the most appropriate methods, techniques, and strategies. Commitment to work and putting maximum effort into work is an important characteristic of a good teacher. A good teacher respects the personality of each child, motivates, encourages children, communicates skillfully with both children and parents.

Table 2. *What do you mean by being a good teacher?*

<i>The basic term</i>	<b>f</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Love	28	To love his/her job To love children To take care of children To be a second mother
Communication	4	Communication skills Ability to communicate with parents and children
Motivation	5	To motivate children
Commitment	10	Commitment to work, Giving his/her best at work
Creativity	6	To create a stimulating environment To reach the desired result through games
Respect	6	To respect personality of each child No discrimination To be a friend to a child, not to show dominance, not to create fear in the child.
Ability Professionalism	13	A good professional and expert in the field Full of knowledge To use different teaching strategies To apply good practices
<b>Total</b>	<b>72</b>	

Disrespect for the teaching profession, the teacher's title, and the responsibilities the teacher has, are the factors listed by the majority of respondents (19 respondents), who believe that this disrespect is a major demotivating factor in the teaching profession. Salary is the second demotivating factor in the teaching profession, stated by 13 respondents, and the third demotivating factor is employment, work engagement, and organization of the educational system. However, a great number of respondents, little less than half of them (33 respondents) consider that there are no factors that demotivate them in the teaching profession itself.

#### *Initial education – preparation for entering the teaching profession*

The aim of the third part of the research is to see the students' attitudes about how satisfied they are with their initial education so far. Students enrolled in

the three study programs are satisfied with the level of knowledge they have acquired during their studies, and the majority of students are generally satisfied or completely satisfied (Chart 6).

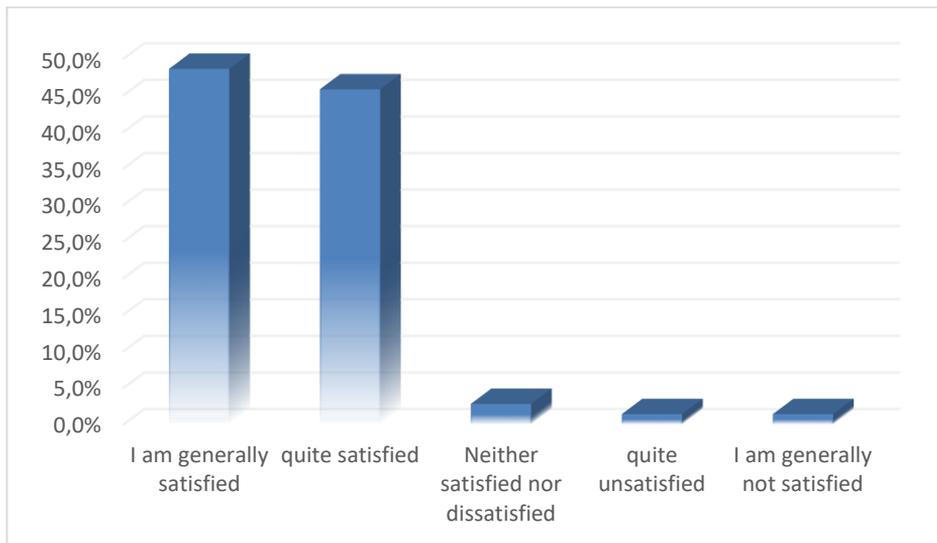


Chart 6. Degree of satisfaction with the knowledge the students acquired during their studies, which are in the direction of being introduced to the teaching profession

In addition to the degree of students' satisfaction with the knowledge they have acquired during their studies, we also wanted to find out the degree of students' satisfaction with the skills they have acquired during their studies, which aim to introduce them to the teaching profession. Students are satisfied with the acquired skills (Chart 7).

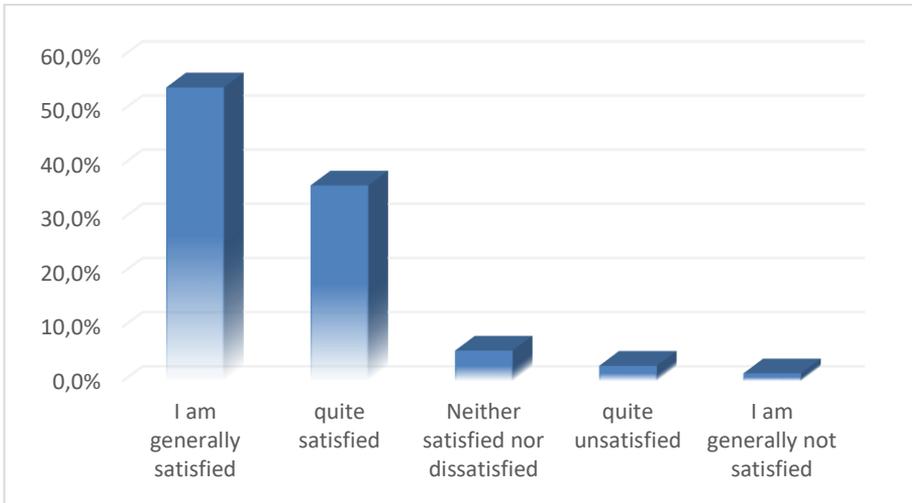


Chart 7. Degree of satisfaction with the skills the students acquired during their studies, which are in the direction of being introduced to the teaching profession

At the end of the research, we wanted to see what the students' opinions and attitudes are about the teaching profession now, a few years after they joined the studies. More than half of the students pointed out that now, a few years after studying the teaching profession, they like it even more (Chart 8)

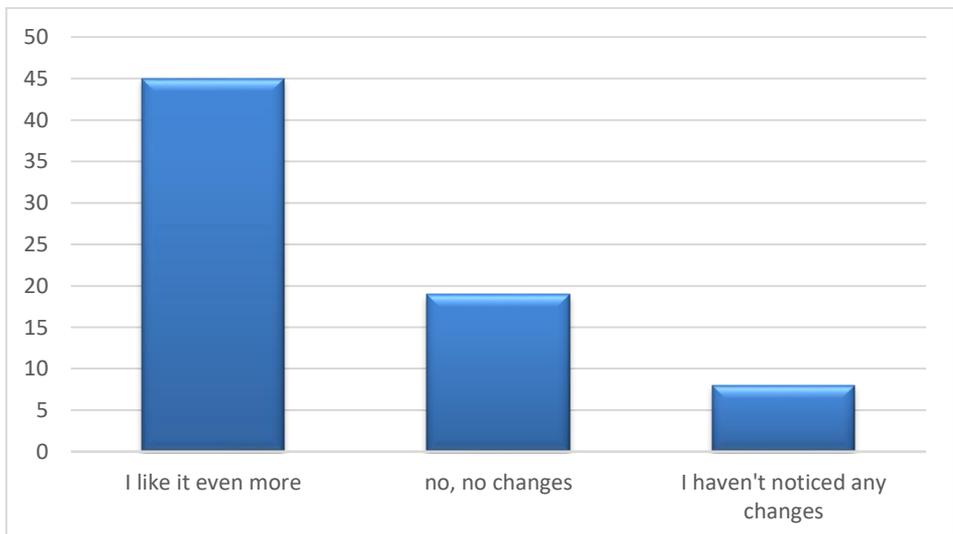


Chart 8. The students' answers to the question *'Has your opinion about the teaching profession changed during your studies?'*

## CONCLUSION

The opinions and attitudes of students about the teaching profession are an important indicator and a giver of reflection on the work, in which direction the teaching profession is going. We observed the opinions and attitudes of students about the teaching profession through 3 aspects: family tradition as one of the guiding principles in choosing the teaching profession, motivating and demotivating factors of the teaching profession, and initial education as a preparation for entering the teaching profession. For the majority of the respondents, their families had no tradition in the field of educational engagement, so the desire of the respondents to opt for this profession is mostly self-initiated. Love for the profession, for children, is the main reason why students have chosen this profession. In fact, it is a basic characteristic of a good teacher, to love his/her profession, to care and love children. Also, a good teacher should be an expert in his/her field, have knowledge, but at the same time know how to transfer knowledge to students in the most appropriate way. A good teacher should be accessible, easy to communicate with and respect the personality of every child. What discourages students today when it comes to the teaching profession is low income, disrespect for the profession by many interested parties, and the place of the profession in the society, as well as difficulties in finding employment. The opinions of the students show that, when it comes to initial education, they are satisfied with the knowledge and skills they acquire during their studies, and for more than half of the students, studying gave them the opportunity to love this profession even more. It is necessary to take measures at the institutional and social level in order to improve the position of the teaching profession in the social context, and understand its significance for the society itself.

## ZAŠTO JE DOBRO BITI DEO NASTAVNIČKE PROFESIJE?

**Apstrakt.** Cilj rada je da se razmotre mišljenja studenata koji su u fazi pripreme za nastavničko zvanje o tome zašto su se opredelili za ovu profesiju, kao i tome da li se kod njih nešto promenilo tokom godina studiranja. Istraživanjem je obuhvaćeno ukupno 72 studenta sa sledećih studijskih programa: Predškolsko vaspitanje, Osnovno obrazovanje i Pedagogija na Fakultetu obrazovnih nauka Univerziteta Goce Delčev u Štipu (Makedonija). Istraživanje je

sprovedeno u junu 2022. Pripremljen je onlajn anketni upitnik u kome su pitanja (otvorenog i zatvorenog tipa) grupisana u tri dela: opšte informacije o studentima, motivacioni i demotivišući faktori za izbor nastavničkog zvanja, početno obrazovanje – priprema za ulazak u nastavničko zvanje.

**Ključne reči:** nastavnik, vaspitač, pedagog, motivacija, profesija.

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