

SOCIAL AND PROFESSIONAL FACTORS INVOLVED IN THE EVALUATION OF TEACHERS

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Abstract

In the first part of the communication, we synthetically present the situation of the general culture education in the north-western part of the country. In the second part of the paper, the main objective of the research is presented: identifying the factors on which the candidates' success at the finalization in education exam depends. The success at the exam, as a dependent variable, is operationalised and quantified through the obtained grade. The following factors are taken in consideration: the candidates' specialization, graduation year, graduates' education form, the type of institutions (public or private), the county where they work, the rural or urban environment of the institution where they work, the rural or urban environment of their birthplace, civil state, sex and age. A number of 100 subjects have been investigated from Bihor County, Satu-Mare County and Sălaj County. Once all indicators have been operationalized and quantified, data was statistically processed. In this way, it was possible to check

the hypotheses, according to which, there are certain specializations and counties where most of the candidates come from, who achieve remarkable results at the final exam.

In the same manner, the impact of the analyzed factors was studied. Finally, several social and professional factors were outlined according to the role they play in the examining process, deciphering the causes of success. The first part of the paper presents the general theoretical issue of social and cultural inequality. The analysis aims at highlighting the important role that education plays in ensuring equal opportunities for young people and diminishing social inequalities. The study highlights the important role of the teacher in ensuring students' good training and in diminishing, through this way, social and professional inequalities. Relevant information regarding education situation in schools is presented, revealing more inequalities, both between counties, urban and rural environments in each county, but also between different areas of the same county.

The premises of the investigation have originated from inequalities such as those presented above. The article tries to capture the intervention of factors, such as the environment from which the teachers come, their specialization, the civil status, the year of graduation, sex, age, etc.

Keywords: teacher, psycho-pedagogical training optimization, perfecting exams, permanent teacher certification exam, second didactic degree exam, social and professional factors;

1. Introduction

Despite the communist and romantic ideals of equality and fraternity, despite the numerous revolutions and ample social unrest, despite the rule of law institutions, which are extending and coming to maturity within more and more communities, our contemporary world is unfortunately characterized by an aggressive deepening of inequality. Alongside the old social group, class and caste inequities, beyond the apparently unsolvable race and gender differences, nowadays the difference in terms of income, way of life and culture level is becoming more and more obvious.

Regarding the socio-political effort of diminishing inequities an important and quite decisive role is held by education and its institutions: school and university. The most common belief, supported by the political factors, is the one which states that school can contribute to a greater extent to the attenuation of social inequities and to the peaceful solving of the complex issues derived from social mobility. In the socio-cultural picture portrayed above, we can identify the important role of the teachers and especially of their training within the complex activity of rising the culture level, of diminishing some severe inequities and contradictions, which exist among various social categories, groups of citizens, professions and jobs.

In our opinion, the urgent issue of growing inequities but also that of ensuring the social and cultural progress depends mainly on the quality of teacher training in terms of forming specialization competences. The arguments mentioned previously have led us to the conclusion and belief that there is an actual possibility of quantifying the teacher training level in relation to professional and psychopedagogical competences, as well as in identifying some social and professional factors on which these depend. It is known that the initial teacher training is done during university years: together with specialization

training, the Teacher Training Departments offer psychopedagogical training by means of running over a curriculum based on educational sciences, which also includes pedagogical practicum. The initial training, which represents the first step in forming teachers, is continued through perfecting exams: obtaining permanent teacher certification, first or second didactic degree and the doctorate.

2. Methodology

By striving to identify variables and indicators in our study, we have focused on the analysis of training programs, namely permanent teacher certification, and the second didactic degree. We were mainly interested in the results of the exams teachers have to pass in order to get these two certifications both in their specializations and in the psycho-pedagogical field. The methodological pattern we had in view, which aimed at depicting some causal relations included on one hand a set of social and professional factors as independent variables, and on the other hand, the results achieved in the permanent teacher certification exams and the second didactic degree exams as dependent variables. The exam results were relatively easily obtained, our investigative effort being directed towards identifying the involved social and professional factors. The methodological research also included hypothetical aspect, that is, the results of the two exams are provided and impeded by the interference of more or less hazardous factors. Initially we guided ourselves by the hypothesis that these exam results depend on the average achieved in the initial education exams, but during the second stage, we took into account other factors such as: specialization, the graduation year, the type of the institution (public or private), the county where the teachers work, their domicile (urban or rural), marital status, gender and age. We have focused our investigation on one hundred teachers who have set these exams in the last two years in Oradea,

namely Oradea University and Bihor County Board of Education. We tried to ensure the representativity by selecting fifty teachers who passed the permanent teacher certification exam and fifty teachers who passed the second didactic degree exam. Moreover, we have managed to select a partially representative number of men and women (28 men and 72 women respectively 22 men and 78 women). The gender distribution of the subjects is represented in figures 1 and 2:

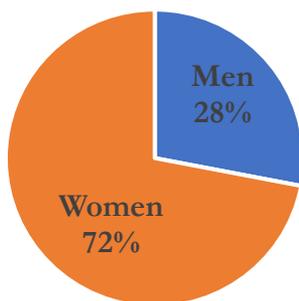


Figure 1. Permanent Teacher Certification Exam

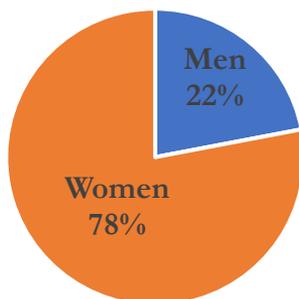


Figure 2. Professional Title II Exam

We were also interested in the specialization of the teachers. Out of the 50 teachers who set the permanent teacher certification exam, we have selected 21 teachers who work in primary schools and 29 teachers who work in middle schools and high schools. (17 humanities teachers and 12 science major teachers).

See figure 3 and 4.

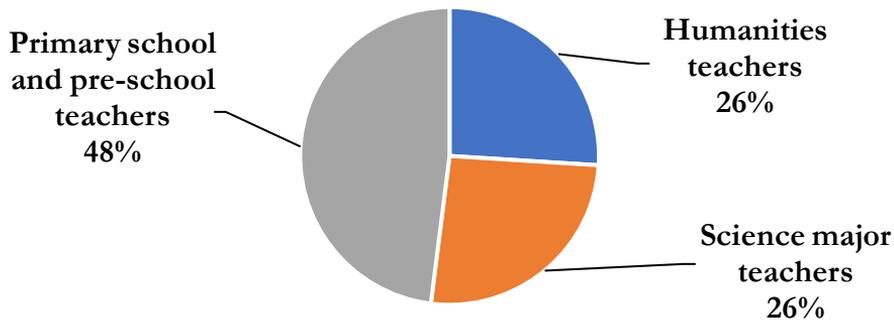


Figure 3. Permanent teacher certification exam

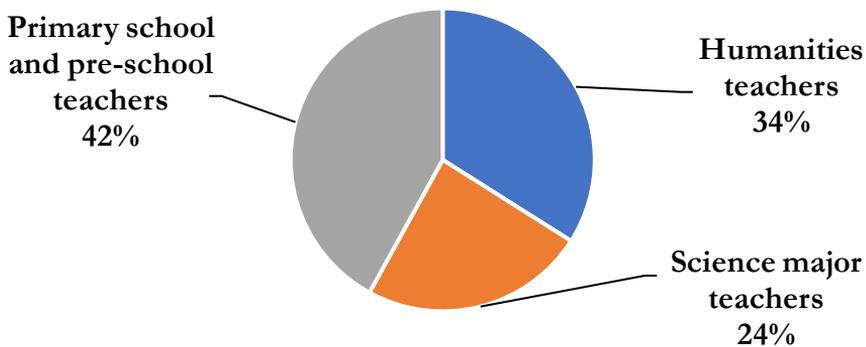


Figure 4. Professional Title II Exam

In the case of the second didactic degree exam it has been difficult for us to select the middle school and high school teachers and by trying to represent in the pattern the big number of primary school and pre-school teachers (almost half of them 48%, 24 teachers). However, we have found thirteen science teachers who work in middle schools and high schools and thirteen teachers of humanities working at the same educational levels (see Figure 3).

Another analysed factor was represented by the year of their graduation. Thus, we have noticed that for the 2016 and 2017 permanent teacher certification exam there were also candidates who had graduated from the faculty in the previous years. Although most candidates, especially those who passed the second didactic degree exam, had a longer period of specialization and pedagogical practice. We have also learned that there is a certain connection between the graduation year on one side, and the age and the marital status on the other side. In such a context, we can distinguish two categories of candidates. A first category is that of the young candidates born in 1995 and 1997, married with children but who are also interested in the exams for career development. We believe that their interest is due not only to their material contexts but mostly to their will of perfecting themselves and affirming professionally. At the opposite pole is the second category of older candidates who were born before 1999 and who participated in these forms of training later. We have not depicted major differences regarding the impact of the quality of the institution they have graduated from, in the sense that the share and performances of the private educational system generally match the level of the state school system graduates. What turned out to matter the most was the candidates' domicile as well as the rural or urban area where they teach.

Among the social factors, which more or less influence the results of the candidates in initial exams, we can mention the marital status and the gender of

the candidates. One can notice an increasing feminisation process of the school system and not only in the sense that the women's number is larger but in the sense that women appreciate the effort of perfecting more and pass these two exams sooner. Primary and pre-school teachers are to be distinguished in this respect since they prove to be more interested in their career, that is, they pass early these exams and try once more even if they fail first time.

The permanent teacher certification exam has a national characteristic in our school system, the Ministry of Education names the commissions and they include specialists in educational sciences and in the subjects corresponding to the various specializations of the candidates. The subject matter and exam scale are established at a national level. The quality of this exam and its exigency are pointed out by the fact that only half of the candidates manage to pass this exam. The results of the candidates in the case of the second didactic degree exam are much better, 90% of them being able to pass the exam. This is due mainly to their experience and professional growth, but also to the fact that only the candidates who have passed the permanent teacher certification exam with at least 8 as a mark, can register for passing the second didactic degree exam. There are similar correlations between the results achieved in the permanent teacher certification exam and students with bachelor respectively master studies. The research further analyzed the perceived importance of the master studies and the related difficulties encountered by the teachers enrolled in such programs. We have requested the subjects' opinion on the quality of these two exams. It is important to state that most interviewed subjects, namely 82% of them have graded the exams as "very good" and only 3% of them regard the exams as satisfying.

See figure 5.

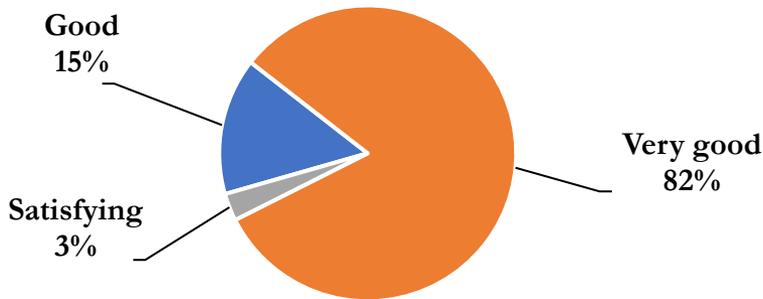


Figure 5. The subjects' opinion on the quality of the permanent teacher certification and the second didactic degree programs.

Together with applying the questionnaire, we have created a focus group, which included a part of the subjects (more than a quarter) and about ten teachers representing both the different specializations and the Teacher Training Department. The topic dealt with by the focus group was that of improving these two exams. Participants have agreed on the necessity of permanently perfecting the teacher training programs and on increasing the role of the universities and the teacher training departments in organising and carrying out these exams. It has been suggested the standardization of the exam tasks and the possibility of conducting them online. Some specialists have claimed the necessity of modifying the methodology and the exam programs, the need of identifying some alternatives such as equivalating the exam for the candidates who completed research projects and for those who achieved great results with their students, in the sense that the students they teach have achieved very good results in the school competitions.

3. Conclusions

- Despite the complexity of the themes and issues correlated with the permanent teacher certification exam and the didactic degree exams, these can be analysed by educational sciences specialists and some aspects can be quantified;
- The role of the school in ensuring the level of culture, in ensuring professionalism and through this diminishing some severe socio-economic discrepancies;
- A few social and professional factors come to the front and they highlight the importance of specialized psycho-pedagogical training, but also other factors such as: the graduation year, the rural or urban environment, quality of the institution, the teachers' domicile, gender and marital status;
- Our systematic research as well as the information gathered within a longer period suggests the necessity of focusing the research on the immediate correlations between the achieved results in the case of the bachelor and master students and the results obtained to permanent teacher certification exam, didactic degrees and creating on these grounds distinct levels of pedagogical competency.
- In another paper we have pointed out the implications of certain social desiderata upon school, that is, “the principle of equality and equity has as a result an extension and diversification of the school systems.” (Florica Orțan, 2018, p. 20). Likewise, we have commented on the pertinent observations made by Emil Păun who stated that school is extremely sensitive to the action of the numerous social factors (see Emil Păun, 2017, p. 116). In our specialized literature the seven dimensions of the numerous challenges

society exerts on the school system, the same way they are described by A. Hargreaves, M. Tardif, C. Lessard, 1999, p. 293, apud. Emil Păun, 2017).

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