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Future professional plans of students in teacher education

1. Introduction

Recent researches underscore the importance of good teachers in ensuring the quality of an educational system (Mourshed & Barber, 2007; Mourshed, Chijioke & Barber, 2010). At the same time we can see that pre-service teachers have poorer academic performance and less interest in PhD studies than other students in most European countries. This phenomenon seems to be related to the feminization of the teaching profession. For instance, obtaining a higher academic degree is typically a masculine career strategy; when female students and employees try to enhance their cultural capital, they tend to choose courses on the same level of education, instead of innovative doctoral training and researches.

Table 1. Proportion of women among teachers (%)

	2010			2011			2012		
	Primary	Secondary	Tot.	Primary	Secondary	Tot.	Primary	Secondary	Tot.
Hungary	95.9	64.8	76	96.1	64.8	75.9	95.9	64.5	75.6
Poland	83.8	66.4	72.4	83.7	66.6	72.5	83.7	66.3	72.7
Slovak R.	89.3	70.4	75.4	89.2	71.5	75.8	89.3	71.6	75.5
OECD av.	80.5	53.7	66.1	81.5	56	66.6	82	56.3	66.6

Source: Education at a Glance, 2010, 2011, 2012

All over Europe there is a strong stereotypical idea that the teaching profession is more suitable for women. But in many cases there are no differences among pre-service teachers by gender: important values are helping others, caring for people and the usefulness of work (for both men and women). When we examined the future professional and private plans of students in teacher training, these issues were common points in our country studies both in Hungary, in Poland and in the Slovak Republic.¹

¹ The part of the study relating to private plans of Hungarian students was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

2. The case of Hungary

2.1. Professional plans of students in teacher education

In Hungary, one of the most important questions in relation to future professional plans of students in teacher education is whether or not they want to teach. In the framework of a study made in 2002, teachers who had graduated in 1990, were interviewed again. The results showed that 29 from the 46 people remained in the teaching profession, and 79 percent of them had already been thinking of leaving their position. The reasons are low salary and wrong school climate. Burn-out can occur early in the career of starter teachers. Men are significantly more exposed to the risk of burn-out and depersonalization. Good relationship with significant figures – colleagues, parents, children – is the most important protective factor. However, according to the results, relational work is difficult and problematic for teachers in many cases (Holecz, 2006).

Another study shows that secondary school students who are less talented and expect lower potential earnings choose college teacher education programs. These less talented students are more likely to stay in the teaching profession. According to this study, the gender of a student had a significant effect on choosing teacher training and over 60 percent of male graduates did not remain in the teaching profession (Varga, 2007).

The latest study of CHERD-Hungary, Partium Christian University and University of Oradea shows that only 2.9 percent of students in teacher training do not want to teach. There is a significantly higher proportion of uncertain students who do not know yet whether they want to teach or try to find a job in other areas. There was a significantly greater proportion of males in this group.

Table 2. Professional plans by gender (%)

	Definitely wants to teach	Only if they cannot find another job
Females	54.7	45.3
Males	33.8	66.2

Source: HERD 2012, N=292, significance = 0.003

Females prefer to teach in primary school: almost half of all male students plan to work in a secondary school or in higher education. It seems that female students are more wary of secondary schools than male students of primary schools although men can expect more role conflicts in primary schools according to the literature.

Table 3. Preferred school level by gender (%)

	Wants to work in a primary school	Wants to work in a secondary school or in higher education
Females	74	26
Males	52.2	47.8

Source: HERD 2012, N=292, significance = 0.001

Both men and women would like to work in “elite” schools but they choose small village schools too. 40 percent of students do not want to work with children with special needs. Gender differences only appear with regard to preference of schools maintained by a church or a foundation: male students are slightly more likely to want to work in these schools than female students, although the differences are not significant (significance = 0.078).

Another important area in relation to future professional plans of students in teacher education concerns the type of further training and courses they want to take part in. The cases of Germany and Scandinavia show that the involvement of teachers in doctoral training, researches and curriculum innovation (Kárpáti, 2008) will improve the quality of education. But the teaching profession itself shows feminine characteristics. Obtaining a higher academic degree is typically a masculine career strategy; when female students and employees try to enhance their cultural capital, they tend to choose courses on the same level of education, instead of innovative doctoral training and researches (Fényes, 2009).

According to “Graduate Follow-up Research 2010”², women and men wish to take part in professional development and master’s degree courses at the same rates. Although relatively few think of attending PhD courses, an even larger male dominance can be seen here: 5.8 percent plan to acquire a PhD degree as opposed to 1.3 percent of the women. This is not influenced by the number of degrees one has at that time: two-thirds of those who have just received their first degree are planning to complete postgraduate studies. What is important, however, is whether the course the given person has completed is considered to be feminine or masculine: 80 percent of those planning PhD studies come from the engineering and natural science fields, and those who graduated in feminine studies – especially social educators and kindergarten teachers – prefer postgraduate specialization programs (Kovács, 2012).

Table 4. Teachers’ aspirations for further learning according to gender (%)

	Yes		No	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Master’s degree courses	11.6	8.3	88.4	91.7
PhD courses	5.8	1.3	94.2	98.7

Significance in the case of PhD courses = 0.001

The HERD study mentioned above suggests that students are relatively satisfied with their training – more than 80 percent –, including theoretical and practical preparation and scientific knowledge transfer. There are no gender differences in this area. Males and females plan to participate in subsequent in-service trainings and/or possible future MA/Msc education in almost equal numbers.

However, according to previous researches, just as the academic career is far more important for males (Fényes, 2009), so the future PhD program is significantly more important for men.

Table 5. Teachers’ aspirations for further learning according to gender (%)

	Plan PhD course	Not plan PhD course
Females	33.5	66.5
Males	50.0	50.0

Source: HERD 2012, N=292, significance = 0.044

2.2. Private plans of students in teacher education

When studying the plans of students in teacher education, we also deal with the question whether can we know something about their private plans: what their plans are for their own life, how they can comply, and match the professional and private life visions. This is a rarely studied area among students, even more rarely studied among students in teacher education.

Gender-related problems like discrimination in the labor market, the balance between work and private life, or the career path after starting a family are perceptible during the university years. Traditional feminine roles are particularly difficult to bring into harmony with a career now, as high numbers of better and better qualified women appear in the world of paid work. Women dominate further education: in the member states of the European Union, there is an average of 124 female students to 100 male students, and the increase is continual. In the first decade of the 21st century, the average increase was approximately 10 percent (Key Data on Education in Europe 2012, p. 84).

Preparing youth for gender roles is a very important task and mission, and the program named “family life education” can play a major role in it. This kind of education appears already in kindergarten and in elementary school, and during this process the children get to know themselves and each other, they are able to communicate, the corresponding behavior according to gender roles will develop. If family life education is integrated into teacher training in higher education, it implements a dual purpose: on the one

² Study analyzes data from the “Graduate Follow-up Research 2010”, a Hungarian national survey. The survey examines those higher education students who completed their undergraduate or graduate studies in 2007. The sample size was = 4 511, and of this number 738 people have a teaching qualification.

hand, students will benefit in their own lives from all that they had learned in this subject, on the other hand, they will be able to transfer the knowledge and competencies to future generations.

According to the definition of Brillinger and Brundage (1989), the aim of family life education is to develop interpersonal connections, to present human relations enriched by education, as all these reinforce family bonds. The authors approach the issue from the aspect of adult education, including teacher education, and they find it important to induce changes in the knowledge, attitudes and competences of grown-up people. They specify five areas in the subject of family life education. The first is family planning, preparation for the parental roles. The second deals with developing parental skills, including the care of children with various disabilities. The third is extending the financial and management skills of the parents. The fourth is the terrain of factors influencing parental roles: media, society, financial circumstances. The last one is taking care of the welfare and education of the child (Brillinger & Brundage, 1989, p. 123).

In Northern and Western Europe, developing competences in relation to family life has been implemented as independent school subjects, e.g. interpersonal relationships, marriage education, parent education, human sexuality, family and consumer education. In Hungary, churches, NGOs and educational institutions run by churches have offered educational and consulting work in connection with relationship and family. From the school year of 2013/2014, the National Curriculum also has to contain education to family life as a subject to be taught and developed at school, incorporating traditional family values. The educational purposes appear in the curricula, the methodology and extracurricular school activities.

The results of the researches show that among Hungarian young people, a strong partnership and starting a family are a priority, but similarly to the trend in Europe, these events take place at a later lifestage. In our regional research we remarked that students try to comply private life and career in their future plans (Engler, 2012). Men and women with degrees are more concerned with the issue because they enter the labour market at an older age, and it requires a longer existential preparation and a longer period of gathering experience.

In the previously presented database named HERD the rate of students in teacher training who are already married is under 10 per cent, but 53 per cent of unmarried students are living in a lasting partner relationship. Table 5 shows the shared vision of these students.

Table 6. Plans for the future among students in teacher education with a lasting relationship (%)

	Male	Female	Total
They definitely want to get married.	38	60	55.6
They are not sure about marriage, but stay together for the long term.	17.2	21.7	20.8
They won't stay together for long term.	20.7	0.9	4.9
They have not thought about it.	17.2	15.7	16
Other	6.9	1.7	2.8

Source: HERD 2012, N=144, significance = 0.000

More than half of the students are sure about getting married, and a further 20 per cent are confident that their present partner relationship will be a long-term one. Women appear to be more confident, they seem to require the secure background. It is probably important for women to balance their professional and private lives at the beginning of their career.

Table 7. Conditions of having children

<i>Having children depends on...</i>	Male	Female	Total
appropriate partner	88.7	89.6	89.4
marriage*	48.1	70	76.5
preparedness for parenthood	61.1	73	68.4
workplace	64.2	66.5	66
own flat*	48.1	61	58.3
optimal age	37.7	43.7	42.5
family support system	42.6	32.2	34.4
assistance of parents	37	28.8	30.5
reaching the top of the career	20.4	14.3	26.5
accomplished experience without children (e.g. journeys, entertainment)	27.5	23.8	24.5
own car	22.5	17.5	18.4

Source: HERD 2012, N=144, * p=0.025; 0.027

The most important conditions of having children are the appropriate partner and being married (Table 7). Hungarian society is characterized by conservative thinking, according to researches people are family-centered and prefer marriage to cohabitation. Here again we can see that marriage is more important for female students, and they insist on the safe family background (own flat). Preparation for parenthood is very prominent with both genders, which underscores the importance of family life education.

3. The case of the Slovak Republic

3.1. Issues of the teaching profession

To be able to analyze plans of students of the teaching profession, it is important first to characterize the state of the teaching profession in Slovakia. After a certain professional autonomy in the second half of the 20th century, when a full pre-graduate preparation was introduced and the social status of a teacher upgraded, since the 1970's we can perceive a period of de-professionalisation, or a crisis of the teaching profession. And since the 1990's especially highly developed countries have undergone a period of neo-professionalism, that is, they have taken steps toward an increased status of the teaching profession (Kosová at al., 2012). The situation in Slovakia is very similar to the state of democratic countries in the 1990's, when the internal and external symptoms of the teaching profession crisis reached their highest peak (Kotásek, 2003). In spite of the decreased interest in teacher positions in lower and higher secondary education, we still see a steady interest in positions in pre-primary and primary education; however, the external crisis of the teaching profession significantly determines the way students of the teaching profession see their future. The most important factors of the crisis include:

(1) Ageing of the teacher collectives. Teachers over 50 years represent 25.5 percent in primary schools; 37.9 percent in lower secondary schools and 33.6 percent in higher secondary schools.³

(2) Feminization of the teaching profession. Within OECD, Slovakia has the highest rate of women in teacher positions at all levels of schools: 75.4 percent (EU average is 69.2 percent). Women occupy pre-primary teacher positions in 99.9 percent cases. There is only one country above that – Ireland - with 100 percent rate. Concerning primary level, in 2009 women occupied 89.2 percent of the positions. Again, only a few countries had a higher rate (Russia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary, Italy, Estonia, Brasil.)⁴

(3) Lack of qualified teachers. According to the international survey TALIS (2008) which studied teachers of lower secondary schools, 31 percent of schools in Slovakia show a lack of qualified teachers; namely 35.2 percent of primary schools and 19.5 percent of eight-year secondary schools.⁵

(4) Low salary. Slovakia has the lowest teacher salaries out of all OECD countries, and also the lowest salaries compared to other professions requiring a university degree.⁶

³ <http://www.oecd.org/education/school/educationataglance2011oecdindicators.htm>

⁴ As above

⁵ http://www.nucem.sk/documents//27/medzinarodne_merania/talis/publikacie/TALIS-web.pdf. (15.10.2013)

⁶ As above

(5) Low attractiveness of the profession. As mentioned earlier, this is manifested by a lower interest of students in teaching profession studies, especially for secondary education, and by an increased drain of teachers, mainly those of younger age.

(6) High demands posed on teachers, caused by a radical boom of knowledge, science and technology, by changes within the child population, by parents' expectations, etc.; yet without proper health or social incentives.

These symptoms are deeply related with the internal symptoms of the crisis, which are more grave, as they affect the personality of a teacher, deepening the crisis from within and preventing the change. Professor Beata Kosová, who has been studying the history and perspectives of teacher education for a couple of years, categorizes them as follows:

(1) Resignation, helplessness, up to the point of burn-out caused by the extreme boost of new knowledge and stressing speed of education (Kosová, 2005).

(2) Routine, hopelessness and passive resistance to changes. The reform which was proclaimed 19 years ago has still not taken place, innovations have been hindered by bureaucratic obstacles; innovative enthusiasm developed in the early 90's thanks to international projects faded out after the year 2000; the long-awaited reform declared by School act in 2008 cannot be realized without the reform of the curriculum (Kosová & Porubský, 2011). Teachers have ceased to believe in a positive change and are overloaded with bureaucratic agenda.

(3) Unpreparedness of teachers for individualisation of education. Teachers are very often helpless in facing specific educational problems and the increase of social, multicultural and special-pedagogical heterogeneity of students. In the TALIS study, this was marked by Slovak teachers of all categories as the most critical problem of their work.⁷

(4) Inner incompetence (mostly of his/her own) to accept the change as an inevitable part of the profession. Due to the expansion of information and communication technologies, students are able to access new and fresh information and surpass school textbooks. Teachers then have to face the pressure, because students become bored and teachers are not able to accept the change as a part of their profession, which usually is a condition of a school (Kosová, 2005).

(5) Feeling of insecurity and fear of losing the job. This is mostly connected to often contradictory statutes of the Ministry of Education, often made in a hurry. Above all it concerns the transfer of primary schools management under the of towns and villages which frequently creates situations where the school is managed by the local mayor who is less educated than the teacher or school director (Kosová, 2006).

(6) Finding it very hard to accept the low prestige of the teaching profession (Kosová, 2005). Teachers perceive indifference and a lack of interest from society. Demoralised, they are then unable to defend their rights and when a conflict with a parent occurs, they are unable to provide arguments with regard to the interests of the child. Teachers find this very hard to bear and they consider their prestige even lower than students and parents do (Búgelová & Baňasová, 2003). According to the TALIS study, as much as 65 percent of Slovak teachers think that society does not show respect to teachers. Hard coping with the low prestige can be seen also in the results of the international comparison of the self-esteem index of teachers, which shows the Slovak teachers' self-esteem to be significantly lower than the average of 24 countries, mainly members of OECD that took part in TALIS.⁸

3.2. Results of the survey

All these factors considerably influence plans of students of the teaching profession. Some of the factors are perceived more than others, that is why we decided to do a survey focused on the plans of students of the teaching profession. It covered 122 students of the teaching profession, out of which 109 were women (89 percent) and 13 men (11 percent). Concerning the age, the largest group was represented by students

⁷ http://www.nucem.sk/documents//27/medzinarodne_merania/talis/publikacie/TALIS-web.pdf, p. 59.

⁸ http://www.nucem.sk/documents//27/medzinarodne_merania/talis/publikacie/TALIS-web.pdf, p.66

between 18 and 21 (77 percent), then those between 22 and 24 (21 percent) and around 2 percent of the respondents were of 25 years or older. The students came from various regions of Slovakia: 36 percent from East Slovakia, 50 percent from Middle Slovakia and 13 percent from West Slovakia. The tool we used was a questionnaire. The first question we asked had to do with the motivation for their study specialization and profession.

Table 8. Motivation for choosing their study specialization

		N	%
A	the proximity of the university to my home	16	13
B	thinking that this study specialization was easy	2	2
C	thinking that as a teacher I will have a job	15	12
D	it was my dream	30	25
E	I was good in this subject matter	40	33
F	my friend applied for the same	4	3
G	it was a backup in case I would not be accepted anywhere else	5	4
H	other	10	8
	total	122	100

The highest number (33 percent) said they felt competent in said subject (e.g. biology, chemistry, etc.) Around 25 percent of students said it was their dream. Interestingly, 13 percent said they chose the study specialization due to the close proximity of the university to their home and 12 percent stated that they considered teaching a good profession for finding a job.

There is a couple of determinants that influence students' decisions. We wanted to know who influenced them to choose the teaching profession.

Table 9. Were you influenced by someone to choose the teaching profession?

		N	%
A	parents	23	18.85
B	friends	16	13.11
C	nobody	76	62.30
D	other	7	5.74
	total	122	100.00

As the table shows, 62.30 percent did not feel influenced by anybody. Quite a lot of them – 18.85 percent were influenced by their parents, and 13.11 percent by their friends. We did not go into detail as to how exactly they were influenced.

The next question focused on their plans after the graduation. We asked them if they wanted to remain in the profession. Only 52 percent of students expressed full consent. 12 percent did not know at all, and 3 percent responded negatively. **Table 10.** Do you want to stay in this profession after you graduate?

		N	%
A	Yes, for sure	64	52
B	Probably yes	40	33
C	I do not know	15	12
D	Rather not	1	1
E	Certainly not	2	2
	Total	122	100

Our next question asked what students considered important after the graduation with regard to job and family. Most of them (61 percent) want to find a job first, and then found a family.

Table 11. What would you like to do after graduation?

		N	%
A	Have family and then find a job	23	19
B	Find a job and then have family	74	61
C	My job will not be influenced by family matters	8	7
D	I do not know	6	5
E	Further study of something else	1	1
F	Other	10	8
	Total	122	100

We were also interested in their plans to undertake further educational courses after graduation. Most of them did not know. 18.85 percent expressed the need to do some further courses and 13.9 percent thought it would not be necessary.

A similar question focused on the need of further/lifelong education of a teacher. 72 percent agreed that lifelong education was necessary, 13 percent did not know and 10 percent thought it was not necessary.

Table 12. Is it important to continue with life-long studying after you graduate?

		N	%
A	Yes, sure	41	34
B	Probably yes	53	43
C	I do not know	16	13
D	Maybe not	10	8
E	Certainly not	2	2
	Total	122	100

One of the questions focused on the worries of students after graduation. The fear of unemployment was expressed by 65 percent of the students, while 11 percent fear they will not know how to teach.

Table 13. What are your worries after graduation?

		N	%
A	I will be unemployed	79	65
B	I will not know how to teach	14	11
C	Teaching will not be interesting for me	5	4
D	Teaching will not cover my living expenses	17	14
E	Other	7	6
	Total	122	100

We also asked what they were looking forward to after graduation. Most of them are looking forward to working with children and students, whereas 11 percent to the stable income.

Table 14. After graduation, what are you looking forward to?

		N	%
A	Working with children and students	96	79
B	Stable income	14	11
C	I do not know	4	3
D	No need to study anymore	3	2
E	Other	5	4
	Total	122	100

The last question returned to choosing the teaching profession. We asked the students why they had decided to become a teacher. The responses tried to elicit if the students see it as their vocation, have talent for it or they think they like the profession.

Table 15. Why have you decided to be a teacher?

		N	%
A	I have talents for this	18	15
B	I think it is my vocation	51	42
C	I do not know	6	5
D	I like this job	50	41
E	Other	2	2
	Total	127	100

The observations and discussions with students show that the motivation for the specific field within the teaching profession (e.g. biology, geography, etc.) can sometimes be different. While talent and interest are main motives for studying a specific subject combination (e.g. biology + chemistry), pre-primary and primary specializations have their own motives: full-time students believe they will like working with children and they consider studying not that hard. Students are motivated rather by unemployment, dissatisfaction with their present job or the need to make use of free time during maternity leave. Women who have simple jobs like cleaning, hairstyling, beautifying, or are unemployed, tend to think they could easily find a better paid teaching job at the pre-primary or primary school in their hometown. Since they are often mothers, they think they will easily handle the children at school.

4. The case of Poland

The work of teachers, although seemingly stable, has many unpredictable elements. Therefore, the question is, can we talk about being fully prepared for the teaching profession. Is this preparedness not in fact a contradiction with the essence of the teacher's job? Thus, the competences needed by the teacher have by their very nature a propensity towards unreadiness and inadequacy; they are always in flux, in development, and consequently constantly require change (Kwaśnica, 1994). Preparation for the work of a teacher should therefore include education, further study and improvement. Education means the granting of professional qualifications to the candidates for employment as a teacher. Further study includes the supplementation of professional qualifications. Improvement is understood as the enrichment and updating of qualifications and skills, and sometimes going beyond them, and their expansion (Kwaśnica, 2004). It should be noted that the preparation of a student to work as a teacher should include the preparation to take up professional tasks on the one hand, and a very important preparation for professional and personal development on the other (Kwiatkowska, 2008).

The present study is one of the results of the project Teacher Education Central European Research Network concerning the future professional plans of teacher education students. It was prepared based on the results of a survey conducted among the students of the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow. The survey was conducted in March 2013, and comprised a group of 107 students. They were all students (at the time at Ignatianum) pursuing their last year of studies for their first degree (bachelor's degree) in pedagogy, specializing in preschool and elementary school education. The participants were full-time (43 percent) and part-time students (57 percent).

The aim of the study was to investigate future career plans of teacher education students. In order to present a complete picture of the issue, the following research problems were identified: (1) reasons for choosing the teaching faculty; (2) prevailing mechanisms for developing professional qualifications among students; (3) student opinion concerning the prospects of their career as a teacher.

4.1. Reasons for choosing the teaching faculty of the respondents

Motivation is most often understood as a state of readiness of an individual to involve in a particular activity (or cease it), in order to achieve any desired goal. Motivation is also a complex of psychological and physiological processes, triggered by need, which determine a basis for behaviour and action undertaken by individuals, as well as their changes. Motivation is connected to the phenomenon of motivational processes which lead the behaviour of individuals towards the achievement of specific states of things relevant to them, and which direct the performance of certain activities so as to lead to intended results concerning the changes in external conditions, changes in a person, changes in one's own position (Pietroń & Pyszczyk, 2007; Reykowski, 1985; Słownik psychologiczny, 1985).

As for the decision to undertake studies at the teaching faculty, the students participating in the research pointed to the dominance of the motive of a subject character (arising from interest in the person of the pupil/student, who is the subject of teaching and educational interactions). This is confirmed by the fact that 92 percent of the respondents pointed to 'desire to work with children' as the main factor in choosing the teaching faculty. Subsequently, the respondents gave reasons of a personal nature: 'a vocation for the teaching profession' – 41 percent of the students; 'opportunity for personal development' – 25 percent; 'personal experience in working with the younger generation' – 22 percent; 'additional benefits of working in education (e.g., longer holidays)' – 21 percent; 'personal pedagogical talent' – 20 percent; 'chance' – 12 percent. Most of the motives pointed to by the respondents may be treated as positive, giving hope for a mature shaping of their identity as a good teacher. At the same time, the fact that 12 percent of the respondents chose this type of study by chance is rather disturbing.

Another element that has been tested is the current attitudes of students towards their chosen field of study. A significant number of respondents, as many 83 percent, are satisfied with their choice. However, what may be worrying is the fact that 7 percent of respondents, despite being dissatisfied with the choice, still plan to complete their studies in this field. Another 7 percent of students have difficulty in assessing this factor, and 2 percent are satisfied with the choice, because studies are interesting, but they plan to change their discipline as they believe that the teaching profession is not for them.

The completion of the studies of the teaching profile does not imply that in the future the students will work in this profession, which was also confirmed by the obtained results: 71 percent of respondents intend to work as teachers, 5 percent do not want to take up employment, while 24 percent do not know yet.

Consequently, what becomes cognitively interesting is the reasons for taking up employment as a teacher after graduation. The motivation of the respondents is similar to the reasons for undertaking the studies, as 77 percent 'want to work with children', 32 percent of the students have discovered their vocation for the teaching profession and want to fulfill this vocation in their life, 22 percent perceive the profession as an opportunity for personal development, while 20 percent of the respondents have also discovered their inner pedagogical talent. For 13 percent of the respondents, another decisive factor in deciding to become a teacher is additional benefits of working in education. Thus, in this area the dominant motivation is the subject motivation, and secondly there are personal motives (occurring most widely).

4.2. Methods of improving student professional qualification and their determinants by respondents

The requirement of lifelong learning is dictated by the fast pace of the development of science and technology, the changes taking place on the regional and global scale. In fact, every occupation places high demands, arising from the requirements of contemporaneity, which is characterized by high specialization and the need for specialists. These factors make the person develop constantly, broaden knowledge, skills,

obtain new qualifications, become more perfect (Kacprzak, 2006). The trends described above are noticed by the students participating in the study.

For 65 percent of students undertaking full-time education, qualification courses turned out to be the best way for professional development during their studies. The students polled most often chose the courses for holiday camp teachers, the courses for games leader and a first aid course. A high percentage of young people (48 percent) also participated in training sessions and workshops. 63 percent of students can also boast of voluntary work experience. 18 percent of the part-time students engage in work, mostly in kindergartens, but also in nurseries and community centers. Only 4 percent of full-time students can boast of professional work in education.

The need to supplement and extend skills after graduation is perceived by 83 percent of the studied population. The motives for taking the decision to improve their professional qualifications are as follows: one's own personal development (68 percent), increased employment opportunities (64 percent), each additional skill may become useful some time in the future (50 percent), self-satisfaction (30 percent). It is worth noting that one person (1 percent) explains the need to improve skills as a factor for helping children.

The students surveyed were asked to list the forms of education they intend to take up after graduation. First place in terms of number of indications was gathered by second cycle studies (Master's degree). This answer was chosen by 81 percent of the respondents, which can be explained by the fact that the study group consisted of people pursuing the first cycle of studies (bachelor's degree). About a third of the respondents (31 percent) intend to participate in further courses, workshops and trainings in the area of pre-school and early school education. Among the possible forms of education there were also postgraduate studies. The desire to follow them was declared by 23 percent of the respondents, most of whom chose speech therapy.

The dominant direction of self-development of the population surveyed turned out to be the pursuit of their own interests (64 percent), nearly a half of them (44 percent) perceive the ways of their self-development in the reading of literature. Personal development is an important factor for 40 percent of the respondents, and about one third (32 percent) do sports. A relatively low percentage of students focus on the development of spiritual life (17 percent), and only 19 percent of them choose to study academic literature and professional journals as a way of personal development.

The answers to the question of involvement in an activity, current or past, divided the researched group. Over half of the students (59 percent) undertaking full-time education was or had been involved in volunteering, while the declaration of voluntary activities was reported by only 20 percent of the respondents doing part-time studies. For this research group the most frequent response was the lack of any voluntary activity – 51 percent. The following responses were indicated by a small percentage of part-time students: active within the student council (13 percent), Student Chaplaincy (3 percent), or holiday camps. This data indicates a small percentage in the total sample of the respondents following part-time study mode who engaged in personal activity. However, full-time students, in addition to the above-mentioned volunteer work, participated in the Student Chaplaincy (20 percent), Scouting (13 percent), student academic circle (9 percent). However, even within this research group, 26 percent of these young people do not undertake any form of activity.

4.3. Prospects for work as a teacher by respondents

The way from the decision to start studying, or rather to choose the direction of education, to obtaining a satisfactory job, can be very long. Therefore, it is important to plan it in order to feel satisfied with the action one has taken when one receives the diploma.

The majority of respondents plan to continue to study and work simultaneously directly after graduating. The role of a working person while still studying was chosen by 66 percent of the students. This decision seems to be dictated by the conditions on the labour market, in particular the attitude of employers who value professional development of their employees. Those who intend to work without

continuing education represent 23 percent of all respondents. By far the lowest proportion comprises people who have not yet planned their careers after graduation (11 percent).

The respondents would see themselves most willingly as nursery school workers. This type of institution has been designated as a planned workplace by 57 percent of the studied population. The second position in terms of popularity is held by schools (36 percent), whilst 20 percent of students plan to lead their own economic activity in the education sector in the future. It can be assumed that the decision to open one's own educational institution is due to the difficult situation on the job market. Graduates of a teaching faculty would be willing to work in line with their qualifications, which, unfortunately, is not always possible.

Students' expectations concerning future employment have shown little differences between full-time and part-time students. For full-time students the most important issue was 'decent' pay – 76 percent of indications. For part-time student respondents salary is also important – 57 percent indications, but the most important issue was a nice and friendly atmosphere at work (59 percent).

The most popular forms of job search are announcements published on the Internet (70 percent). Data show that students know and appreciate the possibilities given by modern means of communication. However, the use of public information sources does not guarantee employability, hence 63 percent of the respondents express their willingness for direct contact with a chosen workplace. More than half of the studied group (54 percent) count on the assistance of their family in finding employment, while 37 percent of the students would lean on job placement offices.

Taking into account the specificity of the teacher's work and the uniqueness of each educational situation, preparation for the teaching profession should involve the whole person. Preparation for the work of a teacher is a process that always remains in development and we cannot prepare for it just once (Kwaśnica, 2004). The challenges faced by the teacher require taking into consideration the multi-dimensionality of education and preparation for this career. It seems necessary to also consider the technological, as well as the personal and functional aspects of teacher education (Dróžka, 2004).

The students surveyed are not optimistic when it comes to finding a job after graduation, but they judge the possibilities of finding satisfying work at an average level. They perceive the need for further education and professional development which is necessary in this profession. The results obtained are optimistic from this perspective, pointing to professional vocational direction of the students, since 75 percent of the respondents see the need to supplement their education after graduation, while only 5 percent do not see the need, and 20 percent consider it difficult to determine at this point. Thus, it can be concluded that the surveyed students recognize the need for continual training and professional development, which is an indispensable element of the work of a creative teacher.

5. Conclusions

The aim of our study was to provide an overview of the plans of students who take part in teacher training. We attempted to outline the professional and the private plans of students in three countries. The international comparison cannot be complete because this part of teacher researching is less well studied in Hungary, in Slovakia and also in Poland. We used the results of the available researches in each of these countries. These examinations are different, therefore the comparison is not complete. We plan to work out a common survey to examine the students from the same aspects.

Based on the available results, it can be established that professional future plans are closely related to students' academic performance and their motivation to work as a teacher. Problems typical of all Europe are also displayed in the Slovak Republic, in Hungary and in Poland. We can talk about the crisis of the teaching profession in Slovakia, but we can also see the negative self-selection and the uncertainty about the future in Hungary. A quarter of Polish students are afraid that they will not find a job after graduation. In spite of these facts we can see that many students would like to work with children, feel talented and want to do useful work.

Students typically considered it important to continue studying in the future. However, many of them would prefer to work at lower school levels, and they do not want to take part in PhD courses. Now the teaching profession has a low status in most European countries and consequently teacher training is not a real choice for talented students: the teaching profession should be seen as an academic career, and future researches will have to explore what is required to achieve this.

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