
Studies and Current Trends in Science of Education

Study on Professional Values in Choosing the Teaching Career

Maria Magdalena STAN

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Abstract

The choice of a profession is a major problem with multiple implications not only at individual but also at macro-social level. The effects of suitable career choices entail behaviours such as satisfaction, commitment, stability, civism etc. A career in education is uniquely challenging. The teaching profession is essential in a country of social welfare, which implies a high level of responsibility and altruism - intrinsic human values. Values play an important role in people's behaviours, affecting their perceptions, attitudes, and motivations. Through this study we aim to investigate the relationship established between the structuring of professional values and teaching career choice, and the effects resulting from this choice. The study was conducted on a sample of 65 subjects, students and teachers in the pre-university educational system using specific investigation tools. The study confirms that work values determine significant effects on job choice decisions. The paper also presents the implications of the results obtained in the study of work values and job choice.

Keywords: Professional values, vocational values, values, teaching career, career choice.

1. Theoretical background

Romanian educational system has been confronting with a financial crisis during the last 25 years which has a major impact especially on human resources. The conducted studies showed the ageing of the workforce and a difficulty in attracting young people to be trained for the didactic career. Most young people who decide to choose the state educational system are either persons who do not find alternatives on the labour market for their qualifications or consider the didactic activity as a transitory one for their future professional career.

The strategies in the field of human resources personnel policies in the educational system should be convergent with answers to questions such as: what can we do to attract young people to the didactic career, is it possible to determine young people’s professional commitment for the

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1 Associate Professor, University of Pitești, Departament of Educational Sciences, Pitești, România, magdalena.stan@upit.ro.

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didactic profession under limited financial conditions, what kind of changes has to be implemented at the level of Romanian school organizational culture level so that the educational system should be attractive for young people when choosing the didactic career, etc.

Obviously, the theme under debate is a complex one and needs ample diagnoses at the level of the educational system, globally. The present study proposes to highlight the professional values which represent one of the factors whose analysis would help us to answer the above-mentioned questions.

Numerous authors consider the didactic activity as having a particular complexity, not only because of the multiple variables implied in the educational system but also because of the personality of the educator. Due to the impact upon the development of children’s personalities, the activity in the educational environment implies extreme responsibility and vocation at the same time on the part of the teacher. To be a good teacher presumes to be enthusiastic and creative, to interact well with children, to have patience and diplomacy, to have a sense of humour, to be flexible and ready to help those around you, to be kind, honest, therefore to have a people-oriented value system.

2. The concept of value

When building and developing a career, a person will relate not only to interests and abilities specific to different activities but also to specific values.

Rokeach (1973) considers value „an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable“. Super (1980) affirms that value is a physical state, a relation or an economic situation towards which we target, tend to or want to obtain. Schwartz (1999) define values as conditions, goals, behaviours which, after getting by certain specific situations, are generally desired to be accomplished, being at the same time normative standards in order to distinguish the desirable modes of behaviour from the less desirable ones.

Value represents a concept hardly to circumscribe in an unique, largely accepted definition. Values are psychical formations whose structure implies affective (feelings), cognitive (value judgements) and volitional (goal orientation and voluntary effort in its attainment) elements. The values exist where there are evaluation preferences based on certain judgements and which orient the individual activity according to certain goals.
A value can be considered as a norm, as a stable belief in a certain mode of behaviour or lifestyle, as an end-state of existence, being more abstract, more general and more fundamental than interests. Values are manifested through interests, the latter being the activities and the specific objectives which allow to reach values (Porlier, 2001).

Values integrate individual/group aspirations which orient and direct behaviour explicitly or implicitly, functioning as stimuli that motivate the individual to perform more actions or as compelling factors, that limit the effort made in task fulfilling. (Negovan, 2004).

Values are organized hierarchically generating the person’s value system and which represent his/her axiological referential. The individual value system is a dynamic system which is learned through social interiorization and assimilation, and which is modified according to personal priorities and choices. The modifications operated in the individual values, either through acquisition, accentuation, restandardization, rescaling, renorming in implementing values, or through the abandon, neglect or narrowing of development, etc. can constitute the basis for fluctuations in the form and intensity of its implication in relation to a cause or a profession (Negovan, 2010, p. 174; Popa, Bonchiş & Clipa, 2015).

An individual’s value system includes personal, moral and professional values.

Personal values represent standards defined by each individual, being very profound and often influencing behaviour, attitude, as well as the decisions the individual takes during his lifetime.

Moral values refers to the standards which settle the reference of human activities and relations to what is socially desirable, to what is considered and accepted as beneficial for human existence.

With reference to the work context, we consider that work values represent the objectives people try to attain in their work activity. Professional values condense the professional aspirations, being associated with professional objectives, with the individual vocation maturity level, with career choices, professional goals setting and with the effort management to attain them (Negovan, 2004).

2.1. Professional values

Organizational theorists defined professional values as being the desirable work outcome which regulates the employee’s organizational behaviour. Professional values reflect individual awareness for the wanted conditions in the work situation and which regulates the actions one performs in reaching the respective conditions.
Kalleberg (1977) provides a comprehensive interpretation for work values: work values are defined as the conceptions of what is desirable that an individual holds with respect to his/her work activity.

The definition of professional values is varied and implies different taxonomies.

Super (1970) considers that what employees want from their work can be framed in two categories: intrinsic professional values which can be found directly in the work activity itself and which satisfy psychological needs such as altruism, aesthetics, creativity, intellectual stimulation, achievement, independence, variety and management and extrinsic professional values, those things the employee wants and searches in organizing his own work, so that physiological and social needs should be satisfied such as economic returns, security, surroundings, supervisory relations, associates, way of life and prestige.

Professional values taxonomy made by Elizur (1984, 1991) is much more adapted to the educational environment and can be used in the studies which explain teachers’ job satisfaction (Knoop, 1994). Based on motivation theories elaborated by Maslow, Alderfer, Herzberg and McClelland, Elizur identifies 24 work values, suggesting two basic aspects of work values: modality of outcome and system performance contingency. The modality of outcome contains three domains: a. affective domain treats interpersonal relations and includes values such as recognition, co-workers, esteem, interaction and supervisor; b. Cognitive domain includes values such as advancement, feedback, status, achievement, job interest meaningful work, personal growth, use of ability, responsibility, contribution to society, independence, company, work influence and organizational influence; c. Instrumental domain refers to the concrete and practical outcomes of the work activity and includes values such as pay, benefits, security, convenient hours and working conditions. The work values dimensions system performance contingency contains, la rândul two facets: rewards and resource and rewards. Resources refer to those outcomes which are provided before performing work tasks, as they are not directly related to the work task performance and include working conditions, health benefits etc. Rewards are directly related to the performance in the work task, including pay, self-realization feeling, etc.

The model elaborated by Elizur presents a useful practical application. With a view to establish an attitude towards work and a motivation for the development of a specific action, it is necessary to establish if the work value is a resource or a reward.
When analyzing professional values, in the professional activity we must take into consideration an important aspect which refers to the distinction between the importance and the fulfillment of work values. The importance of a work value is denoted by the degree of one's desire in expecting the goal in work environment to happen. The perceived fulfillment of a work value is the extent to which a person feels the goal in the work environment to be attainable (Rice et al., 1991).

Professional values add meaning to work experience since they are a reflection of motivation and they settle the preferential work mode, the manner of interacting with the others and the personal workstyle. Work values determine what we expect to achieve from the work experience and, as such, determine our choice of vocation and our reaction to job situations (Burd, 2003).

Although the approach of professional behaviour from the perspective of professional values did not led to the expected results, it emphasizes the subtle relations among them, the individual needs and interest as well as the interest for work, job satisfaction and self-expression in profession (Osipow in Negovan, 2010).

3. Study aims

The present study proposes to identify the dynamics of professional and personal values during professionalization in the didactic career, trying to answer the following questions:

- What are the most important professional values for teachers in the preschool and primary education cycle?
- What are the most characteristic professional values for teachers in the preschool and primary education cycle?

In the present study, we agree to refer in defining professional values to the objectives a person tries to attain in his work activity.

4. Method

4.1. Participants

The lot of subjects included 37 master’s degree students, out of which 15 academic beginners (up to 2 years experience) and 22 teachers having an experience ranging between 10 and 35 years.
4.2. Instruments

In identifying teachers’ professional values, we related to the taxonomy elaborated by Elizur, by building our own analysis tool. Teachers were offered a list containing the following professional values falling under 4 types:

A. Nature of work: a sense of achievement at work, good interaction with students, doing a meaningful task, learning opportunity at work, use of abilities at work, work esteem;
B. Relations with others: decent relation with co-workers, recognition of good work, good relation with supervisors;
C. Material benefits: salary, job security, suitable working time.
D. Authority: good work influence in school, promotion opportunities, responsibility for important work, and influence in your scope of work.

With a view to identify the importance of professional values in the didactic profession, the subjects had been asked to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 represents reduced importance and 4 represents high importance, the professional values they believe important in their work.

In order to identify the fulfilment level of professional values in the didactic activity, we asked subjects to evaluate on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 represents low fulfilment level and 4 high fulfilment level.

The total score on dimension is represented by the sum of the points rating obtained by each item.

5 Results and discussions

The statistical-mathematical analysis of the collected data showed the following results:

- The analysis of associations related to the dimensions which ranges the professional values of teachers, recorded significant but moderate values between the domain of interpersonal relations and nature of work (r=0.47, p=0.05), and also between authority and nature of work (r=0.62, p=0.01)

The analysis of associations of professional values grouped around the dimensions of professional values presents the following results:

**Table 1.** Pearson correlation between the dimensions of professional values

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<tr>
<td>Nature of work</td>
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<td>Relations with</td>
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As concerns the importance of professional values in the didactic profession, we found that the biggest scores are recorded for values in the authority category, both at beginners $m=18.88$, $SD=1.12$, and also at teachers with experience $m=21.5$, $SD=1.43$. The comparative analysis of the results between the two groups as regards the dimension authority reveals that there are significant differences both at the level of global score ($t=-8.64$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$), and also at the level of the succeeding dimensions: good work influence in school ($t=3.16$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$), responsibility for important work ($t=-7.88$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$), influence in your scope of work ($t=-5.64$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$), but there are no significant differences at the level of promotion opportunities.

At the level of the dimension material benefits there are no significant differences but at the level of the global score there are differences at the level of the variable salary ($t=4.35$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$) and job security ($t=10.56$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$).

Professional values grouped around the dimensions relations with others reveals significant differences between the two groups at a significance level of $p=0.05$, $t=2.56$, $df=35$, and at the level of professional value appreciation of well-done work; concerning interaction with co-workers and with hierarchical superior, there are no significant differences between the beginners and the experienced teachers.

Professional values grouped around the dimension nature of work stand in a different situation: at the level of the global score there are significant differences between the two analyzed groups ($t=-2.62$, $df=35$, $p=0.001$), as well as at the perception of the importance of values and at the sense of achievement at work ($t=-5.77$, $df=35$, $p=0.001$), doing a meaningful task ($t=7.62$, $df=35$, $p=0.001$), use of abilities at work ($t=-4.23$, $df=35$, $p=0.001$), but there are no significant differences at the level of professional values such as good interaction with students, learning opportunity at work, work esteem.

As concerns the degree of achieving professional values at the organizational level, there are significant differences between the group of experienced teachers and that of beginners at the dimension level nature of work ($t=4.25$, $df=35$, $p=0.000$) and at the level of material conditions

### Table: Correlation Coefficients

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<tr>
<td>Material conditions</td>
<td>0.25*</td>
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<td>Authority</td>
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*Significant correlation at $p=0.05$

* Significant correlation at $p=0.01$
(t=1.52, df=35, p=0.000). There are no significant differences between the groups who participated in the study at the dimensions interactions with others and authority.

The results obtained after data processing are consonant with the specialty literature, namely professional values manifest a certain dynamics according to work experience and to the social situation which are analyzed.

The dimension interaction with others holds the most powerful impact at the level of both groups, with no significant differences. This can be explained by the fact that didactic profession is people-oriented which determines a bigger valorization of relations with co-workers, with superiors, representing in fact a reflection of the well-done job for one’s fellow creatures. The dimension authority is considered to be not only important as a value but also as satisfied at the level of the experienced teachers, whereas material benefits are considered important by the beginner teachers but any group present it as fulfilled at the workplace.

6. Conclusions

The familiarity with the system of professional values as early as the beginning of the career can offer valuable information on the level of job satisfaction, on the involvement in the professional activity and control of the negative effects in the school organization level such as: absenteeism, high level of turnover, low academic performance and low commitment level.

Another aspect to be taken into consideration is the beginners ‘cognizance of their own professional values which govern their activity in the didactic profession. Cognizance leads to self-control and teachers will develop personal mechanisms to fulfill them at the working place implicitly.

We consider as necessary the formation of a coherent and flexible system of professional values in character with the demands of social life, so that those who want to work in the educational domain might find efficient modalities of self-knowledge and personal development through initial and continuous training.

References

http://www.ala.org/acrl/sites/ala.org.acrl/files/content/conferences/pdf/burd.PDF


