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## Motivational Benchmarks for teaching career choice

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### Abstract

Motivation is an important determining factor of the individual aware and responsible option for a specific career. With regard to student's option for become teachers, the reasons may be different: the availability and stability of employment, working hours, perception of personal skills, challenges and satisfaction that it bring the practice of the profession, the social importance of occupation etc. In this study we present the results of an investigation on student's motivation from Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca for choosing teaching careers. We can see, therefore, whether they have properly planned teaching career after a well-founded educational and vocational guidance or a concern for the moment as a temporary solution until they identify other opportunities.

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### 1. Theoretical premises

Prospective students applying to a certain university specialization and subsequently young graduates seeking a successful career path are faced with the complex process of making a choice that is strongly determined by individual identity issues (such as type of personality, talents, abilities and personal interests), as well as by the structure of society and labour market requirements (Pavelea-Răduleş, 2013).

There is a whole set of prerequisites needed for a freely-assumed choice of career path. Among these, we can mention

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competences acquired as a result of attending school, the ability to apply previously acquired knowledge, special skills, expertise and interests an individual becomes aware of throughout the education process in order to carry out activities that are specific to a certain domain. Also, the motivations and personal values, the career development model offered within families of origin and followed by family members, the attitude displayed by the community toward individuals, what society has to offer in terms of employment opportunities, labour market dynamics, are also important aspects in this respect. As stated before, one of the essential individual and identity-driven factors involved in choosing a certain career path is motivation, the inner force that leads to performance in any activity we decide to undertake. From such a perspective, the following definition seems more appropriate: "Motivation relates to those emotional and cognitive states and processes that can determine, direct and sustain various behaviour and activities" (Lemeni & Miclea, 2004, p. 40).

Motivation is the trigger for the initiation of an activity as well as for the persistence in completing or abandoning a certain task. For that reason, we can safely infer that motivation is one of the key factors with major impact on performance. In most cases, the motivation triggering certain human behaviour is a result of the interaction between different sets of motives. With regard to prospective teachers, among the reasons they state for seeking a career path in education, we have identified the following: availability and stability of employment, challenges and satisfactions specific to the profession, working hours and flexible schedule, social consequence of the profession, etc.

## **2. Investigation Outcomes**

This study aims at presenting the results of a research based on objective findings with regard to the motivation behind the career choice made by students enrolled at „Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, who decided to become teachers. The research was conducted according to the questionnaire-based survey methodology, at the beginning of the second semester, among first-year undergraduates (March 2015). The interviewees (119 students) were students enrolled in the undergraduate programmes at the faculties of Letters, History and Philosophy, Economics, Mathematics and Information Technology, Physics, Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, Biology.

The items of the questionnaire have been developed in such a way that data collected to indicate the extent to which a set of reasons we considered to be representative enough have determined the motivational mechanisms behind students' decision on becoming teachers, as well as their future intentions of pursuing a long-term career in education. We can thus have an image on whether they have intentionally and properly planned their career as prospective teachers or they see it just as a temporary solution, until they manage to identify another employment opportunity. The items and the results of the survey are listed below.

1) The number of jobs available in the education system. Labour market is an important factor influencing career choices for every individual. Although between 2009 and 2012, the number of teachers employed in the Romanian university education system decreased, in conjunction with the also decreasing number of students enrolled in the same system, the number of the former slightly increased during the school year 2013-2014, except for the general upper-secondary and the vocational upper-secondary education (Apostu et al., 2015).

Given the relatively high number of students graduating from universities every year and trying to fill the relatively low number of vacant positions in the education system, the competition between prospective teachers is fierce. In these circumstances, 26.89% of students who consciously chose to prepare and train themselves in order to follow a career path in education consider that the number of positions available within the system does not constitute an essential reason for their option, 22.69% of them regard the number of available positions as secondary, while 37.82% of respondents consider it is a fairly important, but not the main reason for their career choice.

Therefore, only 12.61% of students regard the number of positions available within the education system as a main reason for their preference in choosing a career path, which leads us to believe that most respondents have other reasons they consider as fundamental, such as the attractiveness of the profession and the supposed and expected satisfactions.

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