

## ATTITUDE - KEY ELEMENT OF COMPETENCE AND ESSENTIAL OBJECTIVE OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL- EDUCATIONAL PROCESS\*

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### **Abstract**

*Competence training is not limited to the assimilation of knowledge and strategies or to the formation of skills and abilities, but also to the formation of attitudes.*

*In school we must promote values and attitudes such as: interest in reading and the pleasure of reading; autonomous, reflective and critical thinking in relation to the various assimilated information; self-confidence in one's own abilities; tolerance towards the opinions of others etc.*

*In order to face the challenges of the contemporary world, people must adapt quickly and efficiently, to find solutions and timely strategies, in order to achieve the desired results and especially to find the resources necessary to go through changes several times during their life.*

*In a complex situation, the mobilization of various cognitive resources is not a spontaneous and original invention, but goes through a series of spiritual operations that update the plans and sometimes apply methods. "Mental management", "neurolinguistic programming" and various methods of cognitive education help the subject to become aware of his thinking mechanisms. However, there is no universal "know-how" that applies regardless of cognitive resources or that can be identified with the subject's intelligence.*

*The present study aims to present the importance of training and developing attitude in the Romanian school system. The current context confirms the need to assert a positive attitude, of openness to the new, combined with self-confidence, as absolutely essential directions to meet the demands of accelerated change and reconstruction. Formation and development of an appropriate attitude is an aspect often neglected in school, although in crisis situations, attitude is a key factor in overcoming and solving problems.*

**Key words:** *Competence; Change; Positive attitude; Self-confidence.*

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### **1. Attitude - a key element of competence**

In a dynamic society, in permanent development and change, increasing the quality of education involves proposing solutions and investigating teacher training models.

The most significant component of the system of education is teachers. Profession of teaching is a way of life beyond a profession that could not be performed without love, requiring self-sacrifice, patience and hard working. For that reason, it is essential that teachers have a positive professional attitude as well as professional knowledge and skills. Prospective teachers are aware of the importance of the profession of teaching and the competencies that they must attain. The development level of a country is perceived by means of the importance given to education by that country and through the quality of education. Creating communities with productive, healthy, happy individuals aware of their responsibilities, being beneficial to themselves and others is no doubt realized with the improvement of education.

In this regard, many studies have been conducted (Akinbote, 2007; Himmat, 2017; Ries *et al.*, 2016; Albareda-Tiana *et al.*, 2019; König *et al.*, 2017; Sykes *et al.*, 2010). Other studies have focused on determining the prospective attitudes of teachers towards the teaching profession, the relationship between the level of professional satisfaction and the quality of university life (Atabey, 2021).

Competence is today the main indicator in the validation for a profession, regardless of the field of activity or the status-role acquired during the career (Chiş, 2002). In the psycho-pedagogical field, the term competence was defined by numerous correlations, for example, by comparing it with related terms: capacity, ability, procedural knowledge, strategic knowledge (Zlate, 2000), by placing it in parallel with the term pair: compliant performance pre-established standards (Doron, Parot, 1999) and, in relation to this, by the ability to meet the requirements associated with a role (possibly professional), by referring to the sets of acquisitions that underlie the manifestation of competence (Bocoş, 2006) or, on the contrary, by referring to the potential character of the manifestation of competence, a manifestation that is a function of the complex context in which competence is required (Richelle apud Doron, Parot, 1999; Chiş, 2005).

In the context of a postmodern education focused on the student, on his training needs, biopsychic availability and interests, we consider it necessary to clarify the notion of competence in the context of teacher training.

The term competence was used in the first instance in relation to the professional training of teachers in the USA, since the 60s and 70s and later used in many European countries. Initially defined as the ability to perform a certain activity at pre-established standards and more deeply, as a structured set of knowledge, cognitive, affective-attitudinal and psychosocial skills necessary to meet the required standards of tasks specific to the teaching profession, the notion of teaching competence has evolved.

Psychologists (Aubert, 2003, *apud* Joiţa, 2010, p. 53) mention that the term competence was not specified in dictionaries of scientific psychology until after

1991, namely by cognitive psychology (the set of abilities, cognitive tools that allow employment in action) and then by the psychology of work and of organizations.

Most definitions define the term "competence" in relation to that of "capacity" that is incumbent, which is inferred. Competence thus appears as a set / sets of capabilities. Mastery of a competence presupposes the ability to relate a concrete situation to a class of situations, to integrate it in it and to interpret it as such (Ionescu, 2003).

According to the explanatory dictionary of the Romanian language, competence is defined as the ability of someone to decide on a thing, based on a deep knowledge of the problem in question (Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language, 2000, p. 964).

I. Jinga, 2001 defines competence as "a set of cognitive, affective, motivational and managerial abilities that interact with the personality traits of the educator, giving him the necessary qualities to perform a didactic service that ensures the fulfillment of the objectives projected by the vast majority of students, and the performances obtained to be close to the maximum level of the intellectual potential of each one".

Le Boterf (1997; 2000) considers competence as "an ability to mobilize all types of cognitive resources, including information, knowledge." This mobilization involves investing knowledge, relating to situations, enriching them (Perrenoud, 1996).

The term competence has other more or less differentiated definitions (Chiș, 2005): "Competence is the ability to perform activities related to an occupation or position at the standards defined by employers"; "Competence means having and developing the knowledge and skills, the right attitudes and the experience necessary for good performance in the roles assumed." Competences, as complex structures, with operational and instrumental value, can be characterized as follows: "ensures the fulfillment of the assumed roles and responsibilities; correlates with activity performance; can be measured on the basis of performance standards; can be developed through learning (Parry, 1998).

The terms "skill" and "competence" intersect in all definitions. The skill is considered "the ability to easily, accurately, finely and efficiently perform intellectual/mental or practical/motor operations or actions" (Ionescu, 2003).

Competence mobilizes declarative (describing reality), procedural (prescribing a path to follow) and conditional (showing when to start such an action) knowledge. The exercise of skills is more than a simple enhancement of knowledge, it involves anticipation, judgment, creation, approximation, synthesis, risk-taking. Practicing skills highlights our skills and especially our patterns of perception, thinking and mobilization of knowledge, information that we have assimilated. (Perrenoud 2006, p. 168). A competence presupposes, in the author's opinion, the existence of mobilizable resources, but it is not confused with them, but on the contrary, it helps them by taking their task of putting them in synergy, in view of an effective action and complex situations. It increases the value of using mobilizable resources, ordering them, putting them in a relationship, merging them into a richer

whole than their mere additive reunion. None of the resources belong exclusively to a competence, but can be mobilized by other competences.

Competence is now not only the ability to do something practical, to apply with the help of knowledge and skills, by mobilizing resources, but the ability to play a role, to solve a situation/type of situation, to relate proper to this or, when we speak of competencies, we speak of an intelligence of situations, which is continuously constructed (Jonnaert, 2005, *apud* Joița, 2008, p. 28).

Summarizing, beyond the multiple understandings given to the term, most theorists of the competence paradigm agree with the following fundamental characteristics that can be associated with competence:

- competence is associated with an action field;
- its components are indivisible (knowledge, skills, attitudes circumscribed to it are integrated);
- competences evolve, change in content and operability;
- competences require a continuous process of learning and development;
- competences are refined by integrating new experiences of knowledge and action, the key to effective competency development programs being the identification of learning experiences that ensure the continuous development of the sets of knowledge and skills associated with the competency.

Mobilization in a training process and responsible involvement in a long and difficult project are major, significant acts and it is true that they result from a perfectly lucid choice and a deeply conscious personal decision. This means that engaging in an activity requires a strong attitude.

## **2. The purpose and hypothesis of the research**

The present study aims to present the importance of developing a positive attitude of students to relate to change, to engage responsibly in their own training.

The investigation carried out at the level of the students included in the sample aimed at collecting data on essential aspects of training for teaching: a) The pedagogical concept on which students' attitudes towards their own training are based; b) The importance given by students to the initial training for the teaching career; c) Students' proposals for developing a positive attitude towards their own training process.

In the research undertaken we outlined the following general hypothesis:

If the teacher makes sure that students are aware of the importance of personal involvement in their own training, on the one hand, and on the other hand encourages them to show self-confidence, then progress can be made in attitude (openness to new, tolerance for change, trust that they can successfully adapt and resolve any situation/difficulty encountered).

## **3. Research methodology**

The research was conducted at the University of Craiova - Department of Teacher Training. The research sample included a number of 120 students, enrolled

in the psycho-pedagogical module. In summary, the sequence of these steps is represented in the following table (table no. 1):

**Table 1. The temporal succession of the research stages**

N o.	Research stages	Development period	Aims
1.	<i>The ascertaining stage</i>	March-May 2020	- Collecting some starting data necessary in outlining an overview of the studied problem; - Ensuring the equivalence between the experimental and control samples;
2.	<i>Experimental stage</i>	October 2020- February 2021	- Introduction of independent variables within the experimental groups;
3.	<i>Post-test stage</i>	March-April 2021	- Comparison of data obtained from processing, interpretations, comparisons

In the present research through methods such as observation, questionnaire, interview, we tried to obtain answers to the following outlined questions: How do the subjects behave, how do they respond to a series of requests in the online teaching activity? What is their attitude in the online environment? How can students be motivated, trained in the activity carried out on electronic platforms? and so on.

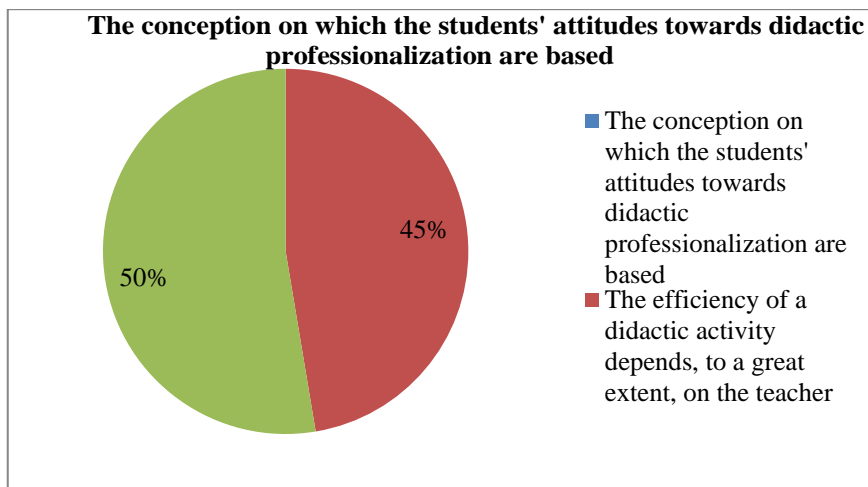
The research undertaken highlighted, in the initial stage, the low motivation, the disinterest of the students to honor a teaching career. Following the intervention, their interest increased significantly, as did the number of those interested in the teaching profession.

In order to identify the opinions, the pedagogical conception on which the students' attitudes towards the teaching profession are based, we applied an opinion questionnaire. We further selectively present some of the results obtained from data collection and organization.

#### **4. Findings**

We can mention that, following the application of the questionnaire to identify the pedagogical conception on which the students' attitudes towards the didactic professionalization are based, we registered the following findings:

- 45% of the surveyed students consider that the efficiency of a didactic activity depends, to a very large extent, on the teacher; the teacher must act, in the didactic activity, with a lot of tact, with a lot of creativity; it must act not only as a coordinator, facilitator of learning, but also as a motivational stimulus;
- 50% of the subjects consider that the teaching activity itself is a difficult approach; students are aware that it is not effective to receive the knowledge ready, but it takes personal effort, active involvement in knowledge and learning;
- in the opinion of some of the interviewees, the teaching career becomes a launching pad for other careers (5%).



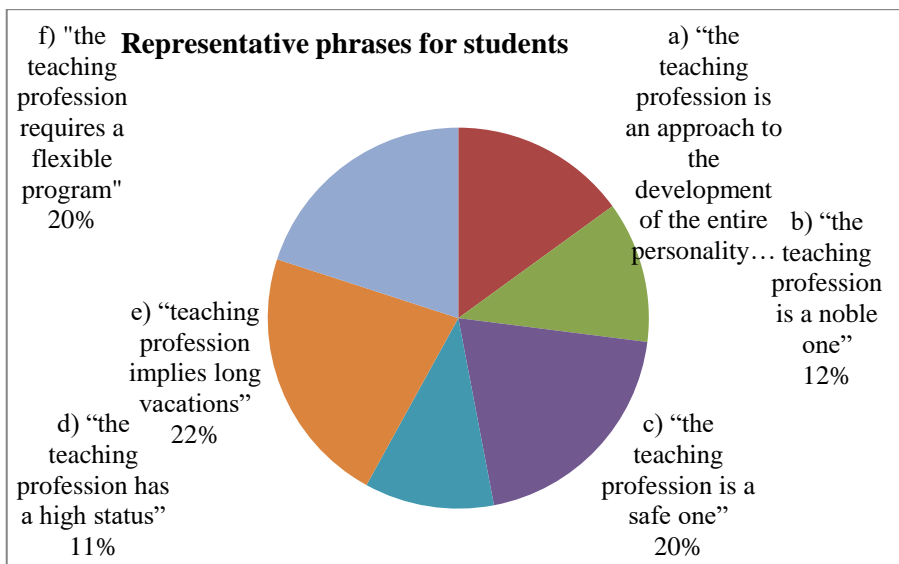
**Figure 1. The conception on which the students' attitudes towards didactic professionalization are based**

Regarding the reasons for which the subjects would choose the teaching career, the most important are: extrinsic reasons - the extended vacations enjoyed by teachers; the fact that the teaching profession offers a pleasant job; encouragement from other people to pursue a teaching career; inability to pursue another profession; intrinsic reasons - the desire to be a teacher, to help students succeed; passion for the field to be taught.

We summarize in the table below the phrases that define students in the pretest:

**Table 2. The phrases with which the teaching profession is associated, in the students' opinion – pretest**

Representative phrases for students	Percentage
a) "the teaching profession is an approach to the development of the entire personality of the students"	15%
b) "the teaching profession is a noble one"	12%
c) "the teaching profession is a safe one"	20%
d) "the teaching profession has a high status"	11%
e) "teaching profession implies long vacations"	22%
f) "the teaching profession requires a flexible program"	20%



**Figure 2. The phrases with which the teaching profession is associated, in the students' opinion – pretest**

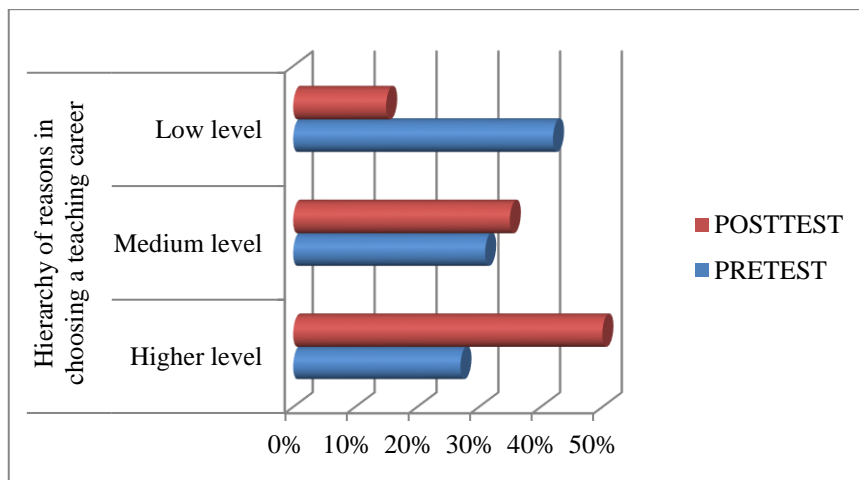
There is a predominance of low-level reasons - 42% ("the teaching profession involves long vacations and a flexible program" or medium - 31% ("the teaching profession is a safe one", "the teaching profession has a high status").

Reasons for which the subjects would give up the teaching profession (data obtained following the application of the focus-group interview): a) Low salary; b) Lack of adequate appreciation on the part of students and parents, of society in general, for the instructive-educational act; c) Bureaucratization of activities;

Following the experimental intervention, the aim was to establish the differences between pretest and posttest at the level of intrinsic motivation. In table no. 3 we present comparatively the data obtained in the pre- and post-intervention phases:

**Table 3. The difference between the experimental and control groups in the pretest-posttest phases in terms of reasons for choosing the teaching career**

STAGE	Hierarchy of reasons in choosing a teaching career		
	Higher level	Medium level	Low level
PRETEST	27%	31%	42%
POSTTEST	50%	35%	15%



**Figure 3. Hierarchy of reasons in choosing a teaching career - pretest-posttest comparisons**

## 5. Conclusions

Data analysis highlights the progress made by students in the dependent variable. If at the beginning of the experimental program the extrinsic reasons prevailed, in the posttest the intrinsic reasons were highlighted.

We believe that the greatest influence on this variable was the teaching activity focused on awareness of the importance of the teaching profession for the evolution of society, on teaching and reflective learning, relaxed, stimulating climate built in online teaching activities.

In order to stimulate the motivation for didactic professionalization, the students considered as very important the following dimensions: a) the use of a methodology that would activate the student, which would encourage him to take control over his own training; b) development of self-esteem through positive feedback (praise, appreciation, encouragement); c) supporting the student to develop a positive attitude towards the teaching career.

In conclusion, the implementation of an intervention program focused on emphasizing the importance of personal involvement in one's own training, on developing the student-future teacher's belief in positively influencing the results obtained by students, led to changes in motivational-attitudinal level.

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