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Attitudes of Pedagogical Departments' Students towards Teaching Profession

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Abstract

The problem of professional self-identification of young people, the idea of the professional “self” of those who are going to enter the labor market and become the efficient force of society, is relevant for the rapidly developing modern society. The paper considers the peculiarities of the professional choice made by students of pedagogical departments, their ideas of the future profession and the motives of getting higher education. In order to reach these goals the following methodological basis was used: theoretical methods, empiric methods (projective methods, observation, and interchange), methods of mathematical statistics. The results of the research have revealed a number of contradictions in the attitude to the future profession characteristic of the majority of students of pedagogical departments. The profession of a teacher appeals to them, but they have already faced considerable psychological difficulties resulting from the low awareness of their skills and abilities. Even at the stage of career-guidance, it is important to consider students' attitude towards the profession, to form the proper idea of its essence, its main features, its difficulties. Studying at a university requires proper psychological and pedagogical guidance of the personality of future teachers (their personal qualities, job requirements, and inner motives of getting higher education). The intensification of psychological training and literacy will contribute to the effective training of a future teacher.

Keywords: professional choice; future teachers; training; psychological difficulties; attitude to the profession.

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Introduction

Contemporary education is characterized by the increasing tendency to focus on the professional becoming of a young teacher. The humanitarian pattern of a teacher's personality is regarded as “a self-organizing entity” (Valitskaya, 2014). The teacher is a medium between the spiritual world of his pupils and the subject he teaches, as well as culture and science. He is referred to as a bearer of “true knowledge” (Zinchenkov, 1998). An essential quality of a teacher is his aspiration for further development. A young teacher is to develop and accumulate knowledge with its further transformation into the experience. Such knowledge can be acquired by means of self-education and study of other teachers' achievements. It is not an odd stroke of luck that ensures successful professional pedagogical practice but an earnest search and thorough analysis of one's achievements.

The Russian system of education is currently undergoing inner and outer crises (Morozov, 2019). It suffers a lack of stability in the financial support and technical aids along with the constant need of qualified staff and the fluctuating number of educational institutions of different levels. One of the factors causing such instability is the demographic crisis which has brought about the varied number of students. At the same time society is more demanding towards the quality of educational services and their diversity. Digital society makes knowledge more available, changes the way it is given and perceived. That, in its turn, requires from a modern teacher to be capable of working in the changing information space, of transforming his 'self' in order to constantly develop the professional sphere. The study of the periods of professional becoming, life strategies of a teacher, his priorities and behavior is done by Arendachuk (2015), Veber (1990), Klimov (1996), Morozikova (2017), Renyova (2012). Such scholars as Markova (1996), Morozikova (2016), Panov (2007), Sonin (2002) mainly focus on the peculiarities of the professional pedagogical activity, the mentality of a teacher. Teachers' training and the peculiarities of their professional becoming in the digital society require psychological research. The scientific significance of the research paper is determined by the study of professional choice made by the students of the pedagogical department, their conscious choice of the professional path, their ideas of the future profession and the motives of getting higher education.

Methodology

In order to study the peculiarities of students of teachers' attitude towards their future profession, there has been conducted a survey among the second-year students of Smolensk State University, embracing 91 representatives from the following departments “Fine Arts. Decorative and Applied Arts”, “Foreign Languages”, “Russian Language and Russian Literature”.

This research made use of the following methods: the empiric ones (studying of the experience of educational organizations, normative documents, educational and methodic papers, projective methods, observation, and interchange); the theoretical methods (analysis, synthesis, generalization and specification), methods of mathematical statistics. Projective methods are represented by the essay method. The students were asked to write an essay on the following topic: “My future profession and I”. The student papers were analyzed to according the following criteria: The student's idea of a career choice, the maturity of the professional choice, the correspondence of the chosen department and the desirable profession; the motivation to get higher pedagogical education.

Results

The results obtained show that 48% of the respondents are planning to be engaged in pedagogical

practice (Figure 1). 8,8% of the total number of respondents were male, however, only 25% of that male group decided to keep on teaching. The rest of the group confessed studying at the chosen department just for the sake of a university degree.

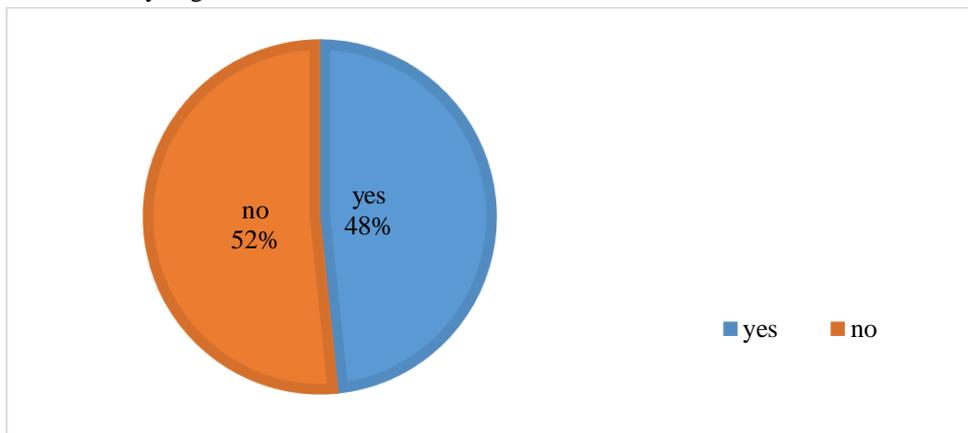


Figure 1. *Students' attitude towards their future profession upon the criterion "Students' idea of a professional choice"*

The analysis of the results on the criterion "The maturity of a professional choice" showed that 79% of the students were acutely aware of their professional choice (Figure 2). A lot of students write that they got interested in the pedagogical profession in childhood, and by the time they had to enter a university they had become fully conscious of their decision. For example, one of the students writes: "My decision to become a teacher was formed in primary school. I remember that when I was in the 4th form I already was trying to come up with some method of conducting a lesson".

Some students were prompted to choose the profession of a teacher by their close relatives. "My Grandmother worked as a teacher for 40 years. When I was a child she told me that it was so thrilling to enter the classroom and see jolly and happy faces of the students"; "... I think that my dream to become a teacher arose due to my parents. My father teaches Physics and Maths, Mother is a teacher of German. I have been lucky to see what it is like to be a teacher, and not only at school but in everyday life as well. It has made my intention even stronger". Unfortunately, in spite of the fact that 79% seem to have made a mature choice of teaching, only 49% of the respondents made this choice in order to teach. The rest point out different reasons, such as "... I've been interested in foreign languages since my school years; I've always wanted to be an interpreter. Why have I chosen the pedagogical department? In my opinion, the profession of a teacher gives you more opportunities for career growth, comparing to the profession of an interpreter". A lot of students mentioned that the profession of a teacher will always be in demand; therefore, if one fails to succeed in some non-teaching field, one may always turn to teaching.

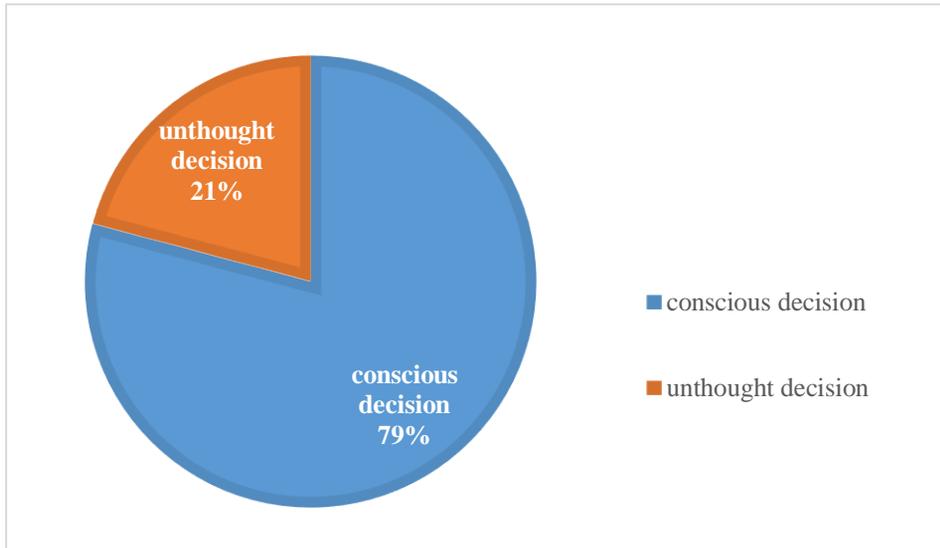


Figure 2. *Students' attitude towards their future profession upon the criterion "The maturity of a professional choice"*

The analysis of the criterion "The correspondence between the chosen department and the desirable profession" showed that 63% of students observe that the department they have chosen fully coincides with the profession of their dreams (Figure 3), 54% of this group see themselves as future teachers.

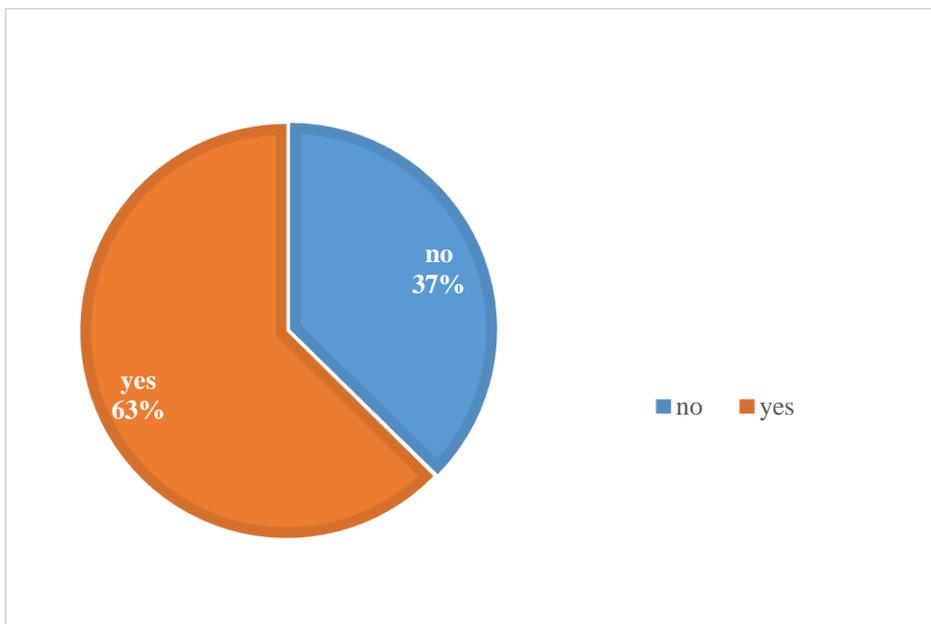


Figure 3. *Students' attitude towards their future profession upon the criterion "The correspondence between the chosen department and the desirable profession"*

The analysis of the students' papers showed that the most frequent motive of choosing the profession of a teacher is self-development – 49 % of the respondents (Figure 4). "The profession of a

teacher is a profession that helps adults and children to understand this world better, systematize their knowledge about this world. That is why a teacher should be an example of intelligence and should never stop at the results obtained”; “I have found a lot of interesting aspects when studying at the university. The basic one is interaction with people. I've always been fond of psychology; still, the science of pedagogy has greatly enlarged my knowledge. I hope that in the future my pedagogical education will be a good basis for further self-development”.

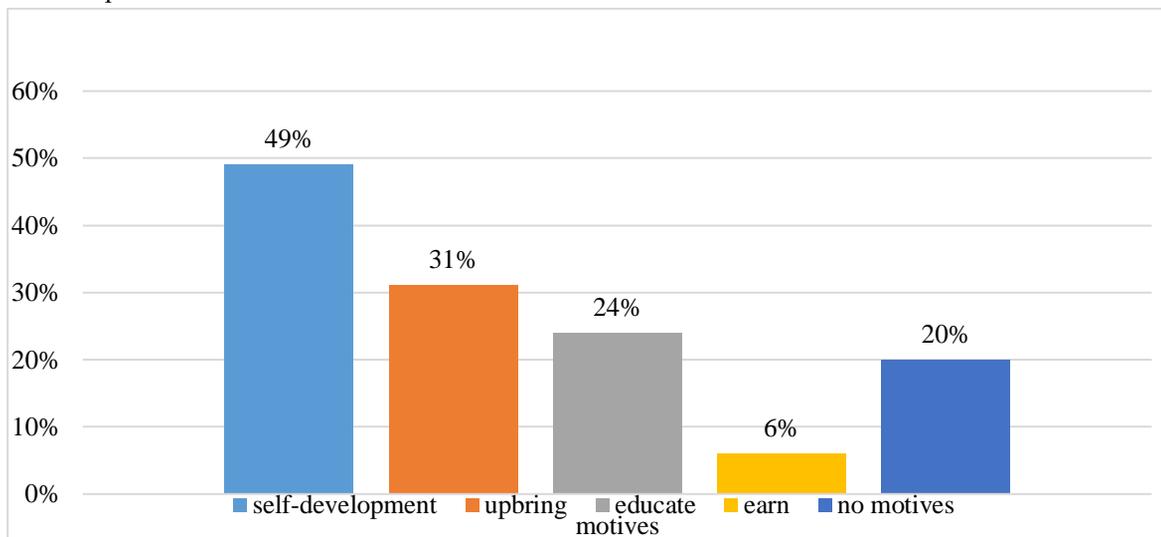


Figure 4. *Students' attitude towards their future profession upon the criterion "The motives of choosing the pedagogical department"*

Self-education and self-improvement, as well as the development of professional qualities, are necessary features of a teacher on the way to a high level of qualification. It is professional behavior and competence that make an educational system really effective. Thus, 31% of students consider the upbringing of students to be an important constituent of pedagogical activity: “I would like to set an example for my students, to help them cope with difficulties and achieve their goals together”; “In my view, a teacher should be a mature personality, without prejudice and cliché thinking, because we are going to work with children who are easily affected. Consequently, It's necessary to set the right example for them, this is what I am striving to do”. 33% of students point out that their choice of the profession was quite mature, that the department they have chosen fully coincides with their expectations of a future profession. These respondents also mention that the number of motives to pursue teaching does not exceed two. 37% of this group has already practiced teaching or interaction with groups of children. “When I was 14 I had an opportunity to try myself in teaching, so I was given the job of the teacher's assistant. I conducted parts of a lesson with preschool children”; “In the summer I managed to get some teaching practice: I worked as a camp counselor. We were rehearsing for the performances, took part in competitions and games, and what not”.

Quite a large part of the respondents (36%) confess that the pedagogical activity is far from the profession they would like to obtain. Unfortunately, students who dislike teaching have acquired their negative attitude to the profession because of the poor treatment of teachers by the state. “First of all, I am a teacher. But, unfortunately, our state does not try to invest in education. That is why I can't consider this job, though it might be appealing to me”.

Discussion

Numerous studies of psychological and pedagogical literature demonstrate that the problem of a teacher's professional becoming, as well as the attitude of students of pedagogical departments towards their future profession, have been given a thorough look in the papers by Panov (2007), Sonin (2002), and other scholars. However, the peculiarities of professional becoming and self-identification of a young teacher in contemporary digital society still require psychological analysis.

Conclusion

The results obtained show that 48% of the respondents are planning to practice teaching. 79% of the students have made a mature choice of the pedagogical career. 63 % of the students acknowledge that the department which they have chosen coincides with the profession of their dreams. However, they confess being faced with sufficient psychological problems, connected with a low level of awareness of their interests, abilities and poor understanding of things the pedagogical profession requires. A great number of students are afraid of teaching because of the responsibility a teacher must take and which is not, in its turn, decently paid for. Still, 63 % of the students admit that the pedagogical department is what they have been dreaming about. A lot of respondents have chosen this department in order to get professional skills in the subject they are interested in. As they point out, the pedagogical department provides better opportunities for professional growth, comparing to other departments. Also, a significant number of students confess their fear to become unemployed, while a degree in teaching may always provide a job, which is a kind of guarantee in our society.

The empiric data obtained allow making a conclusion that there are certain contradictions concerning students of pedagogical departments and their attitude towards their future profession. They are fond of this profession, but they have to face such psychological problems as the fear of undertaking the responsibility, self-confidence, self-estimation of their professional skills, etc. All these factors make them regard teaching as an unfavorable occupation.

Even at the stage of career-guidance, it is important to consider students' attitude towards the profession, to form the proper idea of its essence, its main features, and its difficulties. Studying at a university requires proper psychological and pedagogical guidance of the personality of future teachers (their personal qualities, job requirements, and inner motives of getting higher education). The intensification of psychological training and literacy will contribute to the effective training of a future teacher.

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