Research Paper

Manifestation of Motivation to Work as a Teacher in Pre-School Educational Institutions: Lithuanian Case

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ABSTRACT

Findings of Lithuanian scientists’ studies have demonstrated that one of the most burning problems in teacher education is students’ insufficient motivation to be a teacher and career plans that are not related to the teacher's work. Researchers repeatedly provided evidence that quality of the teacher’s work has a greater impact on student learning than curricula, teaching methods, learning environment and funding, the number of students in the classroom or parents. Strategic aims in the latest European documents on education are directed to improvement of education and quality of teaching, increase of attractiveness of the teacher's occupation and improvement of working teachers' education. In this context, the problem question arises, what motivates Lithuanian pre-school sector teachers to work? Therefore, in this context the study was conducted, disclosing manifestation of the already working teachers’ motivation. Applying the written unstructured interview method, it was concluded that teachers were motivated to work by three key factors: personal usefulness, public significance of the occupation, and cost effectiveness. Personal usefulness manifests itself through the need for improvement and professional privileges. Public significance manifests itself through appropriateness of the profession for an individual and occupational meaningfulness while cost effectiveness manifests itself through the demand of the occupation in the labour market, the possibility of career advancement and salary.

Key words: Quality of education, pre-school education, teacher education.

INTRODUCTION

Strategic aims in the latest European documents on education are directed to improvement of education and quality of teaching, increase of attractiveness of the teacher's occupation and improvement of working teachers' education (Education and Training in a smart, sustainable and inclusive Europe, 2012; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice; OECD, 2011; Rethinking Education, 2012). Bagdziuniene et al. (2014) stated that, researchers repeatedly provide evidence that quality of the teacher’s work has a greater impact on student learning than curricula, teaching methods, learning environment and funding and the number of students in the classroom or parents (Barber and Moursched, 2007; Hattie, 2009; Stronge, 2010).

It is often mentioned that teachers are motivated by various motives: physiological needs, the feeling of security and other needs that respond to Maslow's theory. However, followers of other theories also mentioned other motives as the main motivating factors as: the salary, self-esteem, the possibility to improve, to achieve heights, creative atmosphere, respect, positive feedback from managers (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Teachers’ approach to training, responsibility, honesty, activeness substantially determine their work results and
at the same time life quality and speed of its improvement. Lithuanian scientists’ studies (Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2007) showed that in this context most attention was given to aspects of continuing vocational training (highlighting external (incompatibility of work and science, insufficiently valued learning at work and additional costs, etc) and internal (age, lack of self-confidence, health problems, unpleasant school experience, negative reaction of close family, etc) and obstacles of professional improvement (Kazlauskiene et al., 2011). Issues of changes in the calling to be a pre-school teacher have been analyzed in Lithuania for quite a long time since 2009 (Gauciene, 2009) like motives of entrants to study programmes preparing teachers (Bagdziuniene et al., 2014; Rodzевичute, 2003; Paliukaite, 2005; Jučevicienė et al., 2007; Žygaitienė and Posiunaitė, 2013).

Results of studies conducted by Lithuanian scientists (Jučevicienė et al., 2007; Kazlauskiene and Gaucaite, 2011) have shown that one of the most burning problems in teacher education is students’ insufficient motivation to be a teacher and career plans that are not related to the teacher’s work. Therefore, in this context the study was conducted, disclosing manifestation of motivation of the already working teachers.

The document ‘Council conclusions on the social dimension of education and training’ (2010/C 135/02) emphasizes the need for qualified staff in the field of pre-school education, who are constantly improving their competencies.

The changing attitude to the country’s needs and vision of the future are disclosed in Lithuania’s Progress Strategy ‘Lithuania 2030’. This strategy highly prioritises education and raises particularly high standards for teachers. The fact that particularly much attention of the public is directed to pre-school teachers is also stated in conducted studies. According to the data of the study conducted by Monkevičienė et al. (2009), decentralization of the pre-school curriculum resulted in a challenge for pre-school educational institutions and teachers on how to model the curriculum and ensure quality of pre-school education, responding to various educational needs. As a result, in many curricula children’s needs are disclosed only formally, the curricula are either very narrow or very wide, they do not provide for the ways of evaluating children’s achievements.

It is stated in the study conducted by Juodaitytė et al. (2009) that pre-school teachers poorly respond to parents’ needs, providing them with information and educational support. Jovaisa et al. (2012) emphasized on the absence of coherence between: aims of pre-school, pre-primary and primary education curricula, objectives of pre-school, pre-primary and primary education curricula (there is no unified internal logic of their formulation), principles of curricula; competencies of curricula, content of general competencies projected to be developed in curricula and educational strategies projected in curricula. It is also stated that the tendencies of openness and versatile inclusion of educational institutions highlighted in today’s European documents on education are not reflected; there is insufficient correspondence between assessment projected in pre-school, pre-primary and primary education curricula and developed competences.

All particularly high priorities mentioned in strategic documents related to the sector of pre-school teacher’s work and studies signal the pursuit of higher quality and low prestige of the teacher’s profession in Lithuania pose big challenges for the today’s teacher. The fields investigated in Lithuania include only the aspects of teachers’ motivation for continuing professional development (Tereseviciene and Zuzeviciute, 2007), issues of teachers’ calling (Gauciene, 2009) and issues related to motives of entrants and students of pedagogical study programmes (Bagdziuniene et al., 2014; Rodzевичute, 2003; Paliukaite, 2005; Jučevicienė et al., 2007; Žygaitienė and Posiunaitė, 2013). There are quite many studies conducted in other countries on pre-school teachers’ motivation on how to do their work. Wagner and French (2010) highlighted the following main motives in their study: the head’s support the very nature of work and colleagues relations. The study conducted by Ubom and Joshua (2004) identifies important factors related to favourable educational policy and administration, salary, material awards and progress. Ofojebe and Chinelo (2010), in addition to good salaries, mentioned professional development as important for teachers. Other important factors mentioned by teachers are absence of stress at work (Davis and Wilson, 2010), children’s positive feedback about them (Addison and Brundrett, 2008). In this context, the problem question arises, what motivates Lithuanian preschool sector teachers to work?

**RESEARCH METHODS**

Data were collected employing the written unstructured interview aimed at finding out how teachers’ motivation to work in a pre-school education sector manifests itself. Content analysis method was used in processing the data obtained in the written unstructured interview. The research employed qualitative data analysis software ‘Kokybis’ (version 0.1.0), which enabled them to identify analyzed qualitative characteristics. Respondents’ answers were grouped by semantic-lexical similarity. These data groups were named (nomination of categories), giving the name corresponding to the essence. The research also included calculation of repeated statements (number of mentions and discussing the phenomenon). This way, applying the law of rating, the significance of all obtained data (categories) was identified. Conducting the analysis of research results, the order of importance of distinguished categories (personal usefulness, public significance and cost effectiveness) was followed.

The study involved forty (40) teachers of pre-school...
institutions. To ensure the ethical process, all formalities regarding the opportunity to participate in the study were clarified with anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

Analysis of the results of manifestation of teachers' motivation to work

Results of the conducted study disclosed that teachers were motivated to work by three key factors: personal usefulness of the occupation, public significance, and cost effectiveness. Results will be discussed according to the distribution of these three factors in the order of priority.

Personal usefulness

The category of personal usefulness disclosed respondents' need to improve and occupational privileges as motivational factors. The need to improve in teachers' responses manifests itself through intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Extrinsic motives are related to the requirements of management of the institution, higher qualification of colleagues and development of new technologies such as:

- 'I am encouraged to improve by increasing requirements of management and improving the prestige of the preschool institution. Last year six hours of training were enough but this year the number of courses to be heard doubled. In addition, the documents to participate in the competition for an internship were filled.' [3]
- 'We have to improve because colleagues working together are learning a lot. There are quite many colleagues who already hold two diplomas. Other colleagues attend many courses, conduct workshops themselves.' [9]
- 'We must hurry to learn because new technologies are changing so fast that you can quickly find yourself among the excluded. In another kindergarten they already have smart boards, while I even cannot work with them.' [2]

Intrinsic motives of improvement are related to the approach of lifelong learning, love for children, commitment to work, modern inquisitive and creative children. Such intrinsic motives are given as:

- 'I think the more we improve, the more interestingly, creatively and better we teach children to cognize and feel everything that surrounds them.' [29].
- 'I am used to the need to constantly improve my knowledge; otherwise, I will not be valued at work. I often feel the need to update my experience because this is an asset for the future.' [38].
- '...The very children encourage their wish to know more, to touch and learn about their surrounding environment, things and people.' [15].
- 'Children are so creative that they cannot stand still. I also have to do everything to self-develop my creativity. Otherwise, children will not understand me. Just everything for them will be insignificant.' [11].
- 'I love children very much and the proof of it is my comprehensive improvement and commitment to the job. For their sake I even pay for training courses on myself such that it becomes more interesting in the group.' [6].

Very often, teachers mentioned the factor that is related to their personality's development, particularly emphasising the growth of self-confidence as:

- 'While working I learned to be more self-confident. To be more precise and children taught me that. Children give me inspiration, love and positive thoughts.' [7].
- 'Giving to children, I myself get the most.' [10].

Teachers named the following occupational privileges: work is not monotonous, long vacation, steady salary; 'moving' work schedule, the possibility to communicate with various people (parents, co-workers, children and social partners), positive atmosphere at the organization and the possibility to always feel young.

- 'You will not find any other such non-monotonous job as a teacher's job. Every day something unplanned happens.' [1].
- 'The privileges are long holidays, shorter working hours and permanent salary.' [2, 16 and 32, etc].
- 'We teachers have the opportunity to communicate both with co-workers and children, their parents and individuals representing other professions.' [8].
- 'The fact that you will never get old and always feel young motivates.' [33 and 19, etc].
- 'The prevailing atmosphere is always good both in our group and institution. There is good communication with colleagues from other kindergartens.' [28].

Public significance

Respondents disclosed the public significance category through the following factors: suitability of the occupation for the individual and occupational meaningfulness. Suitability of the occupation for the individual was disclosed through the teacher's occupational roles:

- Relations between the teacher and learner; teacher-teacher; teacher-parents; teacher-director; teachers-representatives of other professions (special educator, psychologist and social educator, etc).
- Roles: Leaders, friends and consultants;
- Personal features: Responsibility, creativity, diligence, openness, assistance to another person, tolerance, proactiveness, respect, communication skills, patience,
self-confidence and honesty, etc.
- ‘Has to be able to maintain relationships with children, parents, co-workers and management’ [1, 17, 19, 25, 35, etc].
- ‘I have to demonstrate the leader’s features to children. I also have to let them demonstrate leadership in the areas where they are strong [39].’
- ‘What motivates to work is that I as a teacher can move away from that role and act as a friend for children [16].’
- ‘When I refused to act as a conveyer of knowledge and started acting as a consultant, I did much better achieving the results and kids like it better when I obtain a bigger motivation to work as a teacher [18].’
- ‘I am motivated to work because I have personal qualities suitable for the teacher: I am responsible, tolerant, can keep a secret and do not like gossips, etc [15].’

Occupational meaningfulness as a motivating factor in teachers’ responses manifested itself through the feeling of usefulness of their work, commitment, self-realization and personal evaluation such as:

- ‘Work provides me with a sense of inner satisfaction. It is hard to describe but when you need to introduce yourself to others or say your occupation, I feel elevated, while other colleagues, especially the younger ones feel discomfort [16].’
- ‘In my work I seek socially meaningful goals because I know that results have a lasting value’ [12].
- ‘There are conditions for constructive interpersonal interaction and various social contacts [25].
- ‘I am valued and respected by surrounding people’ [4, 10, 17, 27, etc].
- ‘I feel that I take up a valuable social status’ [40].
- ‘Every year, best teachers are elected, and the International Teachers’ Day is celebrated’ [31].
- ‘My neighbours, relatives and other people who I do not know come to me for advice [24].’

Cost effectiveness

By the cost effectiveness category the target group disclosed the demand of the occupation in the labour market and the possibility of career advancement and salary as motivating factors. The demand of the occupation in the labour market as a motivating factor in teachers’ responses manifested itself a little, although, according to teachers the occupation is unattractive in Lithuania due to inadequate remuneration for work. Various studies (Ingersoll and Merrill, 2012; Svensson, 2006) showed that the teachers’ status depends not on the salary amount but on public usefulness such as:

- ‘I know that my occupation is the most useful in the public but the salary could be higher’ [14].
- ‘Currently, the demand of pre-school teachers is considerable because young people do not want to study this speciality due to the low salary [9].’
- ‘According to survey data, in our country trust education occupies the 6th place (1: firemen, 2: the president, 3: the church, 4: State Social Insurance Fund and 5: the army). Therefore, the demand for this occupation is considerable [19].’

The possibility of career advancement and salary has also been emphasized little. Teachers’ career ladder is mainly related to permanent self-improvement through professional development. Motivation to work more manifested itself naming intrinsic motives rather than extrinsic.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it can be stated that teachers are motivated to work by three key factors: personal usefulness of the occupation, public significance and cost effectiveness. In all these categories internal factors prevailed over external factors. Personal usefulness manifested itself mostly through the need for improvement and professional privileges. Public significance manifested itself through appropriateness of the profession for an individual and occupational meaningfulness, while cost effectiveness manifested itself through the demand of the occupation in the labour market, the possibility of career advancement and salary. Thus, teachers are motivated to work by the following meanings perceived by them:

- Pedagogical work as a necessity, which creates conditions for development of cultural life;
- Pedagogical work as dissemination of the teacher’s personality;
- Pedagogical work as a service, meeting personal and societal needs;
- Pedagogical work as a source of personal status and identity;
- Pedagogical work as a source of activeness;
- Pedagogical work as an opportunity to share experiences;
- Pedagogical work as a provider of creativity and a sense of purpose;
- Pedagogical work as possession of relationships with various persons;
- Pedagogical work as teachers’ striving for well-being.

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