



MOTIVATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to examine and define the motivational orientations within the teaching profession, emphasizing the factors that stimulate and encourage individuals to choose and remain in this field. Pedagogical motivation is thoroughly considered through the lens of the theoretical models of A. Maslow, F. Herzberg, and the "Job Demands-Resources" (JD-R) model, which highlights the connection between working conditions and motivation. The study focuses not only on intrinsic motivation but also on external factors that can provoke and reinforce it.

A large number of active teachers and students training to become future educators participated as respondents through a pedagogical research method in the form of a survey. The results indicate that the combination of internal and external stimuli determines the sustainability of teachers' motivation. The necessity of improving working conditions and creating a favorable educational environment is emphasized in order to encourage long-term engagement among those surveyed.

Keywords: motivation, profile, educators

INTRODUCTION

The word παιδαγωγός (pedagogue) originates from the combination of two Greek words: παιδί, meaning child, and αγωγή, meaning guide. Thus, the literal translation of the term "pedagogue" is "child guide".

In Ancient Greece, this term referred to incapable and illiterate old slaves who were assigned the duty of escorting and retrieving the master's children to and from school. Today, a pedagogue is a person responsible for the preschool and school education and upbringing of the younger generation. This individual is tasked with achieving the goals of the educational process, which requires not only a broad set of knowledge, skills, and competencies but also a high level of motivation to ensure sustained engagement and continuous self-improvement – so-called lifelong learning. According to Zh. Karapenchev, the teaching profession is a key indicator of one's belonging

to this social stratum and a primary criterion for the public significance of the individual (1).

In her study, D. Zheleva-Terzieva (2) examines the personal and occupational dimensions of the teaching profession, outlining the diverse pedagogical functions, duties, responsibilities, requirements, and the personal qualities necessary for successful professional realization. The author categorizes the teacher's work into operational activities (preliminary preparation – planning) and methodological (core) activities, through which the lesson is conducted. Additional professional tasks are also identified, such as maintaining school documentation, participating in the work of the pedagogical team, ensuring conditions and activities for the protection of students' life and health, and evaluating achievements. The educational aspect of the teaching process is neither overlooked nor underestimated.

For centuries, the teaching profession has been regarded as a vocation with a fundamental role in the development of human society, with the ultimate goal being the education of future generations.

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Despite the challenges faced by educators, the profession is becoming increasingly desirable and attractive to many young people. This raises the questions: "What are the motivational elements that generate such significant interest in the profession?", "How does the pedagogical environment affect those currently working in the field?", and "What changes would they themselves make to the educational process to sustain or enhance their motivation?"

In seeking answers to these questions, it is essential to clarify the concept of "motivation" and to explore how the main motivational factors have evolved over time. The emergence of these factors is often associated with the development of motivational theories by A. Maslow and F. Herzberg, which prompted studies into the needs and motivators within the teaching profession. "The term 'factor' can generally be understood as a complex of forces that act upon an object (phenomenon, process), resulting in certain changes within it" (3).

L. Desev defines motivation as "a subjective internal determinant of human behavior, the analysis of which reveals the reasons and purposes behind a person's activity (both internal and external)" (4). A key factor for long-term commitment to the profession is the intrinsic motivation to teach, to shape the future of society through the eyes of children/students, and to share knowledge and skills. Educators who perceive their work as a vocation often demonstrate higher levels of professional satisfaction.

Motivation is a key factor that determines the life path and professional success of every individual. It is a driving force that encourages professionals in a given field to dedicate more time and make additional efforts toward self-improvement.

Different motivational factors exist for choosing any profession. In the field of pedagogy, the primary motivational factors identified by researchers include:

- Love for children – the desire and pleasure of working with them;
- Desire to change the world or specific societal sectors;
- Striving for personal growth – opportunity for professional advancement;
- Social recognition;
- Working conditions;

- Support from leadership and colleagues – working in a positive educational environment;
- Introduction of innovations in the educational process – use of new methods and approaches.

Motivated educators are a key factor in the effectiveness of the educational process.

Intrinsic motivation is a psychological factor that drives a person to act based on inner values, personal satisfaction, and the pursuit of self-improvement. It does not depend on external rewards, recognition, or incentives. In other words, motivation defines the reasons why people decide to begin or do something, their willingness to sustain the activity over time, and how persistently they pursue their goals.

With regard to the teaching profession, existing studies are related to the above (5, 6).

On the other hand, external incentives (support from colleagues and leadership, opportunities for professional development, adequate remuneration, and public recognition) significantly influence motivation. If external incentives are sufficiently strong and sustained, they can compensate for any decline in intrinsic motivation. Because overall motivation remains high, people will continue to meet expectations, as noted by D. Kanev (7).

Great interest has also been generated by the "Job Demands-Resources" (JD-R) model, which posits that when job demands are high and job resources are low, stress increases—and vice versa. A high number of job resources can offset the impact of high demands.

JD-R is "a theoretical framework that attempts to integrate two fairly independent research traditions: the stress research tradition and the motivation research tradition" (8). "Specifically, the motivational process of the JD-R model assumes that job resources enable employees to cope with demanding job aspects (job demands) while simultaneously stimulating them to learn and develop at work, which can lead to motivation, satisfaction, and organizational commitment" (9).

In this context, the question arises: Can motivation be directly influenced by the value of a specific stimulus? In order to determine to what extent individual motivating factors influence attitudes toward the teaching

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METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of the study is to identify and analyze the motivational aspects that influence the choice and sustained interest in the teaching profession, by comparing levels of intrinsic and extrinsic stimuli among future and practicing teachers.

In line with this objective, the study focuses on the following tasks:

- To determine the main reasons for choosing the teaching profession;
- To analyze the factors influencing educators' motivation;
- To investigate teachers' attitudes toward autonomy in the learning process;
- To summarize participant suggestions for improvements aimed at enhancing professional engagement.

This study was conducted using a quantitative approach based on empirical data collected through a survey method. Two identical standardized questionnaires specially developed for the study were used for the two separate respondent groups. The survey was conducted online in March 2025. The questionnaires include four closed and semi-open questions formulated in accordance with the research objectives, covering key topics related to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, factors for professional satisfaction, the significance of additional training, autonomy

in the educational process, and attitudes toward working in the modern educational environment. The study involved the following two respondent groups:

- The first group includes 82 students from the Faculty of Pedagogy at Trakia University – Stara Zagora, majoring in: "Preschool Pedagogy", "Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy", and "Primary School Pedagogy with a Foreign Language". The largest age group is between 18–25 years (67 participants) or 81,7% of all surveyed students. The remaining age groups are less represented: 26–35 years (7,3%), 36–45 years (8,5%), and 46–55 years (2,5%).
- The second group consists of 42 active teachers from the city of Stara Zagora, practicing across different educational stages. The largest number are employed in the primary stage – 27 individuals or 64,3%, followed by those in the lower secondary stage – 10 individuals (23,8%) and upper secondary stages – 5 individuals (11,9%). In terms of age distribution, teachers over 46 years old dominate, with the largest group being respondents over 56 – 28,6%, followed by 46–55 years – 26,2%, 36–45 years – 26,2%, 26–35 years – 14,3%, and 24–25 years – 2,7%.

The research method is descriptive-comparative with an emphasis on quantitative analysis and interpretation of data, comparing the opinions and attitudes of the two respondent groups.

RESULTS

The first question examines the main motives behind respondents' choice of the teaching profession. Respondents were allowed to select more than one answer, resulting in a greater number of responses than participants: 251 responses were recorded by students and 88 by teachers. The results, expressed as proportional shares, are presented in **Figure 1**.

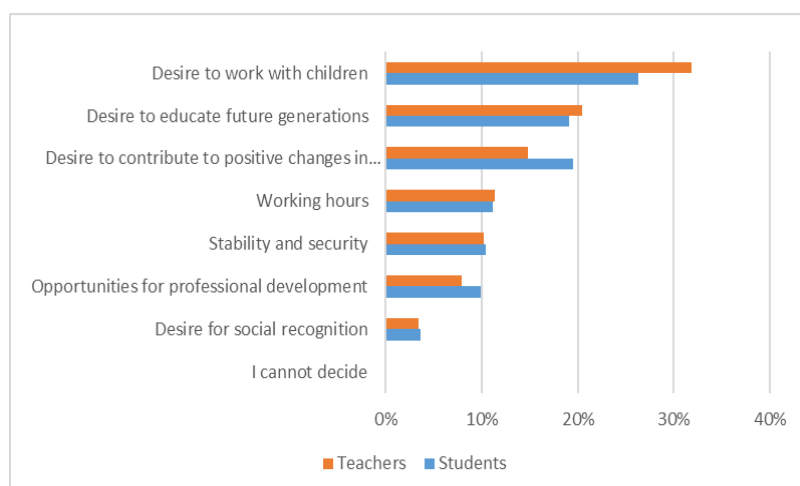


Figure 1. Results for the question: "What were the main motives for choosing the teaching profession?"

The comparative analysis reveals significant differences between the two groups in some areas, although intrinsic motivational drives dominate across both. The most frequently cited reason was the desire to work with children—mentioned 66 times by students and 28 times by active teachers, with a higher proportional rate among students (36,8% vs. 26,3%). A significant number of participants emphasized their wish to educate future generations and contribute to positive changes in the educational system. For the first option, students again had a larger share (25,5% vs. 19,1%), while for the second, teachers slightly exceeded students (19,5% vs. 14,8%). These findings reflect strong idealistic attitudes regarding social contribution and commitment to the educational mission.

Both groups, including students, highlighted pragmatic motives such as job security, stability, social recognition, working hours, and salary – indicating a realistic adaptation to the

system and a recognition of the need to balance ideals with life realities.

The findings are consistent with the conclusions of K. Yildirim, M. Alpaslan, and Ö. Ulubey (10), who note that motivation toward the teaching profession results from a complex combination of values, expectations, and institutional factors. Studying the interests, abilities, and needs of practicing teachers, M. Teneva (11) concludes that these factors exist in a triadic interdependence.

The second question from the questionnaire explores respondents' attitudes and desires for changes in the teaching profession. Respondents could select more than one answer, leading to a higher total number of responses than participants: 286 responses from students and 136 from teachers. The results, expressed as percentage shares, are presented in **Figure 2**.

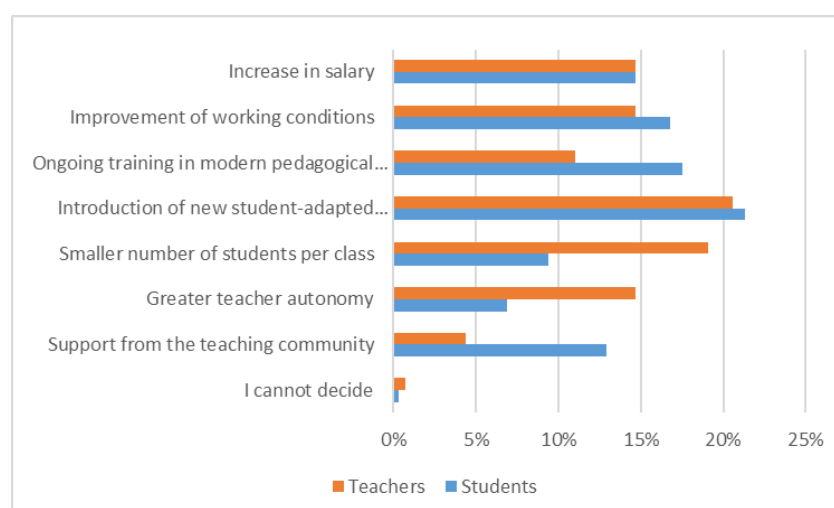


Figure 2. Results for the question: "What changes would you like to see in the educational system to increase teaching motivation?"

The most frequently cited response from both groups pertains to the introduction of flexible curricula, which allow teachers to adapt instruction to the needs of their students (21,3% of students and 20,6% of teachers). This indicates a shared vision of the need for greater autonomy in teaching and the ability to tailor educational content to classroom realities. This finding aligns with the understanding that motivation remains stable when teachers have the freedom to apply their professional judgment—a principle embedded in the JD-R (Job Demands–Resources) model, which emphasizes autonomy as a resource.

Among active teachers, the second most frequent response was smaller class "sizes" (19,1%), highlighting the close link between physical and emotional workload and feelings of professional exhaustion. This concrete measure could reduce classroom management stress and create a more suitable environment for individualized instruction and effective communication.

On the other hand, students ranked second the "availability of professional development and training programs focused on modern teaching practices" (17,5%), reflecting a high sensitivity

to the need for up-to-date, practical knowledge and a desire for continuous learning.

The question regarding the presence and evolution of motivation to work in the teaching

field reveals an interesting dynamic between future and practicing educators. The results are shown in **Figure 3**.

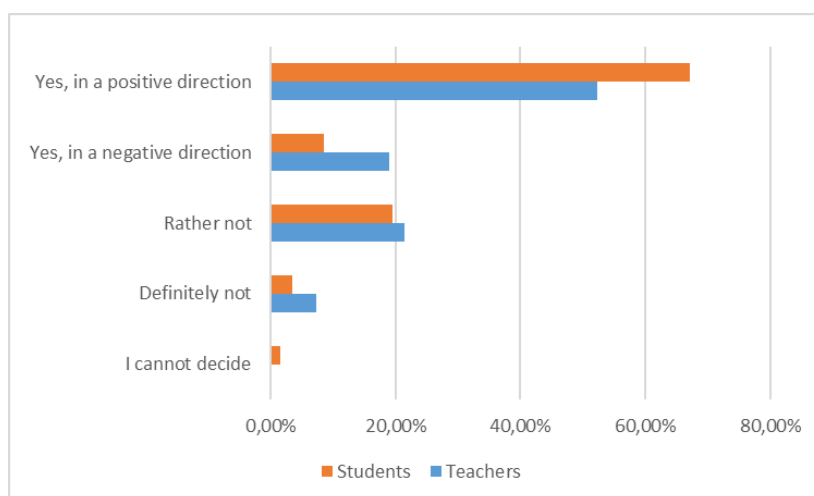


Figure 3. Results for the question: "Has your motivation to work in the teaching profession changed compared to your initial decision to pursue it?"

The figure shows that a significant share of students (67,1%) reported that their motivation has changed positively during their studies. Only 8,5% noted a negative change, while 19,5% indicated that their motivation had remained mostly unchanged.

Among active teachers, the ratio was as follows: 52,4% reported positive motivational changes,

19% noted a negative shift, and 21,4% believed their motivation had remained mostly unchanged.

The next survey question assessed respondents' desire to grant teachers greater autonomy in the educational process. The results are shown in **Figure 4**.

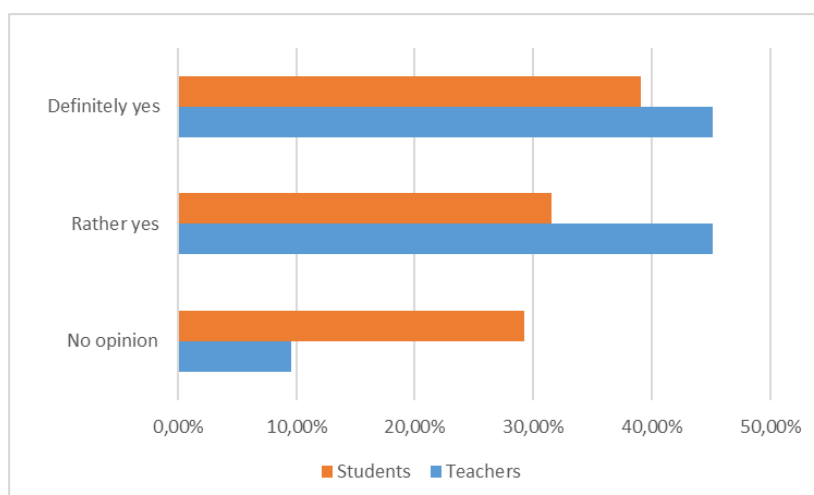


Figure 4. Results for the question: "Do you believe that teachers should be granted more autonomy in the educational process?"

Teachers expressed a clearly defined and unanimous opinion—90,4% responded positively (equally split between "Definitely yes" and "Rather yes"), while only 9,5% answered "Cannot decide". There were no negative responses ("Definitely not" or "Rather

not"). This indicates a conscious and stable need for autonomy, built through real professional experience.

Students also expressed support (a total of 70,7%), though they showed a higher

proportion of uncertainty (29,3%), likely due to the lack of direct experience in a real educational environment.

CONCLUSION

The conducted study provides a relevant and in-depth view of the motivational aspects of the teaching profession, highlighting key similarities and differences in the opinions, attitudes, and expectations of future and practicing educators. The data show that intrinsic motivational drives—such as the desire to work with children, contribute to societal development, and gain personal satisfaction from teaching—play a leading role in both groups.

At the same time, practicing teachers demonstrate clearly expressed pragmatic concerns related to working conditions, job security, and opportunities for professional development and advancement. This underscores the need for actual systemic changes to support long-term professional engagement in education.

Among future teachers, a strong idealistic orientation emerges, combined with an expectation for modernization and development of the educational environment. The overall picture suggests that the teaching profession remains significant and attractive, but requires continuous support and adequate conditions to ensure that teacher motivation is maintained and developed sustainably.

In summary, the results not only confirm the main theoretical concepts but also reveal a realistic and multi-dimensional view of the motivation of both future and current teachers, emphasizing the need for a balanced system in which intrinsic aspirations and external conditions complement each other.

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