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#### ORIGINAL PAPER

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## ATTITUDES TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION EXPRESSED BY MOTIVES OF CZECH AND POLISH STUDENTS FOR CHOOSING TO STUDY TEACHING

### POSTAWY WOBEC ZAWODU NAUCZYCIELA WYRAŻONE MOTYWAMI STUDENTÓW CZESKICH I POLSKICH DECYDUJĄCYCH SIĘ NA PODJĘCIE STUDIÓW PEDAGOGICZNYCH

**Keywords:**  
teacher, student of  
teaching, teaching  
profession, motiva-  
tion, attitude to the  
profession, choosing  
teaching studies

**Summary:** The choice of field of study is influenced by many factors. This text focuses on the factors that influence students to choose teaching as a field of study, and students' attitudes towards the teaching profession expressed by their motives for choosing this field. Based on selected factors (prestige of the profession, social importance of the profession, interest in working with children, etc.), the motives that played a role in choosing the field of study are identified among the interviewed students. The author did not focus solely on the Czech territory, but also carried out a research/survey of Polish students in the same field. The main goal of the research was to analyse the attitudes of Czech and Polish students toward the teaching profession.

The work follows the research investigation of prof. PhDr. Marta Klímová DrSc. from 1973, who carried out her investigation among students of the teaching programmes. Parts of

**Słowa kluczowe:**  
nauczyciel, student,  
zawód nauczyciela,  
motywacja, sto-  
sunek do zawodu,  
wybór studiów  
pedagogicznych

Klímová's questionnaire were also used in the survey, but these parts were updated due to changed conditions in education as well as some political changes.

The research group consisted of Czech students at Masaryk University of the third-year bachelor's studies Kindergarten Teacher Training and the third and fifth years of the study programme Primary School Teacher Training; and Polish students at the University of Silesia of the third-year bachelor's degree and second-year master's degree Early School Education and Pre-School Education.

**Streszczenie:** Na wybór kierunku studiów ma wpływ wiele czynników. W niniejszym artykule skupiono się na czynnikach, które wpływają na wybór dydaktyki jako kierunku studiów oraz na postawach studentów wobec zawodu nauczyciela wyrażających się poprzez motywy wyboru tego kierunku. Na podstawie wybranych czynników (prestż zawodu, społeczne znaczenie zawodu, zainteresowanie pracą z dziećmi itp.) wśród badanych studentów identyfikowano motywy, które odegrały rolę w wyborze kierunku studiów. Autorka nie skupiła się wyłącznie na terytorium Czech, ale przeprowadziła także ankietę wśród polskich studentów z tego samego kierunku. Głównym celem badań była analiza postaw uczniów czeskich i polskich wobec zawodu nauczyciela.

Praca jest wynikiem dociekań naukowych prof. dr hab. Marty Klímowej, która od 1973 roku prowadziła badania naukowe wśród studentów. Części kwestionariusza Klímowej wykorzystano w ankiecie badawczej, ale zostały one zaktualizowane ze względu na zmienione warunki w edukacji i zmiany polityczne.

Grupa badana składała się z czeskich studentów III roku studiów licencjackich na Uniwersytecie Masaryka oraz III i V roku programu studiów nauczanie na 1. poziomie szkoły podstawowej, a także z polskich studentów z Uniwersytetu Śląskiego – III roku studiów licencjackich i II roku studiów magisterskich studiujących na kierunku pedagogika przedszkolna i edukacja wczesnoszkolna I stopnia.



Research on the motivation of the students of teaching programmes is being conducted by researchers around the world (Chong & Low, 2008; Bastick, 2000; Yong, 1995; Heinz, 2013; Watt et al., 2012). Australian researchers P.W. Richardson and M.G. Watt (2005; Watt et.al. 2012) noted four main groups of motives for this profession: the nature of the teaching profession (teacher status, professional prestige, importance of profession for society), subjective perception of one's own preconditions for teaching, internal motives (especially personal and altruistic motives), motives of substitute choice. Heinz (2013) found that altruist motives and high expectations of the studies in the context of preparation for the profession predominate among the students.

Similar tendencies can be observed in the Czech Republic, with several empirical studies focusing on the motivation of students who have chosen to study pedagogy and work as teachers (e.g., Urbánek, 2001, 2003; Škoda & Doulík, 2006; Křesáková, 2001; Zormanová, 2011; Malá, 2011; Rybičková, 2009; Klímová, 1975; Havlík, 1995, 1997). For example, in the research by P. Urbánek (2001) it was found that among the advantages of the teaching profession that students appreciate, is interesting, creative, free, independent, and non-stereotypical work with children, and sometimes even the opportunity to work with children in general; this was also one of their motives for choosing pedagogy. For some respondents of this research conducted by Urbánek (2001), working conditions of the teaching profession, such as holidays, favourable working hours, also had a certain motivating effect on the choice of the teaching profession. Similar results were achieved by M. Klímová (1975), who stated that for 20.56% of respondents, the fact that teachers have additional holidays compared to other professions also played an important role in deciding on the choice of profession. Selfless motives appeared less frequently in the research conducted by Urbánek (2001); only 9.7% of respondents stated the opportunity of educating children and youth as a positive aspect of the teaching profession (Urbánek, 2001, p. 133). In the research carried out by J. Škoda and P. Doulík (2006) at the Faculty of Education at UJEP, the interest in working with children and youth was also found to be the main motivating factor for studying pedagogy. This is confirmed by Klímová (1975); in her research, nearly all respondents – future pedagogy students – i.e., 98.86%, stated “interest in working with children” as the motive for choosing pedagogy. Klímová's research also found that 98.49% of respondents stated a positive attitude towards teaching profession and 95.22% of them were aware of the social importance of the teaching

profession, which was also identified by the respondents as a motive that influenced their choice of study field.

In the Polish territory, the following motives for choosing pedagogy were recorded: obtaining higher education, career change, opportunity of career advancement (e.g. Szymczak, 2013). Focusing on the motivation to study pre-school pedagogy, research identified the following motives: desire to study the preschool pedagogy, interest in working with children (Dycht, 2013).

The presented study builds mainly on the research carried out by Klímová. Because the author believes that the results of Klímová's work, as well as the results of the following research projects (Křesáková, 2001; Rybičková, 2009; Malá, 2011; Zormanová, 2011) no longer reflect the current situation regarding the teacher's profession, the decision was made to modify the questionnaire by Klímová and use it to carry out new research with current students. Furthermore, the author expanded the study sample with students of pedagogy from Poland. The results of this paper identify the factors that influence the choice of students in favour of pedagogy and their attitudes to the teaching profession expressed by their motivations to enrol in the study programme of pedagogy. The research was conducted with a) Czech students at Masaryk University in the final year of the "Teacher Training for Kindergartens" bachelor's programme and in the third and fifth year of the "Primary School Teacher Training" master's programme; and b) Polish Students of the University of Silesia "Pre-School and Early-School Pedagogy" in the third year of bachelor's programme or the final year of follow-up master's programme.

## Method

The main goal of the research was to analyse the attitudes of Czech and Polish students to the teaching profession as expressed by their motives.

The following sub-objectives of the research are based on this main research goal:

- The aim of the research was to find out the attitudes of Czech students towards the teaching profession expressed by their motives.
- The aim of the research was to find out the attitudes of Polish students towards the teaching profession expressed by their motives.
- The aim of the research was to find out whether the attitudes of Czech and Polish students towards the teaching profession expressed in terms of motives differ.

In line with the research objectives, the following research questions have been identified:

- RQ1: Do students show interest in the teaching profession already during their studies?
- RQ2: Which motives influencing the choice of study are described by students as the most important?
- RQ3: Are there differences between Polish and Czech students in attitudes towards the teaching profession as expressed by their motives?

**Research method.** To achieve the research goal, a quantitative method was used, using the questionnaire of Klímová (1975) as the research tool. However, the questionnaire was not used in its entirety. Questions or parts that were no longer applicable or suitable were omitted, e.g., questions regarding work in defunct political/social organisations, questions regarding political affiliation, needs of society, work admittance. Furthermore, some questions were modified to better fit the current world, e.g. “Have you been awarded an honourable mention or prize in a district, regional or national competition?” was reworded to: “Have you won a prize in a district, regional or national competition?”

**Research sample.** 228 students took part in the research. 100% of respondents were women.

The research sample consisted of 106 Polish students. These were students at the University of Silesia, studying the third year of a bachelor’s programme and the second year of a follow-up master’s programme of Pre-School and Early-School Pedagogy. In Poland, pre-school pedagogy and primary pedagogy are studied together in Pre-School and Early-School Pedagogy (*Edukacja wczesnoszkolna i wychowanie przedszkolne*). Specifically, there were 58 students in the second year of the follow-up master programme and 48 in the third year of the bachelor programme.

Furthermore, the research sample included 121 Czech students. These were third year students at Masaryk University, doing the “Teacher Training for Kindergartens” bachelor’s study programme and the third and fifth years of the “Primary School Teacher Training” master study programme. Specifically, there were 40 students in the third year of the “Teacher Training for Kindergartens” bachelor’s programme, 48 students in the third year of the “Primary School Teacher Training” master’s programme and 33 in the fifth year of the above-mentioned master’s programme.

In the Czech Republic, the study fields of Primary School Teacher Training and Kindergarten Teacher Training are studied together. Teacher training

for kindergartens can be studied as a three-year bachelor's programme and as a follow-up two-year master's degree programme. Teaching for the Early-School can then be studied as a five-year master's degree programme.

## Results

**Interest in studying pedagogy and the work of a teacher.** All surveyed respondents were interested in studying pedagogy and working as teachers.

The fact that 51 Polish students (48.1%) stated that they did not apply for any other university programme and wanted to study only pedagogy is a testament of their interest in teaching. Furthermore, 43 Polish students (40.6%) stated that although they applied for another programme and were accepted to it, they did not start it because they wanted to study teaching. Czech students also responded similarly. 47 Czech students (38.8%) stated that they did not apply for any other programme than pedagogy and wanted to only study pedagogy. And 32 Czech students (26.4%) stated that although they applied to a different programme and were accepted to it, they did not start it because they wanted to study pedagogy. Only 12 Polish students (11.3%) and 32 Czech students (30.2%) applied to a different subject to which they were not admitted and which they had preferred to pedagogy. It should be noted that 77 Czech (63.6%) and 65 Polish students (61.3%) do not think that it is easier to get into teaching compared to other fields. Regarding the question of difficulty of studying pedagogy, 83 Czech (68.6%) and 68 Polish (64.2%) students do not believe that studying teaching is easier than studying another field of study.

As a fundamental motive for choosing pedagogy, 99 Polish (93.3%) students and 112 Czech (92.5%) students stated that they liked the teacher profession. The interest in the teacher profession correlates with another result of this research, where it was found that all respondents read pedagogical and psychological literature. Moreover, both Czech and Polish samples had a fairly large number of students who already had experience working with children; most frequently as holiday camp leaders (52, i.e., 42.9% of the Czech students and 72, i.e., 67.9% of the Polish students); or tutors (40, i.e., 37.7% of the Polish students, 75, i.e., 61.9% of the Czech students).

**Attitudes towards the teaching profession expressed by motivation to choose pedagogy.** In the research, we focused on the most important motivations of respondents for choosing pedagogy and the teaching profession.

An important motive for choosing pedagogy is the creative nature of the teaching profession. For 98 Polish students (92.4%) and 101 Czech students (83.5%), it was important to be able to apply their skills in their profession. From that point of view, the teacher profession seemed most appropriate, as they assumed that teachers could achieve self-realization and apply creativity. Another important motive for choosing pedagogy was also the subjective feeling of the respondents about the importance of this profession for society, and based on the research results, we can state that all respondents value the profession as highly important for society.

Many respondents appreciated the teacher's profession because they thought that after graduation, they would be able to find work near their place of residence. However, in this regard the views of Polish and Czech students differed. Only 41 Czech students (33.9%) believed that they would be able to work in their place of residence, while 51 of them (42.1%) thought the opposite. Whereas in case of Polish students, 86 respondents (81.1%) believed that they would find work near their place of residence and only 2 respondents (1.8%) believed they would have to relocate to find work.

Similarly, when it comes to stable salary, there is a difference in the motivations of Czech and Polish students. Only 45 Polish students (42.4%) considered stable salary as one of the motives for studying pedagogy, 19 of them (17.9%) did not think teacher profession would secure them stable salary and 42 (39.6%) Polish students answered they did not know. If we look at the answers of Czech students, then 80 respondents (66.1%) considered stable salary as one of the motives for studying pedagogy and only 23 of them (19%) did not agree. The reason for the difference in the answers of the Czech and Polish students to this question is undoubtedly the fact that in Poland, teachers have been dissatisfied with their salaries for many years (Piasecka, 2009; Jakimiuk, 2008).

The influence of family is also mentioned in multiple research studies (e.g., Malá, 2011; Rybičková, 2009; Klímová, 1975) as a frequent motive for studying pedagogy. In the examined sample, 18.9% of Polish respondents had a father or mother who worked as a teacher, 2.8% of them had a sibling who worked as a teacher. In the Czech Republic, 14.9% of respondents stated their mother worked as a teacher, 0.8% had a father in the teacher occupation, and 7.4% had a sibling who was a teacher.

**Differences in the attitudes of Polish and Czech students towards the teaching profession as expressed by their motives.** Both Polish and Czech

respondents stated that they liked the work of a teacher, because it corresponded with their needs of self-realization, provided them with ample opportunities to use creativity and their abilities. No significant difference was found between the attitudes of Czech and Polish respondents in this area.

In other aspects, however, significant differences in the attitudes of Polish and Czech students were discovered.

The subjective views of students on how society values teachers showed the biggest differences. As for the Czech respondents, 38% of them believe that society respects teachers, while among Polish respondents, only 6% are convinced that society respects teachers.

Similarly, a significantly different attitudes were found between Polish and Czech students in the issue of the salary of teachers. While 66.1% of Czech respondents believed that one of the motives for choosing pedagogy as their major is a stable salary, only 42.2% of Polish students shared this belief. The reason may be the long-term dissatisfaction of Polish teachers with their salaries (Piasecka, 2009; Jakimiuk, 2008).

## Discussion

The presented study has shown a high interest of students in working in education and a conscious choice of their major in higher education. The following findings are also connected with the interest of working as a teacher: all respondents read pedagogical and psychological literature; 52 Czech (44.9%) and 72 Polish (67.9%) students have already worked as holiday camp leaders; 40 Polish (37.7 %) and 75 Czech (61.9%) students provided tutoring.

The research was also focused on finding out the attitudes of Czech and Polish students to the teaching profession as expressed by their motives.

All the surveyed respondents stated that it was important for them to be able to use their abilities in their profession; from that point of view, the teacher's profession seemed the most suitable, as they perceive that teachers are given opportunity for self-realization and creativity. Research by Zormanová (2011), Urbánek (2003), Klímová (1975) and Malá (2011) also arrived at similar findings. Among the motives that influenced the choice of the profession of students, the motive of the importance of this profession for society dominated and based on the research results we can state that all respondents perceived the teaching profession as highly important for society. In the research conducted by Klímová in 1973 among applicants to all faculties of education in



the former Czechoslovak Republic, it was found that 95.22% of respondents were convinced of the social significance of the teaching profession, and they also identified this belief as an important motive for choosing the profession. In 1973, it was also found that 63.6% of respondents considered the teacher profession to be prestigious, enjoying respect in our society. The belief in the prestige of the teaching profession played a significant role in the respondents from 1973 in choosing to study pedagogy (Klímová, 1975). At present, however, the results of the research already indicate a decline in the prestige of the teaching profession. If we compare the current situation in the Czech Republic with the 1970s, we find that in the light of the results of research, the prestige of teachers has decreased quite significantly. For example, in Urbánek's research conducted in the years 2000 to 2002 with a research group of Czech teachers, it was found that two-thirds of Czech teachers perceive the prestige of the teaching profession as unsatisfactory (Urbánek, 2003). Similar results were arrived at by Malá (2011) in her research conducted among full-time students of teacher training courses at the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University, which found that only 27.4% of respondents were convinced of the prestige of the teaching profession. The decline in the prestige of the teaching profession is also evidenced by the research by Zormanová (2011) carried out on students of Kindergarten Teachers studying full-time. In the context of this research, it was found that only 55% of respondents believed that people respected teachers. Also, in this research/survey, a decrease in the prestige of the teaching profession was found in comparison to 1973. In our research/survey, only 38% of Czech respondents believed that society respected teachers, while 33.1% of respondents were convinced of the opposite. The answers of Polish respondents testify to even lower prestige of the teaching profession in the eyes of society, 76.4% of them stated that the profession of the teacher does not enjoy prestige in society and only 6.6% were convinced of the opposite. Here we see a significant difference between Czech and Polish students.

Similarly, when it comes to the motivation by stable salary, there is a difference in the attitudes of Czech and Polish students. Only 45 Polish students (42.4%) and 80 Czech students (66.1%) believe that one of the motives for studying pedagogy is a stable salary. The reason may be the long-term dissatisfaction of Polish teachers with the level of salaries.

The influence of family is a frequent motive for choosing to study pedagogy in many research studies (e.g., Malá, 2011; Rybičková, 2009; Klímová, 1975). For example, Klímová (1975) in her research provides the following data on

the influence of family on the choice of the teaching profession: in the examined sample, 9.4% of the respondents had a father who worked as a teacher, 12.8% had a mother who was a teacher, 4.96% had siblings as teachers. We also reached similar results in the research. 18.9% of Polish respondents state that they have a father or mother working as a teacher, 2.8% of them have a sibling who works as a teacher. For the Czech respondents, the percentual representation of respondents whose relatives work in the teacher occupation is as follows: 14.9% – mother; 0.8% – father; and 7.4% – sibling.

## Conclusion

This work focused on the motives that led Polish and Czech students into choosing pedagogy, specifically Polish students of the University of Silesia in Katowice and Czech students of Masaryk University. The Czech students at Masaryk University were in the final year of the “Teacher Training for Kindergartens” bachelor’s programme and in the third and fifth years of the “Primary School Teacher Training” master’s programme; the Polish Students of the University of Silesia studied “Pre-School and Early-School Pedagogy” in the third year of bachelor’s programme or the final year of a follow-up master’s programme.

The research helps to understand the motivational aspects valued by the students of the Faculty of Education at Masaryk University and the Faculty of Education of the University of Silesia in Katowice, and the results of the research can help in subsequent work with students and their preparation for the teaching profession.

It is also useful to be aware of the changes in the attitudes and motivations of students of pedagogical faculties and in the views of the whole society on the teacher’s profession, as they emerge when comparing the results of our research with the research on the topic previously carried out (e.g., Malá, 2011; Zormanová, 2011; Rybičková, 2009; Klímová, 1975). We find significant differences in the comparison of respondents’ beliefs about the prestige of the teaching profession. While the prestige of the teaching profession played an important role for the respondents from 1973 in choosing to study pedagogy (Klímová, 1975), in later research and in this research, respondents find the prestige of the teaching profession to be unsatisfactory (Malá, 2011; Zormanová, 2011; Urbánek, 2003). However, what has not changed is that respondents acknowledge the importance of the teaching profession for society. Similarly, between the research projects carried out at different times

(Malá, 2011; Zormanová, 2011; Klímová, 1975) and in this research, the respondents agree that the profession of teacher is highly important for society. Furthermore, the respondents of the abovementioned research projects agree that they can use their own abilities in the teacher profession, as teachers are given opportunity for self-realization and creativity.

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