Abstract

The motivation for teaching is one of the conditions of success of the teaching activity. This construct is constituted at the intersection of a plurality of variables, which can be detected by some "information units". The present research explored the motivational variables in a group of 200 students attending to became teachers in qualifying courses at the University of Salento (Lecce, Italy).

The motivational variables on which the survey was focused are the following:

a) Motivational variables related to professional identity
b) Motivational variables related to the role
c) Motivational variables connected to extrinsic elements (eg remuneration)
d) Motivational variables related to the type of subject taught.

The survey, which used a 23-item tool, explored each of the variables listed above through multiple choice questions and Likert scales and produced the following outputs:

a) A description of each of them through descriptive statistics indices
b) An exploration of the correlations (even partial and multiple) between the different variables and between the "information units" and the different variables
c) The elaboration of motivation models, through exploratory factorial analysis, aimed at investigating the saturation of the different items on different factors, in order to make their interpretation.

The data emerged, in addition to allowing the elaboration of a synthesis framework of the professional profile of the teachers who are preparing to enter the school world, offers a reference point for identifying the training needs of the incoming training courses.

Keywords: Incoming training, professional identity, motivation, training needs.

1 INTRODUCTION

Motivation is a complex and multidimensional construct, linked to the social and cultural environment. It is located at the intersection between the person's motivational characteristics and the perceived situation [1]. Motivation is a dynamic factor that mobilities the energy of a system [2] and is influenced by situational variables [3].

Motivation, besides being a dynamic factor, is also a variable process, whose mutability depends on the interaction of different dimensions (biological, emotional, cognitive, behavioral), on factors (internal to the subject and external) and on the processes of the person [4].

The motivation to teach is not directly observable, but can be deduced from some behavioral indicators of the teacher: the choice of objectives, teaching methods and strategies, the general disposition towards students, the relationship with colleagues, etc. It is related to self-efficacy and self-determination [5].

Motivation is educable in the sense that it can not only be identified in the action of each one, explored and measured, but also developed, strengthened and optimized through appropriate interventions and solicitations in the continuous interchange between personal and environmental components.

Today the motivation to teach is an important indicator of the well-being of the teacher in the school and of the scholastic institution, as a whole.
A motivated teacher expresses a conscious and effective teaching proposal, offers students significant learning opportunities and designs quality educational courses. All this guarantees good learning results that satisfy, among other aspects, the expectations of the family, society and stakeholders.

Essential components of the motivation to teach are self-regulation and self-efficacy [6]. Teachers' motivation is closely related to perceived self-efficacy in teaching, good performance by students, self-determination, and control of the teaching-learning relationship. A strong sense of self-efficacy in teachers promotes a solid professional commitment and collaborative relationships with colleagues and families.

The dimensions of self-efficacy, self-determination and control are part of the "metacognitive attitude" [7]. The teachers who possess it can boast high levels of satisfaction with their work, are able to manage their emotions in teaching and are more effective in the face of critical situations.

2 METHODOLOGY

An exploratory survey was launched on professional identity and motivation to teach on a group of no. 200 subjects preparing to become teachers by attending a Teaching Qualification Course at the University of Salento (Lecce, Italy).

The purpose of the investigation was to understand if the variables identified in the theoretical study phase (self-efficacy, self-determination, etc.) have a raison d'être, how they relate to each other and whether and to what extent they render different models of motivation.

The group interviewed is mainly composed of women, in the 20-30 age group. Half of them is awaiting first assignment, the remaining part has performed occasional tasks. About the degree course of origin of the interviewees, the humanistic area predominates, the economic-juridical area follows, and finally the mathematical-technological area. There are only a few specialized subjects, while only n. 6 subjects have the qualification to teach.

We have found the presence in the interviewees of the explicit and verbalizable component of the motivation through a survey, which used a 23-item, explored each of the variables listed above through multiple choice questions and Likert scales.

The survey was divided into 3 sections:

1. Professional identity and reasons for the choice
2. Motivation for teaching
3. Training needs.

The survey explored each of the variables listed above and produced the following outputs:

a) A description of each of them through descriptive statistics indices
b) An exploration of the correlations (even partial and multiple) between the different variables and between the "information units" and the different variables
c) The elaboration of motivation models, through exploratory factorial analysis, aimed at investigating the saturation of the different items on different factors, in order to make their interpretation.

In the pretest phase, attention was paid to the traditional critical elements linked to the use of the questionnaire [8]: tendency to respond in a conformist manner, tendency to agree on everything and systematic tendencies (constant bias that leads to giving answers extreme or to always use the central point of the response scale).

During the data interpretation phase, an overview of the answers provided by the interviewees was elaborated according to the qualification class to which they belonged (humanistic, economic-juridical, mathematical-technological).

3 RESULTS

In summary, the data collected showed that the interviewees do not have an effective representation of the teaching profession. The answers related to this aspect, in fact, are not statistically significant, probably because there has not yet been the actual encounter with the scholastic reality.
The teachers in the phase of incoming training do not have objective elements (the actual practice of teaching, the knowledge of the critical aspects of teaching, a methodological preparation, etc.) to structure their own professional identity. For this reason, they rely on elements of their own personal experience such as:

a) Their own background of old students (their own experience of the school and the meaning attributed to it)

b) The affective dimensions linked to the memory of a particular teacher, considered a model to be inspired by

c) The narratives of the school, teaching, characteristics of the students, etc. learn from other colleagues already inserted, from the media, etc.

The interviewees, in fact, were not even able to highlight any critical elements related to the profession, precisely because they do not know the real dynamics of exercise.

More than half of them, however, believes that the teaching meets their professional aspirations.

Regarding the choice to become a teacher, the variable that has most influenced is the passion for the discipline.

The representation of the interviewees about the teaching role, at the level of the ideal, is affected by the emotional component: they would like above all to build an emotional bond with the students and understand the profession mainly in this dimension. Always following the emotional wave, among the motivations that led to choose this profession, the passion for the discipline is decisive with respect to more pragmatic aspects such as economic compensation, social recognition, etc.

With regard to technologies, we are not in the presence of "fanatics": the interviewees consider them important but to a moderate extent.

The consideration of the moral component linked to the profession was high: the interviewees gave importance to values such as loyalty, respect, solidarity, etc.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The data that emerged from our survey prove useful from two points of view:

1. Allow the elaboration of a summary picture of the professional identity of the teachers who are preparing to enter the world of school

2. Offer decision-makers a perspective to identify the training needs of subjects engaged in training courses entering the teaching profession.

The motivation to teach is a skill that must be built and nurtured during professional practice. Motivation is always educable but, in the absence of appropriate solicitations, motivational beliefs tend to stability and confirmation [9].

From our point of view, an important lever to face the critical issues nowadays connected to the exercise of the teaching role, especially during the initial training, is to intervene in a double sense: supporting the structuring of the professional identity and supporting the motivation to teach.

It is therefore necessary that, in the aspiring teacher, the right predisposition to embrace this profession is nourished through the direct knowledge of the scholastic reality through the training and through the moments of specialized training. The encounter with the working reality will allow to start the development of competences that can be defined as "non-specific":

a) Working in groups (at an intrasystemic and extra-systemic level)

b) Animating the educational and didactic setting urging everyone to express themselves and relate

c) Communicate effectively by exchanging experiences, feelings and building bonds

d) Managing the educational relationship with the willingness to accept the other

e) Know how to investigate, organize, listen and observe

f) Managing complexity by developing the ability to interpret socio-cultural changes [10].

These skills are useful both in teaching practice for students and in collegial work with other teachers.
The teaching profession is today a demanding profession, which requires a solid human profile, a series of skills and a special incoming ongoing training.

We are in the presence of social and cultural changes that also affect the scholastic institution, of new educational needs of the new generations, of many educational emergencies to which we are called to respond as educators. In parallel, there is unfortunately the poor social recognition of the profession. Therefore, according with OECD, political and financial interventions are also necessary to provide well-structured and resourced induction programs for new teachers [11].

The teaching profession needs to be competitive with other occupations in attracting talented and motivated people. The moral strength and motivation of teachers also influence the attractiveness of this profession towards the new generations.

At the system level, support and back-up tools could be envisaged to facilitate entry into the professional career, benefiting from consultancy on specific aspects related to teaching planning and teaching activities, assessment of learning outcomes and collaboration with the teaching staff. The introduction of a professional “portfolio” would make it possible to articulate professional growth paths such as to guarantee the newly hired teacher to adopt the organizational model and to understand the hierarchical structure of the school system to which it belongs. It is desirable to arrive at a guided and protected form of insertion, supported by specially trained figures for an accompanying function, based on defined learning standards or as an alternative to a program of progressive strengthening and strengthening of professional skills [12].

It is necessary to introduce newcomers to the profession, requiring them: a) a degree of performance at the level of expectations b) an insertion, immediately, within a professional community, providing tools for a constant comparison with the most experienced teachers c) the inclusion in training, psychological and pedagogical paths, to support their motivation to teach and to grow as education professionals.

REFERENCES