

# TEACHER STUDENTS IN THE NORWEGIAN PRACTICAL PEDAGOGICAL EDUCATION COURSE

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## Abstract

This article is based on a survey of teacher students taken during the one-year practical pedagogical course, qualifying students to teach in secondary school, where they report their attitudes, values, and motivation concerning perspectives on teaching. We wanted to find out what the Norwegian teacher students thought was important while taking the course. The basic findings are that the students' values are in concordance with the general values in our society, and that the students are predominately influenced by intrinsic motivation but that extrinsic motivation also plays an important part, especially for students who had experienced unemployment.

Background variables like gender or linguistic minority did not make any difference. Our findings indicate that the students are strongly motivated to work with children and young people, and that they found practical pedagogical education relevant and displayed positive attitudes towards the content of the course.

Keywords: Teacher training, motivation, student attitudes.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Recruitment to teacher education and teaching positions is a problem in Norway. Many students drop out during their teacher education, and about a third of newly qualified teachers change their profession during the first five years of their career (Dahl, Buland, Finne, & Havn, 2006). Because of this, the number of students who graduate each year is not sufficient to replace the number of teachers who retire or leave schools for other reasons.

In this article, we will focus on the teacher education program called Praktisk Pedagogisk Utdanning (PPU), which is the counterpart of the English Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). In Norway, this is an obligatory part of the teaching education for those who have completed a bachelor or master's degree and wish to work as teachers. In a quantitative survey conducted in January and February 2017, comprising PPU students from four different schools of education, we set out to explore personal attitudes and expectations regarding future work in classrooms and to discover some of the motivational factors that induce students to enrol in the PPU teacher education program.

PPU is one of two school-led main career paths which lead to a certificate of teaching, largely directed towards pupils aged 10–18 years. Quite often students attend the one-year PPU study part time, thus devoting two years to completing the program, and frequently combine their studies with a teaching job in a nearby school.

The framework for PPU has recently undergone revision. The government regulations of 2015 underline, for instance, the schools' responsibility to identify children and young people with special needs and recognize signs of violence and sexual abuse. The authorities also emphasize the necessity of improving coherence between theory and practice. The main objective of teacher education, in a broad sense, is to professionalize future teachers to master their role as managers of their classrooms—to motivate, guide, and assist the students in their learning and to teach the subjects effectively. The competences that teacher students are supposed to acquire are of importance in our study to see if the students' aspirations are in accordance with the frameworks.

In this article, we focus on the part of the survey that was directed towards the question of motivation. We wanted to identify some of the motivating factors that induce students to choose a teaching career. Ryan and Deci (2000) claim that motivation is absolutely necessary for higher quality learning. They divide motivation into two main categories, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with intrinsic motivation being the best foundation for higher learning and success. They also underline the importance of autonomy and self-regulation as central components of intrinsic motivation.

According to Snyder, Doerr & Pastor (1995), the teachers who feel that a teaching career is a way of fulfilling intrinsic motivation and personal needs are more likely to succeed. Before constructing the questionnaire, we discussed questions like what characterizes the students, why do they pursue a teaching career, do they like the studies, and do they really want to work with children or youths.

Roness and Smith (2009) found in their survey of PPU students that students registered for the course to improve their options in the job market and to feel confident in their work. However, the main finding was that students wanted to ensure the possibility of working with their academic subjects. Kyriacou, Hultgren, and Stephens (1999) had similar findings, and their conclusion was that working with children was a main driving factor behind students' priorities. Other studies confirm that the top considerations in pursuing a teaching career seem to be the desire to work with children and youngsters, make a difference in young people's lives, and the inclination to teach the subjects they had previously studied themselves (Pajares, 2008).

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Procedure

Students from four different teaching colleges participated in this survey. The total number of participants was 281, 127 female and 154 male. The questionnaire answered by the students consisted of 101 items/statements. Eight items were background variables like gender, educational background, parents' education, and their primary language. The other items can be divided into two categories. The first and largest category is based on the objectives described in the framework and curriculum, and the second about motivation and studying habits. The students were asked to choose between five possible answers to the 93 questions: totally disagree, disagree, indifferent, agree, totally agree. Students reacted to 15 statements about various motivational aspects in choosing the PPU. These ranged from more general statements like "I am motivated to become a teacher" and "I think I will enjoy the teaching profession" to more specific statements like "I am taking PPU to get a permanent position" or "I want to have more options."

*Table 1. Percentage distribution of some chosen statements.*

Statements	Totally disagree/disagree	Neither/ or	Agree/totally agree
It is important that the teacher has knowledge about behavioural problems.	1,09	2,17	96,74
It is important that the teacher can be a support to students with special needs.	1,09	3,62	95,29
It is important that the teacher can detect substance abuse problems.	2,20	10,26	87,55
It is important that the teacher can reveal sexual abuse.	2,93	13,92	83,15
It is important that the teacher can uncover bullying among students.	0,00	1,49	98,51
It is important that the teacher has knowledge of students with a minority background.	1,50	7,12	91,39

In Table 1, the statements reflect the main the objective of the teacher education. As can be seen most the students agree or totally agree with all the statements, uncovering bullying being the most unifying.

Further, we did a frequency analysis on the 15 statements describing different motivational aspects. To get an overview the items were recoded, merging "totally disagree" and "disagree", and "agree" and "totally agree." The general tendency is a certain bias between these indicators. The students have to a greater degree stated they agree rather than disagree.

**Table 2.** Percentage distribution of some chosen statements.

		Totally disagree/disagree	Neither/or	Agree/totally agree
Intrinsic	I like working with children and youth.	2,9	5,4	91,7
	I desire to work as a teacher.	2,2	4,3	93,5
Extrinsic	I want to become a teacher to have a secure income.	23,7	28,0	48,4
	I want a safe position.	7,5	15,1	77,4

The distribution of some chosen statements is presented in Table 2, The first two items are an expression of intrinsic motivational factors, while the other two are extrinsic motivational factors. The students agree to a greater degree with the items expressing intrinsic motivation than those expressing extrinsic motivation.

To investigate whether there is a basis for developing complex constructs from the different items, a factor analysis was conducted. The factor analysis showed that there was a possibility for two complex constructs, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. This will be explained further below. The construct "intrinsic motivation" is assembled by five indicators. Some examples of items in the construct would be "I desire to work as a teacher" and "I think the teaching profession is interesting". The construct's reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha (0,73) and shows a high inner consistency between the items. The construct "extrinsic motivation" is assembled by three indicators. Examples of the items in this construct include "I am attending PPU to acquire a safe job" and "I want a safe position". The construct's reliability was measured by Cronbach's alpha (0,65) and shows a high inner consistency between the items.

**Table 3.** Mean and standard deviation for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

	Intrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation
Mean	4,01	3,70
Standard deviation	0,64	0,87

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the constructs intrinsic and extrinsic motivation for the students as a whole. The mean is weighted through dividing the number of items in the construct, so that they can be compared directly. When looking at the constructs, we see that the students report that they are more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically. The standard deviation is also lower for intrinsic motivation, which means that the students are more homogenous (they agree) in their answers when it comes to intrinsic motivation than extrinsic.

We analysed further to see if there could be a difference in the average value of the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when grouping the students according to the different background variables. However, we found only marginal differences in the mean between the groups of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation when looking at background variables like gender, language and so on. The exception was when we divided the group according to their answers on whether they had been unemployed or not during the three last years. Those who had been unemployed had a significantly higher mean on the construct extrinsic motivation compared to those who had not been unemployed the last three years (see Tables 4 and 5). For the construct of extrinsic motivation there were not significant differences in the mean value.

**Table 4.** . T-test constructs of motivation.

Unemployed during the last three years		Average	Standard deviation
Intrinsic motivation	Yes	3,93	0,63
	No	4,04	0,64
Extrinsic motivation	Yes	3,96	0,74
	No	3,59	0,90

**Table 5.** T-test constructs of motivation.

Independent Samples Test									
		Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean difference	Std. error difference	Confidence intervals	
								Lower	Upper
Intrinsic motivation	Equal variances assumed	0,637	-1,397	275	0,164	-0,11506	0,08236	-0,27719	0,04708
	Equal variances not assumed		-1,401	171,045	0,163	-0,11506	0,08212	-0,27716	0,04705
Extrinsic motivation	Equal variances assumed	0,057	3,412	277	0,001	0,37284	0,10928	0,15771	0,58797
	Equal variances not assumed		3,649	204,533	0,000	0,37284	0,10217	0,17140	0,57427

**Table 6.** Percentage distribution from being unemployed or not. I think I will still be a teacher in ten years.

Unemployed the last three years		
Yes	Totally disagree/disagree	5,7
	Neither - or	30,7
	Agree/totally agree	63,6
No	Totally disagree/disagree	5,3
	Neither - or	23,9
	Agree/totally agree	70,7

### 3 RESULTS

When looking at the intrinsic and extrinsic constructs, we have seen that the students are overwhelmingly influenced by intrinsic motivation. Most of the background variables did not make any difference. However, when analysing the data further, we found that there was one background variable that came out differently, whether the students had been unemployed within the three last years.

Those who had been unemployed were to a higher degree motivated by extrinsic motivation than those who had not been unemployed. At the same time, we see that the informants reported strong intrinsic motivation for teaching. Connected with the perspectives of Ryan and Deci (2000) on motivation, the find creates expectations for the students' drive to succeed in their studies and thereby makes them appear to be ideal candidates for a teaching profession. The data strengthen the students' reputations as dedicated future teachers.

Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2008) indicate that motivation can be understood as a process that initiates and maintains target-oriented activity. When we see that students are genuinely interested in learning about topics that do not directly affect their primary education, this is positive for several reasons. First, it corresponds to our findings that indicate they have a sincere interest in working with children and young people, and second, they find that the content of the study is meaningful.

In this study, we chose to associate inner motivation with the students' commitment to and interest in working with children and young people. In terms of external motivation, this relates to engagement that can be explained by external conditions, such as a desire for good grades or better working conditions in the longer term. We see a danger in this connection to easily perceive external and inner motivation as two opposites. However it's not that easy. Both internal and external motivation change over time, depending on context and situation here and now.

When the students who had been out of work stated to a greater extent than others that wishing for permanent positions had been a motivating factor in terms of study choices, we do not find this surprising. Admittedly, the desire to work is an example of external motivation. However, at the same time, it is worth noting that these students, as much as the others, also have an inner motivation for the educational content of the study. This impression is reinforced by the fact that they also state that they like to work with children and youths just as much as the other students.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

In recent years, Norway has seen a tendency towards fewer students applying for teacher education, while the need for new teachers is greater. Therefore, it is important to be open to other viable alternative education routes. The findings in this study indicate that the students concerned have a unique interest in working with children and adolescents, which is very favourable. It is also positive that they feel that the content of the new teaching profession is meaningful.

At the same time, there is a great need for more studies that can reveal more about how these students thrive with the challenges they encounter later in school. This could be of significant importance not only in view of the content of the PPU study, but also its future form and organization.

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