

**Theses of the Ph.D. Dissertation**

**The Effects of Gender on the Teachers' Professional  
Goals, Career Path and Commitment**

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## **The Aim of the Dissertation, Determination of the Topic**

The first and then the second McKinsey Report – in 2007 and 2010 – and, of course the international and national researches following them, made it evident that the main factors determining the quality of education are the teachers' preparedness, ability and knowledge measured by qualifications as well. Therefore, there has been a greater and greater emphasis on researching the teachers' career path, efficiency and commitment in the past decade but at the same time, it is not clear how efficiency can be defined, how the different forms of human capital along with abilities and competences measurable with qualifications and academic knowledge compare to one another.

The early researches on efficiency tried to collect the characteristics needed for the teachers, however, these lists of characteristics proved not so useful since the characteristics mentioned are already formed in the individual before the teacher training. There is still a professional discourse on the personality traits, abilities or systems of abilities that are said to be ideal. The measurable characteristics mentioned before – like qualifications or knowledge of the major – are important and relatively well-grasped, but at the same time they do not linearly affect the performance of the students. According to the researches there is a stronger correlation, for instance, with reflectivity or the use of many teaching methods, however, these are far more difficult to apprehend.

Irrespectively, human capital indicators are certainly not to be neglected: researches on teachers – for example the international TALIS surveys, or a research made by the Education Research and Development Institute in 2014 – show that preparedness in the majoring subject is of high priority for teachers. Another national research from 2014 inspected the opinions of the students who valued the knowledge of the majoring subject very important in terms of the excellence of the teachers, however, for them enjoyable classroom management is as important as well. This is in line with an earlier American result from 2001: students valued it the second most important that the teacher could use his or her high level of subject matter knowledge in practice, too. Nevertheless, the methodological knowledge of pedagogy can be only partially listed to the human capital indicators: abilities of problem solving and process planning gained during the teaching practice can be put into the category of 'decisional capital' named by Hargreaves. At the same time, further training and the acquired knowledge there clearly enrich the human capital.

Characteristics listed to the decisional capital are generally described by the teachers' competences, but the concept of competence itself is problematic and its interpretation is not

uniform. In general, it means proficiency and adequacy. According to the Pedagogical Encyclopaedia it is basically a cognitive trait where motivational elements, abilities and other emotional factors play important roles. It is often used as the synonym of talent and skill sometimes complemented with attitudes. Others find the inner psychological processes significant as well, for example, in the interpretation of Nagy competences make up a full system that contain perception, decision-making, activity planning and performance, too.

Compilation of lists of competences started in the United States in the beginning of the 90's. Their standards serve as pattern in the Anglo-Saxon countries and then later in the Middle and Eastern European countries as well, such as in Slovakia, Hungary and Romania. Competences have become major concepts in the qualification system of teachers of our country and they are central elements in the academic discourse. For instance, Falus essentially puts an equal sign between our teachers' competences and the standards elaborated in the United States. While the criteria of the efficiency of the teacher can be relatively well-described with competences, in their case there is also an upcoming problem that if they are set out from the context of the education policy and appear as the objects of academic discourse then they can be extended unlimitedly just as the former lists of characteristics that are needed for a teacher. An example for this work is the work of the Educational Research Institute of Pécs. They made a wide range of competence list attached to certain subjects, but with some subjects they also listed characteristics that are important competences for all teachers, such as, 'contact competences due to the life of the school organization', 'competences of advocacy' or 'competences of self-realization'. The results from Pécs primarily raise the attention to the fact that the eight competences which are widely used in Hungary now do not probably cover all areas needed for the efficiency of the teachers and secondly, a too detailed list which wants to encompassing everything will be less useful than the previous list of characters that basically describe a over idealized person.

In my thesis I used the decree of 8/2013. EMMI regulation on the teachers' competences. As these appear with relatively similar composition in professional discourses, training and qualification requirements and in the rating system as well, we supposed that most of the teachers have already formed their opinions about the importance of them, so they do not meet new concepts during the questionnaire. However, we did not wish to expand the list of competences too wide we disintegrated the ones that the decree handles as one unit though it covers more competences as well in reality.

The early definitions of professional development had contained the enrichment and development of knowledge and professional skills or the attitudes and the overview of the

teacher's work before the concept of competence became generally used. According to the latter definitions professional development means the development of the teacher's competences; including attitudes, values and cognitive knowledge, the last of which is along with self-reflection as well. Professional development is a long term progress in every case that is not independent from the school environment and the students. The advancement and the development of the teacher's competences starts during the teachers' training and under optimal conditions it continues during the years spent with teaching. The concepts of career cycle and career path are already closely related to this: most people use them as almost synonyms and only some complex models take the other elements of identity and possible crises into consideration that can both affect the conformation of the career cycle. The latter ones also explain that the teaching level, where one teaches/educates, the area of education or discipline where his/her work connects and the expectations against him/her also influence the identity and the career cycle of a teacher. However, neither do these theories touch on the fact that expectations are strongly influenced by the gender of the teacher. The dimension of the gender is generally researched by the Anglo-Saxon researchers but not in connection with the fullness of the career path or competences but rather in a smaller area of interest.

Nevertheless, the expectations and characteristics of the teachers' profession were formed by social, economic and political progresses that took place at more or less similar times and similar ways in the Euro-Atlantic countries. We can see the effect of three, not independent from each other: a high rate of women's appearance in the labour market instead of their previous work in the family farms; the change of the construction of professions between the two World Wars with new professions appearing after World War II and the expansion of the public and higher education. The similar incidences of these processes can be in the background – even though they had different national education and educational management cultures – that researches in connection with the teachers in Europe, in the United States and moreover, in Australia find similar problems and provides a similar teacher's image.

The feminization of the teaching profession in the above mentioned countries – just like in Hungary – was hand in hand with the change of the teacher's image. Among many others, the researches of Drudy, Figula, Kozma and Szabó raise the attention to the phenomenon that in the present Euro-Atlantic educational systems the care for children, advanced social competence and methodological skills play a great role in the teacher's image and its expectations. At the same time, some earlier researches call the attention to the fact that a caring teacher performs poorly at some important characteristics like assertiveness, self-

reflection to negative effects or management skills.

Parallel to the change of the teacher profession, a new concept appeared in the 70's: *semi-profession*. The earlier categories - the *profession* and the *occupation* could not describe the existing professional groups satisfactorily. The teaching profession got into the new category of semi-professions: even Etzioni (1969), who first used the concept, said that semi-professions are typically female, helping jobs. This dimension came up in later analyses as well, and there were authors who said that these professions are semi-professions exclusively due to the women's predomination.

Both the question of gender and professions are connected to the concept of leaving the teaching profession. Some studies about commitment to the career and leaving the teacher career path points out the status of the professionalism of the teacher career path with the questions of prestige and autonomy; in relation to the attraction and keeping of the excellent students in the profession there should be a move from the present semi-profession to the direction of profession. Some authors dealing with the topic mention retirement and change of institution as well, but they basically regard it leaving when the teacher leaves the teaching profession itself. They find it even more problematic that there is a great rate of leaving (10-40 percent) within 5 years from starting the career that they – partly or fully – think to be the failure of career-socialization. As there is a significant rate of leavers among the men, the characteristics of gender cannot be overlooked. Among the reasons we can find a better salary in another profession and that men with higher qualifications can find numerous opportunities in other segments of the labour market. Only Smith points out that for some primary school teachers it is hard to identify with the caring teacher's image mentioned above.

The aim of this thesis is to inspect these above mentioned phenomena expansively in relation to **the efficiency, professional goals, career and plans of further training of the teachers**. With the collective application of the frameworks of gender studies and profession theories it tries to find the answers to the following questions: how the teachers, women and men in the different levels of public education relate to the expectations against them and the opportunities of development; which ones they can identify with during the realization of their role and – what is even more important from the viewpoint of the education system – which ones support them in being efficient.

There are more factors affecting the professional development of teachers: on the one hand, the level of education where the teacher works and on the other hand, the climate and requirements of the educational institution. It is also influenced by the teacher's image with which he/she identifies or should identify with and the prestige and professional autonomy

that are assigned to the teacher profession. Obstruction, crises at certain points of the life career or when the above mentioned factors, like **systematic effects, teacher's image or the prestige become problematic can lead to leaving.**

The high rate of women among the teachers cannot be qualified either positive or negative; however, for students it would probably be more beneficial to have a more balanced rate. At the same time, in any effeminate profession the salaries get lower and men do not feel the job to be adequate and eligible thus affecting the whole profession. Therefore it is worth taking a look at the status of the teacher's career: it was listed as a semi-profession in the lower degrees of education from the beginning, while the work of a university professor – or the secondary teacher that earlier was considered a higher academic quality job by the society – qualified as a profession. Partially for these reasons there have been questions arising, like why personal experimental knowledge is becoming more determinative than the application of the theoretical and practical knowledge gained during the formal teacher training: according to Fónai this is a typical symptom of de-professionalization. Namely, in case of professions the professional protocols, the existence and tracking of the knowledge bases evolving during the practice are more emphatically transmitted while personal knowledge and empathy are also needed for one to become an excellent professional.

The existence of progresses of professionalization or de-professionalization can be supported with the demographical data of the practitioners of a given profession. In case of traditional professions the recruited base is primarily the upper-middle class. By inspecting the law students, Fónai finds it justified that in their case professional policy recruitment. When further analysing the data it is remarkable that this is true mainly in the case of the Eötvös Loránd University: the rate of parents with higher degree reaches two-third. However in the University of Szeged only one-third of the students have parents with degree. Students majoring in Management Organization have only one-fifth of the parents with degree: the career of a teacher, which is traditionally a way of social mobility, has similar rates. Besides the parents' qualifications the qualification of the spouse can also have significance. The role of marital mobility has changed during the past decades just as the institution of marriage has been transformed as well. At the same time, the cultural capital of the parents, the individual's education, financial state and marriage according to status together form the individual's social status and all in all, the worse and worse state of an individual on a certain career path implies de-professionalization while high individual status indicate the professional state of the given profession.

In the segment of the gender and professions there is the question of the advancement

of the career. In connection with that Fényes explains: it is more typical for women to have more qualifications on the same level while men's further studies are motivated by the attainment of a higher level qualification. The analysis of the data of the "Graduate Follow-up Research 2010" showed that the collection of same level degrees are typical for most of the teachers while getting the Ph.D. qualification is primarily among the plans of the men.

The advancement of the prestige of the teacher's career and therefore the acceptance and maintenance of the best skilled students on the career path would be helped if the teacher's profession bore the marks of professions. Among the previously listed things it would be especially important that further trainings strengthened the problem-solving/researching and/or decision-making competences and roles. The latter ones are more masculine while the whole of the teacher's career show feminine traits. An example for this is the growing demand of having a caring attitude for teachers to turn to the students. Nevertheless, only some, mainly Anglo-Saxon researches dealt with the attitudes of the teachers towards these demands and opportunities and which of them they can identify with during the realization of their role. Again, which is even more important, which ones support them to be efficient and whether there are any among them which can mean obstacles for the efficient teaching and could also the rate of leavers. We try to find answers to these questions during the empirical analysis.

## **Methods**

The research is based on the database of the TELEMACHUS 2014 (TEachers' LEarning Motivation and ACHievement in eastern part of HUngary Survey).

The data collection was achieved by the researchers of the Centre of Higher Education Research and Development at the University of Debrecen (CHERD-Hungary). Therefore the questionnaire contains the question blocks of the researchers taking part in the survey. The question blocks serving as the basis of this thesis were the ones about the teacher's professional goals and competences to be developed, like professional past, participation in further training and study plans from more points of view. Besides the originally planned variables to study we asked about other issues, for example in connection with the maintainer. The data collection happened between 1 October and 15 November in 2014, basically by filling out paper-based questionnaires. After the data collection there was a new supplementary online data collection carried out in the districts of the public educational institutions with pedagogical training of the University of Debrecen.

The database included the data of 1056 respondents. The sample showing the characteristics of the teachers working and/or participating in further studies in the studied region is in accordance with the Hungarian population of teachers with regards to gender and age. The rates in the different educational levels act on those of the Hungarian population of teachers less. While 20 percent of the teachers work in Kindergartens, 50 percent in primary schools and 30 percent of the remaining work in secondary education (grammar school, vocational and technical school), in the sample the rate of Kindergarten teachers is 12.6 percent, the rate of primary school teachers is 48.9 percent, secondary school teachers is 34.7 percent and 3.8 percent of them teachers in united institutions. Therefore, with their low rate, we did not analyse the teachers in united institutions and in connection with the Kindergarten teachers we only took some significantly explicit correlations into consideration. The inferences in connection with them call for further research but we could not overlook them since the demographical features of the Kindergarten teachers – such as parents' qualifications, type of settlement or the rate of special professional exams among them – is in accordance with the specialized literature.

The variables manifesting in data of the human capital of teachers are: qualification, the attained degree and the participation in further trainings. In connection with the latter one we analyse the usefulness of the trainings and the methodological features applied as the system of the Hungarian further training are less appropriate for the criteria of effectiveness; so the number of trainings itself does not necessarily show how much they contribute to the advancement of the human capital.

Another variable is the commitment to the career and the intention of leaving. The specialized literature is not uniform with regards to efficiency getting into which category: if a career entrant does not stay in the teaching profession then it appears as the lack of teaching experience that can also be listed to the human capital. Pusztai regards the commitment to the career as an indicator of the success of career socialization while Fullan and Hargreaves connected to the practice – and yet similar to Pusztai – see it as part of a 'decisional capital', a concept coined by them that is embedded into the context of the wholeness of career socialization. According to them the decisional capital is such knowledge that is needed for the analysis of complex pedagogical processes and a more effective treatment of upcoming problems. They emphasize that it is a problem of attitude when every third teacher, with whom the students meet day by day, would like to do something else besides teaching.

Another dependent variable is how much teachers regard certain competences and skills important. This was inspected by two question blocks as well: we assembled one of

them on the basis of earlier researches of students and asked about the goals to be realized during work. This contained statements about the basic tasks (e.g. setting order in the classroom), goals with knowledge in the centre (e.g. giving the most knowledge possible to the students) and goals of innovation (e.g. using the most methods possible). The other one measured the demand of development of the competences written in the Hungarian qualification requirements, but we wanted to describe its content with more lifelike concepts which are closer to the everyday practice.

Our explanatory variables are the gender of the teacher and the highest educational level where they teach. We also looked at the highest qualifications of the parents and spouses along with their financial state to see how much that affects the attained human capital, the further study plans and all in all, regarding the wholeness of the sample it refers to processes of professionalization or de-professionalization.

## **Hypotheses**

1. For male the teacher's career is more difficult to choose than women for the following reasons: relatively unfavourable earnings (just as we could see in the data of OECD, they get 41-48 percent of the wages available with similar education as a teacher) and the contradictory role expectations – to be caring and at the same time authoritative and resolved. Therefore, according to our expectations, there are more men who are planning to leave the teaching profession. This is supported by the data of Varga as well, showing that the gender of the respondents was significantly affecting the probability of the choice of the teacher's career; moreover, the men's rate among the career entrants who leave was over 60 percent. At the same times, for their symbolic state of men are probably in a better financial state than women.

2. We suppose that men will identify with the masculine features better from the set goals during teaching and expected skills, such as the importance of knowledge, result orientation or keeping a bigger emotional distance. So leaving the profession is not only motivated by an available better income but the teacher's image that is less fit to men's gender role. In cases of goals, the above mentioned result comes with the fact that cooperation and care for the students will be more significant for women.

3. According to both the traditional stereotypes and in the role of the teacher, society expects connection orientation and caring behaviour, so our supposition is that women will lay store by these kinds of goals and competences, such as personal care, listening to

problems and setting equal opportunities. They will identify less with the components of knowledge-centeredness.

4. It is true for both genders that they have more degrees; however, getting the higher scientific degree is a typical career strategy of men. For women it is more typical that planning further education means another degree with the same level and not taking part in the Ph.D. program. Therefore, we expect that there will be no significant difference between the genders in the intentions of further training, while significantly fewer women plan to start the Ph.D. Program.

5. At first, women appear on the lower level of education while the image of a secondary school teacher was a learned man in a university-toga. The feminine features of the teacher's career have been strengthened for the last decades with expanding of education bringing in new groups to schools who took part in education for only a short time or they completely dropped out. However, as we wrote in the chapter on profession theories, the different teaching professions separate, such as in case of prestige. Therefore, we suppose that in some cases of the importance of the tasks to be accomplished and the different competences it will not be the gender that is determinate but the highest level of education where the teacher works. So in lower education level, care and generally the feminine values will be more determinate, while for secondary teachers' knowledge-centeredness and masculine features will be more important. Participation in trainings and expectations in connection with them can support the co-existence of professions emphasized by Fónai.

## **Results of the Research**

1. Demographical data show that the status of men significantly differ from the women. There is a smaller difference in the qualification of the parents: in case of men there are more parents with at least a secondary school graduation, so there are more of them stepping on the career path from lower-middle class families, while there is almost no difference between the rates of parents with degrees. There is a greater difference in the spouse in its status reinforcing role: 80 percent of men choose spouse or wife with degree. There are younger men living with a partner with degree than older ones, while in case of women, we can see the opposite tendency, which can refer to the fact that the status and the judgement of the teacher's career have not changed – at least in this respect – in the last decades. The objective financial state of men is clearly more advantageous than women. There can be more reasons for this: teaching on higher level of education – where men are

more present – with favourable income. Doing extra work – moreover, it is often not extra work of teaching - and filling a leader's position of an institution is more frequent among men so this also contributes to their better financial state.

The variants of the human capital show that men judge the status and opportunities of career of the teacher's career path completely different than women. They regard the teacher's career as a scientific career: men with university degrees are a priori in a higher rate in the career path and twice as many gain another university degree than women. Again, compared to women, twice as many of them think the attainment of the Ph.D. grade is possible than women.

Our hypothesis about leaving – and the results of earlier researches supporting that – was only partially justified. **In case of elementary school teachers, it is true that men do not identify with the teacher's career and role as much – while there is a group within the secondary school teachers who are not satisfied in their workplace and career and – independent from the gender – they consider a change. We can find those teachers in the group of teachers who are overrepresented in the innovative factor, meaning it is more important for them to follow the educational novelties, the continuous renewal of the curriculum and the use of most possible educational methods.**

2. The interpretation of the teacher's image is drawn by the importance set store by the competence areas and professional goals. In conclusion this shows that there are few sharp differences between the genders. Regardless of gender, the development of problem solving competences or the support of the students' learning are extremely important for everybody. We could identify one of the traditional of masculine and feminine dichotomies: knowledge- or personality-centeredness. Namely, major subject preparedness and development of theoretical knowledge is more emphatic with men. It is interesting, that the development of the students' personality is important for both genders; but men imagine that without the cognition of personal problems so – in accordance with the statements in the literature – they do need greater emotional distance.

3. The existence of relationship-oriented attitude shows among women in all areas: besides development of the students' personality they think professional cooperation important and even in choosing further training it also means motivation for them if it enables them to have new personal and professional relationship. The latter one can be positive in the makings and development of professional networks' point of view; whether these networks come to life and if yes, then what yields these expanding networks bring could be a matter of further research.

4. Female teachers follow the feminine career strategy on their career path described by Fényes: they enter the career with lower level of degree, collect degrees of the same level and do not consider getting the Ph.D. grade probable. Only 16 percent of them enter the career with university degree, and most of them do not think it can be a scientific career prospect. It is true though, that in case of their further studies for degrees those with university qualifications doubles but do not reach one third – as opposed to the men; almost 60 percent of them had university degrees after getting the second or third degree.

5. The claim to further trainings and satisfaction with them strongly differs regarding gender. Women take part in further trainings and think them more useful for their professional development than men. Interactive teaching methods would be more demanded by women more significantly. There are special feminine features appearing in these results: girls like all subjects in the primary school better than boys and this attitude remains later as well. Group work, the analysis of personality in front of others is more attached to the feminine role and is less accepted by men. From all of the above we can infer that participation in further trainings or the often mentioned, very important aspect of self-reflection are not indispensable of the profession and career of the teacher: if it was, than men would surely be as active in this area as they are for example in – measurable and meaning real advancement – getting a higher level university degree. This is a difference as a whole that is between the professions and semi-professions.

In accordance with the above mentioned the analysis of competence areas and teaching goals show that the use of many teaching methods, professional development and the ability of self-reflection are also more important for women so they tie more to the gender than professional identity. This is a question that cannot be avoided from the viewpoint of the efficiency of education as it would be necessary to plan the learning progress and the use of different teaching methods.

However, the influential effect of the educational level was justified as well: it forms the attitude towards the further trainings and getting degrees. Kindergarten teachers take part more in the special exam training while teachers working in schools regard getting the university level degree important. We may find it in the background that the Kindergarten teachers cannot find a university level training more easily that is close to their work than teachers. We cannot ignore the fact that finishing a higher level school grade means higher prestige according to the literature: if one feels the acknowledgement of the profession of the teacher then it can motivate him to get a higher level degree.

Examining the effects of the educational level there is a new and not expected result

that the attitude towards further training compared to the teacher's image works out in an opposite way: **from the Kindergarten teachers to the secondary school teachers there are fewer and fewer respondents take part in further trainings and the demand for interactive methods also decreases.** Secondary school teachers are less able to combine further trainings with their work, find trainings which are good for their expectations and find the finished courses less useful. In other words, we can find the more feminine attitude of Kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers and the more masculine attitude of secondary school teachers.

All in all, the results of the research raise attention to the fact that gender strongly affect the role interpretation of teachers and in some cases it is an obstacle for the effective work. Those traditional teacher's images that were formed at the time of women stepping on the teaching profession are still affecting the forming of the roles of the teachers. For the entire gradual feminization of the teaching profession, the feminine, caring teacher's image is a characteristic of lower educational levels, while knowledge-oriented, more masculine teacher's image is typical for secondary schools. This is modulated by the educational level, **in case of the secondary school teachers it is overwritten by the more masculine teacher's image which spreads to the women as well, moreover, at the expense of an innovative approach. This is strengthened by the fact that there are no differences in gender when considering leaving: there is a stratum who is not satisfied in his workplace and career and – independent from gender – considers leaving.**

In the present Hungarian system the typical career path is strongly attached to gender. Female teachers gain more degrees (often with the same level) and most of them find it important to be reflective but dislike the scientific career. Male teachers, sooner or later get university degrees during further trainings and not against getting the Ph.D. grade, do not think further trainings to be effective and take part in a smaller rate than women as well. **In this framework it means a problem that searching for the methodological diversity causing productivity or the interactive trainings focusing on problem-solving is typical for women and from them, those who work on the lower levels, while these are important criteria for all teachers.**

It is also justified that the teaching career, being a semi-profession, is mapped in the length and methodology of further trainings and in a way that they are less important in the career path. There is an exception from the latter one in case of trainings which are special exams or university trainings that are important not for their usefulness but the fact that they give certificated which promote career advancement. These two features have the following

results: for men, or generally for secondary school teachers the use of many teaching methods, the following of educational novelties and participation in high-standard further trainings are not significant; however, according to the literature, the importance of these goals would be adherent to the realization of the effective teacher.



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### List of publications related to the dissertation

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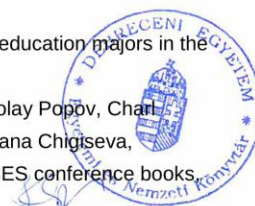
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