BEGINNER TEACHERS: INITIAL TRAINING VERSUS CLASS REALITY

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Abstract

Being educated has nothing to do with how many schools you have attended or how many books you have learned by heart. But it has to do with curiosity about what is around you and a desire to help others. Once you have discovered the secret you want to share with the world and you begin to master it, you are on the right path. All you have to do is study and experiment as much as you can, to be sure that education suits you. As a student, you have to be duty oriented and learn as much as you can about anything that might help you in the future. And as a teacher, you need to find the best solutions so that you can answer any unspoken needs of your students or even yourself.

This research analyses the relation between the proper training that teachers have during their initial training and the needs and expectations from the classroom. It is a mainly quantity study, but from time to time there are even some quality characteristics that are there only to emphasize the general perspective.

The obtained results can provide a solid base for further studies in this area of expertise.

Keywords

Education, teacher, initial training, need, expectation, relationship

INTRODUCTION

Education is a complex process that has its own weak and strength points. Every academic character that takes part in this movement has its own part in the holistic development of human as a living being. The two most important assets of education, that

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influences almost everything around them are the teachers and the students. They are the one that turn the face of education into a dynamic component of society and through them, a brighter tomorrow can occur. But for this to happen, the common factor must be analyzed with reality and study what documents have to say about each one of these two variants.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

We propose to have a look over the regular student situation in the Romanian educational system. Who he really is? What are his needs and expectations? In other words, what is his role in the academic field? And finally what should his relationship with his colleagues and other teachers be?

In some studies, the students are like "a real partner of the teacher […] He is the major actor of active learning, where all students look for information themselves, they intercept them, then they work together" (Ciot, 2012, p. 206). Also, his personality and way of acting, if they are studied in detail, can give us stable raw models that can promote the individuality of this concept (Mih, 2010). To better understand a student, there should be bigger attention to the relationship he has with the other component, the teacher. This relationship should be used in such a way that it can provide the best interpersonal, emotional, and ethical resources. And for doing that, all the component elements of this type of agreement should be fully understood and sensed. According to an article written specifically for this topic, this situation can be fully recognized and sustained (Frymier Bainbridge & Houser, 2000). If this relationship is adequate, and the latter respect his needs and identity, then the true development of the student will take place (Enăchescu, 2008).

A human being has all sorts of needs that need to be accomplished, like security, property, happiness, and self-validation, and one of them is believed to be the need to be educated (Voiculescu, 2008). If for some reason these needs are being neglected, the

integration and the desire to go to the next level are being blocked. Thus, that person will miss his goals, and the perspective of a greater achievement will fade away until all the needs are satisfied. This idea is being studied in some articles that present the relationship between a child's desires and his needs' level of satisfaction (Bohn, Drysdale, & McBeath, 2018; Elliot, Lauchlan, & Resing, 2017; Luftenegger, Milatz, & Schober, 2015).

For this to work out, there is a piece of the puzzle that is the most important asset: a safe and healthy relationship among students and teachers. It is a very delicate matter because there are preconceptions and expectations on both sides. Even though there have been numerous studies on this account, some of the most encountered refer to the first impression that students have when they first enter academic environment. Every student feels this meeting in a different way and has different ways of reacting to it. Also, the teacher has its own way of expressing its thoughts about this. The article that was published in 2004, states these facts clearly (Brouwers, Evers, & Tomic, 2004).

However, the teacher's desire to enter a career of teaching and remain in the profession should be taken into consideration. The motivation for the present and future career is what gives the teachers the passion to give everything they got into educating the younger generation. There is also a saying about the motivation behind becoming a teacher in the first place. You only do this because deep down inside you there is an unanswered question about how to educate in a better way. The more you dive in into becoming yourself a tool of teaching for the young generation, the more you may be able to find solutions for your own issues. By solving it out into the open, you can cure what lays deep inside. Also, the students don't have to be left outside. Their desire to continue their studies more and more thoroughly gives them the energy they need to keep the connection between educative finalities together. Something that can help in this manner could be

found in the articles written by many known authors (Allen, Boyle, & Roffey, 2019; Hobson, Malderez, Tacey, & Tomlinson, 2008).

In order for all of the above to accomplish, the initial formation of the teachers has to be exemplary and set a pattern for future generations. This preparatory education should be continuous and always evolve so that all the methods and instrument that don't work out to be improved. In such a manner a mentoring service should be right at hand.

There are some main areas covered by the latest research (Hamzah, Manzor, & Vikaroman, 2017; Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Lawry, 2017) referring to specific experiences (Joseph, 2011; Lampertová & Wiegerová, 2012; White, 2011), tools used (Hobson & Malderez, 2013; Joseph, 2011; Lampertová & Wiegerová, 2012; Marsh & Mitchell, 2014; White, 2011), initial training (Lawry, 2017; Spătărelu, 2019a), and characteristics of the teachers (Spătărelu, 2019a).

Next, there is an emphasize on the results that sustain the belief about this matter, that there should be a balance in the theoretical formation of the beginner teachers before they encounter the students and their experiences.

METHODOLOGY

The next part of this article presents the results from a mainly quantitative research on this topic conducted on the field involving both teachers and students. The next sections of the methodology show relevant parts that can better describe the outcome.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study is to find out why there is a gap between the theoretical side of the teachers' professional training and the practical side where they run activities most of the time. In other words, why there is no complementary or balance between these

two actions? And what are the perspectives that should be taken into consideration regarding this situation?

Based on this goal, the following objectives have been formulated:

1. Identifying the teachers' perceptions about the existing relationship between the needs of being theoretical and practical educated.
2. Investigating the teachers and students' perspectives about their needs and expectations.

Hypotheses

1. The teachers do develop the required competences to carry on specific educational activities if they attend the initial training classes.
2. There are significant differences among teachers and students' perceptions regarding the student's needs and expectations.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are some suggestions given by the teachers who attended the training classes to improve their influence in the future?
2. What is the opinion of some students about the school environment?

Variables

In this case there is a possibility of working with two kinds of variables, that will help form a better picture about the whole process. On a careful look, all of these can be a real help for studying the reality behind each subject.

Independent variables:

1. Attending to initial training classes.

2. Needs and expectations of the student.
Dependent variables:
1. Teachers and students' perceptions.
2. Teacher's required competences for educational activities.

Methods

The study is based more on quantitative responses, the tool used is a questionnaire. It is a mirror effect, having questions both for the teachers and students to see the whole picture of the process. The questions that will be discussed next are the ones that made a point in our topic. At some point there is an open question about some changes that need to be done, and here is the place where the participants have suggestions about a better development in the future. All the figures and charts are in the appendix section of this article.

Population

There were 118 teachers and students questioned, of different gender, coming from different cultural backgrounds, each having different ages, different initial training levels, and attending different academic levels as can be seen in Figure 1, Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5, and Figure 6. Each characteristic has a role in the study of each variable present in this research.

Limits

As the population sample is vast and diverse, there are some limits of this research that need to be taken into consideration. Most of the questionnaires were taken online without interfering one with another. Thus, the population sample can choose whether to answer honestly or not, so at one point the results may not be genuine 100%. Still, their sincerity and integrity are assumed true.

RESULTS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE METHODOLOGY

As it was said before the tool is being formulated in a mirror effect so the received answers can be better analyzed. The answers to each item show the inner response of the subjects to the main topic: review of the education. In other words, the interest in on finding out what is the teachers' and the students' opinion regarding the same topic.

Opinion about Teachers

One of the items referred to the general view the students have on the teacher. The results (Figure 7) revealed that a very big percentage of the students (almost 80 %) had a very good impression about their teacher, whereas 20% of them refrained from having an opinion in this matter. This result also indicates that, with some exceptions, there is an active relation among teachers and students that can affect education, in future.

Teachers' View about a Child Educational Need

For another item the teachers were asked to make a hierarchy of the most common needs for a child that first enters an education institution with the purpose of learning (Figure 8). First place were the cognitive ones, then the emotional ones and the ones regarding empathy and relations with the teacher. The other needs had good percentages but what can observe here is that a child needs more to feel safe and secure, and connect with the authority, then a big volume of knowledge. The emotional side is more developed and influences the people in ways no one can't even begin to understand.

Students' View about a Child Educational Need

When being asked the same thing, the students put on the first place the emotional needs, then the cognitive ones and socialization (Figure 9). This does nothing more than points out what have

been discovered an item before. It may seem that teachers are keen on the cognitive side, and the students are keen on the emotional one, but in fact what all the children want is to feel like they belong somewhere. Empathy really helps here, because to make a child enjoy your subject and wanting to study for it, you must first understand him and try to be in his shoes. Then when this need is accomplished and satisfied, education can play its role, academically speaking.

Teachers' View about a Child Educational Expectation

When it comes to the expectations that a child might have when he enters an educational system (Figure 10), almost 80 % of the teachers thought they wanted to be encouraged and nearly half of them to be appreciated for all their efforts. This clearly states the fact that they are in need of guidance, and they expect that school should provide it.

Students' View about a Child Educational Expectation

When the same question has been asked to the students (Figure 11), 85 % of them said the same thing, that they would like to be encouraged by their peers or grown-ups, to be understood and influenced in a good way. There is an observation that needs to be made here. Giving the fact that these answers came from both participants, there is a question the raises. Is the education nowadays listening to these opinions? Does it feel like there is a change that needs to be done? Or is knowledge more important than that?

Teachers' Teaching Skill Level

When it comes to the act of teaching and the methods used here, or how prepared we feel before doing it (Figure 12), it looks like there is a general fear among the teachers. No one knows exactly if it's due to a poor training, or with being shy, but the

beginner teachers face with a lot of stress and challenges through the first 2-3 years of teaching. This can be a clue to what is happening nowadays in the schools, where some teachers are not the best guiding tutor for students because they are often afraid, or unable to make right decision. Mentoring, or more likely, lack of it, can have an important part in this manner. If the beginner teachers are considered some ducklings that need to be trained and guided, and there are efforts being used as resources for this, there might be some nice results in the end. But the teachers are not the only one to be blamed for the current situation.

Still, this is a manner that is no longer discussed as it should among scientists today. Mentoring seems to become an unsolving issue in the modern world and more and more in the educational field. It seems like guiding and helping the development of others is more a burden rather than a blessing. And for this, beginning teachers have to suffer a lot. However, some clues can help both sides to know more about this piece of art, mentoring. This information and more can be found also in an article written as a response to the question everyone has about what stays behind mentoring or how can it be brought into daylight (Ashby, Hobson, Malderez, & Tomlinson, 2009).

Students' Learning Skill Level

The students seem very positive when it comes to telling whether their teachers look prepared for teaching or not (Figure 13). Almost 90% said they cannot wait to go to school and see what the teacher had prepared for them. They didn't notice any lack of confidence or stress-related factors when it comes to their everyday teacher. Still, there is a small number of students observant and discovered that teachers are not as prepared as they should be, so their interest and enthusiasm are not that big. However, there are good expectations about this, despite reality.

Teachers' Expectations about Teaching

When being asked, what their goals and desires at the beginning of their professional careers were, the teachers responses showed there are some accomplished expectations, some daydream desires, and something that is not that easy to gain (Figure 14). A big number of them dreamed about a stress-free profession, with many chances of learning themselves and become better with each occasion, but in the end, they looked a little disappointed to find out that reality can be worse. This item demonstrates that there is a big difference in the way a teacher, and more often a beginner teacher thinks, teaching can be. Yes, you can have long terms satisfactions, but in the end what matter is that you are really prepared for what you are doing. Theory that what is learned in school can be helpful sometimes, but it does not mirror the actual reality that a teacher is facing every day. There is a saying, that training for a teacher is like a cover or a summary, that gives them a little clue about what education really is. The rest is more up to us than to the system.

Students' Expectations about Teaching/School

School seemed for most children a place where they can make a lot of friends first, and then deal with the academic information. Then another significant percentage, thought they will learn a lot of interesting things without too much effort needed (Figure 15). In other words, playing is what they really need for the future, maybe a little serious sometimes, but that's it. It may look like a fairy tale for them and is the actual true because so far this is what school has been promoted for them as. However, reality is much worse in some cases, and unless you are prepared for it, it is going to be a hard transition in the reality.

RESULTS FROM THE QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

Observing the things mentioned, the teachers were asked in an informal way what they think should change in the present education system for all the issues to be solved, maybe not entirely but in a significant percentage. And in other words what is their opinion about these changes.

Several suggested there should be a more visible connection between theory and the practical side of training. It would help them more to see the actual needs in a class, then to study about what other people suggested in some contexts, even if that could help them somehow. A practical solution for this would be to have a bigger practical period where they can learn such things as interacting personally with the kids. They even said maybe a separate year just for that.

There are some of their actual responses:

> I think there should be more hours granted for the practical area. The ones that I've done were very short. It was like a snack. And they went on so fast, that I didn't have time to get used to them.

> It has gone too far with the teacher's cognitive development, with his theoretical knowledges, […] because I think that even the teachers from the college didn't start with the little kids. They are talking, but they don't know how it is to be in a class with 38 kids, or to have 30 children in grade VIII. One soul among 30. So, there are things that we face every day. And I think you can learn the real pedagogy, amid the events.

Also, they should focus on the relations with the children and not only on the cognitive side of education. As I seed previously, the students need to feel loved and understood, before becoming academic evolved.

The students also had a word to say in this manner. When they were asked to identify some things, they need to change in their teachers, they suggested that cognitive information can be

attended by games instead of boring meaningless endless sentences. Homework should not be necessary once they understood the mechanism behind every topic. There are also the perfectionist ones that like education the way it is now, without any changes.

However, one of the things that draw my attention was the importance they give for the relation during school time among themselves and the teacher. It is more important for them than any perfect score they will have on any subject.

Here are some responses to support the ideas above mentioned:

> It would be interesting to deal with the subjects by playing.

> To have less tests and homework and to have more interactive activities.

> Less writing and more observing.

> A thing that I would change, not only for my teachers, but for most of them, is a better relationship he should have with the students (during classes). Not to be that kind of a teacher that writes down the whole class and we as little *robots* copy everything on our notebooks. If the teacher came up with some ideas about his class, where the kids should not get bored, to make the class more interesting, it would be better for everyone, and the students would be more attentive.

> I wish for intelligence to be more valued than memory. The teachers should develop a system of thinking, of approaching a problem or an extreme situation. They should not ask: *What did I said last time?*

From the ideas mentioned, it looks like the educational system has very good intentions, but there are some areas where improvements need to be done. But for that to happen, everything should start from somewhere. The change should not be made by the masses but by individuals. Education can improve through little wise steps.

DISCUSSIONS

Even though education, as a process, is meant to change and transform the lives of many human beings, we must prepare the best way for it to grow.

This study was borne out of a desire and curiosity to find out what is the best way to enable the proper education in our lives. Education like any other language or science has a beginning. This happens during the initial training classes. Here future teachers learn what education is, and what are some strategies to understand it and perform it better. Of course, it is not easy, since they need to be up for the challenge. In some cases, out of hundreds of applicants, only a few manage to get to an end.

After the end of these so-called theoretical classes, come the practical areas. Here is where the apprentices must surpass their masters. Here is the place where all the knowledge comes together to inform and form future generations. Some call this period, the life's exam, where they truly find out if they understood the complexity of the educational process.

Usually, here is where the chain breaks because many no-ticed there is a discontinuity from theory to practice. That's the goal of this study, to gather as much information and solution, to get this issue to the next level: what could be the true meaning of education?

The subjects that were part of this study, answered about the present influence of education in their lives, and about some regrets or wishes regarding this kind of experience. They were divided into students and actual teachers and the main stress of this research was about how well the initial training meets the needs and expectations of both children and teachers. Before going any further, there is a concept that needs a deeper insight. Initial training, as it is known by most people, is a very important step toward becoming a real educator. If it is done correctly, as a candidate you can find and truly understand what stays behind education and what could be the real reason for embracing it. More insights

about this manner can be found in a trustworthy piece of art, a book (Antoniou, Creemers, & Kyriakides, 2013) which deals directly with this topic.

Another significant part of the study explored the first encounter of both categories with the educational field, which were their fears, their desires, their curiosities, and how well were they met. Because each one of them came from different environments and cultures, some answers were rather different, according to their experiences. Still, the main idea remained the same, all their fears and uncertainties have the same solutions.

In the latter part of the study, there are some solutions to be revealed to the initial problem of the broken link in the training chain. Both categories had to come up with a plan to changing something about the current educational system. Of course, there were many opinions, as previously stated, but the common thought referred to the change should be regarded as a perspective of education. It must be made for human development and not just for the growth of the ego. Also, for these results to be taken into consideration, there should be an investment in our teachers. They can transform us only with our help. If they are being taken care of and all their cognitive, relational, and ethical needs are being accomplished, they can be the light that makes us shine for others. These ideas could also be found in two other studies on the same topic which had similar results (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Kunc & Kyriacou, 2007). The fact that the same issue is stated in more than one study, emphasizes the fact that education can be understood and protected. The only variable is a big IF coming from our desire for good and prosperity.

Education is a very sensitive topic and at the same time, a very strong one. The people that are involved in this team competition sometimes must blend in so much that they may forget about themselves. Knowing who you are is one thing. But knowing who you are forming and inspiring is a completely different task (Spătărelu, 2019). Someone said once said that a teacher "takes a

hand, opens a mind and touches a heart" and in doing so, he discovers himself.

CONCLUSIONS

Education is considered one of the great gifts people ever received. It can use be used either for prosperity and evolution, or it can be ruined for us and the people around us. Education is like a chain that keeps us together. And after all, is up to us if we take care of it or break it.

Of course, it is a process that needs actions and reactions from both sides. Both students and the teachers have a very important and significant role to play in this, and if it is done as it should, the results can become perfect. This also involves a relationship, that connects the two sides to reach finalities.

Both teams share needs and expectations. Both need to feel understood and encouraged so that they can move forward. And for them to gain such support, there should be some prepared spaces where they can experience this or at least learn about it. Training schools for beginner teachers resemble this kind of preparation, but there are still things to be fixed, understood, and accomplished.

There is a long road to perfection. But the little steps are what it takes for us to get there. Instead of having comments and murmuring all the time, maybe one of us should stand up and begin walking. Education is an active process, not a static one because it is formed out of people, not institutions. When the difference is clearly understood, the results can become a great difference in perspective and behaviors.

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FIGURES
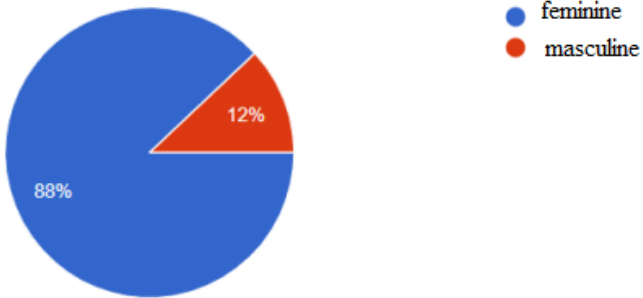
Figure 1
Teacher Population Sample-Gender

Figure 2
Student Population Sample-Gender
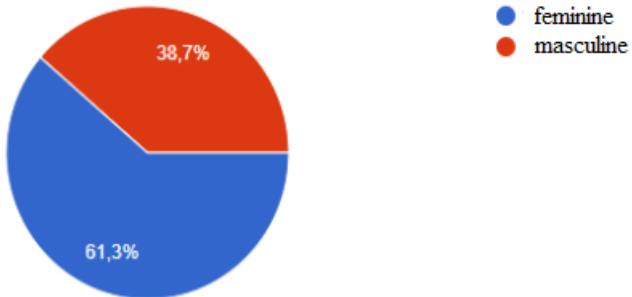
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Teacher Population Sample-Initial Training
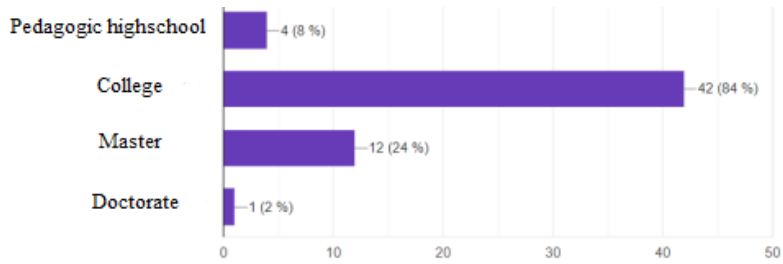

Figure 4
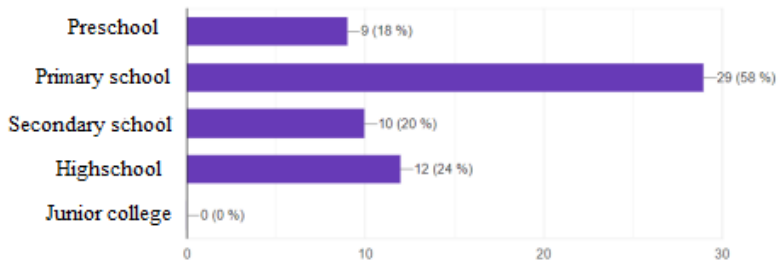*Teacher Population Sample-Academic Level activity*

Figure 5
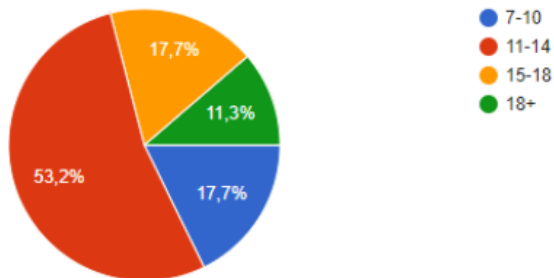*Student Population Sample-Age (Academic Level)*

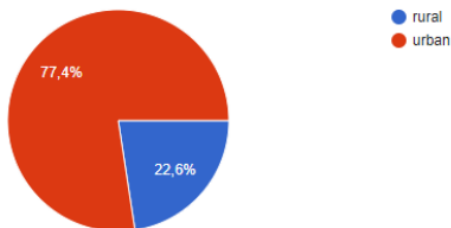**Figure 6**
Student Population Sample-Cultural Background

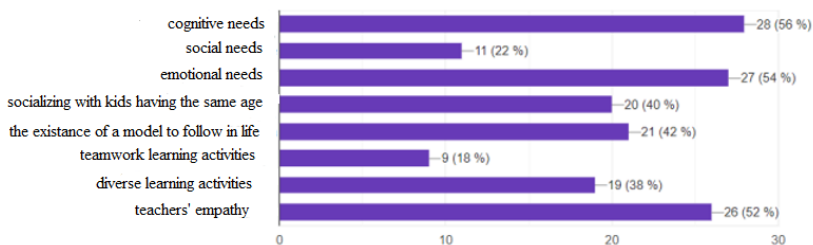**Figure 7**
Teacher General Overview

Figure 8
Teachers' View-Needs
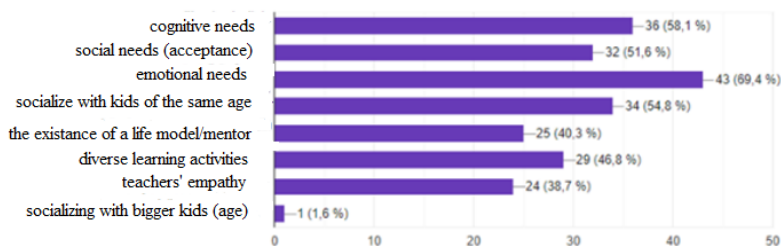
Figure 9
Students' View-Needs

cognitive needs — 36 (58,1 %)
social needs (acceptance) — 32 (51,6 %)
emotional needs — 43 (69,4 %)
socialize with kids of the same age — 34 (54,8 %)
the existance of a life model/mentor — 25 (40,3 %)
diverse learning activities — 29 (46,8 %)
teachers' empathy — 24 (38,7 %)
socializing with bigger kids (age) — 1 (1,6 %)

Figure 10
Teachers' View-Expectations

to be understood — 23 (46 %)
to be accepted — 18 (36 %)
to be loved — 20 (40 %)
to be appreciated — 25 (50 %)
to be encouraged — 36 (72 %)
to be motivated — 24 (48 %)
to be guided — 17 (34 %)
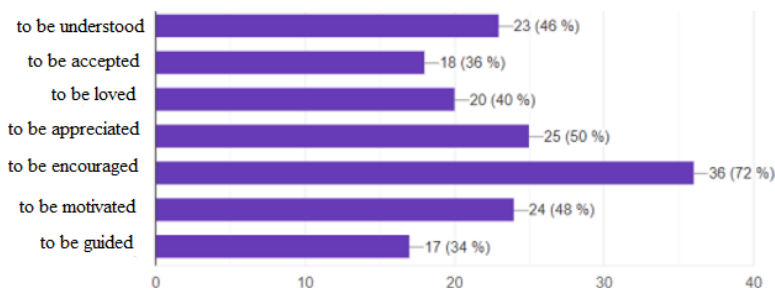
Figure 11
Students' View-Expectations

to be understood — 45 (72,6 %)
to be accepted — 18 (29 %)
to be loved — 22 (35,5 %)
to be appreciated — 34 (54,8 %)
to be encouraged — 53 (85,5 %)
to be motivated — 34 (54,8 %)
to be guided — 36 (58,1 %)
to be treated equally with the others — 1 (1,6 %)

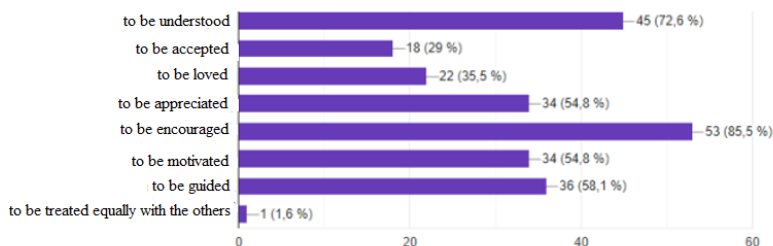**Figure 12**
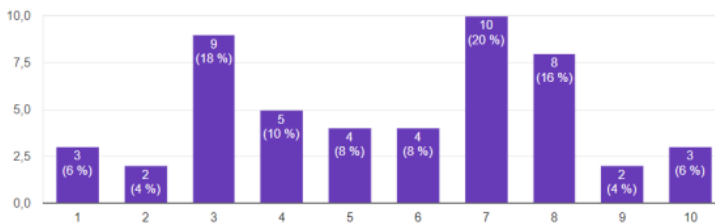
Teachers' Teaching Skill Level

Figure 13

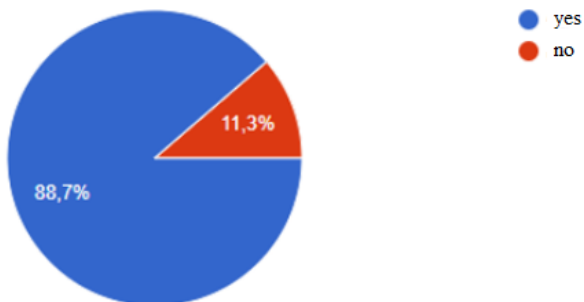*Students' View-Teachers' Teaching Skill Level*

Figure 14

Teachers' Expectations About Teaching
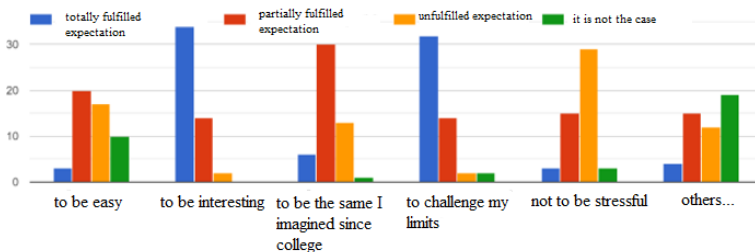
12. What were your expectations and how were they accomplished?

Figure 15

Students' Expectations About Teaching/School