

Career cycle of general and special school teachers in Serbia

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The specificities of general and special school teachers' work might influence their career differently. The aim of the study was to examine the career cycle of these teachers. A survey was conducted on a sample of 120 teachers from general and 95 from special schools. Five stages of career cycle were discovered: induction, competency building and enthusiasm, career frustration, stagnation, career wind-down. Results indicate that age, gender, intrinsic, and extrinsic factors of career choice can influence teachers' career cycle. When these factors are controlled, special school teachers experience less enthusiasm and more willingness to retire than general school teachers.

Keywords: teacher career cycle, Fessler's model, special education, general education, career choice motivation.

The secondary education of children with developmental disabilities in Serbia is realized in both special schools and general schools, where the process of inclusion is implemented. In Serbia there are special schools intended for children with intellectual disabilities, children with hearing and visual impairments, as well as for those with behavioral problems (Rapaić, Nedović, Ilić, & Stojković, 2008). Instruction in special schools is adjusted to the special needs of the students and their particular disability. In schools for children with intellectual disabilities instruction involves shorter class periods and follows special educational plans. Also, all special schools have fewer students per class – from 6 to 12 (Zakon o srednjem obrazovanju i vaspitanju, 2013), whereas the number of students in the general schools' classes can exceed 30.

As far as teaching personnel is concerned, there is a difference between the educational structure of teachers in general and special secondary education. Depending on the difficulties of the students in a particular special school,

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the institution is obliged to employ a certain number of special educators: oligofrenopedagogues, tiphologists, surdo audiologists, and somatopedists, i.e. professionals trained to work with children with disabilities. Subject teachers in special schools have obtained initial education in faculties of the appropriate profile, the same as general school teachers. However, teachers employed in special schools are obliged to obtain additional training and qualifications for working with children with special needs through attending university courses. These courses are adjusted to the disability which the school where the teacher works specializes in (Prosvetni glasnik, 1994). The educational preparation, together with different working conditions, makes an important distinction when attempting to gain a deeper understanding of the context of general and special school teachers' work. Another important contextual characteristic originates from the inclusive education policy, which implies a reduction in the number of children in special schools, thus representing a certain threat for teachers' jobs. Still the most important difference in work surrounding originates from the very classes the teacher is working with. Since being confronted on everyday basis with disabilities and developmental obstacles, teachers employed in special education meet different kind of challenge, have different teaching outcomes and acquire intrinsic rewards differently, compared to their colleagues in general education. That is why we consider it rather important to study whether the career cycle of teachers in the two educational sectors differs, and in what way

Teacher career cycle

Studies of the teacher career cycle in Serbia are rare, and usually focused on teachers in the general education system. Teachers in special schools work with a sensitive population – a population of children with numerous problems, where progress can be difficult to achieve and the satisfaction of teachers is often challenged. Since the challenges special school teachers face are rather different than those of general school teachers, it is justified to pose the question as to whether there are observable differences in the job attitudes, problems, preoccupations, and activities of teachers in general and special education during their career cycles.

Despite the fact that different factors (personal, as well as organizational and social) influence the job attitudes and decisions a person makes during his/her career, numerous research studies indicate the possibility of recognizing a certain regularity in the career development of teachers (Fessler, 1995; Huberman, 1995). By regularity we presume the stages that can be identified in the course of career development. Career development is understood as the course of changes in the cognitive, conative and affective aspects of job attitude. Numerous studies have indicated that during their professional lives, teachers go through particular stages defined by specific problems, preoccupations, and attitude towards job and learning activities. Our research relies on Fessler's concept of the teacher career cycle (Fessler, 1995). This model offers the picture

of career flow fluctuations from the period of preparation for the professional role until retirement. Fessler identifies eight phases in the career cycle which should certainly not be understood as irreversible and linearly aligned one after another, but rather as a plausible course of events in teacher's career.

The first phase, *pre-service*, represents the preparation period – initial teacher training or retraining for a new professional role. The next phase, *induction*, evolves during the first few years of service, when a teacher strives to adapt to this role and be accepted by the social surrounding. This stage can be repeated when the circumstances change, e.g. when transferring to another school. *Competency building* usually begins once the individual has been socialized in the system. This stage is characterized by high motivation for attaining knowledge; the individual attempts to improve his/her teaching methods, to develop work skills and become acquainted with different teaching materials. In this stage teachers often show an interest in participating in various professional development programs. Fessler perceives this stage as a crossroad: people who succeed in these attempts enter the growth phase, while others may encounter career frustration or instability. Therefore, for those who have successfully expanded their range of competences, the *enthusiastic and growing* stage begins. Such teachers demonstrate a positive affective attitude towards school activities, class work, and an interest in contributing to the institution where they are employed. The stage characterized by a negative affective attitude towards work, or in some cases by symptoms of burnout (the most important symptoms according to the literature are emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, Hultell, Melin, & Gustavsson, 2013) is called *career frustration*. This stage most often occurs in the middle of the career. Still, it can appear in beginners, or teachers whose jobs are insecure. There is a great deal of evidence of the stressful nature of a teacher's early career in both general and special schools, demonstrated by high fluctuation (potential or real) during this period (Billingsley, 2004; Boe, Bobbit, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1997; Cohran-Smith, 2004; Smethem, 2007; Struyven & Vanthournout, 2014). We can understand this phenomenon through new teachers' encounters with the unknown, unpredictable surroundings, and numerous tasks for which they are often insufficiently prepared. Career frustration occurrence is also correlated with failure to adapt to the professional role, as well as with an unfavorable working environment (Fessler, 1995). *Career stability* is distinguished by moderate dedication to performing work activities, and sometimes by stagnation in professional development. Professional improvement activities decrease and the teacher does a reasonable job, but with less effort than during the *enthusiasm and growth* phase. After stability, the *career wind-down* stage takes place – a period of preparation for retirement. Approaching retirement is perceived differently – with either sadness or joy. The duration of these stages varies significantly; they may take several weeks or go on for several years. Instead of retiring, a teacher's career may terminate with *career exit* – leaving the job for other reasons (e.g. for another job, for personal or family reasons).

Relevant research results

A great number of studies have searched for the correlates of teachers' career cycle features and offered explanations for their variability. The very conception of career development implies age as one of its basic correlates. The results gained on the sample of general school teachers in Serbia confirm age to be an important correlate of job attitude, and professional behavior to vary depending on the age of the teacher (Marušić, 2013). For example, the youngest teachers strive to fit into the working environment, and gain acceptance in it. Subsequently, young people invest effort into building competences and professional development. In mid-career, enthusiasm flags, devotion wanes and teachers reach a career plateau. Finally, the oldest teachers manifest willingness to share their knowledge and experience with younger colleagues and less motivation for professional development (Marušić, 2013).

Other demographic factors, such as gender, can also determine professional behavior. The differences between the career flow of men and women are related to their family roles (Raggl & Troman, 2008; Super, 1957, as cited in Fitzgerald, Fassinger, & Betz, 1995). From the moment a woman starts a family; her career takes on rather different features than that of a man. Relying on the research of Raggl and Troman (2008), we can conclude that the degree to which a woman's career progress changes due to the pressure of family duties is rarely reached in that of an average man.

The very nature of career choice motivation is also important for the later vocational behavior of teachers. Namely, the strength of intrinsic motivation can explain the later job satisfaction, retention and work motivation of the teacher (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Marušić, 2014; Watt et al., 2012). Some studies indicate that teachers in special schools represent a particularly sensitive group of employees in the educational sector, characterized by high attrition risk. This tendency is explained by lower self-efficacy, insufficient preparation level and negative expectations of career progress. The dissatisfaction level is also at its highest amongst special school teachers due to chronic stress and poor working conditions (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan, & Queck, 2008, as cited in Zhang, Wang, Loshinski, & Katsiyannis, 2014). Still, the results of different research studies are inconsistent. Lazuras (2006) compared the job attitudes of special and general school teachers, confirming higher levels of stress at work among the first group. He relates this result to the organizational context, characterized by the insufficiently defined working role of teachers in special education and the lack of personnel cohesion. In spite of that, there is a less apparent work-related negative affectivity in special school teachers compared with their colleagues in general schools. This result is explained by cognitive and emotional mechanisms which amortize emotional reactions in situations of increased stress at work, as well as the higher emotional investment of teachers in special education, which is necessary in order to establish successful communication with students (Male

& May, 1997, as cited in Lazuras, 2006). It is evident that the level of stress triggered by the very nature of the work of special educators, as well as certain other factors (e.g. teacher preparation, working conditions, interpersonal relations), are important issues to consider when analyzing the job attitudes of special school teachers.

Purpose of the study

In our review of the literature we have not found any studies which compare the career cycle features of teachers in general and special schools. Therefore, we consider it important to conduct an exploratory study of this problem. *This study was carried out in order to describe and compare the career development characteristics of teachers in special and general schools.* The general hypothesis of the research is that the career cycle characteristics of special education teachers will be less favorable, in terms of enthusiasm and growth. This hypothesis is based on previous research results (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010; Yeo, Ang, Chong, Huan & Queck, 2008, according to Zhang, Wang, Loshinski & Katsiyannis, 2014) and the fact that the population of students these teachers are working with is particularly sensitive and the success of teaching activities is less certain, compared to that of general education teachers. In the first step we identify the different modalities of job behavior in teachers, and compare them with Fessler's stages of the teacher career cycle. Then, we explore how the motivation for career choice is connected to the features of the teachers' career cycles. Finally, we compare the career cycle characteristics of special and general school teachers, while controlling for their age, gender, and motivation to choose the teaching profession

Method

Participants

The research sample consists of 215 secondary school teachers from Serbia; 120 respondents are employed in 6 schools for general secondary education and 95 are employed in 5 schools for special secondary education for children with different developmental disabilities (both in the same cities – Belgrade, Bor, Kruševac, and Pirot). Therefore, the sample encompassed teachers in the two sectors of education, working with the same generations of students, in secondary schools on the territory of the same Serbian cities. The sample encompassed teachers of both genders, with a higher percentage of women (65%), which reflects the higher percentage of this gender in the teaching population. Teachers of all age categories are represented in the sample (range of teachers' age is 25 to 65), which is significant considering the importance of this variable for the understanding of the career development.

Instrument

The *Career Choice Scale* and *Career Development Scale* used in this survey were constructed for the purposes of doctoral research (Marušić, 2013). The *Career Choice Scale*

consists of 14 items (whole scale $\alpha=.76$) which measure the relevance of three different motivational basis for teachers' career choice: intrinsic (the subject's interests, abilities, personality traits, love for work with children; $\alpha=.82$), environmental (parents' interests and values, influence of teachers, family background, books; $\alpha=.78$), and extrinsic factors (opportunity to find employment, income, working time, permanent job; $\alpha=.82$)¹. The *Career Development Scale* consists of 34 items (whole scale $\alpha=.70$) intended to measure behavior characteristics for the six stages of the career cycle, from *induction* to *career wind-down*² (the *pre-service* and *exit* stages were omitted because the sample did not include student teachers or individuals who had left the job). In both, *Career Choice Scale* and *Career Development Scale*, a five-point Likert scale was used. In addition to the two scales, the questionnaire also covered socio-demographic characteristics.

Results

Features of the teacher career cycle

The latent structure of the Career Development Scale. To explore whether Fessler's model of career development can be used to describe the career development stages of Serbian teachers, the latent structure of the *Career development Scale* (CDS) was analyzed. Principal Components extraction method and parallel analysis with 95% percentile criterion (Hayton, Allen, & Scarpello, 2004; Horn, 1965; Longman, Cota, Holden, & Fekken, 1989) were used to determine the optimal number of factors (Table 1). Three items were eliminated in preliminary analyses, due to low loadings. The final five-factor solution was obtained and factors were rotated by the Promax method to allow their mutual correlations.

Table 1

Eigen values and percentage of explained variance of the five factor solution obtained by parallel analysis.

Component	Initial solution			Rotated solution	Parallel analysis
	Eigen value	% variance	Cumulative % variance	Eigen value	95th percentile of random Eigen values
1	6.475*	20.887	20.887	4.691	1.891
2	2.996*	9.664	30.551	4.538	1.760
3	2.955*	9.532	40.082	4.177	1.660
4	1.908*	6.156	46.238	3.162	1.578
5	1.556*	5.019	51.258	2.316	1.512
6	1.236	3.987	55.245		1.449

* Eigen value higher than the 95th percentile of random Eigen values obtained in parallel analysis

- 1 The three kinds of motives were distinguished in previous study based on the factor analysis of CCS.
- 2 The reliability of the subscales of CDS is analyzed and reported in the Results section after the latent structure of the scale is analyzed.

Table 2 presents the pattern matrix, showing the structure of the five extracted factors. The first factor embraces thoughts, emotions and considerations connected with the state of *career frustration*: perceiving the working environment as unbearable, feeling unsuccessful, tired and disappointed, and making plans for attrition. The second factor consists of items referring to the attainment of new knowledge and competences, high devotion to the job, and agility in different school activities. This factor encompasses characteristics of two successive phases – competency building and enthusiasm and growth, demonstrating dedication, productivity, job satisfaction and high motivation for professional development. Therefore we named it *competency building and enthusiasm*. The third factor, *career wind-down*, embraces those items which refer to preoccupation with retirement, reduced work engagement, and the attitude that the time has come to stop working. Professional development activities are no longer considered necessary. This phase is connected with the impatient expectation of withdrawal from professional life and a feeling of tiredness. The fourth factor consists of items indicating *stagnation* in professional behavior. The teacher perceives himself/herself to be investing less effort in doing his/her job than previously, feels unsuccessful, sees professional development as a burden, and sometimes has a fear of losing his/her job. The last factor refers to the first phase of Fessler's model – *induction*: embracing efforts to adapt to the new working role, and to gain acceptance in the social surrounding, followed by the attitude that learning teaching methods is important at this career phase. It also refers to those teachers who cannot find permanent employment and need to seek a new position.

Table 2
Pattern matrix

Item	Component				
	Career frustration	Comp. building & Enthusiasm	Career wind- down	Stagnation	Induction
28. I feel sick when entering the classroom.	.828				
25. I'd like to change my job, not to be a teacher any more.	.801				
29. Although I'm not dissatisfied with my job, I plan to look for another one.	.747				
27. I'm disappointed with this job.	.744				
24. I can't stand working at this school any more.	.743				
22. I feel that my professional development is stagnating.	.422				
8. I'd like to work as an advisor to young teachers.	.708				
11. I actively seek new ways to develop professionally.	.698				
7. I'm more eager to participate in teacher council activities than my other colleagues.	.680			.444	
19. I enjoy participating in professional development activities	.595				
3. I try to gain new work-related knowledge	.586				
6. I enjoy preparing for every lesson	.572				
5. I enjoy giving supplementary classes.	.539				
21. I'm enthusiastic about my work.	-.321	.536			
20. I put a great deal of effort into my work.	.511	.357			
9. I believe I'm as devoted to my work as my colleagues are.	.468				
32. The time has come for me to stop working.		.798			
13. I can't wait to retire.		.729			
34. I don't think I need professional development any more.		.653			
33. I'm tired of this job.	.439	.639			
14. I'm thinking about my approaching retirement.		.622	.364		
15. At this age I don't need to try and learn as much as before.		.506	.485		
26. I'm worried about my approaching retirement.		.438			
16. I'm afraid of losing this job, which has a negative influence on my work.				.675	
10. My work is satisfactory, but I make less effort than in the previous years.				.656	
2. At this moment any additional professional development is a burden for me.				.411	
12. I don't feel successful as a teacher.	.355			.388	
1. At the moment I'm doing my best to fit into this school.					.762
23. I'm new at this job and I'm doing my best to be accepted by my colleagues and pupils.					.738
30. The school is unable to employ me permanently, and I'm considering looking for a new job.					.659
4. At this phase of my career it's very important to get acquainted with teaching methods and current trends in my profession.		.345			.410

Correlations between the factors are low to insignificant. The highest absolute value of correlation coefficient is obtained between *career frustration* and *competency building and enthusiasm*, indicating a moderate negative correlation between the two phases. Therefore, we can consider the five identified factors as qualitatively different modalities of work attitudes and work behavior.

Reliabilities of subscales determined by extracted factors range from good (for Career frustration, Career wind-down, and Competence Building and Enthusiasm), to somewhat unsatisfactory (for Induction and Stagnation). One of the reasons for lower reliability of Induction and Stagnation may be small number of items in these subscales. Thus, for the purpose of this study we decided to use factor scores instead of summative or mean scores on all subscales, because they provide measure of the concept which is freed from the error variance.

Table 3
Intercorrelation of factors

Component	1	2	3	4	5
1	.827				
2	-.308	.794			
3	.197	-.174	.821		
4	.237	-.260	.212	.568	
5	.037	.150	-.152	-.033	.638

Legend: Values at the diagonal are reliabilities of factors

Descriptives

Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics for the five subscales of CDS. The values of standardized skewness and kurtosis suggest that the distributions of all subscales deviate from normal distribution. The extremely positively skewed distributions of *career wind-down* and *career frustration* indicate that only a small number of teachers experience these career stages. The skewnesses for the *induction* and *stagnation* stages also indicate that the majority of the respondents have obtained low scores on the two stages, while the skewness of *competency building and enthusiasm* shows that the work behavior of the majority of teachers is characterized by job satisfaction and motivation to obtain new knowledge. For the purpose of further analyses, distributions of all variables were normalized using Blome's formula.

Table 4
Descriptive statistics for the subscales of CDS

	AM	SD	Min	Max	Standard. Skewness	Standard. Kurtosis
Induction	0	1	-1.722	3.361	4.759	0.413
Competency building and enthusiasm	0	1	-3.634	1.912	-2.610	0.075
Career frustration	0	1	-1.240	4.752	11.688	12.626
Stagnation	0	1	-2.328	3.451	4.087	1.935
Career Wind-Down	0	1	-2.005	5.671	15.108	25.325

The comparison of career cycle stages of teachers from general and special schools while controlling for the influence of age, gender, and career choice motivation

Our next aim was to determine whether there are any differences between teachers from general and special schools in the stages of their career development, when their age, gender, and initial motivation for choosing the teaching profession are controlled in the analysis of covariance (ANOVA). Results presented in Table 4 indicate that teacher's gender influences *career frustration* and *career wind-down* (marginally significant), with women experiencing more frustration and greater tendency toward retiring than men (career frustration: $AM_f = .096$, $AM_m = -.199$; career wind-down: $AM_f = .099$, $AM_m = -.193$). The effect of age was obtained for *induction*, *stagnation* and *career wind-down*. As expected, younger teachers have higher scores on *induction*, but lower ones on *stagnation* and *career wind-down*. As for the initial motivation for career choice, intrinsic and extrinsic motives proved to be important for later attitude towards job: individuals with higher intrinsic motivation for doing this job obtain higher scores on *competency building and enthusiasm*, and lower scores on *career frustration*, and *stagnation* (marginally significant). Also, teachers attracted to profession by extrinsic motives tend to manifest work behavior characterized by *career frustration* (marginally significant) and *stagnation*. As for the environmental factors of career choice, they seem to have no importance for further professional development.

Finally, the results show that when age, gender, and initial motivation for career choice are controlled, there are significant differences between teachers from special and general schools in terms of *competency building and enthusiasm* and *career wind-down*. Special schools teachers are less eager to participate in different school activities and to develop new skills ($AM_{spec.sch} = -.172$, $AM_{gen.sch} = .134$) and more willing to retire from their job ($AM_{spec.sch} = .197$, $AM_{gen.sch} = -.156$), than general school teachers.

Table 5

Gender, age, professional choice motivation and the stages of the career cycle of teachers from general and special schools.

Dependent variable	Effect	F _(4, 204)	Partial η^2
Induction	Gender	.949	.005
	Age	69.605**	.260
	Extrinsic factors	.124	.001
	Environmental factors	2.299	.011
	Intrinsic factors	.083	.000
	Type of school	.358	.002
Competency building and enthusiasm	Gender	.136	.001
	Age	.938	.005
	Extrinsic factors	.020	.000
	Environmental factors	.279	.001
	Intrinsic factors	35.762**	.153
	Type of school	5.941*	.029
Career frustration	Gender	5.130*	.025
	Age	.432	.002
	Extrinsic factors	3.531†	.018
	Environmental factors	.013	.000
	Intrinsic factors	11.570**	.055
	Type of school	1.458	.007
Stagnation	Gender	.662	.003
	Age	21.103**	.096
	Extrinsic factors	5.891*	.029
	Environmental factors	1.853	.009
	Intrinsic factors	3.502†	.017
	Type of school	.994	.005
Career Wind-Down	Gender	3.054†	.015
	Age	52.620**	.21
	Extrinsic factors	2.479	.012
	Environmental factors	.031	.000
	Intrinsic factors	.958	.005
	Type of school	7.597**	.037

† Significant at the level of $p < .10$,

* Significant at the level of $p < .05$,

** Significant at the level of $p < .01$.

Discussion

In an effort to describe the career cycle of secondary school teachers, we have identified five factors describing five different modalities of work behavior: induction, competency building and enthusiasm, career frustration,

stagnation and career wind-down. Generally speaking, the stages recognized in Fessler's model can be identified on the sample of Serbian general and special school teachers, with a few differences. In the first place, the factors *induction* (socialization and adaptation to the new working place), *career frustration* (work dissatisfaction and disappointment) and *career wind-down* (preparing for retirement) can be considered analogous to the correspondent stages in the model. Also, we recognize certain similarities between the *stagnation* stage and the stage called *stability* in the model given by Fessler: both indicate that teachers reach a plateau in their career, still responding to the job tasks, but not surpassing them. While Fessler's *stability* phase points at routine job performance, our *stagnation* factor is characterized by negative affect towards the professional role, which arises from feelings of work overload and/or fear of job loss.

Fessler's *building competence* and *enthusiasm and growth* stages are united under one factor named *competency building and enthusiasm*. We conclude that in our sample of teachers, the effort made to gain new knowledge and competences occurs simultaneously with a positive attitude towards work and high agility in job activities. It is important to stress that the lack of the *pre-service* and *exit* phase is a consequence of the characteristics of our sample (the pre-service period refers to preparational activities prior to employment, and the exit stage to those teachers who have already left the profession (Fessler, 1995). In this case, teachers' potential fluctuation is connected with the *career frustration* phase, as a state of major work dissatisfaction.

Further on, the indicators of *career frustration*, *stagnation* and *career wind-down* are not frequently encountered in our sample of teachers. The majority of teachers express satisfaction with their working role, and high motivation for professional development activities. Taking into consideration the overall socio-economic situation in the country as well as the data implying that teachers perceive the state and the society to be indifferent towards education (Polovina, 2010; Teodorović, Stanković, Bodroža, Milin, & Đerić, 2013; Vujačić, Pavlović, Stanković, Džinović, & Đerić, 2011), this result seems surprising. Still, it has been established before that Serbian teachers express rather high job satisfaction compared to their colleagues in other countries (Martin, Mullis, Foy, & Stanco, 2012). Although it is possible that Serbian teachers were more prone to giving socially desirable answers, it is more likely that when answering these questions, the teachers were considering the general employment situation and regarded themselves still well positioned, since they had a permanent job and regular salary.

The respondents' gender and age proved to be important for the course of their career cycle. Slightly higher career frustration and career wind-down in female teachers is in accordance with previous research, indicating that women's family roles often disrupt their development in the professional area (Raggl & Troman, 2008). Correlation with age can indicate the plausible sequence of stages; it also confirms the importance of controlling this variable when comparing the professional behavior of different groups. However, for career frustration and competency building and enthusiasm, the influence of

age was not found to be important. We presume that competency building and enthusiasm is an abiding attitude towards work and a prevalent type of work behavior in normal life circumstances. Also, career frustration may appear at different moments of the career, which explains the non-significant correlation between age and indicators of this stage.

Previous research (Marušić, 2014) showed that the intrinsic motivation for career choice influences professional behavior in two ways: by stimulating positive and agile behavior at work and providing motivation for performing daily work activities; simultaneously, it correlates negatively with career frustration indicators, implying that a genuine interest and love for the job can have a „protective“ function when encountering career difficulties. Our research, however, goes a step further than the previous one, indicating that intrinsic motivation is also of importance for the stagnation stage, characterized by the fall in work motivation and stagnation in professional development. Generally speaking, compared to most of the other independent variables (gender, type of school, extrinsic and environmental factors), the intrinsic motivation for career choice has the greatest explanatory power over the career cycle characteristics. We can conclude that, in spite of unfavorable circumstances (economic crisis, reduced social reputation of the profession, etc), personal factors do retain an important role in defining the career path. It is also important to note that extrinsic factors represent a covariate of career frustration and stagnation, implying that factors such as salary and working time, when determinants of career choice, can obstruct later career development.

Finally, when gender, and age, and initial motivation for career choice of the respondents are controlled, the difference between the teachers from the two educational systems appears. Although being less burdened (having smaller classes and shorter class periods), special school teachers demonstrate less enthusiasm; they are less active in teachers' councils, less motivated to gain new knowledge and competences, and find less enjoyment in activities with students. They also express a greater tendency toward career wind-down, indicating that they think more about their approaching retirement, feel tired, and ready to leave their jobs. Generally speaking, the teachers working in general schools demonstrate a slightly more positive job attitude than their colleagues in special schools, and this effect is irrespective of the initial motivation for their choice of profession.

Teachers in special schools seem to acquire less pleasure from the work they do, perhaps due to lower self-efficacy and bigger stress at work (Emery & Vandenberg, 2010). Marston and colleagues (Marston, Courtney, & Brunetti, 2006) found that the greatest reward teachers get from their work is participation in students' progress, and the opportunity to contribute to and enjoy their development. Therefore, it is understandable that teachers working with children with developmental difficulties have lower scores on the career stage which indicates, among other things, career satisfaction. Teachers of secondary education are preparing students for further education or employment. In each case, the success of his/her students is one of the biggest rewards for the teacher.

In the situation of low employment rates, and low permeability of labor market, the perspective of students with special needs is less bright, compared to their peers without developmental difficulties. That is also one of the facts that cause the difference in job attitude of teachers in special and general education.

The other possible explanation, apart from the demands of work, can be sought in the current socio-political context. Not only do people working in special schools have to invest more effort in developing successful communication with their students (Male & May, 1997, as cited in Lazuras, 2006), but they also feel insecure about the future course of events. Due to demographic changes class sizes have been reduced, and the inclusion policy has resulted in more and more children with special needs entering the general school system. Therefore, we suppose that teachers in special schools, even more than those in the general system, are concerned about the possibility of a salary reduction or even job loss, which can be another obstacle to achieving job satisfaction.

Limitations and directions for future research.

The main limitation of this research should be addressed to the instruments used. First, some subscales of CDS questionnaire (i.e. Induction and Stagnation) showed unsatisfactory reliability, indicating the necessity of further development and refinement of the subscales, with the aim to improve their psychometric characteristics. Nevertheless, the results obtained with these scales are theoretically meaningful and interpretable, showing that these subscales, although failing to reach conventional psychometric standards, still measure targeted concepts. Second, the questionnaire was designed for the purpose of this study (we did not have the opportunity to use the original instruments), which may be the reason for obtaining different results compared to Fessler's model of the teacher career cycle. Furthermore, this study is cross-sectional by its design, which prevents us from drawing firm conclusions about the order of career stages. Finally, the lack of data pertaining to the work climate in the schools prevents us from taking into account the wider context of the study. Namely, as Sammons, Kington, Gu, Stobart, and Smees (2007) suggest, the school climate can significantly affect teachers' career development, and a supportive social surrounding is crucial for teachers' self-efficacy throughout all the stages of their career development. On the other hand, a hostile and highly controlling work environment makes employees more susceptible to career frustration (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Conclusion

The present study has indicated that the career course of teachers from general and special schools in Serbia can be described by five stages which largely correspond to those given in the Fessler's teacher career cycle model. Some of the stages (induction, stagnation and career wind-down) are age specific, while career frustration and career wind-down seem to be influenced by specific

gender roles, indicating the interplay between the professional and private roles of women. Our study also showed that intrinsic motivation for choosing teaching profession can greatly influence personal experiences in the professional role, “inoculating” teachers against both, feelings of frustration and stagnation in professional development, and making them more eager to fulfill their tasks. Also, results imply that teachers who were guided by extrinsic factors such as job security, salary or suitable working hours, burn out more easily and tend to experience stagnation and tiredness in their professional role. Finally, even when all these factors are controlled, and in spite of specific educational preparation and less burden in terms of class periods and class size, special education teachers still have less enthusiastic job attitude, feel more tired and more willing to retire than teachers in general schools. These results can be interpreted in terms of increased stress and decreased self-efficacy when working with children with special needs, as well as uncertainty concerning the future course of events in the special education system. Therefore, it can be recommended for the educational system to provide psychological support for the teachers employed in the special education sector. The special schools themselves should organize support groups and regular counseling for their employees. It is particularly important for a beginning teacher in special education to be familiarized with his students’ perspectives and limitations in order to modulate his own expectations, as well as to have an experienced supervisor leading him through the process of work adaptation. We can also recommend the introduction of achievement, self-efficacy, job satisfaction and burnout topics into the programs for special education teachers’ preparation. We conclude that special education teachers should get the opportunity to work in the general sector after some years of practice and recommend to the policy makers to facilitate this process.

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