

Towards a New Model of Teacher Training in Europe

Teodor Pătrăuță

“Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, Arad, Roumania

The current situation of European educational systems leads to the lack of historical precedents, considering that it implies the end of educational systems based on exclusion, configuring a new conception of educational systems that we are still not able to appreciate at their true value, because we were educated by and in the previous educational system. Lacking other references, we inevitably tend to compare current problems with previous situations, without understanding that the generalization of education to 100% of the population implies a qualitative change that modifies the objectives, forms of work, and the very essence of the educational system. This stage change, marked by the acceleration of social changes, including the pandemic situation, explains why, despite the best educational system so far, teachers with the best levels of training and a financial and material endowment unimaginable until recently, try a sense of crisis and a general feeling of confusion is manifested among the teachers and parents of the children, seeing that education is no longer what it used to be (Esteve, 1998). The key to defuse this apparent paradox is in the tendency to judge the new education system by the mentality and standards of the former selective education, in which most of the adults present were educated. Thus, although we continue to apply to the new general education situation the parameters of the previous situation, in which the selective system excluded every year the students who had behavior problems in the class or had difficulties regarding the mastery of certain educational subjects (Esteve, 1998). In this way, we are currently criticizing the school failure of a percentage of our students, without realizing that their schooling itself is a success, because, although their level is low, they had no level before. One speaks of a low educational level, when, in reality, the educational level is increasing—the general level of the people and the individual level of the best students (Baudelot & Establet, 1990). Indeed, it is true that in our education systems there are students with a very low educational level, although even so, it is a success that they have some education because they used to be on the streets; and, in any case, the current education system produces a higher percentage of students with higher levels than the best students of the 90s. The main element of change, the most substantial transformation, is the elimination of exclusion, today having access to secondary education, alongside students with an excellent level. Thousands of children who were previously expelled from it, thus comply with the European measures of access to education for all children and young people. The previous educational system can be compared to a hospital from which the sickest were kicked out, and those who created behavioral problems were eliminated through the selective mechanisms of the system. However, teaching today is qualitatively different from what it was 20-30 years ago. First of all, because working with a homogeneous group of children as a result of the selection or dealing with all the children in a country, with social and personal problems, is not the same thing. That is why many general education teachers are social workers rather than teachers; and the new configuration of our educational systems requires secondary teachers to assume diverse educational roles rather than the traditional one of intellectual training. History cannot go backwards; to have better quality educational systems, the solution is not to return to the

Teodor Pătrăuță, Ph.D., professor, Faculty of Social Science, Humanities and Physical Education and Sports, “Vasile Goldiș” Western University of Arad, Arad, Roumania.

exclusionary system. Society asks teachers to make an effort to integrate; but, during this time, our society must support and revalue the activity of teachers in order not to put them in front of impossible tasks. The transition from a selective to a general education was based on the increase/amplification of compulsory schooling. For the first time in history, European educational systems have assumed the role of declaring secondary education compulsory. This decision implies a new stage, a definitive break from the previous reality in which secondary education was reserved for those who later attend a university.

Keywords: education, model, teacher, education, exclusion, selection, schooling

Teacher Training and Social Reality

Current teacher training at European level generally has three components:

- Pedagogical, psychological, and sociological training of a general nature, common to all specialties, with a proposed equivalence of 30% of the credits. This training is developed through the University.
- Specific didactic training, depending on the specialty, equivalent to another 30% of the credits. Both constitute what is called theoretical training.
- Practical training is equivalent to 40% of the credits. This component is divided, on the one hand, between a knowledge application seminar, whose functions are to observe, analyze, and evaluate practice in concrete contexts and circumstances, designing in all the theoretical training and, on the other hand, an actual practice stage, initially with the help of the tutor and then with total autonomy.

In the case of the foreign language teacher, it would be necessary for the practice period to include an actual stay in the foreign country where the language to be taught is spoken.

The Recent Past

In the last 20 years, the social consensus regarding the objectives that educational institutions must pursue and the values they must create and develop has broken down. Although this consensus was never very explicit, in earlier periods of a more closed and less pluralistic society, there was a fundamental agreement regarding the values to be transmitted through education. Thus, education reproduced nuclei of values accepted in advance, corollaries of a convergent socialization, i.e. aimed at the unification and integration of children into the dominant culture (Giroux 1997, MacLaren, 1998, Chauchat, 1999 apud Rae, 2001). The situation was favored to a good extent by a great stability of the population, socially unified around an established national culture, with rare migratory movements. Currently, we are in a genuine divergent sociality, whose extreme development could endanger the minimal social cohesion without which a society disintegrates (Esteve, 1992): on the one hand, we live in a pluralistic society, in which different social groups, with powerful media at their service, defend opposing models of education, in which distinct, if not contradictory, values are prioritized; on the other hand, the acceptance in education of the multicultural and multilingual society's own diversity and the lack of homogeneity of education levels forces us to modify our didactic materials and diversify our education programs (Porcher, 1980). Schooling 100% of our infant population involves bringing into the classroom students with very diverse cultural and linguistic sensitivities and a core family upbringing that has developed very distinct values. Many teachers complain about the lack of minimum values, traditionally instilled by the family, which makes coexistence in the classroom more and more difficult. We should not be surprised, therefore, at the disorientation and difficulties of teachers located in geographical areas where cultural diversity is greater: bilingual territories,

extensions of large cities with alluvial population, areas with high percentages of immigration, areas where a number large population is stationed, habitual residence (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997).

Social and Educational Changes

More and more, the teacher encounters in the classroom with different models of socialization produced by what is called the “mosaic society” (Toffler, 1990): a society composed of different cultural groups that produce a primary multicultural and multilingual socialization. Being a teacher on the outskirts of any large European city is equivalent to teaching a conglomeration of students, united by emigration and who were initially socialized into different cultures and values, including different mother tongues. The current moment demand European teachers to think and explain their educational values and objectives, considering that the process of convergent socialization in which the unifying character of school activity, in culture, language and behavior was affirmed, has been removed through—a clearly divergent socialization process, which forces a diversification in the teacher’s activity; and this, not only as a result of the effect of emigration, but also by strengthening one’s own identity in the various native minority groups and in various subcultures. However, it is not easy for teachers to understand the students who make them up, given that these subcultures and urban tribes are born, flourish, and disappear at an increasingly rapid rate (Gee, 2021).

The contradictions of accelerating social changes and divergent socialization situations put the teacher in difficult situations to resolve. As Nigh (2021) point out, one of the skills we must train in today’s teachers is the ability to assume conflict situations. Indeed, the conflict has settled inside the professorial councils, where the break is appreciated between those who would like to maintain education in the academic framework of the previous stage, and those who defend a reconversion that refers, with educational criteria, to the new students who have access to it. Starting from this basic stance, the methodological approaches diverge and the professorial councils divide, leading the confrontation from the evaluative field to the methodological one and establishing the professional conflict within the professorial bodies. On the other hand, the educational system, despite a transition from an elite education to a general education situation, is unable to ensure labor exits consistent with the level of diplomas obtained by students. It’s a very simple problem: in a society that operates according to the rules of the market, with the increase in the number of people accessing different levels of education, they decrease in economic value. Just think that 30 years ago, a person with a baccalaureate degree and a university degree could find a well-paid job, only because few had access to these levels of study. As the situation changed, the students’ motivation to learn decreased, as well as the appreciation that society gives to the educational system, and especially the students’ parents (Martinez, 2005). Whereas, 30 years ago, an academic degree ensured social status and economic remuneration depending on the level obtained, today academic titles ensure nothing, although other selective mechanisms are still maintained that now depend on private enterprise, social relations of families, or the acquisition of other extracurricular knowledge that is not taught in the regulated education system, as happens with knowledge of foreign languages and computer science. In this way, the evolution of the education system and its most brilliant success in the quantitative field have led to the change of the very meaning of school institutions, with the consequent need to adapt to the change, on the part of students, teachers, and parents, who must modify their mentality about their expectations regarding the education system.

Diversity and Diversification

Obviously, as Ranjard (1984) points out, it is absurd to maintain in a mass education the objectives of a system designed to be elitist, and in this sense, through the force of things, European education systems have

diversified and made more flexible; but now, especially in terms of social return, they cannot expect the results that were obtained in the former configuration of the selective systems that were expected from a narrower elite, as they advance in the higher echelons of the system. The result was the withdrawal of unanimous support from society and the abandonment of the idea as a promise of a better future. Much of society, some media and even some governments have come to the simplistic and linear conclusion that teachers, as directly responsible for the education system, are equally responsible for its gaps, failures, and imperfections. As Patrice Ranjard (1984) in France have pointed out, the negative valorization of the teacher as universally responsible for all evils in the educational system is a sign of our times. One of the most obvious reflexes is the increase in claims for civil liability, accidents, assaults, and behaviors qualified as improper. The social judgment (even prejudice) against the teacher has become general. All seem willing to consider the teacher as the main person responsible for all the deficiencies and general confusion of an education system visibly transformed by the dynamics of social change described, although teachers are, paradoxically, its first victims (Cucoş, 2021). But we can also take into account the generic disregard of the psychopedagogical training of teachers, to which we must also add the problem of the lack of adequacy of the psychopedagogical contents that are included here. On many occasions, it is claimed that the training is carried out with pedagogy or psychology contents, which are irrelevant for the orientation of the teacher's daily activity in the practice of activities at the department. Vague notions about schools in pedagogy, with the inevitable mention of Pavlov's dog, or speculative references to the natural goodness of the child according to some European concepts, do not help him much to master the real problems he has to face in the classroom.

Despondency and Discouragement

Legally, the social consideration of teachers has been changed. Unfortunately, today society tends to determine social status based on income level. Therefore, teachers' salary has become an additional element of the identity crisis that affects them. Consequently, there has been a devaluation of its social image, in parallel with the lack of prestige of public services and its disregard for wages, which clearly appear as another clear indication that education is not, in reality, a social priority (Gheorghiu, 2021).

Currently, by expanding the values of the so-called American dream, there are few people willing to value science, dedication in classroom work. By extension of the postmodern requirement "seek power and grow rich", the teacher appears in the minds of many as a poor individual who has not been able to find another better paying occupation. Adopting this mindset, many teachers abandon their teaching careers, seeking promotion in other fields or leadership positions, moving away from their classrooms.

Thus, those who were not able to continue the problems in the classroom day by day, turn into those who lead, judge, and criticize those who continue to work in them. It is easy to imagine the demoralization and the fact that in countries where there are other work alternatives, such as France, Germany, Sweden, and England, the number of teachers begins to decrease, and the recruitment of young people in certain specialties is very difficult. The daily *El Pais* published, in 1999, a report on this topic, with the title: "The Netherlands remains without teachers". Warnings from the mid-1980s by numerous authors were ignored, believing that it would all be the same until it was too late.

Putting the Teacher Back in the Center

If teacher pay does not increase and their social image does not improve, the battle for quality in our education systems will be lost in the hands of a demoralized social group. The battle of quality in education is

primarily played out on the ground of the quality and motivation of the staff involved, more than in structural changes or the abundance of material means (Cojocea, Petcu, Milășan, 2021).

After some years in which the educational systems, rightly, put the child in the foreground, in this new stage, providing a quality education involves the opening of a new era, in which the figure of the teacher is revalued and what our efforts have at the center is the care of giving them the opportunity to carry out a quality activity. Many people talk about quality in education; but this, no matter how you look at it, will always be in the hands of the direct agent with whom the educational system operates: the teacher.

For this, in order to give quality to the new educational system, we must open a new stage of teacher support. If in the previous one the figure of the student was highlighted, now it is necessary to support the teacher as a priority. It is necessary to start a new stage in which the central figure of the teacher is recovered, with the conviction that a quality education depends primarily on the professional, scientific, and pedagogical attitude of the men and women who give life to education (Hattie, 2015). The human factor is the central element in the conquest of a quality education, impossible in the situation where teachers are demoralized and confused because of the poor support they receive from society. Society must support teachers by improving their working conditions.

New Reforms in Teacher Training

In all European countries, new education reforms were thought up, profoundly transforming society and school systems; the remodeling of education systems is claimed to make them possible and to improve the quality in education. And to that end, we must understand that the administration cannot continue to measure the work of teachers solely by the number of hours in the classroom. If, rightly, more is demanded of teachers than teaching, the idea of reserving some time for all these activities that are demanded of them outside the classroom must be accepted.

One of the great unsolved problems of the current educational reforms is the impossibility of facing the curricular diversifications created by the presence, in the same class, of students with very unequal levels, maintaining the same working conditions regarding the size of the classes and the timetable, as in the past, under the conditions of homogeneous groups following the selection (Helsby, 1999). Along this line is the need to improve the training of teachers, considering the emergence of the new goal of making them capable of facing the new problems and the new social demands of this new stage of education. Indeed, as an additional indicator of the increase in quality in education, in these last years the demands and responsibilities that our society demands from the educational system have increased. Our society has generalized the tendency to convert all unresolved social problems into educational problems. Thus, seeing the emergence of new bouts of racism, schools that incorporate a multilateral education path are asked to favor tolerance. If new ailments appear, new health education programs are put into operation. If the number of traffic accidents increases, the inclusion of traffic education in the school curriculum is requested. If drug use spreads, it is immediately proposed to solve the problem with the help of educational programs to prevent drug addiction. With this way of thinking about education, social and political problems immediately turn into educational problems.

Sometimes society forgets the social value of these phenomena and analyzes its causes without considering a collective responsibility. Does society really realize what it demands of teachers? The criticisms we often hear about the school do not come from the lack of quality of the system, but are the result of excessively high expectations from society.

And although our society expects the educational system to assume an important responsibility in confronting these new social problems, there are no guidelines for changing the training that teachers receive, although they have university training, according to the model of the lecturer or the specialist researcher, they do not have the possibility of following special courses that would allow them to respond to these new social responsibilities, nor to carry out a coherent activity in relation to these demands. This is where the confusion and feelings of despair and refusal of teaching staff appear: teachers continue to be prepared to teach impossible classes in schools that no longer exist. The pressure of social changes, but also the achievements of current science and technology, has profoundly modified the didactic activity, the type of learners, and the climate in educational institutions; however, the same society that calls for teachers to take on new responsibilities does not prepare them, during the training period, to face the professional realities they are about to face.

References

- Baudelot C & Establet R., (1990), *Durkheim et le suicide*, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Cojoclea M., Petcu I., Milăsan A., (2021), *Starea de bine a profesorilor și elevilor: resurse, impact și idei practice*, Asociația Europeană a Profesioniștilor în Educație EDUMI, www.edumi.ro.
- Cucos, C. (2014). *Pedagogie*. Iasi: Polirom.
- Cucoș, C. (2021), Cuvânt înainte la lucrarea „Formarea pentru cariera didactică – demersuri teoretice și empirice” (coord. Adrian Vincențiu Labăr, Florin Frumos), 2021, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași.
- De Peretti, A. (1991). *Organiser des formations: Former, organiser pour enseigner*. Paris: Hachette, Education.
- De Peretti, A. (1996). *Educația în schimbare*. Iasi: Editura “Șpiru Haret”.
- Esteve. I.M. (1992) *Multicultural education in Spain: the Autonomous Communities face the challenge of European unity*. Harvard Educational Review, Vol.44 (3).
- Esteve, A. (1998), *Los talleres didácticos como proyecto educativo* en Los talleres didácticos delIVAM, IVAM Institut Valencia d’Art Modern, Valencia
- Eurydice, Rețeaua de informare despre Educație în Uniunea Europeană. (2023). *Formarea continuă a cadrelor didactice în UE și în statele AEL/SEE*. București: Alternative.
- Federighi, P., & Sava, S. (2007). *Glosar de termeni cheie în educația adulților în Europa*. Timisoara: Mirton Printinghouse.
- Gee H., (2021), *Humans Are Doomed to Go Extinct*, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/humans-are-doomed-to-go-extinct/>
- Gheorghiu, M., (2021), *Educația, prioritate națională?* În Tribuna Învățământului, nr. 16/aprilie 2021
- Hattie, J. (2015). *What Works Best in Education: The Politics of Collaborative Expertise*. London, UK: Pearson.
- Helsby, G. (1999). *Multiple Truths and Contested Realities: The Changing Faces of Teacher Professionalism in England*. In C. Day, A. Fernandez, T. Hague, & J. Møller (Eds.), *The Life and Work of Teachers* (pp. 93-108). London: Falmer.
- Ionescu, M. (2007). *Instrucție și educație*. Arad: Editura Vasile Goldiș University Press.
- Kincheloe J. & Steinberg S., (1997), *Changing multiculturalism*, Open University Press, Buckingham.
- Legea învățământului preuniversitar nr. 198/2023.
- Legea învățământului superior nr. 199/2023.
- Lowe, H. (1978). *Introducere în psihologia învățării la adulți*. E.D.P. București.
- Marcelo, C. (1995). *Desarrollo profesional e iniciacion a la ensenanza*. Barcelona: PPU.
- Martinez, Z. D. (2005). *Mediación educativa y resolucion de conflictos: Modelos de implementacion*. Edicones Novedades Educativas.
- Merieu, P. (1989). *Enseigner, scenario ou un metier nouveau*. Paris: ESF
- Niculescu, R. M. (2000). *Formarea formatorilor*. București: All Pedagogic.
- Nigh, P. (2021). *Cultivating a cohesive workplace by integrating soft skills training in professional development programs and resources*. 2021 Awards for Excellence in Student Research and Creative Activity - Documents, 7. Eastern Illinois University.
- Pătrăuță, T. (2013). *Didacticometrie, esență, necesitate, procedure*. EDP București.
- Porcher, L. (ed.) (1980) *Systèmes d'apprentissage des langues vivantes par les adultes* (option travailleurs migrants): Un niveau - seuil intermédiaire. Strasbourg, Council of Europe.
- Rae, L. (2001). *Tehnici de formare. Ediția a treia*. Universal Dalsi.

Ranjard, P. (1984), *Les enseignants persecutes*, Diffusion Alternative, Paris.

Reding, V. (2002). *Cinq criteres de reference europeens pour les systemes d'education et de formation*. Bruxelles: Comission europeenne.

Toffler, A. (1990) *El Cambio del Poder*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janes.

Vera, J. (1984). 1 profesor debutante. Retrieved from <http://ww\v.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi>

Vonk, H. (1983). Problems of the beginning teacher. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 6(2), 133-150.