

Career in education – crisis situation?!

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Abstract: *The teacher is the result of a type of professional and educational formation, with characteristics that mark the pedagogical activity. The experience achieved during investigations proves that there is an insufficient preparation of students for the teacher profession. And if the analysis comprises also the professors, the alarming conclusions lead to the idea that such professions are in their way of being dissolved – not necessarily because of the lack of appreciation at governing level, but mostly because of the policies adopted by the ones with power of decision in the educational system.*

Key words: Teacher profession, teacher career, how attractive it is a career in education.

Introduction

The educational system comprises all public and private educational institutions and functions according to a Law of Education, observing the national standards and principles. According to the Law of Education, education is a national priority, its aim being the free, integral and harmonious development of the human individual, the formation of an autonomous and creative personality, this is the definition

in the Romanian Encyclopedic Dictionary – Education Sciences (1, P. 1043).

The formation of teachers is an essential point in the development of the society. It has to be a national priority because education “needs to speed up finding optimal solutions, to present remedies, but also of those in perspective” (2, p. 11).

As mentioned in the work of univ. prof. Emil Paun, PhD, from the University of Bucharest, “Sociopedagogie scolara” (Social

Pedagogy in schools), education within the relation educator-educated is deliberate. He makes a selection of the knowledge that students have to acquire, related to his formation and aspirations, with society's needs and the aspirations of the young generation (3, p.156-165). Univ. prof. Romita Iucu, PhD, defines the necessity of reconsidering the strategies of teaching and of pedagogical practice according to the teacher profession.

He recommends, according to the structure proposed by the collective coordinated by prof. Dan Potolea in the work "Programe Scolare" (Curricula in schools) for psychology and pedagogy, to emphasize on a program of practical formation in the following abilities and activities:

- Psycho-pedagogical abilities – expressed in projecting, leading, evaluating the instruction process, in the knowledge, counseling and assistance in the development of student's personality;
- Social abilities – expressed in social interactions with students and student's groups;
- Managerial abilities – the class's organization and leading.

Objectives

The university professor underlined the following levels of difficulty in the accumulation of knowledge for the future teacher:

- Abilities of knowledge and understanding – using the terms which are specific for the pedagogical and psycho-pedagogical disciplines;
- Abilities in explaining and interpreting – ideas, projects, educational processes;

- Applicative abilities – projecting, leading and evaluating the learning activities. (2, p. 71-72).

In order to ensure a good preparation for the career in education was enabled the Curriculum project for the pedagogical practice proposed by the participants at seminars and workshops organized under the Reform Program of the pre-university education co-financed by the World Bank and the Romanian Government, within the project START – for the professional development of the teacher on probation (October 2000 and may-august 2001) synthesized by univ. professor TOADER PALASAN from TRANSILVANIA University in Brasov, Romania and comprises the definitive elements in the 3 years of study.

Objectives in Year I:

- Get familiarized with the institutions where they will do the pedagogical practice;
- Get to know the organizational and functional structure of the education units;
- Appropriate the content that regulates teacher's assignments and attributions;
- Emotional self-valuation in relation to the future career.

Objectives in Year II:

- Get familiarized with the fundamental aspects in what concerns the teacher's training;
- Familiarize with the National Curriculum;
- Carry out the lesson planning;
- Get to know the school documents and the way to work with them;
- Observe (assisted) the ways of evaluating students;

► Observe the way of using didactic materials;

► Project – put into practice – evaluate probation lessons and correctly elaborate lesson plans.

It is also reminded the presence of activities such as: discussing the Curriculum they study, analyzing the observations made during assistance to classes, participating at systematic activities with the Nucleus staff (pedagogical body and commissions), participating together with students in extra-school activities. Analysis is aimed to lead to:

- Self-valuation and lesson evaluation according to the systematic requests;
- Teaching in the second Semester;
- Psycho-pedagogical knowledge of students.

Objectives in Year III:

► Further studying of the objectives in Year I;

► Further studying of legislation elements;

► Get initiated in psycho-pedagogical research.

The above are the aspects of the didactic training that can be studied in the objective, complete and well documented work "Formarea cadrelor didactice" (The formation of teachers), which is extremely necessary for those working in the field. Therefore, in the first part of this work we synthetically tackled the importance of the teacher's role and the formation of students, by pedagogical practice.

Research results

In the presentation of univ. prof. Romita Iucu, PhD, from the University of Bucharest,

in the second part we retain important to mention a few opinions of the third year that made the pedagogical practice at School No. 195, in Bucharest, where Mrs. Canepescu (first degree teacher and graduand) works as a civic education teacher and counselor. Follow-up we cite fragments from the experience those students acquired during practice, under the name *The first experience as a teacher*.

The most important day has arrived, the moment in which we switch places with the teachers. I knew from the beginning of the school year that I will teach, but the moment seemed far in distance. The moment when I had to prepare the lesson plan was near, after a few months of assistance I knew what I was supposed to do but still, ideas refused to come. I was thinking that I cannot meet expectations and that I am not made for this work.

When I entered the class (7th grade, B), for a moment I stood in front of the class scared that I won't be able to talk, unlike how much I talk in general. The students were watching me from head to toe; they were carefully analyzing every gesture of mine, ready to correct me if I had been wrong. For them too it was something new, they were used to their old teacher, a lady with experience... and now they were facing a beginner. From what I could observe during the lesson I could see that they enjoyed with my methods and they liked the subject we were discussing. I felt great satisfaction when the students were calling on me saying: Teacher, how do I do here? It was something new for me and suddenly I feel I became someone new. Towards the end of the class I felt more relaxed. The indications of my training teacher were correct and objective, I took count of them, and next time it will be even better.

I felt even before starting the practice activity that this would be the most complex task to accomplish in the University years and one of the experiences to reflect on in the years to come.

I never imagined that I would return again in the middle of students, and less to be their teacher; only when I was among them, when I felt their eyes on me, I truly realized how difficult it is to be a teacher.

In the past years, I excitedly waited the contact with the practical side of the field, to see school as it is, to discover all principles that govern its existence, in order not to remain anchored in theories and to keep as sole memories our own experiences in school.

The school reality reveals that in many classrooms, creativity is marginalized, kept in the shadow of conformity by the rigid strategies of work. We are equipped with methods and algorithms, but we do not arm students with strategies, competences, skills to search for other ways. We become specialists in various fields, but we do not think creatively.

I met teachers who consider that sciences can stimulate only a small part of the creative potential of students. But, creativity doesn't also mean find different, unusual solutions? In the classrooms where I assisted, I noticed that students are not afraid of making mistakes (if they don't make mistakes, they cannot create), they were encouraged to think alternatively to different problems in the civic education environment. From here, we can deduce that we have to be creative in order to grow and to activate the creative potential; the teacher has to discover and stimulate the need for development of each student's potential, and the school has to be a promoter of creative initiatives.

These were only a few opinions of the practitioner students. If and when they will become teacher, we will find out.

From talking to them I reached the conclusion that being a teacher is not attractive for them. Professions with a good remuneration are most wanted. Unfortunately, we are

facing one of the manifestations of the educational crisis phenomenon.

The time when the best students were decided to become teachers has passed. We, who have certain seniority in the system, helplessly become witnesses of their options. What can be done? How can we manage such a situation? But, what does the Educational system offer to a teacher, no matter his/her degree?

A few years back, in full economic growth, I was writing about the thoughts and feelings I had when I entered the 1st grade. I am talking about the reservation I felt when I first entered a classroom, about the fear of upsetting my teacher, about the continuous respect I have for that who thought us how to hold a pencil and how to write with it.

There are little chances to find in the present or future students those deep feelings we felt for our teachers, starting with the gymnasium level and ending with the post-university mentors. Or maybe we are wrong. Maybe when we get calls or messages from different parts of the world, from where students transmit us what they have learned and what they have achieved, the same transfer of feelings takes place as between a student and its teacher. Yet, rarely can we feel proud of personally influencing the destiny of one of our former graduates.

It is very likely that we die and never change our conviction that a teacher needs vocation, talent and dedication in his job, regardless of recognition and remuneration. But, it is also true that moral motivation will never feed us.

Assuming that a teacher has no other skills to provide him with the incomes he needs for a decent existence (teachers always received a wage under the level of their

quality and social significance of his work) there are no sufficient arguments to keep a job gained in competition:

- There exists no more that miraculous atmosphere created among students by their teacher.

► These are usually over-informed as high technology entered many houses, though not in as many as it should have, and frequently their capacities of understanding certain processes and phenomena are exceeded.

► It is also true that children positively overcome their knowledge limits, though these individual research and investigations.

- Teacher's personal and professional authority is no longer recognized as it should.

► The school children consider themselves know-it-all persons that don't need a systematic instruction, that being a waste of time.

► Parents do not adopt appropriate pedagogical practices and most often disrupt the efforts made by school, through its teachers. There are many cases in which parents denigrate teachers in front of their children, give contradictory information...

► The confusion in society related to the role of each actor in child's education: the parent is the one that has to create a basis of education and school institutions have to teach and complete the family efforts. Lately, probably because of the lack of time – which is due to a longer working time and the necessity of the mother to work – there are many who consider schools the only responsible with the education of children. Lots of money is spent in the private educational system, starting with kindergartens and continuing with home tuitions.

► Real are also the negative examples of teachers with a low qualification, who are accepted in the system not because of nepotism, but because of the following explanation (of which I am bored, even though it's true): *With such low wages, the best students do not beat path to come and teach.*

- There is no material stimulus to satisfy the teachers so that they would grow on their professional evolution. Education, although responsible in a great measure for the future human performances (including here the successes in all national economic fields), does not receive sufficient funds from any government, not even for wages, not to take into account the other endowments.

There is always the question: *Why becoming a teacher?* with its variants: *Why teacher in gymnasium and high school?* and *Why university professor?*

Don't try to look for answers if you already are a teacher. Try and think as a twenty two years old person, fresh graduand, full of dreams and hopes. Why would s/he choose a career in education, no matter the level? If we, those who create, educate, form, perfect and develop the human resources, are not conscious of the necessity in investing, as much as possible, in children, adolescents and youngsters, what are we waiting from the ones with power of decision in government, who are always constrained by certain interests and by budgets?

Our salvation (fairly said "as a nation") comes from the enthusiasm of youngsters, especially of those who finished a pedagogical high school or a faculty in the field.

It is worthy of note a questionnaire filled by our students, in order to discover their career orientations in relation to the

needs, aspirations, priorities and values offered by the life events.

- The motivation in choosing such a profession gravitates around the same ideas – the pleasure of teaching:

► *My dream from childhood was to work as an educator. I postponed this dream in order to complete my university studies.*

► Since high school I wished to become a university professor, now I make do with the School Inspector job, in pre-university education.

- We can also observe the consistency in what concerns the need for development:

► I want to finish the Master, and then do my Doctorate, but by then I will keep my job as psycho-pedagogical counselor.

► I am thinking about having a family with two children, but I don't want to give up the career of university professor, even outside country.

Instead of conclusions

To be extremely sincere, how many of those who have a long pre-university/university career would be ready, under the present demographic, cultural, educational and civilization, economic, social and political conditions, to choose the same profession?

Or, if they would choose again to be teachers, would they make a career of it, taking their wages the only source of income, or would they call on other alternatives which bring more money? In fact, what does pre-university/university career imply in the future? Or, what is the future of the pre-university/university career? In front of such questions, which open a long series of other questions, the following one seems fair enough in order to close the psychological circle: Why a pre-university/university career?

We consider appropriate to close this article with a quotation from univ. prof. Romita Iucu's work, a professor with a vast knowledge, a very good tutor, and an excellent professional, who guides us, whose materials improved our activity and who we thank on these lines. "There are many alarm signals that some schools could cease their activity for lack of teachers. The numerical decline of educators was accompanied also by a decline in what concerns the personnel's quality. Other sectors of activity became more attractive to the detriment of the educational sector, and the well-prepared youngsters opt for other jobs than that of teachers. The selection for the didactic professions is more and more made in a residual way: those who apply for the job of educators are those who remain after the other activity sectors selected the best graduates" (2, p.8).

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