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Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education

“Education for Sustainable Democratic Societies: the Role of Teachers”

23rd session

Ljubljana, Slovenia, 4-5 June 2010

Introduction to sub-theme B: Professional development and
social recognition



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Pascale Mompoin-Gaillard

Introduction

Schools are not merely invested with the mission of transmitting knowledge to young people; inevitably schools are also a place of transmission of values, democratic values to support sustainable democratic societies.¹ Teachers, who deal with human beings on a daily basis and for many years, are in a position to shape our common future.

It is widely acknowledged that the role of teachers in promoting the emergence and maintenance of a democratic culture is crucial² and this is partly why teachers are at the heart of the profound reforms we have seen in Europe's education systems recently. The success of education for sustainable democratic societies depends significantly on the teaching profession. *In order to play their part fully, teachers need to be supported. Issues of status and recognition (economic and social), professional development and working conditions are central to developing teachers' ability to assume their responsibilities for education for sustainable democratic societies.* The role of teacher development is becoming more and more important and also more and more challenging.³

Fundamental human values are universal and immutable and that is why some aspects of school life and learning are the same from one generation to another. On the other hand, the world in which young people live, and grow, changes perpetually. This implies that certain aspects of school culture and educational practices are under pressure to change and evolve.⁴ Young people have to be educated in (and for) new contexts (knowledge based societies), and develop competences (knowledge skills and attitudes): communication, plurilinguism, interculturality, "new literacies", equity and multi-perspectivity, to cite a few.

As a consequence, and following these trends, teacher development and the recognition of teachers' professional role will have to evolve if we want to answer the present challenges that European education systems face.

¹ Or "SDS"

² Brett, P et al., 2008, "How all teachers can contribute to citizenship and Human rights educational framework for the development of competences", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

³ Ólafsdóttir, Ó. 2006, "The political context of teacher education in the Council of Europe's programmes", in *Teacher education in Europe: achievement, trends and prospects*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

⁴ Bîrzéa, C. et al., 2005, "Tool for quality assurance of education for democratic citizenship in schools", Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

THREE DOMAINS OF TEACHER RECOGNITION

A. SOCIAL RECOGNITION OF TEACHERS

1. Recognition in terms of status and image

While teachers are important actors for social change, one must recognise that society today does not quite value their role at the level it deserves. The teaching profession suffers from a negative image and a lack of social prestige.

Teachers need to be supported when they are faced with issues related to teaching in classrooms, especially in schools placed in troubled neighbourhoods and schools where poverty and unemployment, immigration, violence, social and regional conflict, inequality and discrimination problems of are serious. Society needs to recognize teachers' hardship in dealing effectively with problems originating from family, social background, social or regional conflict...

WHO wants to be a teacher today?

Teachers who deal with these issues without support and social recognition (status) are subject to stress and burn out.⁵

➤ **Raising teacher image should be a policy focus to attract good candidates and maintain good teachers in the profession.** There is an opportunity to raise teacher status through:

- Access to high quality professional development (see issue # 3)
- Quality assurance, teacher evaluation and action/research to best target the training/education offer for teachers and education professionals (see issue # 5)
- Celebrating and publicising innovative practices through the media
- Decentralising training and support (see issue # 3).

2. Recognition in terms of incentives

Teachers living and working conditions vary widely across Europe, but one is forced to observe that, in many cases, teachers suffer from low economic and social status.

This is especially true for teachers in urban settings. Once in the profession, teachers need to be maintained in the profession; a high staff turnover in the profession results in loss of investment in terms of training and capacity.

“No! I’ll never get a Mercedes then”, answered a 17-year-old Dutch student to the question if he wanted to become a teacher.

➤ **The competences we are looking for in teachers are demanding. Policy incentives should reflect this and can be used as a tool to demand higher quality.** If a society recognises the central role of education to sustain its future democratic destiny, *it should recognise its teachers at a level that makes the profession viable, and attractive.*

⁵ Radai, P. et al., 2003, “The status of language educators”, Council of Europe/ ECML, Graz, Austria.

3. Teacher recruitment

***A much larger number of new teachers are entering the profession in 2005-2015 than in the past 20 years.⁶
Recruitment is therefore a high stake issue in teacher policy.
We need action, and action fast.***

Today, the criteria for entry in pre-service teacher training are largely based on the academic background of candidates. Other criteria such as candidates' communication skills, open mindedness, motivation to work with young people and mirroring society's diversity (in terms of gender, ethnicity, etc...) are not part of recruitment schemes. The consequence of this type of recruitment is twofold: it increases the risk of early drop out of the profession for the candidates and deprives the profession of good candidates with different profiles.

The teachers we recruit in Europe today will be in classrooms in

- Many teachers have little experience outside school: they have been in the system as students and enter the classroom as teachers... They have little or no experience of the private sector. Teachers' competences for today's schools in fast-changing societies are manifold: *schools need flexible, adaptable, cooperative professionals able and willing to maintain a high level of competence throughout their career to play their role as "mediators/facilitators for learning" with students.*

Recruitment should be conducted with the aim of increasing diversity in the profession.

- **Policy should offer a framework to diversify recruitment.** The profession needs to be attractive to motivated and competent candidates from different backgrounds, private sector included. All aspects of the recruitment and employment of teachers should be free from any form of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, political opinion, national or social origin, or economic condition.⁷
- **Policy should support the extension of recruitment outside teacher training institutions:** today, the majority of teachers are recruited at a young age "fresh out of university". There is a need to change this and find dynamic ways to offer entry for people who come from other parts of society, with different and more diverse experience. The teaching profession will have to be made attractive for these new candidates.

"The entry of substantial numbers of new teachers with up-to-date skills and fresh ideas has the potential to substantially renew schools. However, if teaching is not perceived as an attractive profession, and teaching does not change in fundamental ways, there is a risk that the quality of schools will decline."⁸

⁶ OECD, 2005, "Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers".

⁷ ILO/UNESCO Conference on teacher status, 1966, principle #7.

⁸ Op cit.

4. Authorities' recognition of teacher expertise and teacher participation in decision making

***Teachers must play a central role in strategic planning.
If teachers are now at the centre of European bodies' discourse,
member states need to include them in policy making.***

Education systems should avoid continuous implementation of changes (curriculum, didactic approaches...) without teacher consultation. Teachers should be active in change management on a system level and in the classroom.

When education systems model participation, they reinforce teachers' capacity to do the same in their schools and classrooms.

Democratic decision making is the path to reinforcing teacher responsibility and ownership of the learning process and transmission of democratic values.

**"What's up with all this new stuff?
What was wrong with the old stuff?"
(A teacher facing yet another new reform)**

- **Education policy should create conditions in which teachers are supported to determine for themselves, with the ministry, what actions are needed for a better education that answers today's challenges, by exercising their judgment and trying out innovative approaches.**

B. TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AND RECOGNISING TEACHING AS A PROFESSION

5. Access to quality lifelong learning

***Continued support and education
seen over the continuum of a teacher's career are essential.***

Professional development is one of the main opportunities to raise teacher status and at the same time gain professional competences.

With the transition of our societies from industrial to post industrial, and the entrance of the age of knowledge based societies, teachers need to switch from non participative methods and pedagogy to a child centered pedagogy focused on the acquisition of specific *transversal competences: experimentation, systemic thinking and collective knowledge building, problem-solving, critical thinking, capacity to face new developments quickly, cooperative spirit and skills, navigating in knowledge networks...*

Teachers will need to be highly adaptable, and teacher education will have to develop pedagogic as well as *non pedagogic skills including inclusive democratic values, respect for diversity and soft skills in the field of interculturalism.* Central to the idea of education for SDS is the understanding that democratic values and competences *cannot be acquired through formal teaching alone, but need to be practiced. They are acquired through a "learning by doing" approach, based on experience.* This can only be achieved through *continuous professional development* policies that effectively support the teachers who are willing and able to try innovative actions in their school and classrooms.

➤ **Teacher education needs to be supported by education systems and specific decisions need to be taken within the following lines:**

- Time: teachers need time for training/networking; each teacher should access training every year or at the very least every other year.
- Decentralisation: training needs are different from one school environment to another. Therefore, decentralising the planning of training is important to best fit the needs: school-heads and teachers should be able to plan for training through access to workshops and teacher education modules, organising teacher mobility, belonging to networks in order to support the implementation of change, implementing peer-training and team work, ...

The traditional pre- and in-service training models do not suffice in a context where teachers need continued support in the development of the high level professional competences that are now needed.

- Opening paths between higher education institutions and other teacher training facilities so as to allow for quality professional development without teachers needing to engage in long range university studies to improve their competences.

- Belonging to a community of practice, (local, national, regional, international), which is working on innovative learning structures is an essential component of teacher education. Schools and education professionals should have time planned in their schedules for networking activities.
- Ensuring that training is supported by recent research and therefore best adapted to the present needs of our societies.
- Availability of tools for quality assurance, evaluation and self-evaluation: there is a need for establishing simple tools and clear indicators to measure if a school system is reaching the goal of re-enforcing students' capacity (savoir/savoir-faire/savoir-être) to become active citizens able to contribute to solve societal issues.

6. The Bologna Process supporting pluri-linguism and mobility for teachers in Europe

Teachers need to be able to experience what is being done in other European countries in order to progress toward education for SDS.

Linguistic skills and language awareness: a central need for teacher mobility.

Teacher mobility: a central need for education for SDS.

This is why language is an important factor of democratic sustainability in Europe. Data show a diminishing interest within families in learning neighbouring European languages and an overrated presence of English. Teachers need language awareness to build on language diversity in the classroom and engage in regional and international networking. Teacher mobility is therefore a central component of pre- and in-service teacher training.⁹

Following the principles of the Bologna Process, by 2010 higher education systems in European countries should be organised in such a way that it is easy to move from one country to the other (within the European Higher Education Area) – for the purpose of further study or employment.¹⁰ This process should fully benefit teacher education.

- **Education policy can support language learning and mobility for all teachers.** Teachers who have been through mobility programmes should see their status improve and their experience officially recognized and valued in their home country.
- **Ministries of education can support this by raising awareness of the need to enhance teacher education in Higher education institutions.**

7. Evaluation and certification

Today teachers are mainly assessed on their capacity to teach the academic subject(s) they are hired to teach. They are often expected to *transmit this knowledge in ways that do not correspond to the needs of today's knowledge based societies*. Teacher evaluation, quality assurance measures and certification for all training should be organized to also evaluate and celebrate the capacity of education systems to address issues linked to education for SDS. These evaluation tools will consider the "bouquet" of transversal competences¹¹ that all learners/citizens need to acquire.

Evaluation and self evaluation should be seen in terms of support for teachers rather than control. It participates in the development of a culture of lifelong learning.

⁹ CORNU, B. 2006, « Regards croisés sur les nouveaux rôles et compétences des enseignants en Europe », in *formation des enseignants en Europe: acquis, tendances et perspectives*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France.

¹⁰ The European Higher Education Area provides Europe with a broad, high quality and advanced knowledge base, and ensures the further development of Europe as a stable, peaceful and tolerant community.

¹¹ As listed in paragraph 5.

The traditional inspection based on control and assessment with a top-bottom approach which most education systems offer today are not adapted to evaluating these transversal competences. Education systems will need to support this evaluation and certification, by offering more pedagogical support and evaluation/certification resources that adequately measure the demanding new skills which teachers need today. This should be reflected upon through the higher education reforms and the Bologna Process.

- **Policy should support this passage to evaluation and quality assurance approaches** that effectively support positive changes within the teaching profession: self and peer evaluation; team evaluation with on-demand pedagogical support.

C. THE CHALLENGES OF WORKING CONDITIONS

8. Team-work and cooperative structures: “a world full of uncertainty and demands... in which we still must act together”

With the growing number of competences teachers need to acquire, it is necessary to consider that teacher competences no longer be seen as individual and finite.

To respond to the challenges of knowledge societies based on the social, ethical and political dimensions of living together, teachers from now on need *collective competences*. A teacher is no longer considered to be the one to “dispense” knowledge, but should be seen as a “facilitator of knowledge construction”, in a context where each learner takes responsibility for his/her own learning.

***School in knowledge based societies:
a network of learners in a society of
networks?***

- **Policies to enhance collective strategies for teaching and learning are urgently needed.** They include: whole school approaches and supporting teachers acquiring collaborative skills, team teaching approaches, cooperative techniques...
- **Time during teachers working hours must be set aside for collaborative approaches:** teamwork with other teachers, peer assessment, peer training and evaluation, partnerships and project learning.

9. Student achievement and teacher motivation

***Student achievement and teacher self-perception are directly related.
Action should be taken to help schools in this field.***

In an era of widespread media availability (image, video, web...) and overwhelming entertainment choices, young people tend to have *difficulties accepting the necessity to focus, work hard and understand the concept of deferred gratification*. Teachers frequently voice their dismay at getting young people to stay interested in learning, yet getting their pupils to learn and progress is what motivates them.

**“What motivates me is when my students have an “aha” moment.”
(A teacher from Sweden).**

Raising young peoples’ awareness of the importance of reading, accepting deferred gratification and the necessity to work in order to achieve results can sustain teachers’ efforts in this same direction.

- **Wide national campaigns to raise awareness of these issues** can be organized yearly. Public libraries, media, popular websites and social networks, could be solicited to participate actively in these campaigns.

10. Working conditions and public spending: what since the ILO/UNESCO conference in 1966?

The current economic downturn should not be cause for reducing investment in education and working conditions in schools should be improved in the years to come.

Education is a long term investment. For this investment to be efficient and consequential in a positive way, there cannot be “up’s and down”, good years and bad years, for education budgets.

It is noteworthy that many of the conclusions of the ILO/UNESCO conference on teacher status in 1966 are still valid today. Working conditions for teachers suffer from many of the same ailments, when they should be such as to best promote effective learning and enable teachers to concentrate on their professional tasks.¹² Offering appropriate and safe facilities, technical equipment, pedagogical support and appropriate staffing is a basic need to achieve the goals of Education for SDS.

- **Public spending can be planned in ways in which creative solutions are implemented to alleviate the lack of appropriate resources:** pooling resources, team teaching, and networking are some of the possible ways of dealing with sub-satisfactory working conditions.
- **Reviewing the principles outlined by the 1966 ILO/UNESCO** Special Intergovernmental Conference on the Status of Teachers recommendations, updating and adapting the recommendations to the specific present European context could allow for reflection and implementation of guidelines to improve teachers’ working conditions in the next decade.

¹² ILO/UNESCO, 1966, Conference on teacher status report, guiding principle #8.

Guiding questions for debate

- **In your opinion, what are educational institutions' priority missions for SDS?**
Knowledge and cultural transmission; preparation for entering the workforce; self-development; socialization?
- **What measures can you take to recruit, attract and retain quality teachers in the profession?** Issues of status, teacher education, teacher pay, work conditions and decision-making within education reforms must be addressed.
- **In your opinion, in what order of priority must action be taken, and investment be made in terms of spending to best support education for SDS?**

Illustrative case from Hungary

Teacher recognition and professional development in Hungary as seen by teachers and teacher educators

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Following the relevant points raised in the description and directives presented in the publication *Education in Hungary – Past, Present and Future – An Overview*,¹³ this presentation will address issues of the financial background, access, efficiency, quality and equity as well as teacher education and professional development as seen by teachers and teacher educators in Hungary.

Financial background, access, efficiency and quality

Schools are being renovated and they have gradually become better equipped with computers and interactive whiteboards in many areas in the last two decades. However, the majority of the teachers in these schools still do not know how to benefit from these technological developments and very often they misuse them in their teaching or do not use them at all.

Teachers' salaries are very low, and pay rises have been rare and insignificant. The work load of a secondary school teacher is at least 22 lessons per week in addition to a lot of administrative work and after-school activities. Teachers often give private lessons or take on other, better paid half-time jobs on top of their very full working days. Many of them are exhausted and suffer from career-burnout.¹⁴ And many leave the profession.

The acquisition of lifelong learning key competencies is often misunderstood and/or regarded as a new nuisance that teachers have to deal with. Knowledge of the subject matter is what teachers used to be trained to transmit and this is what the majority still regard as their main responsibility.

The development of appropriate pedagogical tools and methodologies, coupled with the necessary and efficient training, retraining and on-the-job training of teachers takes a long time and it requires a lot of energy from teachers who are overworked and underpaid.

Quality is a key issue but education can only be labelled "quality education" if the players evaluate it as such. At the moment, teachers are rarely asked to evaluate their schools, their working conditions and their professional development opportunities. Furthermore, students are practically never asked to evaluate their schools and their teachers. Cases of violence are reported but verbal abuse, discrimination and negligent teaching usually go unnoticed.

¹³ Ministry of Education and Culture. (2008). *Education in Hungary – Past, Present and Future*. Budapest: OKM

¹⁴ Rádai, P. (Ed.) (2003). *The Status of Language educators*. ECML. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

According to the OECD survey “There needs to be a stronger emphasis on teacher evaluation for improvement purposes which, while designed mainly to enhance classroom practice, would provide opportunities for teachers’ work to be recognised and celebrated and help both teachers and schools to identify professional development priorities. It can also provide a basis for rewarding teachers for exemplary performance.”¹⁵ Unfortunately, teachers in Hungary rarely feel rewarded.

Equity

As for inclusive classrooms and quality education for all, approximately one third of all Hungarian Roma schoolchildren attend completely segregated schools or classes and only a quarter of all Hungarian primary schools follow the integration program to the full. Many teachers are against integration, claiming that it makes the successful teaching of “regular” students impossible. As a result, schools often segregate Roma children (using a variety of pretexts, since segregation on the basis of ethnic origin is against the law). Teachers of classes where most children come from highly disadvantaged families usually cannot manage and often end up blaming the Roma students and their families, trying to find scapegoats for their own failure in the classroom, and thus reinforcing negative stereotypes.¹⁶

Another common argument against integration is that teaching disadvantaged students requires special training that few teachers receive, so, these people claim, we cannot expect teachers to achieve good results with highly disadvantaged Roma children. A sad example of teachers’ attitudes to the issue comes from one of these in-service teacher training programmes, where one third of the participating teachers believed both at the start and at the end of the training course that “the failure of Roma children at school is genetically coded.”¹⁷ This probably also reflects Hungarian society’s attitude to the Hungarian Roma population. Many teachers are openly racist, and many others have very negative preconceptions about minorities, especially the Roma, even if they are not as vocal as the former group.

Teacher education and professional development

Teacher education programmes are actively preparing materials, methods and training programmes to prepare pre- and in-service teachers to become involved and active in education for sustainable democratic societies but they also suffer from under-financing and lack of resources. Nevertheless, most universities have been offering courses and materials for multicultural education, teaching disadvantaged students, learner-centred pedagogy, tolerance training, intercultural communication, drama pedagogy, project work, collaborative learning and many related areas both in pre-service and in-service programs for many years.

¹⁵ OECD (2005). “Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers” www.oecd.org.

¹⁶ Based on a feature article in the Hungarian Journal “World Economy Weekly” (HVG) March 3rd 2009.

¹⁷ Ibid..

There are a few other examples of “good practice” and worthy initiatives in Hungary. Just to mention a few, the mentoring program supported by the Ministry of Education and Culture paired up nearly 20,000 disadvantaged students with trained mentoring teachers for the whole school year. In addition, disadvantaged families receive financial support if they take their children to pre-school and kindergarten on a regular basis so they are better socialised and prepared for primary school when they are 6 years old.

Finally, there are many new competence-based teaching and training materials as well as many funded professional development opportunities in Hungary and abroad, which in theory are easily available for teachers. However, there are a few problems with the current on-the-job training system. On the one hand, the compulsory 120 credit points that teachers have to collect every seven years can be earned during 3 or 4 separate short training courses. These short training courses might be about completely different topics and may be as short as 2 or 3 days each. Regardless of the main themes of these workshops, four times 3 days every seven years are not very likely to change teachers’ attitudes and practices. Furthermore, professional development opportunities are not well coordinated and advertised and not all schools are eligible for support to send their teachers on some of these courses. Finally, our exhausted and underpaid teachers who wish to or have to attend professional development events very often have to go on unpaid leave or find someone to substitute for them while they attend a workshop. On top of this, they usually have to pay 20% of the costs of their training.

We may be striving for a better and more rational use of physical and human resources, improving at all levels the efficiency of education and training systems, promoting the extensive use of ICT equipment, the development of curricula and pedagogical tools enabling their efficient and effective use, and we may be striving for the retraining of teaching staff in many areas to promote key competences, to combat school failure and early school leaving and to provide inclusive education for all... but we are not quite there yet. In order to play their part fully in promoting education for sustainable democratic societies, teachers need a better economic status and social recognition as well as working conditions that allow access to more frequent or long-term, better organized and more easily available professional development opportunities.

