Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union

Conference

Teacher professional development for the quality and equity of lifelong learning

Lisboa, Parque das Nações – Pavilhão Atlântico – Sala Nónio
27 and 28 September 2007

The return of teachers
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In recent years we have seen teachers return to the limelight, after almost forty years of near-invisibility. It is true that their importance was never really in doubt, but the focus was on other problems and concerns: the '70s was the time of teaching rationalisation, of pedagogy by objectives, of the efforts to foresee, plan and control; later, in the '80s, we saw major educational reforms, focussed on the structure of school systems and, quite particularly, on curriculum engineering; in the '90s, special attention was given to school organisations and how they functioned, were administered and managed.

Close to the end of the 20th century, important international comparative studies highlighted the issue of learning. *Learning matters.* For its dissemination and the impact it had on the world, PISA (*Programme for International Student Assessment*), which was developed by OECD from 1997 onwards, played an important role.

When we speak of learning, we inevitably have to talk about teachers. A report published by OECD in 2005 – *Teachers matter* – starts with a reference about a new social and political concern: "teacher policy is high on national agendas"[1].

Alongside these widely disseminated comparative studies were two other factors that became compulsory terms of reflection and intervention in the field of education.

On the one hand, the issues of *diversity*, in all its forms, paved the way for a redefinition of social inclusion and school integration practice. The construction of new pedagogies and work methods definitively questioned the idea of *the one best system*, to use David Tyack's expression[2].

On the other, the challenges set by *new technologies,* have revolutionised daily life in society and school. However, as Olga Pombo wrote, "if it is true that the teacher's discourse, as a means of communication, does not travel at the same speed that characterises cybernetic technology, it is equally true that their voice and the instantaneousness of their audibility in the communicative space that is the classroom, the different forms of the various languages that are used, the warmth of the look, the physical posture, the gestures, the intonation, the rhythm of speech, make it a special and unavoidable means of teaching"[3].

At the beginning of the 21st century, teachers reappear as irreplaceable elements, not only in the promotion of *learning*, but also in the development of the processes of integration that respond to the challenges of *diversity* and appropriate methods for the use of *new technologies*.

This is the backdrop to my paper: the return of teachers to the focus of our concerns and policies[4].

After this introduction, I will give you the good news (part one) and later the bad news (part two). I will reflect upon the bad news, adopting a purposefully controversial, if not excessive tone, with the goal of making my views even clearer and provoking a debate that, to me, seems unavoidable.

PART ONE – THE GOOD NEWS
We agree about what we have to do

First, let's look at the good news: we almost all agree about the major principles and even about the measures that need to be taken, in order to ensure the *Teacher professional development for the quality and equity of lifelong learning*, which is the theme of this conference.

When preparing this paper I collected a wide range of documentation: international reports, scientific articles, political speeches, documents about teacher education, books and PhD theses, etc. When reading this material over a few days one can see the recurrent use of the same concepts and languages, of the same ways of speaking and thinking about the problems of the teaching profession.

We are looking at a type of *discursive consensus*, rather redundant and verbose, which expands into references about teachers' professional development, the coordination of initial training, induction and in-service training from a lifelong learning perspective, the focus on the first years of professional practice and the placement of young teachers in schools, the idea of the reflective teacher and research-based teacher education, the new competencies for teachers in the 21st century, the importance of collaborative cultures, teamwork, monitoring, supervision and assessment of teachers… and so on.

All of this is part of a discourse that has become dominant and one that we all have contributed to. We are not just talking about words, but also about the practices and policies that they transport and suggest.

Two major groups have contributed to the dissemination and vulgarisation of this discourse, here understood in the sense of discourse-practice that Cleo Cherryholmes gave it: "the intertextuality of discourses and practices that constitutes and structures our social and educational worlds"[5].

In the first place, there is the group commonly known as the teacher education community, which includes researchers in subject areas, in education and didactics, work groups and institutions. In the last fifteen years, this community has produced a number of impressive texts, which include the concept of the *reflective teacher*, changing how teachers and teacher education are viewed[6].

The second group is made up of "international specialists" that act as consultants or are part of major international organisations (OECD, UNESCO, the European Union, etc.). Despite their heterogeneous nature, they have created and disseminated, on a global scale, discursive practices that are strongly grounded in comparative arguments. Their legitimacy is essentially based on the knowledge of international networks and comparative data and less on the theoretical expertise of a scientific or professional area[7].

These two groups, more than teachers themselves, have contributed to the renovation of studies on the teaching profession. While making this statement, I cannot help but remember David Labaree's warning: teacher professionalization is an extension of the effort by teacher educators to raise their own professional status[8].

It is important to understand the paradox in the origin of important contradictions in the history of the teaching profession: the rhetoric about the mission of teachers implies giving them greater social visibility, which consolidates their prestige but provokes stricter state and scientific control, leading to a devaluing of their own competencies and their professional autonomy[9].

This situation is at the root of the bad news that I am going to share with you: the excess of discourse conceals the poverty of practice. In other words, we have coherent discourse, consensual in many aspects, we are in agreement about what needs to be done, but rarely have we been able to do what we say needs to be done.

PART TWO – THE BAD NEWS
Rarely have we been able to do what we say needs to be done

In part two of this communication, I will question the reasons for the bad news and then I will attempt to identify certain measures that, in my opinion, need to be put in place.

What are the reasons for the bad news? It is not difficult to answer this question. In recent years, there has been an unprecedented expansion of the teacher education community, particularly in university education departments, of international specialists and also of the "education industry", with their usual products (school books, teaching material, etc.) and now a host of education technologies.

There has been an increase of discourse about teachers in these three spheres but teachers were not the main authors of this discourse and, in a sense, they have seen their territory occupied by other groups. We should be aware of this problem if we wish to comprehend the reasons why the practical implementation of the obvious and consensual ideas and discourse has been made difficult.

As peculiar as it may seem, let me talk to you about a *school diary* that was kept in the 1930s[10]. A primary school teacher, who was working in Trás-os-Montes, in the north of Portugal, Dionísio das Dores Gonçalves, left us a record of his teaching, with reflections about his classes, pupils and communities, maps and teaching material, in carefully written notebooks over the years. Looking over these pages, Miguel Torga's expression springs almost immediately to mind: "The universal is the local without walls"[11].

Isolated in rural Portugal in the '30s, Dionísio das Dores Gonçalves worked with great professional autonomy, focussing his efforts on learning, concerned with the personal and social behaviour of each pupil and, above all, seeking to systematically reflect on his teaching practice. Provocative questions are bound to be asked: Are we not looking at a "reflective teacher" long before reflective teachers became so fashionable in our discourse? And aren't teachers nowadays considerably less reflective (due to lack of time, poor conditions, an excess of ready-to-wear material, and a loss of legitimacy in relation to universities and experts) than this teacher of the '30s?

The reference to the past can be seen as an effect of distancing, *a la Brecht*. I do not mean to insinuate any analogy or anachronism with the present, but only suggest the need to adopt viewpoints that are not limited to reproducing non-critical discourse of the evidence. We will not be able to avoid the "poverty of practices" if we do not have policies that help teachers consolidate their knowledge and their fields of intervention, ones which improve teaching cultures and do not transform teachers into a profession dominated by university professors, experts or by the "education industry".

What I am saying, with this simplicity, should constitute the grounds to think the educational policy and the ways of organising the teaching profession field. What needs to be done? Perhaps it is possible to highlight three measures, which are far from exhaustive but may help overcome many of the current dilemmas.

First measure
It is necessary for teacher education to come from within the profession

The phrase I chose for the subtitle – "It is necessary for teacher education to come from within the profession" – sounds odd. By using this expression, I wish to underline the need for teachers to have a predominant place in training their peers. There will be no significant change if the "teacher education community" and the "community of teachers" do not become more permeable and overlapping. The example of doctors and training hospitals and the way they are prepared in the initial stages of training, induction and in-service training can perhaps serve as inspiration.

In this area, it is worth mentioning Lee Shulman's studies, particularly a brilliant note he recently wrote, entitled *An immodest proposal*[12]:

> **"Recently, I participated in a site visit to the teaching hospital of a major American medical school. […] On this visit, I joined a team of students and faculty in the daily ritual of clinical rounds. […] The team I observed included a chief resident, a third-year resident, two first-year residents, two third-year medical students beginning their internal medicine rotation, and a pharmacy student on internship. Each of seven patients comprised a "lesson" within a unit of instruction. We stopped outside every room. The resident or medical student responsible for that patient gave a report that followed a strict outline. […] Next, the chief resident discussed what had occurred during the rounds with the third-year resident in a preceptor interaction, essentially like a supervising teacher with a student teacher. […] We then moved to teaching rounds, in which the chief resident presented a didactic seminar on pulmonary function tests. The day ended with M&M (Morbidity and Mortality), otherwise known as, "Where Did We Screw Up and What Can We Learn from It?" Pretty much the same group from morning rounds reconvened, joined by other faculty. Their goal was quality assurance. […] Everyone in the system was learning. In fact, an assistant professor ran the session, with full professors learning alongside third-year clerks. This kind of communal questioning and learning is compelling. Where in higher education more generally do we find an institutional pressure to come together and ask why students are not learning mathematics or economics well, and what to do institutionally about that? What I watched at this teaching hospital was an institution actively investigating the quality of its work, knowing, caring, and operating corporately to improve and learn from its collective experience".**

From my point of view, I advocate a similar system for teacher education: a detailed study of each case, especially in the case of school underachievement, a collective analysis of pedagogical practice; professional stubbornness and persistence to respond to pupils' needs and concerns; social commitment and the desire to change.

In truth, it is not possible to write text after text about *praxis* and *practicum*, about *phronesis* and *prudentia* as references of teaching knowledge, about *reflective teachers*, if teachers do not achieve a greater presence in the training of their own profession.

It is important to invite the richness, complexity and beauty of teaching out of the closet by making it visible and accessible, as is the case with other scholarly and creative work, as advocated by Lee Shulman[13]. Also, it is essential to consolidate the mechanisms and practice of research-based teacher education.

These proposals cannot be mere rhetorical declarations. They only make sense if they are constructed within the profession, if they are appropriated from the reflection of teachers about their own work. While they are only injunctions from the outside, the changes within the teaching profession will be rather poor.

Second measure
It is necessary to promote new ways of organising the profession

The second measure I propose looks at the need to promote new ways of organising the profession. Most of the discourse becomes unrealistic and unworkable if the profession continues to be distinguished by ingrained individualist traditions or by rigid external relations, particularly bureaucratic ones that have become more obvious in recent years. This paradox is well known among historians: the more one talks of teacher autonomy, the more teachers are controlled, in various ways, leading to a reduction of the margins for freedom and independence.

Professional collegiality, sharing and collaborative cultures cannot be imposed through administrative means or decisions from above. However, examples from other professions, such as doctors, engineers or architects, can inspire teachers. The way they have built partnerships between the professional world and the university world, how they created ways of integrating young people, how they have granted major importance to their most prestigious professionals or how they have made themselves accountable for their work, are examples that are worthy of our attention.

It is not possible to bridge the gap between discourse and practice if there is no autonomous professional field that is sufficiently rich and open. Today, at a time replete with references to the cooperative work of teachers, it is surprising to see the fragility of the *pedagogic movements* that have played a major role in educational innovation over decades. These movements, so often based on informal and associative networks, are irreplaceable in the professional development of teachers.

Pat Hutchings and Mary Taylor Huber are right when they refer to the importance of consolidating the *teaching commons* – "a conceptual space in which communities of educators committed to inquiry and innovation come together to exchange ideas about teaching and learning, and use them to meet the challenges of educating students for personal, professional, and civic life"[14].

Pedagogic movements or communities of practice consolidate a feeling of belonging and professional identity that is essential to teachers appropriating processes of change and transforming them into concrete practice.

However, nothing will be done unless the existing conditions in schools and public policies relating to teachers are changed. It is useless to appeal for reflection if there is no organisation in school that facilitates it. It is useless to call for mutual, inter-peer, and collaborative training if the definition of teaching careers is not coherent within this aim. It is pointless to propose research-based qualification and partnerships between schools and university institutions, if the legal norms continue to make this approach difficult.

Third measure
It is necessary to consolidate the personal and public presence of teachers

The OECD document quoted at the beginning of this paper, *Teachers matter*, underlines the following: "The issues raised in the report go to the heart of teachers' work and careers, and the success of any reform requires that teachers themselves are actively involved in policy development and 5

implementation. Unless teachers are actively involved in policy formulation, and feel a sense of "ownership" of reform, it is unlikely that substantial changes will be successfully implemented"[15].

The conclusion of the OECD study constitutes a good introduction to the third measure, which I will share with you, about the need to consolidate the personal and public presence of teachers.

In 1984, Ada Abraham edited a wonderful book, *L'enseignant est une personne*, which became a symbol of the various streams of research about teachers[16]. However, despite the major advances made in this area, it is necessary to recognise that *a theory of personality* has yet to be formed within a *theory of professionality*. This has to do with forming personal knowledge (self-knowledge) within professional knowledge and capturing the sense of a profession that does not simply fit into a technical or scientific conception. This is about something indefinable that is at the heart of the identity of the teaching profession.

This conceptual effort is crucial in order to understand the specific nature of the teaching profession, but also in order to construct meaningful lifelong learning paths. I recall Bertrand Schwartz, in a text written forty years ago[17]: the Permanent Education that began as a *right,* which many generations of educators fought for, later became a *necessity* and now has turned into an *obligation.*

Lifelong learning is justified as a person's right and a professional necessity but not as an obligation or constraint. Nikolas Rose's criticism of the emergence of a new set of educational obligations is worth remembering: "The new citizen is required to engage in a ceaseless work of training and retraining, skilling and reskilling, enhancement of credentials and preparation for a life of incessant job seeking: life is to become a continuous economic capitalization of the self"[18].

The majority of continuous training programmes have shown themselves to be quite useless; serving only to complicate the teacher's already demanding daily life. Teachers should refuse to take part in this consumerism of courses, seminars and sessions that characterise the "training market" and feed this sense of teachers being "out of date". The creation of Permanent Education makes us think the opposite, building training mechanisms based on the needs of people and the profession, investing in the construction of collective networks that support training practices that are based on sharing and professional dialogue.

One last word to highlight the way training places can be essential in the consolidation of the public presence of teachers. I turn to Jürgen Habermas and his concept of "public sphere of action"[19]. In the case of education, this sphere has expanded considerably in recent years. However, paradoxically, teachers' presence here has also been reduced. There is a lot of talk about schools and teachers. Talk from journalists, columnists, university professors, specialists. Teachers don't talk. There is an absence of teachers, a kind of silence from a profession that has lost visibility in the public arena.

Today, teachers' openness to the outside world is imposed upon them. Communicating with society means also answering to society. Perhaps the profession has become vulnerable, but this is the necessary condition for an affirmation of its prestige and of its social status. In contemporary societies, the strength of a profession is greatly defined by its capacity to communicate with the public.

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I appreciate your attention. I know that I'm talking to teacher education specialists and for that reason I have avoided redundant statements of principles that, nowadays, I believe are quite consensual. I was more concerned about clearly transmitting my opinion on the difference between the excess of

discourse and the poverty of practice. The acute awareness of that "gap" invites us to find new paths for a profession that, at the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century, re-acquires a great importance in the definition of public policies.

As Ann Lieberman says, perhaps we are lacking a starting agenda: "While pressure is necessary, we have to support people by providing the time and necessary human and material resources to get better. But the education work has to be close to the kids and the real problems that teachers describe. That's what we haven't done. We do millions of things that stop short of helping the teacher in his or her classroom. When teachers learn more, students will do better. There is no short cut here"[20].

In conclusion, I remember that curious reference made by John Dewey about a school in Chicago, where swimming was taught via a number of exercises without pupils actually going into the water. One day someone asked one of these young people what happened when they went into the water. The answer was sharp: "I sank". The story deserves to be true, concludes John Dewey[21].

With regard to teacher professional development it is also not enough to practice out of water, it is necessary to support projects, build networks, share experiences, assess what is done and what hasn't been done. It is time to start.

Notes

1. *Teachers Matter – Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*, Paris, OECD, 2005, p. 7.

2. David Tyack, *The one best system – A history of urban American education*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1995.

3. Olga Pombo, "Universidade: Regresso ao futuro de uma ideia", *Da ideia de universidade à Universidade de Lisboa*, Lisboa, Reitoria da Universidade de Lisboa, 1999.

4. This text is oral in nature, as it was transcribed on 27ᵗʰ September, 2007, at the Conference *Professional Development of Teachers for the Quality and Equity of Lifelong Learning,* organised by the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

5. Cleo Cherryholmes, *Power and Criticism: Post-structural Investigations in Education*, New York, Teachers College Press, 1988, p. 8.

6. See a summary of these studies in António Nóvoa (coord.), *Os professores e a sua formação*, Lisboa Publicações D. Quixote, 1992.

7. See António Nóvoa & Martin Lawn (eds.), *Fabricating Europe – The formation of an education space*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002.

8. David Labaree, "Power, knowledge, and the rationalization of teaching: a genealogy of the movement to professionalize teaching", *Harvard Educational Review*, vol. 62, nº 2, 1992, pp. 123-154.

9. See António Nóvoa, "Professionnalisation des enseignants et sciences de l'éducation", *Paedagogica Historica - International journal of the history of education*, vol. III (supplementary series), 1998, pp. 403-430.

10. The school diary of Dionísio das Dores Gonçalves was published by the Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, in 2005, via a CD-ROM organised by António Afonso Gonçalves.

11. Miguel Torga, *L'universel, c'est le local moins les murs: Trás-os-Montes*, Bordeaux, William Blake, 1986.

12. Lee Shulman, *Excellence: An immodest proposal* (at www.carnegiefoundation.org).

13. See Lee Shulman's preface to George Walker *et al.*, *The Formation of Scholars: Rethinking Doctoral Education for the Twenty-First Century*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2007.

14. Pat Hutchings & Mary Taylor Huber, *Building the teaching commons* (at www.carnegiefoundation.org).

15. *Teachers Matter – Attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*, Paris, OECD, 2005, p. 15.

16. Ada Abraham, *L'enseignant est une personne*, Paris, Éditions ESF, 1984.

17. Bertrand Schwartz, "Réflexions sur le développement de l'éducation permanente", *Prospective*, nº 14, 1967, pp. 173-203.

18. Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing political thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 161.

19. Jürgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1989.

20. "Real-life view: An interview with Ann Lieberman", *Journal of Staff Development*, vol. 20, nº 4, 1999.

21. John Dewey, *L'école et l'enfant*, Neuchâtel-Paris, Delachaux & Niestlé, 1922, p. 140.