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The Impact of the Teaching Profession on Mental Health

انعكاسات مهنة التعليم على الصحة النفسية

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ملخص:

تُعد مهنة التعليم من المهن الأساسية في بناء الأفراد والمجتمعات، ويكشف الاعتراف بها كمهنة صعبة عن أثرها العميق على الصحة النفسية للمعلمين. فهي لا تقتصر على نقل المعرفة فحسب، بل تشمل أيضًا توجيه المتعلمين ودعمهم. وتمتاز هذه المهنة بتعقيدها، إذ يتحمل المعلمون أعباءً ثقيلة، ويتعرضون لانخراط عاطفي كبير، ويُطلب منهم التكيف المستمر مع احتياجات التلاميذ المتنوعة.يهدف هذا المقال التعرف على هذه التحديات التي قد تولد ضغوطًا وإرهاقًا وربما احتراقًا وظيفيًا، مما ينعكس سلبًا على صحة المعلمين النفسية. وتوضيح ان صفات المعلم الجيد – كالصبر، والتعاطف، والمرونة، والإبداع، ومهارات التواصل الفعّال – تساعد على التخفيف من هذه الضغوط وتعزز خبرة مهنية أكثر توازنًا و يخلص المقال إلى أنّ الاعتراف بالتحديات التي تواجه المعلمين، إلى جانب توفير الدعم النفسي والمهني المناسب لهم، أمر ضروري للحفاظ على استقرارهم النفسي وضمان جودة التعليم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التعليم ، الصحة النفسية ، الاحتراق الوظيفي ، الدعم.

Abstract :

The teaching profession plays a crucial role in shaping individuals and societies, and its recognition as a demanding career highlights its profound impact on teachers' mental health. Defined as both an educational and social mission, teaching requires not only the transmission of knowledge but also the guidance and support of learners. This profession is characterized by its complexity: heavy workloads, emotional involvement, and the constant adaptation to diverse student needs. This article aims to identify these challenges that may generate stress, fatigue, and even burnout, which may negatively affect teachers' well-being. However, the qualities of a good teacher—such as patience, empathy, resilience, creativity, and strong communication skills—help mitigate these pressures and foster a healthier professional experience. Ultimately, recognizing the challenges and supporting teachers' mental health are essential to ensuring both their personal balance and the quality of education they provide.

Keywords : Burnout ; Mental health ; Stress ; Teaching Profession.

Résumé :

La profession d'enseignant joue un rôle central dans la formation des individus et le développement des sociétés. Elle dépasse la simple transmission des savoirs pour inclure l'accompagnement et le soutien des apprenants. Cependant, sa complexité la rend particulièrement exigeante : les enseignants assument de lourdes responsabilités, investissent une forte charge émotionnelle et doivent continuellement s'adapter aux besoins diversifiés des élèves. Ces contraintes peuvent générer du stress, de la fatigue et parfois un épuisement

professionnel, avec des effets négatifs sur leur santé mentale. L'article met en évidence que certaines qualités, comme la patience, l'empathie, la flexibilité, la créativité et de solides compétences en communication, permettent d'atténuer ces pressions et de maintenir un équilibre professionnel plus sain. En conclusion, la reconnaissance des défis liés à ce métier et le soutien psychologique et institutionnel aux enseignants apparaissent comme des conditions indispensables pour préserver leur bien-être et assurer une éducation de qualité**.**

Mots-clés : Enseignement ; Épuisement professionnel ; Santé mentale ; Stress.

1-Introduction

The teacher's mission consists of ensuring that the maximum number of students acquire knowledge, skills, learning methods, national and universal values, and evolving personal aptitudes.

Moreover, fulfilling these tasks is not limited to the classroom. The educator is also a key player in the educational system as a whole, actively engaged both inside and outside the school environment. The quality of this mission's accomplishment depends on several factors, including initial commitment to the profession, initial and ongoing training, working conditions, evaluation and teacher motivation. However, it also involves challenges that may jeopardize the teacher's mental health.

This presentation aims at studying, analyzing, and discussing the teaching profession in relation to society, the characteristics and challenges of the profession, teachers' working conditions and their evolution, the constant conflicting relationship between prescribed and actual work, teachers' professional experiences, and the conditions under which they perform their duties.

According to Dumont and Martin, "Our society places great value on schooling but little on those who work within it" (1990, p. 18). Hence, the teaching profession is a socially defined occupation, recognized as being a contribution to public utility.

Teachers' ways of acting are diverse, yet they all share a common condition: the work to be done, the tasks to accomplish, and the activity these tasks require, which calls upon their intelligence, energy, and entire existence if working means producing or striving to produce transformations in the world into which humans are thrown, then the teacher's being-in-the-world is entirely invested in their work.

2- Recognition and Definition of the Teaching Profession

The definition of the teaching profession can be structured around the following key points:

Teaching is, of course, about transmitting knowledge. This is often the only aspect of the profession that is widely recognized. However, the essential part is not only the didactic transposition but also the manner: teaching has evolved from traditional lecturing to differentiated pedagogy, as every student and future citizen has the right to receive an education, whether initial or lifelong. Thus, teaching is not merely about transmission; it also involves guiding and supporting students in their learning journey.

To accompany means "to voluntarily take someone along with you." It implies walking alongside someone without imposing hierarchical authority or constraints. It means helping, being present, and, as Alexandre Lhotellier puts it, "walking the path together."

Teaching also requires the ability to organize work in the classroom. This involves structuring activities both collectively—between students and with the teacher—and in relation to single or interdisciplinary competencies.

Assessment is another fundamental aspect of teaching, though it presents multiple challenges. Etymologically and ethically, « to assess » means to give value, to enlighten, to alert, to encourage, and to motivate students. Assessment should never be reduced to merely penalizing mistakes—unfairly labeled as « faults »—nor should it be used to discourage students, create stress, or demoralize some for the benefit of a select few deemed more capable. This dimension of the profession, often taken for granted, is in fact highly complex and plays a crucial role in student success. Piaget emphasized that education should offer every individual the opportunity to "succeed in order to understand", rather than simply "understand in order to succeed. " (Cifali, 1991).

Teaching also involves teamwork—not only with colleagues from the same subject area but also with the pedagogical team of a class, school life staff, and the administration—since teachers work within an educational institution. This requires specific skills that academic university training alone does not provide.

Furthermore, teaching means operating within an economic, cultural, and social environment, with a primary focus on building relationships of trust and mutual recognition with students' families (Excerpt from Education et Devenir, p.4).

3- Characteristics and Challenges of the Teaching Profession

Teachers play a crucial role in the educational process. They have both the privilege and the heavy responsibility of ensuring educational continuity, training, and developing the skills of future generations. Their active contribution to the development and renewal of social, cultural, scientific, and technological knowledge makes their mission one of the noblest professions.

Thus, teachers represent the central figure in the educational system, and the profession is becoming increasingly complex. This complexity arises from two main aspects: their relationship with their professional activities and their interactions with the various elements of their professional environment, including students, colleagues, school authorities, social partners, families, and society in general.

Regarding their professional activities, it is important to highlight their evolving nature. This evolution is driven by advancements in knowledge, the development of pedagogical techniques, and technological progress—particularly new information and communication technologies.

On the other hand, teachers operate in a dynamic professional context, characterized by an extensive human dimension (students, colleagues, parents, school principals, union representatives, etc.) and a socio-economic environment that is constantly evolving and undergoing transformations.

As a result, teachers' interactions with their professional environment are influenced by this evolution and dynamism, often leading to demanding expectations on both sides.

Accepting the complexity of this profession requires each of us—researchers and trainers—to reconsider our perspectives, to be open to different approaches, and to allow ourselves to be challenged and influenced by them.

Like any profession that involves multiple factors, every situation encountered by a teacher is unique. The meaning of each situation cannot be reduced to the sum of its components, just as the meaning

of a sentence is never derived solely from the sum of its words. Each situation has a meaning of its own, sometimes unlike any other.
This uniqueness demands a way of thinking that goes beyond simple logical deduction. The singularity of each situation adds to the complexity of the profession, making it difficult to navigate and to prepare for through training.

Another key characteristic of the teaching profession is the professional attitude required from all teachers, regardless of the level they teach. Teachers must take pride in their work, their role, and their mission. They should carry both the benefits and challenges of their profession with dignity, enthusiasm, and conviction—without complaint or victimization.
With all these characteristics, it becomes evident that teaching is a far more stressful profession than it appears. The demands of the job require significant sacrifices from teachers and generate immense pressure, which raises serious concerns.

- **Other Characteristics of the Teaching Profession**

1. A Human-Centered Profession
Every job involves human beings as both the subject and the agent, which may seem like a simple fact, but it is important to be highlighted. The teaching profession is framed within an interaction between human beings. It is one of those professions where the actions are directed toward living beings. Subjectivity and intersubjectivity permeate this profession, where understanding, navigating, and distancing oneself is no easy task, and where constant uncertainty, occasional panic, and frequent anxiety are present.

2. A Profession Focused on Knowledge Transmission
The primary objective of this profession is to enable others to learn and to internalize established knowledge. This makes teaching different from all other human-centered professions. Didactics, the branch that deals with this undisputed aspect of the profession, is concerned with how to construct knowledge, how to learn, and how to transmit established knowledge.

3. A Complex Profession
Accepting the idea of complexity in this profession forces each of us—researchers and trainers—to reconsider our approach and to be open to being challenged, disturbed by other perspectives: accepting that we will be marked by these approaches and reveal these marks.
Like any profession where several factors intertwine, every situation faced by a teacher is unique. Its meaning cannot be reduced to the sum of the factors that make it up (Mireille Cifali, 1991, p. 5).
The teaching profession is distinguished by several key characteristics. First, it is based on human interactions, where subjectivity and intersubjectivity play a major role, making each situation complex and sometimes a source of uncertainty and stress. Next, it is characterized by the transmission of knowledge, with the goal of enabling students to internalize established knowledge, which sets it apart from other professions. Finally, this profession is inherently complex, as each situation is unique, influenced by multiple factors, which forces the teacher to question their methods and adapt to various pedagogical approaches.

4-The Qualities of a Good Teacher

4.1. Pedagogical Skills

A competent instructor is supposed to acquire the following traits:
- Knows how to adapt explanations to the audience (understands how students think, can explain to everyone, from those struggling to the most gifted, can explain even simple concepts, is a good educator).
- Presents information clearly (is not messy, does not overcrowd the board).
- Is knowledgeable in the subject they teach (has a broad perspective, knows how to step back, inspires confidence, no hesitation, grades the assignments given).
- Knows how to "explain" (explains simply, does not skip steps in reasoning, is explicit, explains the thought process without leaving things implied).
- Is rigorous and precise (minimizes reasoning errors).
- Is organized (follows a logical plan).
- Responds to students' questions, is interactive with them (takes time to answer questions, even if it slows down the lesson).
- Uses concrete examples to illustrate points.
- Uses simple language (to avoid complicating the lesson).
- Uses suitable teaching materials (high-quality handouts).
- Corrects important exercises.
- Ensures that the student has understood after an explanation.

4.2. Skills in "Knowledge Presentation"

When it comes to transmitting knowledge, a role model teacher should:
- Care about engaging the audience (captures attention, knows how to make the subject enjoyable, shares passion, inspires students to attend the class, knows how to "spark imagination").
- Is dynamic and energetic.
- Has a sense of humor (knows how to ease students' tension, de-dramatizes situations).
- Is motivated (loves what they do, passionate).
- Is lively (a lively class with action).
- Is a good speaker (speaks loudly, distinctly, not monotonous, audible to the whole lecture hall).
- Is a good manager of the board and course rhythm (writes legibly on the board, does not overcrowd it, avoids just reading from handouts or slides, takes pauses to let the memory "refresh").
- Is creative in the tools or methods used to transmit knowledge.

4.3. Skills in Group Management

As for managing groups, a successful educator:
- Knows how to gain respect, is charismatic (has authority, is listened to, can manage a class without being overly strict, students should not fear asking questions, even if it is difficult to listen).
- Encourages interaction with students, promotes active engagement and open dialogue with learners, fostering a supportive and dynamic classroom environment and encourages meaningful communication that strengthens teacher–student relationships and enhances the overall learning experience.

As P. Ranjard writes," 'Working in a group' means each member must be strong enough to truly communicate, self-assured enough to engage without fear of losing themselves in the group, and grounded in their personality (not a role) to avoid feeling diminished by being merely a group member" (id., p.162).

Love is a work tool for teachers, especially in primary education, as students are influenced by someone who cares for them and will perform for that person. Teachers must create emotions in young people to stimulate and motivate them (Messing, Seifert, and Escalona, 1997).

4.4. Judgment Skills

Concerning judging and evaluating tasks, the instructor:

- Does not assume everything as obvious.
- Is impartial in grading.
- Is fair in decision-making (to avoid jealousy).
- Does not judge students when they fail.

5. Empathy Skills Toward Students

An empathetic teacher towards learners:

- Is open, understanding, attentive to students (it is normal not to understand, shows care, takes time to understand students' comprehension issues, is approachable, human, interested in everyone and tolerant).
- Knows how to repeat without getting frustrated, and how to be patient (does not get upset when someone misunderstands).
- Builds good relationships with students (teachers and students are humans first, maintains contact, approaches them, avoids being cold or distant, knows how to engage and even joke with students, makes an effort to be liked by learners).
- Takes responsibility for students and their knowledge, does not give up on students due to their difficulties (would not hesitate to go the extra mile for a struggling student, generous, answers questions even if they are off-topic, is also an educator and offers advice in other areas of life, reassures students who did not understand).
- Avoids being condescending toward students, does not treat them like fools or geniuses, meets students at their level (does not look down on students just because they are a "researcher").

6. Personality

A teacher's personality plays a crucial role in shaping the classroom atmosphere, influencing student engagement, and fostering a productive learning environment. Beyond knowledge and teaching skills, the way a teacher presents themselves, interacts with students, and handles challenges significantly impacts their effectiveness. Here are key personality traits that contribute to a successful teaching experience:

1. Kind and Friendly: a teacher who is kind and approachable creates a warm and welcoming environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and seeking guidance. Kindness fosters mutual respect and trust, making students more likely to engage in learning and express their thoughts freely.

2. Smiling and Cheerful: a teacher's energy and enthusiasm set the tone for the classroom. A cheerful disposition helps maintain a positive atmosphere, even in challenging situations. Smiling often

reassures students, reduces their anxiety, and makes learning a more enjoyable experience. A teacher who radiates positivity can turn even a difficult subject into an engaging one.

3. Good-Humored: a sense of humor can be a powerful tool in the classroom. It lightens the mood, helps students relax, and makes learning fun. Humor can also make complex topics more relatable and memorable. When a teacher can laugh with their students, it strengthens the teacher-student relationship and encourages a more open and enjoyable learning experience.

4. Dresses Appropriately (Simple Yet Cool Look): appearance plays a role in setting the right tone in a learning environment. A teacher who dresses appropriately—neither too formal nor too casual—demonstrates professionalism while remaining relatable to students. A "simple yet cool" look reflects both confidence and approachability, striking a balance between authority and connection with students.

5. Confident: confidence in teaching is essential for maintaining authority and credibility in the classroom. A confident teacher communicates clearly, manages classroom dynamics effectively, and inspires students to trust their guidance. Confidence also encourages students to express their own thoughts and ideas without fear of judgment.

6. Punctual: punctuality reflects a teacher's commitment to their profession and respect for students' time. Arriving on time for class, meetings, and other responsibilities sets a positive example and promotes a culture of discipline and responsibility among students. It also ensures that lessons start and end smoothly, maximizing valuable teaching time.

7. Intelligent: beyond subject knowledge, intelligence in teaching encompasses critical thinking, adaptability, and problem-solving skills. An intelligent teacher understands how to present material in an engaging way, tailor lessons to different learning styles, and handle unexpected challenges effectively. They encourage curiosity, inspire students to think independently, and foster a love for lifelong learning.

A teacher's personality is as important as their knowledge and teaching methods. By embodying kindness, positivity, humor, confidence, punctuality, and intelligence while maintaining a professional yet approachable appearance, teachers create an environment where students feel motivated, respected, and eager to learn. These traits help transform the classroom into a space of encouragement, growth, and meaningful educational experiences.

7-The Pedagogical Relationship

The pedagogical relationship is often envisioned without conflict, aggression, or violence. Obedience should be gained without coercion, through charm or "natural" authority (Filloux, 1974, p. 112-113). This relationship between a teacher and their students is an unequal one between an adult and children or adolescents, not unlike the familial relationship. Symbolically, regardless of the real age difference between the teacher and the students, it can be seen as an intergenerational relationship. The teacher is invested with institutional authority and bears the responsibility of guiding the class.

The teacher is "the one who speaks, who knows, who gives, who can; facing those who are silent, ignorant, ask, and can do very little" (Ranjard, 1984, p. 158).

Exercising an educational role with children and adolescents requires establishing a climate of security in the classroom, offering a containing function, a form of "holding." This requires sufficient inner security that allows the teacher not to be excessively affected by students' attacks, nor tempted to respond in kind, and also to avoid feeling overly guilty for the negative psychological movements that occur within themselves.

The classroom is a group of students placed side by side, with teaching conceived as the transmission of information, from the teacher, relying solely on their action and descending to each student individually. This is reflected in the usual arrangement of desks in classrooms. Teachers observe in students' attitudes the desire or refusal to learn, to receive what they are trying to offer — knowledge that, on a psychological level, is like food (Kaës, 1973).

Teaching and educating inevitably involve going against the spontaneity of children/students, imposing constraints, obligations, rules, prohibitions, and making judgments that will affect their future.

The pedagogical relationship is inherently conflicted: tensions, aggressive movements from both sides, are inevitable and dispel the fantasy of a harmonious, gratifying relationship without friction. Tardif and Lessard (1999), in their book on teaching work, explain that the essence of a teacher's task revolves around the relationship with students both inside and outside the classroom.

8-Teacher Motivation and Competence

Teachers play a crucial role in the transmission of knowledge in schools. At the same time, their salaries represent the largest expenditure in education budgets. In fact, in most developed and developing countries, teachers' salaries account for between half and three-quarters of education spending. In some countries, this percentage may reach up to 90% (World Bank, 2002). Given the size of this financial investment, it is critical to determine whether these funds are being used effectively.

Let us start with teacher motivation.

1. Teacher Motivation

The most direct indicator of teachers' job satisfaction is whether they would choose the same profession again.

A regression analysis shows that several policy variables simultaneously exert a direct influence on teachers' job satisfaction and student performance, and that this impact can either be complementary or conflictual. These tensions, between the goals of improving education quality and those aimed at enhancing teachers' job satisfaction, are particularly evident concerning inspections and contracts for teachers not under public service.

2. Teacher Competence

Teacher competence is another aspect potentially linked to job satisfaction. It is clear that, in order to transmit knowledge successfully, teachers must master the subject being taught and the pedagogical tools that allow them to impart that knowledge to students. In general, competencies can only be measured indirectly by looking at years of teaching experience, the duration of training, and the diplomas obtained.

Bernard (1999, p. 70) identified a significant positive impact of teachers' competencies on student performance.

In general, there is certainly a positive correlation between teachers' competencies and their job satisfaction, as often reiterated in literature on the subject (e.g., Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Ma, 1999).

As Lockheed and Verspoor (1991) pointed out, to enhance teachers' competencies, it is necessary to reform the content and quality of their training programs, not just the duration of their training.

A European study on the need for competent teachers is based on three key elements (Jacobsen, J.C., et al., 2007):

1. Improving initial teacher training to provide higher pedagogical quality and professional training for new teachers.
2. Recruiting and retaining a sufficient number of competent teachers to launch and promote a high-quality teaching career.
3. Ensuring that professional development is an essential component of the teaching profession.

3- Class Size and Classroom Management

At the international level, there has been an ongoing debate about the relevance of class size. Authors such as Hanushek (1998) concluded that the available results are inconclusive, and he recommends not focusing too much on this aspect. Other authors arrive at opposite conclusions, claiming that significant quality gains can be made by reducing class size, particularly in smaller classes (see, for example, Biddle and Berliner, 2002).

After discussing teachers and classroom organization, it remains to examine the outcomes related to the inputs of the learning process, which are necessary for both students and teachers, namely: physical infrastructure and educational materials.

4- Physical Infrastructure and Educational Materials

Information about physical infrastructure includes materials used in school construction, availability of electricity, and various facilities such as showers, toilets, water points, desks, housing, playgrounds, etc.

Studies have demonstrated that the availability of classroom books should, therefore, remain a priority in education policies.

- **Constraints of the Teaching Profession**

The teaching profession is full of contradictions, but we can work with them. We can balance things from one side to the other, not by denying the difficulties but by equipping ourselves with the means to build tools for creating something else.

It is a profession that is mentally so demanding that, without precautions, the psychological cost can be extremely heavy. Why?

In general, a teacher is always faced with a singular, complex situation. They are involved and must produce knowledge, meaning, and understanding in relation to what is happening. This is the definition of professional situations.

Teachers' ways of acting are multiple, but they share a common condition: the work to be done, the tasks to be completed, and the activity these tasks require, which engages their intelligence, energy, and entire person. If working means producing or attempting to produce changes in the world in which humans are placed, then the teacher’s being-in-the-world is fully invested in their work.

Additionally, the teacher will face the following constraints in their work:

1. High Number of Students per Class

The number of students per class proves to be a stressful factor. A larger number of students in a class requires more classroom management and increases the risk of losing control, which contributes to an increased workload (Messing, Escalona, and Seifert, 1996). This contributes to the teachers' workload.

2. Interruptions and Discontinuities in the Work

Since teaching involves interactions with a group, interruptions are likely to occur frequently. If students speak while the teacher is giving the lesson, interrupt with questions, or are disruptive, it causes a break in the teacher's task. It is significant to note that interruptions are not the only disruptive elements. There are also several sources of discontinuity in teaching work. For example, if the teacher notices that a student does not understand or is distressed, they must ensure the student understands by asking if everything is okay or by asking them a question. At this point, the students are not causing interruptions, but they are causing discontinuities.

Interruptions or discontinuities during an activity can affect concentration and add to the originally started task.

3. Inadequate Physical Environment

Here, we consider the physical environment as a determinant of work activity.

An inadequate physical environment directly impacts workers' productivity, health, and well-being. Issues such as poor ergonomics, insufficient lighting, noise disturbances, or poor air quality can lead to fatigue, stress, musculoskeletal disorders, and professional errors. To address these problems, it is essential to improve ergonomics, optimize lighting, reduce noise, regulate temperature, and modernize equipment. Providing a well-adapted work environment thus enhances employee performance and well-being while reducing occupational risks.

4- Organization, Workload, and Psychological Distress

Numerous studies emphasize that teaching work involves a significant workload, which contributes to the fatigue and burnout of teachers (Jarvis, 2002; van Dick and Wagner, 2001; Schonfeld, 1990; Schonfeld, 2001).

Carpentier-Roy and Pharand (1992) examined the issue of work organization and mental health among primary and secondary school teachers, using a psychodynamic approach to work. They found that high workload and pathogenic work organization were responsible for psychological distress and even "burnout" among teachers, both at the primary and secondary levels.

5- Lack of Recognition, a Factor of Dissatisfaction

Lack of recognition is one of the major sources of dissatisfaction among teachers, as it undermines their sense of value and professional identity. When the efforts and dedication of educators are not acknowledged—whether by students, parents, colleagues, or educational authorities—it can lead to feelings of neglect, demotivation, and frustration. Recognition is not limited to financial rewards; it also includes moral appreciation, opportunities for career development, and the acknowledgment of teachers' contributions to students' academic and personal growth. The absence of such recognition may intensify stress, reduce job satisfaction, and even contribute to burnout, thereby affecting both the well-being of teachers and the quality of education. Therefore, fostering a culture of appreciation and valuing teachers' efforts is essential to promote motivation, engagement, and professional fulfillment.

6- Professional Burnout

As mentioned earlier, cases of professional burnout are becoming increasingly common among teachers. Burnout, first defined by Maslach (1976), refers to the condition of a person suffering from emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a very low sense of personal accomplishment (Riel, Jessica, 2009).

So-Kum Tang et al., (200) indicate that work fatigue is caused by high workload, lack of time to complete various required tasks, inadequate work environment, difficult classes, etc. This fatigue has negative effects on the mental health of teaching staff and increases the risk of professional burnout.

7- Tasks Outside of the Classroom

In addition to the work done in the classroom, teachers spend considerable time outside of teaching hours preparing, grading, and assessing students' learning. They also have to prepare report cards, plan and hold meetings with parents. To these tasks are sometimes added duties within the institution, such as assisting and supporting colleagues, involvement in various committees, or participation in training and professional development (Campbell and Neill, 1994).

8- A Sense of Pathological Alienation

We also encounter five factors of a sense of pathological alienation in the situation of teachers:

- Isolation (being distanced from centers of power).
- Helplessness (lack of social control produced by a failure to understand the values guiding decisions or the absence of decision-making).
- Absurdity (actions are taken and repeated, as if waiting, without conviction).
- Lack of norms (absence of rules of conduct in a transitional situation).
- Self-alienation (when the image of oneself reflected back by the group is different from one's true self).

Almost everything in this profession is a source of anxiety: "the students, the group, the institution, the parents, the curriculum, the relationship, personal competencies, the ever-appearing loss of control, loss of identity, fear of colleagues, life, death, illness, and suicides; authority and discipline, the other who consumes me or mocks me, my solitude, the responsibility of my actions, attacks, judgments, helplessness and failure, my uncertainties, rejection, the unknown, its violence and mine, what couldn't be predicted, where it overflows, my vulnerability, the feeling of being exposed, my inadequacy, my inability to achieve the ideal image of a good educator, the expectations of others, my doubts, the return to school, tests, inspections, and that person I don't understand, their failure, the lack of time, the knowledge gaps, their possible revolt, my unmasked weakness, what is expected of me that I cannot give…" (Cifali, 1994).

- **Improving the Teaching Profession and the Functioning of Educational Institutions**

We are at the dawn of the 21st century, and we already sense – we observe – that the teaching profession – the most beautiful job in the world – is rapidly evolving at all levels of the knowledge chain.

What are the reasons for this evolution?

- A new context,
- New audiences,
- New tools,
- New partners.

For more than half of the teachers, reducing the average number of students per class appears to be the primary measure to improve working conditions. Besides the issue of class sizes, teachers advocate for taking into account consultation time during service or developing means to allow teamwork. This criterion extends from small to large educational institutions.

1. A New Context for the Teaching Profession

The globalization we hear so much about, which is becoming, like Aesop's language, both the best and the worst of things, is undoubtedly a source of prosperity, growth, and cooperation, but also of international competition, where it becomes vital for every country to have human resources attaining the highest level of qualification possible. This is a context where knowledge is increasingly seen as a commodity, and a global education market is already taking shape.

The problems of our society have crossed the gates of schools and universities, which were previously considered protected spaces: poverty, violence, drugs and intolerance. Young people are losing their bearings, and some speak of a crisis of values in today's world – a world of "instant gratification," a world of "disposability." This makes teaching more difficult.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are now a daily reality in the lives of teachers and learners. The world is within reach, but cyberspace, with the massive amount of information it provides, can sometimes be overwhelming.

The media compete with and sometimes contradict what young people learn at school. We must note a sense of bewilderment: it took 38 years for 50 million people to access radio, 13 years for television; Internet achieved the same revolution in less than 4 years! There is, as we know, a real danger of a growing divide between those who have access to ICT and those who do not, what is now called the "digital divide."

Finally, the capping of resources invested in education is foreseeable, despite the dramatic increase in budgets allocated to education in countries committed to democratizing access to knowledge. This presents several challenges.

In this evolving context, the public that teachers work with is also changing.

2. New Audiences

They are new both quantitatively and qualitatively.

- The democratization of education, at all levels, has led to an increase in the number of children enrolled in school and students attending university:
  - Extension of schooling years,
  - Access for previously underrepresented groups,
- At the same time, these audiences are less homogeneous: different ages, socio-cultural backgrounds, expectations, and needs; an increasing number of adults attending universities for qualification, knowledge upgrading, or simply cultural activities for a better quality of life.

3. New Expectations and Demands from Society

It is important to recall the role of education highlighted in Jacques Delors' report and its four main functions: learning to do, to be, to learn, and to live together.

Should all of these roles be fulfilled by the teacher?

- Communication of knowledge, knowing that this knowledge quickly becomes outdated and requires constant updating.
- Training individuals for the workforce.
- Preparing young and adult learners for professional insertion,
- Developing employability skills.
- Educating citizens.

The expectations placed on teachers are stressful as their responsibilities multiply.

4. New Tools at Their Disposal ICT

- Technologies in all their forms – radio, TV, Internet – are deeply changing the conditions of teaching and learning, as well as the teacher-learner relationship.
  - Easier access to information can improve teaching quality.
  - The learner imposes their own pace and choices... Providing an opportunity to focus on each learner. Standardized curricula give way to individualized learning paths.

- The disappearance of the one-size-fits-all model: new tools imply a rethinking of pedagogy and curricula. And what about virtual universities?

5. New Partnerships

Schools and universities are now open to the surrounding world.

Teaching used to be a rather solitary profession. The teacher was alone to pass their qualification exams, in the classroom, and to correct papers.

What is increasingly expected of them is to work as part of a team: partnerships with families, partnerships with colleagues (multidisciplinary approach), partnerships with local authorities, and partnerships with international organizations, with a special focus on partnerships with developing countries.

Ultimately, the attention given to new teachers, through the creation of initiation or accreditation programs, probationary periods, theoretical exams, and the awarding of diplomas or certificates, is a factor contributing to the recognition of the teaching profession on several fronts:

- Giving teachers the opportunity to verify the scope of their interest and commitment to the profession.
- Allowing entities responsible for teachers' work (principals, local and central authorities) to assist teachers in their integration into the profession based on scientifically and practically established rules and foundations.
- Developing professional standards, especially the competencies that a skilled teacher should possess.
- Reconciling academic knowledge and university training on one hand, and the needs of schools, students, and curricular demands on the other hand.
- Ensuring teacher stability in the profession based on their competencies and adaptability to changes (which may occur at the level of schools, regions, and students).

It should also be noted that the recognition of the teaching profession is not closely tied to the model of administration and management of teachers' affairs (the state, the institution, the position) as much as it is to professional scientific conditions (training diplomas, employment conditions, etc.), and even to the conditions that guarantee the quality of work in the profession and its professional nature.

The professionals in the field, who play a role in evaluating performance and awarding diplomas, also contribute to the professional nature of teaching, as long as there are upper limits (standards) that they apply.

9. Conclusion

The role of the teacher is both exhilarating and sometimes troubling, characterized by moments of enthusiasm but also by moments of discomfort. Indeed, the profession is full of contradictions and challenges, but it also offers immense opportunities for personal and professional growth. At its core, the teacher is tasked with the monumental responsibility of shaping the minds and futures of students, guiding them through the complex process of learning and self-discovery. This responsibility is not only to educate academically, but also to cultivate critical thinking, moral values, and social consciousness. Teachers are, therefore, the architects of the future, directly influencing the generation that will one day lead the world.

It is essential, now more than ever, to recognize and honor the teacher's pivotal role within society. Teachers are not only transmitters of knowledge but also active participants in the ever-changing

landscape of education. They are the ones who are directly impacted by the evolution of curricula, technology, and societal demands. They should not only be seen as subjects of policy decisions but as contributors to the formation of those policies. Their insights, experiences, and reflections should be fully integrated into the conversation about educational reform and development.

The teacher is at the heart of the major shifts taking place in today's world. As global dynamics evolve, the role of education becomes even more crucial, and teachers are the frontliners of this transformation. Whether dealing with technological advancements, new pedagogical approaches, or the changing nature of student needs, teachers must be supported and equipped with the tools necessary to adapt and thrive in this fast-paced environment. In addition, recognizing the unique challenges teachers face, from workload to emotional toll, is vital to ensuring they can continue performing their duties with passion and effectiveness.

To truly pay homage to the irreplaceable role that teachers play in the formation of future generations and the citizenship of tomorrow's world, it is imperative to provide them with the professional development, resources, and respect they deserve. Supporting the teacher is not just about improving individual working conditions, but about strengthening the foundation of society itself. The future of education—and by extension, the future of the world—rests on the shoulders of those who dedicate their lives to teaching, and it is only through a collective commitment to this mission that we can hope to build a more informed, compassionate, and resilient global community.

As Cifali (1994) aptly states, the teacher's contribution to the future of society is invaluable and indispensable. By fully integrating teachers into the reflection and development of new tools, and by recognizing and supporting their essential role, we ensure that they are not only the bearers of knowledge but also the nurturers of the potential within each student. Only then can we truly move towards an education system that honors its teachers and prepares future generations to face the challenges of an ever-changing world with knowledge, wisdom, and integrity.

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