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Editorial

The place of educational sciences in teacher education in Europe

Since the end of the 19th century, in many European countries, teacher training has evolved based on knowledge that is ever more extensive, more diverse, and which is the subject of a genuine effort to systemize. The evolution of this knowledge coincides with the development of educational sciences within European universities.

These sciences allow teachers to benefit from the knowledge and contributions of research in the field of education. For the past forty years, they have also been used to train teachers themselves "in and through" research. The challenge in this education "in and through" research is the development of teachers' autonomy and their ability to adapt to future changes in the education system, particularly in the evolution of the educational context and students' population. These are the first arguments put forward, more or less explicitly, by the authors contributing to this issue, in order to explain that educational sciences have penetrated teacher education rather deeply in all the countries studied.

The authors from each country show that a very wide variety of factors are involved in favor of an ever greater use of these sciences (I). They also show that the penetration and use of educational sciences in curricula do not always live up to the hopes of policy makers or even professors/researchers who have supported this use of educational sciences. It is therefore appropriate to highlight some of the obstacles which make these educational sciences sometimes have limited effects, both from the point of

view of the teachers in training and of the trainers themselves (II). Highlighting these limits could open up prospects for a more constructive use of these sciences (III).

I-Favorable factors

Among the factors militating in favor of educational sciences holding a place of higher importance in teacher education, it is worth noting certain arguments coming from the teaching profession itself. Teachers, especially primary school teachers, traditionally trained outside the university, would find in the use of these sciences an opportunity to consolidate the university dimension of their training. A profession that bases part of its practice on science gains prestige and its identity is consolidated. The extension of training, which in many countries has led to a Master's degree, has helped strengthen the professional recognition of these teachers. As a result, policy makers anxious to train ever more efficient and effective teachers encountered no opposition from the profession.

The institutionalization of certain educating devices, such as “Bachelor’s thesis” or other “essays”, the aim of which is, among other things, to educate teachers to reflect on their practice, was put in place without encountering any resistance, from the last decade of the twentieth century, in most European countries. Policy makers, professors/researchers from educational sciences and the teaching profession have been rather favorable in principle to the establishment of these educating devices in the curricula. The institutionalization of these systems is therefore without a doubt one of the factors which has made it possible to stabilize the place occupied by educational sciences in teacher education. These sciences - the knowledge they produce, but also the research methods they offer - are widely used in the texts of this issue.

It should be noted that research in educational sciences has produced a great deal of knowledge on the historical, geographic, political and social contexts in which education systems, and teachers within them, operate. They have also made and continue to make an important contribution to the study of teaching practices.

They also question the relevance and effectiveness of the measures implemented in the context of teacher education. They provide valuable knowledge for teacher trainers to better understand and have more control over the conditions that allow "reflective devices" to achieve their goals. In other words, they shed light on the way in

which these devices allow teachers in education to better structure the understanding of their actions. This theoretical knowledge from educational sciences should help improve teacher practices.

However, these educational sciences encountered a number of obstacles of various kinds, and the learning to which they would lead has sometimes fallen short of the expected results.

II-Obstacles and limits

First of all, educational sciences face some competition from other disciplines. In the education of secondary teachers, it is particularly difficult for educational sciences to be imposed on the subjects taught. It should be noted that, traditionally, secondary teachers see themselves more as specialists in the subjects they teach than as pedagogues. Even if educational sciences are institutionalized, in other words if their place in the curricula is now official, the attention paid to them by secondary school teachers who are in education is not always what professors/researchers hope for educational sciences. However, educational sciences also suffer from some competition in the education of primary teachers. Specifically, they must prove their usefulness alongside didactics which appear to be disciplines more in tune with the content that these teachers will have to teach.

In fact, one of the major difficulties encountered by educational sciences is proving their usefulness, both to the policy makers who are responsible for setting up effective teacher education and to teachers in education. The policy makers are concerned with training teachers who will quickly be operational in the field. For the latter, the urgency to face the realities on the ground, especially during their internship, means that they favor education content that provides immediate solutions to the problematic situations they encounter. Professors/researchers in educational sciences are therefore called upon to show their usefulness, sometimes with the risk of renouncing the critical virtues of their discipline. Several authors mention that these professors/researchers can quite frequently be led to focus their teaching on what is expected by the official recommendations and less on knowledge constructed in a rigorously scientific manner and sometimes critical towards the official recommendations.

However, the expectations of professors/researchers are not always sufficiently in line with the requirements of professional education worthy of the name. Being focused on academic writing, these professors/researchers can also ignore the demands of the professional field. As a result, they can lead students to adopt the attitudes of "good students", to show a certain docility, to embrace their expectations by showing their academic achievements, whereas these students should above all, with the prospect of professionalization, highlight their professional difficulties, those they encounter in the field, in order to better analyze and overcome them ... In a few words, the postures of professors/researchers may not be conducive to building the autonomy of future teachers, an autonomy that would allow them to evolve in the field of their practice. This is undoubtedly also a deviation from the evaluation methods that have been put in place with the Master's degree in many teacher education systems: the need to pass a diploma reinforcing a form of "deference" towards trainers and their requirements, whereas the logic of professionalization would require students to be more concerned with the effects of their practice than with the evaluations that their trainers make of them.

This student status is probably in its own way an obstacle to real professionalization which requires a break from the classic student posture.

III- Perspectives

Some countries have started to question the university dimension of education, and at the same time, the place of educational sciences in the curricula has suffered the consequences. The UK is spearheading this trend by starting to create an important place for peer training in the field. In addition, most countries have ensured, at the same time as university studies were extended, that the professional dimension of education is preserved. Some analysts have therefore been able to perceive in this desire to maintain a foothold in the field a kind of competition against educational sciences. This question is, rightly, at the heart of the concerns of professors/researchers in educational sciences who, when they see their place - in terms of the number of hours devoted to their discipline - diminishing in the curricula, worry as to what the future holds for their discipline.

However, the question also arises in other words. Several authors of this issue show that the problem educational sciences face is first of all the issue of finding their

proper place in curricula and of functioning in complementarity with the other dimensions of education programs. It is necessary to develop synergies between educational sciences, internships, preparatory courses for internship, etc. In other words, for educational sciences, it is a question of knowing how to fit into a complex education program in which equally complex devices must operate in the service of coherent teacher education. The question is technical, it relates to education engineering.

But it is also political. What is fundamentally at stake in this questioning that professors/researchers in educational sciences must pursue is the question of the recognition of a profession that they are helping to educate, that of teachers. Basically, is it not for researchers in educational sciences to prove that the knowledge they provide, that the distance and the analysis of situations that they allow in order to rethink their teaching, are at the service of relevant teacher education, which makes sense for these teachers, while giving them the means to preserve their freedom when technocratic regulations are putting this profession a little more under control every day?

In short, the importance of the contribution of educational sciences to teacher education will depend on the way in which professors/researchers in this discipline will be able to work in synergy with the other protagonists of education (professionals of the field, didacticians, etc.), but the place which will be granted to them will also depend on the substance of the ability of the professors/researchers to make the teachers ever more autonomous, that is to say more equipped to build their own rules of operation and regulation ...

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