

# THE TEACHING PROFESSION IN EUROPE: HISTORICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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## INTRODUCTION

A considerable number of surveys, studies and analyses has been dedicated to teachers, particularly over the past thirty years, a period in which their number has doubled in the European countries. Scientific works combine with documents issued by professional organizations and politically oriented texts in the attempt to understand a problematic which has gained importance at the end of the present century. The intention of the present chapter is not to add an additional text to this literature on the theme of teachers which is already so abundant. Instead, it attempts give an overview of the reflections put forth in recent years on the history and on the present challenges facing the teaching profession. This work is structured by three major concerns, which consist of: reference to teachers as a group, without deepening the sociological differences which divide, particularly “primary” and “secondary” school teachers; the privileged attention given to teachers in the public sector, as they are generally the ones who have carried forth the principal changes in the profession; and the definition of the European Union as the unit of analysis, suggesting a generic approach, which cannot, however, take the specificities of each country into account.

These generalizations (and delimitations) establish the margins of this document which is constructed on the basis of a number of national surveys, but which finds its essence in the effort to define a comprehensive reading of European reality. This is undoubtedly a crazy undertaking, because of the differences which mark the European space, notably between the Catholic and Protestant countries, the North and the South, the center and the periphery, or between continental Europe and the United Kingdom, to mention only a few instances. However, I will make some effort to insure that the vision of this synthesis is not produced in a way that obscures the specificities of each context.

The arguments are based on a central concept--that of *professionalization*. This concept will be mobilized not on the basis of (static) criteria for verifying attributes, but on the basis of the (dynamic) processes by which a professional group evolves. Thanks to this type of reading, it will be possible to understand the main changes in the history of teaching (first section,) and to mark the present conflicts centering around an increasing recognition of the teaching profession (second part.) The concept of professionalization thus acquires a historical significance, put into place through pragmatic means, with the goal of allowing us to understand the efforts of teachers to improve their professional status (Nóvoa, 1987.) This option does not detract from an analysis of professionalism as a discourse, which is at the origin of new practices of control and the social regulation of teachers.

It goes without saying that the concepts of *profession* and *professionalization* do not have the same meaning in different parts of the world, and that their usage has been strongly influenced by the Anglo-American world. However, today these notions are no longer a residue of the Anglo-American contexts: “the word profession, sometimes with its English

pronunciation, as an expert legitimated by science, is injected into national discourses about education.” (Popkewitz and Simola, 1996, p. 6.) This does not lead to an argument in favor of a definition of these concepts which remains constant from one country to the next, but instead “to [the recognition of] a certain international currency in discourses about professions, while, at the same time, making those discourses problematic as they are historically realized in educational fields.” (Popkewitz and Simola 1996, p.6.) It is this transnational acceptance of the concept of *professionalization* which will be mobilized in a pragmatic manner in the text, to illuminate processes for enhancing the status of teachers (the development of specialized knowledge, claims for a greater professional autonomy, definition of ethical and deontological rules, improvement in salaries, etc.) but also to understand the reorganization of the technologies of control and regulation of the teaching profession. This analysis thus acquires a historical dimension, directly tied to the manner in which questions of power/knowledge are played out, not only within the professional group, but also in its relations with the State and with society. These reflections place the professions at the very heart of social conflicts and goals, attracting attention to the role played by the State in the various processes of professionalization.

In this context, the question *Are teachers professionals?*, becomes totally useless, as it is more reflective of an ideological position than a scientific inquiry (Perredoud 1996). On the other hand, it is useful to identify the major lines of power which characterize the work of a group which is attempting to professionalize its activities. The temporal analysis of large collective movements makes it possible to see the strong points (and the contradictions) of the process of professionalization. This text pays particular attention to the struggles and to the actions taken by teachers in order to obtain certain social and economic privileges (Goodson and Hargreaves 1996.) In this way professionalization can be seen as a historical project undertaken by teachers, but also as a process which has been opposed, by arguments concerning economic costs, by state-run bureaucracies, and governmental powers, and by various social interests.

### **Model for analyzing the process of teacher professionalization**

The question of relations between the State and teachers constitutes a central element in the process of professionalization. Magali Larson (1988) is correct in recalling that the professions constitute a material connection between the State and the deployment of certain specialized knowledges in civil society. However, in the case of teaching, these relations are even closer, to such an extent that the history of teachers can be told from the perspective of an analysis of the relations they have had with the State. Independent of the status which is granted them in the different countries (civil servant, contractual worker, etc.) this question remains essential for understanding the past and present ways in which teaching is organized as a profession.

In most European countries, it is towards the end of the 18th century, in connection with profound changes in the way social and economic life was organized, that the State created conditions which were propitious for the emergence of a professional group consecrated to teaching as its primary activity. It is impossible to understand this first moment in the process of professionalization--the occupation of a certain social domain by a group of individuals who dedicated the majority (or all of) their work hours to this activity--without referring to the actions accomplished by State intervention.

At the same time, questions about the selection and recruitment of teachers, but especially the authorization to undertake these activities, become more and more important. What had lain, up to this point in the domain of religious authorities, of local communities, or of private interests, became a function of the State, which now had to put into place appropriate mechanisms for regulating this social field. A fundamental step in the process of the professionalization of teachers concerns the creation, by public or State authorities, of a legal support for undertaking the activity, such as a license or a diploma. This is an essential moment, especially in bureaucratic professions, as it created a legal framework for gaining access to the profession, fixing the conditions which have to be present for permitting entry to the profession and instituting specific and precise procedures for recruitment (test, examination, etc.)

*Figure 1*  
*Model of Analysis for the process of Professionalizing Teachers.*

The study of relations between the **State and teachers** constitutes, therefore, one of the central aspects of the analysis of the process of professionalization, whose two essential dimensions are:

1. The development of a **body of knowledge and skills** belonging to the teaching profession which can be explored, to a large degree, by an examination of teacher training institutions. This body of knowledge and techniques should be capable of reproduction and transmission to others, as it cannot be seen in terms of its conditions of production and diffusion. In this respect it is fundamental to understand the role of the **development of teacher training institutions** in the production of professional knowledge. This consists of a long training period (several years) which cannot be accomplished solely through practical apprenticeship, and which should contain theoretical (academic and intellectual) practices.
2. The definition of a **group of norms and values** unique to teachers, an action which is accomplished, to a large degree, within its training institutions, but which finds its reference point in professional organizations. The fact of exercising a profession inevitably involves

norms and ethical behaviors, which orient professional practice and relationships between the practitioners themselves and between these individuals and other social actors. It is for this reason that it is more productive to analyze this question in conjunction with the **development of professional associations of teachers** who participate, notably, in the definition of rules for exercising the profession, for the defense of the socioeconomic interests of their members and for safeguarding ethical and deontological norms. In the case of teachers, the problematic of professional autonomy takes on a heavy burden, to the extent to which it is central to the construction of this profession's relation both with the state and with local communities.

Finally, it is fundamental that the analysis of the different dimensions and stages in the process of professionalization are closely linked to an understanding of the evolution of the social image and the professional status of teachers. This axis of reflection attempts to envision professional history as a collective enterprise in social mobility, casting light on the conflicts which cut across the teaching corps, as well as the different visions of the teaching profession which inhabit the social and political field.

These various aspects are represented in *Figure 1*, constituting the model of analysis of the process of professionalization of teachers which will be adopted throughout this chapter. It is hoped that these criteria which have just been described will not serve to limit the socio-history of the teaching profession. However, these criteria are intended to serve as stepping off points, making it possible to construct a reasonable approach to the historical trajectories and current challenges facing teachers.

## **THE HISTORICAL PROCESS OF THE PROFESSIONALIZATION OF TEACHERS (18TH-20TH CENTURY)**

### **The State and teachers**

The end of the 18th century represents, in European societies, a key period in the history of education and, thus for the teaching profession. Despite the specificities of each country and each socio-economic context, people everywhere were asking what constituted a good teacher: Should he be religious or secular? Should he be part of a teaching force, or be only one teacher juxtaposed with others? How should he be chosen and named? How should he be paid? What authority should control him? (Julia, 1981). This collection of questions was inscribed in a movement towards the secularization of teaching, which resulted in the State taking charge of the educational institution. The new *teaching States* instituted a more rigorous control over the educational process, that is to say the process of reproduction (or production) of the way in which people conceive of the world (Bourdieu 1993). The success of this process depended to a large degree on the recruitment of a new corps of teachers, chosen and supervised by solicitations emanating from the power of the State. (Archer, 1979)

The cartography of educational reforms in 18th century Europe has already been established (Chartier and Julia 1989). Theories centered on the nature and the process of State formation show the extent to which the creation of national educational systems corresponds to the need to train personnel to fill State functions, to spread dominant national cultures, and to create political and cultural unity within the new nation-States (Green 1990; Soysal and Strang, 1989). From one area to the next, reform efforts were, naturally, marked by the particularities of national histories and circumstances, but they were also guided by a common, transnational, project, which was to lead to the formation of the modern State. Ernest Gellner (1983) even argues that the centralization of the State was a consequence of the centralization of education. He believes that the educational system was a necessary condition for the economic development specific to modernity. The reconstruction, in the 18th century, of the principle of citizenship must be seen in the context of the reform movement and the affirmation of nation-States in the European context.

The position of teacher, which developed in a subsidiary and non-specialized manner, first in the Protestant countries and later in the Catholic countries, thanks to the action of religious congregations, acquired new contours. The improvement of teaching tools and methodologies, the introduction of more sophisticated teaching methods, as well as the broadening of curricula and educational programs made it difficult to practice teaching on a purely accessory or marginal level. Teaching tended to become differentiated as a "collection of practices," becoming the domain of specialists who were able to devote sufficient time and energy to it. In general terms, despite the specificities of each country, one can say that State intervention was to provoke a homogenization as well as a unification and a hierarchization on a national scale, of the different groups which were dedicated to teaching: in the beginning it was the State framework, and not a corporate conception of the profession that made teachers into a professional group.

One of the first concerns of 18th century educational reformers involved the establishment of uniform procedures for the selection and nomination of teachers. In fact, the teaching profession was one of the first professions to adopt meritocratic methods of selection, "based on the formalized recognition of individual merit, demonstrated by diplomas and specific tests." (Viñao Frago 1994, p.119.) Nevertheless, the emergence of new professional models did not come without various forms

of resistance, which helps explain, according to Dominique Julia (1994,) the quasi-secular separation which distinguished declared intentions from their realization in practice. It was necessary to remove teachers from the influence of local populations and authorities and envision them as a State sponsored group, or at least as a group operating under the aegis of State protection. The teachers themselves were to adhere to this project, to the extent to which it gave them a measure of autonomy and independence, vis-à-vis the priests, the local authorities and the local populations: nevertheless, they had the protection of the State, with all of the rights and responsibilities which that implied. This was a project supported simultaneously by the teachers and the State: the former attempting to transform themselves into an autonomous and hierarchized administrative group, and the latter attempting to guarantee its control over the educational institution. (Hamilton 1989)

In general, since the end of the 18th century, teaching licenses or permits have been obligatory. These documents have been granted by State authority, (or some other agency granted authority by the State) after an individual has passed an examination or competition which is open to anyone who has a certain number of attributes necessary for admission (literary prowess, age, good moral character, etc.) This decision represents an important step in the process of professionalization, as it creates the conditions necessary for the elaboration of a canon of technical competencies, based on educational criteria, which served as a base for the recruitment of teachers, and, as a corollary as a blueprint for a teaching career. The license or permit, functions as a "guarantee" by the State to the teachers which the latter can use to improve their professional status.

Saying that in most countries teachers are State employees is insufficient, if one does not add that they are a *particular type of State employee* (Robert 1995.) Furthermore, it is important to understand that "the blanket use of the term *State functionaries* hides too many historical, local and particular possibilities and, importantly, ignores teachers' attempts at working class alliances on education and their varied interpretation of their role as perceived by the State, and their resistances to it" (Lawn and Ozga, 1981, p. 49.) The teaching profession is closely tied to goals and expectations and is strongly linked to a political intentionality. Teachers are carriers of a message and are aligned with national ideals: they must be seen from the dual perspective of integration and independence. At the end of the *Ancien Régime* the status of State functionary was convenient for teachers, as it assured them an independence with respect to local influences (Cornu 1992) However, teachers attempted to combine the privileges of functionaries (for example, tenure) with those of independent employees. To a certain extent, it can be said that the ideal model of teaching is situated somewhere between that of the civil servant and the independent professional--that is one reason why the model of the liberal professions remains, whether explicitly or implicitly, a point of reference for the members of the teaching profession, even if it has never served as a base for their organization. In their collective history, teachers have never given up asking for regulations which are less administrative (in the bureaucratic sense) and more professional (in the liberal sense) (Terral 1997.)

### **Development of teacher training institutions**

The creation of teacher training institutions, a primordial step in the process of professionalization, is the fruit of an action on the part of both teachers and the State: the former saw it as a way of enhancing their status; the latter as a powerful instrument of control. The institutionalization of the procedures of training, through the creation of normal schools, has permitted, on the one hand, the development of teaching as a profession and the social improvement of its members, and on the other hand, the establishment of stricter State control of the teaching

profession. The project setting forth the creation of teacher training institutions is fairly old, but in the majority of European countries it was not realized until the 19th century. The action taken by teachers explains, to a large degree, the success which the normal schools have experienced since the beginning of the 19th century; up to that point, teachers, like other professionals, would include two demands in each of their struggles: an increasing request for access to normal schools, as well as prolonging of the curriculum and raising academic standards in their training. In doing so, they demonstrated their adherence to the idea of a social stratification based on academic criteria, and to the principle of superiority for those who are educated. The normal schools are the point of origin of a profound change, of a real sociological revolution in the people teaching in primary schools. Because of their actions, the impoverished and poorly educated teachers of the beginning of the 19th century were to give way to professionals, trained and prepared to exercise the activity of teaching (Gardner 1995; Nique 1991.)

Teacher training institutions were initially oriented towards primary school teachers, but since the second half of the 19th century we can see an increasing preoccupation with secondary school teachers (Wideen and Grimmett 1995.) These two types of teaching have, obviously, different strategies and problems, especially due to the fact that primary school teachers are expected to be more concerned with the student, while secondary school teachers construct their identity in relation to an academic discipline (Judge, Lemosse, Paine and Sedlak 1994) However, in both cases, the importance of this moment in the professionalization of teachers is obvious. Furthermore, a long term analysis of the evolution of teacher training reveals a growing similarity between these two institutional tracks. In a historical analysis of initial training for the last century recently published by the European Union, the following conclusion emerges: "In summary, three important ways of organizing training for elementary school teachers characterize the evolution of teacher training over the course of the century: post-primary education in a specialized professional school, the training institution at the post-secondary level, and, finally, training in an institution of higher education, generally at the university. These models are found more or less all over in Europe, but implanted in different parts of the century. " (Commission Européenne, 1996, p. 91.) Concerning secondary education, the same document suggests "that initial training for secondary teachers dealing exclusively with subject matter knowledge is insufficient for guaranteeing a high level of success in democratic school systems open to children from all socio-economic levels" (Commission Européenne, 1996, p. 92.)

### **Body of knowledge and skills**

Teacher training institutions are points of reference for the production of a body of knowledge and skills exclusive to the teaching profession. At first the normal schools (primary teachers) and later the universities (secondary teachers) put into place curricula which attempted to determine the knowledge and techniques necessary for professional teachers. It is for this reason that a history of professionalization cannot ignore the question of the relationship between teachers and knowledge, especially pedagogical knowledge. However, it is not sufficient to take into consideration the genealogy and the diffusion of a specialized knowledge, because it is also necessary to take into account the social meaning of this knowledge, as well as its penetration into individual and collective knowledge, as the relationship between that knowledge and the different

powers (academic, professional, political) which inhabit the educational field.

The ambiguity of the professional status and the social condition of teachers is well illustrated by their relationship to knowledge. The *intermediate* position of teachers is particularly manifested by their dependence on the knowledges produced by other groups and other social spaces. In the 19th century two axes of reflection developed: on the one hand the axis of *pedagogy*, closer to the normal schools and the practices of teacher training, and on the other hand, the axis of the *science of education*, often in the space of the university, and in a theoretical dimension. There is a kind of disconnection between the science of education as an academic discipline, and pedagogy as a practical knowledge for teachers (Schriewer and Keiner, 1992.) This bias produced a cleavage between theory and practice (between theoreticians and practitioners,) which highlights the pertinence of analyzing the professionalization of teachers on the basis of the knowledges and powers which are in place in a given period.

In fact, the professionalization of teachers is tied to the possibility of a pedagogical knowledge which is not strictly instrumental and which can produce a corpus of reference which is both theoretical and practical. In reality, it is not surprising that the high-points of the production of a scientific reflection in education are also the high-points of the professional affirmations of teachers. Nevertheless, these periods also contain elements of a devaluation of the teaching profession, because they provoke, simultaneously the de-legitimation of teachers as producers of knowledge, and the investment of new groups of experts who are affirmed as "scientific authorities" in the domain of education. It is important to understand this paradox: with every advance in the educational sciences there is an improvement in the image of teachers, but there is, at the same time, a decrease in their competencies, especially concerning the status accorded their knowledge, that is any knowledge produced by experience and reflection on practice.

For normal schools, there was an important change towards the end of the 19th century in the majority of European countries. The coursework stretched out to two or three years and took on a clear dimension of professional training which justified the status of experts conferred on teachers, and their monopoly for intervening in the field of education. In a general sense, one finds, for the first time, a conception of teacher training in which pedagogical knowledge tends to become independent of methodological procedures, thus installing new power relations between those who produce theory and those who produce practice. This division was accentuated towards the beginning of the 20th century at the moment in which the psychology-sociology-pedagogy triangle which served as the base of the sciences of education kaleidoscope, was constructed. The new scientific *élan* was conceived of as a central element in the strategy of rationalizing institutions and the production of a logic of innovation. Therefore, it had to furnish instruments which were useful to administration and to social regulation. This involved changes in the universe of teacher training, between the normative and philosophical approach of the late 19th century and the reformist tendency, based on scientific knowledge which was imposed afterwards.

The explosion of the educational sciences provoked a greater proximity between teachers and a general body of knowledge, but brought a risk of less attention paid to specific aspects of the field. This is why we can see, periodically, especially within the normal schools, a sort of methodological reply, which makes it possible to see, provisionally, the links between theory and practice, thanks to the presence of a number of hierarchies among the holders of knowledge, (the scientists,) the guardians of methodology (the normal school teachers, and, in a certain sense, the inspectors,) and the men and women of action (the teachers.) We are, therefore, confronted with contradictory processes which mark an incontrovertible launching point for the teaching profession during the first



decades of the 20th century, at the same moment which marked the limits of its autonomous development. Despite all the exceptions and the differences in situations between one country and another, it is undeniable that the obligation of obtaining relatively long and theoretically based specialized training, constitutes a very significant step in the process of the professionalization of teachers.

### **The development of professional teachers organizations**

The first teachers associations were organized at the beginning of the 19th century, under the form of friendly associations or mutual aid societies, They sometimes formed under the guise of collective defense and protection, and sometimes with the objective of promoting culture and teaching, these associations were first born among secondary school teachers, and were later enlarged to include primary school teachers. At first their modalities of organization were fragile, although they already carried the corporate interests of the profession (Bernard, Bouet, Dommanget and Serret 1966.) These organizations formed slowly, and according to different rhythms throughout the whole first half of the 19th century (Robert, 1995.)

However, towards the middle of the 19th century, a series of sociological changes, especially the progressive consolidation of training institutions, and the beginning of compulsory schooling, created conditions which were favorable to the development of the associated teachers movement, which assumed the previous existence of a collective task of converting teachers into a unified group, and the elaboration of a common ideology and mentality: this is the result of a long collective enterprise out of which this corporate actor was born, giving witness to the way in which teachers had become conscious of their own interests as a professional group.

In the image of the different logics of training, an important cleavage separated primary and secondary school teachers. The former adopted a more combative role, gradually approaching the perspective of labor unions as they developed within the workers' and civil service movements. The latter organized in a variety of different ways, trying to achieve a more corporate identity, which does not, however, imply that there was not an aspect of demands or collective claims to their movement. One could see, in this difference, the classic opposition between professionalism, linked to the defense of general interests and public service, and unionism, with its links to class interests. However, this opposition does not stand up to a careful and critical examination, as the distinction is based more on ideological differences than on the study of the functions which were actually performed by the different types of professional organizations: from that time it was not possible to "contrast *professionalism with unionism* like two systems of values exclusive of one another. (Maurice 1972, p.222.)

Nevertheless, the choice of the associative model as appropriate to describing the teachers movement has been the object of great controversy, as can be seen from the ambiguity of its socio-professional status. Thus teachers associations have adopted very diversified forms of organization and action, taking either professional orders or labor unions as models (Lawn, 1985.) This choice has been legitimated by very distinct discourses which are loaded with political meaning, and which change considerably, depending on socio-political contexts and historical situations. On the other hand, the practice of professional associations is almost always characterized by a somewhat hybrid behavior, organized around two dimensions: the defense of their members' corporate interests and the defense of teaching in terms of public service and social utility.

At the beginning of the 20th century after several decades of struggle and collective efforts, the union model began to dominate among teachers. This, however, does not hinder the maintenance, until today, of other associative models such as friendly associations, pedagogical associations, including teachers from a specific discipline, groups of specialists, pedagogical movements, or even the beginnings of professional orders (Robert, 1995.) However, a study published in 1925 by the Educational Workers International shows clearly that despite political difficulties and the immense diversity of forms of organization, the union perspective had acquired a solid base in the majority of European countries (Boubou 1925.) Ida Berger would even write that "this strong syndicalization is a trait obvious to the highest degree in the physiognomy of teachers." (1979, p. 152.) Speaking of the Swedish situation, Christina Florin would insist on the fact that "the increasing influence of this organization [Association of the Elementary Teachers of Sweden] contributed to making teachers more professional" (1991, p.22)

### **Unity of norms and values**

The prestige and power which teachers enjoyed at the beginning of the 20th century is indissociable from the actions carried out by their associations: they added to the intrinsic unity of the teaching corps, imposed by the State, through their status as functionaries, an extrinsic unity, built on the basis of professional solidarity and the defense of common interests. In this framework, the State opposed in different ways, the autonomous organization of teachers. The establishment of an esprit de corps, and a common strategy was not accomplished without conflicts, given the fact that the movement contained a number of different ethical, ideological and political tendencies.

This rapport of powers, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, progressively built an apparatus of adhesion which constructed the contours of teachers' professional identities. This was a process which undoubtedly had individual references, but which played itself out primarily in a collective dimension. Professional associations played a primordial role in the elaboration of these collective reservoirs of beliefs, norms, rules, meanings and values which defined the profession of teacher. Under their influence, an expansion of the press and a multiplication of conferences and congresses played itself out in the transitional decades between the 19th and 20th centuries. These two spaces became regular laboratories of common ideals, with schools and instruction representing the progress which teachers were invested in as principle agents.

Teachers' norms and values were first defined against the background of a social dimension (the school and its role in progress.) They were later played off against a standard of pedagogical responsibility (the child and his or her rights as a student.) It is from these two standpoints that we can see the ethical debate and its consequences relative to the regulation of the profession. It is important to understand that, if from the point of view of the profession's regulations, teachers were submitted to ethics imposed by the State, they succeeded in collectively producing referential values concerning their daily activities and their professional demands. This is why the ethical question must be seen in the context of an analysis of an apparatus of adhesion for teachers, and cannot be understood without looking at the work accomplished within teachers' representative organizations.

### **Social image and the economic status of teachers**

The second half of the 19th century is a key period for understanding the ambiguity of teachers' positions, as well as the improvement in their socio-economic status. The creation of normal schools (and university-based institutions for teacher training,) the development of the educational model and the belief in the virtues of instruction as a factor in progress transformed access to the teaching profession into an aspiration for different social classes as a means to social improvement. To become a primary school teacher was to manage an escape, it was to escape other conditions marked by images of pain "that of the peasant, exhausted at night from cutting hay, that of the maker of wooden shoes, who sweats heavily turning his drill, and that of the weaver who is combing dusty hemp" (Ozouf 1967, p. 63.) Normally coming from underprivileged social groups, primary school teachers felt superior to the villagers because of their knowledge; nevertheless their pitiful remuneration made it impossible for them to adopt a middle class lifestyle (Ozouf and Ozouf 1992.) The sociological isolation of teachers was similar to that of priests (it was crucial to maintain relations with everyone without favoring anyone) and reinforced solidarity within the teaching corps. The situation of secondary school teachers was completely different. Coming from more privileged backgrounds, they were, until the middle of the 20th century, that is to say until the period of explosive growth in schooling, part of the local elite (Chapoulie 1987.) Their university training, their salaries, and the fabric of the social, cultural and political relations which they maintained, favored this insertion, which marked an obvious divide between primary and secondary school teachers (Neave 1992.)

In both cases, professionalization is not a process which was built endogenously. The history of teaching is indissociable from the place which its members occupied in the relations of production and the role they played in the maintenance of the social order. Teachers were not only responding to a social need for education, but they also created this need. The great social operation of schooling would never have been possible without the confluence of several factors of a social and economic order; but it is important not to forget that the agents of this enterprise were the teachers. At the moment in which the school was imposed as a privileged instrument of social stratification, teachers were invested with an enormous power: from then on they held the keys to social ascension (and stagnation.) This placed them at the crossroads of frequently contradictory socio-economic interests: functionaries of the State and agents for reproduction of the dominant social order, they thus personified the hopes for social mobility held by different social strata. Here lies all of the ambiguity and all of the importance of the teaching profession: as cultural agents teachers are also, inevitably, political agents. Furthermore, as Philippe Perrenoud reminds us, public images represent a big enough challenge, as much for professionals as for the organizations which train or employ them: in fact, "no corporation can be indifferent to its public image, to the extent to which its reputation depends on it, so does its prestige, its revenue, and the power of its members" (1996, p. 69.)

### **The feminization of the teaching profession**

The problematic of the feminization of the teaching corps--a phenomenon which, despite specific national circumstances can be clearly perceived in all European countries since the middle of the 19th century--is essential to the analysis of the social image and the economic status of teachers. Traditional sociological explanations, especially the inference that the teaching profession is devalued because it is predominantly feminine (and vice-versa) are insufficient to understanding the complexity of this question (Albisetti 1993.) It is necessary to go further and use more sophisticated

conceptual tools which make it possible to understand the *positive* contribution of women to the professional definition of teachers, instead of classical analyses of the negative impact, which regard women as an "obstacle" to the improvement of the image and status of the profession. However, it is important to point out that women have played a fundamental role in the professionalization of teachers, both concerning the production of knowledge and values as well as for the definition of professional attitudes and competencies, the process of taking charge of children's education or the clarification of pedagogical responsibilities. The need is to study that "added value" of feminization, if one wishes to understand the historical dilemmas which cut across the teaching profession.

In this respect, the question of salaries is both significant and contradictory. On the one hand it is a struggle which brings together successive generations of women, who fight, often with the support of professional organizations, for equal pay for men and women. On the other hand, and contrary to what could be expected from traditional explanations, the recognition of this right by public powers has not had very significant consequences for the sociological composition of the teaching profession. Curiously, and here we see another contradiction, equal wages were first obtained in the countries of Southern Europe (at the end of the 19th century) and did not reach the rest of the continent until the middle of the 20th century (Araújo 1993; Owen 1988.) Nevertheless, even with differential wages, teaching was one of the few careers open to women, as is demonstrated by the growth in registrations in normal schools in the last decades of the 19th century.

An analysis of iconography concerning teachers produced at the beginning of the 20th century reveals an absence of *public* images of women teachers. Nevertheless, by 1900, women constituted a majority of primary school teachers: more than 50% in France and Belgium; more than 60% in Sweden and Italy, and more than 70% in England. In spite of this, the dominant images of teachers are always *masculine* images, which seemed to be a better fit with the professional image of teachers. It is true that there were some feminine images, but these were often "private" images (the teacher with her students, or in her class.) At the same time, ideologies of *motherhood* were diffusing through the field of education, notably due to the work of a new generation of doctors and hygienicists. However, the conception of teaching as a female profession remained subordinate. The more useful image, especially in reference to union struggles and the search for greater social recognition, remained masculine. The feminine dimension of teaching was recognized, but did not constitute a point of reference for identifying the profession.

The continuation of a tendency towards feminization gives the question of gender a fundamental role in the identity process of teachers. Avoiding classical arguments, it is perhaps more interesting to pose another question: Are we not confronted with an essential change in the teaching profession? In fact, this problematic cannot be approached from the standpoint of simple statistical or quantitative reasoning. Instead, this question needs to be situated within the complex field of influences and contradictory projects for the teaching profession. At the same time, for reasons which were simultaneously political, social and cultural, teachers were to be removed, little by little, from the forefront of the public consciousness. Since the 1930s, it appears that a cloak of silence has fallen on teachers, enclosing them inside educational spaces. This retreat was accompanied by a rhetoric which reinvented conceptions of mission, or of religious vocation, adapted to the female universe. The profession of teacher was adapted to a feminine identity, and this brought with it essentially *private* images. Along with this transition, we can also see a reinforcement of apparatuses for controlling teachers which, especially in the case of women, impacted not only on professional factors, but also on private dimensions. Primary school teachers became the objects of a close surveillance which put into place policies which were discriminatory towards women's work.

The feminine image of the profession became definitively fixed towards the middle of the 20th century, at a time when women were already a substantial majority among primary school teachers, and represented a substantial percentage of secondary school teachers. In fact, it is crucial to underscore the differences between primary and secondary teaching: in the latter case, the percentage of women remains, in the European Union, around 50% (Commission Européenne 1996.) Otherwise within the space of the European community, the proportion of women in the teaching force has grown very little since the 1960s, although a country by country examination of this evolution indicates how much this tendency hides important national disparities (Commission Européenne 1996.)

These facts are fairly significant as they indicate the arrival of a certain threshold in the process of professionalization, with a relatively stable composition of the teaching force and the consolidation of a certain number of rules in teacher training and in the practice and regulation of professional activity. The consolidation of this social image and the professional status of teachers was not accomplished without struggles or contradictions. Towards the middle of the 20th century, we can identify processes which certain writers call de-professionalization (or proletarianization) which go head to head with the dynamics of the professional affirmation of teachers. However, it is undeniable that the consolidation of the project of *mass schooling* along with the consolidation of teachers' status and the fixing of a certain *professional image* confirm the end of a historical cycle in the organization and development of the teaching profession.

## **SOCIOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS ON THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

The first cycle in the professionalization of teachers lasted until the 1920s/30s. This cycle is inscribed in the start of State sponsored schooling at the end of the *Ancien Régime*, and the consolidation of mass schooling at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite tensions and conflicts, it is a relatively *coherent* period in the life of teachers, a period where they constructed themselves as a professional body. However, during the Second World War, and after, with the post-war dynamics of educational expansion, teachers were confronted with a number of contradictory processes in which elements of professional affirmation were mixed with logics of devalorization and authoritarian control over the profession, which some authors have named *de-professionalization* (or *proletarianization*) (Lawn and Grace 1987; Ozga 1989, Ozga and Lawn 1981.)

Without entering into a debate concerning the adequacy of the term, it is possible to identify certain factors which characterize this phenomenon: the separation between conceptualization and realization, which brings into play a surveillance of teachers by experts; the standardization of tasks, which provokes a technical and instrumental definition of teachers; the reduction of remuneration, which causes a devaluation of teachers' socio-economic status; the intensification of demands vis-à-vis every day educational activities, which makes a reflexive approach to pedagogical activity more difficult. At the heart of the debate, one finds the question of professional autonomy, that is the internal or external regulation of the activity of teaching. It is obvious that during the middle decades of the 20th century teachers did not stop working to reinforce their social image or their professional status. However, they were obliged to deal with contradictory and opposing tendencies (Lawn 1987.)

Furthermore, several authors recognize that, by the 1970s, teachers had gained a number of professional objectives, notably thanks to their representative organizations (Grace 1991; Goodson and Hargreaves 1996.) This reflection concerns primarily the Northern European countries, because the situation in the South was substantially different, given the existence of authoritarian regimes which blocked the professional development of teachers. Nevertheless " within a remarkably short period of time, the decade of the 1980s, the professional gains made by the teachers over a long historical period were either weakened or eliminated by the action of the central state in education" (Grace 1991, p.3.) However, despite political and social differences, it is undeniable that the debate concerning the professionalization of the teaching profession has had similar contours in the 1980s/90s in the majority of European countries, a circumstance which has obvious political explanations.

### **Thinking about relations between the State and teachers**

The sociological analysis of the teaching profession cannot overlook an important qualitative fact: for the last three decades, the total number of teachers in the European Union has practically doubled, currently comprising about 4 million members. It is true that this evolution has not been consistent in all of the States, but it represents a change in size, as well as content, in the definition of the teaching profession. The crisis of teaching which has been talked about since the 1960s, is not unconnected to this phenomenon which carries paradoxical visions: on the one hand there is a devaluation of teachers and their professional status; on the other hand teachers remain, in political discourse and in the social imaginary, one of the most crucial groups for constructing the future. An understanding of the current challenges facing the profession requires a special attention to this *gap*

between the real condition of teachers and the weight given to their actions.

Ivor Goodson and Andy Hargreaves (1996) have clearly demonstrated the complexity of this debate, highlighting its conflictual and contradictory elements. The reconfiguration of the teaching profession is a process which is situated at the heart of a profound alteration of the forms of State intervention into society, which is taking place in a very different way in each different country in the European Union, but which is being supported by similar discursive practices and educational policies. At the risk of overestimating the importance of these resemblances, it is possible to mention two processes which are closely linked: the *rationalization* and the *privatization* of teaching.

The perception of tendencies towards the rationalization of teaching requires a look at the development of the educational sciences and the groups of experts (in curriculum, teaching methodologies, evaluation, etc.) which make a claim to power over the organization of teachers' activities. This contributes to the confirmation of a technical definition of the profession and, at the same time, to the construction of practices of control based on "scientific" rationalities. It is the relationship between teachers and knowledge which is directly at stake, through a separation between the conception, the realization, and the standardization of tasks which makes a reflexive approach to teaching impossible. The rationalization of teaching brackets knowledges, subjectivities, in a word, the personal and collective histories of teachers. In this way a professional logic is constructed which makes the subjective and experiential dimensions of teachers' space for reflection on their own work, and informal moments of exchange and cooperation into a *tabula rasa*.

The very rapid growth of specialists after the 1980s has brought with it a reconstitution of the arena of education, most notably through a reconfiguration of the teaching profession and a new attitude towards political decision making (Charlot and Beillerot 1995.) It is important to understand the importance acquired by specialized systems of knowledge in the organization of peoples' lives and in the management of professional work (Giddens 1990.) The imposition of the discourses of the educational sciences as "rational," "scientific," or "objective," obscures the ideological dimensions of, and differing points of view about, the teaching profession. The prestige of educational researchers depends on the "naturalization" of their points of view and on an increasing proximity between academic and university spaces. The State is tending to abandon a normative (or prescriptive) role and to increasingly put into place technologies of surveillance, evaluation and regulation based on categories produced by experts. The efforts to rationalize teaching put into place by certain practitioners of the educational sciences contain a logic which values the knowledge of experts and disqualifies the knowledge of teachers.

The rationalization and the privatization of teaching are two moments in a single process of external control over the teaching profession. They are part of a political agenda which tends to define teachers according to criteria of technical rationality, which reinforce the gap between theory and practice as well as the ambiguity of teachers' relationship to knowledge. Pedagogical experts produce discourses about autonomy, capacities for self-reflection or about the importance of teachers' academic or scientific qualifications at the same time that educational reforms are seeking legitimacy through a rhetoric of decentralization which seems to move in the direction of giving teachers greater control over their work. However, in order to improve the quality and the efficiency of teaching, educational policies look to the experts who impose ever more stringent procedures of evaluation and control over the content, the processes and the results of educational work. Furthermore, teachers are pressured to adopt conformist perspectives and to adopt technical orientations which threaten their professional autonomy (Pereyra, García Mínguez, Gómez and Beas 1996; Popkewitz 1993.)

The concept of the *privatization* of education harkens back, on the one hand, to the neo-liberal policies which have introduced new work regulations for teachers, and on the other hand, to the weight acquired by the “laws of the market” in the definition of educational space. Bureaucratic or administrative mechanisms tend to be replaced by strategies of management and administration of teaching personnel (Helsby 1995.) Maeve Landman and Jenny Ozga stress, correctly, that “the space left for teachers in the new model of market-driven client-led and state-regulated education provision is not comfortable. (Landman and Ozga 1995, p. 24.) The call for decentralization, for example, consecrates political strategies based on controls which lie closer to teachers’ work, either through the intervention of local authorities, or through a logic of client accountability. The reference to a greater autonomy of teachers also implies an auto-regulation, both individual and collective, which embraces criteria originally conceived outside of the profession. This is why the political rhetoric of teacher professionalization must be analyzed as an element in a greater redefinition of relationships between the State, civil society and the scientific world.

These two processes (*rationalization* and *privatization*) denote contradictory tendencies, especially concerning relations between the State and teachers: rhetorical inflation of the mission of teachers contributes to giving them greater social visibility, which reinforces their prestige, but also contributes to the installation of stricter governmental and scientific controls. These controls bring with them a depreciation of teachers’ competence and work. European societies at the end of the 20th century are manifesting an ambiguous attitude towards teachers: they are regarded as professionals who are lacking competence and qualifications, who hold, nevertheless, the greatest hope for social and cultural change. The identity process of teachers is produced through a game of power and counter-power between images which carry different projects, and which make it necessary to define a new professionalism for teachers.

### **Perspectives and challenges in teacher training**

The training of teachers is one of the most decisive domains in the changes taking place in the European educational systems. Throughout its history, the training of teachers has been balanced between academic models, centered on specific institutions and “fundamental” knowledges, and practical models, based on schools and on “applied” methodologies. This is a dichotomy which must be overcome by adopting professional models which are capable of putting into place partnerships between institutions of higher learning and the schools, in the framework of a consolidation of spaces of collaboration and alternance (Elliott 1993.)

The creation of teacher training institutions has constituted a crucial step in the process of professionalization. In the 20th century, the progressive universitarization of the training structures has represented an essential aspect of the social and scientific affirmation of teachers. In consequence, it is not a matter of reducing the intellectual scope of teacher training, or of advocating a return to the schools as a site of excellence in the preparation of the field. The question is elsewhere: it involves installing new procedures and techniques of collaboration between the universities and the schools, in a way which promotes modalities of training which take into account the actual challenges facing the teaching profession (Adams and Tulasiewicz 1995.)

If raising the level of initial training has been one of the historical claims of teachers, for the past several years the principal debate has centered on continuing education. For several years we have seen that teacher training needs to be reconsidered and restructured in a way which integrates different levels of conceptualizations, “organizational context, nature of the professional role,



professional competence, professional knowledge, nature of professional apprenticeship, curriculum and pedagogy” (Elliott 1991, p. 310.)

Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that neither the universities nor the schools alone are capable of responding to these needs, which indicates the importance of a new basis for cooperation. Putting into place organizational mechanisms for creating connections between the universities and the schools takes place through the institution of new professional functions and through the valuing of spaces for practice and for reflection on practice. A reflexive conception of the teaching profession is coherent with this *third way* which is based on praxis as a space for forming a critical consciousness and qualified actions. The reconfiguration of a new *teaching profession* passes through three investments which have traditionally been absent in teacher training: the teacher as an individual, and the educational institution and the profession as a collective (Nóvoa 1994.) The new realities of initial training, and especially of continuing training, cannot ignore these three challenges.

### **Bodies of knowledge and skills**

The above reflections touch on the problem of the relationship between teachers and knowledge: are teachers the carriers (and producers) of their own knowledge, or are they merely the transmitters (and reproducers) of a knowledge generated by others? Is teachers’ reference knowledge essentially scientific or technical? We know that these questions have been the subject of numerous debates, in which various different visions of the teaching profession and contradictory professional development projects have come face to face. The historical analysis of curricula and teacher training reveals an oscillation between three poles: *methodological*, with a privileged attention given to techniques and instruments of action, *disciplinary*, centered on the mastery of a domain of knowledge, and *scientific (pedagogical)*, having the educational sciences as references, in general framed by the other social and human sciences, particularly psychology. These poles tend to reproduce dichotomies (fundamental knowledge/applied knowledge, science/technique, knowledges/methods etc.,) which are no longer pertinent to thinking about the relationship between teachers and knowledge.

The effort to escape from this binary thinking has been accentuated since the 1980s, a period when the contours of a new type of knowledge identifying the teaching profession was sketched out. Educational literature has advanced a great deal in the delimitation of professional knowledges, beginning with a look at the specificities of concrete actions taken by teachers (Paquay, Altet, Charlier and Perrenoud 1996.) This reflection underscores the reflexive dimension of teachers’ actions and the need to invest in praxis as the point of knowledge production, while paying particular attention to the lives of teachers. According to Pierre Dominicé (1990,) theory furnishes us with indicators and with a framework for reading, but what the teacher remembers as reference knowledge is that which is linked to his identity and his experience. The triple movement suggested by Donald Schön (1990)--knowledge in action, reflection in action and reflection about action and on reflection in action--suggests a conception of the teacher as a reflexive professional. At present, teachers’ bodies of knowledges and skills can only be defined in relation to their capacities for reflexive self-development and theoretical elaboration coming from references to practice.

### **The renewal of teachers’ professional associations**

The teachers' association movement has played a primary role in the professionalization of teachers. The adoption of the union model is consistent with the consolidation of teachers' role as functionaries "To the extent to which teachers are salaried workers like others, their unions are unions like any other, classical defenses by professionals against employers and clients, instruments for negotiating working conditions, salaries, qualifications for employment, rules regulating vacations, status, career paths, continuing education, retirement, social solidarity, etc." (Perrenoud 1991, p. 31.) We cannot forget, as Martin Lawn writes, speaking of England, that "teachers were the first major group of white collars to organize into professional associations" (1996, p. 28) and that "the union became the major link between individuals and groups and acted as an effective way of exerting pressure publicly and mobilizing support" (1996, p. 107.)

The teachers union movement has its own contours, related to the specificity of this professional group. However, today, the redefinition of the status of teachers brings with it significant changes in associative logics. For several years we have seen, on the one hand, a reflection on styles of union action and organization, and on the other hand, the development of new forms of teachers associations. The regrouping of teachers tends to be organized through different modalities, so that, for example:

- disciplinary groups (associations of history or mathematics teachers, etc.) which bring highly stimulating dynamics with them, while at the same time exacerbating the risks of diminishing the feeling of belonging to the teaching force as a whole;
- pedagogical movements, which are manifested in diverse forms for sharing the responsibility of teaching tasks, and/or spaces for cooperation and collaborative work;
- structures for exercising professional power in the framework of affirmation of a collegiality which functions as a counterpoint to strategies for reinforcing State control (Smyth 1991.)

This last modality is particularly important, because it articulates with projects of autonomy, and of the reorganization of educational institutions and with the consolidation of networks of collaboration within the teaching force. In a study of teacher culture and the structure of schools, we can see the interdependence of three elements: the enterprising capacity in education, the self-governance of schools and the collegiality of teachers. André Robert even talks about a "unionism of proximity, characterized by its capacity to multiply the initiatives for local interventions, at the level of the institutions themselves" (1995, p. 165) as one of the most promising evolutions. Martin Lawn goes as far as affirming that "in a seller's market power should move to the teachers; this has happened at significant periods in the past" 1996. p. 138.)

## **Set of norms and values**

The values which have served as the basis of the historical affirmation of the teaching profession need to be rethought in the light of the contemporary realities of education. It goes without saying that a certain number of these values remain essential to the professional definition of teachers, but others have become obsolete. This is the case, for example, of the great scholarly ideals which founded the teaching profession in the 19th century. Furthermore, the normative framework of the State does not take the same form today, as teachers tend to escape from administrative restraints if they are too strict. Finally the attachment of teachers to the construction of a national citizenship

tends to be redefined in a more intimate sense, (local and community ties) as well as a wider sense (transnational affiliations.) Teachers need to develop new values which mine the most positive reminiscences of the past, but which do not encourage an indiscriminate “return to the past.”

The need to go past the restrictions imposed by the State framework makes it necessary to define other modalities of functioning (recruitment, evaluation, etc.) In this context, the debate on the production of a professional culture for teachers becomes central. This is work which is accomplished both within and outside of the professional group, making necessary a whole series of interactions, negotiations and compromises. The new professionalism of teachers has to be organized according to clearly explicit ethical and deontological rules, notably concerning relationships with different educational partners and the provision of professional services. In addition to certain traditional dimensions, there are three aspects which deserve to be mentioned: pedagogical responsibility, institutional compromise and collective engagement.

Professional ethics have to integrate a pedagogical component, namely the refusal of theories and methods which are discriminatory or which contribute to the consecration of social inequalities. Lise Demailly is correct when she emphasizes that this aspect is indissociable from the definition of teachers: “It can seem strange that professional competence implies ethical (philosophical) positions--and perhaps this is true in the case of relational careers--but how else can I name (I will give one example of the ethical dimension of the profession among others) a principle such as belief in the educability of the learner?” (1987, p. 66.) We are confronted here with a definition of the ethical dimension which is very close to pedagogical terrain and to professional practices. This does not concern a normative system dictated from the outside, but instead the profession’s collective production of ways of doing and of saying.

This brings us to a second aspect, that is to say, an ethics which is defined, as well, in relation to an institutional compromise at the level of the educational organization. The capacity of teachers for producing a professional culture leads to the possibility of the teaching profession enjoying the autonomous power of self-regulation. However, autonomy needs *territoriality*, or an institutional space where the organized teaching force can legitimately exercise its power. The definition of politics in a local space, as well as the emergence of schools as organizations, configures a new territoriality, concerning at the same time identity and professional intervention, between the too global level of the macro-system, and the too restrained level of the micro-classroom. Reflection on the school and its educational projects is not identical in the different European countries--the most obvious division is that which separates countries with a strong tradition of centralization or decentralization--but we can see similar evolutions concerning a responsibility for teachers which is also constructed on the basis of educational organizations (and not only on the basis of relations, or of references to national citizenship.)

It is within this institutional framework that the idea of a collective engagement (collegiality) can take place. This is not simply a matter of consolidating networks of solidarity and *esprit de corps*, but also of creating spaces for collaboration and regulation of the profession. The new professional culture should be based on very strict criteria concerning the teaching career (recruitment, progression, evaluation, etc.) and on an explicit process of setting rules, responsibilities and criteria for competence. If teachers do not occupy this space for regulating the profession, other groups (the State, the universities, local authorities, etc.) will intervene to create apparatuses for controlling their work. However, if a wider participation of social actors is desirable, it is crucial to distinguish those aspects which must be regulated by the profession itself.

## The social image and economic status of teachers today

The analysis of social image and economic status is essential to understanding the challenges currently facing the teaching profession. There are important changes taking place in the condition of teachers, even if certain traditional divisions are being maintained: functionary/contractual labor, primary teachers/secondary teachers, etc. This reinforces the idea that there is an enormous difference from one country to another, and that it is difficult to speak globally about the situation of teachers (OECD 1994.) However, it is equally undeniable that the problems encountered by teachers within the European space are similar. In the thematic dossier about teachers presented in *Les chiffres clés de l'éducation dans l'Union Européenne*, (Key figures for education in the European Union) we can read the following reflection: "In conclusion, the different visions given to the same object--the teaching profession--have again revealed the diversity of situations in the European Union. Furthermore, this approach has made it possible to establish the fact that many of the member States are asking the same questions and attempting to resolve the same difficulties." (Commission Européenne 1996, p. 129.)

From the point of view of the statute, it is important to understand that the modifications produced in recent years, at least in certain countries, tend to bring together various situations: in the countries of Southern Europe we see the emergence of laws for placing wage controls on teachers which, without casting doubt on their status as functionaries, introduce distinctions and specificities between teachers and other categories of workers; in the European nations as a whole, there is a tendency in the direction of reinforcing ties with local communities, which is often translated into a greater social participation in the wage control of teachers; perspectives of school autonomy bring about laws which give them more meaningful power for controlling the recruitment and the career paths of teachers. These few examples are attempting to establish the existence of problems--and sometimes solutions--which are identical in all of the countries within the European Union.

Another question deals with the traditional debate between unity and differentiation within the teaching force. The union movement, after having been strongly marked by this division, has leaned towards the perspective of equality of wages for all teachers. *A contrario*, certain associations have worked in the direction of deepening distinctions in order to assure the maintenance of a series of prerogatives and privileges. This type of difference still remains marked, especially between primary teachers (a single teacher is in charge of the class, and relationships with children constitute an essential element in his or her professional identity,) and secondary school teachers (one teacher for each academic discipline, relations with a certain type of disciplinary knowledge constitute an essential element of his or her professional identity.) Nevertheless, these divisions are tending to disappear--a process which is visible in the leveling of salaries "so that in 1965 an important difference between the remuneration of a primary school teacher and a secondary school teacher was visible more or less everywhere, in 1993 this difference is diminishing (Belgium, Spain or Austria) or tending to disappear (Greece, France, Italy, Finland, Sweden and Scotland) (Commission Européenne, 1996, p. 120.) This phenomenon does not only concern questions of salaries, but also touches on a whole variety of other aspects, such as recruitment policies, teacher training, and career progression or participation in the management of educational institution.

One central point in the sociological analysis of the teaching profession lies with the evolution of levels of remuneration. In this respect, the situation is quite distinct from one country to another. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify a general tendency towards a slow growth in purchasing power, even though the relative position of teachers with respect to the overall standard

of living has slowly decreased over the last 30 years. The relative economic stability of teachers hides important differences between countries: for example, German teachers earn almost twice what Greek teachers earn (OECD 1996.) Another relevant aspect deals with the fact that there has been a reduction in the spread between maximum and minimum teachers' wages in recent decades. This means that teaching becomes more attractive in the beginning of the career, but this is detrimental to a challenging and financially remunerative professional progression. This is an option which makes it possible to solve certain problems of recruitment, but contributes to de-skilling and confirms certain tendencies towards de-professionalization.

This point has a direct impact on the social image of teachers. This is a very difficult debate to engage with. On the one hand, without doubt, there is a devaluation of teachers' social image, given that they have lost the prestige derived from the fact that they possessed a type of knowledge which was inaccessible to the majority of the population. The popularization of teaching has contributed, paradoxically, to a loss of social status among teachers who sometimes live in the nostalgic dream of a society where their actions were once more highly valued. On the other hand, several studies have demonstrated that the professional image of teachers remains relatively high. Peter Cunningham, for example, has analyzed the English press between 1950 and 1990, concluding that "despite attacks from the political right and their development in the media, public support for teachers and a benign perception of their role was once again ascendant by 1990" (1992, p. 55.) These contradictory sentiments accentuate the ambiguity and the malaise of teachers who are incapable of replacing traditional images with images which affirm a new vision of the profession. The social representation of the profession remains attached to a past time period, and is not capable of taking into account the challenges currently facing teachers. The identity process is always elaborated in the context of an interplay of powers and counter-powers and between images which carry different projects for the teaching profession.

The key to the renewal of the profession lies, to a large degree, in the possibility of a defined status for a wider autonomy, and for a mark of excellence and rigor. Questions concerning training and associative spaces are essential, but the consolidation of ties with local communities and decision making within the framework of educational institutions have become central elements in the redefinition of teachers' professionalism. It is for this reason that the debates surrounding educational projects are taking on an increasing importance, liberating teachers from administrative control, and stimulating a more intense cooperation at the level of schools. This competition involves, on the one hand, cooperation in professional activities (groups for planning, reflection and evaluation of pedagogical work) and on the other hand, the search for an active presence in the direction of educational institutions. (Nóvoa 1993.)

The five dimensions evoked in the last paragraphs--status, unity/differentiation, salaries, social image, and autonomy/career--make it possible to identify the evolutions taking place in the European countries, although in diverse forms, which are in the process of reconfiguring European education. However, the emergence of a new identity brings about, above all, the possibility of a *social redemption of the profession*. In fact, the ambivalence which cuts across the relations of European societies with the teaching profession is no longer tolerable. On one side, discourses are outbidding each other to define the role and the mission of teachers, on whom reposes a considerable part of the hopes for Europe's future (OECD 1990.) On the other side, we tend to regard teachers with a certain distrust, to devalue their professional activity and to blame them for the current difficulties of the educational systems. The rhetorical inflation thus grows, with a certain social distrust towards teachers, a situation which reinforces divisions and malaises. Today, we have

to put into place courageous policies for redefining the teaching profession, along with an effort to consolidate its prestige in public opinion.

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The contemporary educational debate reaffirms several paradoxes which are currently affecting the teaching profession. There is a crisis of ideas which results from the absence of a social project for education. After the concretization of the enterprises of *mass schooling* (at least in terms of the imposition of compulsory schooling) and the *democratization of schooling* (at least in terms of popularization and the opening of the schools to different publics, we are confronted with the closing of a historical cycle characterized by the strong presence of the State (Prost 1992; Phillips 1995.) The next decades will see the emergence of new educational forms, which will necessitate a redefinition of the teaching profession, notably in its relations with the State. This does not involve arguing for the agenda of privatization, but instead of recognizing that there are major changes which are taking place in the field of education. The founding beliefs of school systems will crumble before our eyes, bringing about an identity crisis for teachers. This is why we have to retrieve a sense of meaning for educational action, which, in turn, implies a reconstruction of the historical project of the teaching profession.

The *raison d'être* of the teaching profession is shaken when we speak, now, of a post-nation-State Europe, or a post-national identity. The process of globalization is added, in the European context, to a project of economic and political integration which has important impacts on the arena of education (Husén, Tuijnman and Halls, 1992; Ryba 1995.) The inevitable question concerns the maintenance of the nation State as a pertinent space for decision-making in educational matters, given the multiplication of levels of power between the local and the global. These tendencies are clearly increased in the context of the European Union, which constitutes the most elaborate legal form for defining a *post-national citizenship*. (Soysal 1994.) The already consecrated principle of a *European citizenship*, institutionally recognized by the Maastricht treaty, inscribes solidarities in numerous public spaces “which breaks apart forever the idea of the primary alliance on which the idea of national territory is based” (Badie 1995, p. 222.)

This is a conflictual reality in which local identities, regional loyalties, national sentiments and European ideologies are expressed. It is an extremely complex debate, which has radical consequences for education, threatening certain fundamental elements of national systems of education. One of the principal ruptures concerns the transformation of teachers' identities from being “agents of the State” and the institutors of a “national citizenship”--which, in a certain sense, makes them less responsible for the functioning of schools, while isolating them from the social milieu--towards an identity constructed within an educational institution which has considerable margins of autonomy, and which is integrated into a local community. This is not a matter of

enclosing schools within the local space, but rather of understanding that the processes of professional development are not, in the first place the State's responsibility, but are, instead, a competence belonging to the educational collective, organized within its work and training center, the educational establishment.

These changes are currently defining themselves in a time frame which is marked by strong contradiction within the teaching force. On the one hand, there is a rhetorical inflation concerning the importance of their mission, which is clearly visible in a series of international texts. But the reality of things is quite different from the reality of discourses, and very often, teachers are asked to deal with contradictory and conflictual processes, for example, resulting from contemporary policies of technologization, privatization, and rationalization of teaching. Nevertheless, in the educational terrain, there are always other options, and these policies are counterbalanced by choices which attempt to value the educational development of teachers (Bell and Day 1991, Calderhead and Gates 1993.) A look at the evolutions taking place in the European Union shows clearly that in this region of the world, perhaps more than elsewhere, teachers are being subjected to a redefinition of their role, and of their identity processes (Nóvoa 1996; Sultana 1994; Vaniscotte 1996.) A number of documents even talk about the "new" European teacher in order to emphasize the moment of transformation which we are facing. We are often faced with rhetorical affirmations which the realities of teachers' work negates. However, it is in this interplay of powers and counter-powers, of conflictual tensions and contradictory projects that the future of the teaching profession will play itself out. The future is necessarily open. It is useless to attempt to guess what forces and which interests will succeed in imposing themselves. However, whatever happens will always represent a provisional equilibrium, because there is never an end to the history of teaching.