



## Teaching Practices between Subjectivity and Pedagogical Regulations: Cross-Reference

Sara Nacir<sup>1\*</sup>, Mustapha Tijjini<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Languages, Cultures and Communication Laboratory, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences, Mohammed First University, Oujda, Morocco

### \*Corresponding Author

Sara Nacir

Languages, Cultures and  
Communication Laboratory, Faculty  
of Letters and Human Sciences,  
Mohammed First University, Oujda,  
Morocco

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**Abstract:** University pedagogy is an emerging discipline, continually producing debates and research concerned with quality in higher education. The university teacher plays a central role in the transmission of knowledge and the development of students disciplinary and transversal skills. What about his training in pedagogy? This article is a reflection on this problem related to the act of teaching at the university, It summarises the importance of university pedagogical training for future university teachers and teachers in practice in order to ensure quality teaching that meets national and global requirements and the current and future needs of society.

**Keywords:** University pedagogy, teacher training, professionalization, university teachers, pedagogical practices.

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## INTRODUCTION

The international trend emerging in university education is the professionalization of teachers, who, until now, practice in a personal way, according to their specialty, recognized as experts in their field, having published. This trend probably follows the decline in the skills of university teachers in many countries, a decline in turn caused by the decline in the level of university learning.

Faced with this observation, it seems necessary to establish rules, a pedagogy, a program, because confidence in the honest knowledge of excellence of university teachers decreases from year to year. Furthermore, it seems acceptable to postulate a pedagogical system favorable to student learning, even if the latter are now supposed to be autonomous and capable of self-managing their training.

The presupposition of this transfer is the idea that the profession of university teacher is

learned. In addition to the high-level knowledge of the latter, he must communicate clearly, adopt a pedagogy favorable to the structured understanding of the students and effectively ensure the modules of certain training courses, professionalizing in particular. Indeed, future professionals coming out of university must have a range of skills capable of introducing them easily into the world of work.

Such is the case for the major business and engineering schools in many countries... Why shouldn't universities do the same? The quality, content and form of educational transmission should correspond to specifications, promoting the best possible training for students. We note that the level of the latter has dropped dramatically: this is why we are looking for remediation.

In addition, university courses are welcoming more and more students: the institution has grown in size. There are no longer intellectual elites who gain access, but everyone and we know how little the baccalaureate is worth, the only

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element of access to the Faculty. It would then be necessary to institute a university entrance examination. In fact, the baccalaureate is distributed too generously and class repetitions in school education are left to the judgment of parents and students, which was not the case in the past. We therefore find ourselves with a large number of baccalaureate students who are not able to be autonomous at the University, many registrants drop out in the first year. These should be put in condition to know in advance if they have the prerequisites to enter the University or not. Otherwise,

Henceforth, the need for an evaluation and professional training of university teachers is now essential, not only on the basis of their intrinsic value as researchers and specialists (prestige logic), but also according to their capacity to transmit (pedagogy) and to follow a program restoring essential basic knowledge for their subject (logic of teaching excellence).

#### **EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AND EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING**

The ICED (International Consortium for Educational Development) founded in 1993 and the Dearing report of 1993 point to the relationship between subjective excellence and pedagogical excellence at the university. In France, this body is represented by the CNE (National Evaluation Committee) chaired by Laurent Schwartz, mathematician, Fields medalist. Higher education institutions are now concerned about their prestige, reputation and attractiveness for students, as well as the reliability of the academic titles issued, judged by employers. The purpose is to promote the comparison of education systems and to guarantee the recognition of diplomas.

Concretely, this is done through reports to see the improvement in teaching and student success. The national agency AERES (Agency for the evaluation of research and higher education) in France is in charge of these evaluations in 2007. These questions of quality assurance penetrate the Universities which operate a benchmarking between Institutes and self-evaluate as much as they are evaluated from the outside, at the national and international level.

#### **INTERNATIONAL RANKINGS: BETWEEN EXCELLENCE AND PRESTIGE**

Universities also find themselves in competition with schools that have an excellent reputation. For example, in France, this is the case of the Parisian Grandes Ecoles, whose graduates are expected to leave by the best hiring companies. Or again, studying political science at the University has

no comparison with the School of Political Science and the ENA... The prestige of these Institutes is indisputable and incomparable. Similarly, Polytechnique or the School of Mines or Arts and Crafts, are of a level immensely superior to university engineering schools...

In Italy, Politecnico, in Milan, is the ultimate in engineering, as La Sapienza is for other courses. Their prestige is a guarantee of their excellence, which commits them. It is a pride to teach and study in these schools. The same goes for Harvard, Stanford and MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in the United States: who doesn't know them? To enter, the course of the student is studied with a magnifying glass. There are many suitors but few are the lucky ones.

Universities are also judged in relation to Nobel Prize winners and Fields medalists: this remains in the domain of the prestige of certain brilliant elements, but says nothing about the superiority of the education provided by this or that university. There is a citizen demand for more factual benchmarks, through a multidimensional classification. Europe has collected the data communicated by the Universities on their teaching, but the fact is that an evaluation carried out from the inside, by the person concerned, is often not objective.

A comparative approach from the outside should be adopted, based on teaching, efficiency (rationalization of resources, etc.) and effectiveness (improvement in teaching and student success, etc.). The value of education is made up of three factors: 1) application of internal systems to assess the quality of education, 2) design of appropriate and comprehensive training programs; 3) level of teachers and students.

The evaluation of university teaching is a primary factor in improving individual practices on three levels: the establishment, training and individuals. Initiatives for the improvement of teaching consist of awarding bonuses or other rewards and recognition to the most effective and acclaimed teachers, who obtain the best results in terms of the success of their students. For those who feel the need, ongoing training in university teaching pedagogy should be available. Monitoring should take place periodically, of course, to ensure the quality of the teaching offered to students.

Admittedly, the oldest and most experienced teachers (who have prestige) would take a dim view of such control, but it must be noted that there are many novice teachers who have no experience and must be monitored, coached. It could

be considered not to control teachers established since remote times, whose results are the best in terms of student success, which testifies in their favor.

The OECD published a guide in 2012 entitled: *Fostering quality in higher education: Policies and practices*. Its purpose is to give suggestions to university presidents and academic leaders with regard to improving teaching practices. It is based on five necessary considerations: 1) sensitizing different stakeholders; 2) provide professional training for teachers; 3) emphasize the commitment expected from students; 4) changing leadership style; 5) promote initiatives relating to quality, innovation and evaluation.

The teaching profession is in the process of being devalued: it is to regain the place it held during the 20th century and again during a good part of the 21st century, that it is necessary to restore the credibility and the prestige of university teachers, by creating the conditions of their value, of their respectability. Respect is not imposed, it is earned.

The Ministry of National Education in France, for example, follows the conclusions of the AERES (Agency for the evaluation of research and higher education, created in 2007), which has as expertise the evaluations of Universities and the report with the Ministry. The latter distributes less resource allocation to lower-rated institutions. The evaluation is carried out every five years and concerns all: management, teachers, establishments, training, performance.

These assessments [1] have an incentive impact and induce the evolution of actors towards the development of strategies to comply with standards (Musselin *et al.*, 2012). European standards have been adopted. "AERES experts are attentive to links with local research and immediate economic needs, to the relevance of training in terms of numbers, success rates and further studies; they also examine the existing forms of follow-up (improvement advice, evaluation by students, integration) and generally favor the evaluation of results and neglect that of objectives and activities. Almost nothing is said about the composition of the teaching teams and the organization of the courses» [2].

The AERES has been criticized for these shortcomings; it then modified its control principles.

### UNIVERSITY PEDAGOGY

The notion of university pedagogy is recent but widespread everywhere, under the impetus of articles, books, reviews and the international congress of UNESCO in Paris in 1998 [3]. The field of university pedagogy has expanded and has been the subject of numerous publications: *Review of Higher Education*, *Studies in Higher Education*, *International Journal for Academic Development*, *Teaching in Higher Education*, *Journal of Higher Education*, *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, etc.

In France Lebrun is the author who illustrates the growing insistence on not dissociating teaching and learning, on combining pedagogy and technology and on widening the reflection still further to the overall construction of the training system. (Technologies for teaching and learning (Lebrun, 1999), Theories and teaching methods for teaching and learning (Lebrun, 2002), eLearning for teaching and learning. Combining pedagogy and technology (Lebrun, 2005), Building a training device. Book for teachers, trainers and scenario designers (Lebrun, Smidts & Bricoult, 2011).

Other research has focused more specifically on the interactions between teachers and students, in the training process itself. English-speaking authors (Säljö, 1979; Entwistle & Ramsden, 1983; Ramsden, 1988; Entwistle, 1989; Prosser & Trigwell, 1999) created a movement around teaching and learning: they were able to identify the teaching styles of university teachers and the learning styles of their students. They also studied the degree of congruence between these first and second styles, as well as their impact on academic performance. This movement has inspired numerous European studies (Zuniga, 1989; Wolfs, 1991; Noël, 1991; Noël, Romainville & Wolfs, 1995; Rege Colet & Romainville, 2006).

Student success (academic achievement) [4] is a first-rate criterion that has been retained to judge good university pedagogy [5], both in Europe and the United States.

<sup>3</sup> <https://journals.openedition.org/rfp/2168,6/6/22>

<sup>4</sup>DE KETELE, JM, "Factors of success at university", *Christian Humanities*, vol. 26, no. 4, p. 294-306

<sup>5</sup>DONNAY, J. & ROMAINVILLE M. (1996). *Teaching at university, a profession that can be learned?* Brussels, De Boeck Ed.

<sup>1</sup>BEDIN, V., *Evaluation at the university. Assess or advise?* Rennes, Rennes University Press, 2009

<sup>2</sup> <http://vigil-et-analyses.ens-lyon.fr/DA-Veille/93-juin-2014.pdf>, 6/6/22

In France in October 2017, a platform (FUN-MOOC) was made available to university teachers for training ("Training to teach in higher education") [6]. Teachers are encouraged to interact with students to ensure they are listening and have understood; this technique is called CRT or Classroom Feedback Technique.

*"We can summarize the philosophy of Thomas Angelo and Patricia Cross, the authors of the book which popularized the concept in 1988 (2nd edition in 1993), by the formula "Teaching without learning is just talking". To ensure that there is good student learning in a course, there needs to be some interaction with them. Because we know that it's not enough to see "that they seem to be listening" or to ask them "did you understand?" [7].*

In a research "Entering higher education professions" (Étienne and Annot, 2014) [8] integrated into the program "Universitarization and professionalization – Issues and tensions in the professions of human interaction", it has been observed that novice university teachers share concerns which are those of secondary school teachers: how to teach a heterogeneous public? How to facilitate the acquisition of scholarly knowledge for young people who are culturally and socially distant from the requirements of the institution?

Indeed, university teachers weave the fabric of their program themselves:

"Thus, unlike the primary or secondary school teacher who has a sufficiently detailed prescribed curriculum, accompanied by educational documents that concretize it, the university teacher is led, somehow, to conceive the purpose of the training to be provided, by explaining what is implicit in the brief program made available to him, possibly by

formulating skills and objectives, recommending the appropriate activities and teaching aids and providing for evaluation tools" (Roegiers, 2012, p. 30) [9].

It is an appreciable freedom, but also a great responsibility. The activity of these teachers is articulated between research and administration. At the university, it is necessary to bet on the acquisition of autonomy on the part of the students. The teachers wonder about their role and about the most suitable method, reconciling the transmission of knowledge and the autonomy of the students. In addition, the personalization and diversity of the university courses offered to students pose a problem, during teaching, which is uniform in the face of plurality.

The fact of wanting to lead university students towards autonomy presupposes support more than instruction. As such, in France, the pedagogy of teachers is special and was recently entrusted to the Higher schools of teaching and education (ESPE) while university pedagogy centers already exist or are being set up in certain universities [10].

*"One of the fundamental differences between the old tutoring policy and the more recent "Licence Plan" policy is the role assigned to teacher-researchers. In fact, academics have been directly called upon to perform tutoring functions, which was not the case in the 1990s (even if, in fact, members of the university community who are not teachers-researchers involved in the "License Plan": students, administrative staff, secondary school teachers)" [11].*

University teachers have inherited their own training which they tend to reproduce. But the situation has changed, because massification, the arrival at university of a heterogeneous population - in terms of cultural preparation, social profile and level- exposes them to a dilemma and they have too few tools to promote university success (Perret, 2003). Support practices indirectly reveal the crisis of higher education in France, against a background of failure and discredit at the international level (PISA ranking).

A new generation of university students is more akin to holders of the baccalaureate who prolong their studies, in the absence of a job or a project. How to teach a heterogeneous audience? How to facilitate the acquisition of scholarly

<sup>6</sup> <https://pedagogieuniversitaire.wordpress.com/6/6/22>

<sup>7</sup>Same

<sup>8</sup> Annot, E. (2014). Afterword. In Lameul, G. and Loisy, C. (eds.). University pedagogy in the digital age, questioning and clarification of research (p. 221-226). Brussels: De Boeck.

Annot, E. (2013, August). What are the elements of comparison between the methodologies implemented for teacher support training in the school environment and the training of higher education teachers? Communication during the AREF international congress. Online: <<http://www.aref2013.univ-montp2.fr/cod6/?q=content/2586-quels-sont-les-%C3%A9l%C3%A9ments-de-comparaison-entre-les-m%C3%A9thodologies-implement%C3%A9es-pour-le-soutien-à-l'enseignement-supérieur>>, 6/10/21

In <https://journals.openedition.org/rechercheformatio/2298>, 6/6/22

<sup>9</sup> <https://journals.openedition.org/rechercheformatio/2298>, 6/6/22

<sup>10</sup>Same

<sup>11</sup>Same

knowledge for young people who are culturally and socially distant from the requirements of the institution?

### FROM SUPPORT TO HIGHER EDUCATION PEDAGOGY

We observe a paradox: *openness to as many people as possible with a succession of support systems for success in the name of equal opportunities, and an unequal system* (Bodin and Millet, 2011) [12]. The idea of training higher education teachers in pedagogy is very recent and presupposes consideration of the way in which their professional identity is built around their discipline. In effect: "The knowledge to be taught draws from the reference discipline which is the main identity support, whereas the knowledge to teach proceeds from a world of the implicit which is acquired both through teaching responsibilities and activities but also at the very heart of the disciplines" (Rege Colet and Berthiaume, 2009, p. 138).

University teachers take initiatives to adapt to their audiences. However, the way in which they approach the questions of teaching and student learning remains little studied. Bru's (2001) research on undergraduate studies points to an "absence of sufficient and detailed knowledge" regarding teaching practices, thus making "difficult work whose importance no one can deny". Adangnikou (2008) mentions the fact that, in the end, there is very little research that really bears on teaching practices at university.

Pedagogical practices are varied but poorly adapted to the heterogeneity and expectations of the public and society. Traditional lectures are experienced by students as monologue lectures. Bourdieu believed that these monologues lacking in pedagogy favored the perpetuation of social hierarchies. This pedagogical model is the main element explaining the flight of undergraduate students, who find it difficult to understand the instructions that are not made explicit during the first weeks. The cultural diversity of university students requires adapted teaching methods (Peretti, 2002). To integrate these new heterogeneous audiences, the university needs to equip itself with innovative teaching methods.

Moreover, even there is heterogeneity of the university teachers of the new generation who are not "mature" and autonomous like those of the previous generation who came from a more strict and solid university preparation. The

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<https://journals.openedition.org/rechercheformatio n/2298>, 6/6/22

democratization of access to the university, without selection criteria at the entrance, has produced a drop in the general level, to which the Institution has had to adapt, not without sacrificing the quality of future teacher-researchers...

Let us add to this, that the lack of valorization of the function of the teacher, the lack of respect of the students, often demotivated, weighs the balance of the choice towards research, on the part of the teacher-researcher, because it is a more rewarding function, which gives satisfactory fruits. Few universities have support structures for university pedagogy:

"Adagnikou and Paul (2008) find that teaching support centers are present in just over 20% of French universities. Among these centers are the "Structures Universitaires de Pédagogie" (SUP). These are intended in particular to "promote educational innovations", to "ensure the initial and continuing training of higher education teachers", or even to "promote the enhancement of the teaching function and educational investment" [13].

In Belgium, a "*Pedagogical enhancement file*" composed of reflections and suggestions for teaching practices by university teachers themselves, which seems useful to novice teachers.

### PERSPECTIVES, RECOMMENDATIONS

Faced with failure in the first year of university (more than one in two students), teaching practices are called into question, although the latter denounce the shortcomings of students over the past two decades: "*Lack of methods of intellectual work, lack of work and organization, insufficient mastery of written, oral and spelling* (Boyer and Coridian, 2001)» [14]. The failure of the students is explained by their unpreparedness, which is not false, the secondary school having lowered its level requirements.

The fact remains that some teacher practices could be improved and made more accessible to the majority. If the latter is less mature, less cultivated and more heterogeneous than in the past, it is necessary to adapt to it by more motivating and relevant methods, without lowering the level, which, nevertheless, is in the process of arrive, alas,

13 Adangnikou, N., & Paul, JJ (2008). Training in university pedagogy in France, an offer that is still too limited. 25th Congress of the International Association of University Pedagogy. May 19-22, Montpellier.

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<https://journals.openedition.org/questionsvives/1178>, 7/6/22

by discrediting the university institution itself, at least, in France.

The way students study is influenced by the way teachers teach: in other words, teaching practices influence student organization and motivation. It is therefore necessary to try to act on these practices, by improving the pedagogical training of teachers. French and foreign research on this subject is still thin. It can be said that students follow lectures less well.

Research on university pedagogy is in full expansion, to compensate for the massive failures of the first university years. "Such work will make it possible to update certain avenues of reflection concerning the pedagogical training of teachers » [15].

Since the start of the 2013 academic year, the Higher Institute of Teaching and Education (INSPE) has been a component of a university which implements the training of primary and secondary teachers, but not university teachers, who must justify a busy career before taking on this position. In France:

*"The position of university professor often comes as the sanction of a particularly well-stocked career as a teacher or researcher. It's sort of the icing on the cake that rewards years of investment. It is therefore not a job that one aims for immediately after obtaining one's doctorate (...). Becoming a teacher-researcher must above all be a medium- or even long-term objective. Doctoral students must first enter the labor market, which is not easy for them» [16].*

## CONCLUSION

A teacher-researcher is considered to be a specialist in a very specific field, who rubs shoulders with students while building and implementing research projects. He must provide lectures, supervise tutorials, research, follow and advise students, participate in exams, publish articles and develop teaching programs... The whole thing is not simple...

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<sup>15</sup>Same

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<sup>16</sup>

<http://etudiant.actualite.fr/etudiant/metiers/fiche-metier/professeur-d-universite.html>, 7/6/22