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A historical case study


Suggested key terms: teacher education, history of sciences of education, history of social sciences, disciplinary field, disciplinarisation, professional education,
Abstract

The paper analyses the articulation between the evolution of teacher education and the academic discipline “sciences of education” in Geneva from 1872 to 1933. It illustrates the more general thesis that profession and discipline are at the same time indissociable and irreconcilable. Three periods and modes of the articulation are distinguished: - exteriority, with respect to teacher education, of the discipline, aimed at guiding pedagogical action; - parallel institutional evolutions of teacher education and discipline, in the trail of “éducation nouvelle”; - division of theoretical and practical teacher education in two institutions – one disciplinary, the other professional. These periods show that the contradiction between profession and discipline takes different forms in history. At the same time, the early universitarisation of teacher education and the continuous existence of an University Institute in Geneva – rather an exception in Europe – show the deep interrelationship between both.
Our communication\(^1\) deals with the analysis of the articulation between the evolution of teacher education and the academic discipline called “sciences of education” in French speaking countries. Our main question could be formulated as follows: does the need to educate professionals of education favour the development of an academic discipline which has as its object the analysis of educational phenomena; or, the other way round: does the existence of such a discipline transform the nature of the education for primary teachers?

We deal with this question of the relationship between profession and discipline (Stichweh, 1987) through a historical analysis of the Genevan situation between 1870 and 1933:\(^2\):

- 1870: first claims of the teacher unions in favour of the institutionalisation of teacher education at university level;
- 1933: foundation, in Geneva, of the “Etudes pédagogiques”, a teacher education for primary teacher which is partially given at university, 60 years after the first claims.

We would like to describe and understand at the same time the strong and very ancient pressures in favour of universitarisation of teacher education and the powerful and so persistent resistance to this movement.\(^3\)

Our choice for the Genevan example has several reasons. We wanted to work on precise empirical data, which shows the discourses of the different actors involved in function of their precise context of enunciation. A monographic approach allows also to collect different points of view, to refer to different domains of knowledge, to take into account several institutional levels and to study various sources on the question.

Geneva, more particularly, has been chosen for two reasons which may appear to be contradictory:

a) At a first glance, Geneva is a typical example of a much large movement in which many occidental states redefine teacher education and establishing, more or less at the same time, chairs in pedagogy at the university. This is for instance the case in Germany (Oelkers & Neumann, 1984), France (Gautherin, 1991), Austria (Brezinka, 1995), United States (Cruikshank, 1998), Finland (Kasanen, 1990) but also in Switzerland (Berne, Fribourg, Lausanne; see for instance Oser, 1991).

b) A the same time, Geneva is very atypical. First, it is perhaps the only republic in Europe which has not institutionalised a specific education for teachers in the 19\(^{th}\) century, in creating an “École normale” or “ehrerseminar”. Second, because it is precisely in Genev that the first “Institut DES sciences de l’éducation” (Institute for sciences of education) is founded (1912) whose reputation is immediate and whose longevity is unique in Europe (Claparède, 1912; Bovet, 1932). Third because in the thirties, it is the first canton in Switzerland and one of the only republics in Europe which realizes the project, largely debatted at that time, to organise

\(^1\) This work is part of a more general project being conducted in the department of sciences of education of the University of Geneva and financed y the Fonds national de recherche scientifique, grant 1114-057097-99 “Emergence et premiers développements des sciences de l’éducation comme champ disciplinaire. L’exemple de Genève 1890-1948” headed by R. Hofstetter and B. Schneuwly with the collaboration of Velérie Kiciman, Valérie Lussi, Christian Muller and Martina Spaeni. A more detailed version of this text is given in Hofstetter and Schneuwly, in press a.


\(^3\) See, for the theoretical background of our approach, Hofstetter & Schneuwly, in press b; on the question of teacher education and discipline, see Novoa, 1998 and Bourdoncle, 1993; for a comparative view on sciences of education in France and Germany, with respect also to teacher education, Schriewer and Keiner, 1993; more generally, on the history of sciences of education, Drewek & Lüth, 1998.
teacher education on university level, in a very strong relationship to the becoming discipline and in the trail of the movement of “école active” or “Reformpädagogik” (Hameline, Helmchen & Oelkers, 1995).

Our work is based on the following thesis (see, for a similar approach, Tenorth, 1994) which has still to be proven in much more detail through other historical monographs: The evolutions of profession and discipline can not be split up; the need to educate professionals of education is the origin of the emergence of the academic discipline and this latter transforms the nature of teacher education. At the same time, nonetheless, the requirements of the one (the professional education of teachers) seem to be contradictory, and even incompatible with the requirements of the other (the constitution and development of a scientific, academic discipline).

At least, this seems to be the case in the Genevan history we want to describe to you very schematically.

**Periods of universitarisation of teacher education and development of the discipline in Geneva**

1st period (1872-1898)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional education</th>
<th>Pedagogical section in secondary school: general culture + professional courses (“cours normaux) and pedagogy (baccalauréat)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td>Course given by the professor of pedagogy in secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>1 chair in pedagogy (later called: science of education)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- guiding function of pedagogy for pedagogical action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- pedagogy as moral science</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion:** *Profession and discipline are propelled by the same expectations, but they are developing in distance from each other*

2nd period (1898-1927)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional education</th>
<th>Pedagogical section in secondary school: general culture + professional courses and pedagogy (baccalauréat)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td>Training courses in schools of application (1 year) + professional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- special courses (syntax, analytical reading, pedagogy, child psychology)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- training periods in the school of application of the ISE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discipline
- 2 chairs of pedagogy: general pedagogy and experimental pedagogy; psychology in research and teaching is practised as “applied”; lectures in child psychology
- Foundation of the “Institut des sciences de l’éducation”:
  - private, outside university
  - outside teacher education
  - many matters involved (medicine, law, economy, psychoanalysis, anthropology, …)
  - 4 functions: teaching, research, information on educational matters, propaganda for new education

Conclusion: Profession and discipline have a parallel development in the trail of new education; strong influence on the level of contents; many collaborations; almost none official institutional articulation
### 3rd period (1927-1933 …)

| Professional education | - *Etudes pédagogiques* (post-secondary): training period (4 months + professional courses (1 year)  
| | - *Etudes pédagogiques*: training period, professional courses, didactics, management of a class, … (1 year)  
| | - (empirical) report  
| Articulation | - *Institute of sciences of education*: theoretical studies at university (psychology, sociology, pedagogy, didactics, child protection, psychotechnics, professional orientation, experimental pedagogy, French language, psychology and moral education, education for children with special needs) (1 year)  
| Discipline | - Integration of the *Institute of sciences of education* into university; more material and personal resources  
| | - Structural changes:  
| | • reorganisation of curricula following university rules;  
| | • distinction between academic and non academic employees;  
| | • progressive structuring in two poles: psychology for fundamental research – pedagogy for applied research  
| | • abandoning of the propaganda for new education  

Conclusion: *Profession and discipline obtain an official institutional articulation; this results in new separations: theoretical and practical education; fundamental and applied research.*

### Profession and discipline: an indissociable and nonetheless irreconcilable pair

The data analysed confirm the thesis of a deep interweaving between the evolution of teacher education and of the discipline “sciences of education” in Geneva during the period from 1870 to 1933. This interweaving appears first of all in the simple chronological parallelism between the two “institutions” in that each major change of the one is accompanied by important transformations of the other. Let’s take the three periods we have distinguished:

1. The first institutionalisation of teacher education leads to the creation of a chair of pedagogy which is assumed to guide the education in elaborating a coherent pedagogical doctrine.
2. An education which articulates theory and practice under the heading of new education in the trail of a new psychological conception of the child is developing in parallel to the foundation of the first Institute for sciences of education which combines scientific research and teaching, including places for application.
3. This institute becomes part of the university, devoted to sciences of education as a discipline at the very moment when it takes charge of the theoretical education of teachers; this education is now institutionalised on post-secondary level.

The interweaving of the two movements goes far beyond a simple chronological parallelism and implies a real influence of one on the other, from the point of view of contents as well as forms. Let’s take again the three periods:

1. Exactly as in other cantons of Switzerland (Vaud, Berne, Zurich, Fribourg) and in other countries (like France, United States, Austria), the institutionalisation of teacher education in...
Geneva creates the need of a discipline of reference which takes first the academic form of a moral science which has in charge to capitalise and to co-ordinate practical experiences and to elaborate pedagogical theories which are general, can be transmitted and function as doctrines which guide the pedagogical action. Pedagogy, while assuming successfully this role of directing, remains nonetheless quite distant and exterior to the pedagogical actions and debates, rests in the “ivory tower” so often depicted, and leaves the way open to other developments of the discipline.

2. The numerous forms which the elaboration of a discipline of reference has taken in the beginning of the century - following the periods and the countries it is called pedology, new pedagogy, experimental pedagogy or didactics, sciences of education – constitute a very important element in rethinking teacher education in the trail of “pédagogie active” or “Reformpädagogik” and as a response to the claims of teacher trade unions in favour of a higher level of education and social status. Consequently, Geneva reorganises its teacher education in giving more importance to “stages” (training periods in schools) to better articulate theory and practice, and in integrating theoretical courses which were influenced by the new discipline of reference which was on the way to be constituted. The latter has been institutionalised in taking the form of a private institute, independent from university; without taking an official role in teacher education, the new Institute of sciences of education constitutes a central pole of reference for all important pedagogical questions. And the teachers and students are the first interlocutors for the researchers of the Institute, helping them in making research and in propagating their pedagogical and scientific theses.

3. In Geneva, the reinforcement of the discipline takes place in 1929 when sciences of education is integrating university as an institute which combines different research domains: psychology of the child, epistemology, experimental pedagogy, didactics, history of education, and so on. This stabilisation allows a partial universitarisation of teacher education which is now based on these contents, part of the theoretical luggage of each primary teacher of Geneva. The interdependent evolution of discipline and profession, which seems to be quite unique in Switzerland and Europe at this time, takes nonetheless the paradoxical form of an institutional separation between theoretical and practical education of the teachers, assumed by separate institutions, and of a separation, inside the discipline “sciences of education” between psychology which is oriented towards fundamental research, and experimental pedagogy, devoted to applied research.

The profound interweaving of forms and contents in the two evolutions should nevertheless not hide the fact that both, profession and discipline, have a real autonomy. The logic of each evolution, though being interdependent, is based on forces and pressures on each which gives them a dynamic which goes far beyond their interrelations, and is even in a certain sense contradictory.

The teacher education is strongly pushed forward by two actors acting in the socio-professional domain; both are eager to assure the efficiency of their pedagogical action and of the educational systems.

- The teachers act for an enlargement of their initial education and for a higher qualification, on university level if possible, this leading to a higher social consideration; they act also in favour of an education which is closely related to practice, in order to instrument the future practician and to participate as partner in the professional education of the students. A the end of the twenties nonetheless, in a new political and socio-economic context, the intellectual ambitions seem to wake in favour of a much more pragmatic conception of teacher education.

- The administration wants to be sure that teacher have a sufficient qualification; after a large general cultural education, the professional education has to develop high competencies and at the same time lead to a good knowledge of the laws and curriculum which govern the system and
which have been edited by the administration itself; it has also to be inspired by the pedagogical philosophy which bases the whole system, be it traditional or reformist. The administration has also to look at an economic management and to guarantee an ideological control on its employees. Insofar, it has an ambivalent relationship concerning the intellectual and pedagogical autonomy of the teachers; this ambivalence is perhaps more clearly apparent in other countries and cantons, where it refrains the process of professionalisation and of enlargement of the programs of teacher education.

On the side of the discipline, its philosophical origin, the theorisation of the notion of “moral science” the integration of a discourse including aspects of “scientism” are some of the elements which lead to the elaboration of the autonomous discipline “pedagogy” at the end of the century. At the very same time, one sees the development of social sciences, more particularly psychology, under the influence of positivism and evolutionism which are the base of the conceptions of child development as “natural”; these facts and others favour the initiatives to build a new discipline of reference for the professions of education, a “new pedagogy” as Claparède for instance call it. All this leads quite often to a relationship of “overhang” of the researchers to the practicians and to a risk to reduce practice to a domain of application of scientific “truth”.

The relative autonomy of each evolution is in fact based on the different, sometimes irreconcilable requirements of discipline and profession as social practices.
- We have just seen that the discipline is possible only when it is articulated to social demands, among them the ones of the profession, demands which are conditioned by social, political, economical and professional stakes. These demands are of course regulated by principles of action et need pragmatical responses corresponding to the requirements and aims of the educational action; in other words, they need the axiological, moral and prescriptive dimensions of pedagogy.
- However, these principles of action contradict partially some essential principles which regulate the social practice of a scientific discipline which presupposes a momentary postponement of action, the disinterested construction of knowledge, the rupture with common sense, the judgement based on facts instead of a value judgement.

The interweaving of the two evolutions appears thus as incompatibility between specific, contradictory requirements. This incompatibility manifests itself in different forms of relationship between professional education and discipline at different moments of history:
- exteriority of the discipline aimed at guiding pedagogical action in a first moment;
- parallel institutional evolutions of education and discipline, in the trail of new education, in a second time;
- division of theoretical and practical education in two institutions – one disciplinary, the other professional – in a third time.

Unity and contradiction seem indeed to be the motor which propels the discipline “sciences of education”.

Conclusion

In Geneva, contrary to most other cantons in Switzerland and most European countries, since the thirties, the discipline “sciences of education” is quite stable with its own institute at the university,
and the teacher education is installed on a high level one could call “semi-universitary”. This particular case is worth to be reflected on, and we would like to conclude in doing this.

Geneva is not particular at the end of the last and the beginning of the new century when many initiatives tended to universitarise primary teacher education at many places in the world and to develop pedagogy as academic discipline. These initiatives were strongly supported by the teacher trade unions in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and so on and were realised to a certain degree for instance in Hambourg with Meumann and Stern, in Vienna with Bühler, in Zurich, also with Meumann (see for more details Dudek, 1990; Schubeius, 1990; Depaepe, 1993; and the contemporary, already well documented study by Dottrens, 1929). A particular social and ideological configuration is at the origin of this movement:

- there is an strong movement of pedagogical reform – in articulation with the idea of “Einheitsschule, école unique” and supported by teachers – this reform is at least partially realised at several places;
- there is a scientific, theoretical background which is proposed by the new social sciences, namely psychology, which support this movement, inspire it, lend it its concepts and discourses;
- an important development towards higher qualification in teacher education takes place, which the teacher unions, as well as the administrations and the pedagogues and scientists favour.

These three factors back up each other and take form in many institutions and actions of reform. Quite often, nonetheless, these initiatives remain ephemeral: the discipline is not institutionalised on a long-term basis; teacher education stagnates, and even regresses. Geneva, because it is to a certain sense exceptional, shows that an other issue would have been possible, if certain conditions would have been realised: the institutional existence of a discipline; effective reforms of the school system (new pathways through the system, education for children with special needs, changing of programs, tendency versus a unified school and unified teacher education); a very high level of teacher education and a clear separation, in this education, between first a general education, and then, on post-secondary, even academic level, a professional education.

Why did attempts fail, even where the conditions were given? Why did the discipline not develop on a long term basis, in a complex and contradictory interaction with education? We hope that future discussions and historical studies, ours and of other researchers, allow to go further in the questioning and to begin comparative research to understand much better this complex and fundamental problem in education of the relationship between profession and discipline, a problem which is most relevant today in the global process of professionalisation of the teacher profession and of the reconfiguration of social sciences, and among them sciences of education.

References


