

Enhancing guidance through professionalization

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Suggested Citation:

Canzittu, D. & Lothaire, S. (2024). Enhancing guidance through professionalization. *Global Journal of Guidance and Counseling in Schools: Current Perspectives*, 14(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.18844/gjgc.v14i1.9224>

Received from December 02, 2023; revised from January 15, 2024; accepted from March 14, 2024.

Selection and peer review under the responsibility of Assoc Prof. Dr. Nur Demirbas Celik, Alanya Alaadin Keykubat University, Turkey

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Abstract

The paper explores the changing landscape of education and teacher professionalization in Western nations, focusing on French-speaking Belgium. This shift towards a post-bureaucratic paradigm emphasizes local autonomy and managerial ethics, reshaping educators' roles from traditional "masters" or "technicians" to "reflective practitioners" and "learning specialists." This transformation empowers teachers in innovation and prompts reflection on teaching methods, necessitating their involvement in school management, and fostering collaboration among peers and institutions. The study analyses teacher professionalization centers on integrating educational guidance into pedagogical practices. The study details international directives and addresses societal, educational, and organizational challenges, faced by secondary schools in French-speaking Belgium during this transition. Additionally, it examines the historical progression of educational regulations, highlighting the shift from bureaucratic to autonomous models to meet the needs of both educational authorities and school users.

Keywords: Educational guidance; guidance; reflective practitioner; teacher professionalization; school management

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1. Introduction

Over time, the education system has been tightly entwined with a regulatory structure resembling professional bureaucracy, as noted by Mintzberg (1982). This model delineates the state's oversight of education while professionals, particularly teachers, operate within a predetermined set of regulations, a framework eloquently highlighted by Maroy (2008). However, the past four decades have witnessed a noteworthy metamorphosis in the traditional educational setup, notably in French-speaking Belgium and Western nations. These regions have encountered significant societal transformations, compelling a reevaluation of established norms.

The erstwhile professional bureaucratic model, which long governed the educational sphere, is gradually yielding ground to a post-bureaucratic paradigm. This new model shifts the emphasis towards local empowerment, endowing more authority to regional stakeholders. The crux of this decentralization process lies in the infusion of a managerial ethos, an attempt to blend both economic and pedagogical autonomy seamlessly within the precincts of educational institutions. The overarching objective is to equip schools with the prowess to meet the multifaceted demands set forth by educational authorities and stakeholders alike, as expounded by Barroso (2000) and echoed by Tardif & Lessard (2004).

Within this evolving landscape, the revered archetypes of the 'magister' or 'technician' are being eclipsed by the 'reflective practitioner' model, championed by Shön (1983). This transformative model propounds that teachers should transcend the mere replication of pedagogical routines; instead, they should be adept at innovating on the spot and engaging in introspection regarding their teaching methodologies. They assume the role of 'learning specialists', leveraging an array of diverse teaching methodologies to actively involve students in their learning odyssey. This transformative approach mandates their simultaneous involvement in the collective management of schools, fostering collaborative synergies among colleagues, hierarchies, and institutional practices, as iterated by Maroy & Cattonar (2002).

The focal point of this paper resides in a meticulous examination of this ongoing shift in teacher professionalization, viewed through the lens of lifelong guidance goals articulated by, for example, Ananiadou & Claro (2009), UNESCO (2017), and the United Nations (2015). This paradigm shift in professionalism isn't exclusive to educators but echoes among various professional groups, prompted by evolving work organization paradigms (Guichard, 2019; Rahmatollahi & Mohamadi Zenouzagh 2021). Contemporary work environments increasingly demand individuals to exhibit heightened autonomy, creativity, adaptability, and mobility while seamlessly integrating and contributing to workplace evolution (World Economic Forum, 2018; Brannon & Clark 2023). This exploration aims to delve into the societal and educational challenges interwoven with this guidance shift, while also shedding light on its potential evolution within the educational milieu.

1.1. Purpose of study

In this discourse, we aim to elucidate the transition from the bureaucratic to the post-bureaucratic model. Additionally, we intend to deliberate on teacher training, both initial and continuous, in the realm of guidance. About initial teacher training, it becomes evident that guidance doesn't occupy a central position in professionalization. Conversely, official documents illustrate a gradual shift towards a more holistic understanding of guidance for students. However, these official intentions regarding guidance seem subject to fluctuations, partial disappearance, or even redefinition by authorities across various texts and intermittently. Consequently, we encounter what we term "phantom intentions" in this article; intentions that dissolve and transform in alignment with official discourse.

2. Methods and Materials

This study uses the content analysis method, by analyzing existing literature. The analysis will meticulously address the array of stakeholders involved and the intricate organizational fabric of the system. The elucidation of these aspects will draw from comprehensive analyses of the implementation

of an educational approach to guidance witnessed in numerous secondary schools across French-speaking Belgium, as chronicled by Canzittu (2019) and Canzittu & Demeuse (2017).

3. Results

3.1. Post-bureaucratic models and the redefinition of the teaching profession

3.1.1. The historical model of professional bureaucracies

Across numerous European nations, the establishment of national school systems during the 19th and 20th centuries embraced an institutional and organizational framework intertwining bureaucratic aspects associated with the responsibility of the nation-state for education and a professional facet. Bidwell (1965) delineated the school as an organizational entity, attributing to it characteristics akin to organizations as professional bureaucracies (Maroy, 2008).

Consequently, this regulatory system manifested in various forms within different Western societies (Manzi et al., 2022). It argues that, initially, the state shouldered the responsibility, to varying extents, of instituting the education system to cater to the increasing need to socialize younger generations across diverse social strata, over extended and intricate timeframes. The education provision, thus, took shape in centralized or diversified formats, underpinned by progressively standardized norms applicable across all components of the system. This paradigm accompanied a division of educational responsibilities, precisely defining roles and competencies unique to each educational participant. Consequently, the State constructed a hierarchy to monitor adherence to regulations and procedures. This organizational structure, rooted in rule standardization and compliance, justified itself in the pursuit of rationality and the aspiration for universal rules across the nation-state, aiming for equitable treatment and uniform access to education. In this sphere, the bureaucratic essence of the school system encompassed organizational coordination and institutional significance. Consequently, the bureaucratic model encompassed a positive nod toward legal compliance and rationality in its broader context (Maroy, 2008).

Due to the intricate nature of educational responsibilities, these bureaucratic attributes consistently coexisted with significant autonomy for individual teachers in executing their duties, leveraging their professional expertise and knowledge (Maroy, 2008). As highlighted by Barroso (2000) and Cheng et al., (2021), this system thus amalgamated state, bureaucratic, and administrative regulations with professional, corporate, and pedagogical regulations.

3.1.2. Post-bureaucratic models and the teaching profession

In the past few decades, institutional regulation has undergone significant shifts propelled by substantial educational policy enactments. These pivotal legislative moments, such as the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales, and the 1997 Missions Decree in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation (FWB). These encompass amplified school autonomy, the quest for equilibrium between centralization and decentralization, the ascendance of external school evaluations, parental empowerment or relaxation in school selection, a diversified educational landscape, and augmented scrutiny and control over teaching tasks (Barroso, 2000; Maroy, 2008).

Amid post-bureaucratic models, the state's role doesn't diminish; rather, Western governments exhibit sustained interest in education, albeit through evolving mechanisms. The central state isn't relinquishing its educational responsibility; instead, it is distancing itself from the day-to-day educational administration and entrusting mandates to local governing bodies accountable for resource allocation and goal attainment. The state endeavors to fashion policies grounded in broad consensus, incorporating evaluative mechanisms to monitor agreed-upon objectives. While varying nations might not uniformly embrace these changes, a pervasive new form of regulation emerges, necessitating the continual production of a "body of knowledge."

This transformation finds support from major international bodies like the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The state, in this context, doesn't aim to extend

monopolies but rather distances itself from immediate educational management. This leads to a process of decentralization (or deconcentration) of authority to local bodies, resulting in the proliferation of a managerial culture (akin to modern corporations). This culture seeks a blend of flexibility and autonomy alongside compliance with competitiveness and performance standards (Tardif and Lessard, 2004). The model champions autonomy in both economic and pedagogical school management, emphasizing their responsiveness to demands from educational authorities or school users. Simultaneously, it fosters an evaluation culture as described by Thélot (1993), underscored by external and institutional self-evaluations aimed at enhancing teaching practices and outcomes (Maroy, 2008).

Central governments not only redefine their role but also encourage a market-driven logic in educational stewardship. In various nations, the proliferation of a significant private school sector, the liberty of school choice, and the emergence of schools developing distinct projects contribute to the commodification of schools (Power et al., 1998). This market-oriented approach encourages a consumer mindset among users, escalating competition among schools, and shifting selection from a pre-enrollment social sorting process to one occurring during the educational journey. Schools adapt by devising strategies to differentiate themselves and adopting marketing techniques to attract and retain high-performing students. Consequently, schools start to serve specific target audiences, diverging from their traditional public service role. These aspects signal the ascent of a market model despite not translating into complete system privatization (Tardif and Lessard, 2004). This quasi-market model was propagated in Anglo-Saxon nations by certain neoliberal analysts like Chubb and Moe (1990), critiquing the inefficiencies of the bureaucratic education system and advocating for competitive pressures from users to enhance it (Maroy, 2008).

However, it's noteworthy that the paradigm of professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1982) hasn't vanished entirely, and legal regulations persist. Numerous legislative documents are still generated, emphasizing adherence to administrative rules. Thus, the post-bureaucratic model concurrently coexists and clashes with the bureaucratic model. Moreover, educational policies exhibit diversity across European countries despite a semblance of reference paradigms. Some highly decentralized regions tend towards recentralization, while others incline towards greater decentralization. This divergence is rationalized by considering the widespread emergence of an evaluative state hypothesis. To actualize this regulatory model, decentralized states must define core curricular objectives and institute national evaluation systems while upholding, or at the least preserving, supervised school autonomy. Conversely, centralized states with standardized curricula and national certification tests need to encourage school autonomy and introduce mechanisms for closer monitoring post post-external evaluations. Consequently, implemented policies don't conform to a "one-size-fits-all" approach, as educational systems embody historical diversity, and endure multiple tensions, and contradictions (Maroy, 2008). Thus, policies rarely mirror the presented models entirely, owing to the hybrid and composite nature of educational systems, leading to policy hybridization effects.

3.1.3. A redefined teaching profession amidst constrained autonomy

Current endeavors to reshape the teaching profession and the accompanying rhetoric of professionalism, intertwined with shifts in educational system regulations, mark trends that both professionalize and deprofessionalize educators. These paradoxical trends align with the hypothesis of heightened specialization and vertical labor division between teachers and managerial or professional elites, exerting growing influence and control over educators. This shift materializes as an empowerment of an administrative elite, spanning from school heads to central education system administrators, accompanied by the strengthening of an intellectual elite tasked with conceptualizing teachers' work and facilitating their adaptation to the new professional paradigm. Consequently, a more intricate division of labor within the teaching domain emerges. This involves an amplified role for educational science experts from universities and the emergence of new professional segments, such as pedagogical advisors supporting colleagues, whose influence in shaping teaching practices is expanding, often amidst considerable resistance (Bourdoncle, 1993; Maroy and Cattonar, 2002).

These two delineations imply the necessity to align the teaching profession with evolving educational and societal paradigms. The proliferation of schools and the resultant heterogeneous student populations have heightened the complexity of the teaching task. The reflective practitioner model of professionalism (Shön, 1983) supplants the erstwhile valued magister and technician models. This model posits that teachers must not merely replicate pedagogical routines but instead possess the ability to innovate on-site and introspectively. Teachers assume the role of learning specialists, operating autonomously and employing varied teaching methodologies to foster active student involvement in their learning journeys. Concurrently, they engage in school collective management through collaborative work and institutional practices. Notably, except for trade unions, prevalent discourse emphasizes the technical dimension of the profession over its image or social status (Maroy and Cattonar, 2002).

In this scenario, teachers find themselves in a paradoxical situation. The historical assertion of their professional autonomy can conflict with imposed centrally dictated frameworks and the emergence of new professional segments tasked with supervising their work. These new segments demand autonomous implementation of reforms, some of which align with new regulatory models specific to quasi-markets and the state's evaluative aspect.

Moreover, parents gain unprecedented power, enabling them to object officially (via administrative procedures) to decisions made by the educational team regarding their child(ren)'s educational path. Thus, while the discourse and educational system context advocate maintaining and even enhancing classroom autonomy, disciplinary and curricular knowledge remains externally standardized and validated. This operational mode is not exclusive to teachers but is rarely observed beyond the educational realm (Huberman, 1993; Maroy and Cattonar, 2002).

Furthermore, akin to many civil service professions, state/public authorities maintain a pivotal role in institutionalizing the teaching profession. Entry into the profession is contingent on possessing higher-level training, acknowledged or organized by central authorities (Rolka & Scherer, 2024). Consequently, the professional development of educators links to individual autonomy through self-regulation of their work content and critical analysis of professional practices. This autonomy in their work, though not exempt from control by other administrative professional group actors circumscribing their sphere of activity, is deemed a central criterion for professionalization, distancing educators somewhat from the symbolic power of the latter (Maroy and Cattonar, 2002; Tardif and Lessard, 1999).

These facets underscore that while other professional sectors have witnessed a near-continuous transfer of powers from central to local authorities over recent decades, the educational domain's reforms have been more erratic, reflecting a lack of consensus on the positive implications of increased autonomy granted to the teaching profession. Despite the augmented responsibilities entrusted to educators in most European nations, collective autonomy in work regulation remains elusive. However, it might be linked to heightened school autonomy in its cooperative dimension. Yet, this dimension could curtail educators' decision-making regarding their work content and pose a significant obstacle to their pedagogical freedom. The rationality of the evaluating state aligns with professionalization acknowledging teachers' expertise and providing the latitude to practice within the framework defined by new policies and regulatory methods, contributing potentially to educator discomfort (Tardif and Lessard, 2004).

3.3. Teaching professionalism and the educational embrace of guidance

3.3.1. Lifelong guidance as an essential professional skill

Recent scholarly works underscore the necessity for individuals to develop "career adaptability skills, denoting the capacities individuals possess to effectively manage their career trajectories" (Savickas, 2013; Ferrara et al., 2019). This imperative arises from substantial changes in work structures (Bernaud & Lemoine, 2012) and the increasing fragmentation of professional landscapes (Hélaridot, 2005), compelling individuals to autonomously navigate their career paths (Rodrigues et al., 2019).

In all spheres, including the professionalization of educators, careers are influenced by the fluidity characterizing contemporary society (Bauman, 2007). They encompass work, employment, profession, and occupation alongside personal self-expression (Franklin, 2014; Young & Collin, 2000). Essentially, a career evolves from an individual's freedom, their inclination toward self-determination, and their capacity to make decisions aligned with personal values (Briscoe & Hall, 2006).

However, the aptitude to navigate careers in an uncertain environment is not inherent, necessitating preparation and training for workers to acquire it (Guichard, 2010). "Self-management of personal and career paths, devoid of guidance, risks perpetuating certain inequalities rooted in gender, social status, generation, or income disparities" (Carosin et al., 2019). In the realm of education, the challenge involves two facets: equipping teachers to acquire this career management skill themselves and training them to assist students in acquiring such skills.

This dual necessity appears to garner consensus in literature (Canzittu, 2019; Carosin et al., 2019; Guichard, 2014, 2018, 2019; Kargulowa, 2018; Pouyau & Guichard, 2017; Savickas et al., 2010; Sultana, 2014). In the subsequent section, we aim to delve into how guidance concerns are integrated into educational reforms within the French-speaking Belgian context. This involves scrutinizing curricular documents and the official intentions articulated by the responsible government in education. To accomplish this, we've meticulously combed through these texts to identify all references related to guidance and subsequently categorized their content. The comparison between curricular texts and the articulated intentions seeks to unravel the extent to which guidance issues are addressed and aligned in these documents.

3.3.2. *Educational guidance in the context of french-speaking Belgian education reforms*

The capacity for decision-making and pedagogical autonomy in teaching primarily manifests through didactic transposition (Chevallard, 1994), signifying the conversion of scholarly knowledge, practices, skills, and culture into taught equivalents (Perrenoud, 1998). This transposition delineates between external (transition from scholarly knowledge to curricular content) and internal (teacher's adaptation of curricular content) processes (Paun, 2006). These give rise to the prescribed curriculum, providing teaching frameworks (Duroisin et al., 2011), and the implemented curriculum, translating the prescribed curriculum into teaching materials. Besides the "hidden curriculum," which encompasses unstipulated teachings in the curriculum (Perrenoud, 1993), scholars identify the "forgotten curriculum" as content outlined in aims but absent from the curricular content (Soetewey et al., 2011).

Additionally, educational authorities outline intentions guiding prescribed curricula development and the actions of school stakeholders. Notably, the ongoing works within the French-speaking Community of Belgium (FWB) concerning education organization, outlined in the Pact for Teaching Excellence (FWB, 2017), signal an essential reorganization of the education system. It focuses on improving student performance and reducing educational disparities through three principal actions: (1) the introduction of a common polytechnic core, (2) fostering guidance initiatives, and (3) organizing educational transitions. Here, we'll delve into the first two points while discussing the third later.

The envisioned core curriculum is described as polytechnic, offering a diversified range of fields and studies without prioritizing specific learnings. It aims to equip pupils, by the end of the 3rd year, with extensive information facilitating their choice of study paths (Canzittu, 2018). Regarding career guidance, the Pact aims to integrate it into educational thinking by emphasizing school and career path construction. It focuses on developing self-awareness, reflective capacity, and early exposure to the world of education and work (Canzittu & Carosin, 2019; Irvine et al., 2023). The Pact advocates implementing guidance within subject content, fostering collaboration between stakeholders, and involving students in constructing their personal and professional projects (Canzittu, 2018).

These intentions resonate with proposals outlined in the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 and international bodies (OECD, UNESCO, ILO). They underscore the necessity to equip youth with skills to navigate fluid societies (Bauman, 2007), fostering lifelong guidance (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009; Council of the European Union, 2006; UNESCO, 2017).

Despite these goals, initial teacher training inadequately addresses guidance, as observed in the decree defining initial teacher training effective from the 2020-2021 academic year (Government of the French Community of Belgium, 2019). Limited guidance training is provided among various content areas, underscoring the need for comprehensive guidance preparation for education stakeholders.

Moreover, the Community Policy Declaration (CPD) for 2019-2024 proposes measures concerning guidance but primarily focuses on guidance activities in the final year of the core curriculum. However, these plans lack comprehensive guidance integration, raising concerns about the educational approach to guidance and its impact on student decision-making processes. In these texts related to educational reforms, intentions seem to shift between different documents, reflecting changing educational frameworks and leaving stakeholders with evolving freedoms but often in a state of inconsistency and uncertainty.

4. Discussion

For a long time, the teaching profession operated within the confines of professional bureaucracy (Mintzberg & Romelaer 1982), balancing state responsibility for education with professional autonomy (Maroy, 2008). However, societal shifts in the last forty years have propelled the ascendancy of a post-bureaucratic model, empowering local entities. This decentralization, steeped in managerial culture, advocates school autonomy in both economic and pedagogical management while requiring responsiveness to educational authorities and users (Barroso, 2000; Tardif & Lessard, 2004). These changes underscore the emergence of the reflective practitioner (Shön, 1983) as the pinnacle of professionalism. Teachers are evolving into independent specialists, employing diverse teaching methods that empower students in their learning (Maroy & Cattonar, 2002). Recent initiatives, such as the 2017 Pacte pour un Enseignement d'excellence and the 2019 decree on initial teacher training, endorse the cultivation of a reflective practitioner attitude (Shön, 1983). These texts advocate for teacher responsibility in fostering collective learning dynamics, marking a significant evolution in the teaching profession linked to contemporary school challenges.

The transition towards a post-bureaucratic model in educational regulation demands a broader consideration of lifelong guidance. Analyzing French-speaking Belgian legal texts reveals an evolution in integrating this concept into education. While the 1997 Missions decree laid the foundation for student development, the 2017 Pacte pour un Enseignement d'excellence prioritizes the educational approach to guidance in student practices and teacher training. However, recent decrees and policy statements for teacher training and community policies diminish, transform, or partly divert from these intentions. They scantily address guidance as a teacher skill, potentially reducing its significance in training and education, and overlooking its crucial relevance in 21st-century societies.

The discrepancies between these declarations reveal what we term elusive intentions that dissipate from one political statement to the next. This ambiguity hampers the professionalization of education stakeholders and inhibits the development of educational guidance. Neglecting these aspects could lead to dissatisfaction, disengagement, and a potential exodus of teachers from the profession (Lothaire et al., 2012).

5. Conclusion

The exploration of developments in the teaching profession and educational systems across Western countries presents a captivating avenue for analysis. A comparative assessment could illuminate both commonalities and distinctions in the pursuit of local autonomy, pedagogical innovation, collaborative management, and the societal challenges confronted by educators. Investigating the integration of lifelong guidance into educational frameworks, along with comprehending the teaching profession's perspective on this evolution, promises valuable insights.

A closer examination of how diverse cultures and educational systems shape the professionalization of teachers and their roles in school management offers a wealth of understanding. This comparative approach has the potential to showcase exemplary practices and draw lessons from

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varied countries, enriching the discourse on the trajectory of the teaching profession and education overall.

In conclusion, adopting an international perspective becomes imperative for a nuanced understanding of the evolving dynamics within the teaching profession and educational systems across diverse Western contexts. By shedding light on challenges, aspirations, and best practices related to the professionalization of teachers and school management in a rapidly changing world, this perspective becomes a catalyst for a more enriched global dialogue on education policies, reforms, and pedagogical practices.

The professionalization of teachers, particularly concerning aspects of decent work, social justice, and sustainability, assumes paramount significance in fostering the holistic development of students. These fundamental concepts constitute the core of personal and professional guidance for the youth, molding their perspectives and contributions to society. Expanding the scope of teacher professionalization to encompass these pillars is indispensable for preparing the younger generation to navigate the complexities of an ever-evolving world.

Internationally, a multitude of strategies can be employed to nurture this facet of professional development among educators. Primarily, the integration of modules on decent work standards, social justice principles, and sustainability ethics into teacher training programs emerges as a pivotal step. Embedding these concepts in the curriculum for aspiring teachers allows educational institutions to instill a profound understanding and commitment to these values from the outset.

Furthermore, ongoing professional development initiatives should place a strategic focus on these themes, providing educators with continuous learning opportunities and avenues for skill enhancement. Workshops, seminars, and collaborative projects could be tailored to explore innovative ways to integrate these ideals into classroom practices, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to guide students toward ethical, socially responsible, and sustainable behaviors.

Ultimately, by arming teachers with the knowledge, skills, and resources to incorporate these critical elements into their pedagogy, education systems can significantly contribute to cultivating a generation of responsible, empathetic, and conscientious global citizens.

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