

DIMENSIONS OF EDUCATIONAL MENTORING: FORMATIVE VALENCES AND SUCCESSFUL PRACTICES IN CONTEMPORARY SCHOOLS

Mariana TIPEI-VOIA, Ph.D. Cnd.,
Babeş Bolyai University of Cluj Napoca,
mcismasiuisj@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This study analyzes from a psychopedagogical and academic perspective the fundamental needs of modern early childhood education, focusing on the reconfiguration of the educator's professional identity as a vector of change. Premised on the idea that the evolution of current generations demands a definitive abandonment of professional comfort and traditional routines, the study explores the core pillars of the reflective teacher paradigm. It addresses the essential dimensions of didactic success: cultivating enthusiasm as an epistemic resource, the courage to implement methodological innovation, and the smart management of resistance to change. Aligned with European educational standards and grounded in the theoretical contributions of prominent Romanian academics (M. Bocoş, H. Catalano, I. Albulescu, A. F. Roman), the paper demonstrates that modern preschool didactics measures success not by classroom silence or rigidity, but by the level of authentic engagement and autonomy stimulated among children. The study advocates for a conscious and creative assumption of the modern educator's role, capable of opening new chapters in the praxis of early childhood education.*

Keywords: *early childhood education; reflective teacher; change management; didactic innovation; autonomy; preschool didactics.*

Introduction: "The Beginning Never Ends"

In the contemporary landscape of educational sciences, early childhood education is undergoing a period of profound conceptual and structural reconfiguration. The shift from a pedagogy centered on the transmission of knowledge to one focused on the holistic development of the child demands a deep transformation of the educator's professional identity.

Becoming a "modern teacher" is not merely a career option, but an epistemic and deontological responsibility. The phrase "the beginning never ends" encapsulates the very essence of early childhood education: each generation of preschoolers brings with it new psychological profiles, as well as new socio-cultural and technological realities, forcing the teacher into a continuous effort of reconfiguration and self-improvement.

"How Should We Think in Order to Make a Change?" The Paradigm of Reflective Thinking

"If we teach today's items as we taught yesterday's, we rob them of tomorrow." — John Dewey

Change in education cannot occur at a superficial level (by simply adopting new materials or technologies); rather, it starts with the restructuring of mindsets. To generate an authentic transformation, pedagogical thinking must become modern and reflective.

Pedagogical success is incompatible with inertia or complacency. Didactic routine, though it offers a false sense of security, rigidifies the educational act. Traditional, rigid practices based on excessive directiveness and standardization must be countered with scientific arguments provided by modern learning theories (constructivism, socio-constructivism). Reflective thinking allows educators to constantly self-evaluate their practices, critically analyze what works and what does not, and find the courage to innovate.

Often, innovative initiatives clash with the skepticism of a traditionalist professional environment. A modern teacher learns to maintain professional autonomy, refuse to be influenced by defeatist discourses, and consciously assume the role of a change agent.

As we glean from the works of Professor Muşata Bocoş, PhD, dedicated to instruction and learning, an educator's professional training does not end with obtaining a degree. Instead, it transforms into a continuous construction—a self-regulated process where reflection upon one's own practice serves as the engine for self-improvement.

Vectors of Success in Preschool Didactics: Enthusiasm, Courage, and Creativity

"The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." — William Arthur Ward (This perfectly supports your idea of not being just an "ordinary teacher".)

The academic approach to classroom management and instructional design highlights that the efficiency of methods is closely linked to the affective and attitudinal dimension of the teacher.

In early childhood education, enthusiasm is not just a state of mind, but a subtle strategy for behavioral modeling. The socio-affective climate of the classroom is directly determined by the educator's energy. Enthusiasm generates epistemic curiosity among children and an openness to learning.

Change implies leaving secure patterns behind. Applying early interactive methods (for instance, project-based learning, experiential approaches, and designing stimulating learning environments) requires professional courage and taking responsibility for temporary failures, which are viewed as learning opportunities.

Didactic creativity must not remain at the stage of spontaneous intention. Systematically writing down innovative ideas and translating them into concrete curricular designs represents the transition from intuition to pedagogical praxiology.

Alignment with European Educational Standards and Interactive Didactics

In agreement with modern orientations in early childhood didactics promoted by Professor Alina Felicia Roman, PhD, professional success is no longer measured by silence in the classroom, but by the degree of authentic engagement and autonomy that the teacher manages to stimulate among the children (*Roman, A.F., Didactica educației timpurii*).

The needs of modern education are intrinsically linked to the benchmarks and values of the European Education Area, which promotes inclusion, sustainable early digitalization, the child's well-being, and the development of key competences.

A successful teacher capitalizes on every professional development opportunity (courses, European mobilities, communities of practice). Lifelong learning is the only guarantee against professional burnout.

The modern educator is the first to implement child-centered strategies, transforming the preschooler from an object of education into an active subject of their own formation. Interactive methods (the project method, clustering, the Lotus technique, outdoor role-playing games) stimulate critical thinking, autonomy, and collaborative social skills.

Management of Difficulties and Resilience in the Face of Change

Following the line of thought of Professor Ion Albulescu, PhD, in the analysis of modern educational doctrines, we can state that thinking in a contemporary manner means understanding that the preschooler is

not a passive recipient, but an active builder of their own world. The teacher's role is to guide this process with discretion and pedagogical sensitivity.

Any process of transition from a traditional system to a modern one generates resistance, bureaucratic barriers, or material difficulties.

Instead of resignation, the modern teacher adopts a strategic approach. Difficulties (lack of resources, reluctance from some parents, or systemic rigidities) are critically analyzed and tackled through creative solutions, educational partnerships, and intelligent negotiation.

The systematic repetition of the axiom "It can be done!" is not a simple exercise in naive optimism, but a strategy for cultivating professional resilience and self-efficacy. The educator's belief in the success of their approach has a direct impact on the children's performance and involvement (the Pygmalion effect).

In early childhood education, where play and free exploration constitute the foundations of development, success is conditioned by the educator's capacity to generate positive academic emotion. This confirms Albert Einstein's thesis, according to which *"the supreme art of the teacher is to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge"*—a desideratum that defines the profile of the reflective and modern teacher.

Modern early childhood education no longer needs mere executors of school curricula, but architects of learning. The decision regarding how the current generation will grow belongs directly to the educator at the desk, regardless of the geographical or socio-economic context in which they practice.

In light of the managerial and didactic approaches promoted by Professor Horațiu Catalano, PhD, we can argue that the modern teacher possesses an essential strategic competence: that of transforming the difficulties inherent to change into opportunities for institutional and personal development, precisely by capitalizing on the creative resources of the group of children.

Embracing the role of a modern teacher means translating innovative ideas into a successful pedagogical practice, turning every day in the classroom into a research and innovation laboratory. Looking from this perspective, this path of professional development becomes the key to opening a new chapter in preschool didactics—a chapter where professional success is accessible to anyone who has the courage to think freely, reflectively, and with a future-oriented mindset.

The close link between the courage to innovate and letting go of the comfort of certainties is summarized in Albert Einstein's thought: *"We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them."*

References

- Albulescu, I. (2021). *Doctrine pedagogice. Modele fundamentale ale educației*. Editura Institutul European. (Lucrare fundamentală pentru înțelegerea curentelor și doctrinelor moderne în educație).
- Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. W. H. Freeman.
- Bocoș, M. (2013). *Instruire și învățare. Teorii, modele, strategii*. Editura Paralela 45. (Sursă cheie pentru formarea continuă a cadrului didactic și conceptualizarea învățării autoreglate).
- Catalano, H. (2018). *Managementul clasei de elevi. Abordări teoretice și praxiologice*. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Cucoș, C. (2020). *Pedagogie: Repere teoretice și aplicative (ediția a III-a)*. Iași: Polirom.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). *Teaching for deeper learning*. Harvard Education Press.
- Dewey, J. (1972). *Democrație și educație. O introducere în filosofia educației*. Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Einstein, A. (1954). *Ideas and Opinions*. Crown Publishers.
- Ingersoll, R., & Strong, M. (2011). The impact of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers: A critical review of the research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201–233.
- Iucu, R., & Pânișoară, I.-O. (2019). *Profesionalizarea carierei didactice*. Iași: Polirom.
- Korthagen, F. (2017). Inconvenient truths about teacher learning: Towards professional development 3.0. *Teachers and Teaching*, 23(4), 387–405.
- Kyriacou, C. (2022). *Managing teacher stress and anxiety*. Routledge.
- Rad, D., Vișcu, L.-I., Cădăriu, I.-E., & Watkins Jr., C. (2025). *Psychoeducational Challenges in the 21st Century*. Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Roman, A. F. (2014). *Didactica educației timpurii*. Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu”.
- Roman, A. F. (2020). *Tendințe și orientări în pedagogia contemporană*. Editura Academiei Române.
- Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.
- Ward, W. A. (1970). *Fountains of Faith*. Duxbury Press.