

THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF TEACHERS BETWEEN REALITY AND ASPIRATION

Maria SALLOUM, Ph.D.,
Universitatea din Oradea
mioara_salloum@yahoo.com

Abstract: *The teacher's role in the society, is essential. As a trainer and a personal model, the teacher sets the tone for a strong community. The image of the teacher is reflected in social consciousness and it is correlated with the attractiveness of the profession. In our research, through two studies, we plan to analyze how the social representation of teachers coincides with their self-perceived image in the discharge of professional duties, and the attractiveness of the teaching profession among high school students' final grades. The results allow us to say that, unfortunately, between social representation of teachers in society, with reference to the discharge of professional duties and their self-perceived image, there are big differences.*

Key words: *social representation, the image of the teacher, the attractiveness of the profession.*

Romanian education is going through a big challenge. On the one hand the society expects better and better results from graduates, on the other hand the job perspective is getting weaker. Under these conditions, the quality of teaching is a challenge. Beyond the transmission of knowledge, the educator's task is forming and developing a harmonious personalities of young students. As an actor of the educational system, the teacher should always find the perfect balance between what he or she can offer and what is expected of him or her.

The great majority of teachers are either over 40 years or up to 30 years, the most active segment in terms of professional, 30-40 years, is the most underrepresented. Young teachers remain for the moment in education until they find something more suitable.

The social representation is depending on how the circumstances reconstructs reality. Supported by two pillars, one individual and a social one, this is actually a system of values, a practical way to learn about the world around. As a form of social conscience, it shows how the social actors communicate their conceived messages, promote a certain type of image.

In the development and operation of social representations, S. Moscovici (1995, p. 34) outlined the action of two mechanisms: anchoring and objectification. Anchoring tries to reduce strange ideas to the usual categories and images, and objectification tries to transform something abstract into something concrete, to make something that exists in our minds in something that exists in the physical world. Anchoring is a process that reduces what is alien and disturbing, unknown in our system of categories, something known and familiar. By anchoring social need are closer, familiar, appreciated. This particular statute gives representations of theories of common sense, forms of social knowledge. To categorize someone or something is to choose a paradigm of those stored in our memory and to establish a relationship with its positive or negative (S. Moscovici, 1995, p.35).

Anchoring has several steps. First object represented takes on a particular significance, this is done by two types of complementary activities: assessment activities, classification and categorization on one hand, on the other hand by coding activities. Secondly, by anchoring representation provides an interpretation of the social world, enabling integration of this kind of knowledge into a system of pre-existing knowledge. Lately, anchoring representations becomes active elements of social life. Thus, the representation will bear the mark of expectations, values, norms group's produced.

In order to be more easily manipulated the represented object must be assigned to certain traits, comparing it to a certain prototype already subsisting in the collective memory. Comparison allows framing object in a category. Moscovici underlines the role as a possible means of establishing the identity of an object, phenomenon. Basically this mechanism is trying to establish a relationship between something real and imaginary (S. Moscovici, 1995, p. 35).

Anchoring operates closely with belief systems, values, knowledges previously developed and socially shared. Participating in the creation of social representation anchoring becomes itself a way to manipulate the knowledge. The anchoring mechanism follows the objectification of representations that complements the explanatory model of the generation and operation of social representation, it is an extension of objectification (Dois W., A. Palmonari, 1996, p. 28). Anchoring points to the

three basic functions of representation: the cognitive function of integrating the new; to interpret reality and conducts orientation and social relations . As a mode of social thinking, objectifying make the abstract concrete, materializes word, clarifies unknown ideas, unfamiliar with the real. Objectifying means to discover the iconic quality of an idea or an inaccurate beings, to replicate the concept in a picture (S. Moscovici, 1995, p .45).

The information coming from the outside is selected out of context, and then the meanings that will be serialized into a structure is called the nucleus of an imaginative figurative character. So what it is abstract objectification materializes, turns a concept into an image or a figurative knot. The social representation is the process that establishes a relationship between subject and object, each with its attributes. Social representations are vectors, central opinions, beliefs, collective behaviors. In education, social representations of teachers are particularly important. Social representations about the teaching profession are present in the minds of prospective teachers before they start teaching, they have been taken form stereotypes (Adam, 2013 <http://www.rcsedu.info>).

Individual approach to stereotypes stipulates that over time, individuals develop beliefs concerning the characteristics of social groups, and show how this knowledge affects their reporting to different individuals who belong to those groups (Iluț, 2001, p . 147) .

Social representation of a profession, recognition by the community depends on the level of qualification, competence, professionalism and motivation of those who practice that profession. Thus, social representation requires the presence of teachers with pedagogical skills or competencies that determine its success in the educational process.

Chircev defines a set of teaching skills as personality traits of the educator, enabling him to achieve maximum results in any circumstance, in any class (Chircev, cited Sălăvăstru, 2004, p. 152).

The image of the teacher decreased, and results of schools with excellent results are hardly promoted. Instead negative media abounds with examples and highlights perhaps more than needed. It requires a closer involvement in promoting the profile of the teacher, a continuous dissemination of good practices and good results obtained by most teachers.

Methodology

Objectives and hypotheses: In our research, through two studies, we plan to analyze if the social representation of teachers coincides with their self-perceived image and how much the teaching profession is appealing among High school in terminal grades students. Thus, the first study assumes that there is a significant difference between self-perceived image of teachers and social representation of teachers on how teachers perform their

professional duties, and the second study states that the number of students who want to become teachers is decreasing.

Participants: In the first study, there were three categories of participants:

- 104 community members, randomly selected: 67 women and 37 men, aged between 35 and 60 years, of which 53 are urban and 51 from rural areas;
- 89 high school students from two high schools in Oradea, 49 girls and 40 boys aged between 15 - 18 years;
- 97 teachers, 62 women and 35 men, 58 from urban and 41 from rural areas, aged between 23 and 58 years.

For the second study we worked with 109 students from XIth - XIIth grades, 64 girls and 45 boys from two national colleges and two technical high schools from Oradea, aged between 16 and 18 years.

Instruments: In the first study we used three questionnaires with ten open questions, one for each of the three categories of participants, and in the second study, students were asked to answer the question: Would you like to become a teacher? They were asked to provide three arguments for their chosen answers.

Procedure: First we wanted to find out if of the teachers' image in the community and among students coincides with their self-perceived image in the discharge of professional duties. The three categories of participants, weighted by their responses positive, negative or neutral, are found in Table 1:

Answers	Members from communities	Teachers	Students
Positive	28	72	17
Negative	66	5	51
Neutrals	10	20	21
Total	104	97	89

Given the frequency responses, we applied for comparing χ^2 test.

For research was used SPSS, Chi Square test .

Table 2. Frequencies observed, as expected, percentages and adjusted standardized residues on participants' answers

		Answers			Total	
		Positiv es	Negati ves	Neutr als		
Partici pants	Membe rs	Observed requencies	28	66	10	104

	from communities	Expected frequencies	42.0	43.8	18.3	
		Adjusted standardized residues	-3.5	5.5	-2.7	
	Teachers	Observed frequencies	72	5	20	97
		Expected frequencies	39.1	40.8	17.1	
		Adjusted standardized residues	8.3	-9.0	1.0	
	Students	Observed frequencies	17	51	21	89
		Expected frequencies	35.9	37.4	15.7	
		Adjusted standardized residues	-4.9	3.5	1.8	
	Total	Observed frequencies	117	122	51	290

In table 2 we can track the observed, the expected and adjusted standardized residuals for responses of 290 participants in our research, operationalized through positive negative or neutral feedback. To see where the differences are significant, adjusted standardized residuals are pursuing individual cells. The values contained in range (-2, 2) are considered indicators of significant differences between observed and expected frequencies.

Table 3. Significant adjusted standardized residuals value

Quality	Answer:	Adjusted standardized residuals value		
		Positive	Negative	Neutral
Community		-3.5	5.5	-2.7
Teachers		8.3	-9.0	-
Students		-4.9	3.5	-

As we can see, there are significant differences between the three categories of participants. The biggest difference was obtained for the teacher's answers who are discordant with the other participants by placing

the opposite if positive answers or negative, thereby strengthening our statements stipulated in hypothesis.

Table 4. Value of χ^2 test.

	Value	Df	Sig
Coefficient (Pearson) χ^2	95.935(a)	4	.000
Nr. valid cases	290		

0 cells (.0 %) have expected frequency less than 5 .
The minimum expected frequency is 15.65

The values in the above table confirms our research: participants' responses analyzing the situation, we have a degree of freedom χ^2 4 95.935 with a significance level .000 lower than the critical sig of .05, so we can say, without a risk of error of less than 1 %, there are significant differences in responses between the three categories of participants in this study.

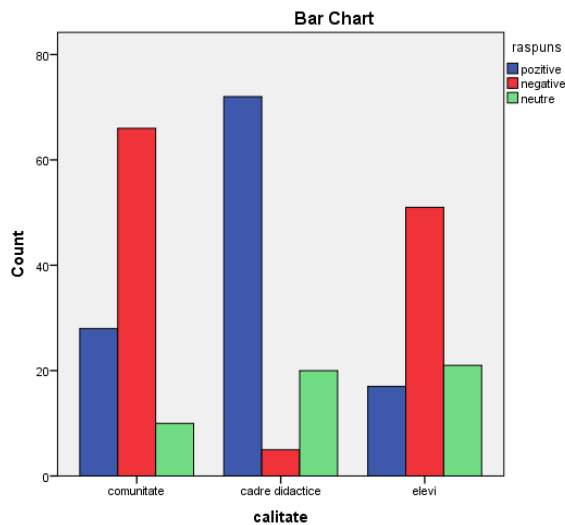


Figure 1. Graphical representation of the situation of the participants' to the first study answers.

In this figure we can see that the differences between the responses of community members, teachers or students on the opinion they have about the way in which teachers fulfill their role of educator in society are very different. The obtained results allow us to say that, unfortunately, between social representation of teachers in society, with reference to the discharge of professional duties and their self-perceived image, there are big differences. This is because, in our opinion, that every teacher more or less subjectively considers to fulfill its noble role of educator. Moreover, most teachers make many sacrifices and believes that mistreated socially. Among the responses from teachers found the question: Do you fulfill the duties of educator? The most common and largely positive, are: *Yes, I hate to disappoint my students; Yes, I often make even more than I was asked; I try to fulfill all tasks, although sometimes I feel unmotivated.* At the opposite pole we find disapproving answers from the community members: *The teachers don't do their job as they should., They should be better prepared to deal with more serious about educating and guiding children., Some aren't well prepared, aren't made for this profession., Many teachers do not teach in the classroom to get students to come to private lessons.*

The students argued that: *Unfortunately, some of the teachers don't know how to teach and prefer to talk about anything else on the subject of the lesson., Some teach us a little but they demand a lot., The majority of teachers are subjective and do not even hide this., After 12 o'clock we are free all the time., The teachers are talking on the phone during the classes., There are very few teachers who are doing their job and deserves to be respected., They don't have patience with us, offend and humiliate us.,*

In the second study, we thought it would be useful to see if there are high school students eager to become teachers. Thus, we asked 109 students in XIth – XIIth grades, 64 girls and 45 boys from two national colleges and two technical school high schools from Oradea to answer the question if they would like to become a teacher and provide three arguments for their chosen answers. Of the 109 students, only 14 have expressed their willingness to become teachers. Among the arguments of those 14 students we have found some constants: *I love children., Is a beautiful profession, it offer decent working conditions and the opportunity to be always up to date in a particular field., I have more free time and holidays and so I can do something else.* Unfortunately the majority of students, even if they would like to be teachers would not choose this profession because: *It's a stressful*

work., Students do not respect you and they work for nothing., No, the students don't appreciate them and I wouldn't like to work in these conditions., No, because I don't find it as an interesting job... every day doing the same thing, it becomes monotonous., I don't think I would be able., I'm not attracted at all to the field., No, because it's a hard job, you must prepare more and have more patience.

Students interviewed know very well what would be their priorities if they would become teachers: I wouldn't distinguish between students., I would never teach if I wasn't well prepared., I wouldn't give unfairly marks and I wouldn't teach too much in a hour., I wouldn't take bribes., I would teach things that are useful in life., I would never beat a child., I would not label a student unprepared, but I fight to make him to want to learn., I should try to be fair and honest with my students., I would not you insist to teach them useless stuff., I should try to make students to learn with pleasure not for fear or marks., I should respect the break and I would listen the students., I would never leave the class until my students understand the lesson., I would never make a student feel bad., I wouldn't offend students., I'd do classes interesting. I would insult students and fairness should be a priority for me, I don't want to be a teacher, but if by mistake I would be, I would try to make less mistakes than my teachers.

Conclusion

The results of our research confirm that there are differences between the way teachers evaluate their work and social representation of this. Closely related to this is the lack of attractiveness of the profession among community in general and among students in particular. As the role of the teacher, the principal actor in education is essential, we think that we need an intervention program to promote more positively the profile of the teacher in the society.

References:

- Adam, Simona, *Profilul cadrului didactic între reprezentare și vocație individuală*, <http://www.resedu.info>, 8.07.2013.
- Doise W., A. Palmonari (1996). Caracteristici ale reprezentărilor sociale, In volumul *Psihologia socială - aspecte contemporane* (coordonator A. Neculau), Iași: Ed. Polirom.
- Iluț, Petru, (2001). *Sinele și cunoașterea lui*, Iași: Ed. Polirom.
- Moscovici, S. (1995). Fenomenul reprezentărilor sociale, în volumul *Reprezentările sociale* (A.Neculau coordonator), București: Editura Societatea Știință și Tehnică