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REAL-LIFE AND FICTIONAL TEACHERS AS THE FOCUS OF THE 21st CENTURY ACADEMIC RESEARCH

The early 21st century features numerous changes. They are manifested at different levels in societies. Things that seemed stable are not any longer. The field of education is no exception. All of us undergo the process of schooling before becoming professionals within our domains. Schools have become ubiquitous in popular culture. There are several ways to define «popular culture». Popular culture in this work is «a set of practices, beliefs, and objects that are dominant in a society at a given point in time. Popular culture encompasses the activities and feelings produced as a result of interaction with these dominant objects» [11]. Hence, popular culture has a way of impacting on an individual's attitudes towards certain topics. In the light of popular culture, one can barely conceive teaching activities that do not involve teachers. They are the key figures in the system of education. Its state and development perspectives depend on them. The future of the whole society is based, to a certain extent, on the functioning of educational establishments. Students in their essays voice that «if

civilization fails to properly educate its youth, it will cause a plethora of problems and that will ultimately lead to the devastation of that civilization» [15].

We cannot but agree with Shoffner that teachers are recurring characters in the books we read, the comics we scan, the films we watch, the shows we record. Baudrillard argues that the constant repetition of images through the media has effaced the distinction between reality and fiction. The persistent images of teachers have blurred the distinction between real and imaginative [3].

In the mundane real world, the images of teachers are commonly represented, by Hawthorne and Rosenthal, as semi-professionals who lack control and autonomy over their own work and as persons who do not contribute to the character of knowledge. Fictional teachers, by contrast, are not shackled by government-mandated 'standards' and 'competencies' and frequently the problem with most texts characterizations of teachers is that they create unrealizable expectations for real-world teachers.

Studies of teachers' life and work have increased and improved in recent decades. Hobsbawn and Lortie dwell on the link between teachers and educational research studies in the US, stressing that empirical studies of teaching work and the school staff's outlook remain rare [6]. Ball and Goodson emphasized that teachers were shadowy figures [2]. Goodson comments on the fact that in most research studies they were present in aggregate through imprecise statistics and only as formal incumbents, mechanistically and unproblematically responding to the powerful expectations of their set role. Goodson argued that researchers had not paid heed to the complexity of the teacher as an active agent making his or her own history [6, 29]. Connelly and Clandinin hint at the importance of biographical and personal perspectives. Sikes, Measor and Woods focus on developing our understanding of teachers' careers [14]. Lawn concentrates upon teachers' biographies [8, 388– 392]. The cohort of teachers is ageless. Levinson admits that a person's perspectives at particular stages in his or her life crucially affect their professional life and development [9]. That is why the teacher's life cycle should not be excluded when it comes to conducting research. Becker and Geer's work scrutinizes the teacher's life style in and outside school, his or her latent identities and cultures, impact on views of teaching and on practice [4, 56–60]. According to Olsen, teacher identity can be defined according to multiple approaches. By Rodgers and Scott, most discussions of teacher identity are characterized by four assumptions: 1) identity is dependent upon and formed within multiple contexts which bring social, cultural, political and historical forces; 2) identity is formed in relationship with others and involves emotions; 3) identity is shifting, unstable and multiple; 4) identity involves the construction and reconstruction of meaning through stories over time [13, 24–25].

There can be mentioned specific rationales for studying the teacher's life and work. In Goodson's opinion, these kinds of studies stimulate the new moves to restructure and reform schooling. From Casey's perspective, examining teachers' lives helps one understand the much discussed question of «teacher drop-out». She underscores that «the taken-for-granted assumptions put teacher attrition in the investigative cul-de-sac» [5, 188]. Lortie focuses on the significance of scrutiny of the pupil period of teachers which is the period of observation and internalization of particular models of teaching. He calls them «latent models» that are activated during the training period. The researcher refers to it as teacher socialization [10]. Many studies in the late 20th century have focused on teachers' own experiences as pupils. The works of Acker and Middleton, and other feminist studies provide vital and insightful studies into teaching as a gendered profession, thus it is one more substantial reason for studying the life and work of teachers [6].

On balance, crisis phenomena, observable in societies, are caused by those who are products of deteriorating educational systems with teachers being their part. Teachers belong to culturally embedded archetypes. Studies of factual teachers' life and work might become and do become significant pillars for creating fictional teachers. The studies of teachers' professional life and patterns of professional development must address the dimensions of the personal. Life experiences and background are key ingredients of the person that we are. Researchers have treated these questions somewhat meagerly. Correspondingly, the research on factual and fictional teachers gives one some

insight on how to perceive teachers, transformations they undergo and even leads to reconceptualization of models of teacher development. Through examination of real-world teachers and literary texts that portray teachers real-life teachers and teachers to be consider the complexities of societal and ethical issues each can face. Exploration of fictional and factual teachers contribute to deconstructing the out-of-dated image of the teacher and constructing models of a new generation teacher which will favour the prosperity of humankind.

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