

Leading article



Professional pedagogy as a transformative vocation: a tribute from memory



La pedagogía profesional como vocación transformadora: homenaje desde la memoria

A pedagogia profissional como vocação transformadora: uma homenagem da memória

Yudit Rovira Álvarez¹  0000-0003-3232-9372  judy@upr.edu.cu

Vadim Aguilar Hernández¹  0000-0003-2690-6380  vadim.aguilar@upr.edu.cu

¹ University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Pinar del Río, Cuba.

The third edition of *Mendive. Journal on Education*, opens its pages with a deeply moving purpose: to pay tribute to one of the most committed voices in national pedagogical thought, and in particular, to the development of Professional Pedagogy. This constitutes an essential part of our cultural identity. Saying that pedagogy is culture reminds us that Technical and Vocational Education (ETP) has its roots in its own tradition, represented by figures such as José Martí Pérez, José de la Luz y Caballero, and Fernando Aguado y Rico, among others. Professional pedagogy is the fruit of the experience and research of numerous educators, who have built and sustained it over time. It is a process oriented towards the training of individuals capable of driving the country's economic and social development, as Dr. C. Juan Alberto Mena Lorenzo rightly pointed out.

His passing leaves a deep void in *Mendive. Journal on Education* daily work. His membership in the Center for Studies in Educational Sciences (CECEPRI) of the University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca" was an essential part of his connection with the journal, whose operation is made possible thanks to the joint work of the Center and the team of editors, translators, proofreaders, designers and referencers, attached to the "LiberCiencia" Editorial Seal of the Vice-

Rector's Office of Research and Postgraduate Studies. For more than five years, he was a member of the Scientific Council of the journal, contributing with commitment, rigor and depth to the evaluation of articles and to the strengthening of editorial quality. His legacy remains alive in the pages he helped to build and in the pedagogical ideology that he passionately defended: an education conceived as a project of justice, humanity and transformation.

From that perspective, we aim to place at the center of this editorial a proposal that engages with many of the principles championed by Mena Lorenzo: professional pedagogy as a field, as an approach, and as a horizon. We rely on his work as a compass to rethink the Cuban university from a commitment to the integral development of the human person and its dialectical relationship with the world of work.

And speaking of professional pedagogy, as Mena pointed out, is initially oriented toward the training of mid-level professionals and the teachers who carry it out. However, due to advances in science and technology and the need to articulate the initial and continuing training of professionals, Professional Pedagogy is becoming a Pedagogy of Higher Education, of Professional Development, and of Academic Postgraduate Studies. All of them address the training of professionals, with points of contact, interpenetration, and complementarity between them, both historically and conceptually.

Professional pedagogy is rooted in a principle that was essential to Juan Alberto Mena Lorenzo's academic and personal life: the dignity of education as a collective project. It is not enough for the university to transmit knowledge; it requires integration with labor organizations with equal responsibility for vocational training.

In the work championed throughout his professional life, which inspires this editorial, he forcefully argues that professionalization doesn't mean restricting, but rather expanding. Professionalization implies providing the pedagogical process with an integrative logic, where each component -from the professional problem to the assessment- is articulated with the specific challenges our students face. Professionalization is, in essence, humanization.

The role of the teacher as the articulator of this transformation is also courageously recognized; they cannot simply be transmitters of content: they are guides, researchers, companions, and facilitators of complex learning experiences. The professionalization of the educator requires an ethic of commitment, a lifelong attitude of learning, and an openness to change. As Mena Lorenzo taught us, teaching is an act of love, clarity, and resilience.

In this sense, the integration between universities and labor organizations must transcend the logic of utilitarian subordination. The relationship with the world of work cannot be limited to satisfying economic demands: it must become a pedagogical opportunity, a stage for educating values, skills, and attitudes. Only in this way can the university open itself to the world without losing its critical essence, its role as a cultural and ethical beacon in society.

Today more than ever, in a context marked by global market tensions, environmental crises, and the precariousness of life, we need Cuban Higher Education to reshape itself as a space of resistance and construction. And to achieve this, professional pedagogy can offer us the tools and foundations to rise to these times.

This issue will continually publish articles based on the work he carried out as a tutor, alongside his master's and doctoral students. In addition, exceptionally and as a tribute, historical sections are being opened to pay homage to him. The "Relevant pedagogues" section provides a closer look at his professional work; the "Book presentation" section showcases a work of his own. The overall purpose is to highlight the contributions of this pedagogical vision, while paying tribute to the man who dedicated his life to these same struggles: the beloved Professor Juan Alberto Mena Lorenzo. His thought lives on in our classrooms, his love for teaching accompanies us, and his unwavering faith in a university committed to social equity is a legacy we will not betray.

From *Mendive. Journal on Education*, we reaffirm our commitment to continue defending a pedagogy that thinks independently, that knows how to communicate with its context, and that never forgets that every student is a subject of rights, dreams, and hopes. This was Mena Lorenzo's constant message, and it is the spirit that also animates professional pedagogy.

Let this issue be, then, more than a tribute: a commitment. A commitment to continue teaching with dignity; to continue training professionals with integrity; to continue believing that education is, as José Martí said, "placing man on the level of his time so that he can float, and not leaving him below his time so that he cannot stay afloat."

Rest in the light, Master. In every shared knowledge, in every word you inspired, your presence endures like a wine that never runs dry.

Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

The authors participated in the design and writing of the leading article.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License