

Teacher education and education policies¹

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Abstract

Being a teacher in the 21st century has changed a lot. His/her roles (they increased and diversified a lot) and his/her social image have changed. There have been rapid changes, in which many teachers have tried to catch up and assume new educational and social roles, but many also became confused in the face of the scientific knowledge, technology, social demands, and erratic government policies, etc. Uncertainties and changes have been introduced into the profession, and teachers have to deal with them. And they must prepare themselves to assume these new roles and critically analyze the educational reality that surrounds the profession. They must assume the leading role they deserve.

Keywords: teachers; teacher education; educational criticism; education policies.

Formação de professores e políticas educacionais

Resumo

Ser professor no século XXI mudou muito. Mudaram as suas funções (aumentaram e diversificaram muito) e a sua imagem social. Houve mudanças vertiginosas, em que muitos professores tentaram se atualizar e assumir novas funções educacionais e sociais, mas muitos também ficaram confusos diante do conhecimento científico, da tecnologia, das demandas sociais e das políticas erráticas de governos etc. Incertezas e mudanças foram introduzidas na profissão, tendo de lidar com elas. E os professores devem preparar-se para assumir essas novas funções e analisar criticamente a realidade educacional que permeia a profissão. Devem assumir o protagonismo que merecem.

Palavras-chave: professores; formação de professores; crítica educacional; políticas educacionais.

Formación del profesorado y políticas educativas

Resumen

Ser docente durante el siglo XXI ha cambiado mucho. Han cambiado sus funciones (han aumentado y diversificado mucho) y su imagen social. Han ocurrido cambios vertiginosos, donde muchos profesores y profesoras han intentado ir poniéndose al día e ir asumiendo nuevas funciones educativas y sociales, pero también muchos, entran en desconcierto delante del conocimiento científico, con la tecnología, con las demandas sociales, con las políticas erráticas gubernamentales, etc. La incertidumbre y el cambio se han introducido en la profesión y tiene que convivir con ellas. Y el profesorado se tiene que preparar para asumir estas nuevas funciones y analizar críticamente la realidad educativa y la que envuelve la profesión. Debe asumir el protagonismo que se merece.

Palabras clave: profesorado; formación docente; crítica educativa; políticas educativas.

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1 CONSERVATIVE POLICIES VERSUS PROGRESSIVE POLICIES

It is clear that policies² influence education in general (Martínez Rizo, 2018) and, therefore, specifically, also teacher education, whether initial or continuing. Teacher education is not an isolated activity, it is linked to the theoretical assumptions of a given political and socio-historical moment that determines a concept of teacher education, which will consequently guide the formative action of public policies and training proposals.

Evidence and lived realities over time show us that, when education policies are conservative, neoconservative or neoliberal³ (normally within the scope of general and global education policies), control over education increases and, as a consequence, centralization and distrust in teaching and training, introducing liberal conceptions, or those that postulate a more authoritarian, vertical or non-participatory practice in educational practice. Apple (2002, p. 26) asks, referring to right-wing education policies: “How does their language work to highlight certain things as real problems while marginalizing others? What are the effects that these policies promoted?”. In this study, we will analyze these effects on teacher education.

Since teaching is a social practice, with an ideological influence and an axiological nature, it was and it is the target of all powers. However, conservative intervention has been limited to control, giving teachers instructions, circulars, norms, procedures, prescriptions..., disregarding their professional identity, their autonomy, their knowledge and their ability to make decisions. In conservative policies, schools and teacher education fulfill a dual political function, as they ensure, through political socialization, basic loyalty to the regime or established government and guarantee the recruitment of its supporters, even through elements of corruption and malfeasance. Therefore, the relationship between education and power⁴ is of great importance.

During recent years, with the governments we have had, a conservative education has been produced that some would call moderate, but which has greatly harmed education and teachers. Lately, with votes trending towards ultra-conservative and reactionary policies, predominantly in some countries, we are witnessing the radicalization of conservative policies and the beginning of a dangerous regression in education. I am aware that progressive and conservative denominations can be ambiguous, and their boundaries are blurred, and they are

not identified solely with political parties. However, if there is a difference, it is how the future of society is seen and, therefore, proposals on education and training are fundamental.

From this perspective, the universe works mechanically, and the laws of nature are presented as eternal and immutable. In this sense, knowledge is completely objective, and the purpose of science is to reach the truth. As a result, the traditional model of teacher education, framed within the logic of the educational paradigm of modernity, was characterized by an emphasis on the acquisition and mastery of knowledge, while the training curriculum was imposed as fragmented and governed by a disciplinary logic.

The history of education has shown that the consequence of all this is the development of initial education that is scarce⁵, poor, unprofessional and highly dependent on the powers that promote control policies. It is the preparation for a subordinate and dependent profession that makes it vulnerable to the political and social environment. In continuing education, teachers' autonomy is reduced, and institutions that develop teachers in a more autonomous, collaborative, or research-oriented manner are eliminated or minimized. We do not work for the common good, but, preferably, for a certain social class, and the educational institution is seen as an enterprise. The permanent training model is to update teachers through standardized and decontextualized courses, trying to respond to aspects of needs that are more prescriptive than collaborative or felt. They see the training curriculum as closed and in a certain context, the same for everyone (Popkewitz, 1994). For these policies, teachers are subject to training.

Conservative and ultra-conservative policies do not trust teachers, an example of this has been the elimination of certain teacher education courses for years. There is also a great rejection of change, and they fight for the application of religious morality, traditional and family values without interference from the State, based on a certain conception of personal freedom. And, of course, order and control are fundamental elements in their way of thinking about social reality.

According to Esteve (2001), this aims and causes the subordination of teachers to the production of knowledge, the separation between educational theory and practice, professional isolation in educational work, the marginalization and neglect of the moral, ethical and political problems of education and the factor of decontextualization.

Current educational ultraconservatism does not like to teach aspects of everyday life with the argument of individual freedoms which, for its adherents, never need to be linked to

social issues. They do not want topics such as abortion, sexual diversity, drugs, liberating pedagogies to be discussed (it is not surprising, although it is shameful, that Paulo Freire was insulted by the policies of an ultra-conservative Brazilian government) and, they also want to see social inequalities and school segregation as something inevitable in the human condition, as some students are predestined and nothing can be done (there are chosen ones, and there are weak ones).

On the contrary, a progressive policy⁶ starts from the premise of an open vision of teacher education, a more contextualized training curriculum and a reality based on uncertainty and change and trust in teachers, their more autonomous development and less intervention of training curriculum, in a public and secular school, in which participation is fundamental and with the defense of equality, freedom, human dignity, democracy and justice, seeking progress and the majority social well-being. The aim is to give social and professional status to initial education⁷ and develop teachers as an important component in the free, more democratic and autonomous education of people. And, of course, the improvement of their work. Teachers are seen as subjects of training and learning.

Teacher education in progressive policies can be the development and extension of practices linked to professional practice, more liberating, democratic, with greater autonomy and developing critical thinking in teachers, “[...] they are a humanist project that would develop a broadly educated teacher and promote greater flexibility, innovation, and imagination in classrooms” (Popkewitz, 1994, p. 213). An opening in their way of seeing education that could represent a danger for neo or conservative policies (Apple, 2002).

In short, the difference between progressive and conservative education policies is evident, despite the different tendencies and denominations of some parties that claim to be progressive and have a conservative ideology as their background. In general, progressive education policies have been characterized for more than a century by the fight for a new and renewed school with more confidence in teachers, in the development and less intervention of the curriculum, in a public and secular school, where participation is fundamental and with the defense of equality, freedom, democracy and justice, seeking progress and the majority social well-being, in a training in the territories to educate reflective, investigative and critical teachers. And constant change and collective rights are fundamental words. In some trends, in addition to the more cautious progressivism, we have the emancipation of human beings.

If we analyze the policies that have predominated in recent times in teacher education in many countries, we will find, at the international level, a regression or stagnation of what has been developed since the 1980s,⁸ a decade considered the explosion of a new way of seeing learning throughout life, such as the development of investigation-action or its formative research model, models of development and improvement of teaching, implementation of educational innovation projects, creation of teaching centers or similar, more collaborative modalities, etc., developing processes of deliberation between legitimately interested actors, the teaching staff, and, in recent times, in these more conservative policies, the ability to argue on the most important issues is forgotten, which is non-existent or manipulative (Martínez Rizo, 2018). When more progressive policies reappear, they are so conditioned by previous policies that it takes a long time to reverse new policies and, sometimes, they do not even reach a legislature, with the aggravating factor that laws are modified and, later, modified again. It never ends. Therefore, if there is no minimum education policy agreed upon as a public education policy, constant changes and teacher disorientation will arise.

This formative stagnation, except in some aspects such as the emotional/personal issues of the teacher, or everything related to teaching subjectivity and the analysis of the complexity of what happens in the classroom and in the teacher, which sometimes appears as anecdotal or purely academic, is denoted by the disenchantment and abandonment of many professionals who dedicated themselves to the topic, the policies applied and the disorientation caused. The reasons for this intellectual abandonment of the analysis of teacher education and the struggle for its improvement may be numerous: the intellectual apathy of some academics; the flight of trainers tired of regulations and control, the lack of debate on the issue by conservative governments and the disastrous policy of dismantling continuing education institutions in recent years. Formative processes cost a lot to build and little to destroy, sometimes a simple piece of official paper is enough.

A collective awareness of the meaning of this problem is necessary. This implies a determined ethical and political stance to fight against social inequality, school inequality and for social and school equity and justice. For this to be effective, action plans are needed in this regard. This requires the education system to undergo a profound review of how it treats impoverished children, in order to make a decisive shift in their favor. To achieve this, a systemic and articulated response through public social policy decisions is essential, especially

in education, health, social services and transfers of redistributive economic support. It is the only way to break the vicious cycle of poverty inherited for generations.

When conservative public policies predominate in educational and training systems, the tendency is towards bureaucratization, imposing more interventionist, technocratic and formalized models, hindering autonomy and true democracy in collaborative training processes. Conservative policies are interested in having teachers who “sell” to power, whether media or political, the teaching they advocate, supporting, with their presence, with their suspicious silence or with their technical reports to those who govern, through conservative policies or against their own group, the country’s education. They aim at a type of teacher education in a consolidated transmissive model of technical rationality with a deterministic and uniform vision of teachers’ work, and a model of training through standard courses that still persist (model classes, notions, educational orthodoxy, decontextualized, skills, with a behavioral perspective, for certain purposes...); thus, they show the orientation of teacher education towards solving generic teacher problems that do not normally exist in many contexts, instead of delving into a more regulatory and reflective model (with aspects such as investigation-action, reflection, collaboration, contextualization of practical problems, heterodoxy, varied models, new challenges such as ecology, inclusion, gender, migration, interculturality, sustainability, globalization...), a framework in which the trainer is yet another diagnostician of the obstacles to teachers’ education who helps them to overcome these obstacles instead of solving other people’s problems, in which, possibly, the personal, professional and institutional aspect of the teaching staff has more to say than the entire technical apparatus.

No one can doubt that the social and educational contexts that condition education and training have been changing. The new economy and its global consequences emerge, the increase in poverty and, at times, endemic misery, technocratic reforms; technology lands with great force in education as a big global business, in which many companies seek their share of the profit; globalization is evident on social networks, the entry of companies into education as a new educational philanthropy disguised to gain followers or customers... And a major crisis begins to emerge in the teaching profession. If we add that, for all this, previous education and training systems do not function as they should, school buildings are not suitable for a new way of seeing and practicing education, people’s emotional formation assumes increasingly more importance, the relationship among them, the community and context as an important element

of education, etc. All of this influences, in progressive policies and practices, a certain disorientation in the face of the violent attacks of political conservatism and which is intended to be modified, but there is more progress in the field of ideas than in the field of practices. Perhaps, to carry out this change in practices, greater theoretical and political analysis and greater mobilization for a collective formulation of new objectives and strategies aimed at building an education based on freedom and democracy are necessary. If this is not possible, teachers' motivation to do different things decreases, they take few risks and, above all, innovation and change appear as a risk that few want to take. Anomie⁹ appears.

Based on this analysis of building a new vision of teacher education, a struggle is necessary to develop progressive policies that lead to liberating educational and formative practices. It is necessary, based on analysis, to develop a new alternative professional culture for teachers and a new educational and social practice. Paulo Freire's work is taken as a reference, among others, which serves to analyze the fallacy of school neutrality, to construct a more politicized notion of education and to develop a pedagogy of resistance, hope or possibility (Gadotti *et al.*, 2008).

We also cannot forget, in this view, part of the theses of cultural Marxism¹⁰ by Gramsci and the Frankfurt School and other thinkers baptized as neo-Marxists in the cultural and ideological struggle. As McLaren (1994, p. 197) said long ago, "With one foot solidly planted in neo-Marxist traditions and the other posed somewhat hesitantly over the anti-metaphysical radicalism of post-analytic philosophy [...], pointing out how schools reproduce the discourses, values and privileges of existing elites".

Perhaps we also distance ourselves, although we take them into account in the analysis, from the defenders of reproduction and their disciples, since they analyze the functioning and reproduction of the capitalist system in a too mechanical way and, consequently, do not foresee its contradictions and gaps in resistance, struggles and mechanisms of counterpower. We must also monitor the theses of a certain pedagogy (very popular today) that is called "progressive", as it has assumed the language, not the practice, and its approaches in relation to school, democratic society and the commitment and content of change and teaching innovation and teaching are very ethereal and vacillating. Pedagogies sold at different prices, often useless, to a bidder who obtains benefits¹¹.

2 POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO PROGRESSIVE POLICIES: MORAL AND PROFESSIONAL RECOVERY

Paulo Freire said that the issue is how to transform difficulties into possibilities. Through education, can we transform current difficulties into future possibilities? However, a new alternative to conservative training policies in all their aspects is to analyze and contrast a new vision of education with the theorists and practitioners of the return to basics, which should be taught in a certain way, that democracy is guilty of excessive tolerance, that traditional values have been lost, that there is too much educational permissiveness, we have to separate students for various reasons, whether gender, disability or failure, as they harm the best ones, etc., which have reappeared in recent times with academic elitism and which leads them to considering certain things better than others, which influence teacher education, for example, the University as the pinnacle of training knowledge and not taking into account the practical knowledge and experience of teachers, distrust in the teaching staff, accusing them of indoctrination in their training and the empty and often exhausted, useless or complicated theoretical discourse as a model of the intellectual and the Western cultural tradition as superior and unique, disdaining other identities and cultural contributions. The authenticity of the teaching experience, told through the voices of teachers who experienced different contextual situations, is forgotten and ends up permeating the ideas and behaviors of other people who also participate in the same educational or professional activity.

A professional recovery of teachers and their training is necessary to directly oppose any explicit or hidden manifestation of this return to the darker past and technical rationality, so present today in education policies (competences such as conduct to be observed and evaluated, bureaucracy, merit for remuneration, excellence, strategic plans, quality, teaching awards...), whether in curricular content or in forms of management and bureaucratic technical control of education.

This recovery is also moral (autonomy, questioning attitude, self-esteem, citizenship values, etc.) and intellectual (knowledge, reflection, qualification, pedagogical capacity, etc.) and, of course, also structural in training, requires a restructuring of progressive political positions. However, this recovery involves, above all, control and autonomy over the teachers' work process (including training), devalued as a result of curricular fragmentation and

conservative curricular reformist policies of recent years. Fighting against the power that is established through the establishment of decision-making mechanisms, forced isolation and individualism, the routinization and mechanization of work. The objective of this recovery should be to reposition teachers and their education to be active protagonists in their personal, professional and institutional context, increasing their self-concept, their consideration and their professional and social status. This can be achieved by demanding a true collective struggle, collegiality among colleagues, greater participation in educational decisions by everyone involved in childhood and adolescent education. It is necessary to reallocate and give importance to the knowledge worked in educational centers to increase teaching knowledge, consideration and social *status*.

We learn when we are able to analyze our own experience. When we can extract a solution from it, which, when put into practice, helps us do better and allows us to live a new experience. When this is done for a long time, in the field of practical experience, what remains is a multitude of resolved issues that can be shared with colleagues. It is a matter of valuing what one knows and also valuing what others know. Breaking the silence of that voice that remains silent because it does not dare to express itself, because it thinks it does not contribute anything or because others know better. It is necessary to break with the ignorance of so many who advise others or want to solve problems from outside, to share professional practice with colleagues next door, with those in neighboring rooms and with those who work in institutions close to the role they perform, even if they are far away in space.

Hannah Arendt wrote long ago that education is the point at which we decide to love the world enough to take responsibility for it. She also said that many adults refuse to take responsibility for the world they brought their children into. Now is a good time to develop this appreciation and rethink the world we want for children and adolescents. We can do this if we are able to use education, within and outside, to improve people. However, this implies a new way of doing things, on the part of politicians, the educational system and the community. It is possible that all of this will lead to the reinvention of a new way of doing and investing in education.

Sharing experience and knowledge in teaching is very important. However, sharing means living the story from within. Therefore, communication between teachers is even more important, sharing problems, talking about everything, anxieties, grouping together in a

common project to help overcome demoralization and recover the tools that allow them to perform well at work.

Progressive policies should also lead us to practices of reviewing the official legitimization of school knowledge so defended, nowadays, by the conservative right in its retreat and try to put students in contact with the different fields and paths of knowledge, experience and reality. In this sense, it is necessary to be sensitive to the traditions and values of ethnic and cultural minorities.

However, it is difficult, with a single conservative educational thought predominant in some contexts, to unmask the overloaded, decontextualized and hidden official curriculum and discover other ways of seeing a more diverse reality. Teacher education must break that uniform way of thinking that leads to analyzing progress in a linear way and does not allow the integration of other identities and social realities, other cultural manifestations of everyday life and other secularly marginalized voices. Confront the social exclusion of large sections of the population as something determined, habitual, ordinary and reprehensible.

A new way of seeing teacher education necessarily involves understanding what happens in the face of the specificities relating to the areas of the curriculum, rapid changes in context, the rapid implementation of new information technologies and their consequences, a new vision of schooling, teaching and learning, the educational inclusion of girls and boys with educational needs, or the intercultural and environmental phenomenon. Being aware that education policies and practices do not work in all contexts, since cultures and contexts are different, and it is not possible to transpose them to very different contexts, even if one thinks that they are similar things, as has been happening in many Latin American countries with the influence of external reforms.

3 NEW GAZES, AND SOMETIMES OLD, ON TEACHER EDUCATION POLICIES AND PRACTICES

In recent years, alternatives have begun to emerge, old and new voices have begun to overcome aphonias or disconcerts.¹² The analysis that is not limited only to training such as the mastery of scientific or academic disciplines, the passion for methodological recipes¹³ or, for

everyone, is gaining strength, but also raises the need to establish new relational, investigative and participatory models in the practice of teacher education. And that brings us to the present.

New practices for new teacher education must seek alternatives for more participatory training, where knowledge is shared and, although it is difficult for policies to reach practices, it is necessary to generate changes in the training process, making it more dialogic with a greater exchange between all those who have something to say, and this must imply a new gaze at teacher education. It is important to be introduced to the theory and practice of teacher education with new perspectives that favor greater innovation in centers.

If the formative practice is based on the fact that teachers are the subjects of their education, we must be aware that the change in teachers, which is what training aims for, being a change in professional culture, is very slow and complex. This slowness must also imply, on the part of the teaching staff, the need to personally live the experience of change. Teacher education alone has little impact if it is not linked to personal, contextual, organizational and management changes and experiences of power relations. To change education, no one doubts that teachers must be changed, but also the context in which they work. If school improvement requires a systemic process of innovation, this means that changes in one part of the system affect the others. Therefore, continuing teacher education influences and is influenced by the context in which it occurs, and this influence conditions the results that can be obtained. Therefore, to change education, teachers must be trained in the context in which they work, in other words, in the educational institution and in the social environment. If both things are done, an institutional innovation is created, preventing innovation from being just a personal experience.

The aforementioned professional development does not fall solely on teacher education, but on several components that occur together in the teaching work practice. This development must occur simultaneously in the teaching staff as individuals, as professionals and as members of an institution. Teacher development occurs in a specific social and educational context. The context conditions the profession, so there is awareness that prudence must be applied to actions and practices that are plausible and politically acceptable to the protagonists. Without them there is no change. And this displeases conservative politicians, as they do not want a uniform, subordinate and dependent teaching body to disappear.

When education approaches the context, there is an awareness that unlearning mechanisms must be established to learn again. Learning and unlearning are two sides of the same training coin. There is also the necessary reflection on the ethical, relational, collegial, attitudinal and emotional aspects of the teaching staff, which go beyond the purely technical and *objective* aspects.

This implies a new perspective that should not only be an education centered on face-to-face activities, nor view the teacher solely as an implementer of educational techniques, but rather an education oriented towards a professional of knowledge who is capable of analyzing and critically reflecting on the educational aspects within his/her context, both individually and with the colleagues. A teacher education that favors processes of sharing educational practice in guided reflection and a questioning attitude that can be supported by colleagues.

According to this approach, the teacher assumes his/her role as protagonist in the transformation of the educational system; for this, a teacher who breaks with the conception of simple transmission of knowledge is needed and who actively participates in the investigation of his/her own practice, in the management of the classroom and the center, in the management of conflicts and in the resolution of problems that his/her social environment imposes on him/her. In this sense, it is not enough for educational research to be exclusively a laboratory matter to control variables, but it must be a creative, autonomous and self-reflective process, in which the teacher can criticize his or her interpretations of values, ideologies, beliefs and traditions of education.

Thus, the importance of reflecting and investigating what is done emerges. Teacher education must be based on subjects' reflection on their teaching practice, in a way that allows them to examine their implicit theories, their mental functioning schemes, their common or reproductive pedagogical knowledge, their attitudes towards teaching, carrying out a process of constant self-esteem. Guidance for this process of reflection requires a (self)critical approach to educational intervention and an analysis of practice from the perspective of the ideological and attitudinal assumptions that support them. This also means that during training, teachers' values and conceptions must be constantly questioned.

Training policies need to clarify the intended objectives of teacher education and support teachers' efforts to change their practice, giving greater autonomy to enable pedagogical processes of change. They should also investigate the extent to which teacher

education affects changes in student learning and contributes to the professionalization of teachers. These policies, looking to the future, must develop institutions to support training, with more flexible and decentralized structures with diversified programs and modalities that ensure individual and connective learning processes close to educational institutions and territories and radically introduce training in schools where teachers assume the role they deserve, and they are the ones who plan, execute and evaluate their own training through innovation projects.

The objective of teacher education is to be able to continually reflect and modify educational tasks, in an attempt to adapt to the diversity of students, to recognize differences and to commit to the context. This important purpose is only compatible through its connection to a common project in the educational center or territory and to autonomous training processes, to a power of pedagogical intervention. It means accepting the need for greater knowledge, commitment and an important relationship with the context. He/she is not only a research or reflective teacher, but also a community teacher, whose social commitment is necessary and important for improving education.

As I have already argued elsewhere, if teacher education aims to serve something beyond personal, professional and institutional development, it is also about confirming the enormous contradictions in which the teaching profession is immersed in the 21st century, trying to provide elements to overcome the perpetuation of situations that have already been dragging on for a long time, such as the inoculation of an educational DNA: professional alienation, working conditions, hierarchical structure, training through the updating of others, etc. This implies educating teachers in change and for change, by breaking traditions, inertia and imposed ideologies; to be formed through the development of reflective skills in groups, since the teaching profession has become increasingly complex, and doubts, lack of certainty and divergence are inherent aspects with which an education professional has to live. This therefore implies a change in training policies and practices (Imbernón, 2017).

The importance of the field of knowledge of teacher education allows, on the one hand, that aspects that have remained immobile for a long time or that have been trapped by institutional inertia or inadequate public policies can begin to be questioned; and, on the other hand, it encourages the emergence of alternatives or new proposals, which can provoke new thinking and training processes and the role of teachers in professional change.

We cannot fail to emphasize that this improvement in teacher education also involves establishing paths to achieve pedagogical, labor and social improvements and, also, through debate and self-criticism among the professional group itself, seeking a strategic alliance between teachers to build a new way of seeing teacher education, destroying old models and building coherent processes of action to increase social participation, transform education and question technical and instrumental training and contribute to a fairer, plural and democratic society.

In short, teacher education must promote a culture of participation, professional tolerance and collaboration based on the healthy and constructive confrontation of the diversity of opinions and ideas, and it must introduce debate and interaction in the cloisters and departments of innovation project construction centers. We must also seek to find organizational alternatives and institutional commitment to eliminate at the same time the processes of individualism in professional work, without prejudice to the group favoring the participation and decision-making of all work components and defining the conditions so that each member enhances his/her individual aspirations and seeks to satisfy his/her needs and expectations.

The task is not easy, but it is necessary to assume and generate a new professional culture that allows the development of an education that jointly develops reflective capabilities, and that is interpreted, understood and reflected collectively on teaching and the social reality that surrounds it. To achieve this, we need to improve the functioning of the centers, their management, organization, evaluation and communication, compare ideas and, of course, intervene as much as possible in the curriculum and the social reality that surrounds the educational center. Perhaps many educational issues will have to be quarantined to be reconstructed and generate new alternatives for teacher education.

Teacher education must be supported by the subjects' reflection on their teaching practice, in order to allow them to examine their implicit theories, their operating schemes, their attitudes..., carrying out a constant process of self-evaluation that guides professional development. This means that continuous education must extend to the field of emotions and attitudes and must constantly question each teacher's values and conceptions about what he/she thinks, does and about collective work.

The approach we advocate is, therefore, not an education focused on content, nor on the application of techniques, but oriented towards a reflective and critical professional who has the capacity to process information, analyze and critically reflect on what he/she does, autonomy shared with colleagues, rational decision with evidence of improvement, evaluation of processes about what he/she does and reformulation of educational projects if they do not work, both labor, social and educational within his/her context and with colleagues.

The roles of teachers and even students have changed over time, just like the world around us. From the old functions of instructing children in the four rules and learning to read and write, we have moved to a more comprehensive, more complete education, which covers all aspects of children: physical, intellectual, social... Teachers are no longer trained by people who teach all subjects with a single book, the basic subjects to be able to access culture, but they have also become, in the 21st century, education and knowledge professionals, in which social issues are very important. The social reality that exists in school institutions reflects the conflicts that are experienced today in the family, in relationships, in the professional world, in the mass media, in political systems, etc., and teachers take on new educational roles, new challenges to maintain up to date with what is happening in the scientific and social fields.

These are changes that have impacted the profession. From isolated work in the classroom, it moved to the teaching team, and the unit of change is the educational institution. Nowadays, it is not possible to work as a teacher without working as a team. Relational and participatory models are essential for the teaching profession. And, especially during the 21st century, there has been a reflection on the ethical, relational, collegial, attitudinal and emotional aspects of teachers, which go beyond the purely technical and “objective” aspects that predominated in almost everything in the previous century. These are increasingly essential themes in today’s schools and in the new role of teachers.

The teaching profession takes on a more relational, cultural-contextual and community nature, in which interaction between colleagues and all people linked to the community becomes important. The 21st century shapes a new way of being a teacher, as he/she has to actively and critically participate in his/her context and transmit to future citizens values and forms of democratic, egalitarian behavior, with respect to the cultural and social diversity of the environment, etc.

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NOTES:

¹ A first approach to the ideas presented here was published in Rodríguez Martínez and Imbernón (2022).

² Education policy can be formally understood as the actions undertaken by a government in relation to educational practices and the way the government approaches the production and provision of education (Viennet & Pont, 2017). Also in Rayou and Van Zanten (2015): “Educational policies are programs developed by authorities, informed by values and ideas, directed at educational actors, and implemented by administrators and educational professionals”. Although I would add that there can be, and there is, a number of non-governmental or inter-governmental institutional actors that also influence.

³ We applied the concept of conservative that incorporates neoconservative, liberal and neoliberal policies in this text. See also Apple (2002).

⁴ Power to do, to intervene, to modify, to manipulate, to see a certain reality, etc.

⁵ Government officials regret that candidates for teaching do not meet the necessary conditions nor assume the responsibility they should have, but, paradoxically, instead of establishing criteria for improving that profession, they reduce it to a secondary or subsidiary profession, even in relation to other social service professions.

⁶ We are referring here to the fact that the most progressive policies involve deliberation processes between legitimately interested actors, and this implies the ability to argue, to convince, and as a convincing argument is not the same as a logically convincing argument, the ability to argue is necessary to carry them out (Martínez Rizo, 2018).

⁷ If we want teachers to be autonomous professionals, who work in collaboration with other professionals in their center, if we want them to be able to generate intervention projects and share doubts, problems and innovative solutions through individual and collective deliberation, we have to transform their initial training.

⁸ Previously, an individual training model predominated in teacher education; in other words, priority was given to initial training (bad and historically defenseless) and *training where and anyhow possible* was applied in continuing education.

⁹ Anomie as the passage of everything, from collective norms and obligations.

¹⁰ Cultural Marxism, always controversial in intellectual debates, states that culture is inseparable from its social, economic and political context and, therefore, must be studied taking into account the system and social relations that produce it.

¹¹ Gadamer (1977) said that a convincing argument, which often appeals to feeling, is different from a logically convincing argument, which often does not convince.

¹² For years there have been groups of teachers committed politically and unionistically in a critical attitude, resistance and alternative actions, especially in summer schools, meetings, publications in pedagogical journals and in union and pedagogical renewal movements. Many teachers and groups have assumed, for a long time, that their role is more related to a facilitator of a learning process than an instructional process transmitter, and alternative training processes are required.

¹³ If education focuses on face-to-face activities that are predominantly methodological; if teachers are conceived as implementers of techniques, training will be oriented towards the academic discipline and teaching methods and techniques; if based on a more reflective and critical professional, it will be oriented towards the development of information processing capabilities, analysis and critical reflection, diagnosis of problematic situations, collective decision-making, process evaluation and reformulation of projects in a more horizontal education.

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