

CONCERNING THE DISCOURSES ON TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper delves into the diverse ways in which teacher development is currently conceptualized. A large bibliographical corpus allows to appreciate how diverse the positions concerning initial teacher development are, as well as the changes teachers should experience in order to improve their teaching practices. Besides the corpus there is another dimension concerning the discourse about teaching practice and professional development issued from its own actors, addressed neither to researchers nor to authorities. The mutual invisibility of those places of discourse production lays down the path for this paper, going further than simply accepting the existence of both discourse modes in order to understand them, as productions of a place that at the same time allows and forbids.

TEACHER EDUCATION • VOCATIONAL TRAINING • DISCOURSE •
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(SELF)UNDERSTANDING, CHANGING, IMPROVEMENT...

TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS UNDOUBTEDLY AN AREA WHERE everything that has been said can be said differently, either to be improved or refuted. A simple overview of some chapter books and journal articles published in the past few decades offers a landscape of a diversity of approaches, as well as a variety of opposition and discussion on the matter. This is a field where the dominant note is the diagnoses denoting that several aspects of teaching practices look bad when they could look better, or really well even. This is perhaps why teachers cannot read them without feeling judged of teaching 'wrongly' and, also true, urged by diverse means and reasons, to improve their practice because that is always a real possibility. The purpose to improve a current situation, either by radically changing it or just improving it, is a common focal point in every academic research on the subject.

The debate concerning how the current deficiencies on teaching and teachers' professional development fields are to be resolved, revolves more or less explicitly on the virtues consigned to being a good teacher. Often this is just the opposite to reality's faults. Far from being a peculiarity of teaching practices' analysis, it has been a common ground to all improvement projects whether in politics, social and economic spheres from the Enlightenment to our days. This constitutes a legitimating of the immense academic and political efforts invested in

the study of matters concerning teachers' professional development, in most European and American countries at least.

However, it has long been noted that the fruits of said endeavors usually get tangled in web of academicians and unable to reach its logical recipients, teachers themselves. This has challenged academic researches to find out why this happens (CLARK, 1988; PERRENOUD, 1994; HANCOCK, 2001; DESJARDINS, 2013). It is my thesis in this article, that it is not enough to acknowledge there are insider and outsider perspectives (COCHRAN-SMITH; LITTLE, 1993; RAYOU, 2008). Rather, it needs to be further inquired on what such *places* (DE CERTEAU, 1993) of knowledge and practice production *allow* and *forbid*, so the question of the discursive production about teachers' professional development (including analysis of teaching practices) stop hearing always the same bell.

Academic research theorization investment on teachers' professional development and teaching practices as well, entwines in a fashion that is not always dialectic *two worlds* with mutual *otherness*. Being able to tell the other, the colonial other, the subaltern other, the other just other, has always been a mirror difficult to accept in its dimension of identitary reference (be it personal, cultural, social or ideological). It certainly requires a thorough deconstruction of one's discourse that forcibly implies its conditions of production (this is, what such *place allows* but also *forbids*).

This idea applies not only to the fruits of the academic research discourses on teachers' professional development and teaching practices but also to the discourses of teachers talking about themselves, full of otherness as they might be. While it is unlikely a teacher might not understand what they are doing – as it is often assumed – anything they might express about either their practices or their identity roots casting light on how they perceive their professional development, is a discourse that can be analyzed and criticized and thus come away as strengthened or deeply reconsidered. From my limited experience I can only assert that teachers that see themselves as theorists of their own professional practice are better equipped to establish rapports with these others, whether they are historians, philosophers, linguists or psychologists. Likewise, it has always seemed to me that researchers who identify themselves as subjects of practice of their own research cross the bridge to teaching practice more fluidly and they often produce more judicious discourses. As Vygotsky (1925/1999, 275 clearly explains on this subject:

Here, too, is the root of the question of another person's "I", i.e., of how I can know the mind of another person. The mechanism for knowing oneself (self-awareness) is the same as the mechanism for knowing others. Usual theories of our knowledge of another's mind either proclaim forthwith its unknowability or, by means

of a variety of hypotheses, endeavour to construct a plausible mechanism that essentially is the same in a theory of sensations or a theory of analogy: **we know others because we know ourselves**; in getting to know the anger of someone else, I am reproducing my own anger. (my emphasis)

This paper is structured in two parts. The first overviews some matters relating to the different styles of discourse around teachers' professional development with a special focus on the feelings of foreignness setting them apart and the implied considerations on methodologies. The second part reviews how authors have analyzed the links between professional development and change, and also, between professional development and self development, this is, between the kinds of professional the teacher is able or wants to become and the professional the others want or need. There will be an overarching counterpoint of voices belonging to the different actors and their *places*. A short conclusion closes the article gathering the main points of the covered topics.

ON THE POINTS OF VIEW, DISCOURSES AND HOW DEVELOPMENT AND CHANGE CAN BE UNDERSTOOD

Once we ascertain a duality of discourses, absolutely or relatively independent of each other, on the subject of teachers' professional development it seems wise to me to begin by casting a glance on how they are supposedly related. Indeed, there is ample bibliography *describing* what teachers are, know, think, feel or hope for, based on what they themselves *utter* (RUSSELL; MUNBY, 1991; CLANDININ; CONNELLY, 1996; BONNETON, 2008; ALTET et al., 2013 among many possible others). In spite of the apparent diversity, the literature adheres to the forms used by the Social Sciences to relate with their objects of study (FENSTERMACHER, 1994, p. 4, 7). Here, the teachers' voices is taken as "proof" or "testimony" on which conclusions are built. However, the conclusions validity does not rest on said testimony but rather, the researcher's methodological neatness to handle it (RIOPEL; GERVAIS, 2008). It is, and it couldn't be otherwise, a discourse on other discourse(s). And yet, a reading from *the margins* of this discourse is always possible, a new reading in which teachers' voices appear *differently*.

This assumption will lead me down two different paths, which will be taken successively. In the first place I find it worthwhile to focus on the conditions of production of the discourse of proof or testimony, on which the research concerning teaching practice or teachers' professional development is based. Secondly, the successive

discourse mediations from the teachers' voices to final reader need to be made explicit. The point is to avoid the blurry of limits between one and other type of discourse on the teachers' professional development, fusing them into just one discourse. To close the item I will explore succinctly the means by which the former considerations could affect, from the point of view of certainty, the extensive common ground of causal nature that appears to be constant in relation to the production of knowledge related to the teachers' professional development. The counterpoint with *the other discourse* will have a special place in the argumentative development.

Firstly we must consider the conditions of production of a discourse on oneself in a context that is neither private nor intimate, in a fashion often devoid of spontaneity. I am not suggesting the interviewed, surveyed or observed teachers must necessarily be untrue, which could of course be at least in part, but rather to the fact that the discourse may be different depending on the moment, the circumstances or, even, the enquirer. This is, I would like to propose taking into account the inherently interpersonal and intersubjective condition of the illocutionary force undeniably possessed by the discourses constituting the base of these research works. History (conceptual history among other approaches), and sociology and psychology as well, have made notable advances in the theory field of how researchers relate to the other's voice, near or far in space and /or time.

Often during my long experience in this field have I come across texts (oral or written) than I can only describe as "the best version of myself", be it because I had the impression they attempted to maximize hits or misses in a manner likely to be narcissistic or because they presented more a conclusion than a testimony. I have also occasionally faced stonewalled citadels, people who would consider being asked about their personal judgments or feelings as an inadmissible prying. We must never lose sight that the dark side of discourses –written or spoken– about oneself, of one is or does, doubtless bear resemblance to nakedness –of exposure in Freudian sense– that some experience with pleasure, with shame, or as the most natural thing in the world. Anyway, what the speaker thinks is always more meaningful than what is said, and this might or might not be the same regardless of what the researcher wants to believe. On this point, and this is later picked up again, I find it relevant to mention what American academia calls *narrative inquiry* (CLANDININ; CONNELLY, 1991; RITCHIE; WILSON, 2000). Along a similar line to the French psychoanalytically-oriented clinical approach (BLANCHARD-LAVILLE, 2001; CHAUSSECOURTE, 2014), American authors propose an interactive dimension that is much deeper and dialectical between researchers (who remain researchers) and teachers (who remain their object of study), that results in a final

text that is not created in co-authorship. It is worthy of notice that the process of making explicit the conditions of production of this text, which is used to conceptualize the practice of teaching or the journey of professional development of the teachers on whom the research is focused, is a unique feature of this model's research protocols. In this sense it attempts to stop being, at least for an instant, a no-place of discourse production, particularly because it is a discourse on the other and not on one self.

The *place of production* of both types of texts gives way to a next set of considerations: the numerous and often overlapping levels of interpretation both in the documental texts and, even more so, in the texts referring the former. Indeed, I have just referred to one in the above paragraph. A discourse on oneself, one's actions or feelings, even in the silent world of the private thinking, is always an interpretation of the matter that might or might not change with time. We all once or twice have found ourselves befuddled by a previous judgment ("I don't know why I thought it was so good... or poor... that class... that course") clearly suggesting that we have changed our minds, perhaps radically. Inevitably the transition from thought to a public discursive form within a certain interlocution context represents a second level of interpretation in which the fact that it is addressed to somebody (singular or plural) "decisively matters. What is said constitutes not only an interpretation of subject –today's class, for instance– but also an interpretation on what the speaker thinks of themselves, a particular version that will be delivered to the interviewer. Clot (2000, p. 58) claims:

[...] la description est toujours adressée. La verbalisation n'est pas la mise en mot de l'action passée. C'est une activité langagière à part entière au cours de laquelle le ou les sujets redécouvrent l'activité et la transforment.

In turn, Barbier (2000, p. 91) warns us:

Pour ne citer qu'un seul exemple, caricatural mais fréquent, on constate qu'un questionnement direct sur les motivations ou sur les valeurs déclarées par les acteurs est ensuite utilisé par le chercheur lui-même comme indicateur de motivations ou de valeurs attribuables à ces mêmes acteurs. Naïvetés combien de fois répétées...

Lastly we must not lose sight that the way that thought reaches the reader, even the most elementary form of textual faithful transcription, belongs to another discursive universe where it is "proof" or "example" of judgments, concepts or conclusions, created by the

new text's author, concerning this matter. This certainly brings into play new levels of interpretation –i.e. what the author thinks about it and the way they offer to others a version of their own thinking– ... to which is added, of course, every and *each* reader's interpretation.

In other words, and the use of the indicative mood sustaining many of these texts aside, we need to bear in mind that the many discourses on what the teachers professional development is and how it occurs have too many interpretative mediations (none of which are naive nor political, philosophical or ideologically neutral) to surmise that its interweaving configures a verbal correlative truthful to that segment of what is real being the teachers' professional development, indissolubly related to the teaching practice (whether in the future, in the present or in the past). We should be clear that the first step to access to what somebody says on what they think on what they do begins by denaturalizing the unavoidable interpretative work done by the reader (or listener), assuming that what is interpreted is, in turn, an interpretation. In the section titled '*Interpretation in narrative inquiry*', Clandinin & Connelly (1991, p. 274-276) affirm:

Initially a narrative researcher is concerned with description [...]. But even in these descriptive records, there is an interpretive quality, for when we tell stories of ourselves to others [...] we are engaged in offering an interpretation of the stories we are living. And when we, as researchers, record field notes of participant-observation, there is an interpretative quality that enters into the notes we keep.

The use of indicative mood, the printed word and the social and political prestige of the academia bestow on the texts, following Barthes line of thought, the aspect of truth regarding their matter. I allude in particular to the difference between the statement “this book is 100 pages long” or “it rained yesterday” with “teachers don't have enough time to do research” or “teachers prefer this to that”. However, and this is relevant too, most of the “documental” texts are also expressed in indicative mood and it is not without great effort that their authors arrive to consider them as version of their thought related to the context of enunciation. From my point of view in such cases what supports the use of the indicative mood is not the interpretative dimension of the conclusion but a subtle play between a conviction –a gesture towards oneself– and persuasion –a gesture towards the other– that leads us to consider the texts expressing the voice of the teachers more of a dialogue than a simple statement on the matter. Even when my approach might be articulated differently, I don't feel its fundamentals are far from the classic text of Fernstermacher's *The knower and the known* (1994).

To wrap up this segment, and as it has been alluded before, I will review some implications of this approach to the linkage of these two discourses on teachers professional development. In fact the emphasis on the interweaving of versions concerning the events of its personal significance leads to the loss of certainty supporting claims on the nature of teachers' professional development. It also challenges the certainty availing a direct correlation between what teachers say or do and different levels of occurrences –for instance a model of teacher professional development and the quality of the teaching, or the kind of teacher someone is– or between the documental basis of a given research and its conclusions, particularly when they are expressed in terms such as “teachers are (or think, or hope for...)”.

Certain authors (EVANS, 2014; CLARK 1992; FERRY, 1983/2003) have long claimed that it might not be possible establish a link reasonably solid between the institutional implementation of teaching professional development models and what could be considered as outcomes in terms of styles of teaching and measurable educative results. While Clark (1992, p. 75) allows that teachings might be ‘self-directed professionals’ because he considers ‘the good news is that teachers are not passive, needy, deficient and homogeneous’, Evans (2014, p. 181) finally accepts that “we have established that effective professional learning is not necessarily confined to intentional development opportunities and events”. Long before Ferry (1983/2003, p. 29) suggested that ‘se former ne peut être qu’un travail sur soi-même, librement imaginé, voulu et poursuivi grâce à des moyens qui s’offrent ou qui l’on se procure.’

To the aforementioned authors this is evident even to the teaching practice outsider’s regard. The lack of certainty concerning the kind of teacher – and teaching – deriving in the attainment of a certain institutional arrangements for teaching professional development must be understood as a set of generalization possibilities. It is not that we cannot, in fact, assume there is a rapport among a practice style, a personal biography and reciprocity in a teaching professional development model... for a given teacher. The issue here is to always determine whether there are modes to argue – and verify – that it will be such, if not for all cases, at least for a great majority, allowing the expression “in general”.

From my perspective it is evident that this idea adheres -often against some parameters of innovative stances- to a causal structure positively correlating ways of doing (either in teaching or in professional development) with the supposed outcomes. Thus it is assumed time and again (GINNS et al., 2001; PERRENOUD, 2001; PAQUAY et al., 2014), that certain ways of teaching enhance or prevents the learning of the content knowledge, just as certain ways of syllabus in basic teachers development give as a result certain kind of teachers, who eventually will instruct

in a certain fashion which will obviously result in certain educative outcomes. Here, I find it opportune to bring up Ricœur's "singular causal imputation" (1985/1995, p. 301). While Ricœur applies it to historical thinking it is, in fact, applicable to the analysis of the reality of the teaching practice and the teachers professional development because it deals with things that have happened (and thus they can be known) and the logical chain organizing them ("by means of the imagination"), some being imputable to the existence of the others. What matters, finally, argumentative dimensions aside, there is no way to "prove" the dependence between, for example, a model of teachers professional development and any given educative outcomes, be they outstanding or disastrous. Hancock (2001, p. 122) concludes that '*illusion of causality*' ('i.e. teachers teach and pupils therefore learn what is taught', which can also be applied to teacher learners).

In actuality, starting from this claim potentially undermines the basis of any institutional initiative for teachers development since it is assumed that, regardless of its style or contents, some teachers will turn out to be one form and others differently (and some might not even fall within these categories). To the extent this logic applies to the past as well, this view is also likely to undermine the basis of some conclusions regarding the cause-effect relationship between the evils of the present in the educative field and the institutional models of professional development supposedly decisive in the development of active teachers, held responsible for the current deficiencies. Thus I am suggesting that it is unwise to establish both outcomes (in the future) or causes (in the past) in the field of professional development based on a causal structure that takes into account only the configuration of the institutional offer regarding teachers professional development related to "cause to an effect" (expected or observed).

In my opinion one of the most important clues permitting to analyze teaching practice is to always bear in mind that the subjects who are objects of analysis, are, at the same time, subjects of analysis of the same object, this is, of their teaching practice or the sense of their teaching development (COCHRAN-SMITH; LYTTLE, 1993). From the perspective of power holding this means that the fact of being social, political or ideologically accredited to tell the other, understand them or design the ways they should be, forcibly coexists with other manners in which power is exercised, this time by the subject. These manners are more surreptitious, more invisible and relatively invulnerable and make each subject in development the place where they gain sense –in both infinite and diverse singularities– in the developmental mediations offered by both the professional development institutions and the vast field of experience of their own life journey.

And it is right from this *other* side that it is always possible that everyone (this is, *each one of us*) are good, bad and average teacher in different circumstances, even in the short span of a class. Even more, we are all that at the same time for some students but not all, for some colleagues but not all, for some authorities but not all. In fact we should accept that nobody is such a good teacher who always does everything right, so long as nobody is such a bad teacher who always does *everything* wrong. The amount of things going on during just one class is so large and diverse that there is no means to cluster them in just one category offering clear references allowing appreciating the distance of the teacher to the ideal. I have assessed classes in which I could find no fault regarding selection, order and structure of the contents, and yet I had the impression (never a certainty) that some students might not have understood what the class was about. On the other hand I have witnessed classes with wonderful interpersonal dynamics, agile, attractive... in which I learned that the Berlin Wall extended all along of the border, among other juicy tidbits I never read about in the history books. Classes but in singular because maybe the previous or the following one would have impressed *me* differently, both of the class and the teacher, whose impression, in turn, could be completely different to *mine*. We all know that *some time*, some subject, *some class* or *some course* we did better or worse, in that year or that group, which were so nice or *that another* group where the students were so challenging. We also know that we have not always experienced the urge, the need or the opportunity to talk about it to somebody,

It is also clear to all of us when we grade our students' papers and we notice that some are extraordinary and others are terrible, that we could arrive to just any conclusions if we took those results as a measure of quality of our teaching. Of course we could think that some students did not understand the guidelines and perhaps with a different guide, more or less complex, outcomes would have been better or worse. In other words, it is indeed difficult to deduce the teaching quality of a given teacher from their students' performance outcomes, just as it is equally difficult to deduce knowledge from said outcomes. It is hard to refute that with good students we all feel like great teachers –and the opposite as well–.

During my career I have met teachers to whom giving passing grades was almost an obligation or a natural right, and in general, they were not considered good teachers even if (or better said, precisely because) *all* their students received passing grades in their tests. In other cases, it must be pointed out, it was “scholar failure” what made a teacher a *good one*, as it is supposed a proof of high standards and thus of a higher demand of school performance. There is, of course, generous praise for those universally said to be clear in their expositions, and that makes them better to those whose classes are harder to follow. Praise is

also bestowed on those who can keep the class under tight control or are in good personal terms with students. Obviously nothing of this trickle down to statistics or national or international standards, but rather, it belongs to the universe where everyone –just like *our* students– are identified by their names. I do not remember having mentored teachers or teacher learners worried about becoming reflective teachers, or researcher, or constructivist, piagetians, or even good teachers. What I do remember is the diversity of the “urges” that demanded my advice, my help, my knowledge or my time... which always reflected the singularity of issues that worried them.

TEACHERS CHANGE, DEVELOP AND SELF-DEVELOP

It is safe to assume that the moment an individual enrolls in a higher education institution (be it a teachers’ institute or medical school), he or she already has some expectations regarding the professional practice. However, there are some considerations relevant to teachers’ professional development. Matter of fact and unlike other professions, individuals have been exposed to a wide variety of teachers probably all their lives, or at least a good decade and a half before becoming a student teacher (or perhaps longer, for not everyone enrolls right out of school), living passively with the practice of their chosen profession. It is also clear that when somebody enrolls in a teachers development institution – just like any other course or program– does not expect to complete it unchanged. What is not that clear is that –once in the professional practice – all teachers will feel compelled to change what they do, understanding they find reasons to change it. Likewise, it is also unclear that an outsider’s perspective can properly appreciate the many and diverse change processes occurring in the riverbed of practices.

These are probably the crucial points regarding the axis passing through the notions and expectations concerning teachers’ professional development at the moment: to develop *oneself* or *to be* developed by someone else with the purpose of becoming a teacher – and effectively being one – and afterwards decide, or have to, change what one already is. There is, on one hand, several approaches regarding the passing from ‘amateur’ to professional mostly centered on the institutional arrangements for teaching development; on the other hand there is also plenty of stances focusing on changes concerning professional teaching practice sometimes starting on the inadequacy for the purposes –i.e. inefficiency– and others starting from the changes required by a purported renovation of education’s political or social ends. I will apply myself to study these two matters successively in this section. I will then first deal with the manners in which the question of the entrance to the profession is approached, and secondly, I will review the approaches

criticizing the manner the teaching practice is achieved in order to transform it. It is of remarkable interest contrasting what Anglo-Saxon bibliography dubs teacher researchers and what is, in fact, practical research on teaching practice as a source of change and improvement in the teaching professional practice.

SELF-DIRECTED TEACHERS DEVELOPMENT

How does one become a teacher? As it was exposed before, some would explain it as a process foreign to the teacher that determines the resulting type of teaching professional. Others would instead say it combines decisions from the very subject in formation; and some would consider that it is something that each individual does on their own accord and style and for reasons that are always peculiar. Some affirm that some basic knowledge is required before going on stage, while others maintain that anything worthwhile is learned by doing... or a bit of both. And lastly, were we to ask teachers, one by one, to detail how was their professional development, we would probably have far more answers than we could manage, and always bearing in mind that they were just the answer to a questionnaire, in what Argyris and Schön (1974, p. 6-7) call *espoused theories*. In fact it is matter for debate to the extent to which it a concern of teachers regarding their professional work. From my point of view, assuming that teachers whether self-develop or are developed by someone else sheds light more on a difference of understanding reality by those who are mostly alien to it than reality itself, which remains beyond reach.

In this sense an often made distinction implying a certain value judgment between the notion that teachers direct themselves following a personal plan, and that claiming that they are outcomes of an extrinsic production machinery (POPKEWITZ, 2015; RITCHIE; WILSON, 2000), as if this entailed a greater or lesser degree of freedom to teachers. Zeichner (2010, p. 70), however, weighs in the relative effect of such approaches:

Here, despite all of the rhetoric surrounding efforts to prepare teachers who are more reflective and analytic about their work, in reality, reflective teacher education has done very little to foster genuine teacher development and to enhance teachers' roles in educational reform. Instead, an illusion of teacher development has often been created which has maintained in more subtle ways the subservient position of the teacher.

This discourse remains firmly outsider to the central problem of teacher professional development, understood as a process undergone by a subject, or many subjects, in a mode that does not render it something physical and therefore, not approachable by research the way

other events or processes are. The notion that perhaps said processes' mechanisms is beyond the horizon is always unsettling, particularly to traditions in which research has unveiled so many mysteries. With the purpose of making sense of this interplay between two, and for two, involving not only trainers and trainees but also outsider's and own discourses, I find it appropriate to borrow from psychoanalysis and their notion of seeing something "otherwise".

In this sense Kaës in *Fantasme et Formation* (2007) noteworthy unveils the place of the trainer (formateur) in a context in which the centrality of the institutional arrangements regarding the subjects in formation ends up neutralizing any role of subjective perspectives from anyone holding a trainer place (i.e. politicians, academicians and teacher trainers) may have. From his point of view the request for development to someone is a natural subject's gesture, combining the *instinct* of no longer be the same and the *desire* of becoming like the other somehow. In turn, Kaës believes that regardless of the trainer's place, the notion of being able to "create" the other, of developing them, is a place from which the exercise of power has a significant place (of omnipotence and destruction): 'C'est sans doute que, pour créer et former, donner l'être et la vie, il faut aussi détruire' (2007, p. 70). Close to Kaës thinking, and Enriquez as well Ferry (1983/2003, p. 37) expresses: "Le projet insensé de modeler l'autre, de créer un être à son image, de lui insuffler la vie, qui est le fantasme de l'animateur, ne peut aboutir qu'à lui donner la mort". And still, we are all somehow developed (by someone, in singular or plural) and developers (to others, in singular or plural).

From this point of view I will focus on the use of the verbs "to develop" in many instances concerning teachers professional development. "Developing" teachers of the 21st century, developing reflective teachers, developing good teachers... The absence of subject should not mislead us regarding who is the subject of said action: us... the Government, the Teachers Development Institute, Secretary of Education, society... attributes itself, discursively, the power of developing and deciding the outcome of this development (this is, its product). However, in our world, to assume this dimension of outcome in relation to teachers professional development (and not just it) provides with safety and rationality to institutional endeavors even if it is only to justify its funding (ALTET; GUIBERT, 2014). From my point of view it is likely that the notion of being able to "develop" or at least to guide the professional development in a particular direction backs up the academic investment steering research aiming to be able to define, with certainty, what is teaching professional development and particularly how it occurs. I will review some significant approaches, among many.

L. Evans (2002, 2014) attempts to create an authored version regarding the means teachers professional development occurs. She

clearly establishes not just the fact that there are multiple and diverse regards on the matter, to conclude that in spite of the inevitable individuality of the process, it can be modeled after general guidelines. The principal assumption is that it occurs in precise moments that leave the subject some learning, in particular when they are shown “a better way of doing things” (2014, p. 188). Therefore the notion that change steering professional development (2014, p. 19) This is a change that takes place to the pace of experience (both in the sense of life experience and becoming an expert). I would like to highlight the fact that she considers an incongruity *‘wishing or attempting to impose change [‘a better way’] on others’* (2014, p. 194).

Other research lines, such as those psychoanalytically oriented, have endeavored to understand the professional development focusing on the psychic transformations it entails. Such regards (BLANCHARD-LAVILLE; TOUX-ALAVOIX, 2000; BOSSARD, 2009) attempt to articulate the entrance to the profession as a “time between two” meaning the transition from a student role (which one has always been and still is within the classrooms of the teachers institute) and the teacher one becomes. On this point, the metaphorical concept of “professional adolescence” is of particular notice. It is through it that it that tension, anguish, grief and fantasies ushering the transition from the time of being a student to a teacher happens, often in the very same rooms of the same institution. In that sense Nadot (2000) presents an integrative overview of the manners professional practice is acquired, in which assumes that the subjects in development integrate “professional knowledge” listening to (this is, learning discursive knowledge), seeing (others) doing, talking (this is, analyzing what has been done or seen), and finally, doing.

Professional Didactics approach hold pride of place within the French speaking academia. Just like reflective practitioners case, it wasn't born of teachers professional development necessity, but rather other professional fields was adopted -and partly adapted, too- to the teaching universe. With deep Piagetian roots, Professional Didactics focuses on the relationship between doing and learning (to do), and therefore dissolves the limits between initial development and lifelong learning and development. One of its overarching notions is that “real” work will mold contents and mechanisms of initial training (PAQUAY et al., 2014; VINATIER; ALTET, 2008). VINATIER (2009, p. 16-17) places teachers' professional development at the intersection with a research activity, involving at the same time the subjects in development and the researchers through a theoretical sustainment focusing the analysis of the real practice of the former.

From within, teacher professional development looks differently. As I've mentioned before, in my decades-long experience

accompanying soon-to-be teachers, or practicing teachers (plus my own teaching experience at secondary level), I have never found that the mechanisms, or even the strongest or weakest points of professional development, were a hot topic related to particular situations. This does not mean that, however, that often invokes “fathers” or “mothers” in manners of doing, of focusing subject, being more or less exigent or rigid in certain matters, of thriving in the institutional environment. “I am like...”, “I credit this person with shaping my style...”, “I used to have a teacher who...”, “My mother used to say that...” and utterances in that line that spontaneously populate the professional speech and invite the assumption that to each one, a negative version exists. “I will never be like...” etc. It is also clear that sometimes some people lack the interest or the opportunity to share such thoughts but this doesn’t mean they don’t have any. So, somehow, these people (teachers, parents, acquaintances) or manners of doing have acted as “developers”, regardless of intention. It is the developing teacher who anoints them as developers when adopted them as models, as authorities, as source of security. In this sense nobody becomes a developer of their own volition.

To conclude this section I would like to introduce taught knowledge, which in general has a lackluster role in the analysis on the teachers’ professional development. We must not lose sight of the fact that we, teachers, are specialized on a subject, which we prefer over the rest and that surely it affected our decision to become teachers in the first place. This predilection also allocates our energy in lesson planning, our relationship with our students, in proposing exercises, in looking for new materials, etc. In this sense, the notion of “didactical transference” of Blanchard-Laville (2001, p. 203-207) – even if its design is mostly for practice analysis rather than professional development processes – I find it necessary as a formality since it is part of the “rapport au savoir” of the teacher and their understanding of their own teaching action.

THE RENEWAL OF PRACTICES

The speed at which change occurs, the urgency of the present world, among other factors, since the last decades of the past century have led to the emergence of discourses both critical and profoundly ameliorated regarding the role of education and therefore the manners in which teachers professional development should support the expected change. In this sense it has been suggested, insistently, that practicing teachers, already “mis-developed” should “re-develop” to fit in the new educative purposes and regards. The manners in which this transformation for betterment should happen are diverse and often starting on an interventive action by those who consider themselves qualified to conduct said process. It is interesting to see how the verb

“to help” is used in relation to these proceedings, considering that this is a condition *sine qua non* to achieve it.

The most prominent features of these initiatives for improvement circle around the idea of reflective teachers originated in the United States and later extended in the francophone areas, as well educative action-research – EAR –, with a strong English-speaking base and later extended to other countries. In both cases the main notion is that teachers should become conscious of their limitations both in the action and understanding domains (which has actually guided their own development), which will enable change. According to Kemmis (2007, p. 1). Action research aims at changing three things: practitioners’ *practices*, their *understandings* of their practices, and the *conditions* in which they practice’

From this point of view, the boundaries with those who support practice analysis as a means of improvement of quality in teaching or the professionalization of learners is quite unclear. The former focus on writing about one’s teaching practices as a practice of analysis (RITCHIE; WILSON, 2000; RICHERT ERSHLER, 2001; LIEBERMAN; WOOD, 2001; CIFALI, 2001). However, it is worth mentioning that in spite of the role granted by many authors to the subject of action, its presence and its voice, that seldom dispenses with the presence of a more competent other, who not only guides but also often legitimates the analysis and reflection work (and therefore its conclusions, whatever they might be).

Two matters are at the heart of the concerns regarding these two approaches: the uncritical dimension of practices –or in other words of the assumptions that supposedly stand behind them– the existence of hiatuses separating theory from practice, in the sense that what was expected did not happen. The uncritical scope of practices –those teachers routinely perform without truly knowing why they do it that way, all the more if they are followed by a particular difficulty in account for them in conceptual terms– is almost in the register of stigma. As W. Carr says (1986, p. 183): “The transition is not from theory to practice or practice to theory, but from irrationality to rationality, from ignorance and habit to knowledge and reflection”. It is precisely by overcoming this uncritical dimension through analysis and reflection that the gaps between what the teacher expected to happen and what is understood to have really happened, can be solved. Often it is the wrong practical theory what entailed a wrong action, unable to achieve the expected results. Needless to say, these processes of “illumination” are necessarily worked out in a collective environment that conduits to a new professionalism.

It is worthy of notice how, among these approaches the notion of a metamorphosis from a “raw” professional subject into a “better” one, is always a public and shared affair. In some cases there even is a

particular focus on distinguishing reflection as a private activity from the “true” reflection, collective and socially valuable. “Reflection is commonly considered to be a private activity, while reflective teaching, like any kind of teaching, is expected to be a public activity” (ZEICHNER; TABACHNIK, 2001, p. 82). In this vein, Perrenoud (2001, p. 45), “claims that il importe que la posture réflexive fasse partie du contrat didactique entre formateurs et étudiants, aussi bien que de la culture commune des formateurs”.

From my point of view, this turning public (at least in appearances) of private reflection constitutes a basic requirement of any university or academic research endeavor. This is the means researchers have to approach to an object to be understood, and if possible, help change. However, as we have stated before, no one can be certain of the sense the subject conferred to the practice under collective analysis, and least of all how it may influence any future practices. Let’s allow ourselves to accept that reflection (silent and private) may be highly significant to not just the assessment of the past but also the construction of a different future... or similar in a positive fashion, because sometimes change may not be regarded as necessary.

As a matter of fact, the manners in which we the teachers change our ways of doing and of understanding what we do as well, and widely diverse, personal and idiosyncratic. The same should happen with the researchers practice, although it is not an attractive object of study. From the other shore this is often seen as a refusal to become reflective teachers or researchers (ALTET et al., 2013; HANCOCK, 2001). So far there is no article on the subject but it would be interesting to – symmetrically – inquire into the reasons academy researchers refuse to become practical researchers (of their own research practice) just as many of their objects of study have long been.

In my understanding this is turning point we must focus on to clear the landscape, and in some sense give it some rationality. Many teachers have led (likely many do so as we speak) practical researches concerning their own teaching practice (ZAVALA, 2008). Teachers’ practical research is governed by completely different parameters to that of the academia because the inquiry is not with the purpose of creating new knowledge but the improvement of a practice whose author –and perhaps nobody else– perceives as “problematic” (and not in the sense of a hiatus between theory and practice but the conflict between two rival practical theories regarding the same practice). The research question not always is *what to do* in order to solve this (*practical*) *problem*, and not *why* does this happen. In this sense, practical research flows through different courses to those proposed by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) or even Kemmis (2007) to the extent that it is not the production of new knowledge –this is, to stop *not knowing*– what leads practical research, but the purpose of betterment of practice

where it is considered problematic, complex, inadmissible, distressing or frustrating.

These are neither discursively legitimated processes nor are they private so long as they forcibly involve continuity in the course of the teaching practice. One thing remains true: in the end, things change in some sense. Either teaching becomes different (and therefore the manner it is theorized) or there emerges a new understanding devoid of conflict for ways of doing that remain little or no changed. Even in plain sight it often remains unseen.

CONCLUSION: SAILING THROUGH UNCHARTERED SEAS

Faced with a much broader bibliographic corpus than the reviewed in the previous pages, the notion that the teachers' professional development occurs in manners, and perhaps in places too, not perceivable by academic research is inescapable. The diversity of manners of understanding the matter is certainly overwhelming, and therefore challenging to accurately characterize. Undoubtedly, seen from the outside, things are always 'seen from the outside', and both seer and the doer are responsible for the way they look. Perhaps not everyone sees it the same, because not everyone looks at the same things, or because it is never the same for one subject as for the other.

While many authors agree on its opacity, is a no less desired object of study sometimes from a natural curiosity, and sometimes from a practical and political sense that turns that knowledge into a place of power, to say what there should or should not be or what is right and what is wrong. Thus we have seen those who abhor uncritical and compliant teachers to those who dream with teachers who are critical, emancipated and creative. We have reviewed those who understand that professional development fundamentally depends on institutional arrangement and the organization of the syllabus, to those who think that, in the end, each teacher is the designer of their own teacher professional development project.

Over time, and with the appearance on stage set of tools of analysis that bare the subject's place within its own action (and its own appraisal of the action), it could be said that the situation has become even more obscure. This is, some authors tend to admit that teachers' professional development is an extremely complicated matter because it involves a number of variables of hardly under control or theorization. Therefore, they prudently renounce to the formulation of hypothesis regarding what would happen to teachers or student teachers, or regarding the reasons explaining a current situation that is appraised by some as problematic and defective.

Finally, I would wish everyone would cast a backward glance on their own steps and thought about their good teachers, and the others, and the place each one of them has had in the assimilation of relevant knowledge, fundamental regarding professional performance. For some reason, and there must be a myriad of hypothesis, there is a ubiquitous trend to dichotomize teachers professional development and its content knowledge's rightful place. I'm not referring to simply speak of *history* or *mathematics*, but to world or country, ancient or modern, Marxist or nationalist, postcolonial or Eurocentric history. I would, if I could, give example of other content knowledge such as physics or philosophy (and not history of philosophy). Perhaps my own personal history betrays me on this point. I have been a (history) teacher for more than 40 years and I have endeavored to theorize didactics of history, understood as the theory of the teaching practice that every teacher does with their own practice. More than two decades in the field of teacher development (to history teachers) have convinced me that all student teachers are not just only children, but also, it is impossible to understand anything about the development of these future teachers extraneous to how they relate with the history they teach, the one they want to teach, the one they have learned or simply know but cannot figure out what to do with it. What does not seem to be questioned is the fact of hoping their students learn and enjoy that knowledge and the special bond they share with the teacher. Ultimately, being a teacher is not much more than interact with others, which always take place through content knowledge, and it is often is the way said content knowledge allows it to be, because often it is not the teacher but the particular topic. There are topics, and there are days in which it seems we are (experienced or not) all bad teachers.

I have also seen from close the difficulty (that once was mine) to size the logic of the change proposals in the key of the everyday classroom life. I am almost certain that, seen from the other side, some practical research processes I am aware of could produce a symmetrical effect. This leads me to think that there is still a long way to go for both discourse modes relating teachers professional development find a reason to listen to each other.

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