

EVALUATION OF TEACHER TRAINING: A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

With the support of social representation theory, this article intends to discuss the importance of psychosocial analysis of teacher formation and teacher evaluation, apprehended as a process that involves not only the mastery of skills and knowledge in a specific area, but also the understanding of the processes of making a professional identity, the production of its subjectivity, and relations that teachers develop with the other and with a range of others who take part in their training.

EVALUATION • TEACHER EDUCATION • SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY • SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

EVALUATIONS OF EDUCATION SYSTEMS and Higher-Education Institutions (Instituições de Ensino Superior – IES) in Brazil aim to mediate the relation between society's demands and the control over the possibility of access to quality education. Analyses of the historical trajectory of such evaluations – done by Fávero (1977, 1991), Buarque (1986), Martins (1989), Dias Sobrinho (2003), Lima (2005), Marback Neto (2007) and Santos (2008) – show how this mediating role has been used in putting forward institutional reforms and the redefinition of public policies, contributing both to the reinforcement of current standards and to changes in the directions of higher education in Brazil.

These studies also show that the evaluation function of diagnosis, which is necessary for superior education, has been used as a way of mediating social control activities, transferring responsibility for improvements in the quality of teaching to society and to the Higher-Education Institutions. Thus, over the course of its historical trajectory, evaluation has built up a sort of rationale that has, on the one hand, defined the criteria of judgment by which society should analyze higher education, and on the other hand, has maintained control over what a number of governments have defined as competency, access and quality.

Evaluation of higher education is currently governed by Law 10,861, enacted April 14, 2004, which set up SINAES, the National Higher Education Evaluation System (Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior). This is an analysis strategy involving ten dimensions in Higher-Education Institutions' academic, administrative and financial policies and management, founded upon the mission that

these institutions propose to fulfill. It also involves institutional self-assessment and external evaluation.

The National Student Performance Examination (ENADE – Exame Nacional de Desempenho de Estudantes)¹ aims to evaluate the quality of training delivered by undergraduate courses through standardized comparative tests held at the beginning and the end of courses. These are tests that seek to define the cognitive domains to be mastered by students in a given course. Their results and above all public dissemination strongly reinforce the impact on the profiles of professionals to be trained in a given area. In other words, these evaluations, by stimulating and sculpting training policies, eventually define curricular guidelines insofar as the option to evaluate given dimensions and given subjects helps create curricular trends, teaching priorities, and student evaluation criteria, finally establishing definitions of professional quality.

The aspect to be examined is not the relevance of developing systematic processes of evaluating education professionals, but rather the purposes of such processes and consequently, the use to be made of their results. Furthermore, it is essential to consider the evaluation of education professionals as one of the sets of elements for evaluating schools, analyzing the teaching in articulation with the educational policies in force. The procedures for evaluating different agencies within the education system must therefore be systematized; it is not teachers and students alone who should be evaluated. (SOUSA, 2008, p. 89)

The results of evaluations and the countless studies showing the importance of teachers, school managers and pedagogical coordinators in delivering quality education, lead to the preparation of training policies founded upon the belief that training, as an isolated factor, could lead to a change in teaching and in student performance improvements. In this context, evaluation programs have appeared both for practicing teachers and for those still undergraduate programs to allow entrance to the teaching profession, with the clear purpose of establishing performance monitoring policies.

Despite the importance of these evaluation processes, based on cognitive mastery of the contents of training courses, we emphasize that teacher training and consequently, teacher evaluation possess specificities that are not addressed by tests that define strictly cognitive domains. The evaluation process that analyzes the cognitive domains to be given in training courses is not rejected, but we affirm that analysis of training must encompass understanding of the student subject (future teacher) in a less segmented manner. This proposal is part of

1 See <<http://www.inep.gov.br/superior/enade/default.asp>>.

a psychosocial perspective of evaluation of teacher-training processes, and aims to lay down predictive of future performance.

TEACHER EVALUATION PROCESSES WITHIN A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

We propose here to differentiate between two processes in teacher evaluation: one which addresses evaluation of the teacher in training – at a Higher-Education Institution, in ongoing training programs given by the Ministry of Education’s state-level Education Secretariats, and so on – and another, which addresses the evaluation of practicing teachers.

In order to teach well, practicing teachers – constrained by contexts that are frequently adverse and nearly always different from those presented during training – must exercise a set of skills to integrate their knowledge in the conditions they find themselves. The best performance will not necessarily be put in by a teacher mastering the largest range of contents, but by one who in given circumstances manages to integrate this with other variables to obtain the best possible performances from his students.

Evaluation of practicing teachers therefore cannot be analyzed only by taking student performance into consideration, since student performance depends on context-related variables: on the school, on the family, on their parents’ level of schooling, on their socio-economic level, as the SAEB (Basic Education Evaluation System – Sistema de Avaliação da Educação Básica)² – and Provinha Brasil reports have shown³.

The focus of the evaluation of practicing teachers must be therefore, on the links that the teachers they establish with their practice and relations between their performance and the context. This will enable the decision-making process to be better guided, and enhance practices, which are the essential roles of educational evaluation, rather than merely classifying processes.

In our studies, this perspective is defined as psychosocial insofar as it comprehends the teacher-subject as socially constituted and the constructor of his reality. It is based on the theory of social representations, as elaborated above all by Moscovici (1986)⁴ and Jodelet (1989), and in the theoretical proposals of Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye (1991), André and Placco (2007), Tedesco (2008), Tenti Fanfani (2007, 2008) and Gatti (2010), to name but a few authors.

Within the psychosocial perspective, evaluation of teachers in training does not only involve the cognitive mastery of an area of knowledge, but also the understanding of the processes of building a professional identity, producing a subjectivity and the relations

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SAEB, as laid down by Ordinance 931, published March 21, 2005, comprises two processes: ANEB (National Primary Education Evaluation – Avaliação Nacional da Educação Básica) and ANRESC (National School Performance Evaluation – avaliação Nacional do Rendimento Escolar).

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The Provinha Brasil, introduced in 2008, is an evaluation tool aiming to enable a diagnosis of the level of reading and writing of children in public education systems to be made after one year in school. The test is therefore given to students enrolled in the second year of school, at the beginning and at the end of the school year.

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Moscovici (1978, p. 28) sees social representations as “an organized corpus of knowledge and one of the psychological activity’s thanks to which man makes physical and social reality intelligible”; representations are a type of socially constructed knowledge shared with the practical aim of helping construct a common reality within a given social set.

developed by that teachers with one or more others who take part in the production of the teacher's training. These processes must be taken into consideration during teacher training, and their analysis makes clear the quality expected of the teacher's future performance.

During their training, student-teachers progressively acquire mastery of contents, and also gradually build representations that are laden with images and attitudes towards teaching, toward the pupils, and toward their future teaching profession. These representations serve as selective filters modifying and reorienting the knowledge that is being constructed (KARAVAS, 1995; KARAVAS, DROSSOU, 2010). The focus of evaluation during the training process, as well as the focus of its results, must therefore include, within the psychosocial perspective, the subjective conditions in which this training is being given, considering expectations and the possibilities of changing the way in which these impending teachers apprehend and perform their practice. Evaluation can, with this focus, suggest decisions to guide the review of processes and conditions during training, insofar as it is essential to identify how students, the future teachers, integrate the new knowledge taught on the course into their lives' trajectories, how they recognize themselves as teachers, how they construct their professional identity and a strong adherence to beliefs and values that will guide their specific practice.

Distinguishing these two types of evaluation – training and practice – obviously does not mean that in evaluating practicing teachers one should not consider the subjective dimension of their performance. What this distinction reaffirms is that evaluation of a teacher, and indeed, any educational evaluation, means selecting different types of focus and choosing indicators.

Within these terms, the distinction seeks merely to intensify the option for the inclusion of a category of indicators that extends future paths of intervention, decision-making, and, therefore, possible action upon the expected performance.

During professional practice, evaluation feeds back into school management activities and into the education system to understand the interplay between knowledge, skill and teacher attitudes within the context in which teaching takes place. During training, evaluation must give feedback to higher-education institutions to permit modifications and/or enhancement of curriculum management and above all offer alternatives enabling a new meaning to the acquisition of knowledge, skills and student/future teacher attitudes. The point at stake is to lead the forthcoming teacher to reflect on his trajectory and improving his academic performance, making it predictive of better performance in the future.

Both in the context of training and practice, the role of evaluation is thus not limited to identification of what is going well or what is going badly. Its role is to create alternatives, to test assumptions and to enable the production of repertoires of action that propose changes. This is because evaluation, when geared toward understanding the processes behind given results, can provide more alternatives for taking intervention steps.

Evaluations of students in training (future teachers), currently carried out in Higher-Education Institutions, through ENADE, of students in training and future teachers, have not been sufficient for underpin processes of change. ENADE, as an evaluation census, describes and classifies performances, analyzes the quality of training given at Higher-Education Institutions, but does not generate alternatives of action.

A study performed by the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo's permanent self-evaluation commission (CPA) sought to analyze the ENADE results along with teachers, coordinators and university departments' head teachers⁵. The analysis involved comparison of students' results using the test key and course teachers' teaching plans. We believe the experience provided course teachers with a good interpretation of the results. However, we should admit that, despite the great effort, no significant enhancement of understanding of students' performance or of the teaching provided was achieved, beyond what the overall test results had given.

No one doubts the importance of ENADE, but its own objective – diagnosing the quality and equity of Brazil's higher-education – brings constraints in itself. Thus, new studies should be carried out by evaluation processes, which seek to understand how – and in what circumstances – performances are produced, so that alternatives for significant action against the institutions offering this level of education could be achieved.

Evaluation of training that privileges the cognitive dimension without considering the context in which performance is revealed is not a characteristic of ENADE only, but also of the document entitled *Referenciais para o exame nacional de ingresso na carreira docente: documento para consulta pública*, (“Guidelines for the national teaching career entrance exam: public consultation document”) produced by the Ministry of Education's Anísio Teixeira National Institute for Educational Studies and Research – INEP⁶. The document describes a body of basic knowledge categorized into seven comprehensive subjects and nine specific subjects, as well as general topics for teachers of Portuguese, Mathematics, Social and Natural Sciences, Child Education, Adolescent and Adult Education⁷, as the following chart shows.

⁵ On this topic, see the 2007-2008 Report coordinated by Professor Doctor Clarilza Prado de Sousa. Available at: <<http://www.pucsp.br/cpa/>>.

⁶ Available at: <<http://www.sbem.com.br/files/matriz.pdf>>.

⁷ When Paulo Renato dos Santos was State Education Secretary for São Paulo, his Secretariat evaluated and published results for primary education teachers.

A Ministry of Education initiative put forward by the Minister of Education, Fernando Haddad, to evaluate teachers was also in public consultation at that time. See: <<http://consultaexamedocente.inep.gov.br/index/login>>.

CHART 1

ISSUES TABLED BY INEP/MEC FOR THE NATIONAL EXAMINATION TO ENTER THE TEACHING PROFESSION

<p>1. Right to education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify rights laid down in the Federal Constitution and The General Law of Education to be guaranteed by each actor involved in education; • To acknowledge roles and duties of different spheres of government and institutions in education in Brazil, in accordance with the Federal Constitution and The General Law of Education; • To identify rights established in the Children's and Adolescents' Statute to be guaranteed by each actor involved in education; • To acknowledge roles and duties of different spheres of government and institutions regarding children and adolescents, in accordance with the Children's and Adolescents' Statute; • To study the historical process that gave rise to the current status of the right to education in Brazil; • To link current educational legislation with schools' work and teachers' activities in the classroom.
<p>2. Current educational policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To study the design and characteristics of current educational policies at the national level, such as: FUNDEB, Prova Brasil and IDEB; • To acknowledge the roles and duties of different spheres of government and institutions regarding educational policies currently in force in Brazil; • To link educational policies currently in force with schools' work and teachers' activities in the classroom.
<p>3. Human development and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the main concepts and theories of human development in their physical, cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional and moral aspects; • To identify stages and variations in students' development in accordance with the major theories of human development; • To recognize the ways in which the several aspects of students' development affect their learning; • To recognize the ways in which factors within and outside schools affect students' development and learning.
<p>4. Pedagogical planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know the types, functions and components of pedagogical planning; • To know the functions, components and elements that make up a curriculum; • To know the characteristics and components of a teaching sequence; • To recognize the relationship between the schools proposed curriculum, its political-pedagogical project and the teaching sequences adopted.
<p>5. Strategies, approaches, activities, and teaching resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To detect strategies, approaches and activities that are suitable to the students' age bracket and stage of development; • To devise strategies, approaches and activities that are suitable for obtaining given learning goals; • To identify pedagogical routines that are suitable to the students' age bracket and stage of development; • To find suitable ways of organizing the pedagogical space in accordance with learning objectives; • To know the procedures for choosing textbooks to be used; • To pinpoint appropriate ways of using a range of teaching resources in accordance • with learning objectives; • To create adequate ways of using technological and audiovisual resources such as computers, the Internet and videos.
<p>6. Pedagogical evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To recognize the types, functions and components of pedagogical evaluation; • To identify suitable evaluation strategies in accordance with the teaching situation and the learning objectives; • To use large-scale evaluation data in order to take pedagogical decisions.
<p>7. Curriculum adjustments to meet the needs of students with special needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To know the types and levels of curriculum adjustments that can be adopted to cater for students with special needs; • To identify curriculum adjustments that can be appropriate for students with specific special needs.

Undoubtedly, this is a list of aspects necessary for entering a teaching career insofar as it values pedagogical issues, since it is mandatory for teachers to master the content of their disciplinary area (History, Portuguese, Mathematics and so on); it is also important if they want to have a pedagogical knowledge helping him to discriminate the context within which teachers speak, as well as to whom they speak and with whom they do so. However, it does not take into account the subjective side, which again reveals an understanding of the teachers training in a segmented perspective of the subject, one which is “simplistic” to a certain extent, because it considers that only mastery of contents will produce changes in teachers’ performances. As Gatti aptly puts it:

In educational policies intending to trigger processes of change in cognition and practice, what one observes is that they generally espouse the conception that by offering information, and content, and working on the rationality of professionals, changes in attitudes and ways of acting will come about based on the mastery of new knowledge. (2010, p. 4)

Analysis of teaching should consider not only knowledge of subjects, curricula and pedagogy, but also the importance of subjective and experience-based aspects that in this case are not supplementary but part of the core. In other words, evaluations continue to ignore the subject that is being trained, the conditions in which he is being trained and the way in which his professionalization is produced⁸. That is, in this paper it is understood as the connection established by the subject with the profession, with his knowledge from the area of education and, in a supplementary manner, with processes that act in a social dynamic – values, representations – to give guidance to the process of training.

According to Tardif, these teacher-constructed processes that will give meaning and guidance to the teacher’s practice may be defined as a body of knowledge of the teachers’ work, that is:

...organically connected to the person of the worker and to that worker’s his work, to what he is and does, but also to what he has been and has done, to avoid departures towards concepts that ignore his incorporation in a process of work, emphasizing the socialization of teaching profession and the contextualized domain of the activity of teaching. (2002, p. 17)

The body of knowledge that structures the teaching profession, the one which is specific to teachers’ performance and has to be analyzed during training involves, in a psychosocial perspective, understanding of the triad “individual subject” – “social subject” – and “object” (MOSCOVICI, 1978, 1986; DOISE, 2002). This understanding pervades the subject’s connections with

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Barbier (1998) believes that professionalization is today a field of practices guided by an intention that comes into being in the context of training. He states that the intentions guiding the production and transformation of skill are individual and collective characteristics, which cannot be dissociated, becoming manifest in a given circumstance as an activity socially situated, performed by the subject.

his experiences, life trajectory, and the object of his action. This is, therefore, the organic aspect that informs the social construction of his profession. These elements that establish the interrelations of this triad and define the construction of the subject are what should be taken into consideration in training processes.

We recognize that one of the difficulties possibly explaining the lack of concern for such aspects is the fact that is very hard to evaluate them. Evaluating this body of knowledge does indeed demand the use of a theoretical structure and the conduct of quantitative studies in order to develop a set of instruments able to adequately address these subjective aspects.

TRAINING OF FUTURE TEACHERS AS AN OBJECT OF ANALYSIS

The training of teachers and the analysis of the knowledge involved in teaching has been discussed by several authors, striving to understand the complexity of this training. Among others, we can mention Schön (1983), Tardif, Lessard e Lahaye (1991), Gatti (1992), Nóvoa (1995), Saviani (1996), Gauthier et al. (1998), Pimenta (1999), Tavares (2002), Placco (2005), André (2006) and Marcelo (2009).

Cunha (2004), based on proposals put forward by Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye (1991), Saviani (1996), Gauthier et al. (1998) and Pimenta (1999), provides a broad categorization enabling identification of currently prioritized aspects:

CHART 2
CATEGORIZATION OF THE KNOWLEDGE BASE INVOLVED IN TEACHING OR POSSESSED BY TEACHERS

TARDIF, LESSARD, LAHAYE (1991)	PIMENTA (1999)	GAUTHIER ET AL. (1998)	SAVIANI (1996)
1. Professional training knowledge; 2. Subject-specific knowledge; 3. Curriculum-specific knowledge; 4. Knowledge derived from experience.	1. Knowledge derived from experience; 2. Learning-based knowledge; 3. Pedagogical knowledge.	1. Subject-specific knowledge; 2. Curriculum-specific knowledge; 3. Knowledge derived from Education Sciences; 4. Knowledge based on teaching tradition; 5. Empirical knowledge (from experience); 6. Knowledge related to the practice of teaching.	1. Attitudinal knowledge; 2. Critical-contextual knowledge; 3. Specific knowledge 4. Pedagogical knowledge; 5. Didactical-curricular knowledge.

Source: Cunha (2004).

This chart shows that in a training context, there is a concentration of sets of knowledge that should encompass pedagogical content and specific areas, students' development and learning processes, teaching methods for the content areas, and teaching procedures for general and precise contexts. Saviani (1996), among the authors we have studied, is the only one who addresses attitudinal knowledge.

Although we are not questioning the importance of the cognitive dimension, we feel that ignoring affective, cultural and attitudinal dimensions – that enable the subject to be analyzed in the process of professional training and in the context of lived experiences – generate social inequality. As Tedesco (2008) states, this happens when policy actions, and especially within social contexts of extreme poverty, put forward mass policies without concern for the subject who will implement them. In the author's words:

Acknowledging the importance of the subjective dimension of social phenomena poses new problems for theory and political action. Policies intended to address the problems associated with poverty are generally mass policies, with little or no chance of personalization. Only in contexts where penury affects restricted segments of the population and where there is a relative abundance of resources does it seem possible to personalize intervention strategies. In situations where the needs of large contingents must be met using scarce resources, the temptation to ignore the subjective dimension of the problem is very strong. However, no one should suppose (on the pretext of the urgent necessity to meet mass needs) that subjectivity is less relevant in services aimed at segments of the population with few resources than in services for the population with abundant resources. (TEDESCO, 2008, p. 6)

While dealing with the psychosocial dimension of teacher-training processes, one may also ask what types of subjects are being produced by current economic, political and cultural changes. Tenti Fanfani (2008) notes that the process of globalization is causing “social erosion”, since it deepens the absence of meaning, cancels long-term prospects and allows individualistic and fundamentalist visions to put down roots. These visions are molding a society that centers on the present and that is out of touch with the past, conflicting with the profession of the educator, whose fundamental role is to prepare youth for the future and build citizens based on knowledge accumulated over generations. That is why it is important to act upon those processes that constitute the subject during training – processes that have been ignored in most studies in the field of education and teacher education.

The psychosocial perspective, through a multi-referenced approach, may help apprehend how to evaluate these processes during the teacher-training and therefore, act upon them. It is essential to advance in the construction of an alternative for evaluating training that takes the teacher into consideration within the context of his lived experience, his practice and his planned future, favoring understanding of relations between theory and practice in the curricula of teacher-training courses. One alternative that goes beyond the predominantly cognitive vision of analysis, allowing understanding the subject as one that constructs himself socially and is constructed by the social contexts he experiences.

Based on the levels of analysis proposed by Doise (2002), for example, it is possible to analyze the relationship of the individual subject with his experiences and trajectories as well as the social subject's relationship with the social dynamics and with the positional, ideological, evaluative and representational inter-relations present in these dynamics. Only by considering the subject, it is possible to give meaning to the vague discourse that is nowadays widespread in the field of education, about the relations between theory and practice. This is a challenge or, to use Charlot's (2006) expression, an "epistemological wager."

Only by considering the subject one can give meaning to the vague discourse that is widespread in the field of education about the relations between theory and practice. This is a challenge or, to use Charlot's (2006) expression, an "epistemological wager." Studies conducted within the scope of the International Center for Studies in Social Representations and Subjectivity in Education of the Carlos Chagas Foundation's Department of Educational Research (Centro Internacional de Estudos em Representações Sociais e Subjetividade em Educação – CIERS-ed⁹, Departamento de Pesquisas Educacionais, Fundação Carlos Chagas – DPE/FCC), aimed at analyzing how students on pedagogical courses and teacher-training college degree courses, future teachers, construct themselves as subjects on the basis of processes of otherness and professionalization that lead to educational action. This involves understanding how these university students interpret their training, their future profession and also how teacher-training courses, through their curricula, build their social and formative space.

These are studies of the psychosocial processes behind the construction of pedagogy and university teacher-training students' professionalization, aiming at creating indicators and a proposal for the evaluation of teacher training.

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See the following link: <http://www.fcc.org.br/pesquisa/ciers.html>

THE THEORY OF SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS AS INPUT FOR THE ANALYSIS OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL PROCESSES OF TEACHER TRAINING

The theory of social representations is not the only approach enabling a psychosocial analysis of teacher training and the formulation of a training evaluation proposal beyond the measuring aspect. However, this was the theoretical thinking adopted in CIERS-ed/DPE/FCC¹⁰ studies in order to create evaluation processes that take the complexity of human action into consideration and enable managers to take decisions helping to perfect practice and training.

It should be stressed that the terrain in which social representations arise and take shape is essentially cultural and historical. These representations favor the individual's adaptation assuming an action or communication about daily existence aiming at knowledge which, in turn, returns to common sense,

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This is a Research Program coordinated by Professor Doctor Clarilza Prado de Sousa, entitled "Social Representations of education and teacher-training students concerning the work of teaching" (*Representações sociais de estudantes de educação e de licenciatura sobre o trabalho do docente*) carried out by an international network of researchers into the topic of professionalization. The longitudinal study began in 2006 involving some three thousand early-year Brazilian, Argentinian and Portuguese university teacher-training students. See Sousa, Pardal and Villas Bôas (2009), and Sousa and Villas Bôas (2011), on the issue.

provoking processes that modify his action in his setting. Studying these representations permits to learn about the contradictions that the individual, or the group, wishes to surpass. They are made by the social-psychological representational capacity of the subject, communication processes and social practices.

An understanding of the meaning of these functions thus leads one to believe that the theory of social representations, or the organized set of propositions making up this field of studies, will enable the thoughts and behaviors of future teachers to be revealed, providing input for new directions for the teaching effort.

The social representation that an individual share with his group, his perception concerning the movement of transformation of his reality, his future difficulties, both foreseen and envisaged, all deserve systematic analysis. Understanding this is essential to help educators seek transformation in their training action. We resort to Marková, in order to synthesize this approach:

Moscovici has often expressed the idea that the Theory of Social Representations defines and demarcates the fields of Social Psychology, and that Social Psychology should become the anthropology of modern culture. Firstly, human social phenomena are always phenomena that are in transformation, and thus the concept of social change is fundamental in social psychology. Unlike any other theory of social psychology, the concept of social change is the core of the theory of Social Representations. Secondly, and stemming from the first point, the Theory of Social Representations provides the epistemological foundations for the study of social change and for the conceptual coherence of social psychology, fragmented as it is today. Thirdly, nearly all phenomena in social psychology refer to symbolic communication, popular know-how, and social action. These phenomena have a double orientation. They overlap in culture and history, and therefore, tend towards stability. At the same time, they remain alive through the activities, tensions and conflicts of groups and individuals who appropriate, innovate and create new phenomena. (2008, p. 234)

In opposition to the concept that predominates in psychology, which reduced the role of the subject to a position of passivity – by deeming knowledge to be the product of an intra-individual process in which the social intervenes only secondarily – the theory of social representations emphasizes the active and creative role of the subject, who is built in relation to society.

Moscovici (1978, 1986) affirms that it is in life with others that human thought, feeling and motivation develop. Social psychology, using its own methods, thus becomes a type of anthropology of modern culture. This definition of the object requires the traditional cleavage between, on one hand, the individual-centered analyses of psychology and, on the other,

society-centered economic and sociological analyses to be overcome. Despite the tensions between them, these two types of analysis must be linked.

The reality of relations between what is individual and what is social needs a triplet model in which the other participates in the construction of this reality. Negotiations with the other – with other individuals and groups – develop on both sides simultaneously. That is why social representations are important as part of social reality. This is a possibility – according to Social Psychology – of studying that which is becoming.

The study of social representations needs a relationship between the complex cognitive systems of the individual and the meta-systems of symbolic relations characterizing a society. We see two cognitive systems functioning: one that processes associations, inclusions, discriminations, and deductions – in other words, the operative system; and another that controls, verifies and selects with the help of rules – be they logical or otherwise. This is a type of meta-system that reworks the material produced by the former (MOSCOVICI, 1978). The author calls upon social psychologists, in particular, to study relations between these societal regulations and cognitive functioning in order to answer the following question: Which communications systems that are characteristic of a society actualize or favor which cognitive functions and in what specific contexts?

Education, when marked by an over-individualistic focus from psychology, without an understanding of the meaning that societal regulations have in the constitution of the subject, creates the illusion of understanding a subject that might exist without society, or as Moscovici (1) affirms, a sort of Adam suffering only social influences and not being socially constituted.

Psychosocial studies establish a ternary vision in constant interaction and mediation: individual subject – social subject – and object. Lautier (2001) believes that it is precisely this interaction which, despite hindering critical work, prevents one from succumbing to the temptation to analyze the student's or the teachers' behavior only from a psychological or sociological perspective.

This constant interaction and mediation, within a psychosocial perspective, is the process that enables reality to be constructed, types of knowledge to be structured, allowing one to “question the separation between the psychological and the social in the essential fields of human life” (MOSCOVICI, 1986, p. 26).

Construction of reality, the fruit of this mediation characterizing the social nature of interpersonal – and even intraindividual – processes, shows that: a) There is no such thing as a “liberated” knowledge produced by a subject “freed” from others, from history, and from belonging; b) The common subject may as well be a constructive subject constantly creating knowledge, and aware of what he is talking about; c) History and its structures do not exist independently of subjects (JOVCHELOVITCH, 2008). Teacher-training thus centers both on the understanding of these mediation processes, and of how

they occur, within the context of training, in the thinking of student/future teacher toward his work.

These aspects lead us to the following questions: How do students make use of the information they receive in education courses¹¹ – both of pedagogy and other undergraduate fields of knowledge- to understand the teaching profession? Is the information provided by science education somehow articulated with their experiences? As students, future teachers, build their knowledge, will it guide their conduct?

As a result of their experiences, ideology, values and even their conceptual system, subjects will select, organize and legitimize, within their group, the information received during their courses. Familiarity with the knowledge which guides these students, future teachers, means to understand the following: all knowledge is “expressive,” represents subjective, inter subjective and objective worlds, triads constituted in daily reality, and “project identities, values, and ways of life in the social fields” (JOVCHELOVITCH, 2008, p. 260). And that “studying knowledge means to study the set of practices, relations and concrete contexts, in which knowledge, as social action, occurs” (p. 261). This knowledge, characterized by its dependence on “who is speaking”, “how he speaks”, “of what he speaks”, “why he speaks” and “to whom he speaks” (JODELET, 1989; JOVCHELOVITCH, 2008) provides evidence of contexts and conditions that are distinct from the production of knowledge, and as such, have been the focus of study by several social psychology authors such as Moscovici (1978, 1986), Farr (1987), and Jodelet (1989).

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Education courses are: “Bachelor in Pedagogy Course”, “Bachelor with Licensure”, and “Licensure”.

The students who have accomplished the “Bachelor in Pedagogy Course” (the minimum hour content is of 3200 hours), “Bachelor with Licensure”, and “Licensure” (hour content variable according to the area) are able to teach in primary and middle levels of Basic Education. The teacher who studied “Bachelor in Pedagogy Course”, specifically, is able to work in Early Childhood Education, in primary and middle levels of Basic Education, in “Youth and Adults Education Project”, in Professional Education, in Educational Process Management, as well as a researcher in the educational area. The “Bachelor with Licensure” refers itself to the classic model of three years studies on specific field (such as Mathematics, History etc.) plus one year of pedagogic studies (“Licensure”). Thereby, the teacher who studied “Bachelor with Licensure” is able to teach in middle levels of Basic Education, in “Youth and Adults Education Project”, and in Professional Education.

The social representations of students about education courses (pedagogical courses and university-level teacher-training degrees) enables the students to reveal how they understand and explain the meaning of this work, the factors that lead to good performance, the pattern of otherness that constitutes their relations with students, the links they have with their future career the definition of their social identity, their expectations of their professional future and the knowledge already possessed that makes them teachers.

Whereas the social representations allow the formation of all systems of knowing and enable the expression of subjective and inter-subjective worlds and goals (Jovchelovitch, 2008), it is fundamental to recognize how these expressions are transformed from one group to another, from one context to another. In other words, doing so permits to understand how scientific knowledge, offered in education courses (pedagogical courses and university-level teacher-training degrees), is transformed into teaching into social representations of teaching to guide the work of students, future teachers.

FINAL REMARKS

The possibilities of psychosocial analyses of teacher-training and its operating modes help to improve their evaluation processes, besides allowing to identify how institutional, economic, social, material and

political conditions – that are intrinsic to the process of building knowledge and giving shape to its internal structure (JOVCHELOVITCH, 2008) – come together to construct the professionalization of teaching. Facing this issue is essential, if the teacher is not to be seen as a virtually isolated agent in the pursuit of a teaching that allows for equity and quality.

Obviously, the need for teacher-training that includes the objective content of the curriculum, as well as improvements in structural working and pay conditions and support and regulation of the teaching profession cannot be ignored. What we intend to emphasize is that, beyond these important aspects, one should also know how future teachers envisage their profession in order to put forward actions that lead them to perfect their work. And here the psychosocial perspective arises as a valuable approach for understanding teacher training and teaching.

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