

Teacher training and quality of education in Latin America and Brazil

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Teacher training and quality of education in Latin America (Mercosur)

As training is considered as the main determinant of professionalization

A major problem: the limits of pedagogical knowledge, professional knowledge

Latin America: the wide variety of models of teacher training and the significant discrepancies among them.

The educational policies in the Latin American context, by trying to include the most vulnerable ones, have highlighted this difficulty.

The teaching profession as a research object: reflections on the political, institutional, collective and collaborative nature of work

The specificity of teaching as an individual activity is contrasted to an insistent rhetoric today, present in the education legislation in these countries, around the need for a collective and collaborative work involving all the teachers. However, the structures of jobs, curricula and training institutions, the format and the criteria of evaluations follow the individual perspective.

Teaching as a profession makes the knowledge and the cultural transmission their substantive content. On one hand, the teacher transmits a knowledge that he/she does not produce, and, on the other hand, he/she produces a knowledge which is not recognized, that is, the knowledge that is produced on the transmission. By its nature, the construction of knowledge typical of teaching as a profession in its relation to changes in the operating conditions of school systems is seen constantly challenged by socio-historical transformations.

The historical approaches on teachers in the Latin American context can be divided into three different phases

- National developmentalism (1950 and 1960), under the influence of the Theory of Human Capital, teachers were considered as necessary inputs for the expanding school system.
- Neoliberal reforms (1990s), teachers were seen as key agents in programs of changes and also considered primarily responsible for the students' performance. Besides they were responsible for the school and system performances.
- The emergence of popular-democratic governments, we see a paradox between increased autonomy and democracy in the school context and the intensification of teachers' responsibility about the success or the failure of the system measured by external evaluations through standardized tests.

Two approaches in contention for teacher training in the current context in Latin America:

The first approach is predominantly academic and it insists on the need to train the teacher as a co-responsible professional for the results of the work of classroom and school and he/she still participates in decisions of educational policy.

The second approach is predominantly managerial and it seeks to promote control, development of standards, performance measurement and teacher education in terms of these patterns and their measurements.

The direct repercussions on teacher training

In several Latin American countries, given its extremely unequal context, dysfunctions between initial training and labor characteristics that require skills which the new teacher was not prepared for are notorious.

The inequality of opportunities goes beyond the profession and it refers to structural problems of educational systems as the coexistence of schooling mass with poverty and exclusion.

For this reason, training as a matter of public policy is one of the most complex challenges in the region, for the social responsibility associated with the fulfillment of the right of all to education of quality.

The direct repercussions on teacher training

The evaluations of initial training and in-service teachers in the Latin American context point out:

Persistence of traditional approaches

Disarticulation of training with other factors affecting the quality of teaching

Disconnection among the actors of initial training; lack of mechanisms of monitoring and educational assistance

Disconnection among the actors and systems of initial and in-service training

Training activities directed to individuals and not to the teaching staff, among others.

Teachers and their training in Mercosur (Argentina)

Argentina has about 900,000 teachers, while only 7% do not have adequate training. Teacher training occurs in two types of higher education institutions: Higher Education Institutes (IES) with training of teachers for primary level; and universities, to train teachers for the high school level. The training at IES and public universities is unpaid.

The National Institute of Teacher Education is responsible for regulating the system of teacher training and also for evaluation, self-assessment and accreditation of institutions and courses.

Institute for Quality Assessment and Educational Equity is under process of creation, which is autonomous, to evaluate the students' learning, teaching practices and the management of educational institutions of all levels and modalities.

Teachers and their training in Mercosur (Brazil)

Brazil has approximately 2.5 million teachers are currently working in kindergarten, elementary and secondary education, with more than two million in public sector, 78% have a university undergraduate course.

At the same time strategies of initial teacher training have been developed through distance education, representing a serious risk to the quality of education.

There is no national policy on teacher evaluation, however, the complexity of the decentralized system, so characteristic of the federative country, and the different levels of power in which teachers are linked cause the states and the municipalities have their own policies that, in some cases, bind the educational performance of students with individual productivity of teachers and their salaries.

Teachers and their training in Mercosur (Paraguay)

Paraguay has 60,000 teachers in the public sector and 18,000 in the private sector. Among the teachers working at primary level, 8% do not have adequate training, 38.1% do not have adequate training to perform at the "third cycle of Basic Education School" and 54.1% do not have adequate training to perform at the Initial Level.

The teacher training has a "tertiary" and non-university character held in institutions of Teacher Training, as well as some universities or higher institutes enabled.

The processes of teacher evaluation occur at different career stages: at admission, during training, at the accreditation of institutes, at the contests for admission in positions and professional performance.

Teachers and their training in Mercosur (Uruguay)

Uruguay has 41,000 teachers in the public sector, three institutions account for nearly 95% of the public offering of teacher education, and the country. All the teachers are enabled to work at primary level and 59% are qualified to work in secondary level, and 23.5% of teachers working at the secondary level have incomplete qualification, and 17.5% of teachers working at secondary level do not have adequate training.

Most Uruguayan teachers have no postgraduate education. The Education Act (2010/2014) considers the inclusion of ongoing training among the criteria for teacher evaluation, the National Institute of Educational Assessment was created in 2009 with the aim of evaluating the quality of education in the country, including teachers and their training.

The policies of Professional Development of Teachers (PDT)

- **Argentina** provides an in-service training as a right and as a responsibility of all teachers in the country, once the offer comes from the State and it is free of charges.
- **Brazil**, these policies are designed as updates and continuous improvement of teachers, and the law provides the linked development of teacher training. Since 2009 federal training programs at the undergraduate level (PARFOR) and postgraduate level (CAPES) have been developed, with free offer, provision of scholarships and paid leaves. However, these are measures that varies among states and municipalities.
- **Paraguay**, teacher training "in service" is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Culture and it is established as a duty of education professionals. The initial teacher education and training "in service" is performed by the National Integrated System for Teacher training. **Uruguay**, PDT policies are associated with the concept of "ongoing training" and they are conducted by the Institute for Improvement and Higher Studies, supported by the idea of education as a right and a professional requirement of teachers.

Some final considerations

Teaching constitutes a mass occupation for its institutional characteristic.

Latin America: about 6.5 million teachers.

In the context of expressive massiveness, diversity and inequality the analyzes wishing to typify good practice can be considered unpromising (and even reckless), establishing simple parameters of performance and designing uniform policies for the sector which are relevant and of great range.

Some final considerations

It is observed that the concern with the training is on the agenda in these countries, both initial and continuing training and in-service, primarily motivated by the need to improve the levels of quality of education, which it may explain the development of continuous links between training and evaluation in policies of the countries cited.

PDT policies have given primary emphasis on training and been somewhat emphatic in relation to other constitutive dimensions of teacher professionalization, such as working conditions, salaries and career, certainly not reaching the favorable environment to a better learning and the desired quality of Latin American children and young.