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# **The theme of teacher education: trajectories and trends of the field in research and action**

Maria Isabel da Cunha<sup>1</sup>

## **Abstract**

The knowledge of the epistemological, cultural and political movements which defined, from a historical perspective, the understanding of the field of teacher education can be a significant contribution to the practice of education. Understanding this process in its evolutionary dimension favors understanding the complexity of this field of knowledge and the multiple influences that are established in it. Therefore, this study aims to map and study the theoretical and practical trends which marked the understanding of teaching in Brazil, preferably in the period beginning in the second half of the twentieth century. The work recognizes its random condition and does not demand exclusivity. From the mapping done, it is concluded that the different theoretical and practical trends for teaching had a significant impact on educational research and this, in turn, also played a leading role in the paradigmatic changes that have hit teacher education. As the paradigm of technical rationality gave way to an understanding of the educational phenomenon as socially and culturally produced, there were significant changes in ways of producing knowledge in the education area. All the phases that mark the trends of the studies on teacher education have produced concepts and presented themselves as products and producers of educational actions, influencing and being influenced by policies, legislations and cultures.

## **Keywords**

Teacher education – Theoretical and practical trends for teaching – Policies on teacher education – Teacher professional development.

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## ***O tema da formação de professores: trajetórias e tendências do campo na pesquisa e na ação***

Maria Isabel da Cunha<sup>1</sup>

### **Resumo**

*O conhecimento dos movimentos epistemológicos, culturais e políticos que definiu, em uma perspectiva histórica, a compreensão do campo da formação de professores pode ser uma significativa contribuição para a prática da formação. Entender esse processo na sua dimensão evolutiva favorece o entendimento da complexidade desse campo de conhecimento e as múltiplas influências que se estabelecem sobre ele. O objetivo deste trabalho, portanto, é mapear e estudar as tendências teórico-práticas que marcaram a compreensão da docência no Brasil, preferencialmente no período que se inicia na segunda metade do século XX. O trabalho reconhece sua condição aleatória e não pretende exclusividade a respeito do tema. A partir do mapeamento realizado, conclui-se que as diferentes tendências teórico-práticas para a docência tiveram significativos impactos nas pesquisas educacionais e essas, por sua vez, também exerceram um papel de protagonismo nas mudanças paradigmáticas que atingiram a formação de professores. Na medida em que o paradigma da racionalidade técnica foi dando lugar à compreensão do fenômeno educativo como produzido social e culturalmente, houve significativas mudanças nas formas de produzir conhecimento na área da educação. Todas as fases que marcam as tendências dos estudos a respeito da formação de professores produziram conceitos e se apresentaram como produtos e produtoras das ações formativas, influenciando e sendo influenciadas pelas políticas, legislações e culturas.*

### **Palavras-chave**

*Formação de professores – Tendências teórico-práticas para a docência – Políticas de formação docente – Desenvolvimento profissional docente.*

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Reflecting on the concept of teacher education requires recourse to research, to the practice of education and to the very meaning of the teacher's role in society. This research tracks the political-economic and socio-cultural movements shaping the teaching performance, at the real and ideal levels. Now the practice is established from an amalgamation of theoretical and contextual conditions.

In this direction, in a contemporary view and based on the Brazilian reality, this study focuses on the different contours of the teaching role, socially produced at a time and place, which favor the conceptual apprehension of teacher education. In the analytical exercise done in this article, I do not intend to exhaust the topic or to demand exclusivity in the theoretical perspective. Its aim was to stimulate syntheses which foster an understanding of the trajectory of teacher education in Brazil, in a procedural perspective. Thanks to this, I hope to contribute to the scholars of the subject, especially the younger generations, and help them be acquainted with the movements experienced in this field of study, in which, there certainly are tensions and subjective understandings in play.

### **Teacher education: conceptual dimension**

We shall begin our theoretical reflection from the understanding of Estevão (2001 p. 185) regarding education:

education as a specific social practice and as a true institution which fulfills certain social functions related to the reproduction, regulation and legitimization of the social system. [...] education, at the same time, celebrates certain sometimes-contradictory values linked both to the business and managerialist world and to the civic world and the world of citizenship.

If the concept of education is not neutral, as shown in the quote above, it is essential to

analyze it from a perspective that distances itself from a purely technical understanding, ruling out any possibility of denial of subjectivity.

Gauthier (1999, p. 24) properly recorded that:

[...] each device of the look and observation changes the object of study [...] therefore, we never study a neutral object, but always an implied object, characterized by the theory and the device that allows seeing it, observing it and knowing it.

In this perspective, it is important to have a systematic reflection about teacher education, because in many situations, in spite of its natural questioning condition, research can take a relative contribution to emancipatory educational processes. Thus, knowledge can both be a place of resistance to the regulation imposed and serve as an instrument of power in a given discursive context.

The paradigm of modern science, strongly inspirational of exact and natural sciences, has marked the trajectory of social sciences in their intention of legitimacy. In such paradigm, many times, teacher education was treated in an essentially neutral dimension, both in its pedagogical inspiration, and in the psychological perspective.

Assuming an explicit valorative position, Arroyo (2004) advocated a *human education*, extrapolating the usual interpretation that confines education to determined places and times. For the author,

[...] pedagogy is born when one recognizes that this education, involving the idea of manufacturing the human world, is part of a project, an intentional, conscious task. (ARROYO, 2004, p. 226)

As a result of and in accordance with this position, we can say that, broadly speaking, teacher education takes place in a *continuum* since the teachers' family upbringing and

cultural education until their formal and academic trajectory, remaining as a vital process while their professional cycle happens. In this context, it is possible to mention a *teacher educational process* (ISAIA, 2006) which includes:

[...] both the personal and the professional development of teachers, addressing self, hetero and intereducational actions in an inter-related way. (ISAIA, 2006, p. 351)

Considering a more punctual dimension, the literature has assumed, as formal possibilities of professional development for teachers, two preferred spaces: initial education and continuing education. Initial education are institutional processes of training of a profession that generate the license for its exercise and its legal and public recognition. Undergraduate licensure courses, under Brazilian law, are responsible for the initial education of teachers for primary and secondary education and should match what the legislation proposes in relation to their goals, formats and duration.

By continuing education one means the initiatives instituted in the period that accompanies the professional time of teachers. It may have different formats and duration, taking the perspective of education as a process. It may both have originated in the initiative of the persons concerned and be embedded in institutional programs. In this case, school systems, universities and schools are the main mobilizing agencies of such education.

### **Teacher education: development of the trajectory of the concept, main theories and authors**

The pedagogical literature has reported quite often on the research on teachers and their education that has been conducted over time. Understandably, these investigations are closely related to the political and epistemological perspectives which have defined the role of

the teacher over time. However, to reflect on teacher education as a problem that encourages multiple studies, events, guidelines and policies, it is necessary to expand the scope of focus.

This expansion is justified because teachers are professionals who, except in rare situations, perform their activity in specific places: schools and universities. This condition leads to the reflection that “one is unlikely to be able to address the issue of teaching separated from the place where it is produced as a profession” (CUNHA, 2006, p. 56). There are no teachers in a vacuum, in an ethereal vision, proposing shifts between subject and context. A teacher becomes a teacher at a cultural and human institution, repository of values and expectations of a particular society, understood in a historical time.

This assumption helps understand and analyze the investigative trends in the field of teacher education which either oscillated between teaching and school or focused more specifically on the figure of the teacher. Thus, by the literature review, it is perceived that until the early eighties the studies of North American origin were the most widespread in our country and were the ones that most influenced Brazilian researchers. Among the first studies known are those inspired by the industrial organization and which had assumed the ideas of productivity and control, focused on the theory of work organization and sought to ground administrative matters of school systems (SANT’ANNA, 1976).

Regarding teaching itself, it is worth mentioning the studies of Gage (1963), which show that investigations into the teacher began with the intention of studying teaching effectiveness. Moreover, it is important to emphasize the investigations of Grujot (apud POSTIC, 1979), which proposed a relationship between teachers’ professional value and their ability to make students understand information. For this author, the quality of the pedagogical act should be measured by the quality of the transmission of the teacher’s knowledge.

Remmers and Gage (1963) presented another noteworthy proposal in the 1950s. It assumed that “[...] the best teachers are the ones that produce the most desirable changes in their students in a higher level” (POSTIC, 1979, p. 31). Generally, this type of research analyzed the development of students’ skills and knowledge, which were measured before and after the teacher’s influence. This proposition aroused some criticism, not for what it represented in the conceptual aspect, but for the difficulty of measuring and removing correlated variables. The idea that teacher competence was assessed by the product and that this was the result of objective conditions of teaching seemed to be absolutely accepted.

These studies stemmed from the assumption that the competence of the teacher was a single trait. Thus, teachers who could stimulate the development of an aptitude among the maximum number of students would also be able to make them progress in any other situation and/or would be capable of the same feat with any category of students. Clearly behavioral in nature, this line was very present in the Brazilian research in the 1970s, which focused on teacher behavior.

Studies on teacher effectiveness gradually shifted to the investigation of the very act of teaching. The prime example of this trend, with a strong presence in the national space, were the strands which turned to the analysis of the interaction process within the classroom. Among the scholars of the subject, Flanders (1960) was the most publicized. The analysis of interactions was as a technique to capture qualitatively and quantitatively the dimensions of the teacher’s verbal behavior in the classroom and stemmed from the idea that measuring the influence of teacher behavior on students’ work is a direct means for evaluating teacher effectiveness.

In the same perspective as that of Flanders’ research, some more studies were conducted focusing on the affective and interactive aspects of teaching. From these investigations, others evolved which focused attention on the

cognitive conditions of act of teaching. The form of the proposition of content and of mental processes, triggered in the students, would be indicators of teacher competence. Gage (1963) and Meux Schmith (1997) developed criteria for assessing the act of teaching based on the cognitive categories, relating thought processes to teaching skills. Other studies of cognitive basis continued to be conducted. Gallanger (1967) and Aschner (1963), using Guilford’s three-dimensional model, distinguished the influence and relationship between the verbal behavior of the teacher and the dominant processes in the thought of students.

Despite the efforts of these scholars to contribute to a better understanding of the process of teaching and, therefore, of teacher education, they were criticized for reducing the complexity of the pedagogical situation to a constellation of isolated stimuli, typical of the behaviorist view.

In Brazil, however, the repercussion of these studies was significant, conveyed primarily through the graduate programs established in the early 1970s. Through a study of the articles published in national journals on the subject of teacher education, Feldens (1984) showed that such articles could be grouped into six categories of analysis. Three of them concerned teacher characteristics, teaching competencies and interactive processes, while the others were linked to education and training programs. The theoretical and methodological framework used was predominantly North American, which confirms the strong cultural and academic influence of these scholars in Brazil.

From then on, they created space for investigations that had focused on the teacher from a psychological perspective. Morrison and McIntire (1971), whose writings were translated in Brazil, argued that the teacher should have determined personality traits, attitudes and social interests that caused a high level of satisfaction among students.

Lembo (1975) investigated the performance of teachers in function of their

frustrations and proposed alternatives that would prevent school failure. In general, most of the research was linked to the psychological experience of teachers and the role they played in the school, family and community.

Mosquera (1976), for example, brought together and re-signified propositions by foreign authors on the subject, stating “that any pedagogical revolution must take into account the affectivity of teachers, because their affective skills are fundamental to the future world” (MOSQUERA, 1976, p. 105). This author’s studies, already with the national seal of approval, had important repercussions in research and teacher education practices that sought the appreciation of psychological aspects in the construction of teaching.

In the same direction, the ideas of Rogers (1971) inspired many Brazilian educators, representing a progressive view in the technicist space of the seventies. Perkins (apud MOSQUERA, 1976) also had his turn, reinforcing empathy and self-concept as a core category for teachers to promote interpersonal relationships.

In the current analysis, distancing oneself from the events, it is clear that, at the time, psychological aspects represented a strong line in research on teacher education. It seems that even sociological and anthropological studies were concerned with issues of social status or the adaptation of the subject to a given culture. However, they did not make explicit the relations of power and/or class domination underlying the modes of production. The teacher and the students seemed to be understood as abstract beings, existing independently of time and space, for whom history and social structure mattered little.

The understanding of the political dimension of education interfered a lot in the way of understanding the role of teachers and, therefore, of teacher education. In Brazil, the early eighties marked the possibility of establishing new perspectives on the teaching function, understanding teachers within the power structure of society, in which identity is

conceived as a social and cultural construction. Paulo Freire’s contribution in this regard was unsurpassable. The author taught that the teacher is a being of the world and cannot be thought of outside this perspective; s/he is not an isolated individual, but rather “a being in a situation, a being of work and transformation [...]” (FREIRE, 1992, p. 28).

Graduate programs were placed at the forefront of academic discussion, also seen as a political space. In our country, studies like Mello (1982), Nosella (1983), Vieitez (1982), and Luckesi (1983) inaugurated a new stage of analysis of teaching competence in technical and political dimensions. Such scholars were inspired by the Marxist contributions made by Saviani (1981), Gadotti (1980), Rodrigues (1985) and other Brazilian educators. The understanding of teacher education began to be questioned and expanded, incorporating cultural and subjective dimensions which until then had been absent from the studies on teaching.

National events such as *Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência* (SBPC, Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science), *Conferência Brasileira de Educação* (CBE, Brazilian Conference on Education) and *Encontro Nacional de Didática e Prática de Ensino* (ENDIPE, National Meeting on Didactics and Teaching Practice) became privileged spaces for large academic and political discussions. Such events materialized the efforts of flourishing national entities such as *Associação Nacional de Educação* (ANDE, National Association of Education); *Associação Nacional de Docentes da Educação Superior* (ANDES, National Association of Teachers of Higher Education), *Associação Nacional de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Educação* (ANPED, National Association for Research and Graduate Programs in Education) and *Centro de Estudos sobre Educação e Sociedade* (CEDES, Centre for Studies on Education and Society).

At that time, educational research turned to the philosophical and sociological frameworks because it was concerned with the major problems



of the country, in the phase of democratic reconstruction. The theme of teacher education was on the agenda of state governments, newly elected in the context of political opening. Those governments sought in academia engaged intellectuals to their staff. There was an emergency for new practices to forward the real demands of the public education systems, which were the responsibility of the states.

At the same time, the positivist logic of doing science was beginning to show signs of exhaustion in the support of educational research. The new discourse, incorporating the concepts of dialectics, became incompatible with the epistemological view of modern science. Restlessness with the concrete space of pedagogical practice gave rise to the so-called qualitative research methodologies, breaking with the logic of neutrality and quantification (CUNHA, 1993).

In this movement, action research, participant, phenomenological, life history and ethnographic studies were increasingly used in dissertations and theses, as well as investigations of university professors. On the school floor there were movements demanding greater autonomy of institutional collectives and leading innovative experiments, which aimed to break with the traditional teaching and learning practices.

Such movements, reconfigurations and stimuli hit the theme of teacher education. In this sense, the studies that distanced themselves from the technical rationality were very important and became a national basis of investigative production. As a result of these investigations, it was created the *Associação Nacional de Formação de Professores* (ANFOPE, National Association of Teacher Education), which brought together researchers and university leaders involved in the field of pedagogy and teacher education. This association played an important political role, establishing dialogues with the ministerial authorities and the Brazilian Congress, which would legislate on the topic.

Lüdke and André (1986), Fazenda (1995), Veiga (1988), Cunha (1989), Martins (1982), Pimentel (1993), Pimenta (1994), Penin (1994) and many other national researchers were incorporated into the international contributions of scholars such as Schulman (1989), Gimeno Sacristán (1989), Nóvoa (1992), Schön (1983), Zeichner (1992, 1995), Perrenoud (1993), Contreras (1994) among others.

The perspective of studying teachers as concrete subjects of pedagogical actions contributed to understand them in their technical, personal and professional constitution. This development began to gain ground in studies that related education and work, grounded by sociological references. The teaching profession, in its social condition of exercise, incorporated aspects of culture, gender and ethnicity as members of its configuration. The following studies had these investigative concerns: Arroyo (1985), Abraamo (1987), Silva (2000), Louro (1989), Lopes (1991), Costa (1995), Hypólito (1991), Pessanha (1994) and others. Internationally, the contributions of Varela (1992), Apple (1989), Enguita (1991), Nóvoa (1992) and Guerrero (1992) were important and had repercussions in Brazil.

In this context, the theoretical reflections and productions coming from the research influenced the movements of discussion of the teaching profession, with respect to both its everyday exercise and its education. It was demanded that, in Brazil, the education of all teachers occurred at a higher level and that there were a national organization to ground the curricula for undergraduate education courses.

The cultural basis of teaching, perceived as a historical production, was also accepted by scholars of the field, who incorporated this dimension as a value. As a result, there was an appreciation of subjectivity or, rather, subjectivities, fostering the discussion of the historical subject of social transformation. Teachers assumed their role of subjects in history and, in addition to the psychological, political and professional dimensions, their insertion in



the culture was recognized, in which the global contingency coexists with local determinisms.

Paradoxically, a new stage in the map of the world political economy, with the symbolic fall of the Berlin Wall, was established at both social and political levels. The second half of the 1990s brought the breakthrough of the so-called neoliberalism, reconfiguring capitalism in an exacerbated way and announcing the end of solidary utopias. The shrinking of the state was established as the main banner, recognizing the market as the key regulatory force of human relationships. To achieve with greater success the logic of globalization, it was defended: the significant weakening of the concept of nation, changing the bases of production and the relations of dependence between the rich and the poor. Policies for strengthening economic blocs, thus, seriously impacted national identities, with significant repercussions on their institutions, including the university.

Still puzzled, education in general and the university in particular found themselves in a struggle between democratization and the response to the demands of a changing world of production. New configurations were presented as inevitable and pedagogical neotechnicism was easily produced to meet the demands of the market, mainly through the parameters of total quality and the pedagogy of competences.

The discourse of competences was institutionalized through the new *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* (LDB, Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education), enacted in 1996, and the subsequent *Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais* (PCNs, National Curriculum Parameters) of the various levels of education and professional careers. The inclusion of the term competencies did not mean, in this context, only a figure of speech; it revealed an articulation of greater dependence between the education systems and the demands of the productive world, taking the teacher once again for a craftsman of a largely predetermined pedagogy.

In this context, the teaching function is materialized through the instrumental action to

facilitate the achievement of competencies by students. Spaniard Cesar Coll (1987) and French-Canadian Philippe Perrenoud (1993) gave the main theoretical grounding for such legislation and significantly influenced its drafting.

The impact of international and national economic policies on educational systems resulted in the emerging discussion about the space of teacher education, taking as a reference for such term the sociogeographic approach, which understands space not only as a physical unit, but also, and more importantly, as a definition of power. With inspiration from Giddens (1984), we can state that men make their own geography and also their history. That is to say, “spatial configurations of social life are a matter of fundamental importance to social theory, and so are the dimensions of temporality” (GIDDENS, 1984, p. 363).

The previous discussion which considered the issues of teacher education analyzed from the viewpoint of epistemology and pedagogy took a new direction. Still considering very relevant the reflections that address the relationships between teaching and research, or between theory and practice, there was a push by the political measures to reorder the focus of discussion.

The place of teacher education, seen before only as a matter of educational property, began requiring analyses in the context of political strategies. In this context, the ideas of Hargreaves (1999) about the social geography of teacher education need to be highlighted, as they reinforce the idea that the space where teacher education takes place was established as important and capable of modifying and adding contingencies to the general trajectories of teacher education, making it a relevant feature of human institutions and interactions.

By highlighting the importance of the place of education, Hargreaves (1999) stated that where teacher education lies and is distributed is so important a matter as the one that addresses when this education was created and how it evolved in a particular environment.

In this perspective, the space of education has a sense of inclusion/exclusion which, especially in the capitalist restructuring of the last decade, has profound social meanings in the power structure of the world order.

For the author, the current social geography encompasses the spatial marginality and deinstitutionalization of teacher education from the university. With it, a new use of other places and spaces is established, creating a certain symbolic confinement. In this modality, professional development schools (institutes of higher education) would be instituted as concrete ways of representing selective and accepted practices for teacher education and where practical interests, in addition to those of the university, could be integrated. In this understanding, as stated by Milton Santos (1997, p. 20):

[...] what globalizes separates; it is the location that allows the union [...] characterized by two kinds of constitution: one is the territorial configuration itself; the other is the norm, the organization, the regulatory regimes. The place and the region are no longer the result of organic solidarity, but of regulated or organizational solidarity.

Built to understand the theme of contemporary acceleration, this argument perfectly fits the logic that justifies the establishment of a specific space for teacher education outside the university. This is because, in this view, such space represents the inadequacies of global spaces that should give way to the spaces that preserve the specific and make it function more adequately. Santos (1997, p. 18) also stated that “the specific place becomes the world of the truthful and hope, and the global place, mediatized by a perverse organization, becomes a threat”, a threat which certainly mischaracterizes local possibilities.

The irony of this discussion is to realize that the defense of a broader academic education of future teachers could be used as an argument in favor of globalization, strengthening the

argument that the generalist and theoretical spaces would nullify the efforts to build teacher education’s specific knowledge, which included the knowledge of daily practice. It was necessary, therefore, to denounce this fallacious possibility. More serious than this condition may be the risk of confining teacher education in spaces where there is no traffic of ideas or of general and multidisciplinary knowledge.

Therefore, the challenge seems to be the link between the local and the global, between broader theoretical frameworks and everyday life. We shall use again the words of Milton Santos (1997, p.16), when he states that “space becomes globalized, but it is not global as a whole, but only as a metaphor [...] what can be globalized are people and places”. And these possibilities will certainly depend on regulation rules which, in turn, tend to be very difficult to understand in places and in spaces which do not stimulate the typical contradictions of the multiple alternatives of interpretations of the world.

Hargreaves (1999) says that the position and the social importance of teacher education are defined in part by the spaces that are created for such education over time. For this reason, attempts to change the statute and social importance of this education involve changing the position and the place where it happens. The political effort made to ensure the education of teachers of the lower grades inside the university was due to the recognition of the importance of this phase of schooling, which requires the presence of a well-qualified teacher.

This teacher education was converted into something less peripheral and subject to marginalization. It became more related to the spaces of knowledge and culture and open to understanding and communicating with the world. However, it still faces difficulties in securing teachers’ desired professional status. As it is easy to see, the background discussion goes beyond the technical and objective dimension. It involves political issues and, as such, causes reactions and controversy, including academic discussion.

Reactions to the political disqualification of teacher education were soon to come. Assuming teaching as a complex action (CUNHA, 2004; SEVERINO 2006), the movements established and the literature of the field made explicit the disagreement with the legal proposals, which were intended to reduce the teaching function to predetermined parameters, questioning the legitimacy of the university as an education space.

Again, a cultural condition was downgraded, taking the universal as a standard for the local. Regulatory policies made use of external evaluation to define, in a reductionist way, what is a value in education and the consequent bureaucratization of teaching work impacted on professional practice. Studies related to the concepts of intensification and teacher malaise were academically constituted. Scholars such as Apple, Hargreaves, Corrêa and Matos made important contributions to the theme which has important followers in Brazil.

These studies have been expanding from the challenges facing the teaching profession. Violence, drug addiction and the crisis of authority are problems of contemporary society that significantly affect the school and impact the traditional role of the teacher. Low wages lead to the phenomenon of intensification and conditions that do not suit work influence teachers' self-esteem, and are a substantial part of the ills that settle in their professional careers. These phenomena ratify the position that the reflection on teacher education and teaching practice requires an intrinsic relationship with the social context, its values and tensions, making explicit the continuing relevance of its discussion.

Coexisting with the academic production of appreciation of teaching in its cultural complexity, the strand of poststructuralist studies is also present contemporaneously in the research on teacher education. Grounded by authors such as Foucault, Deleuzze, Guattari, Apple and Larrosa, in the international sphere, these studies were soon extended with national contributions, of which are highlighted the

studies of Veiga Neto, Moreira, Silva, Costa, Corazza (2006), Garcia and others.

Teachers and their ways of being and acting are subject to a regime of truth produced by critical theories, having specific effects of power and truth on the processes of teacher subjectification, related to a moral duty. The questioning of critical theories focuses its interest on the processes of subjectivation and the governability issues involved in teaching. Therefore, there is a special relationship between the theories of curriculum and teaching.

Contradictorily, and capable of signaling a form of resistance, the theories that value the experience and reflective ability of teachers settled exponentially in education courses and in the supervision of educational research. The contributions of Schön (1983) were the first to popularize the idea that the knowledge derived from experimental research, which he called *technical rationality*, is no good for coping with everyday problems of teaching and learning.

In contrast, the author proposed what he called *epistemology of practice*, that is, he assumed that the contact and interaction with the teaching practice can generate knowledge, whenever teachers are involved in cycles of reflection and dialogue with practice problems. In this case, it is recognized that teachers produce knowledge, by collating practice with theory and the concept of teacher knowledge settled in a possible counterpoint to the meaning given to the term competencies by neoliberal policies. The ideas of authors like Tardif (2002), Nóvoa (1992), Marcelo Garcia (1999) and Gauthier (1999) were accepted in Brazil and inspired studies such as Pimenta (1999), Ramalho (2004), Cunha (2006, 2010), among others.

This trend, though largely accepted by researchers and teacher educators in Brazil, was questioned by scholars of the field of philosophy, who warned against the danger of deploying a pragmatic view in teacher education, denouncing the possibility of *retreat of theory* (MORAES, 2003). However, this position – by playing an important role against

reductionism – caused the deepening of research and practices that combined theory and practice as a possibility of teacher education.

The main merit of the epistemology of practice is the recognition of teaching work as a source of knowledge and of the complexity of teaching, always hit by contextual contingencies. As a result of this trend, strategies of cultural narratives and understanding of the concept of *professional development* settled with a significant presence in the field of teacher education. Such strategies and concept gradually replaced and encompassed the previous concepts relating to continuing education and lifelong learning.

The focus of the change is related to accepting that education is a subjective process, that is, teachers are educated as a condition for their mobilization for that (NÓVOA, 1994). External stimuli may be important, but they also require the meaning that the teacher attaches to the educational experience. It is recognized that this experience includes trajectories of life, cultural references and social values in an amalgam of possibilities for building the teaching professionalism, understood as the profession in action.

Certainly, the exercise of performing a temporal analysis and the boldness of organizing trends to express the movement of teacher education that hit contemporary Brazil is complex and risky. Referents emerge from the organizer's view and take a restrictive aspect that such condition includes. It corresponds to a random chance that at no time intended to be the only expression of truth. This is an exercise, among others, whose purpose is to contribute, especially to younger generations, so that they can get an idea of the trajectory, when examining the theme of teacher education.

We have developed the following table with exactly the same purpose and boldness with which we summarized the trends manifested in the field of teacher education.

Faced with this scenario, it is easy to realize that the efforts that have marked the

epistemological, cultural and political ruptures in the field of education and teacher education have always been in tension. Still fragile and minority, such ruptures sought to assert themselves in the academic field, with all the difficulties arising from the dominant presence. They generally coexisted and sometimes amalgamated into new contours.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2000, p. 344) states that “the paradigmatic struggle is, as a whole, highly risky” because it requires an emerging subjectivity that involves *societal* and epistemological rupture. For the author, “alternative forms of knowledge generate alternative practices and vice versa” (SANTOS, 2000, p. 344), permeating the concept of subjectivity that is constituted as the great mediator between knowledge and practice. Certainly, these are the contemporary tensions for teacher education and all movements and alternatives will reveal the complexity that they demand.

Those different trends had a significant impact on educational research and this, in turn, also played a leading role in the paradigmatic changes. When one assumes that research can be a key element for emancipatory education, one embraces the idea of consistency between research processes and a proposition of valuing education. As the paradigm of *technical rationality* was giving way to an understanding of the educational phenomenon as socially and culturally produced, there were significant changes in the ways of producing knowledge about education.

Research continues addressing the classic themes of teacher education, including initial and continuing education, knowledge creation in professional practice and the conditions of professionalization. Recognizing the workspace as a place of education resulted in a significant trend of researching on teachers in their context of work, in which they are recognized as producers of knowledge and, at the same time, respond as produced to the objective conditions of existence and professionalization. In this direction, the investigative assumptions

**Table 1** - Research trends in teacher education

Trends	Studies	Period
Behavioral Psychology	Professional value measured by the ability to make students understand information.	1960/70
Interactionist	The measure of the influence of teacher (verbal and interactive) behavior on the student reveals teacher effectiveness.	1960/70
Cognitivist Psychology	The teacher's action relates to students' thought processes and the construction of teaching skills. It evolves to the impact of the constructivist epistemological perspective.	1970/80
Affective Psychology	Educators' affectivity, personality traits, interests, and self-concept are fundamental for the construction of professionalism and their ways of teaching.	1970/80
Political Philosophical	Teachers are seen within the power structure of society in which their identity is a social construction. Technical and political competencies are allied.	1980
Political Anthropological	Teachers are culturally produced and politically situated subjects. Their history and working condition give a new meaning to their education.	1980/90
Political Sociological/Culturalist	The professionalization of teachers and their working conditions in the organization of capitalist society, their gender, class and ethnicity have profound meanings in their social pedagogical practices.	1980/90
Political Poststructuralist	Teachers and their ways of being and acting are subjected to a regime of truth produced by critical theories, having specific effects of power and truth on the processes of teacher subjectification, related to a moral duty. It focuses its interest on the processes of subjectivation and issues of governability.	1990/2000
Political Neoliberal	Teachers are primarily managers of predetermined pedagogies in the form of competencies to be achieved by students from a perspective of productivity. They are hit by a process of proletarianization and progressive disqualification by the emptying of their intellectual condition.	Late 1990s e 2000s
Political focused on the epistemology of practice	Teachers are reflective subjects who see practice as the starting point of their education and their professionalism, contextually resignifying theory. They take self-education as a principle and reflection as a possibility of development. They consider the social and institutional contexts in which they operate.	1990s and 2000s
Cultural narratives and professional development	Teachers act based on structural knowledge from different sources and contexts. They build their knowledge from the multiple influences of education, in confrontation with the cultural and institutional context in which they operate.	2000s

that take the cultural dimension have been recurring because they meet epistemological requirements better.

Another exponential strand in the field of teacher education is the incorporation of the strand of epistemologies of practice, which inserted terms such as reflective teacher and researcher teacher. This strand stimulated studies on *learner* teachers. It clearly intends to research on teachers as epistemic subjects, who gradually reconfigure their knowledge in function of the professional challenges that practice imposes on them.

It is possible to discuss the idea of an epistemology of practice that can not be identified with irresponsible practicism, easily criticized for the possibility of existing away

from theory. In this perspective, the processes of teacher education would be weakened, by rushing curriculum proposals. In the current context, in which globalizing and economicist policies pressure for rapid mass teacher education, this is a significant threat. However, this argument has not served to negate the importance of theories that take the epistemology of practice as the articulating axis of teacher education. In particular, this occurs thanks to the constant complaints of weakness of the education model which proposed a theorization disconnected from the practice and everyday life of teachers and students.

In a recent study, André (2008) pointed topics that have been presented and discussed in the Working Groups of *Associação*

*Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação* (ANPEd, National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education). Considering the legitimacy of the source, due to its importance and representativeness in the area of education, the data can be useful to be presented here despite being a sample of the national reality.

In the aforementioned study, the most recurrent themes were related to some dimensions, such as:

a) pedagogical practices of teachers, who demonstrate didactic capabilities, including mainly the evaluation processes of learning, teaching specific subjects, the use of textbooks and the appropriation of the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) into the processes of teaching and learning;

b) teaching representations and conceptions about the actors in the educational process as well as the policies that interfere and regulate school education;

c) teaching work and the conditions of teacher professionalization, including the dimensions of autonomy and self-management in the processes of continuing education;

d) the practices and programs of teacher education, including initial and continuing education, in their political and pedagogical dimension; and

e) the importance of research as a tool of quality teaching, exploring theories and practices that prepare the teacher for this protagonism.

Understanding the limits of the information outlined above, it is possible to assume, however,

that they indicate contemporary positions and serve as a guide for the area. It is noteworthy that this description points relevancies and reveals silences. There is a perceived lack of topics related to public and career policies, to the philosophical and political dimensions of teaching, the sociological dimension of teachers' work and a few others that make up the spectrum of topics related to the field.

All the phases that mark the trends of studies on teacher education have produced concepts and presented themselves as products and producers of educational actions, influencing and being influenced by policies, legislations and cultures.

The issue of teacher education is an inexhaustible subject and is always exciting in higher education. It has led to different study approaches and required developments in its analysis and understanding. The demands of professionalization reopened specific reflections on the continuing education of teachers at all levels, which led to the need to rethink initial education. Both continue to demand efforts and to encourage the investigative spirit of the academic basis.

It seems that the need to study teachers and their education is as permanent as the idea of process in their human condition, in their social organization, is inexorable. Changes in society will always define new challenges for the education of human beings and, as a result, different contributions to the role and education of teachers. This arises as a permanent challenge for research and the university.

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