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Maria Assunção Flores & Eneida Shiroma

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Teacher Professionalisation and Professionalism in Portugal and Brazil: what do the policy documents tell?

MARIA ASSUNÇÃO FLORES

Universidade do Minho, Instituto de Educação e Psicologia, Campus de Gualtar, 4710 Braga, Portugal

ENEIDA SHIROMA

Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Centro de Ciências da Educação, Campus Universitário-Trindade, CEP: 88.040–900 Florianópolis (SC), Brazil

ABSTRACT *This paper focuses on teacher education policy in Portugal and Brazil over the last decade, and it discusses its implications for teacher professionalisation and professionalism. It identifies the emergence of competing discourses arising from policy texts and other formal documents related to teacher education, both initial and in-service, issued in both countries. It is argued that the intertwined concepts of professionalisation and professionalism, which play a central role in most recent policy documents, entail different meanings in different contexts. Although similar orientations can be identified, particularly in regard to a new rhetoric emerging in the educational field, it is also evident that different ways of operationalising the concepts of professionalisation and professionalism have been put into place.*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, lifelong learning has become a key concept in policy documents, in particular after the publication of the UNESCO's report *Learning: The Treasure Within* by the International Commission on Education for the 21st Century, led by Jacques Delors. The increasing relevance attached to lifelong learning brought about implications for the educational system, in general, and for the role of the teacher, in particular. A close look at the most recent documents concerned with educational reforms reveals that teacher professionalisation and professionalism emerged as key issues. These are complex and controversial concepts, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper. Several authors distinguish professionalisation from professionalism, the former being a social and political project or process (by which a given occupation seeks the recognition as a

profession), and thus related to issues of status and public recognition, the latter being a term which refers to the nature of people's work (Carlgren, 1999; Sockett, 1993).

Although similar concepts may be identified in official documents in many countries, educational policy is driven by different priorities, which are dependent upon the social, political, cultural and economic context in which they are embedded.

This paper draws upon the most recent policy documents issued in Portugal and Brazil. It focuses particularly on teacher education, both initial and in-service, which has been one of the major targets of educational reforms since the 1980s. It looks at policy texts published over the last decade by exploring the following main questions. What kind of changes affecting teacher education were introduced in recent years? How is teacher professionalisation defined? What are the main reasons put forward to account for the need for teacher professionalisation? What is the government's intention in developing the notion of 'teacher professionalism'? These will be examined not only in the light of the social, cultural, historical and economic contexts characterising both countries but also within the broader transformations affecting education and teachers' work.

TEACHING AT THE CROSSROADS: TOWARDS A NEW RHETORIC OF TEACHER (RE)PROFESSIONALISATION?

It has been argued that teaching has become an increasingly complex activity that requires teachers to be prepared to respond to a wide array of new and demanding challenges resulting from social, economic, cultural and political changes (Day, 1999; Esteve, 2000). Quality has become the key word reiterated world-wide and the need to raise the standards of education a priority for all governments. Analysts state that the 'social market model' (Day, 1999) dominates the educational field in which an outcome-led conception of teaching has become prevalent. This perspective entails the notion of pre-specified and standardised learning goals to be achieved through a linear process in which effectiveness and efficiency emerge as key issues in assessing its quality. Within this perspective, teaching is seen as a highly controlled activity and teachers as technicians or 'doers' who implement curriculum guidelines according to a top-down orientation (Gimeno, 1995).

Recent changes in teachers' work call for new ways of approaching the teaching profession and, as a consequence, new ways of training those who will work in schools and classrooms. Some authors argue that teaching is mainly a practical activity which can be learned through a training process in the school setting (Lawlor, cited in Husbands, 1996). This view relates to recent trends in teacher education policies in several countries over the last two decades, through the emergence of school-based teacher education models in which the practical dimension is prevalent (Furlong *et al.*, 1996; Husbands, 1996).

Discussing the state of the art reforms that occurred in teacher education, within a European perspective, Vonk (1995) draws attention to some patterns, which point to different ways of looking at teacher professionalism. He identifies a general trend towards

the professionalisation of teaching, which can be seen in efforts to establish a body of professional knowledge and expertise aimed at 'bringing Teacher Education curricula to the academic level' (1995, p. 272). The UK moves away from the trend towards a longer academic and professional training, through the introduction of school-based teacher training schemes. Critics argue that the emphasis on 'on-the-job training', in which the participation of higher education institutions may be minimal, is likely to contribute to the de-professionalisation of teaching. An opposite trend can be identified in other countries (for instance, Portugal, France and Spain). An example of this can be seen in recent government initiatives to replace the traditional divide between elementary and secondary school teacher training, by extending the formal training of the former, and by emphasising the pedagogical component of the latter.

Another trend relates to the increasing government intervention in the definition of a set of competencies and standards against which the training of prospective teachers is to be set up and evaluated. This prescriptive view, often associated with a school-focused teacher training, is said to represent a 'drawback' in the professionalisation of teachers (Gilroy, 1999; Vonk, 1995). In this respect, Bell (1999, p. 199) argues that:

the story of Initial Teacher Education in England between 1960 and 1999 is one of gradually increasing government intervention in the structure, content and delivery of an educative process at a time when teacher autonomy and the status of teaching as a profession has been eroded.

Similarly, in the context of recent research to monitor changes in initial teacher education in England and Wales, Furlong *et al.* (2000, p. 149) found that 'in the course of just fifteen years, the system had been moved from one of diversity and autonomy to one of homogeneity and central control', suggesting that a narrower concept of teacher professionalism, based on a restricted notion of professionalism, has been gradually achieved. They further asserted that 'the purpose of the erosion of university domination of initial teacher education may not have been to devolve real responsibility to schools ... but to impose an alternative and more restricted state mandated approach' (p. 163).

What is apparent in most of the recent policy initiatives is an attempt to re-think the teaching profession by introducing significant changes in the way in which teachers are trained, whether they encompass an extension of the formal training or a greater emphasis on a school-focused apprenticeship model. All this had implications for the understanding of teachers' work and, consequently, for teacher professionalisation and professionalism.

Teacher Education Policy in Portugal in the 1990s

In the Portuguese context, the 1990s [1] were considered to be a 'turning point' in teacher education policy, with the institutionalisation of in-service education in 1992, which became compulsory for all teachers for career advancement purposes, and the consolidation of the initial training of prospective teachers. Among other initiatives, it is worth noting the recognition of the academic degree—'*licenciatura*' [2]—for all teachers irre-

spective of their level of teaching, in an attempt to reduce the gap between elementary school teachers and secondary school teachers, and the setting up of the National Institute for Accreditation of Teacher Education (INAFOP) [3] in 1998, in order to assess and monitor the quality of teacher training programmes against a set of specific standards. The Portuguese model of training pre-service teachers is university-based and reflects what Formosinho (2000) terms the ‘universitarisation’ of teacher education with an emphasis on the academic dimension rather than on the professional one (Canário, 2001a; Formosinho, 2000).

Whilst initial teacher training is university-based, in-service teacher education is framed within a decentralised model of social partnership aimed at fostering the continuing professional development of teachers and educational innovation in schools. By the decree-law regulating the in-service education of teachers, schools and other institutions, such as professional associations, teachers’ unions, school centres, are granted the opportunity to design and implement their own in-service activities according to the existing national framework which embodies the following main goals:

- ‘improving the quality of teaching by providing teachers with continuous updating and upgrading of both their theoretical and their practical knowledge;
- increasing teachers’ professional competence;
- encouraging self-directed learning, research and innovation;
- improving existing competencies related to all the roles and responsibilities teachers are expected to perform at school;
- acquiring new competencies and skills aimed at fostering the building of school autonomy and its educational projects;
- stimulating change processes at a school level’ (Decree-Law 249/92).

Alongside these are the national priorities defined at a central level as far as the focus of in-service activities is concerned, namely, for financial purposes. One of the key issues arising from the policy documents regulating INSET is the importance attached to the local dynamics in so far as schools may organise their own centres (usually at a municipal level) and, therefore, their own in-service activities. This view acknowledges the contextual and social factors which determine the nature and process of in-service education courses to be provided to teachers.

Overall, recent trends in teacher education policy in Portugal may be regarded as important steps into the (re)professionalisation of teachers, namely, through the extension of formal training and the recognition that all teachers should be graduates, irrespective of their level of teaching. Efforts to establish a body of professional knowledge can also be identified, a trend which is well documented in recent research on teacher education (see, for instance, Estrela *et al.*, 2002) and in other work on quality and standards for teacher education (see, for instance, work carried out within the context of the National Institute for Accreditation of Teacher Education). According to Campos (2000), the existing legal framework which underpins teacher education policy in Portugal points to a view of the teacher as a *professional*. Thus, training programmes would train teachers to be

professionals who hold a critical attitude towards social realities are able to contribute to innovation and research and reflect, in a systematic way, on their practice within a lifelong learning perspective.

However, this is a rather simplistic picture which does not account for the complexity, and in a sense ambiguity, characterising teacher education over the last few years. According to Formosinho (2000), although it is possible to identify the emergence of a professional culture amongst teachers, the traditionally bureaucratic and *civil service culture* is still very influential in teachers' views of the teaching profession. Recent empirical work carried out in Portugal has revealed that, in general and despite the high expectations amongst teachers and other stakeholders in the early 1990s, INSET has failed to meet teachers' and schools' expectations and their needs, particularly in the case of teachers' centres which were seen as key structures in fostering local dynamics and innovations in schools (Barroso & Canário, 1999; Canário, 2001b; Ruela, 1999). Evidence has also shown that overall in-service activities were planned and implemented according to a bureaucratic and technologically-oriented conception (see, for instance, Barroso & Canário, 1999; Ferreira, 1994; Ruela, 1999; Silva, 2001). This is to say, a formal logic prevailed according to which priority was given to the implementation of the educational reform in the light of the existing financial programme. Therefore, the potential of a decentralised model has led paradoxically to a formal and instrumental logic of INSET according to the national priorities rather than of the local and contextual needs of teachers and schools (Barroso & Canário, 1999; Ruela, 1999).

As for the initial teacher training (ITT), the need to re-think and re-design teacher education programmes is widely recognised (Campos, 2000; Flores, 2001; Pacheco & Flores, 1999). By and large, the gap between theory and practice, between universities and schools and the lack of a clear framework of what it means to be a teacher nowadays (Estrela *et al.*, 2002) emerge as the major weaknesses of current ITT programmes. In some cases, teachers are still being trained for schools that no longer exist. This contributes to deepen the gap between training and the increasing demands and expectations placed upon teachers whose work has been characterised by greater bureaucratisation, accountability and public scrutiny. In recent years, teachers have been confronted with new challenges: the existence of new areas in the school curriculum (e.g. cross-disciplinary areas such as citizenship education, environmental, health education, sex education; 'project work' which aims to foster learning methodologies such as search for information, collaborative inquiry, etc.); the definition of curricular competencies for students at different levels of teaching; the introduction of national assessment; increased autonomy for schools and, consequently, new roles for teachers in regard not only to managerial responsibilities but also in terms of curriculum development and school-community dialogue; and the growing use of ICT in teaching.

However, a recent report on the assessment of ITT programmes reveals that a traditional and formal view of training is still prevalent despite the rhetoric of lifelong learning and constructivism (Canário, 2001a). In other words, an academic rather than a professional logic prevails in many ITT courses in which technical rationality is prevalent, despite the

widespread movement towards the teacher as researcher and as reflective practitioner. The report also highlights the lack of articulation and the fragmentation within ITT courses and the lack of an integrated perspective linking ITT and INSET. In this respect, research has shown that, in most cases, universities and schools remain two separate (and sometimes contradictory) worlds in the preparation of prospective teachers, despite the 'mission statement' of a shared (institutional) role as training institutions (Braga, 2001; Flores, 2000; Pacheco, 1995). Within this logic, student teachers are left to integrate the theory and the practice of teaching, and the subject area and the pedagogical components by themselves. The process of becoming a teacher is, therefore, marked, in most cases, by discontinuities and fragmentation.

The Recent Educational Reform in Brazil

Recent changes in educational policy in Brazil in the 1990s focused mainly on administrative decentralisation, national curriculum standards, assessment, financial issues and teacher education. The Fundamental Law issued in 1996 established initial teacher education for primary schools at a higher education level, but the presidential Decree-Law no. 3276/1999 established that it should be done outside the universities. [4] It would occur exclusively in higher education institutes which did not exist at the time and needed to be set up.

In the face of the huge number of teachers to be trained and the lack of training institutions to train them, the legislation permitted teachers without a degree to obtain their diploma within 10 years. Therefore, by December 2006, all teachers in Brazil should be certified at higher education level. Surprisingly, the same government that established this has also reduced funding for public education and the number of vacated posts available for teachers in public universities. All this made it difficult for teachers to access universities. To avoid resultant social pressure, reformers offered criticisms of teacher education courses provided by university centres. In Brazil, ITT programmes which traditionally trained teachers were described as inadequate to respond to current social demands. Such criticisms were similar to those attributed to British universities, namely, in regard to the over-theoretical nature of conventional ITT courses:

This attack sees higher education courses as over-theoretical and time-wasting, whose student teachers are forced to indulge the preoccupations of ivory towered academics who propagate pernicious theory which is both harmful and irrelevant. (Hoyle & John, 1995, p. 150)

Hoyle and John (1995) assert further that 'the contradiction at the heart of this critique is that if such theory is indeed irrelevant and lofty, can it be at the same time be harmful? Ironically the attack, in part, testifies to the effectiveness of traditional teacher preparation' (p. 150). Critics argued for the removal of teacher education from the universities. According to reformers, this new perspective has become the way to increase efficiency and productivity, and to solve educational problems. Therefore, they argue for the creation

of curricular standards, national exams and institutional evaluations. These kinds of decisions are closely related to the reform of the administration and management of the educational system. It has been argued that new ways of evaluating the performance of schools should take into account the competencies teachers acquired, their professional performance as well as their students' achievement. The decentralisation of administrative and financial management was undertaken becoming the responsibility of school units. These decisions are compatible with the government's intentions to reduce public expenditure in the social area by asking volunteers for help to solve educational problems.

When these decisions were implemented, the Brazilian government undertook the reform of teacher education policy which was characterised by the following:

- reductions of public investment in initial teacher training (ITT) suggesting higher education but as a kind of non-university course;
- initial teacher training with emphasis on vocational education of teachers, driven by more practical, shorter training (2800 hours in total);
- a more practical and less theoretical training, closely related to situations that teachers will face in schools; and
- a conception of the teacher as being able to manage his/her own professional development.

A key issue in analysing a given reform relates to the kind of vocabulary intentionally used to disseminate its ideas and to make people agree with its importance. A new reform needs to provide teachers with a new discourse that is not theirs. This new discourse does not take into account teachers' experience. It is necessary, then, to put into place the following strategy: the lack of legitimacy of their theoretical and practical knowledge, along with the need to persuade them that they should be provided with a kind of training unconnected from the roots of their *métier*.

In Brazil and elsewhere, the high rates of failure and dropout were used to justify the claim that their training was not adequate. The image of the teacher as a semi-professional, whose actions had (negative) implications for pupils and the educational system, aimed at creating the conditions to implement this project. The new reform proposes alternative techniques and procedures and adopts a new language which aims to emphasise the lack of legitimacy of teachers' theoretical and practical knowledge.

In this context, the discourse of professionalisation emerges. The concept is itself problematic in so far as it presupposes that teachers are not professionals and that they need to be professionalised. But what kind of training should be provided for teachers? A kind of training which contributes to change the nature of their professionalism. If this is the new meaning attached to teacher professionalism in the late 20th century, in the educational field this redefinition has negative implications in so far as it seeks, in most cases, to ignore the identity constructed over the years and to replace it by a market-orientated, competitive and individualised mentality.

THE PARADOX OF RECENT TRENDS IN TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

As described earlier, the most recent policies in teacher professionalisation assume, under the same umbrella, different forms in different countries. In Portugal the universitarisation of teachers dominates and in Brazil the training of teachers at higher education level was proposed, though outside the universities.

In both contexts, ambiguity characterises teachers' work in recent years. On the one hand, autonomy, participation and flexibility are reiterated in policy documents (according to which teachers and schools are granted greater autonomy to implement and manage the school curriculum, their roles are expanding classroom doors and greater demands are placed upon them); on the other hand, resources and support (including training) are far from being responsive to their needs and their new professional roles.

Different and competing perspectives and ways of looking at teacher professionalisation and professionalism co-exist. This trend is depicted by Hargreaves (2000) as the post-modern age of teacher professionalism, which is marked by 'a struggle between forces and groups intent on de-professionalising the work of teaching, and other forces and groups who are seeking to re-define teacher professionalism and professional learning in more positive and principled modern ways that are flexible, wide-ranging and inclusive in nature' (p. 153). At the heart of the paradox is the tension between two distinctive and opposing movements. As Hargreaves and Goodson (1996, p. 3) put it:

some parts of teacher's work are becoming *reprofessionalised* in ways that involve broader tasks, greater complexity, more sophisticated judgement, and collective decision-making among colleagues, while other parts of the work are becoming *deprofessionalised* in terms of more pragmatic training, reduced discretion over goals and purposes, and increased dependence on detailed learning outcomes. (original emphasis)

A deeper understanding of these contradictory trends needs to be located in the broader educational reform initiatives within an international perspective to which we now turn.

Teacher Education within an International Perspective

Over the last two decades or so, a new concept of teacher education has emerged. The need to conceptualise teacher education as a 'lifelong enterprise' (Vonk, 1995) and as a 'long continuum' (Develay, 1996; Marcelo, 1999; Perrenoud, 1993) has been reiterated in the literature over the last few years. Within this view, ITT is seen as the first step of a career-long process only preparing for entry into the profession. Induction and in-service education and training of teachers are also viewed as two crucial elements of the *continuum* (Bolam, 1987; Marcelo, 1999).

In many countries, educational reforms attributed to teachers a key role in education. They are blamed for what goes wrong in public education and, at the same time, they are seen as the keyholders to its success. It has become necessary to involve teachers in reform

initiatives making them realise their anachronism in face of their new role in the 21st century.

This conception of the teacher described by the UNESCO Commission for the Education for the 21st Century, led by Jacques Delors, was reiterated in educational reforms in Latin America. According to UNESCO/OREALC (1993), the concept of professionalisation should be the *leitmotiv* of educational reform in Latin America. The above document, along with the recommendations of the World Conference of Education for All in 1990 and the document of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in 1992 produced the guidelines for the educational reform occurred in the 1990s.

These documents express the orientation of the professionalisation but not the logic behind it. Besides the convergence of interests amongst nations and international policies that the documents highlight, they also stress that professionalisation calls for much more than a teacher who 'knows how to do things'. What needs to be emphasised is that the logic(s) behind the reform of teacher education lie in reasons that go beyond concerns with the skilling of teachers (Shiroma *et al.*, 2000). Understanding the nature and purpose of teacher education implies, therefore, the analysis of the conceptual and epistemological assumptions underpinning its policy and practice but also consideration of the social, political, cultural and economic context in which it is located.

The Centrality of Teacher Education

It has been argued that no reform can be successful against or without teachers because their commitment is crucial to the success of any educational initiative. Despite this, most structural reform efforts have failed to address this issue adequately; instead a bureaucratic and managerial orientation has still been prevalent in many cases (Day, 1999; Fullan, 1993; Smyth, 1995).

How does this kind of teacher professionalisation and professionalism match managerial purposes? According to McBride (1996, p. 276), professionalisation serves to socialise teachers into the values of the professional community, the culture of the *métier* and organisational culture. Gradually the policy of professionalisation creates a 'growing bureaucratisation and a relative loss of salary advantages, status and privileges' (Burbules & Densmore, 1992, p. 74). Besides bureaucratisation characterised by the growing need of certification, reports and frequent assessments, this kind of professionalisation corroborates the thesis of teachers' proletarianisation. The concept of proletarianisation relates to tendencies in labour organisation and its process within capitalism such as an increasing division of work, including the tendency to transform high level tasks into routines, a growing control over each step of the labour process, an increase in workload and the decrease in the skills needed to perform the tasks (Densmore, 1987). Derber's perspective of proletarianisation is that:

These systems seek to achieve labour discipline and productivity not by stripping

from workers the technical knowledge and discretion that potentially allows them to obstruct management's goals, but rather by encouraging technical skill and autonomy and, in so doing, leading the worker to ideologically identify his or her own interests with those of the firm and to develop internalised motivation and discipline. (cited in Densmore, 1987)

Within this view, the ideology of professionalism may be seen as a construct which obscures the reality of the working situation at the same time as it assures the internalisation of motivation and discipline described by Derber. According to Hoyle and John (1995), the reform of teacher education aims to reduce the knowledge base of the teaching profession and in this sense reinforces the thesis that this is a model of professionalisation which leads to teacher proletarianisation. This is operationalised in teacher education under the influence of utilitarianism in which a technical rationality defines educational goals in terms of their utility. In this view, the education of children aims to prepare them for the labour market and other roles in society. Because of this, it is recommended that initial teacher education should be functional, emphasising only what is *professionally* useful in the classroom. This utilitarianism has gone hand in hand with the application of rationalist principles to teaching and learning. As a consequence, the problem of education consists in developing the most effective means of achieving given ends. Implicit in this view is the notion of the professional defined within the technical rationality: someone who is as efficient as s/he is neutral. The outcome of this technical rationality, practice-oriented, is the de-politisation of the professional and the weakness of union organisations.

Overall, and despite the contextual differences, teachers' work has become more and more complex and demanding as a result of the volume of changes that have occurred in society over the years. The changing nature of teachers' work requires teachers to be professional and proactive in order to respond adequately to the ambiguity, uncertainty and increasing complexity which characterise the educational settings in which they are expected to operate. All this has implications for teacher professionalism, which, as described above, is being characterised by different (and conflicting) views in recent times. This tension is well illustrated by Day (1999, p. 12) when he states that teachers' work 'embodies both challenge and threat. They may be both autonomous and accountable to others, independent and collaborative, in control and not in control, teacher and child centred'.

Despite the increasing expectations placed upon teachers and schools, the support and resources allocated to them are far from being responsive to their needs. Moreover, teacher training and education programmes do not respond adequately to the changing nature of teaching demands. Is this a surprising inefficiency or an expected effect?

WHAT DO THE POLICY DOCUMENTS NOT TELL?

One of the targets of educational reforms was to change the teaching career. Many documents suggest abandoning the current structure in which all teachers have the same status and salaries distributed according to criteria of seniority and qualifications. They propose segmentation, diversification, internal differentiation, payment according to pro-

fessional performance at different levels and distinct kinds of activities. Salary incentives offered to teachers are linked to in-service education and their performance and, in some cases, to pupils' performance as well. The existence of national exams to evaluate systems and to assess pupils' and institutions' performance ends up by introducing a competitive system amongst schools at all levels in so far as they constitute the indicators for the publication of educational rankings. These assessment mechanisms introduce a competitive idea where it did not exist previously. In Brazil, public-private partnership is advocated to compensate for the reduction of government investment in the social area, opening up a promising market niche to educational businessmen who want to 'make profits' by constructing *educational shopping centres*. In this way the 'healthy' partnership between university and school has been replaced by the commercial and utilitarian buying and selling of educational packages. A model of the professional who demonstrates competencies and skills and whose main concern is to respond to clients' needs was advocated. At first glance, the gap between needs and solutions seems to indicate that the policy of teacher education is unarticulated or incoherent. However, a comparative and historical analysis makes it possible to identify a project responsive to the demands of the global economy and to the World Bank rules.

Teacher professionalisation and professionalism assume different forms in different countries located in different situations at the centre and at the edge of modern capitalism. Under the same umbrella, the reform of teacher education was implemented in different ways in Europe (as was the case of Portugal) and in Latin America (as was the case of Brazil). In Portugal, although there seems to be a general trend towards teacher (re)professionalisation, there is still much to do if teachers are to be active professionals and thinkers who have a say in the (re)definition of their professionalism. Amongst other issues there is a need to value practice as a source and site of learning through reflection and inquiry and to promote conditions of learning (resources, time, meaningful training opportunities in and out of school) for teachers to engage in sustained processes of reflection, collaboration and construction of the teaching profession. It is also crucial to create and maintain effective partnership between schools and universities in the building of communities of teachers as lifelong learners, acknowledging the potential of both institutions as sites of (re)construction of knowledge of different kinds. Teacher educators also need to re-think their role in the light of the new challenges of the learning society in which teachers are expected to operate. If teachers are to be researchers and professionals who reflect on their practices (and the values underpinning them), then ITT courses (and INSET activities as well) have to be organised accordingly, leaving behind training processes and practices dominated, in many cases, by traditional models and by technical rationality.

In contrast to what seems to occur in some European countries, in Latin America an excluding educational project has been implemented. One of its cornerstones is the construction of a new profile for teachers who should be creative without being critical and who are able to work in teams as long as they do not participate in collective bargaining nor promote union organisation. In other words, they should be technically more competent and politically less active, responding, in this way, to the recommendations of

international agencies which finance reforms and suggest the transformation of the teaching career and the weakening of the teachers' unions movement. Despite this pessimistic picture, it is a reform which is still underway, and consequently, still capable of being changed. In the scope of this paper, we have sought to discuss the logic behind this reform, apparently contradictory, but coherently articulated in its essence. The success or failure of a reform depends upon the forces which emerge throughout its implementation. Teachers' participation in their own professionalisation process by negotiating their interests and by fostering the path of existing policy towards a different teacher education is opened up by the possibilities of real and local dynamics.

To sum up, a restricted view of teaching, and therefore of teacher professionalism, is still visible, at least in part, in some discourses and practices which encompass, sometimes, a contradictory logic. At a time when concepts such as lifelong learning, reflection, inquiry, collaboration, innovation and the like are widely propagated, it is imperative to go beyond the recognition of teachers' role in society and provide them with real conditions (including adequate and meaningful training opportunities) to redefine and challenge their professionalism.

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NOTES

- [1] It is worth noting the number of policy documents issued over the last decade, since the publication of the decree-law regulating teacher education in 1989. Amongst others are: the document institutionalising in-service education, which became a right and an obligation for all teachers, the publication of the teacher career statute, and the policy text regulating specialised training of teachers (for specific roles within teaching such as management, special needs and curriculum development).
- [2] From 1998 onwards all teaching candidates have to hold this degree. It is a 4- or 5-year course at university or institute of higher education, inclusive of 1 year (in the case of the 5-year course undertaken at universities) or a few months (in the case of courses undertaken in institutes of higher education) of teaching practice in schools.
- [3] This institute has been abolished recently by the new government elected in March 2002.
- [4] There are 170 million inhabitants in Brazil and two million of them are teachers. Approximately 78% of primary school teachers did not get a diploma (undergraduate course).

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