



EDUCATION REFORM IN MEXICO: NEO-LIBERALISM, “SCHIZOPHRENIA” AND THE ETHICAL CHALLENGE WITHIN THE AGENDAS FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE

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Abstract

This article attempts to place the Mexican education reform signed into law in 2013 within the context of a global neo-liberal teacher quality discourse. The schizoid nature of neo-liberal reform is singled out as particularly problematic and relevant to the Mexican case in which teachers are simultaneously positioned as responsible, autonomous professionals capable of leading educational change, and as a collective body in need of ‘policing’ through evaluation. It is argued that the tensions and ambiguities of this situation, and the coercive component of evaluation, means that substantive educational change through teacher transformation cannot be guaranteed, and that adaptation and simulation among teachers is a more probable outcome. Given this situation I argue that we need to foresee the reform’s failure ‘on the ground’ and to start looking for approaches to teacher development and change that go beyond the traditionally technical approach to teacher training by wholeheartedly embracing the ethical component of teacher experience. Consequently, I argue, research in Mexico needs to be bringing ‘real-life’ teacher experience to the forefront of the educational debate and working hard to develop, document and position alternative approaches to teacher education that engage the whole teacher (heart, body, mind and spirit) in a radical reappraisal of what teaching and learning might come to mean for themselves and their students.

Keywords: Education reform, Mexico, teacher quality discourse, ethics of the care of self, teacher transformation, teacher education.

Resumen

En este artículo nos proponemos contextualizar la reforma educativa en México promulgada en 2013 dentro del discurso neoliberal de la calidad de los docentes. La naturaleza esquizoide de la reforma neoliberal es calificada como problemática y pertinente en el caso mexicano, al ser considerados los profesores como profesionales autónomos y responsables, capaces de encabezar el cambio educativo y, al mismo tiempo, como un cuerpo colectivo que requiere ser “vigilado” a través de la evaluación. Se argumenta que las tensiones y ambigüedades de esta situación, así como el componente coercitivo de la evaluación, significan que el cambio sustantivo en la educación mediante la transformación de los docentes no puede ser garantizado, y que es muy probable que

se dé la adaptación y simulación entre ellos. Ante este escenario, necesitamos prever el fracaso de la reforma “sobre el terreno” y empezar a buscar perspectivas de desarrollo y cambio de los docentes que trasciendan el enfoque tradicionalmente técnico y aborden la formación docente adhiriéndose sin reservas al componente ético de su experiencia. En consecuencia, los estudios en México deben poner al frente del debate educativo la experiencia docente de la “vida real” y trabajar de manera ardua para desarrollar, documentar y posicionar enfoques alternativos de la formación docente que involucren por completo al profesor (corazón, cuerpo, mente y espíritu) en una radical reevaluación de lo que la enseñanza y el aprendizaje podrían llegar a significar para ellos mismos y para sus estudiantes.

Palabras clave: reforma educativa, México, discurso sobre la calidad docente, ética del cuidado de sí mismo, transformación docente, formación docente.

MEXICAN REFORM IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Any significant education reform has, at some point, to pass through teachers and will require modifications, greater or lesser, in teacher identity. Mexico’s present wave of education reform is no exception to this rule. Indeed, the education legislation passed in 2013 would seem to have the figure and work of the teacher as its primary target—from the terms and conditions of their entry, to their ongoing evaluation, continuance and/or promotion, and to the degree of responsibility they have at a local level to make things happen (i.e. the proposed decentralization of decision making to schools). Thus the 2013 reform can be understood as an attempt to promote (or enforce) educational change through a metamorphosis of teacher identity.

Gil (2013) uses the analogy of a dilapidated old bus on a steep and pot-holed road to depict the Mexican education system and denounces the current education reform as an attempt to ‘fix’ education by concentrating its efforts almost exclusively on reforming the driver (teachers). Gil’s analogy is a powerful critique of the limited vision of an education reform that places the burden of educational improvement almost entirely on teachers. Reform efforts target the caricature figure of the apathetic and irresponsible teacher shielded by the historic power of the unions (Muñoz, 2008; Bensusán & Tapia, 2013; Blanco, 2013), and seek to replace this widely condemned ‘object of scorn’ with a dynamic and accountable teacher whose permanence in the system is the result of *individual* merit rather than a union power founded on practices of collective bargaining.

Labour relations between the government and teachers have, historically, been mediated by the SNTE (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación) within a legal framework which guarantees its structural hegemony in terms of the ability to officially represent teachers. Muñoz (2008) describes the relationship between the government and the SNTE as a mutually beneficial arrangement in which the government of the PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) ceded large swathes of control of education to the union in exchange for a guaranteed mobilization of electoral support and a limited opposition to its education policies (Muñoz, 2008). Such has been the SNTE’s resulting presence in the education system that, according to Muñoz, “the power of the union has been confused with the power of the administration” (2008, p.389; see also Santibáñez, 2008) through mechanisms by which important bureaucratic posts and processes are carried out by union offi-

cials. Other commentators have described this presence and activity of the SNTE as a “colonization” of the education system (Street, 1992).

Whilst, historically, the relationship between the PRI and the SNTE served to consolidate their power bases, democracy and transparency at the macro and micro level have been ongoing victims of this corporatism. Teachers may have achieved job security and improvements in income, but at the cost of the democratic process within their own profession, and where professional accountability to the state might have stood; in its place teachers have been accountable to the culture and practices of the SNTE. Though this culture and these practices can be understood as hegemonic, not all teachers have been willing to tow the line, and opposition to the undemocratic nature of the SNTE has often crystallized into movements and parallel factions, the most important of which has been the *Coordinación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Educación* (CNTE) which wields considerable power in a handful of Mexican states. Even though such tensions mean that the teaching body cannot be taken for granted as politically homogenous, it is also true that all these tensions exist under the all-pervasive umbrella of the SNTE and its pact with the government (Muñoz, 2008).

Historically, then, the experience and voice of individual teachers has been absorbed and subsumed within Mexico’s corporatist political history, and the teaching profession has found itself squeezed between the government and the union in their effort to align teachers *en masse* within a complex framework of give and take in which all sides have sacrificed degrees autonomy in exchange for stability and permanence. In this context, the present reform’s move to dismantle the collective identity of teachers and atomize their labour relations through the mechanisms of individual evaluation can be seen as a paradigm shift. As Bracho and Zorrilla (2015) point out, the reform agenda set in motion in 2013 goes well beyond the technical, or functional, or structural; rather, it should be understood as an “institutional reform” and as

... a process of change that implies the construction of a new scaffold of rules that lead to modifications in the sphere of the individual conduct of educational actors, as well as inter o intra-organizational patterns of conduct and interaction. Whilst changes in functions and structures necessarily come about through juridical and normative decree, especially in the public sector, the changes in values and their translation into conduct and relational patterns require not only the passage of time but also their intelligent management to successfully deal with [a series of related challenges] (p. 35).

If this “institutional reform” is profoundly macro-political in its attempt to reclaim the control over the Mexican education system previously handed to the teacher unions (Gil, 2013), this macro shift obviously has micro implications at the level of individual teachers, involving them in important modifications to their job security. Whilst teacher security in Mexico has traditionally been a function of an inalienable contractual relation between the state and teacher, arbitrated by the power of the teacher unions, the current education reform proposes to weaken this contractual arrangement and to move toward a teacher security rooted in performance. Where there is good teacher performance, there will be job security and promotion. Where there is bad teacher performance, there will be negative consequences and possible

dismissal in the case of new teachers.

The terms under which teacher performance will be rewarded or punished are set out in the Ley General Del Servicio Profesional Docente (INEE, 2015), a law that outlines the “institutional reform” alluded to by Bracho and Zorrilla and sets out to redefine the all important relationship between teacher and teacher and between teacher and state.

The re-working of teacher identity from ‘trusted’ appendage of the state to independent actor required to prove their usefulness through measurable criteria falls clearly within the brief of neo-liberal education reform (Ball, 2003). In general terms such reform efforts attempt to align “public sector organizations with the methods, culture and ethical system of the private sector, [whereby] the distinctiveness of the public sector is diminished” (p. 216). One of the central features of this re-alignment is the creation of what the OECD (1995) calls “a devolved environment”.

This new environment “requires a shift by central management bodies toward setting the overall framework rather than micromanaging [...] and changes in attitudes and behaviour on both sides” (OECD 1995, p. 74). As Ball points out, the changing roles of the central management agencies in this new environment rest, as the OECD (1995, p.75) put it, on ‘monitoring systems’ and the ‘production of information’” (Ball, 2003, p. 216). True to the ethos of neo-liberal reform we find that the current reform in Mexico does indeed rest largely upon the consolidation of monitoring systems the production of information, and the devolution of administrative and curricula powers to schools (INEE, 2015).

Across the world neo-liberalism has attempted to shift the focus of responsibility and accountability from the state to its citizens, and the field of education is no exception. As Moore (2012) points out, the targeting of a failing body of teachers (and its unions) has been central to the prevailing global mood in educational reform. Such reform has spread across the world like “a policy epidemic” (Levin, 1998), and takes shape through “three inter-related *policy technologies*: the market, managerialism, and performativity” (Ball, 2003, p. 215). Teachers caught up in this policy epidemic are expected

to organize themselves as a response to targets, indicators and evaluations. To set aside personal beliefs and commitments and live an existence of calculation. The new performative worker is a promiscuous self, an enterprising self, with a passion for excellence (*ibid.*).

In the case of Mexico we might caricature the 2013 legislation as the attempt, at least discursive, to convert teachers’ passion for survival (job security) into a passion for professional excellence and enterprise. Thus the “existence of calculation” in which they are expected to participate is the calculation not only of their ongoing professional development, but also their professional survival.

INHERENT TENSIONS AND SCHIZOID DILEMMAS

Whilst a realignment of job security necessitates that teachers undertake a strategic adjustment in their positioning within the power relation between state and union, evidence from studies of teachers across Latin America reveal the difficulty teachers face in adapting to the burgeoning discourse of teacher performance (Fardella y Sisto, 2014, 2015; Cornejo, 2008, 2009). We might expect these diffi-

culties to increase in situations, such as Mexico, where contrasting and seemingly contradictory reform components are embedded in this same teacher quality discourse. On one hand the present reform discourse in Mexico promotes teacher autonomy within a culture of professional trust, and on the other hand it favours the control of teachers within a culture of professional accountability.

The move toward teacher autonomy is evidenced by a decentralization of some decision making to the local, school level, requiring teachers to exercise their own professional criteria and leadership as individuals pursuing shared pedagogic and organizational goals. And the move to teacher control is evidenced by the consolidation of the National Institute for Educational Evaluation's remit to evaluate teacher quality and provide the necessary criteria to make decisions on performance related pay, advancement or dismissal for individual teachers. It is possible to assign a schizoid quality to these contrasting messages by which government apparently cedes control at the level of schools and collectives, whilst gathering in the reins at the level of individual teachers.

Furthermore, behind the surfaces of these two contrasting policy technologies are two contrasting educational or developmental schools of thought. Evaluations linked to reward and punishment can be equated with behaviourism, whilst a furthering of local leadership and innovation can be equated with constructivism. Evaluations encourage teachers to learn excellence through a dynamic of reward and punishment, and school-based decision-making encourages teachers to learn excellence through a moral and reflexive engagement in their context and its problems.

The Mexican education reform of 2013 is not alone in generating schizophrenic tensions within education. Indeed, neo-liberal education reform has long been labelled as fundamentally schizoid. Lyotard (1984) points to how neo-liberal's demand for productivity is offset by the time required for reporting this same productivity. Elliot (1996) points to the excessive 'systemic' energy demanded to generate the performative information required for perfect control. Blackmore and Sachs (1997) conclude that "institutional schizophrenia" results from the pressure to maintain competitive advantage in both "first order activities" (teaching etc.), and "second order activities" (the reporting of achievement). Troman (2000) draws attention to the low-trust organizational climate fostered within a supposedly high-trust meta-devolution of decision-making. Ball (2003) highlights a "values schizophrenia" whereby individuals and institutions simulate compliance and *perform* performance. This represents a type of strategic "gamesmanship" (Ball, 2003) involving elements of compliance *and* resistance to standards and targets through the creation of "fabrications" (Ball, 2003) or an "enacted fantasy" (Butler, 1990).

Drawing attention to the potentially schizoid tensions in reform discourse is one way of illuminating the complex reactions displayed by teachers at the receiving end of a polyphonic socio-political agenda. The different voices or tonalities of reform make it more difficult for teachers to get on board collectively as they make it more difficult to understand what it is they are signing up to, or, indeed, how they themselves are being perceived by the government – are they competent professionals to be trusted, or belligerent fossils to be policed? In the case of the present Mexican reform such schizoid tendencies are accentuated by its attempt to shift the longstanding rules of engagement between government and the teachers' union, and technical (or educational) components of legislation run side by side with legislation whose primary function is to decrease the power of

the teachers unions (Blanco, 2013).

Whilst it would be a simplification to say that the ‘technical’ elements of the reform are not political (in the sense that they too consolidate an essentially neo-liberal agenda), teacher evaluation and the threat of teacher dismissal are a conspicuous power-play politics in the adversarial sense (Bensusán & Tapia, 2013). The reform is therefore about education –i.e. about how teachers can best occupy their role– and at the same time about political power at the highest levels –i.e. about the neutralizing of a union that had become a local, regional and national powerbroker.

REFORM AS THE EXERCISE OF POWER –POLICY (THEORY) VS. PRACTICE (REALITY)

As Gil (2013) comments, an increased control over Mexican teachers is to be achieved largely through efforts to establish a new culture of teacher evaluation which will serve to determine which teachers “stay” and which teachers “go” (see also Bensusán & Tapia, 2013). This radically changing relationship between the teacher and the state is a reflection of substantive modifications in the nature of the Mexican state and government, from the corporatist politics of the old-school Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to the neo-liberal politics of the new-school PRI that began to take prominence post 1988 under the Presidency of Carlos Salinas. Thus the present reform can be seen not only as a reaction to the persistence of poor academic results, and a conjuncture in which public opinion had crystallized against teachers –identifying an over-protected and under-achieving work culture as the principal ‘drag’ on children’s education standards (Bensusán & Tapia, 2013) –but also, and perhaps most importantly, as a reflection of a new socio-political culture in Mexico, one in which the PRI’s alliances are not first and foremost corporatist, involving the cultivation of a solid electoral ‘army’, but strategic, and with business and communication sectors; that is to say, a new political landscape in which the PRI might not be so dependent on the mobilization of teachers to assure its power base and further its interests, and therefore not so dependent on maintaining the SNTE as a consolidated and privileged organ of power.

The degree to which the PRI was prepared to dispense with the old arrangements was perhaps symbolized by its imprisonment of Elba Ester Gordillo, leader of the SNTE for nearly three decades, shortly after the reform laws were passed in 2013. Through this gesture the PRI signalled its reluctance to negotiate what it saw to be the central terms and conditions of its planned reforms, not least those aspects of the reform that undermined teachers’ job security. In this context, the undermining of individual job security simultaneously undermines the collective bargaining power of the SNTE, establishing through evaluation a new sphere of accountability to the state that challenges the traditionally dominant culture of accountability exercised through the rigours of union membership.

Given the historic precedents and the relative importance of what is at stake for teachers, it is not surprising that this change in political culture has met with some resistance. In the case of education and teachers, resistance is most vocal from teachers affiliated to the more ‘radical’ CNTE, and has resulted in large-scale mobilizations of teachers in states such as Oaxaca and Chiapas. Opposition to the proposed changes in the selection, permanence and promotion of teachers is often framed through a disbelief that a socio-political system known for its corruption will be able to implement fair and transparent processes, or that teachers can indeed be almost unilaterally blamed for the country’s poor educational per-

formance (Bensusán & Tapia, 2013). Blanco (2013), for example, makes the case that there can be no guarantee that the neo-liberal checks and balances of teacher evaluation will not be absorbed within the status quo, or corrupted by powerful inertias and pre-existing interests and power relations.

Blanco (2013) points out that if the backbone of Mexican reform is teacher evaluation, the key to its success becomes how to design and implement evaluation procedures that are responsive to the complexity and diversity of teachers and the complexity and diversity of contexts in which they work. Such a 'responsive' system might be more acceptable to teachers and less likely to be 'manipulated' by local realities that do not conform to a narrow evaluative rationale. However, to call for the design and implementation of evaluation procedures that are truly responsive to the multiplicity of 'reality' is perhaps a misrepresentation of the modern 'reason of state'.

Foucault (1995), for example, clearly identified the examination as the modern state's quintessential technology of power, not because of its ability to reflect or 'capture' reality, nor for its strictly oppressive capacity, but rather because of its central role in modern power's production of subjectivity. Examination and its calculations *create* individual and collective truths about subjects. From the Foucaultian perspective, the rendering of the Mexican teacher within the machinations of evaluation-examination is a sign of the state's increasing disciplinary reach into the lives of its subjects. Whether or not the status quo can resist this thrust in the short term, as Blanco (2013) suggests, it seems that the tendency of modern power is to act increasingly upon the individual through

the fixing, at once ritual and "scientific," of individual differences [...] [T]he pinning down of each individual in his own particularity (in contrast to the ceremony in which status, birth, privilege, function are manifested with all the spectacle of their marks), clearly indicates the appearance of a new modality of power in which each individual receives as his status his own individuality, and which he is linked by his status to the features, the measurements, the gaps, the "marks" that characterize him and make him a "case" (Foucault, 1991, p. 204).

Drawing on other important thinkers, Rose (1996) emphasises how the science of calculation has become central to the management of human beings:

Marx, Nietzsche, Weber, Lukacs, Habermas, and Foucault each, in his different way, suggested that calculation and calculability have become central not only in projects for the domination of nature, but also in relation to human beings. We have entered, it appears, the age of the calculable person, the individual whose individuality is no longer ineffable, unique, and beyond knowledge, but can be known, mapped, calibrated, evaluated, quantified, predicted, and managed (Rose, 1996, p. 88).

It is no small irony or coincidence, then, that Mexican teachers (and their counterparts across the world), so long the instruments through which a population of students were 'captured' in an "apparatus of uninterrupted examination" (Foucault, 1991, p. 198), are, finally, themselves being subjected to the same principle of calculability.

Importantly, Foucault makes it clear that relations of power are never unilateral. A force operating upon a population or individual (in this case the demand

for teacher 'accountability') meets counter-forces that oppose this will. Foucault describes this state as one of "permanent provocation" (Foucault, 2000). It is still too early to say how the different modalities of 'resistance' to the current reform in Mexico might play out, however, international evidence suggests that top-down macro-reform rarely generates its intended changes at the micro level of teaching and learning in schools and classrooms. Described by Hargreaves (2003) as ' soulless standardization', reform agendas not only attempt to impose themselves upon a multiplicity of teachers and learners, but have also been shown to be ineffective in bringing about longstanding changes in the micro-practices of teachers and schools (e.g. Levin, 2008; Payne, 2008). Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) identify three main reasons for the difficulty of importing or imposing change from outside (or from 'the centre'): the importance of hard-won situated knowledge, the uniqueness of educational agents, situations and relations, and the reality of omnipresent flux. Significantly, Hargreaves and Shirley's critique of attempts to import change operates right down to the exchange between two teachers working side by side. The uniqueness of each teacher means standardized approaches to teacher development and good teaching run against our human reality.

Similarly, the "values schizophrenia" highlighted by Ball (2003), whereby individuals and institutions simulate compliance and *perform* performance, implies reform scenarios in which 'real' or 'felt' teacher transformation is not occurring; rather, what is occurring are realignments of strategies within relations of power. There is a schizophrenic quality to this differentiated reaction to reform discourse. On the one hand policy technologies of performativity, managerialism and the market (Ball, 2003) do effect change in teacher identity as "what it means to teach and what it means to be a teacher (a researcher, an academic) are subtly but decisively changed in the processes of reform" (Ball, 2003, p. 218).

However, on the other hand, it is far from clear that the quality of teaching and learning is a central part of this change. Ball concludes that teachers will increasingly migrate not toward professional 'virtue' but towards a 'pragmatic' "existence of calculation". Conclusions as to how an existence of calculation impacts on behaviour of teachers and researchers can be inferred from the evidence of the effects of the Carrera Magisterial (Teachers' Career) as Mexican teachers learnt 'play the system' and to mould their concerns and their activities in line with the programs 'rewards' (Observatorio Ciudadano de la Educación, 2008). This 'playing the system' is decisively not the same as a concern for the quality teaching and learning.

Likewise, Mexico's Programa de Escuelas de Calidad (Quality Schools Program), implemented as part of a previous wave of reform, has been shown to be another arena in which teachers adapt to a vision of whole school projects and entrepreneurial leadership at the time of project design, but are subsequently unable to successfully deliver on the project's promises. Zorrilla and Pérez's (2006) research into the experience of participating school directors revealed how they applied the discourse of whole school innovation when seeking financing or discussing the project (i.e. 'talked the talk'), but in practice remained embedded in fractious teacher relations and weak or authoritative leadership styles (but were unable to 'walk the walk'). Zorrilla and Pérez's research provides a specifically Mexican window onto the schizophrenic tendencies within the neo-liberal reform as policy (theory) comes up against practice (reality).

The conflation of programs such as Carrera Magisterial and Escuelas de Calidad

with teachers' professional development and excellence in teaching and learning is a simplification of the subjectivity and agency of teachers. This simplification negates teachers' ability to make identity adjustments or to 'play the game' without necessarily undergoing a *profound transformation* in their educational commitments, understandings and practices. This issue of simulation vs. transformation goes to the heart of the central challenge of any reform agenda—how to move from the ground of the normative and legislative to the ground of ethics, values, and beliefs. It is a crucial differentiation picked out by Bracho & Zorrilla (2015) in their analysis of the Mexican reforms and how they might play out in the future.

Worryingly, we might expect that the requisite transformation in values and motivations will only occur where the assumptions and principles of reform resonate with teachers' real experience and with conditions on the ground. However, as Blanco (2013) points out, the current reform agenda can be interpreted as a generalized simplification of the issues surrounding teacher quality, or quality of teaching, and their relationship to academic results (Bensusán & Tapia, 2013). This simplification, he argues, is due to the increasing influence of the discourse of business and enterprise within education policy in Mexico. Mexico is not alone in this 'simplification' or 'industrialization' of education discourse. Ball (2003) identifies a global trend toward the privatization of discourse and policy as the language and philosophy of education becomes impregnated with terms and ideas imported from the world of business. Yet, however ubiquitous the language of enterprise and business has become in official policy documents, evidence 'on the ground' still suggests that the life of schools, teachers and of education is constantly escaping the terms and conditions of business.

TEACHER IDENTITY AND DEVELOPMENT—THE BIGGER PICTURE

If education reform is to transform the pedagogic and organizational tendencies of teachers, it is unlikely to be able to do so through simplifications of teacher identity such as the 'bad teacher' caricatures used in certain sections of the Mexican media to argue for the need to 'control' teachers (Gil, 2013). Teacher evaluation, even when at its most sophisticated, will tend toward 'standardization' and insensitivity to the diversity of teachers and educational contexts (Blanco, 2013). But a nuanced approach to teacher identity, one that is able to pause long enough to contemplate the complexities of teacher experience and educational context would appear to fall outside the established rationale of government. It seems that a government that exhorts teachers to change their habits is itself condemned to its own habits of imposition and "soulless standardization" (Hargreaves, 2003). As Gil (2013) maintains, such gestures are destined not to modify the quality of teaching and learning, but take shape as new strategies within the historic relations of power between the state and teachers.

From this perspective an education reform that relies heavily on measures to 'discipline' teachers (in the Foucaultian sense of the word) will align itself not with a principle of education in its deep sense, but rather with the spirit of conditioning and the principles of reward and punishment (see for example articles 27, 28, 34-39, 52 and 53 of the General Law for Teachers' Professional Service, in INEE [2015]). This means that such reform efforts often make their primary appeal not to the self-actualization that represents the highest level in Maslov's (1970) hierarchy of human need (or development); but rather, to the lower levels such as secu-

erty and belonging. Ironically then, the reform implicitly confirms a limited regard of the capacities of teachers and their motivations, falling back on the historical lack of trust that Blanco (2013) identifies as characteristic of the government-teacher relations. Embedded within this lack of trust is a tendency to ignore the teacher as person and to reduce them to objects or instruments.

Goodson (2007), speaking from a European context, and Tenti Fanfani (2005), speaking from the Latin American context, both identify an over-instrumentalization of teachers' work and identity as a central obstacle for educational change. Such instrumentalization dehumanizes and simplifies the teacher experience, and ignores the learning that teachers have gone through to become who they are (professionally and personally). Goodson is categorical in his assertion of the need to return to the teacher as person and to bring the teacher biography centre stage:

The assumption is held that the clear enunciation of objectives, backed by a battery of tests, accompanied by accountability strategies, and confirmed by a range of financial incentives and payments by results, will inevitably raise school standards. The teacher is positioned as a key part of this delivery system, but technical aspects of teacher professionalism are stressed, rather than the *professional biography*—the personal missions and commitments that underpin the teacher's sense of vocationalism and caring professionalism (Goodson, 2007, p. 137).

According to Goodson, what he calls “the personality of change” is all too often seen as the “stumbling block” of real reform, rather than as a crucial “building block” (*ibid.*, p. 138). To follow Goodson's recommendation to build educational change from the ground of professional biography is to embrace teacher education as profoundly moral or ethical, and to encourage a teacher reflexivity that stems from a trust in teachers' capacity to think and feel themselves towards ‘good teaching’ and to assume responsibility in the cultivation of professionalism. It is also to acknowledge that changes in teacher identity do not come easily, and will only occur where teachers are fully engaged in the possibility of learning and transformation. In order to become different teachers, teachers themselves need to be learning differently. And, as Goodson suggests, one way to achieve a new learning for and about teachers is to attend to them not as ‘tools’ but as ‘people’, thinking and feeling their way through their own histories.

Similarly, Korthagen (2010) advocates a more holistic approach to teacher education, taking into account Epstein's (1990) psychological perspective of our *experiential mind-body system*, whereby the cognitive and emotional content of experience are not separated, but rather experienced as a whole. A holistic approach is implicit in the upsurge in teacher development discourses that emphasize the moral aspect of teaching (Burant *et al.*, 2007). A “move toward a more moral and civic professionalism” (Osguthorpe, 2008, p. 291) simultaneously inhibits a reliance on ‘naked’ skills and methods:

The idea of the professional as a neutral problem solver, above the fray, which was launched a century ago, is now obsolete. A new ideal of a more engaged, civic professionalism must take its place. Such an ideal understands, as a purely technical professionalism does not, that professionals are inescapably moral agents whose work depends on trust for its success (Sullivan, 2004, p. 2).

Teachers recognizing themselves moral agents and citizens are forced to direct attention to their immersion in complex systems (including their immersion in their own complex 'self'). A central feature of these complex systems is the question of teacher motivation, commitment, and dedication. For some educationalists this motivational component is critical to re-thinking educational change and teacher development. Day (2007) points to the motivational factor of teachers' belief "that they can make a difference in the learning and results of their students because of who they are, what they know and how they teach" (p. 254). Similarly, Lopéz de Maturana (2010) asserts that "the pedagogical strength of teachers depends to a large degree on the fascination and the enchantment with what they do" (p. 59).

Fuentealba and Imbarack (2014) ask whether education policy can and should assimilate the issue of teacher commitment. They conclude that to do so would necessarily involve the recognition and integration of the two dimensions of the personal and the professional in teacher practice, and the cultivation of a new perspective they denominate as "from within", aimed at understanding and analyzing the meanings and values of educators whilst also taking into consideration their complex contexts composed of multiple actors.

Similarly, Palmer (2003) refers us to the Socratic principle that an unexamined life is not worth living. A moral imperative of self-examination necessitates a "pedagogy of the soul" capable of reconnecting "soul and role" (2003). This pedagogy of the soul is proposed by Palmer as the default educational change that needs to occur among teachers *en masse*. Palmer's spiritualized vision has much in common with the widespread secular discourses of teacher reflexivity. According to Moore (2004), the critical thinking of *reflexivity* must include the broader context in which teaching is occurring - the invisible 'baggage' of teaching, and its socio-political, historical, and psycho-emotional considerations. Such reflexivity "offer[s] practitioners the best hope ... of long-term professional happiness and improvement of classroom practice" (*ibid.*, 141).

BACK TO THE FUTURE...

As the mirage of technique fades into the distance, self-examination appears on the horizon as necessity, just as for Foucault (1997) the ethics of the care of self becomes a pre-requisite for the subject who wishes to take their place in civil society and its relations of power. The growing call for a moral and reflexive approach to teacher education and development stands in stark contrast to what can be understood as a reward-punishment model of teacher evaluation being put forward as a key feature of teacher education-development under the current Mexican reform. Whilst a disciplinary teacher evaluation is offset by those components of reform designed to permit and foment teacher leadership at the school level there exists no clear message as to the nature of the training experiences that will transform and energize teachers. For this reason the current education reform in Mexico runs the very real risk of being neutralized at the interface between policy and practice. Like other neo-liberal education reforms whose point of departure is a failing body of teachers (Moore, 2012) current reform efforts in Mexico may successfully impact on teachers at the level of their strategic negotiation of power relations (e.g. state-teacher-union) whilst simultaneously failing generate genuine commitment or to permeate deeply into their pedagogic and peer relations or

their understanding and vision of education and schools. What we may be about to witness in Mexico, then, is a collective “enacted fantasy” (Butler, 1990) of the “passion for excellence” (Ball, 2003) in which teachers adapt to and perform their new ‘identity’ whilst remaining existentially untouched by the reform discourse.

If the policy technologies of educational change are to insist on the central importance of teachers and teacher identity, *they need to ensure that they are genuinely transformative of teacher identity and practice rather than ‘coercive’ measures which teachers can mould themselves around or resist.* The moral and reflexive turn in teacher education and development can be understood on some levels as a response to teachers’ historic resistance to ‘imposed’ change. Teachers the world over, it seems, have refused to do the learning required to transform themselves and schools in externally predetermined ways. Korthagen (2010) points to the seeming impotence of teacher education to effect practice and generate significant educational change in the ‘real life’ context of schools. For Korthagen this impotence is partly rooted in teacher education’s unwillingness to address the affective dimension of change (in line with Goodson’s “personality of change”):

The problem of promoting fundamental professional change is first of all a problem of dealing with the natural emotional reactions of human beings to the threat of losing certainty, predictability or stability. This affective dimension is too much neglected in the technical-rationality approach, which seems to be another cause of the transfer problem (Korthagen, 2010, p. 410).

Whilst it would be possible to argue that the Mexican reform’s stress on the collective, school-based construction of educational pathways means that the teacher is being configured as a reflexive agent, there are no legislative guarantees that this new potential agency is being approached from the ground of human complexity, and from the affective and existential dimension of teacher experience as proffered by educationalists such as Korthagen and Palmer.

In contrast, a holistic or integrative approach to teacher development –or what might be called, after Foucault, a professional ethics of the care of self– can be seen as a potentially more satisfactory means of engaging teachers in educational change, and also a way of attending to schizoid tendencies within teacher experience. Embracing the teacher as person, and teacher experience as complex and contradictory would allow education and educational change to distance themselves from the supposition of techno-rational solutions to the ‘problems’ of education. An education reform that seeks to attend to the complexity of teacher experience is one that could embrace the tensions in that same experience, making of them an opportunity for collective reflection with a view to generate teacher development from the ground of contradictions and difficulty, and not from an overlaying of technical ‘solutions’. If the discourses of education have become increasingly technical and political, and if this shift has only increased our sense of our educational institutions as somehow unequal to the challenges facing the 21st Century, then perhaps we need to dismantle our over-reliance on technical and political ‘solutions’ and look towards ethics as a potential source of transformative thinking and practice.

An ethical turn in education can be considered as a *return* to our Greek and Roman educational roots, in which the cultivation of *ethos* was a central concern. This return to ethics could not be conceived within the normative, other-centred

framework of existing professional ethics; rather, it would need to draw on the reflexive and self-transforming function of a Foucaultian *ethics of the care of self* whose pedagogy or whose practice are conceived of as a *psicogogia*. That is to say, a teaching or learning whose goal is not a transformation in our understanding of the world, or the other, but a transformation in the subject themselves. Foucault understood the ethics of the care of the self as a discipline of self-formation, or the cultivation of self, through which a citizen would prepare themselves not only to take up their place in society (especially public office), but also prepare themselves for a dignified death and the honour of being well remembered. This cultivation of self was not only an aesthetic endeavour, it was also political, and aimed to ensure that the individual did not abuse any position of power, nor that they were overly subservient, but exercised their autonomy and enabled the autonomy of others.

The ethical subject was an individual who had acquired and practiced a “mastery of self” (Foucault, 1994) that meant that they were slave to no-one or to no-thing (not even their own desires), but were able to bring their own frame of reference to bear on any situation. For Foucault, the ethics of the care of self are particularly important in that they are concerned with the question of freedom, or with a cultivation of freedom. Such an ethics, then, may be of particular importance to the cultivation of a professional autonomy in teachers, autonomy particularly important in the Mexican context where historically teachers’ agency has been squeezed between a mixture of hegemonic forces in the PRI, the SNTE, and the Secretary of Education. Likewise, such an ethics can be understood as bearing an important relation to the question of motivation or commitment in teachers. The care of self, requiring a search for self-knowledge, necessarily involves teachers in transformative processes and can, therefore, bring about a re-enchantment with education or learning and a keener awareness of their own effect on others. This potential to cultivate a commitment to teaching, or a commitment to education, or a commitment to human growth and development is no small matter. Nias (1981) concludes that commitment is the defining quality that determines who is perceived as an “authentic teacher”, as opposed to those teachers whose principle interests lie outside the school. The reflection and leadership that the quality teacher discourse requires of teachers is something that may only occur among committed, or “authentic teachers”, and this committed, authentic teaching may only be cultivatable through ethical approaches to teacher training that embrace the teacher as person, as being, and complex subject rather than ‘programmable’ object.

Significantly, the now well-established reflexive approach to teacher training offers some clues as to how ethical questions can be brought into play within teacher development. But, more radical and possibly more profound approaches to the care of self could also be derived from the fields of psychotherapy and spiritual practice. Mindfulness and meditation practices are just one example of how technologies of the self are currently being applied to educational settings (Martínez, 2015). But if we are to take teachers’ care of self, and their pursuit of self-knowledge seriously, then we might find many other possible points of crossover between the worlds of education, teacher identity, psychotherapy and spirituality (Keck, 2015a, 2015b). Naranjo, a psychotherapist turned educationalist, has the following to say about this ethical turn with regards to teachers:

Teachers, more than anyone, need an experiential complement to the present

scientific, humanistic, and pedagogical curriculum; a novel curriculum that would comprise self-knowledge, interpersonal repair, and a spiritual culture based on lived experience (and thus free from dogmatism) (2010, p. 156).

This novel curriculum would be the means by which teachers could learn “the vital and necessary work involved in overcoming destructive attitudes and thus cultivat[e] the higher emotions and virtues” (p. 157). Whilst teacher development practices do exist that are inspired by an ethics of the care of self and Naranjo’s invitation to self-knowledge and inter-personal repair (see, for example, Keck, 2012, 2015a, 2015b; Keck & Monroy, 2014), these approaches remain marginal and there is little evidence that the energy currently being invested in reform efforts within Mexico contemplate the ethical dimension of teacher identity to any significant degree. And yet a growing body of literature is currently urging that the teacher quality discourse abandon its over-reliance on evaluation in favour of processes that foment teacher reflexivity in the ethico-moral domain. If we can understand the legislation of 2013 as an attempt to legally impose a new professional ethos onto a body of teachers widely condemned as unethical and incompetent, true teachers autonomy –their ability to construct their identity beyond, outside, and within the law– will only be available to them if they are able to find a means to individually and collectively construct a sense of vocation and purpose whose roots are firmly established by internal, experiential references and not normatively. For this to occur, I am proposing that those up until now marginal experiences of teacher development that focus on the teacher as person –see for example the video of *Ser Docente, Ser Persona* (Keck & Monroy, 2014) –would need to be examined with a view to considering how such experiences might be transferable to the wider context of teacher development.

Likewise, as a means to redress the lacunas in the present reform agenda, educational research in Mexico would do well to include two lines of inquiry among its priorities: Firstly, it might further document the officially ignored schizoid tendencies of the policy-practice divide and of reform discourse in relation to teacher identity and thus bring real-life teacher experience to the forefront of educational debate; and, secondly, it might look to develop and document alternative approaches to teacher identity work, approaches that are informed by ethics as opposed to the technical or political. As long as the tensions and inconsistencies of teacher experience remain largely invisible, and possible alternatives remain largely unexplored, Mexico is likely to be fated to endlessly repeat a global tendency to ignore the complexity of teacher-focused reform efforts, and in so doing derail the possibility of achieving an educational change that is inclusive and transformative rather than divisive and normative. As long as teacher voice, teacher experience, and the teacher as person, is sidelined by education policy’s tendency to instrumentalize the teacher as a deliver of prescribed teaching and learning, or swept along by macro-political gamesmanship, then there will remain an urgent need to lobby and pressure for a increasing consideration of their immediate and intimate experience as the legal framework of reform becomes transposed into concrete practices. Educational research has the good fortune to be in a position to participate in this necessary work, and perhaps the duty to exercise leadership in the same. Perhaps from this shared sensitivity to teacher experience the reform’s emphasis on teacher training and the devolution of decision making to the local level can provide the context, or fertile ground, in which

the “intelligent management” (Bracho & Zorrilla, 2015) of change processes will be able to outgrow the system’s previously held limits and learn to truly and productively engage with the complex experience of teachers.

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