

The Relationship Between Curricular Policy And Teacher Professionalism: Tensions From The Shaping Of The Curriculum

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Abstract

The article is derived from the research "The relationship between curricular policy and teacher professionalism: tensions from the shaping of the curriculum" developed under the qualitative perspective and the collective case study methodology. Its purpose is to reveal the paradoxical relationship between teacher policy and professionalism during the shaping phase. It initially presents a conceptual development that supports the subsequent discussion on the contradictions between the prescribed curriculum and institutional contexts, admitting that the incorporation of politics in school is not instrumental, but rather involves a complex practice conveyed through processes of interpretation and translation. In this problematic situation, the possibility of a creative relationship based on the demand for autonomy and professional development of teachers is recognized.

Keywords: Teaching professionalism, curricular molding, curricular policy, reflective and critical curricular approach, collective professional culture.

Introduction

Resumen

El artículo se deriva de la investigación "La relación política curricular y profesionalidad docente: tensiones desde el moldeamiento del currículo" desarrollada bajo la perspectiva cualitativa y la metodología estudio de caso colectivo. Su propósito es revelar la relación paradójica entre política y profesionalidad docente durante la fase de moldeamiento. Presenta inicialmente un desarrollo conceptual que fundamenta la posterior discusión sobre las contradicciones entre el currículo prescrito y los contextos institucionales, admitiendo que la incorporación de la política en la escuela no es instrumental, sino que entraña una práctica compleja vehiculada mediante procesos de interpretación y traducción. Se reconoce en dicha situación problemática la posibilidad de una relación creativa cimentada en la reivindicación de la autonomía y el desarrollo profesional docente.

Palabras clave: Profesionalidad docente, moldeamiento curricular, política curricular, enfoque curricular reflexivo y crítico, cultura profesional colectiva.

The curriculum is carried out not in ideal or abstract representations, but in real things, in concrete cases, in a large body of facts about which theoretical abstraction is silent. The materials of a particular curriculum will not consist merely of portions of science, literature, process (...) The subject matter of theory is abstract or idealized representations of real things. But the curriculum in action deals with real things: real acts, real teachers, real children, things richer than their theoretical representations and different from them. The curriculum will deal

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poorly with real things if it treats them simply as replicas of its theoretical representations (Schwab, 1978, p. 309-310).

1. Problem statement

Educational reforms, conveyed through state policies, are the reflection of great disruptive shifts deployed at the national and international levels and arising from economic, cultural, and political rearrangements (Popkewitz, 1991). These phenomena are presented as opportunities for transformation and social strengthening. However, the true meaning and practical possibility of these phenomena are a matter of discussion. This discussion encompasses the potentialities of the phenomena, as well as the threats that they make visible, deny, or hide. Consequently, the transformation of the curriculum must be understood as more than the establishment of regulations by the state and the adjustment of curricula in schools. The true impact of educational reforms and policies is more closely associated with the institutional and professional responses that occur at specific times and in specific contexts. In these instances, it becomes necessary to assess, among other things, the conditions of possibility.

In relation to the aforementioned points, Ball et al., As indicated in the relevant literature, studies on educational policy have predominantly centered on two primary strands. The initial strand pertains to a macro-level perspective that is characterized by a critical evaluation and subsequent rejection of the ideology it embodies. This ideology is often regarded as a tool that serves the interests of the state and the pursuit of efficiency and productivism (Apple, 2001; Silva, 2001). The second strand of research, as evidenced in government reports and studies by Castellanos (2015) and Castro (2016), adopts an affirmative stance. This strand aims to evaluate the effectiveness of these policies in terms of their successes and failures. It interrogates the underlying causes of their imminent failure or inadequate implementation in educational institutions. Consequently, the comprehension of the implementation of the policy has been relegated to the background, becoming a kind of black box (Ball, et al., 2012) that merits exploration.

In the context of the aforementioned framework, the present article is predicated on an analysis of the curriculum's shaping, with particular reference to the interplay between educational policy—more specifically, curricular policy—and teaching professionalism. This analysis is undertaken from the vantage point of a processual perspective on the curriculum (Gimeno Sacristán Sacrist, 2012), a standpoint that engenders a less unidirectional or absolutist approach. This approach acknowledges the tensions and disagreements inherent in the aforementioned phase, while concomitantly recognizing the harmonies and confluences associated with professional teaching practice. This perspective is conceived as a conduit for transformation and fortification of teaching.

The approach to the curricular shaping phase is justified by the opportunity represented by the understanding of the interests and determining influences at this level (Goodson, 1991), in which external demands concur with contextual wills and possibilities. As a guide to the institutionalized structure of teaching, molding possesses both a symbolic and a practical meaning. According to Goodson, it establishes the parameters that precede and situate teaching in the classroom. Therefore, its study seeks to specify and delve into the reality of this process at the state, institutional, and professional levels. This observation reveals that the molding phase does not strictly adhere to the state proposal, but rather involves a combination of institutional and individual decisions, as well as determinations (Beltrán, 2010) and curricular codes (Lundgren, 1992), which extend beyond the explicit functions of the curriculum. Consequently, the implementation of policy in schools necessitates processes of interpretation and translation (Ball et al., 2012) that extend beyond the scope of instructional implementation. This could be regarded as unrealistic and deterministic, as Popkewitz (1991) posits that the school system cannot be conceptualized in the absence of contradictions. It is precisely through these contradictions that one can counteract dominant interests and practices.

In light of the aforementioned points, it is imperative to explore the paradoxes that emerge from the exercise of autonomy characteristic of teaching professionalism during the molding phase in relation to curricular policy. This exploration serves to broaden the existing discourse and deepen theoretical frameworks that take into account the contextual reality. This approach is designed to facilitate a reflective and critical exercise, thereby promoting a more nuanced and informed understanding of the subject matter. In a similar vein, the concept of professionalism

is understood within the paradigm of its determinants of practice. This is due to the fact that professionalism is subject to the constraints imposed by the educational and curricular system itself, which delineate its boundaries and conditions (Gimeno Sacristán, 2013).

2. Review and current status of the topic

As a point of departure, a conceptual approach to the categories of curriculum, teaching professionalism, and curriculum policy is presented. The discussion is situated around the problematic situation represented by the shaping of the curriculum.

Curriculum and curriculum shaping

As is well established, the concept of curriculum is polysemic, in such a way that there is no universal and immutable definition, since each one serves the interests of those who enunciate it (Jackson, 2001). The concept first emerged as a field of research and theorization in 1918 with the publication of Franklin Bobbitt's *The Curriculum*, in which he defined it as "the set of activities and experiences that children and young people must engage in to develop the skills necessary to successfully navigate the challenges of adult life" (p. 5). Consequently, the curriculum delineates a structured progression for students, ensuring their systematic development towards attaining the requisite knowledge deemed essential for their future success. According to scholars such as Beltrán (1992), the curriculum encompasses not only the structure and theoretical foundation but also the practical exercise. Given the multifaceted nature of these phenomena, the curriculum is conceptualized as "a mobile and complex space, whose existence is not autonomous; a space populated by the dynamic set of social relations that link the different agents among themselves and with objects" (p. 28).

From a complementary perspective, Grundy (1998) cautions that the concept is not an abstract notion with any existence apart from and antecedent to human experience. Instead, it is a method of arranging a series of human educational practices" (p. 19). In a similar vein, Giroux (1990) and Goodson (1995) concur in defining it as a social construction, given its existence based on beliefs and the manner in which individuals project themselves in the world. Furthermore, Gimeno Sacristán (1986) has noted that the curriculum functions as "the instrument through which the school serves society" (p. 161). In this sense, the curriculum can be regarded as a means through which to understand the manner in which society and its representatives envision the role of education. Therefore, the curriculum is regarded as a cultural and social construction, within which discourses are present that establish and organize educational interests and practices. However, while it is true that its design is influenced and enunciated by external powers, it is also true that it has a direct relationship with the understanding, capacities, reasoning, commitments, hopes, knowledge and wills of those who adopt it (Stenhouse, 2003).

A variety of categories of classification are employed to account for the meaning and evolution of the curriculum. In this regard, scholars such as Bolívar (1992), Kemmis (1993), Lundgren (1983), and Stenhouse (2003) have proposed the use of curricular theories as a means to systematize the orientations on the ways of thinking about the curriculum and the codes that structure it. The purpose of these theories, as Gimeno Sacristán (2013) and Walker (2003) add, is to substantiate, conceptualize, and give meaning to practice through rational explanations that justify the decisions and actions that are taken. In a similar vein, Grundy (1998) delineates the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum, drawing upon Habermas' (1972) concept of knowledge as technical, practical, and emancipatory. The technical curriculum, characterized by its controlling nature, stands as a distinct and exclusive entity, wholly independent from the other two facets. Conversely, the practical curriculum, which emphasizes understanding, possesses the potential to foster emancipatory outcomes when founded upon critical pedagogy. Consequently, from the author's perspective, the latter signifies an evolution of the former.

The technical or technological model, despite being questioned for its eminent rational intentionality and its focus on results, presents fundamental contributions to more renewed conceptions of the curriculum, as evidenced by its proposal to organize the educational process as a cycle. Consequently, drawing from a range of practical theories and critiques, prominent authors such as Gimeno Sacristán (2013), Goodson (1991), Jackson (2001), and Stenhouse (2003) have proposed a processual model. This model, in addition to the organization posited from technical standpoints, encompasses contextual, cultural, and professional dimensions. These dimensions are

instrumental in formulating and implementing a training proposal that is centered on social transformation. This model comprehends the curriculum from diverse phases or levels, allowing for its materialization. In this regard, Goodson (1991) delineates two primary phases: preactive and interactive. The initial phase corresponds to a preceding planning process, while the subsequent phase pertains to the implementation of practical exercises within the classroom setting.

In this regard, Gimeno Sacristán (2015) proposes that comprehending the processes of curricular concretization not only facilitates the discernment of interconnections and dissimilarities, but also enables the elucidation of phenomena associated with the pursuit of innovation and the apparent reluctance to embrace change. Goodson (1991) posits that the relationship, or lack thereof, between theory and practice is contingent on the nature of the pre-active construction and the interactive realization. Consequently, focusing on the preceding phase is a revelatory exercise for practice.

In accordance with the formulations proposed by Jackson (2001) and Goodson (1991, 1995), Table I offers a synopsis of the organization of the curricular objectification phases put forth by Gimeno Sacristán (2013, 2015).

Table I. Phases of curricular implementation

PHASES		DESCRIPTION
PREACTIVE	Prescribed curriculum	It includes the set of external and state regulations that educational institutions must follow and in which the local administration and teachers have no interference.
	Curriculum Presented	It is the way in which publishers and external entities express in previous material an interpretation of the prescribed curriculum which ends up being used by teachers.
	Molded Curriculum	It corresponds to the curriculum organized by the school in which different agents and factors intervene, in addition to the previous phases.
INTERACTIVE	Curriculum in action	It has to do with practice in real scenarios from which adjustments and transformations are made in previous thinking and design.
	Curriculum accomplished	It includes the real effects caused in students by having part in education, that is, in the set of intentional and interrelated practices that seek to influence them.
	Curriculum Evaluated	It corresponds to the internal and external control practices that aim to validate the curriculum applied.

Source: own elaboration

As previously stated, the focal point of this essay is the molded curriculum, which, as indicated by the references, sources, and available contents (prescribed and presented curriculum), as well as collective and individual decisions, explicitly delineates the parameters and orientations that underpin the pedagogical practices of the educational institution. These factors are influenced by external, situated, and material contexts, as well as by the professional teaching culture (Ball et al., 2012). Therefore, at this level, there is a significant manifestation of autonomy and professionalism, which are fundamental elements that must be analyzed.

Professionalism and teaching autonomy

According to Densmore (1991), a consensus on the theoretical and methodological definitions of "professional" or "profession" has yet to be achieved. However, the author posits that, traditionally, the profession has been regarded as an occupation that, by virtue of an intensive training process, the possession of specific knowledge, and an emphasis on service to the community, is deemed worthy of a special status and privilege in a society. In

their seminal work, Bazán and González (2007) pioneered the concept of a profession as a legitimized activity that "corresponds to the set of values and beliefs that define what is important within modernity: rationality, expertise, universality, scientific objectivity, emancipation, control of the environment, social prestige" (p. 71). Consequently, the role of the professional is to occupy a recognized space in society, based on the expectations that it establishes, within the framework of altruistic purposes and social strengthening. However, this is subject to the dynamics of the market, which do not necessarily demand a collective and fair benefit (Imbernón, 2008).

According to Imbernón (2008), the teaching profession has been examined through a model of traits that evaluates professionals based on ideals to be met in order to be considered qualified. In the context of education, this model advocates for the integration of technology in teaching methods and the professionalization of the teaching workforce. However, it disregards significant aspects such as autonomy in work performance, which, as Densmore (1990) asserts, is a crucial element in delineating a particular labor condition as professional. Autonomy is thus understood as an inherent dimension of the concept of professionalism, referring to "a way of being and being of teachers in relation to the world in which they live and act as professionals" (Contreras, 2018, p. 10). Consequently, educators possess a degree of autonomy in the organization of their professional activities, enabling them to adapt the curriculum to enhance or diminish the original framework (Gimeno Sacristán, 2013).

In a complementary manner, Gimeno Sacristán acknowledges that the teaching profession is, above all, a "creative profession that allows the expression of those who exercise it" (p. 206). Consequently, it is not neutral but rather determined by individuals and by the context. This necessitates a shift away from positivist or technocratic perspectives, wherein the curriculum is conceptualized as the implementation of a policy dictated from state and institutional levels. In this regard, Hargreaves and Fullan (2014) differentiate the concepts of being a professional and being a professional. The former is defined as the ability to perform a task based on established functions and norms. The latter is linked to the ability of the professional to reflect on themselves and others in the exercise of their profession. In a similar vein, Contreras (2018) differentiates between professionalism and professionalism. In the initial conceptualization, the educator is regarded from an instrumental perspective, implying that the attainment of their role is facilitated by the cultivation of specific competencies in alignment with predetermined orientations, thereby assuming the role of a mere consumer of the curriculum (Apple, 2001). The second approach aims to transcend the limitations of a functionalist perspective by emphasizing the critical and participatory role of the teacher. It underscores the significance of educators' commitment to enhance their practices in accordance with students' common needs (Grundy, 1998; Stenhouse, 2003).

In this article, the term "professionalism" is defined as "the qualities of the professional practice of teachers according to what the educational profession requires" (p. 50). Contreras (2018) clarifies that this concept should not be considered as an instruction manual for professionals to develop their skills. Rather, it is a way to situate teachers within the framework of desirable values and pretensions that enable them to make decisions in a coherent and responsible way. A similar approach can be taken with professionalism and professional autonomy. In this case, these concepts can be analyzed in the light of Habermas' constitutive interests of knowledge. From this perspective, Grundy (1998) identifies the theoretical and practical implications of the curriculum. Therefore, in consideration of the technical, practical, and critical traditions of the curriculum, the professional autonomy of teachers becomes comprehensible.

From a technical perspective, the teacher is regarded as the individual responsible for developing a predetermined curriculum. Consequently, autonomy does not play a significant role. From a pragmatic standpoint, Grundy herself deems that professionalism ought to be characterized by a "practical judgment" in which commitment and the capacity to discern what is suitable in a given circumstance are present. This distinguishes the teacher as a reflective professional and a curricular agent. However, as the author asserts, merely practical interests grounded in understanding are insufficient. It is imperative that, under the aegis of professional autonomy, an emancipatory interest linked to a critical perspective be cultivated. In this framework, self-reflection and decision-making capabilities are oriented towards egalitarian and liberating objectives, rather than towards the enhancement of unjust or hegemonic practices (Contreras, 2018). The role of the teacher is thus linked to notions of "expanded professionalism" and "research teacher" (Stenhouse, 2003), assuming a leading and, above all, responsible role. In

this sense, the school functions as a space for struggle, and teachers are regarded as "intellectuals" who provide students with the tools to participate in it (Giroux, 1990).

Educational policy and curriculum policy

Politics emerges from the necessity of the state to establish and implement social-territorial autonomy, grounded in the historical imperative to ensure a harmonious way of life (Heller, 1971). As Goodnow (1980) elucidates, "the function of politics consists in the expression of the will of the State, which is complemented in its execution through the government" (p. 173). Therefore, although it is a complex term, it is recognized that it is related to the organization of a society based on forms of action and power that structure and direct it. In this sense, Pulido (2017) elucidates that the concept of public policy refers to

a general link between the State and society that, in reality, takes shape in the relationship between rulers and governed, extending to the field of culture, depending on the specific interests and needs that summon the different human groups to political action (p. 16).

Public policy serves as an object of study, which is linked to the analysis of the "work of the authorities invested with public or governmental legitimacy" (Thoenig, 1997, p. 19). This analysis encompasses multiple aspects, ranging from the definition and selection of intervention priorities to decision-making, their administration, and evaluation. Accordingly, public policy is defined as the influence of the state in establishing methods in accordance with specific interests, which, in an ideal scenario, are founded on democratic decisions aimed at averting problematic situations and fostering the well-being of society as a whole. However, given their reliance on external forces, such decisions can inadvertently serve to legitimize inequalities (Pulido, 2017).

Consequently, the concept of educational policy encompasses the manner in which the State conveys its representation of the educational sphere through proposals that, as Torres (2015) asserts, endeavor to influence the society of the future that each political current deems ideal and that ensures the realization of its distinct projects. According to García (2021), the term can be defined as "the guidelines, programs, and actions that the government carries out in order to tackle or solve a problem of an educational nature" (p. 25). Consequently, this concept corresponds to the state orientations and decisions that control and direct the educational system. It also includes a justification and purposes, the resources, strategies, programs, and even other policies that allow it to be viable. A notable illustration of this phenomenon can be observed in Latin America, where the pursuit of coverage, efficiency, equity, and quality is meticulously orchestrated through a strategy of accountability.

The domain of educational policy encompasses a range of areas, including the realm of curricular policy. The latter is defined as the set of guidelines that direct the establishment and formulation of curricula within educational institutions. Despite the prevalence of discourse on these two subjects, the term "curricular policy" is specifically defined as "those aspects of educational policy that are translated, in the context of the school or classroom, into a modification of curricular forms or contents" (Beltrán, 1992, p. 33). Conversely, scholars such as Elmore and Sykes (1992) have noted that the domain of curriculum policy is characterized by a state of disorganization and a paucity of conceptual clarity, resulting in an insufficiency of definitions to guide research. For the authors, this policy corresponds to the regulations that determine what should be taught in schools. However, its definition does not end there. It is also important to study how they are designed and how they are received at the school level. In this regard, Beltrán (1992) reveals that curriculum policy is associated with the guidelines issued by instances of power, as well as the exercise of contesting them, which includes counter-hegemonic attempts by some sectors of civil society. Consequently, curriculum policy pertains to a domain of educational policy that directs and impacts school practices, albeit not in a broad manner, but rather in those practices that are intrinsically associated with the delineation of the subject matter taught and the acquisition of knowledge in the classroom. The subject also encompasses state regulations, as well as the reciprocal relationship between such intentions and practical actions.

3. Curricular policy and molding: Tensions from the professional teaching practice

As noted, articulating curricular policy in schools is not a strict process of execution, but rather a complex practice that forces teachers to elaborate and construct a particular meaning from the exercise of their profession (Schön,

1998). In this way, molding as an essential phase of curricular concretization becomes a problematic situation characterized by contradictions and tensions to which an approach is made below.

Technical curriculum and teacher deprofessionalization

From the perspective of practical and critical theories of the curriculum, the reductionist organization of the educational system linked to technical visions transformed education into mere training, which engendered significant questions and uncertainties in the school. Among these were the limitation of teacher autonomy and its consequent deprofessionalization (Contreras, 2018). Consequently, the educator's role has been conceptualized as that of a civil servant, entrusted with the execution of predetermined directives, thereby diminishing their professional scope to that of a technician or a mere executor of tasks (Apple, 2001; Gimeno Sacristán, 2013). Ben-Peretz (1980) offers a compelling illustration of this approach through a comparison of the teaching function with that of the musician who interprets a composition. In this scenario, the musician is unable to incorporate their own interpretation into the performance, but instead, they are compelled to adhere strictly to the original composition. Therefore, the intricacies inherent in authentic professional practice—in which educators' conceptualizations and determinations assume paramount significance, endowing their actions with significance and particularity (Gimeno Sacristán, 2015, p. 55)—are overlooked. Teachers ought to be regarded as the architects of their own pedagogical environment, that is, the designers of the curriculum in situ (Ben-Peretz, 1980).

Teacher deprofessionalization, as previously mentioned, is exemplified by reductionist and limited conceptions such as professionalism (Contreras, 2018) and being professional (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2014). These perspectives imply that teachers are exercising professional actions by adhering to the pre-established curriculum, thereby engaging in an instrumental practice. Nevertheless, this deprofessionalization persists due to two factors. Firstly, there is a historical underestimation of the significance of teaching professionalism. Secondly, there is a continued reliance on technical curricular models. In this regard, Díaz-Barriga (2014) issues a caveat, noting that while the reforms call for a renewed discourse and appear to diverge from conventional encyclopedism, they have not attained the anticipated impact. This, in part, can be attributed to the fact that their underlying principles "respond to a discernible political interest in establishing a productivist and efficient perspective for education" (p. 19).

Consequently, contemporary state orientations are associated with technical interests that perpetuate the subordination of the curriculum to economic and market imperatives (Gimeno Sacristán, 2013), rather than to educational and societal needs. In this scenario, the rhetoric of professional qualification obliges teachers to assume an increasing number of tasks and responsibilities. This reaffirms their role as technicians-executors, thereby masking their loss of autonomy and subsequent deprofessionalization.

The demand for teacher autonomy?

The prevailing curricular orientations in Colombia and the majority of Latin American countries are derived from international policies articulated by entities such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and the OECD. In recent years, the aforementioned organizations have placed considerable emphasis on quality and a competency-based approach. The efficacy and homogenizing nature of such policies, as well as their high levels of specificity and control, have been the subject of considerable scrutiny. In this regard, authors such as Apple (2001) and Gimeno Sacristán (2009) have reiterated that, despite the ostensibly humanistic and progressive purposes expressed, which would suggest an advanced school, in reality, they employ the traditional technical approach.

Conversely, the aforementioned quality policies are developed concurrently with the apparent intention of the State to recognize and guarantee institutional and professional autonomy. Evidence of this phenomenon can be found in the discourses surrounding Law 115 of 1994, which was promoted by the National Pedagogical Movement. This law stipulates school and teacher autonomy as a means for educational institutions and their respective stakeholders to develop curricula that align with the needs and contextual particularities of their respective communities. However, this autonomy, as it has been promoted and argued, represents a paradox, since it is based on a democratic attitude, but it is promoted by the State, so that it is decreed that one is autonomous as long as one follows what is established (Oliveira & Feldfeber, 2006). This would be pertinent as long as the rules were general, structuring, and open to the purposes of the school. However, this is not the case with current

policies. In fact, current policies present in an increasingly specific and concrete way what should be taught. Moreover, they are supported by evaluation and control tools that aim to monitor the implementation of the pre-established curriculum.

This phenomenon, as posited by Contreras (2018), can be termed a "false autonomy." This apparent autonomy is characterized by a discourse that purports to be distanced from the conventional technical stance, placing trust in educators and emphasizing the prioritization of school and environmental needs. Nevertheless, this discourse is concomitant with the predominance of neoliberal rationality, which is characterized by the imposition of limitations and demands that shift responsibilities to schools and educators without providing the requisite assurances and conditions for implementation.

In summary, the current regulations present a significant deviation from the autonomy and flexibility established in the policy itself. Therefore, it is necessary to "reconceptualize the meaning of the concept of autonomy, apart from the adhesions of professionalism and within the framework of the qualities and characteristics of the teaching profession that arise from its meaning as an educational profession" (Contreras, 2018, p. 44). Departing from this perspective necessitates a resolute dedication and a discerning disposition, aimed at fostering emancipation and liberation (Kemmis, 1993; Silva, 2001). These objectives are inherently constrained by the dearth of autonomy, as Gimeno Sacristán (2013) contends. It proves to be a formidable task for educators to champion such emancipation within the confines of a regulated pedagogical praxis. Furthermore, as previously stated, this autonomy entails an assumption of responsibility by the teacher and the school that exceeds their capacities.

The mismatch between the real and the abstract

As demonstrated in the preceding discourse, it has been acknowledged that the educational objectives delineated in the prevailing reforms, despite their meticulous articulation, fail to elucidate the mechanisms through which these objectives are to be actualized. In this regard, Gimeno Sacristán (2009) asserts that articulating such intentions, in this case competencies, does not inherently lead to the "know-how" that enables their realization. Furthermore, this perspective acknowledges that these ideals may not always align with common or fair interests. Gimeno Sacristán contends that the prevailing discourse is founded on the imaginaries of what is regarded as desirable to achieve. However, this discourse is deemed to be both empty and ambiguous, as it neutralizes social distinctions and renders language, thought, and action devoid of meaning. Consequently, a potential dehumanization is fostered, characterized by a disregard for the context in which educational institutions and teaching professionals operate (Popkewitz, 1991). This oversight entails a failure to acknowledge or address the conditions that enable the articulation of these guidelines. As posited by Alba (2002) and Runge (2018), a paradox of rationalization has emerged. This paradox is situated at the intersection of the abstract, as embodied in educational policies predicated on quality, efficiency, and economy, and the real, as manifest in the interactions and relationships between subjects who act from their singularities and particularities, thereby transforming and determining their reality. The tensions between policy formulation and implementation manifest themselves, to a certain extent, in the significant variations evident in how a policy is received in one context or another.

Consequently, rather than conceptualizing this as a matter of "knowing how to do it," it is imperative to acknowledge, as posited by Ball, et al., (2012), that the emphasis should not be on the study of policy implementation, but rather on the evaluation of their effectiveness. That is to say, views that are affirming in nature and that investigate how institutions apply policies, or those that evaluate the quality of such application, are not relevant or appropriate. What is significant is to understand how these policies are made in multiple and contradictory ways. The purpose of this study is to analyze the interpretation and translation of politics in school. It is important to note that the term "politics" refers to the reading or position that is manifested in the narrative and in the institutional discourse. The term "politics" also refers to the concrete tactics and practices through which politics is incorporated in the school.

Between the local and the global

Another paradox present during curriculum design, and which, therefore, crosses the professional teaching practice, has to do, on the one hand, with local, contextual, and particular demands and, on the other, with global requirements characterized by a homogenizing tendency. In this sense, Runge (2019) identifies two clearly

contradictory requirements: the one related to the diffuse and particular and the one linked to the universal and specific. The state discourse establishes an openness to designing a curriculum from the local level while simultaneously incorporating extensive pretensions linked to a global nature. Therefore, the potential for educators to customize knowledge according to students' needs is alluded to. However, the development of a curriculum that is not aligned with this reality is required. This results in educators facing the significant challenge of facilitating a coherent encounter between these two worlds, despite lacking the necessary tools, training, and organizational resources to do so.

In this regard, Pinar (2014) offers a clarifying perspective on the state curriculum, asserting that opposition to it should not be characterized by a wholesale dismissal of guidelines. Rather, it should be understood as a counteraction to the diminution of personal freedom and the apparent globalizing interests that are in evidence. In this regard, Díaz-Barriga (2014) posits that the challenge lies in defining the fundamental contents necessary for training in the face of global demands, while also ensuring the incorporation of local needs. In this manner, educators are obliged to adjust and establish a curricular commitment according to the context, without relinquishing broader demands and possibilities, in accordance with their professional obligations.

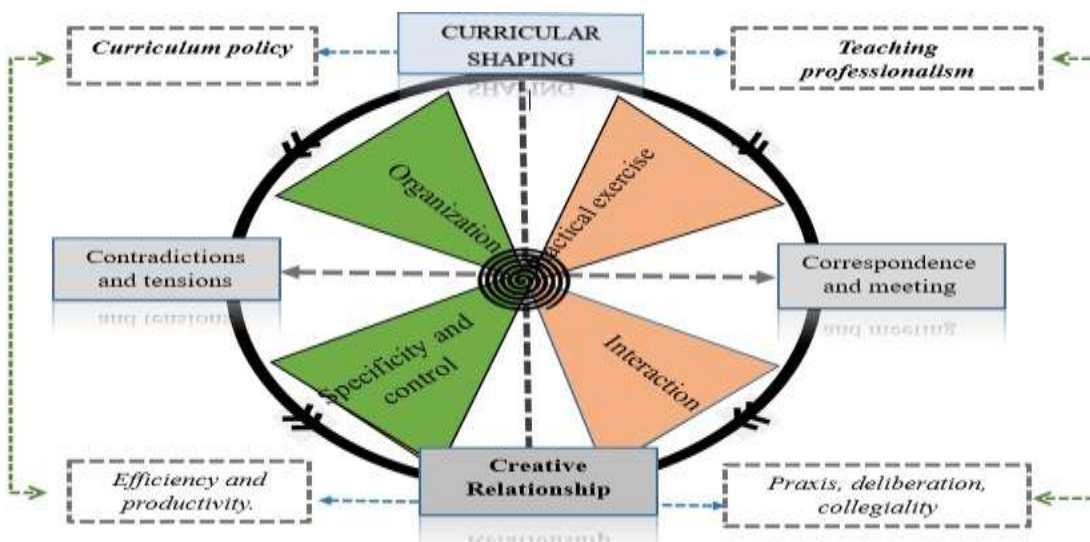
4. Teaching professionalism as a driver of a creative encounter

The present study has exposed the ongoing conflict between politics and institutional reality, particularly in relation to teacher professionalism and autonomy during the curricular shaping phase. As illustrated in Figure I, the central thesis of the article is represented graphically. The figure demonstrates the tension or paradoxical relationship, while presenting elements focused on a possible creative relationship based on the individual and collective vindication of teaching professionalism.

Claiming the professional and the collective

According to the aforementioned points, the foundational elements of teaching professionalism transcend the scope of sociological theories, which are deemed inadequate due to their instrumental perspective and approach to professionalism. Professionalism is closely associated with ongoing reflection and the educator's capacity to adeptly address uncertain and diverse scenarios that elude prediction within a bureaucratic framework. Nonetheless, reflection should not be limited to addressing practical concerns. As Apple (2001) cautions, such reasoning and understanding of teacher professionalism is predominantly exhibited by those who already wield societal control. This tendency manifests in a greater emphasis on the implementation of the pre-established curriculum rather than on its critical examination.

Figure I. Relations between curricular policy and teaching professionalism from the curricular shaping phase



Source: Own elaboration

Consequently, the institution of education must not legitimize interests that are incongruent with its fundamental principles. Rather, it is imperative for the school to engage in a reflexive critique, a process in which it discerns its tensions and disagreements, and subsequently establishes new horizons that transcend the instrumental visions of the curriculum. This process is pivotal in promoting a fruitful encounter between the State and the institution of education, thereby fostering a meaningful dialogue and collaboration that leads to the development of a more effective and inclusive educational framework. In this regard, educators should not limit their practice to the constraints imposed by state directives. Instead, they should exercise their professional autonomy to make decisions guided by educational and social values. This suggests that they possess a comprehensive understanding of the content and foundation of the curricular policy. It is important to note that in many cases, there is a lack of knowledge, resulting in unsubstantiated acceptance, rejection, or indifference. Furthermore, it is imperative that educators possess a keen understanding of the local context to identify meeting points that facilitate the transformation of educational practice into an emancipatory instrument.

The creative relationship referenced in this article is predicated on the following: The first component is an introspective and analytical practice, predicated on the contextual predicaments confronted by teaching professionals. These challenges are conceptualized as opportunities for devising a creative response through praxis (Kemmis et al., 2017). The second component is deliberation, defined as the proactive involvement of teachers and principals in the discernment and democratic design of the curriculum. This involvement is informed by their conscientious actions in the face of global challenges and their capacity to formulate well-informed judgments. The third component is a collective professional culture that is characterized by solidarity, prioritizing the context, debate, and group agreements. In this regard, Imbernón (2008) offers a noteworthy perspective:

If educational practice is a constant process of study, reflection, discussion, confrontation, experimentation, jointly and dialectically between the context and the collective of teachers, it will come closer and closer to critical emancipatory interest. (p. 33)

The presented material also suggests a reinterpretation of autonomy, which cannot be construed as individualism or as the exclusive domain of the teacher. Rather, it is conceived as the capacity for support, exchange, and collaboration among professionals. These interactions must be understood in the context of democratic and educational principles, which, as Stenhouse (2003) asserts, are susceptible to critical examination and can be effectively implemented. Consequently, the relationship between teachers as professionals and the awareness that such an exercise is possible within a specific professional reality is evident (Contreras, 2018). Professional autonomy is therefore defined by a dynamic process characterized by the encounter with others. This encounter is characterized by its sensitivity and flexibility, necessitating the integration of educational objectives and social commitments to comprehensively define the teaching profession.

Practice-based professional development

The aforementioned fundamentals are recognized as essential for any process of teacher training or professional development. This is due to the fact that, even when there are individual and institutional wills, the absence of knowledge and skills to exercise an authentic professional practice becomes an undeniable limitation. It is imperative to acknowledge that other adjustments and wills are essential to impact organizational dynamics and generate the necessary conditions of possibility. These should not be complied with in accordance with the state directive as it is given, but rather to promote a conscious and critical exercise in the face of its interpretation and translation.

In contrast, while it is indisputable that teacher training grounded in the disciplinary domain of pedagogy is imperative, it is equally crucial to formulate a commitment to professional development that acknowledges the workplace as a pivotal milieu that influences the comprehension, discernment, preparation, and decision-making of teachers in addressing quotidian challenges (Imbernón, 2011). From this vantage point, the problematic situation of curriculum shaping is perceived as a concrete possibility to promote teacher professional development. This development occurs from the place where practice takes place, thereby transforming the school into a space for

training and molding. In this environment of reflection, commitment to democratic freedom and action is present (Angulo, 1989). This allows us to conceive this phase of curricular concretization as a driver and determinant of practice.

In light of the aforementioned issues, it is imperative to leverage this and analogous situations during training, whether it be initial training or the execution of one's profession, as a means to substitute for face-to-face contexts characterized by uncertainty. This approach enables the legitimization of training, thereby facilitating professional learning to the greatest extent possible.

Conclusions

The text establishes the need for an approach based on the practical and critical theories of the curriculum and on teaching professionalism. It is considered necessary to vindicate professional autonomy as a mechanism to move away from visions that promote a professionalism based on teacher productivity and at the service of state requirements. These latter requirements are characterized by efficient and hegemonic visions of teaching.

As demonstrated above, it is possible to identify tensions, uncertainties, and contradictions between teacher professionalism and the guiding policy of the school curriculum. It is acknowledged that the autonomy delineated by the State is accompanied by a high degree of specificity and oversight. Additionally, there is a discernible discrepancy between government expectations and the conditions of possibility in the contexts in which they aim to be integrated.

The curricular shaping phase is recognized as an important manifestation of teacher autonomy and professionalism. This is linked to the problematic situation implied by the paradoxical relationship between curricular policy from the structural-formal and the real practice. The latter is influenced by teacher training and experience, contexts, and the different codes and determinants of the curriculum.

In this relationship, teachers must learn to maintain a constant balance and reflection, allowing them to generate a creative and purposeful encounter that can be assumed in a fruitful way. This is possible to the extent that both tensions and harmonies are understood, so that these agents assume their role as suitable professionals capable of identifying problems, discerning conflicts, and making decisions in favor of training purposes.

Consequently, the cultivation of teaching professionalism must transcend the confines of technical professionalization, instead emphasizing the establishment of a professional culture that fosters spaces for both individual and collective reflection. Furthermore, it is imperative to create conducive working conditions that enable autonomous practice, encompassing the selection and production of knowledge, thereby fostering greater democratic principles. However, it is worthwhile to interrogate the efficacy of this autonomy within the context of the school system and to examine the challenges and difficulties that teachers encounter when exercising autonomy in the domains of curriculum design and planning.

Finally, it is considered a priority to address studies focused on school contexts that allow an approach to the voice of the actors involved in curricular molding. These studies are a possibility to understand the determining elements of curricular practices and to project actions focused on teacher transformation and professional development. According to Schön (1998), the manner in which these professionals think and act serves as a mediating factor in the adoption of a reflective practice that is more closely aligned with the prevailing training needs, which, as has been previously noted, transcend bureaucratic formalities.

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