Teacher Professional Development and the Argument of Incompetence: the case of in-service elementary teacher education in São Paulo, Brazil

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Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Institute of Education
University of London
2001

To my father Valdomiro, for his enduring support;
To my mother, Anna, for her love;
and to Bruno and Arthur, for sharing with me the true joys and challenges of life

Abstract

This work proposes that since the early eighties a specific strategy has gained increasing importance within official Education Programmes in São Paulo (Brazil) addressed to deal with the high rates of pupil repetition and dropout: the concentration on teachers professional development. We argue that this strategy is based on the idea of teacher's incompetence as the main explanation for educational problems. This idea pervades both the conceptions of the programmes and their proposed actions and practices. We discuss the idea of teacher's incompetence tracing its recent origins in the literature, and investigating its repercussions for the formulation and implementation of official Education Programmes, namely Basic Cycle, Basic Cycle in a Single Shift and Quality School undertaken by the São Paulo State Secretariat for Education. In order to develop our argument a programme for Teacher Professional Development (TPD) carried out in the early 90's was chosen as the empirical context. A systematic fieldwork based on a qualitative research method was carried out in which the perceptions, expectations, and interrelations of the involved teachers, course monitors and policy makers were extracted from a number of interviews and observations. Our analysis demonstrates the presence of what we identify as the *"argument of incompetence"*. Having provided evidence of its presence in the educational literature and in the education policies we explore and demonstrate its presence and its significance in the perceptions of the three groups of professionals involved in teachers' professional development programmes we analyse. We show that the *"argument of incompetence"* takes on different forms according to the context. It tends to be more refined at the level of the educational literature and rather simplistic in the education policies. However, the core of the *"argument of incompetence"* follows a linear logic: "we do not have a good quality school only because we lack teachers of professional competence". We proceed to demonstrate that it not only undermines the relations among the main participating agents in teacher professional development, namely, policy makers, course monitors and teachers, but it also promotes a mistaken way of thinking about teacher professional development. Mistaken and simplistic as it promotes a conception of TPD that overestimates its possibilities of dealing with chronic and broader issues of low quality of Brazilian Basic Education without taking the necessary action regarding other vital elements such as suitable conditions of work in schools and teacher's career development.

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

As with any PhD thesis, this work has a history. And I would like to share with the reader some of the facts of my professional life that are closely linked with that history. The main intent is to facilitate the process of situating my position within the Brazilian education system, providing some of the background for my interest in this field and for the major choices I have made during the development of this work. I will also take the opportunity to thank the people and institutions that directly and indirectly contributed to the realisation of this work.

I see myself as a person deeply involved with Education. Many years into a career it is frequently difficult to recall precisely how one first found oneself captivated by a profession. I had a great opportunity to work as a research assistant for five years in a prestigious institution of educational research in São Paulo. It was there at *Fundação Carlos Chagas* that I was initiated into the area of research in education and learned what are the personal and professional implications of becoming truly committed to a kind of research that aims to contribute to the improvement of the quality of our state education. During that time I had the privilege of working with and especially learning from very experienced researchers. Much I learned from Dr. Vitor Paro and Dr. Celso Ferretti during a long research about a full-time school project. My knowledge about the life and educational situation faced by those people living in the slum tenement-houses was obtained from Dr. Felícia Madeira. I am heartily obliged to Dr Maria Helena Souza Patto, teacher and former supervisor, for introducing me to the field of research in Educational Psychology, and for her asking me to work as her research assistant. It was a privilege to be in contact with her for so many years. With Maria Helena I participated in a long research project about school failure, a problem that has tarnished the history of education in Brazil since its early times. That experience was decisive in shaping the path of my professional life and the academic interests it took.

I had a short but significant experience as an Educational Psychologist at the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo (USP). My contact with schools, teachers and pupils was increased as well as my knowledge about the reality of the schools: at

that time I could see how deeply unjust the school was for the pupils and their families. They took all the blame for their failure and many of them ended up accepting the responsibility for it, considering themselves as incompetents, incapable of acquiring even the rudiments of schooling. So, I joined those colleagues that worked to show that the children from the popular classes were as capable, as intelligent, and actually as fascinating in their process of discovering the world as any other children. For much of the time we were too tough on teachers.

I landed at Heathrow Airport in July 1991 with a mixture of excitement and apprehension. My husband Jesse was already there. Since the beginning of that year he was attending a PhD programme at UCL, improving his knowledge in the field of nonlinear dynamics. I was fortunate for I could always count on him, my dear husband and best friend, to share my sorrows and happy moments, also my uncertainties. He has always been a qualified interlocutor: intelligent, interested and patient. I am sure I would not have accomplished the task of finishing my PhD without his incommensurable support. I also thank him for the patience of being my English reviewer.

I started my studies at the Institute of Education in the beginning of 1992. New challenges awaited me: to handle the language and environment, to adapt to the weather, particularly to the British winter. Carlos and Jonathan became unexpected dear friends. They opened their home and their hearts to receive us. At the Institute I met Monika Tratnik, Paulina and Ana Maria, dearest friends sharing similar experiences of being 'overseas research students'. I thank them for their inestimable friendship and tenderness.

It was a challenge to me to acquire the command of the English language necessary to conduct my academic work adequately. I had to accept that I would not have the same performance in the use of English that I have with my mother tongue. To me it meant an additional effort to safeguard my self-esteem and my confidence in doing 'my job' there. I remember an episode that occurred at the early times of my studies at the Institute. It is worth mentioning it. Once one of my supervisors, Dr. Bob Cowen, said to me that the material I had presented 'was good for Chapter Eight'. I received that answer with a mixture of frustration and bewilderment for at that time I did not fully understand what his somewhat humorous comment meant. I remember thinking, also in the same mood: "I did not know my thesis would have eight chapters... If that is good for Chapter Eight, what will be the others?" I recall that some years after that meeting I understood exactly what Dr. Cowen meant. His comment was intended to call my attention to how specific the subject of that initial material was; therefore, I should try to define first the broader context of my work.

The episode described above also illustrates a different concern that followed the whole process of doing this work: to construct a well-defined object of study, which at the same time solidly referred to its broader context. I have tried hard to fulfil the request of focusing my research object. In the process of doing that I have learned much on various areas; some of them are disciplines that I had very little familiarity with, as a professional originally from a background in Psychology[1]. I certainly made some detours during those early studies, despite my supervisors' question constantly in my mind: *'what is your argument?'* Those detours allowed me to form a broad picture of the reality of Educational Policies in the years before the period I analysed. That part was not included in the final writing up, as it would unnecessarily increase the size of it and make the final version of the thesis lose focus. Despite that cut and others that I have made, the work as a whole is perhaps slight long. In this respect, I would like to make two considerations that are worth mentioning in this context.

First, the way I have learned to do research follows a kind of logic that requires the context (socio-political) to be included, and that introduces an additional effort to 'keep focus'. And secondly, considering that the work is targeted at a non-Brazilian reader, the explanation of that wider background gained additional relevance. Therefore, I thought it important to provide the reader with detailed information and try to include some aspects of the Brazilian culture.

Finally, I had to get adapted to the way of doing and presenting a PhD work in England. My previous research experiences were acquired within a context of team-work. Even my MPhil was carried out taking two other colleagues, also developing their own ethnographic research projects, as close interlocutors[2]. So, this was a long adaptation process in which I had the inestimable help and kind attention of my supervisor, Anthony Green. I thank him for his always careful readings, during all

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[1] My undergraduate course was at the Institute of Psychology at the University of São Paulo, in 1985, and my MPhil programme was carried out in the same institution, on the area of Educational Psychology. I presented my thesis in 1991, few moths before initiating my programme at the Institute of Education.

[2] Both MPhil and PhD programmes in Brazil have a part of taught courses, compulsory. Those courses also represent opportunities to meet colleagues and to discuss the projects. In that sense, the opportunities to organise 'discussing groups' are ampler than that I had during the course of my work at the Institute.

the phases of this work, for his comments and for his permanent concern with the successful accomplishment of my work.

After my experience of working at the Institute of Education I certainly achieved a greater maturity as an independent researcher. I have learned how to build and to present a thesis argument; as well as how to work with research students to make them accomplish that. That ability is, I reckon, one of the best fruits of my years at the Institute of Education.

The research document in this thesis is the latest step in the process of my involvement with the struggle for a better education in Brazil. If difficulties caused by moving away from a well-known and supportive environment emerged, the benefit was that the physical and emotional distance from the everyday life of the university and schools allowed me to accomplish a significant task. That was to produce an academic work that hopefully will contribute to our understanding of a particular assertion that has undermined the best efforts to make the Brazilian state school a good school for all: the *"argument of incompetence"*.

To finalise this foreword, I would like to thank the University of São Paulo and the CNPq. (Conselho Nacional de Pesquisa) for providing the financial resources to make my project possible. The whole idea would have been impracticable without their support.

Chapter One

Introduction

In Brazil the dissatisfaction with the basic education system is both historical and consensual. The many unsatisfactory aspects of the Brazilian education system were well documented in the education literature[3]. Until the 60's the state basic education system was simply not large enough to meet the growing demand, making access to it the privilege of a few[4]. The total number of state school places rose sharply during the two following decades, and it is generally agreed that that problem of access was solved by the late 80's. Since then the focus of an increasingly general discontentment has been the low quality of the education system as expressed by high rates of repetition and dropout. Reducing these two parameters – that have always characterised the system – was taken as the main challenge facing policy makers.

The improvement of the Brazilian State education system, particularly at the Basic Education level, has been on the agenda of many State governments. Proposals for the solution of the various perceived problems have found their way into various official Education Programmes. The educational policies during the 80's and first years of the 90's have stressed their intention of building a better quality schooling. This work investigates the case of the São Paulo State. Three main programmes were launched by the São Paulo State Government from the middle eighties until the beginning of the nineties, as follows: Basic Cycle – (CB), Basic Cycle in Single Shift- (CB-JU) and Quality School – (E.P) These programmes were explicitly devised to deal with the high rates of repetition and dropout. Those programmes intended to introduce profound changes to the educational system. The teacher and his/her pedagogical practice were at the centre of the proposed changes.

It is noticeable that in this period there was an increasing emphasis on the figure of the teacher and on the need of his/her continuous professional development. An

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[3] Kessel (1954); Cardoso (1949); Cunha (1974), Freitag (1978), Sposito, M. P. (1984), Patto (1984, 1990) amongst others.

initial analysis of both the official documents and of the academic educational literature shows that **the proposals recommending the offering of programmes of continuing professional education were gradually gaining space, particularly in** the official documents, and establishing themselves as the main strategy adopted by the Secretariat of Education to improve the quality of education.

The recognition of this trend in educational policies raises a few questions. Why has that happened? What are the basic arguments that have provided the grounds for that choice by the State Secretariat of Education (SSE)? What is the logic behind it? Is there any relation between the path taken by the educational policies and the academic educational literature? Is a similar trend observed in the educational literature? The actions of continuing professional education occurring during the last two decades have received little attention from the educational research particularly of critical studies concerning their assumptions, aims, contents and strategies, as Andaló (1989), Hypólito (1996), and Perosa (1997) noticed. In other words: **the lack of serious research and studies of teachers continuing professional education contrasts with the evident blooming of teachers professional development courses observed in the period.** To the extent that there has been academic research interest in the field of teacher education, it is a recent development. Thus, Sarti (1999) while analysing the papers published on 'teachers education' by the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* (RBEP)[5] between 1986-1995, noticed that quite a few papers are presented in the "Research Notes" section, that is devoted to the researches in development. Therefore, she concluded, "the interest in the theme of teacher education is to a certain extent recent".

André (1997) observed the same using a different but also equally important source of information. She used a comprehensive compilation of data by the National Association of Research on Education (ANPED), on the PhD and MPhil. theses developed within the Postgraduate Programmes in Education in Brazil from 1990-1995. Analysing the summaries of the works on *teacher education* André observed

[4] Cunha (1974); Freitag (1978), Almeida and Parente (1991); amongst others.

[5] Brazilian Journal of Pedagogic Studies, would be a possible translation for the title.

an increase in the number of works during the years, particularly from 1994 to 1995[6]. The theme *'teacher continuous education'* shows signs of increase but the theme of 'initial education' leads the ranking of Brazilian theses in teachers education. The perspective of those professionals involved in the actions of Teachers Professional Development (TPD)[7] is also under-researched[8].

Through this thesis we intend to contribute to the development of this field of study by offering a detailed critical analysis of the main educational programmes carried out by the São Paulo State Secretariat of Education addressed to primary education between 1982 and 1993, particularly their proposals for TPD[9]. The educational programmes are the following: Basic Cycle (CB), Basic Cycle in a Single Shift (CB-JU) and Quality School (EP). Our critical focus will be upon the theme of teacher professional incompetence. More particularly the perspective of those professional involved in the actions of continuing education: the course monitors, the teachers themselves and the team in charge of the project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice'. This thesis considers that the subjective meaning that those actions have for individuals at all levels of the education system plays a central role in the issue of teacher professional development[10]. Therefore this thesis will provide elements to understand and to discuss the point of view of all those directly involved in the actions of continuous education carried out in the beginning of the 90's by the State Secretariat for Education (SSE)[11]: from the policy makers level to the school teacher in order to develop the argument for the thesis that the theme of teacher professional incompetence took an increasing significance during this period, to the point of becoming the chosen strategy to deal with the low quality of the education system. Particular attention is paid to the discourse(s) about primary teachers and their professional development (present both in the documentary sources and in the

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[6] She identified 236 works between 1990-1995, being 203 MPhil. and 33 PhD.

[7] Hereafter TPD.

[8] Perosa, G. (1997) carried out her MPhil on the actions of continuing education taken by the São Paulo SSE. Her work, very interesting in its findings, is presented on the review of the literature in this thesis.

[9] The year of 1982 was chosen because it was in that year that the first elections for Governors after a long period of military dictatorship took place. In 1993 the fieldwork was carried out.

[10] Fullan, M. (1991);Hargreaves, A. and Fullan, M. (1992); Hargreaves, A. (1994); Patto (1990) ; Andaló (1989), amongst others.

[11] Hereafter SSE.

interviews). By doing so this thesis aims at: a) Identifying the logic behind the increase of continuing professional education programmes (in number of places and in variety of courses) offered by the SSE. b) Tracing its presence and possible origins in the educational literature; c) Analysing its relations, repercussions and modifications when interpreted by those directly involved in implementing the policies.

It is important to be clear that suggesting that teachers require more training seems to appeal to common sense. We see nothing wrong with that. On the contrary, we believe that teaching is a profession that may benefit immensely if conditions are provided so that schools and teachers could have activities related to their continuous development included in their routine, their practices and expectations for professional life. In this sense it is important to state clearly that we are not criticising the idea of TPD or teachers continuing education in itself. What shall be discussed and criticised in this work is a certain approach to TPD. A certain appropriation and use of TPD activities that is based on two ideas: a) that teachers require training **because** they are incompetent; b) their incompetence is the sole explanation for school and educational failure. We argue that a conception of teacher continuing education in which negative ways of seeing the teachers, with consequently homogenized descriptions of them and their work prevails particularly when it is referring to the teacher professional competence. We shall also criticise a conception of TPD that reduces the causes of the school and educational failure to a single element, namely teacher education. That conception of TPD overestimates its possibilities for dealing with broader issues of low quality of state education and, more seriously, it underestimates other important elements such as the concrete conditions of work and career development.

The idea of teachers' incompetence, in the sense of the lack of teacher adequate training for teaching, is recurrently used on the educational programmes developed by São Paulo State from 1982 to 1993. Our case will be made by conducting an examination of these programmes. Therefore during this work the recent origins and relations of these policies and programmes with the academic discourse are traced,

their inner logic is pursued, and implications for the work of those directly involved in the actions of continuing education are described and discussed[12].

The central argument of this thesis is that from early 80's until at least mid 90's, the policy and practice of Brazilian Education has been organised around the *'argument of incompetence'*. The core of that argument states that the sole explanation for the poor performance of the education system is the incompetence of teachers. Therefore, according to this argument, the only thing to do is to improve the teachers' competence. Thus, the *'argument of incompetence'* has been used to justify and to shape the adoption of continuing professional education programmes as the main strategy in improving the quality of the education system.

To present our argument we organise the work in nine chapters, including this **'Introduction'**.

Chapter Two presents the main debates related to primary education the problem of the school failure that shaped the education programmes analysed by this thesis. We argued that the conjunction of the presented debates and ideas increased the visibility of schools and of teacher's work. The educational literature associates the low quality of basic education with teacher's poor professional qualification. The underlying logic is that "we do not have a school of quality because we lack teachers of good professional quality'. Therefore it became common to claim that all efforts should go towards improving the teachers' technical competence, through in-service education programmes.

Chapter Three discusses the educational literature on teacher professional development, particularly in Brazil, with a special attention to establish if and how the idea of teachers' incompetence appears. The analysis reveals that the concept of competence, and the belief on the teachers incompetence are deeply related to a simplistic logic pointed out earlier on Chapter Two. An apparently sound and convincing *'argument of incompetence'* of teachers was built within the education

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[12] Our work is greatly indebted to Patto (1990,1984), in its perspective and critical approach, as will become clear on Chapter Two.

literature. This version of the *'argument of incompetence'* is presented and critically discussed.

Chapter Four presents a critical analysis of the education policies carried out in the 80´s in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais. The education programmes developed by São Paulo State between 1982 and 1993 are discussed in detail. We trace how the idea of teacher incompetence emerged at the education policies level. The analyses confirmed that teachers' continuous education gained increasing importance as the chosen strategy in dealing with the low quality of education. The analysis of the documentary sources lead to the conclusion that, at the level of the education policies, the *'argument of incompetence'* lands on fertile soil and establishes its domain.

The preparation of the fieldwork and the rationale for the definition of a case study of a project of TPD developed in the early 90´s is the subject of **Chapter Five**. The analysis of the fieldwork is presented in the next three chapters. Each of them deals with the impact and manifestation of the *'argument of incompetence'* at the levels of agents of TPD developed by the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice". Namely: policy makers, course monitors and teachers.

Chapter Six presents the findings of analysis of the policy makers' conceptions, opinion, and strategies of TPD. The analyses reveals that the team in charge of the Project "Literacy: Theory and Practice" articulates its conceptions and activities of professional development in line with the *'argument of incompetence'*. The main argument proposed is that the team organises its activities having in mind a main objective: to build an alternative *'network of competence'* so that the quality of education would be increased. We argue that the team interviewed, as a whole, tend to attribute a great importance to actions of TPD to the achievement of a better quality education, overlooking the other essential aspects such as adequate material condition of work and career.

Chapter Seven presents the findings of analysis of the interviews conducted with the four course monitors in charge of the Basic Course. The course monitors have a strong sense of group identity built through their participation in a previous project of

TPD. Therefore, despite agreeing with the strategy proposed by the policy makers of *'networking competence'*, the course monitors tend to have an ambivalent attitude towards them turning themselves to their previous group of reference as their real partners.

Chapter Eight presents the findings of analysis of the teachers conceptions, perspectives, doubts and anxieties concerning their teaching practice in general and their evaluations of the Basic Course, in particular. The main argument addressed is that the *'argument of incompetence'*, at the level of teachers, manifests itself in two ways: through their *'need of distinguishing'* and their *practice of questioning* the competence of *'the others'*. Both strategies aim to safeguard the teachers' self-image threatened by working in stressing and unrewarding conditions of teaching and by adopting the partial but convincing *'argument of incompetence'*.

Chapter Nine presents a synthesis of the main conclusions of this work, organised in four statements grounded in the analyses and discussions presented earlier in the main body of this thesis. We also present some implications that follow from our work, as well as preliminary ideas on how this work might be developed with further research.

Chapter Two

The educational literature: debates and controversies

The academic debate of the 70's and 80's played a fundamental role in defining the direction taken by the education policies in general and in shaping their teachers professional development programmes in particular. The influence of the academic production, its debates, ideas and controversies, is noticed on the level of the education policies implemented in the State of São Paulo from 1982 to 1993. This chapter traces these main debates and ideas, related to primary education and the problem of the school failure that influenced the education programmes analysed here.

Subsection 2.1.1 sets the context by beginning with a summarised account of the expansion of primary and higher education. Following that, the main debates and influential ideas in the educational literature are presented. It is argued that the conjunction of those debates and ideas, within the historical context, **increased the visibility of teacher's work, as the dominance of what will be identified as the psychological reductionist approaches subsided.** Subsection 2.1.2 presents the official data, and also the controversies involving the rates of repetition and dropout. An important point is made by disclosing some of the errors in the official data and their consequences for the understanding of the causes of the school failure. The influences of the Theories of Reproduction are presented next, on Section 2.2. Their historical importance to the education in Brazil is due to the movement they represent toward a focus upon the understanding of the school within a class society. To the field of Psychology, those theories represented the first alternative group of ideas to the dominance of the psychological-individualistic approach to the causes of the school problems. The debate about competence (section 2.4) entered the educational scenario in the 80's. As the Deprivation Theories – which can be taken as emblematic of the simplistic and reductionists approaches to the understanding of the school failure - were beginning to lose strength, the attention turned to the teacher and her teaching practice. It became common to claim the need was for improving the teacher technical competence. The teacher was in focus. The chapter ends with

by examining where the relations between those debates and the theme of teacher professional development.

2.1 Improving the quality as the current challenge of Brazilian Primary Education [13]

2.1.1 A little of history

Until the 60's the access to education was a privilege of a few[14] (see Table I [15]). More than half of school age children were out of the school: that meant nearly 8,000,000 children out of school. At that time, the most pressing problem was to expand the educational network in order to provide school for all. However, the consciousness of access to schooling as 'a right of everyone and duty of the

Table I

Development of Education Provision among the population aged 7 to 14 years (in thousands) - BRAZIL

Year	Population	Enrolment	Rates of schooling
1950	10,402.7	3,767.9	36.2
1960	14,406.4	6,540.5	45.4
1970	19,693.0	13,209.9	67.1
1980	21,934.2	18,476.6	84.2
1989	27,509.4	22,616.5	82.2
1996*	28,525.815	25,909.860	90.8

State' was not clearly established among the people as a whole (Beisiegel, 1990). This is a long process that is even now in progress. The state school network of that

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[13] The basic organisation of the education system, its levels and main features, are, in short, the follow:
I - Basic Education (Educação Básica): composed by: Pre-school (Educação Infantil), Primary Education (Ensino Fundamental) and Secondary Education (Ensino Médio). II- Higher Education (Educação Superior)
The Pre-school education is structured in groups based on the children's age, catering for ages from four months to six. The Primary Education, taking eight years of compulsory and free education, caters for children between the ages of seven to fourteen. The Secondary Education takes at least three years, including vocational courses. And at the Higher Education level, the number of years varies accordingly to the course.

[14] Cunha (1974); Freitag (1978), Almeida Neto and Parente Filho (1991); amongst others.

[15] Table Sources: Almeida Neto and Parente Filho (1991) p.24 and Castro, M.H. G. and Davanzo, A.M.Q (orgs1999) p.77.

time was recognised as providing a very good quality education[16]. But it was just for a few. And, to a certain extent, that was not considered as a problem by most people. The demand for education for all became an issue only with the acceleration of the pace of the economic development and the consequent increase in the rates of urbanisation and industrialisation that occurred during the 50's and 60's.

As a consequence of an unequal economic development across the country, the prosperous states of the Southeast had their population increased by a strong internal migration from the Northeastern states. Attracted by the possibility of getting jobs and better living conditions, thousands of migrants gathered their few belongings, leaving behind, sometimes, their close relatives to try to build a better life for their families. These first migrants opened a path followed by many (Durhan, 1973).

The 1970 demographic census showed that over 13 million Brazilians were not living in their State of origin. This figure represents more than 14 % of the total population in that year. By far the largest inter-regional movement was the net loss of nearly 3.5 million people from the Northeast states to São Paulo State, being the Greater São Paulo the main region of destiny. The same census showed that the majority of the Greater São Paulo population (53%) had been born outside the region (Vaughan-Williams, 1992)

In forty years the Brazilian population had changed from mainly rural to mainly urban[17]. All spheres of social life and social services were affected by the fast, unequal and disorganised urbanisation across the country: housing, sanitation, electricity, water supply, medical and educational services.

So far as school education is concerned, the organisation of the educational system was affected by the increase of the demand for education. Brazil had then to expand its educational coverage considerably during the 60's, 70's, and 80's. Claims from

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[16]. Nevertheless the rates of repetition and dropout were always very high. Kessel (1954) shows that in Brazil in 1938, 58 out of 100 pupils that enter the 1st grade did not reach the 2nd in the next year. And that only 4% of the students managed to complete the 4 years of the Primary school without repeating any grade.

[17] In 1940 the urban population represented 31.2% and the rural 68.8% whereas in 1980 is was the opposite: 66.7% urban and 33.3 % rural (source Brazilian housing Bank, cited by Vaughan- Willian,

the working classes and the emerging urban middle classes played no minor role in bringing about such expansion (Freitag, 1978; Cunha, 1975; Romanelli, 1988 and Beisiegel, 1990). The former wishing to have access to basic education and the latter to move upwards by means of an academic degree[18].

The expansion of Higher Education[19], as it occurred, had consequences for the quality of teaching on its Basic level. The Higher Education network grew considerably since the end of the 60's. The number of enrolments between the years of 1968 and 1973 increased by 300%. This increase happened mainly in the private sector, where isolated schools[20] (not Universities) were established at a fast pace. In 1968, the number of enrolments in State institutions was greater than in private institutions (153,799 against 124,496). However, the scenario had changed considerably five years later: in 1973, 2/3 of all enrolments in Higher Education in the country were in private institutions.

For the argument of this work it is important to bear in mind that apart from the Catholic Universities, well known for the good quality of their teaching, 96% of the enrolment in private institutions corresponded to isolated schools, without tradition (Cunha, 1975). These institutions started by offering mainly night and weekend courses in areas that do not demanded high investments, mainly at human sciences. Until very recently, there was hardly any control upon the services offered by those institutions, so the quality of teaching provided by them was far from satisfactory. So, with respect to the argument that this thesis is building, there is a basis for the claim made in the education literature that teachers have not, in general, received a

1992, pp 41)

[18] The so- called "University Crisis" was being caused by the youngsters' discontentment about the insufficient number of places at University. Cunha, 1975 puts that the increase of demand for Higher Education was closely related to the economy after 1964 (when a military coup took place). An intensification of the economic process of concentration of income, capital and properties was observed, followed by the bankruptcy of small business. So, the upward mobility to the middle classes through savings and small business became more difficult. As a consequence, the call for Higher Education increased sharply during the 60's and the number of places at universities became increasingly insufficient to meet the demand. Between the years 1964 and 1968 the number of candidates to Higher Education institutions that could not have access to any school grew by 212%. In 1968, for instance, there were 125,000 students in that condition (Cunha, p. 238-9). The students' dissatisfaction encouraged their engagement in political activities upon which the State was losing control.

[19] See footnote 13 to the organisation of the education system.

[20] The denomination ' isolated schools' refers to faculties or institutes that are not linked to any

good initial education. We do not argue with that claim but with the proposition that follows that statement which identifies teacher education (particularly in-service education) as the main (sometimes the sole) aspect to be dealt with if a higher quality of education is to be achieved.

Comparing to the State Institutions, private institutions offer a service of lower quality. So, their graduates did not have the same chances of getting the best places in the labour market. The expansion of Primary Education that was also occurring required new teachers. Therefore, the majority of the leavers from private schools got a job at the state basic teaching. It has been mainly from those private schools that the secondary teacher (and to a certain extent primary teachers as well) and other school staff have graduated.

Put briefly, the educational policies in the last forty years have consisted in diminishing the participation of the State in this level and, at the same time, have positively received the participation of the private institutions "even knowing that a significant part of the institutions that compose this group is much more concerned with reproducing the capital invested than in offering a consistent cultural and scientific formation to its clientele"(Martins, 1992 page 97).

The situation described above is important to our study because of its double impact on the quality of Primary Education, as follows:

A) The quality of initial teacher education was negatively affected as poorly prepared secondary teachers teach the future primary teachers;

B) The Primary Education is also affected by primary teachers seeking those night and weekend courses either to improve their professional qualifications or to progress in their career.

In what concerns the expansion of Primary Education, there are some initial comments to be made. In 1971 the Primary Education, comprised by the first eight years, was made compulsory for all children between the ages of seven and fourteen.

University.

It should have been available to all. However, until the middle 80's the official data show there were not enough places at state schools to meet the demand. For those who did get a place at school, staying in it was a challenge: the rates of repetition and dropout were very high, historically higher than 45% on the 1st and 40% on the 5th grades (see table II and III)[21]

Table II

Primary Education - repetition rates between grades – BRAZIL –1981 – 1995

Year	Grades (%)								Total
Repetition	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	
1981	57	28	22	18	34	30	27	21	36
1983	58	31	25	21	38	33	30	23	38
1985	51	34	25	23	40	33	29	21	36
1987	49	36	27	23	40	34	30	23	36
1989	48	34	26	23	41	34	29	22	35
1991	46	34	25	22	40	32	28	22	33
1993	47	35	26	21	36	30	25	19	-
1995	44	31	24	20	35	28	23	18	-

Source: table based on Castro, M.H. G. and Davanzo, A.M.Q (orgs) 1999, p 80

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[21] Kessel (1954) in a classic research on dropout showed that 58 out of 100 children did not reach the 2nd grade in 1938, in Brazil.

Table III

Primary Education - dropout rates between grades – BRAZIL –1981 – 1995

Year	Grades (%)								Total
Dropout	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	
1981	2	6	8	11	10	8	7	11	6
1983	2	6	9	13	11	10	10	16	7
1985	2	6	9	11	10	10	7	13	6
1987	2	6	8	11	10	9	7	10	6
1989	2	6	7	9	8	8	6	12	6
1991	1	5	6	8	7	8	6	11	5
1993	1	3	5	7	7	6	5	9	-
1995	1	3	4	5	5	5	5	12	4

Source: table based on Castro, M.H. G. and Davanzo, A.M.Q (orgs) 1999, p 80

The 1988 Constitution removed the upper age limit, making Primary Education mandatory and free for all, even for those that, for any reason, could not attend school at the proper age. Despite primary Education being officially free and for all Brazilian citizens since the 1824 Constitution (Empire's time) that remained as an unfulfilled ideal for a long time. The initial 'boost' to the rates of enrolments that occurred between the 50's and 70's (from 36.2% to 84.2%) needs to be viewed with caution. It was, without doubt, an achievement for the majority of the population. They gained access to school. However, such expansion happened not only by the increase of number of schools but mainly at the expense of the number of hours of the children's daily attendance. The number of daily shifts increased to meet the rising demand for places at schools, many working with three day-shifts and one night-shift. It was common to find schools working in very improvised places, such as old warehouses and rooms in churches.

Recent data indicate that the educational coverage has reached an acceptable level: to a certain extent, the issue of access to school has been overcome. As table I showed,

in 1996 official data pointed that 90,3% of the school age population was at school[22]. Many problems, however, persist such as suitable infrastructure such as buildings and furniture, complete school staff, and number of day-shifts, to mention a few (Franco,1995; Cunha, 1991, among others).

In comparison to other middle-income countries, such as Mexico and Venezuela, Brazil has not given priority to education: in the early 90's data shows that less than 4% of the Gross National Product (GNP) is invested in education with only 1.3% of the GNP effectively reaching the Primary Education schools (World Bank, 1994). In what concerns our work, it is important, for the moment, to remember that with insufficient resources it is quite difficult to improve the general quality of education. When the State does not provided schools with the necessary resources, namely, suitable buildings, equipment, materials and labs, and well-paid human resources it is unreasonable to expect that all teachers will be able to carry out their duties properly. Analyses and arguments that overlook the concrete material conditions of work by emphasising only the deficiencies of the teacher initial education contribute to mystify the reality. It is quite convenient to the State Government to do so. This thesis will demonstrate how this is done and its impact on and thorough teachers and in-service course monitors.

However, it is important to remember that there are countries that spend approximately the same or even less than Brazil but obtain a Higher Educational engagement, as Table IV shows.

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[22] Data from official national reports, analysed previously by UNESCO-1989 show that in 1985 the net rates of coverage of Primary Education were 83.2%. Despite the advance that figure means in comparison to previous decades such figure puts Brazil below other countries in Latin America as, for example, Argentina (99.9%), Chile (92.5%), Peru (93.5%) or Venezuela (86.9%) (UNESCO, 1989, p.38).

Table IV

Comparison of educational indicators between Brazil and countries of similar per capita income- 1994

Country	Illiteracy rates (%) (10-14 years old)	Secondary education-engagement rates (%)	Higher Education - Engagement rates (%)
Chile	**3.0**	**70.0**	**23.3**
Mauricio	8.4	54	2.1
Brazil	**17.8**	**39**	**11.7**
Malaysia	15.0	60	7.3
Venezuela	4.7	34	29.5
Hungary	----	82	15.3
Uruguay	**2.8**	**83**	**32**

Sources: World Bank- Relatório sobre o Desenvolvimento Mundial, 1994.
UNESCO: Statistical Yearbook, 1994 apud PNE (1998)[23]

Comparing Brazil to Chile and Uruguay, also Latin American countries, Brazil has the worst condition in all three indicators: illiteracy rates between 10 to 14 years old, secondary education engagement rates and higher education engagement rates. It is worth mentioning that Brazil has one of the worst positions so far as engagement in Secondary Education is concerned.

Some studies [World Bank (1986), World Bank (1988), and Mello (1993)][24]have pointed out that the reason for the disparity in educational engagement between Brazil and other countries is mainly due to the way the money is spent. It has been stressed that the resources are low but above all they are poorly spent: wrong priorities and a variety of problems on how the resources are raised, transferred and

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[23] PNE (1998), for reference see PNE – Plano Nacional de Educação- proposta da sociedade Brasileira (1998). From now on we use only PNE(1998).

[24] The educational system has multiple and unstable sources of funding. The Education Salary, for example, which became the main resource for the expansion of Primary Education, is highly affected by the economic conjuncture as its bases of payment are the total payroll of the companies. The lack of control upon the payment of the Education Salary and the delay of its transfer are also pointed out as distortions to be remedied as they cause financial uncertainty which makes it difficult the planning. There are as well serious problems regarding tax evasion. Furthermore, there are distortions related to the mechanism for transferring resources from the

used. Unfortunately Brazil is internationally known for the corruption in all spheres of its social and political lives. In such a country it is extremely convenient to the State governments to disseminate, through their official documents, the idea that the success of their educational programmes is 'in the educators' hands'[25]. A possible failure will be blamed on the teachers' resistance, lack of commitment, and incompetence.

The consequences of the mentioned problems can be felt on the distribution of enrolment per level of schooling, as displayed in Table V.

Table V

Distribution of total enrolments according to the level of schooling - Brazil - 1972, 1982 and 1992

Level of schooling	1972 (%)	1982 (%)	1992 (%)
Pre-school	3.6	6.32	9.5
Primary Education	**80.9**	**79.9**	**76.0**
Secondary Education	10.14	9.74	10.3
Higher Education	5.37	4.08	4.2
Total number (x 1,000)	12,820	29,509	39,648

Sources: IBGE: Anuários Estatísticos, 1972,1982,1992 apud PNE (1998)

The scenario on the distribution of the different levels shows that the Primary Education has the largest majority of the total enrolments in the country. If, on the one hand, it reflects the priority given to this level of schooling (the attempt to offer widespread access to education) on the other hand it shows how other levels (such as Secondary Education and Higher Education) have received insufficient resources and little attention by the Governments (PNE, 1998). As discussed earlier, the percentage of youngsters that reach the Secondary Education is very low (39%) and it showed no signs of increase in the last decades[26]. Insignificant is also the participation of

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federal government to state and municipalities.

25 Further discussion is in Chapter Four, section 4.5 'Closing Remarks'.

26 The population between 15 and 18 years old (cut-off age for this level of schooling) is

Higher Education on the total of enrolments. Primary Education is the only level that seems to have the access, if not universalised in practice, at least potentially universalised. The high rates of repetition and dropout have been one of the main obstacles for the completion of the Primary Education. And that has been so from the early decades of the century. Studies and researches were conducted trying to find out the reasons why school failure has followed the history of Brazilian Education[27].

What is, then, preventing Brazil from providing a school of good quality for all? Would it be lack of proper funding? Would it be lack of competent teachers due to inadequate teacher education? Would it be unsuitable education policies? Would it be a school culture that disseminates a "Pedagogy of Repetition" among educators? We do not have the intention of fully answering these questions but to show that, at least from the 80's onwards, there was a tendency, observed in the academic debate, to provide arguments that increased the strength of the following 'answer': "if we do not have a good quality school is mainly because the people doing the teaching lack professional competence".

From the next subsection until the end of this chapter, we shall present the most influential debates and controversies in the educational literature that directly or indirectly contributed to increase the visibility and significance of the work of teachers and of the school and its inner mechanisms in relation to explaining educational problems.

2.1.2 Rates of repetition and dropout: data and controversies

2.1.2.1 Official data

Brazilian basic education has been consistently described as a 'national disaster' since its earliest times (Ribeiro, 1992). The existence of high rates of repetition and dropout has been reported for decades and affecting mostly the poorer population

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distributed as follows: 20% was in the secondary school; 30% was in the primary school; 10% was in special courses for older students; 2% in Higher school and the remaining 28% was out of school (PNE., 1998)

[27] A summary of that is presented on the next sub section.

(Barreto, Mello and others, 1979)[28]. That is the phenomenon that is known in the Brazilian educational context as 'the school failure'.

Moisés Kessel (1954) in a classic study about the dropout in Primary Education, shows that in 1938 58 out of 100 pupils that were enrolled on the 1st grade that year did not reach the 2nd grade in 1939. And that only 4% of the pupils managed to complete the four years of Primary Education without repetition.

Thirty years later, data from the 80' s Education Census[29] showed that there was no sign of change in the educational scenario (Souza, M. and Souza, D. et al., 1994). They revealed a dramatic situation that can be illustrated by a simple mathematical calculation.

Taking the total of school age children, the 80's Census shows that 1/3 of them were out of school. From the 2/3 that managed to get into the school system, half of the children enrolled on the 1st grade were not enrolled on the 2nd grade. Thus, adding the first 1/3 plus the second 1/3 we reach a sad picture: 2/3 of all school age children were either facing serious problems of staying in the school system and of getting the minimum elementary education or they were simply out of school.

However, during the 80's the scenario showed some signs of improvement concerning access to school, particularly for the younger generations. Data from the PNAD - National Sampling Survey of Households- (1987) [30] show that:

- 25% of all Brazilian with ten or more years of age completed only the 1st grade.
- 14% of youngsters completed Primary Education in eight years (ideal period), without any repetition, and only 36% will eventually complete Primary Education after having repeated one or more grades.

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[28] Regarding the greater incidence of the rates of repetition and dropout between the subaltern classes, a research carried out in São Paulo city, in the 70's, showed that the rates of repetition reached 43% in poor areas such as Itaquera and Guainazes. While in typical middle class areas such as Pinheiros the repetition rates were not higher than 10%.

[29] Education Census is our translation to English of 'Censo Escolar'.

[30] The PNAD is carried out periodically by the IBGE (*Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*)- Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

• The younger generations stay 8 years in the school system but manage to complete only five grades.

The figures referred to above indicate that the difficulties of the Brazilian Education System are not a recent phenomenon. On the contrary it pervades the history of the Brazilian Education in this century. And that is so despite all the education reforms, education policies, and educational researches that were carried out during the last 70 years (Patto, 1991).

2.1.2.2 Controversial figures

At this point it is opportune to introduce the controversy involving the issues of rates of dropout and repetition, and access to the education system. The controversies are about what is the nature of the main obstacle to the democratisation of the education system. Is it dropout of students? Is it the high rates of repetition? Is it the shortage of places and schools? The correct assessment of the main obstacle is important because from it will derive the correctness of the chosen educational policies to tackle the main problem (s).

As far as this thesis is concerned, the controversies involving the rates of dropout and repetition that emerged with the work of Ribeiro (1992) were part of the process of bringing to focus the teacher and her (his) teaching practice, as will be shown shortly. Therefore, they are a constitutive part of the debates and ideas that increased the visibility of the work of schools and teachers. Ribeiro's work is serious and important to the understanding of the 'broad picture' drawn by the national statistics, led him to claim the existence of a "Pedagogy of Repetition", as we will also discuss shortly. Within that "Pedagogy of Repetition" the teacher occupies a key role as the 'guilty party'.

Ribeiro (1992) argues, using an alternative mathematical model called PROFLUXO[31], that the methodology utilised by the Ministry of Education Statistics

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[31] The PROFLUXO model uses data from the PNAD, a national sampling survey of households, while the official agencies use data from the Educational Census. For details of the proposed model see: Fletcher, P.R. and Ribeiro, S.C. (1989) ' Modeling Education System Performance with Demographic Data: an

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Office leads to errors that distort the analyses of the Brazilian educational reality. He shows that since the 60's many studies have pointed to errors in the official data concerning the relation between repetition and dropout.

Those errors would have led researchers and educational authorities to analyses and policies that do not take into account that the main problem in the education system is the extremely high rates of repetition not of dropout, as the official data suggests[32].

Using the PROFLUXO model, he claims the repetition rates are higher than the official agency says (52.4% against 29.6% to the first grade in 1982) and the dropout rates are lower (2.3% against 25.5% to the first grade in 1982). So, he argues that, differently from the widespread belief, dropout is not the main problem in the first grades. He also found that in 1988 the Brazilian population attended the primary school 8.5 years, in average. That represents enough time for the conclusion of Primary Education by the young population. But they complete only 6 years. Considering that the average age to start the schooling is 7.5 years old and the average period of attendance is 8.5 years the probable age of dropout is around 16 years, independently of the grade reached.

Another conclusion of his work, controversial at that time but largely accepted nowadays, refers to the issue of access itself. He claims that this problem seems to be practically overcome. **If there was no repetition**, the capacity of the education system would permit in 1988, the incorporation of 95% of school age children. Thus, he concludes,

> "This finding leads to the understanding that the notion of child's early dropout from school caused by social or cultural determinants is misleading and that Brazilian families, on the contrary, make an enormous effort to keep their children in school. On the other hand it shows that it is the **low teaching performance** which prevents, through high repetition rates, the universalisation of elementary education in Brazil."(Ribeiro, 1991, p.20-21, our emphasis)[33]

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introduction to the PROFLUXO Model'. Mimeo.

[32] The rates of repetition are such that in 1982, 25% of all enrolment in Brazil at Primary Education is concentrated in the first grade, and in poorer regions of the country the rate reaches almost 50%. The expected percentage would be around 12,5% in each of the eight grades of primary school (Ribeiro, 1991).

His work clearly lays emphasis on the immense **responsibility of schools** (particularly the low teaching performance), and not in children or their families, in obtaining the universalisation of primary education. That idea was significant and gained many adherents from the late 80's as the school system and the school itself were investigated. He argues that most teachers' attitude towards pupils' learning difficulties is based on a "pedagogy of repetition". This concept would refer to the widespread belief that repetition is good for pupils to provide them with the opportunity to learn what they did not, to revisit the contents they did not study properly. Not rarely, his statistical findings gave support to qualitative researches that, from the 80's, were trying to provide evidence for the better understanding of the complex reality of schools and of the multiple causes of the high rates of repetition and dropout among children of the popular classes [34].

Some later studies, such as that of Franco (1995), have argued that the figures such as the incorporation by the education system of 95% of school age children must be viewed with caution. According to Franco, many researchers have denounced the "perverse strategies" that promoted a "superficial and inconsistent democratisation" of school access. They refer specifically to the bad conditions of work and functioning of many schools: overcrowded classes, schools working with up to five daily shifts, lowering of teachers wages, amongst other factors. Franco's main argument seems to be that a better quality of schooling cannot be achieved with the current rate of investment in state education.

It is interesting to observe at this point that, although the emphasis may be placed on pedagogical aspects (Ribeiro) or school infrastructure (Franco), there seems to be a consensus about the idea that the **low quality** of the schooling is the main problem to be solved. Perosa (1997) argues in the same direction:

> *"Known repetition rates, in addition to countless researches that have – particularly from the seventies/eighties – depicted the precarious teaching-learning relations inside school, have led to a true migration of concerns from the question of access to state*

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[33] All quotations of Brazilian authors were translated to English.

[34] Machado, M and Souza, M.P.(1997); Souza, D.T.R and Souza, M.P.R et alii (1994); Perosa (1997) amongst others

school to the issue of the quality of the schooling on offer." (pp. 22)

Therrien (1996) recently carried out an interesting work where she analyses the production (in various spheres) of the negative social representation of the teacher's work in the educational literature. Related to the issue of the (low) quality of education, part of her work was devoted to identify points of overall agreement within the pedagogic discourse on that issue[35]. The first two points of agreements can be summarised in the following statements: a) The educational coverage has been, since the 80's, sufficient to meet the demand. However it is also pointed out that the existence of problems due to the way the increase of places was made. b) Once there are enough places, the challenge now is to improve its quality (pp.86-111). Her work confirms that there is a consensus in the mainstream educational literature concerning the issues of the educational coverage (access to the educational system), and of the need of improving its quality.

Another line identified by Therrien refers to an association between the low quality of education and teachers work (professional qualification). This idea is at the root of the path taken by the educational policies in São Paulo State between 1983-1994.

2.2 The influence of the Theories of Reproduction

The Theories of Reproduction have helped to redirect the analysis of the causes of the education problems, from the pupils to the institution. It is possible to claim that they were the first significant group of ideas that represented an alternative approach to the dominance of the psychological reductionist approaches to the causes of school failure[36].

In the 70's, the influence of the Theories of Reproduction (Althusser,1974; Bourdieu and Passreron,1975, Establet and Baudelot,1971), particularly Althusser's, was very significant to the more critical Brazilian educators[37]. Those theories represented an

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[35] The phrase 'pedagogic discourse' in the work of Therrien refers to the mainstream production of the academic educational literature.

[36] See the full discussion on this approach in the next item.

[37] See Patto (1984) p 32-54

advance for the understanding of the school within a class society, providing the conceptual tools to overcome the liberal discourse of the school-society relation. School, and its problems, could no longer be analysed apart from its socio-economic conditionings. Schools, as well as other social institutions are then viewed as the locus where cultural domination takes place, understanding such domination as the cultural counterpart of the economic exploitation inherent to a capitalist society. The concept of "reproduction" was privileged as an explanatory concept in education. A critical stance was being built among the Brazilian academic community, and that was fundamental to substantially changing the nature of the explanation of schooling and its serious and chronic problems. Those critical approaches were particularly welcome to many within the Brazilian context as they could be, along with Marxism, precious tools to denounce the social and economic inequalities increased during the military dictatorship. The adoption of the Theories of Reproduction was particularly crucial to the Educational Psychology and psychologists, inaugurating a revolution by the re-definition, for some, of its own object of study. As Patto says:

> *"By bringing to light the ideological, taming, and excluding role of School, these authors called our attention to the possible contribution of Psychology to the preservation of the blatantly unjust social order then existing; they also changed the way in which we conceived the learning difficulties of a large fraction of children from popular classes: the focus definitely shifted from the pupil to the institution."*[38] *(emphasis in the original)*

The initial enthusiasm with this then new, critical way of understanding the relation School-Society gave way to a wave of pessimism among academics with respect to the role of schools for the popular classes. In those theories schools are viewed merely as agencies of social and cultural reproduction, legitimating capitalist rationality, sustaining dominant social practices, and therefore having no role to play in the process of social change (Althusser, 1974). The limitations of the Theories of Reproduction began to be apparent. The emphasis on the reproductivist role (particularly in Althusser's work) played by the school as part of the I.S.A. (Ideological State Apparatus) overlooks their potential for change because it downplays human agency and the power of resistance by groups such as teachers and

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[38] In Machado and Souza,(eds) (1997), preface.

students (Giroux, 1988). The historical dimension and dialectical character is lost (Saviani, 1991). Those reproduction theories, as they were formulated, could not provide useful conceptual tools to explore the conflicts, contradictions and resistance that take place in school education. Education and schools are also places of contestation and resistance not only of reproduction[39]. The contribution of some ethnographic works, such as Sharp and Green (1975), Paul Willis (1977), Jean Anyon (1981), Robert Connel (1982) among others cannot be neglected as they shed light not only concerning the concept of reproduction itself but also on its contrary, the counter-reproduction (or resistance)[40].

It is interesting noting that although the Theories of Reproduction enabled the Brazilian educators to make a critique of the material conditions of schooling and to denounce the social and economic inequalities of the Brazilian society under the military government, they were sterile in helping to forge practical interventions. **It was the *"argument of incompetence'*," in the version that appears in the educational polices that did that,** as will be shown in Chapter Four. For the moment it is important to point out that it provides the policy makers with academic justification to identify the 'guilty party' for the situation in which the state education is found.

In the early 80's many academics on the field of Education drew from Gramsci's and Snyders' ideas to give support to a line of analysis whose purpose was to discuss the social function of the school and its potential for social transformation. The concept of the school as an institution of the civil society was primarily searched for in Gramsci, and to understand it the idea of counterculture was employed. From Snyders (1977) was borrowed the primary importance of the syllabuses for the improvement of pupil's education, and therefore for the progress of the school from a social perspective. The work of Saviani and Mello illustrate well this usage of Gramsci's and Snyders' ideas [41]. The wish to rescue the value of the school within a larger project of building a fairer and democratic society was certainly at the centre

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[39] See, Apple, M.(1981), Snyders (1977), Giroux (1983, 1988).

[40] Rockwell (1986).

[41] See Mello (1982), Saviani (1980), Nosella (1983) amongst others.

of the work of a São Paulo's group of educators, led by Dermeval Saviani, a well-known senior lecture at the Catholic University of São Paulo. That group became very influential not only in São Paulo but nation-wide. As Garcia[42] puts it:

> *Brazilian educational thought was characterised in the eighties by the hegemony of a group of São Paulo educators led by Dermeval Saviani. At least three generations of educators were nurtured by a certain reading of Gramsci, such reading influencing everything that was said and written at that time. (pp. 127)*

It should perhaps be made explicit here that the influence of the group referred to by Garcia included the influence on the sphere of education policies. At least one of its members became directly linked to the level of education policies. Guiomar Namo de Mello was the co-ordinator of the group that prepared the proposal for education of the political party that won the 1982 Governor election. Later, she was in charge of the Municipal Secretariat of Education[43], and since then Mello occupied leading positions on the field of education being also elected a "deputada federal" (the Brazilian equivalent to a British Member of the Parliament)[44].

Saviani's, grounding in Gramsci defends the idea that schools can and do play a very important role in achieving a more democratic society, being in that sense more appealing to the educational sectors interested in finding alternatives to the reproduction theories. The school is the privileged place for the popular sectors to have access to what they have been systematically denied: the knowledge produced by humankind. Through such knowledge the popular classes would go beyond common sense and reach a higher level of understanding of the reality: the so-called "philosophical consciousness" (Saviani, 1980).

Teachers have then an important role in helping their students to get access to the universal knowledge. The connection with the concept of teachers' competence is then made. To better teach their students, teachers would have to become **more competent**. From this idea to be achieved through better training, to that of the

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[42] Garcia, R. L.(1996)

[43] From: 'Notes about the Author' in Mello (1988), 9th reprint

[44] We mentioned those data so that the reader unfamiliar with Brazilian political and educational

teachers' incompetence in teaching the "real" pupils was just a short step. The academic discourse that followed stressed the need of teachers being **technically more competent.** However, the belief in the teachers' **incompetence** was also present in the educational literature, sometimes clearly, other times between lines. The academic work is influential outside the university context. Particularly when its arguments may be of practical and political use within the sphere of public policies. Most of the proposals of TPD that were carried out (see Chapter Three, subsections 3.1.1 and 3.2), particularly those that were part of the educational policies (see Chapter Four), were inspired by the idea that because of their incompetence teachers had to attend to courses, conferences, talks and similar activities. More than a place and moment to develop themselves as professionals, to continue with their studies, to have the opportunity to meet their peers and to reflect upon their practice, the activities of TPD aimed to transmit to teachers 'new theories' and modern methods of teaching so that they would become *more competent.*

Returning to the analysis of the work of Saviani and his group, Garcia considers that the intention of Saviani's group was to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the teacher's practice[45]. Recently some authors argue that to a certain extent that happened. (Garcia, 1996; Arroyo, 1996[46])

> *"Among Brazilian educators an effervescent curiosity established itself driving them to read, discuss, study, improve themselves, and to conquer what became the Holy Grail − technical competence − without which, in the hegemonic conception, there was no possibility of achieving a competent pedagogical practice."*
> *(Garcia, pp. 128)*

That conception of the relation school–society, produced at the academic level reaches the school and the schoolteacher, particularly the idea of teacher

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scenarios can have a better idea of the influence of Mello's work and ideas.

[45] Garcia, page 128

[46] Arroyo (1996) develops a very interesting discussion concerning the level of teachers professional qualification. He makes a very provocative statement: "I dare to say that we have accumulated professional qualification, at least at medium-size and big size cities, sufficient to build an education system that can provide a fair basic education to Brazilian citizens. His discussion follows an uncommon, but interesting path. Questions such as "what school structures are we keeping that resist to all policies that aim at improving the quality of school, giving the school, its pedagogical processes, and its professionals a bad reputation?" (p. 48).

incompetence (Garcia, 1996). In Brazil, there was no substantial concern for defining precisely the meaning of 'competence' and its opposite, the concept of 'incompetence'. Apart from the work of Mello (1988) and the criticism initially addressed to her work regarding her definition of the terms *technical competence* and *political commitment* (Nosella, 1983; Lenhard, 1983, and Gadotti, 1983)[47] the concept of 'competence' has been used in both academic literature and in schools in a somewhat loose and possibly careless way. In the educational literature on TPD, as it is discussed in the next chapter[48], some of the works that make use of the concept of competence ground their approach on Mello's definition.

The debate engendered by that group, particularly the discussion about the idea of "technical competence" is thoroughly discussed in a coming section. The trends followed influenced the level of policy making, as well as the intermediate and local levels of the school system. The tendency to focus the attention on the teacher was gaining strength.

2.3 - Explanations of the causes of the school failure

This sub-section mainly presents the explanations of the causes of the school failure that were proposed in the educational literature during the last decades[49]. The discussion presented in items 2.3.2 – *The primacy of the psychosocial approaches*, and 2.3.3 – *Studies on the everyday life of schools* is based on the work of Patto[50], considered as a landmark in the school failure's research[51]. Her work resulted from a long and comprehensive research project. By bringing here the different explanations

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[47] See item 2.4 the debate on competence

[48] Chapter Three, item 3.2 "The Revista Brasileira of Estudos Pedagógicos – RBEP – (Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies).

[49] For the complete discussion see Patto, op cit pp 110-160.

[50] Dr Maria Helena Souza Patto is a full Professor at the Institute of Psychology – University of São Paulo. She worked the greater part of her professional carrier researching and teaching on Educational Psychology, particularly on the phenomenon of the school failure among the popular classes children. The excellence of her work is recognised nation-wide. Her last major work 'A produção do Fracasso escolar: histórias de submissão e rebeldia', 1991 (The Production of the school failure: histories of submission and dissent) was published by a commercial House of Publishing, what collaborated to the dissemination of her findings. For that work, she received a prize for 'the most relevant work in the field' given by the Teachers Association of São Paulo State (APEOESP). It has been included on the list of recommended bibliography of official public exams for teachers and other professionals of education in São Paulo State for many years. We studied with her and also worked later as her assistant on the mentioned research on the causes of the school failure.

[51] Patto, M.H. S (2000) Produção do fracasso escolar: historias de submissão e rebeldia. São Paulo,

given during the previous decades we intend to point out the change in trend that started to emerge during the 70's and became more clear from the mid 80's and its relations to the 'argument of incompetence'.

We argue that there was a significant shift in the position adopted by some of the leading Institutes of Research and Teaching[52] on the causes of school failure: from the dominance of the psychological approaches to the introduction of sociological and psychosocial approaches. In Patto's words:

> "(...) the year of 1977 is a milestone in this very important change of focus after so many years trying to locate the roots of learning difficulties in the psychosocial features of the pupil. At that time, a group of researchers from the Carlos Chagas Foundation carried out a number of projects devoted to the investigation of the contribution of the school system to the low achievement of children from poorer social strata. Their results (published in 1981) inspired a new batch of projects devoted to a more detailed research of social selectivity inner-school mechanisms, emphasising the study of functional and structural aspects of the school as well as its internal dynamics (FCC 1984)". (Patto, 1990: 118).

We understand that, from that time onwards, the school and the teachers work gained more visibility, which meant a change of object namely, from the children and their families to the school and its agents. In this aspect, the attention of part of the academy was to a certain extent diverted. And more than that, the theoretical background of the Theories of Reproduction (and its critics) founded a critical standpoint about schools. The naïve approaches, such as the psychological ones, where questioned. That was the time of denouncing. The rupture from the liberal conceptions of the role of schools in society (by the reaffirmation of their role in the re-production of the social inequalities) was present in many research projects. It soon become clear that neither the liberal approaches nor the reproductivist's were adequate to fully understand and to analyse the relation between schools and society. They failed to help the comprehension, dialect by its nature, of the double action of

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Casa do Psicólogo. First edited (1990, and four reprints) by TA Queiróz.

[52] We refer to the well-known and influential universities such as University of São Paulo, University of Campinas, Catholic University of São Paulo, and also the Department of Educational Research of the Carlos Chagas Foundation.

reproduction and transformation produced inside and by the schools[53]. Teachers and all those who work and spend a great deal of their lives inside schools produce, reproduce, mediate and transform economic, political, and cultural power (Apple, 1985).

For us it is important to point out that the debate concerning the schools and their relations with the society in general, and the identification and the discussion of the school's inner mechanisms of production of school failure in particular, brought the schools and teachers into the limelight, as we shall argue shortly in item 2.3.2 – *Studies on the everyday life of schools.*

2.3.1 From the academia to the schools: losing substance.

The findings and conclusions of studies and educational research projects reach beyond the academic circles. We believe that it is desirable that they do so as, with Marx in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, we agree that it is important to transform the world; to interpret it is too limited.

However, the results of the academic work do not reach other levels of social life exactly as their authors proposed them, but only to a greater or lesser extent, and in various degrees of 'accuracy'. We are especially interested in how those results reach the various levels of the education system, namely central, intermediate and local levels[54], and in how this reflects upon social policies in general and Educational policies in particular. People appropriate the academic discourse in different degrees of 'accuracy', even within the very academic environment. When we talk about the appropriation made by policy makers and education agents at all levels of the education system the divergence can be even wider. That is so, for example, because it is a common belief that the academic discourse has to be simplified (shortened, modified and with clear links with the practice) in order to be made understandable

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[53] Giroux (1983), Savianni (1982), Gadotti (1983).

[54] We will not discuss here the appropriation made by the media for it is out of the scope of our work but it has an important role in choosing between all 'available' studies, those that will be passed on TV, newspapers and etc.

by the 'ordinary' teacher[55]. Kramer, 1989, provides elements to conclude that the distortions and simplifications observed are the result (not exclusively, of course) of the cascade method commonly used within the actions of TPD, as described below.

First the central levels of the State Secretariat of Education (SSE) conceive, plan and prepare pedagogical materials and proposals. Following that, the proposals and materials are transmitted within the central level to the teams in charge of 'training', that being the first division between conception and execution. The team (or teams) transmits the proposals and knowledge to the intermediate levels of the SSE. At that level (intermediate), Kramer (1989) believes that even the well-defined and democratic proposals are transformed to 'prescriptions'. Issues for discussions become 'norms', and theories become 'fragmented discourses'. That happens because normally professionals working at that level do not possess the knowledge that resides behind the preparation of the proposal, neither do they have the pedagogical practice necessary to contextualise and criticise it. The intermediate levels have then the task of transferring what was made of the proposals to the local levels (usually individual teachers and other specialists of schools). That implies yet another level of mediation. Distortions and simplifications occur. Kramer argues that the cascade method (and we add, under the specific conditions it occurs in Brazil) propitiates the fragmentation between conception and execution, and that is further aggravated by the power conflicts that exit between levels and within levels. We agree with her.

Thus, thanks to the cascade method, as it has been used in São Paulo State, a particular kind of belief gained strength within the education scenario. It is the one that identifies, in a simplified manner, the problems with teacher education and the school failure; the teaching practice and the (low) quality of education; the teacher practice and the pupils learning difficulties. In a phrase, the 'argument of teachers incompetence' was being built. We shall provide more details of it while presenting the next items.

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[55] 'ordinary', or ' common' teacher is the way the teachers are referred to by the intermediate and

2.3.2 The primacy of the psychosocial approaches

The consideration of the inner aspects of schooling in the production of the school failure is a phenomenon more or less recent and still not fully understood by educators in general. The dominance of the psychosocial reductionist approaches[56] was very strong until the early 80's. So, in this sub-item (and in the following one) we briefly present the explanations and how they evolve over time and, more importantly to this thesis, how the changes, from the exogenous to the inner aspects of schooling, brought the schools and the teachers to the centre of attention, thereby constituting an important element to increase the visibility of their work.

There are persons that have the merit of systematising the thinking of their time. A paper published by Ofélia Boisson Cardoso, in 1949, illustrates the thinking of the 40's and 50's displaying then a *contradiction* that is noticed years later. For that reason, we will spend a few lines discussing it.

Cardoso, while analysing the causes behind the 'state of calamity' that primary education was in, identified four aspects of the problem, namely, pedagogical, social, medical, and psychological.

On the **Pedagogical aspect**: The teacher is the person mainly responsible. And this responsibility is due to the exercise of the profession without vocation and the required professional competence resulting then in an inefficient and uninspiring teaching. She criticises the schools for their low quality of teaching. Thus the teacher is unable to make the pupils become interested in learning. As a consequence the children display either undisciplined behaviour or apathy. Under the item **Social aspects** Cardoso argues about the bad influence of the pupil's family and of the neighbourhood. They would have attitudes, moral values and behaviours rejected by the school. In this sense, such negative influence results in the loss of interest in school by the children. Under the items **Medical and Psychological aspects**, the bad

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central levels of SSE, and even by many University teachers.

[56] Such as the "Gift Theory" (See Soares, 1986), and the "Cultural Deprivation Theories" (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1968)

conditions of the children's life are seen as causing all sorts of illnesses, physical and emotional.

An incoherence that the author introduces in her line of reasoning can be noticed. It leads to an ambiguity that continues to be present even today[57]. Explaining it: on the *pedagogical aspects*, she criticises the work developed at schools and denounces the unsuitability of the teaching and its low quality. The teachers are charged with working without 'vocation' and adequate professional education. In short: *'the school is inadequate and boring'* (A). She says:

> *"Inadequate processes are the cause of a good deal of the apathy*
> *and indifference observed in pupils" (Cardoso, op cit, pp 81).*

On the other side, when discussing the *social aspects*, the children and their families are blamed for the difficulties they face at school. They are described as 'not interested in the school' due to a cultural inferiority of the group they belong to. The prejudice against the members of the working classes is flagrant in the next quotation:

> *"(...) what the school tries to build, the families destroy, in a*
> *moment reduce to dust. (...) their live and flagrant examples*
> *infiltrate children's flesh and blood, dictating amoral ways of*
> *reaction and anti-social behaviour. Being brought up under such*
> *negative influence the children lose interest in school work, give*
> *little value to it and do not believe its efficacy."(Cardoso, pp. 82)*

In short: 'pupils are not interested in school'. There is a clear problem of logic in her argument. How could one expect ANY children (not only from the working classes) be interested in a school that she has just described as inadequate, and with low quality staff, therefore boring? To offer a better school is a precondition to make judgements about the interest or lack of interest by the clientele. It reveals also a simplistic perspective, because reductionist, way of analysing children's attitudes and behaviours at school: detached from the context where they appear, the school and classroom. Because the child's behaviour and attitude resulted **only** from previous

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[57] Patto, op cit, 115.

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(meaning family) influences, having nothing to do with the way schools and their agents deal with them.

As we said earlier, Cardoso represents a manner of explaining the causes of learning difficulties that was dominant at that time (40's and 50's). It also imprinted a fragmented way of conceiving the causes of the school failure, because detached from the broader context, that we summarise along the following lines:

A) 'The school is inadequate and boring'

B) 'The pupils have no interest in schools'

The analysis carried out by Patto revealed that a division had arisen in the educational thinking[58]. Following the line "A", the philosophers of education and some pedagogues developed studies and researches on the structural and functional aspects of the education system aiming to improve its quality. Following the line "B", psychologists and pedagogues put their energies to try to assess the biosocial and psychological features of the clientele. In the beginning of the 60's, however, line "B" was dominant, initiating a long period when the causes of the school failure were mainly searched for in the pupils and their families. The victims were blamed for their failure. This was part of the early 70's Deprivation Theories (DP), imported from the USA, were spread and their influence was massive. In Brazil, they assumed two main versions that in a few words are[59]:

1) Version of the Deficit

This first version argues that the socio-economic and cultural environment of the lower classes do not provide the required stimulation to the adequate cognitive, physical and psychological development of their children. Therefore, the members of those social classes have all sorts of deficiencies and deficits. That is then the cause of the learning difficulties and adaptation to the school.

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[58] Op cit, 116.

[59] Cole &Bruner (1972) proposed the following terminology, widely accepted: Theories of Deficit

2) Version of the Difference

The second version argues that the American society is multicultural but with dominance of the values, norms and attitudes of the middle-classes. This produces conflicts, as the members of the minority groups do not share the same culture. Those groups have a *different culture* which is disregarded by the main social institutions, school included. So, they are psycho-socially deprived.

Disregarding the differences between the two versions, they agree on their proposals to deal with the problems: to establish 'programmes of compensatory education', aiming to supply the children, at pre school level, with the 'missing' cultural elements.

Undoubtedly, critical comments have to be made. We divide the critiques to the Deprivation Theories in two main blocks. The first concerns basically the theoretical-methodological approaches underlying them. The second includes results of latter works that questioned the conclusions of the DT, particularly in what concerns the supposed deficiencies of the Brazilian school clientele. The critiques will be addressed in the next sub-item.

2.3.2.1 Questioning the thesis of the child's deficiency

There are many works that criticised the approaches of the Deprivation Theories, which are taken here as emblematic of the line of argument that most contributed to what we call 'the psychological reductionism', so we shall not extend our discussion for too long.

There are some common criticisms presented by those that disagree with the arguments of the Deprivation Theories. First, it is pointed out that the issues involving the pupils' (low) achievement should not be analysed *per se*, apart from the school context where they appear and isolated from its social and economic conditionings. Second, the conception of 'culture' used by the DT is highly

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and Theories of Difference, according to De Lemos, 1985.

questionable, as it   implies the misuse of comparisons between cultures. For example: the argument that some 'cultures' do not provide their members with the necessary tools to succeed at school.

With respect to the theoretical-methodological approaches underlying the researches that produced the Deprivation Theories they were directly or indirectly questioned and criticised by Houston, 1970, in what concerns the limitations of the researches on the evaluation of language when the subjects are observed in a single and artificial setting. Althusser (1974), Bourdieu (1974); Bordieu and Passeron (1975) and Freitag (1978) provided the conceptual tools to disclose the functionalist conception of the relation school-society that are backing the Deprivation Theories, as they were proposed in the USA. Stubbs and Delamont, (1976), Delamont and Hamilton (1976), Rockwell (1987), and Patto (1982) present alternative proposals of observations in the classrooms based on techniques from the anthropology that made evident the limits of researches that are exclusively based on psychometric assessments, surveys or any other type of standardised observation. Hammersly and Atkinson (1983) in the UK, Erickson (1986) in the United States, and Ezpeleta and Rockwell (1986) in Latin America are some of the representatives of the qualitative tradition that has been developed in England since the 60's and in the USA from the 70's (ethnography, case studies, symbolic interactionism, participant observation, phenomenological and interpretative). Despite the differences among these approaches, all of them attempted and indeed broke with the positivist models of research dominant at that time (based on the natural sciences). Some authors claimed the need to adopt important changes in the way we had been analysing schools and their processes as the theoretical-methodological approaches available have proved to be insufficient to understand the complex and multifaceted nature of the school reality.

As to the conclusions of the Deprivation Theories, many Brazilian researchers, belonging to various fields of knowledge, directly questioned some myths and stereotypes about the life of low-income classes. During the 70's and 80's the idea that the pupils of the lower classes failed because of the damaging consequences of their life conditions and ('negative') cultural features of their groups was well accepted and shared by members of the academy (Pinheiro, 1971; Poppovic, 1972;

Ramozzi- Chiarotino, 1982; Montoya, 1983, to mention some); and by the school agents alike.

The belief was spread, for instance, that the pupils presented learning difficulties due to physical and mental problems, such as under-nourishment, hyperactivity, mild brain dysfunction, epilepsy, and other mental deficiencies and mental illnesses. This idea was so convincing, and legitimised by questionable psychological tests and a very precarious public health system, that it took a good deal of effort and dedication of many, through the development of several studies and researches, and also by the close contact with those pupils and families, to build a knowledge to counteract those myths, and to help us to know who are the actual 'poor pupils' we have in the Brazilian schools benches.

Poppovic [60](1972) was, according to Patto, one of the first researchers to notice the limits of Deprivation Theories and to try to propose an alternative explanation for the causes of the school failure. She pointed to the prejudices and problems with the adoption of concepts (or expressions) such as 'needy', 'deprived', 'and' 'deficient', arguing that these concepts bring with them discriminatory ideas about the 'different' (the 'different' is the person who does not have something that *we* have), and, moreover, they do not disclose the **process** that is victimising those groups. Therefore, she proposes another concept: the 'culturally marginalized'. In her words:

> *"It seems to me that the more adequate expression, to indicate the conditions that result from the deprivation of the same opportunities of development that the dominant strata of population consider ideal, is 'culturally marginalized'. It indicates a process that is being suffered and not a degrading and static condition (as the other three expressions considered) (p.245)".*

However, Poppovic ends by falling into the traps of the same theory she was trying to overcome as she describes, using the framework of the functionalist North-American psychology, the environment, the culture, the cognitive models, and the relationships established between the members of the 'culturally marginalized' groups. Her argument becomes then not much different from the second version of

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[60] Senior Lecturer at PUC –SP and researcher of the same Educational Research Department (DPE) mentioned on the beginning of the item 2.3.

the DT. It holds, however, the merit of proposing an alternative explanation for the causes of the school failure, by trying to articulate the two previous affirmations (letters A and B).

A→ the school is inadequate and boring (the 'guilty party' is the school)

B→ the pupil is not interested in school (the 'guilty party' is the child and the family)

New affirmation:

C→ The school is inadequate for the marginalized children.

From her arguments we understand that the Brazilian schools would be adequate for the children from the middle classes but not for the children from the 'deprived' or 'marginalized' families. The school failure would be caused, then, by the inadequacy of the teacher to deal with those kinds of children. This alternative explanation became very influential to the ensuing educational programmes for the children from the popular classes, as noted by Paro et al. (1987) when referring to proposals for full-time schools made by the newly elected state government in the early 80's.

The 80's was the decade when the Deprivation Theories and the myths that followed them were more strongly criticised. A convincing argument in a country like Brazil that has a high percentage of mortality for under fives (61/1000)[61] is the one that relates school performance and under-nourishment [62]. Souza et al. (1989) mention a research carried out by Collares and Moyses (1982) on the relation between the low school achievement and nutrition. In a school where the repetition rates were as high as 70% on the first grade they observed that only 12% of the pupils had some kind of physical problem that could be related to the learning difficulties. Collares (1989), a paediatrician, also indicates that there are different levels of under-nourishment and that only the higher levels can cause handicaps. It is important to make our position clear so that there is no misunderstanding: in Brazil we do have children severely affected by the consequences of the social inequalities. As we said we still have

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[61] According to the World Bank, "Relatório sobre o desenvolvimento mundial- 1994", apud Plano Nacional de Educação (PNE) - 1998.

[62] Social inequality is another feature of the Brazilian socio-economic structure that is directly related to the infant mortality. Brazil has one of the most unequal distributions of national income in the world (World Bank, 1994 apud PNE, 1998). **The richer 20% of the population earn 32 times more than the poorer 20%.**
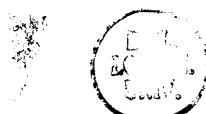
shameful rates of infant mortality. In fact, the children most severely affected by malnutrition **do not even reach** the school age. Those that manage to reach their seventh birthday[63] are somehow 'survivors'.

The experience of a group of psychologists (Souza, 1989, pp 197) from the Centre of School Psychology[64] with groups of pupils with 'learning and behaviour problems' confirms that most of the children they had contact with do not present any handicap:

> *We have verified that children attending the school do have an erratic nutritional pattern, either in the quantity or in the quality of food available to them. (...) That is, malnutrition is real. However, the malnutrition has not been observed to compromise children's competence for learning. They have learned to speak, play, and perform a number of tasks that involve the same cognitive abilities necessary for school learning.*

The same position was adopted by an influential Piagetian group from the Federal University of Pernambuco. Carraher et al. (1982) in a paper with the meaningful title of "Ten in life; zero at school: the cultural contexts in the learning of mathematics" describe the findings of a research with street children in Recife. They found that after having failed in traditional Piagetian tests, the same children demonstrated to have the expected cognitive abilities for their age group if the 'test' was presented as a concrete activity involving mathematical operations of buying and selling goods. Thus, for Carraher and her group, the causes of the frequent failure of those children at school are not to be found in their incapacity or delay in the cognitive development (resulted from the socio-economic context they live in). They are related to the school that does not offer proper opportunities of real learning and does not know the real capacities of its pupils. A series of papers were published in a well-known journal, called "Cadernos de Pesquisa", on the issue of the position of the 'Brazilian Piagetians': do they agree or not on their evaluation of the cognitive development of children from the poorer strata of the population? (Patto, 1984; Freitag, 1985, Caglari, 1985, Moro, 1986; Carraher et al. 1986).

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[63] The age that children are expected to start to attend school, as pre-school is not yet assured to all.

[64] The Centre of School Psychology is based at the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo. Among other activities, the Centre provides assistance to state schools by carrying out discussion groups with teachers, and by conducting psychological services to groups of children with 'learning and behaviour problems'.

When the influence of the Deprivation Theories decreased, and with it the idea that the causes of the school failure were on the school clientele, a space was left unoccupied and a question to be 'answered': "who is **the** guilty party?"

The changes in the explanation of school failure – from the primacy of the psychosocial approaches to the consideration of school's inner factors, such as the school system and school's practices and processes – contributed to bring into light the teaching practice and the teachers' conceptions. With a narrow reading of the critiques, that change was understood, particularly by school agents, as moving from 'blaming' the pupils and their families (by the Deprivation Theories) to 'blaming' the teachers (and secondarily the education system). That follows a simplistic logic that restricts the analysis of a complex phenomenon – such as school failure – to a single aspect (teaching practice).

2.3.2.2 Studies on the school every day life

From the mid 80's onwards it was noted, not only in Brazil, but also in other countries in Latin America, that existed a discontentment among the most critical educational researchers concerning the way the school was being studied and described by educational literature. Some argue the importance of rethinking the theoretical-methodological approaches adopted by educational researches[65]. Following a similar movement observed in the United Kingdom and United States of America at least a decade earlier[66], a common trend was to substantially change the way we 'talk about schools'. Some advocate that we have to stop using 'false truths' and generic explanations about schools, and about pupils and their families (Patto, 1990). Others propose that we have to rescue the school's 'non documented history', for that is the history that makes the life at school (Ezpeleta and Rockwell, 1986). They have in common the importance attached to 'looking inside schools', getting to

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[65] Patto (1990), Azanha (1990) in Brazil; Rockwell, E. (1987) and Ezpeleta, J. and Rockwell, E. (1986) in Mexico, Assaél Jenny (1987) and Edwards, V. (1990), in Chile.

[66] We refer to the approaches denominated as 'ethnographic', 'qualitative' or 'participant research, represented by the works of Stubbs and Delamond (1976), Sharp and Green (1975), Hammersly and Atkison (1983), Erickson (1973, 1986), Woods (1979), Pollard (1982), amongst others.

know their agents with the purpose of reaching and knowing a level of reality that has been neglected.

Azanha (1991), a well-known Brazilian academic, dedicated to the field of the Philosophy of Education, criticised the studies developed by the Brazilian Education arguing that

> " (...) the authors operate with categories that are too abstract to allow reliable descriptions of the concrete school practices. The problem with those studies is that the authors, by limiting themselves to generalities, are not authorised to propose the qualifications and classifications they do of an unknown practice, because that practice is inaccessible from the (theoretical) positions they hold." (pp.41).

Azanha also calls the attention of the Brazilian academics to a dimension of the school that has been virtually absent from the academic concerns, and that can lead us to an interesting insight into the education. It is the dimension of the school everyday life. Providing an example, Azanha uses school failure itself to illustrate his position.

> "The computers correlate data about the repetition with a multitude of factors (biological, psychological, social and economical) and then they find out what everyone already knows. But, what about the everyday of the education practice that culminated in those results? We know nothing!"(pp.43)

At the same time that Azanha was presenting his work, Patto revealed some of the education practices related to the production of the school failure. Patto defended the same position regarding our ignorance about the school everyday life. She developed a long and detailed research on the causes of the school failure. That research, developed during two and a half years of fieldwork, relied on several sources of information, such as: observations in the classrooms and other school environments; formal and informal interviews with head-teacher, teachers, parents, locals and representatives of the local neighbourhood association; and a case study with four pupils considered, by the school agents as 'the most difficult children' of the worst group.

Patto, during more than 450 pages of a book[67] – which was described as being 'destined to generate a great impact on the scientific-academic community'[68] - presents a detailed account of processes and practices developed in the everyday life of a state school located on the outskirts of São Paulo City. In its first part, she traces the origins of the scientific conceptions that form and conform the ethnic and class prejudices and stereotypes that permeate the beliefs (in the social life and even in the scientific discourse) about the social, cultural, and even moral inferiority of the members of the popular classes. The history of the explanations of the school failure is then recovered by the analysis of the studies and researches published since the early decades of the century. In the second part, the analyses of the fieldwork are presented. From her work, we learned that there are some school practices and processes (observed at the school and on the education system) that can be, on their own, responsible for a great part of the existent school problems (such as repetition, dropout, and behavioural, to mention the most visible ones). Some of them are: the practice of streaming; the practice of *remanejamento*[69] (that is to move the pupils from one group to another – once or even more times – during the academic year), performed without previous notice to the pupil or the family; the disregard behind the common habit of reprehending a child in public, or making 'comments' to other adults about the child or her family in her presence; the practice of forcing the pupils to do meaningless and tedious activities in learning support groups. That set of school practices and processes 'have as a common denominator the disregard for the children as beings endowed with feelings and wishes, that is, treating them as a 'thing'.'(p. 254).

The author refers also to some other school practices that are related with the learning problems observed at school:

a) The commitment of the teachers with 'the school statistics' not with the pupils. The schools are forced to reduce the rates of repetition at 'any costs', establishing

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[67] The reason for citing the number of pages of Patto's work is to give the reader the idea of the size of her book which means that *probably* (and our experience confirms that) most of the teachers and teachers educators had read only part of it, not the whole book.

[68] Gomes, J. V. Preface to the second edition, 2000.

[69] As there is not a similar concept in the UK schools we opted to keep the word in Portuguese explaining its meaning to the reader.

not only a real dispute among both teachers and schools, but also generating a climate favourable to the 'game of pretending'[70].

b) Perverse mechanisms of allocating teachers to classes. The criteria allow tenured and more experienced teachers to choose first. Therefore, the tendency is to choose the 'easiest' or the 'less time-consuming' groups (which means to avoid the literacy classes), and the better shifts[71], so the most inexperienced teachers end up with the most difficult groups of students. The logic is not to 'waste' good teachers with 'bad' pupils...

c) Negative expectations of the pupils' performance due to prejudices and negative stereotypes against the popular classes.

d) Bureaucratic mechanisms of transferring tenured teachers between schools along the year making it usual for a group to have more than a teacher of the same discipline during the year, or even to be without any teacher for months.

After presenting the findings and fully discussing them, Patto develops, in a last chapter, some important consideration on education policy and the production of the school failure. For the purpose of our work we call attention to two of them.

First, the disclosure of the school mechanisms directly related to the learning difficulties make imperative a serious revision of the explanations of school failure based on the Deprivation Theories.

Patto's long experience with the school and its agents suggests that the idea that the state school teacher teaches her pupils following models that would be suitable to an 'ideal pupil' is not confirmed by reality. The inadequacy of the school is mainly due to its bad quality, to the school agents' supposition that the poorer students do not have the cognitive capacities that frequently they actually do, and to their negative expectations that their pupils will not learn (pp. 403).

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[70] Teachers pretend that they teach while students pretend that they learn...

[71] In Brazil many schools work in two or three day shifts and one night shift. Most teachers try to work in a shift that presents the least conflict with their domestic lives. So, the intermediate shift (from 11:30am to 15:00pm) is frequently avoided.

Second, the failure of the school is an inevitable result of a school system that produces obstacles to the consecution of its education objectives.

Based on the sociology of everyday life, proposed by Agnes Heller, Patto reaffirms that the school reproduces the conditions observed in the society at large: the segmentation and bureaucratisation of the pedagogical work. Those features of the primary education engender the conditions that facilitate the teacher's adhesion to particularities, to the development of attitudes and practices motivated, above all, by particular interests, not the children's. That approach is different from the Reproductivist Theories discussed and criticised in section 2.2. In her study, school and its agents, namely teachers and students (and, to a certain extent, parents) are not viewed as simple puppets of the broader system. The analysis of the classroom practices and of the case studies with four pupils - considered by the school agents as 'the most difficult children of the most problematic class' - revealed insubordination to the school rules (veiled, sometimes), that was understood as a sign of resistance against authoritarian and meaningless school practices. The title she gave to her work: *"The production of the school failure: histories of submission and dissent"* is suggestive of the difference of her approach.

The insubordination of teachers and pupils, however, does not necessarily work on their own behalf. The insubordination of the pupils can be interpreted by the school agents as undisciplined behaviour or 'immaturity'. The insubordination of a teacher can be interpreted by the school team as a sign of lack of commitment, and professional incompetence.

The reading of her work may bring an uneasy feeling of pessimism, of lack of alternatives for those wishing to change the State Education for the better. Patto's work did not aim to offer to the academic community any practical alternative but a comprehensive critical review of the explanations of the school failure. That she fully accomplished, and her work becomes a fundamental point of reference. She does indicate, however, a way forward making use of the work with teachers, in small groups, with a qualified professional, capable of a kind of listening that helps them to overcome their adhesion to particularities and to foster the development of attitudes and practices motivated on the children's behalf.

It is important then, to make explicit that Patto's suggestion does not follow the simplistic logic **of blaming individual teachers**, claiming their incompetence. On the contrary, she warns the reader of the risks of doing that. We took seriously her advice, reproduced below, by paying attention and questioning the common idea in both educational literature and educational policies about the teacher's incompetence.

> *"It is a mistake of serious repercussions to try to argue that the cause for the inefficiency of school is the profile of the educator, a profile drawn from moralistic considerations, all too common among technocrats, that educators 'are incompetent', and 'do not care at all'. The testimonies of the educators have helped to show that their reactions find their reasons in the logic of the system that induces them to use legislation in their own benefit, thereby constituting real 'survival strategies' in adverse work conditions."*
> *(pp. 407)*

Returning to the explanations given for school failure (letters A, B, and C, on subsection 2.3.2), the studies on school everyday life proposed another one that can be summarised as follows:

The education system, as it has been organised, and the inadequate educational policies implemented during the last decades encourage school practices and processes that engender difficulties to the process of schooling.

Within the academic sphere, Patto's work has given rise to other researches not only on the broad theme of the school failure but also on other facets of the school everyday life[72]. At the school level, her ideas seemed to be **not fully understood** by the teachers and school staff. It was not uncommon to notice a rejection to the

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[72] A group of education psychologists that work at "*Serviço de Psicologia Escolar*" (Centre of Education Psychology) at the Institute of Psychology of the University of São Paulo developed a series of researches that aimed to study various aspects of the process of schooling. Souza, (1991) looked at the production of the 'school success', at that time an object of study virtually unknown within the academic spheres. Marcondes, (1994) provided an interesting account of the education processes of production of the 'handicapped pupils'. Other researches worth remembering are the works, clearly inspired and backed by Patto's ideas, of Cruz, (1994) that revealed the appropriation of the Basic Cycle programme made by concrete schools and teachers, of Proença, (2000) that provides an important discussion on the undergraduate curricula of Psychology courses and its suitability to deal with 'school complaints', and of Perosa (1997) that more recently turned her attention to the programmes of TPD offered to the Primary school teachers and their relation with the school failure.

fragments of her work that reached schools. We believe that few teachers had access to the whole book, but mainly to sections of it, at most. We reckon that when teachers had the opportunity to read anything by her, it was mainly a paper that represented only a part of her propositions about school failure. It resulted from a conference (that was video-recorded and multiplied to be used on in-service courses) to teachers and other educators that was converted into a paper called *"Criança da escola pública: deficiente, diferente ou mal trabalhada?"* (State school child: deficient, different or badly dealt with? " That paper was included in a small book published by the Foundation for the Development of Education (FDE). It was expected to reach all schools. In that publication the explanations of school failure based on the Deprivation Theories are strongly criticised and the position defended pointed to the contribution of the way the school and the teacher deals with their pupils. In the oversimplified manner of explaining the problems that is so often employed by the school and its agents, teachers felt criticised because their ways of dealing with their pupils were seen as a central element of the problems they faced. With the questioning of the explanations based on the Deprivation Theories the place of 'the guilty' was left unoccupied, and the teachers and other professionals that work with them, felt blamed for the failure of the state school.

2.4 The debate about competence

In the beginning of the 80's a debate within academia was established involving two concepts related to the teacher's work and the way this professional group was (and still is) viewed by the academia, the media (and by the general public) and even by themselves: **the technical competence and the political commitment**.

The concern with the education of the popular classes (or problems of their failure at school) was certainly at the centre of that debate. Which means that the concern of the academics with improving the concrete opportunities (of access and permanence at school) for the members of the popular classes was at the basis of their action. For some it involved participation in politics by assuming leading positions. It was a time of optimism. As it shall be presented later in Chapter Four, the beginning of the 80's

represented the first recent opportunity of experiencing active and free participation in the politics by the Brazilian society, with the 'official end' of the military regime.

Santos (1989) in her Ph.D. work about the field of didactics in the Brazilian educational context shows how the spirit of 're-democratisation' present in the country with the end of the military regime affected all spheres of social life, including education. Consequently, debates and proposed reforms in education opened a discussion about the teachers training[73]. Discussing then the main aspects of the debate on teacher's and other school specialists' training, her argument reinforces our proposition about the role played by the debate on 'competence' to the trends in the field of education. In her own words:

> *"This debate (on training of teacher and educational specialists) was marked by the affirmation of the political role of teaching, which allied to technical competence will ensure that education plays its part in the process of social change"[74].*

The terms 'competence', 'competent' and its negative forms 'incompetence' and 'incompetent' have been broadly used when referring to the education system, to teacher education, to the teacher herself, and to teaching. Yet it seems that in the Brazilian education literature there is no real concern for precisely defining its meaning and uses.

The imprecision and ambiguity in the meaning of competence have been one aspect that the literature on the competence-based approaches has criticised (Hyland, 1992). Ashworth and Saxton's (1990, cited by Hyland) analyses revealed serious and damaging ambiguities and inconsistencies on the use of the term 'competence'. Competence is of "unclear logical status" and the meaning of competence has not yet been coherently specified; in particular, "it is not clear whether competence is a **personal attribute, an act,** or an **outcome of behaviour"** (pp. 3, our emphasis). The same criticisms can be applied to the use of the term competence in the Brazilian setting of teacher education. In São Paulo's educational context the concept appears

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[73] Santos 1989, pp. 22.

[74] Op cit, pp 25

in general as a modifier, qualifying a noun, denoting the preference for its use as an attribute, usually a personal attribute of teachers.

The concept of competence, particularly technical competence, gained popularity both within the academia and in all levels of the school system as the explanations of the learning difficulties of the pupils from the popular classes started to move from the *exogenous* to *endogenous* aspects. Or, in other words,   the teacher and her teaching practice entered again the scene, gaining visibility as 'the guilty party' of the problems observed in schools.[75].It may be time to explicitly affirm that the concept of competence was not 'invented' in the 80's, as the concern with the teacher's incompetence is not new. As learned with Andaló (1989), the concern with the competence of teachers appears in Brazil with the enlargement of the school system. But the use of 'technical' as a qualifier for 'competence' was certainly coined by Guiomar Namo de Mello in her 1982 book *"Primary School teachers: from technical competence to political commitment"*[76]. The book raised intense controversy within the academia, the debate about the pertinence of her ideas fuelled by the criticisms of some (Nosella, 1983; and Lenhard, 1983; Gadotti, 1983) and support of others (Cury, 1982; and Saviani, 1983).

In 1988 Mello's book was in its 9th reprint, which is an indication of how popular her ideas became (or what was understood of them) in the years following the publication of the book[77].

Mello's work concerns the expectations and social representation of teachers about their pupils and the school failure. On its initial pages Mello makes explicit her discontentment with the selectivity operated by the schools with a large portion of the pupils failing in the first years of schooling. So, her work is based on a certain

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[75] Remember that during the 40's, under the influence of the New School movement, the school and the teacher were highly criticised for their incapacity to offer good and interesting teaching. See Cardoso, 1949.

[76] The original title is *"Magistério de Primeiro grau: da competência técnica ao compromisso político"*. The bulk of that book is directly drawn from the author's Ph.D. thesis.

[77] Mello was also the Co-ordinator of the committee that devised the education platform of the victorious party in the 1982 State government elections. That government launched later on the CB Programme. She was also in the Municipal Secretariat of Education of São Paulo city in the late 80's.

conception of the causes of the school failure. In the following quote her way of understanding the origins of the school failure is clear:

> "The school conditions are today *powerful mechanisms of selectivity. Their quality and nature are such that they contribute to the school failure of the children from underprivileged socioeconomic background, albeit great part of this failure being due, without doubt, to the material poverty that victimise those children." (pp. 15)*

Mello's conception was clearly under the influence of the Deprivation Theories, well accepted in the beginning of the 80's. But the influence of the sociological thinking of Marxist tradition is also noted in her concern with the proposition on the possible role that the school conditions may assume, as 'mediation' between the economic conditionings and the social destiny of the school clientele. The school conditions, she argues, may be of such quality that they may contribute to alter 'the prediction of failure inscribed in the economic background of the child' (p.15). To do that,

> "*the way that the school operates has to be **technically** adequate to the features of those children. Assuring better conditions of learning to the children, the school realises its political meaning".*
> *(stress in the original, pp. 15)*

Thus, Mello's main thesis can be summarised in the following way: The technical competence is the critical point through which the teacher would introduce (for him/herself) a political meaning in his/her teaching practice.

Her ideas were criticised by Marxists and liberals alike. The criticisms addressed two main issues:

1) Concerning the definitions of some key concepts, such as: technical (for its hidden technicism), political (it lacks definition), competence (for its a-historical content), and work (for being full of ideological implications), (Nosella, 1983; Lenhard, 1983).

2) Concerning a supposed linear relation between technical competence and political commitment. The technical competence would be, as presented by Mello, a previous moment to the political engagement rather than an expression,

in itself, of a political commitment (Nosella, 1983). Nosella even suggests that Mello's thesis should be inverted: 'From the political commitment to a new technical competence.'

Gadotti (1983) addresses the same issues while discussing the role of universities in the project of formulating a conception of world adequate to the popular classes' interests. He emphasises the importance of the political role of teachers. For him education is essentially a political act and it is this feature that is transforming of social relations. A political project coherent with the interests of the popular classes must be forged by those involved in education. Therefore the teacher education has to provide teachers with the conceptual tools to read the reality of social injustice, to understand it and to work towards overcoming it. In this way, the teacher education has

> "Not only to teach them (the future teachers) methods and techniques but to teach them to understand the situation of the pupil and of those that are out of the school. It is this consciousness that we have to develop in the future professional instead of inculcate him with a technical knowledge. The professional of teaching is not a technician, a specialist, he is primarily a professional of the human, of the social, of the political. " (Gadotti pp. 142)

Gadotti emphasises then the need to develop class awareness among the future professionals of teaching to help them to achieve a critical consciousness.

> "This is the only way to make accessible to them the means to develop solidarity with the popular classes." (Gadotti pp. 142)

Gadotti intends to emphasise (following an approach influenced by Paulo Freire) the political dimension of the act of educating, turning this dimension into its fundamental aspect. Mello, on the other hand, emphasises the technical dimension. According to her, only a better technical background and professional preparation would enable the teacher to develop a political commitment to their pupils from the popular classes. Nosella goes as far as contradicting Mello directly by saying that the

teachers would only perceive the need for better professional preparation after they had committed themselves politically[78]

Saviani (1983) takes part in the debate. Although his declared purpose is to contribute to the debate it is also noticeable his intention to come into Mello's defence and 'set the things in their right places' by clarifying Mello's ideas. Saviani was both Mello's and Nosella's supervisor. He starts his paper declaring his perplexity in face of such polemic raised by Mello's book and particularly in face of the directions the controversies are taking[79].

The concept of **technical competence** seems to have generated many criticisms. Mello was accused of proposing a new version of the technicist pedagogy (Nosella, 1983). We believe that happened because Mello's book may have helped to strengthen the false and misleading belief that the "problem" of Brazilian state education is basically a "technical" problem requiring therefore technical solutions.

> *"The way that the school operates has to be **technically** adequate*
> *to the features of those children". (pp.15)*

This interpretation of Mello's ideas could perhaps be avoided if she had been more careful when defining a key concept for her main thesis. She uses the phrase technical competence all over the book but **when defining it** she prefers to use the phrase professional competence rather than technical competence. Why? We found no answer.

> *"By professional competence I understand several features which*
> *are important to indicate: Firstly, the proper mastering of the*

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[78] These contradictory viewpoints are reflected in different styles of teacher professional preparation (both at the initial level and in continuing education efforts). Those that emphasise the political dimension tend to give more importance to discussions about the role of the school, the possibilities and limits of the work of the teacher, etc. Others focus on the relevance of professional preparation as related to contents and techniques.

[79] Some chosen subtitles and some bypassing remarks made by Saviani uncover his underlying intention of explaining what Mello intends to argue. For example: 1) By choosing sub-titles such as ' who fears the technical competence?' and ' Who fears the political commitment?'. 2) By commenting that he feels it is necessary to inform the reader of the context of Guiomar's book, before making any comments on the merit of the book. He justifies that saying that it would facilitate those readers that did not have access to the book and also because it seems to him that many people who have been' fuelling ' the debate around the book ' didn't even bother to read it'.

school knowledge to be passed on linked to the ability of organising and transmitting it in such a way that it would be effectively appropriated by the pupil. Secondly, an integrated and articulated understanding of the relevant aspects of his (the teacher) own practice, that is, an understanding of the multiple relations between the various inner aspects of the school functioning such as enrolment criteria, Curriculum and methods of teaching. Thirdly, a comprehension of the relations between the technical preparation he obtained, the school organisation and the results of his action. Fourthly, a broader comprehension of the relations between school and society which necessarily involves the question of his work conditions and payment. " (Mello, pp. 43)

Mello describes in detail what kind of competence she believes the teacher should have. It is then crucial for her to define what she has been labelling in various passages of her book as"technical competence". However, she does not do that. She rather defines professional competence.

Saviani, using the same quotation, argues that *what Mello defines as professional competence is what she means in her work by technical competence.* That does not sound very convincing, particularly for those that disagree with her. A possible interpretation would be that Mello uses technical and professional interchangeably. However, she does not give the reader any indication that this is the case.

In Mello's work there is also the reproduction of a negative way of viewing teachers. After describing in detail the necessary elements that a teacher has to have to be considered "competent" a conclusion about real teachers follows almost naturally: they are incompetent.

> *"What is now important is to point out that, objectively, the division of work in our Primary and Secondary schools drained the competence the teachers had when they worked at the schools for a few (people). And it has not allowed them so far to re-acquire that know-how on a new basis, more adequate to a school that has grown and diversified its clientele." (pp.54)*

It follows that, for Mello, the teachers' incompetence is not a hypothesis, a point of departure: the teachers' incompetence is taken for granted.

Taking another passage, now from the closing chapter, more information can be obtained on the meaning of that concept to the author. In that chapter Mello resumes her analyses on the representations that the teacher makes of her practice. She makes an analogy between the technical competence and a missing character.

> "To this (the missing character) I call technical competence. It (the technical competence) would be materialised in terms of the mastering of schooling content and the adequate methods to transmit it to the children that do not have the prerequisites ideally established to their learning"(Mello, pp. 145).

In this passage technical competence is connected with mastering contents and methods of teaching. Those would be, on the Author's point of view, the expression of the teacher's technical competence.

Taking the Author's ideas as a whole it is not clear whether or not technical competence would be something else than the teacher's mastering contents and methods. As it is claimed here, the concept of technical competence was not clearly defined by Mello. This fact has led to various interpretations, including the one that understands contents and methods in a very restricted way as a set of techniques that should be applied by the teacher.

We intend to point out that beyond the conceptual confusion involving the word 'competence' an important and unexpected result followed. Mello's work may have helped, *even unintentionally*, to strengthen the idea that 'the problem' of State education in Brazil is a technical problem at the level of teachers' classroom skills that requires basically technical solutions, minimising then the relevance of other aspects, such as providing the basic work conditions for schools, changes on the organisation of the education system, sufficient funds for education and adequate mechanisms of controlling its expenditures and so on.

Mello concludes her book making a prediction: the teacher's in-service education is the critical point to foster the teachers' technical competence.

> "Concerning teacher's practices I suppose that the lack of preparation, and technical insecurity are at the root of the deception, of the strategy of blaming the victims (pupils) while at

*the same time loving them, **unable to do anything** concrete to lift from their shoulders the burden of failure. A better professional preparation for teachers would at least allow the elimination of this hypothesis. **Without such preparation,** little can be said for sure about their availability and willingness to reform the school"(pp.146, our stress)*

As we can notice, some ingredients are present in Mello's work that helped to form the scenario of education policies on   that decade: **negative and homogeneous descriptions about teachers** concerning both their professional preparation, and their attitude towards the profession and pupils. The chosen 'remedy' is also devised by her: investing on the TPD, as a main strategy to reform the school.

It is important to see the political (in terms of education policies) unfolding of that debate, and how seriously her suggestion was taken by those involved with teachers in-service education. And it is important to analyse how the concept of competence was interpreted by those directly involved on the issue of teachers' professional development, from the top to the bottom level.

After the late-eighties the academic debate around the idea of competence *apparently* ceased, as we present in the next chapter[80]. The question is: What were its repercussions to the school and teachers? Did its influence at the school also stop?

Having finished the presentation of the academic debates and controversies in the educational literature, we propose now, for the sake of clarity of our thesis, to summarise the chief aims of this chapter, our arguments and the main conclusions up to this point.

In this chapter we presented the main debates and influential ideas, related to primary education and to the problem of school failure, that played an important role by influencing the trends followed by the education programmes analysed here.

It is consensual in the academic educational literature that the current challenge of Brazilian Primary Education is to improve its quality (section 2.1). As we will

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[80] See 3.2.1 Mid-to late-eighties: the apogee of the idea of teacher's poor initial education and the consequent teacher's technical incompetence.

present further in Chapter Four, the education policies carried out by São Paulo SSE during the 80's and first years of the 90's, intended to improve the quality of the education offered to the population. That meant to deal with the old and challenging problem that we, in Brazil, call the 'issue of the school failure': high rates of repetition and dropout, specially in the early years of schooling. What are the causes of the school failure? What can be done to sort this problem out? The explanations given during the last decades were briefly presented in section 2.3. We argued that there was a significant shift in the position adopted by some of the leading academic institutions of research and teaching on the explanations for the causes of the school failure: from reductionist psychological approaches to sociological and psychosocial approaches. Such a shift in position basically meant moving away from focusing on the pupils and their families to focusing on the school and the work of teachers. That shift was influenced by the Theories of Reproduction and its critics (item 2.2). When the researchers' attention was driven to this other object of study, namely schools and teachers' work, the concept of competence, particularly technical competence, became popular not only within the academia but also in all levels of the school system.

We argued that **the conjunction of the debates and ideas summarised above increased the visibility of schools and of teacher's work, as the dominance of the psychological reductionist approaches receded.**

2.5 Teacher professional development, the improvement of the quality of education, and the concept of competence: an initial exploration of their inter-relation

The period between 1983 to 1994 witnessed attempts from the São Paulo State Secretariat of Education – SSE – of improving the quality of its educational system, as stated in the official documents. **Gradually,** the in-service education programmes started to figure in the documents and in the practice (more in the first than in the latter) as the strategy of choice in dealing with the low quality of the educational system. The rationale behind this decision can be summarised as follows: The low quality of schools is associated with the teacher's poor professional preparation that,

by its turn, generates low teacher's performance. So, improving the professional qualification of teachers – **through in-service programmes** – would bring the quality of education to higher levels.

That is clearly stated in the documents published by the SSE along the period examined. That can be observed in the next quotation, when the Single Work Shift programme was launched, in 1988.

> *"To create the Single Work Shift to Basic Cycle teachers means to respond to one of the most recurrent claims made by the teachers who recognise in this victory a possibility of constituting themselves as **a professional group more competent and more prepared to take on its social responsibility.***
>
> *To increase the number of hours for teachers professional preparation and in-service education activities, as well as for the follow-up, control, supervision and assessment of the teaching learning process, makes possible, consequently, to deal with the still critical bottleneck of the initial grades."(SSE, pp. 4- our stress)*

Perosa (1997) when analysing the education programmes carried out by São Paulo State points that:

> *"It became certain that all efforts should be directed towards improving the technical competence of teachers." (pp. 27)*

At a first glance, the idea of putting all energies on teacher professional development programmes may convince many for it seems to be *logical*, it seems to make sense. The idea that better schools are achieved by better teachers pervades the history of Brazilian education. However, some voices emerge to announce a necessary shift of direction. Arroyo (1996) in the National Congress on Teachers Education defies his peers with a provocative talk. "Looking at the synopses of most conferences on teachers education, we find an almost linear logic. Proposals concentrate on how to re-qualify teachers education programmes, how to endow them with a higher density of theory and practice. "Be it at initial education be it at continuous education (and lately he argues, the emphasis has been placed on the continuous education)... the logic follows the same linear reasoning: let us train and re-train our teachers and we

shall have a high quality school for, we do not have a school of good quality because we lack professional quality." (pp. 48).

He continues claiming that is urgent to:

> "... *question that* logic *and orient our researches and analyses, as well as government policies, to a better understanding of the complex relations among society, school system, education and teachers education. Teachers education is at the end of a chain of interaction processes, and can no longer continue to be presented as a miraculous remedy to all school ailments." (p. 48).*

A simple exercise might help understanding the elements supporting the logic under question here. Borrowing Arroyo's statement, and substituting the word 'quality' in the phrase 'professional quality' (at the end of the sentence) by 'competence', one gets:

> "... *the logic follows the same linear reasoning: let us qualify and re-qualify our teachers and we shall have a high quality school for, we do not have a school of good quality because we lack* **professional competence.**"

The first comment is that the meaning is kept. The resemblance with Mello's ideas is undeniable[81]. The concept of "competence" (or the idea of teacher's incompetence) seems to be behind the logic of that line of reasoning. It appears there has existed all along an "*argument of incompetence*" that is feeding that "too logical vision", to use a phrase by Arroyo.

Our intention is then to work in the direction suggested by Arroyo: to question that *logic*. We intend to continue to trace its presence in the educational literature and its repercussion to the educational programmes and to their proposals of teacher professional development. In the next chapter, we will take this discussion further and pursue how the concept of competence appears in the literature on teacher professional development. The presence of the '*argument of incompetence*' in the educational policies and their TDP programmes is proposed in Chapter Four.

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[81] See Mello, op. cit. Chapter I.

Chapter Three

Teachers professional development

This chapter presents a discussion that resulted from our dialogue with the educational literature on teacher professional development, particularly in Brazil. The discussion was oriented by some basic questions: What has became the role attributed to in-service education activities? How are teachers described by the literature? What is expected from them? And particularly: Does the idea of teacher incompetence appear? Our central aim is to investigate the presence of the idea of competence and incompetence of teachers in the educational literature on teachers' education, particularly that related to teacher professional development. It is also our purpose to identify what has been reported as the main criticisms and problems involving teacher's professional development for we believe the idea of teacher's incompetence is directly related to the permanence of the problems.

The period focused is mainly from the beginning of the eighties to mid nineties. That includes the period related to the educational programmes analysed here. Some earlier studies were also analysed when a historical perspective was important to provide a better understanding of the questions.

The chapter is organised in two main sections followed by a closing section. The first discusses the main issues presented by the specialised literature on TPD, the central concern and constant challenges. We conclude that most of the attempts at teacher continuous education had taken the individual teacher as an 'incompetent resource' that needed to be trained with new theories and techniques. The second section reviews the papers published in a prestigious and traditional journal – the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* – RBEP- (Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies). The presence of the idea of teacher's technical incompetence is observed in the papers published in the period analysed, having its apogee during mid to late eighties. Our analysis revealed that there are some *dissonant voices* from the mainstream conceptions and approaches of TPD, both in the RBEP and in the

literature on teacher education. Those voices were unknown or unheard by those responsible for Education Policies.

3.1 On the issues raised about teacher professional development: a monotonous diagnosis.

3.1.1 Training teachers to master new pedagogical techniques

Attempts to 'train' teachers are not new. In Brazil, the concern with the professional development of teachers emerged with the enlargement of the school network, the so-called 'democratisation of education' and with the persistent high rates of dropout and repetition (Andaló, 1989).[82] "Those problems led the education authorities to the concern with the 'teachers competence', installing the need to research on teachers education and to offer professional development courses" (Andaló, 1989, pp 10).

The first research about teacher's training courses was carried out in 1961. For its historical importance, it is interesting mentioning it. The *National Institute of Pedagogical Studies (INEP)*[83] in a joint action with the *Institute of Education of Rio de Janeiro* (ITE) carried out an inquiry with primary teachers to know their opinion about the courses they had attended. The main results are the following. The teachers considered the courses' approaches unsatisfactory. The majority of teachers suggested changes should be introduced in the courses so that they could be taken as an opportunity to discuss practical issues of their interest. The teachers also suggested that the courses should take the real problems brought out by them as a starting point. Forty percent of them reveal a wish of having a more direct participation in the definition of the courses, through what they express as 'taking into account their suggestions'.

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[82] Andaló mentioned that already in 1949 the Review of Pedagogical Studies gives notice of training courses for primary teachers (pp 10).

[83] In Portuguese: *Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos (INEP)*. The Ministry of Education and Health was created in the early 1930s. The INEP was the central body in that Ministry in charge of its technical concerns. Its responsibility was to study the educational issues.

Part of Andaló's work is devoted to investigating the perspective of those professionals involved in professional development courses, both their planners (course monitors) and teachers. For teachers, the author concludes for there is ambivalence towards the idea of attending the courses. On the one hand they think the courses are important as an opportunity to up-date their knowledge and to re-think their practice. On the other hand, their expectations of obtaining practical help such as suggestions and solutions to the problems they 'technicians', as face in dealing with pupils are hardly fulfilled. Teachers regard the courses as excessively theoretical, making use of inaccessible language with no links with the reality of the schools and the pedagogical practice. The teachers felt disrespected. The teachers call the professionals of the intermediate and central level of the education system, impose on them arbitrary orientations that ignore their practical experience. They decide what teachers can and shall do. The criticisms made by the teachers are hardly taken into account. It is not uncommon for them to be interpreted as expression of their 'resistance to change', as the following passage reveals.

Gatti et al. (1975), in their research that evaluated a training programme for first grade teacher conclude:

> " (...) an educational programme which intends to improve the teachers competence must take into account that teachers have attitudes and expectations that not always are the most adequate to a real process of change at the level of the technology of teaching. So, in what strategy is concerned, the programme has to anticipate a way of intervening upon those attitudes. "

In other words, the teachers may resist changing their practice. They continue, "it is understandable that a teacher, which in principle is capable to conduct the literacy process, resists to acknowledge that he/she does not know enough and so to commit himself or herself to learn how to do better what he/she does every day."

The concern with the competence and efficiency of the professionals of education was not new. In the middle sixties and seventies, the idea of "competence" became associated with *efficiency and the mastering of 'new technologies of teaching'*. The role attributed to teachers professional development in that period is related to the dominant conception of education during the military regime. Education, as directly

involved in the provision of human resources for industry, "acquired a new dimension and importance, and, within it, the concern with the competence of its professionals" (Gatti et al. 1975, p. 15). Schools were seen as having to be more rational, efficient and productive, so their professionals should be properly trained to perform accordingly.

> ``(The subordination of the education system to the needs of the productive process) *brought about the creation of the current Human Resources Development Centres in a majority of states; where such Centres do not exist the Secretariat of Education is responsible for the training of course monitors for the school network. That fact somehow determined **the notion that in-service training solves all problems in education, although it is known that such notion is nonsense.** The process of teacher preparation, in all its instances and shapes, acts solely in the sphere of teachers professional formation, and even so in quite a limited way."*
> *(Fusari,pp.1997 41, our stress)*

The proposal of 'teachers training' as a "remedy to all school ailments", using Arroyo's phrase, was already present at that time and its origins connected with the domain of the Human Capital theory in Education and its technicist approach, in the sense of understanding teacher professional development in a restricted way, as a knowledge and skill development. The proposal is restricted to transmit to teachers up-to-date techniques in teaching and some school contents. As Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) conclude,

> *"Teacher professional development involves understanding not only the knowledge and skill that teachers should acquire but also understanding what sort of person the teacher is and the context in which most teachers work. Without an understanding of the person and **without the most profound alterations in the bureaucratic, androcentric, control-centred ways in which our schools work and our school systems are run,** specific staff development efforts are likely to prove temporary and localized in their impact, and unsuccessful in their overall effects."(pp. 16-7, our stress)*

Instead of adopting this way of conceiving teachers professional development, as actions and activities that should take into account and deal with 'the context in which most teachers work', most of the actions carried out since the beginning of the concern with the continuing education of teachers are inspired by the idea of

"competence", which is associated with mastering school curriculum contents and teaching techniques. From the 60's onwards, professional development for education staff was carried out by a number of **actions**: seminars, courses, talks, meetings and so on, aiming to train the professional of education. As described by Fusari (1997),

> *"In that way, professional preparation tends to look like a situation where 'somebody is going to teach somebody else to do something right'. And here it is already possible to realise that the preparation of human resources was ultimately reduced to training, the latter in its turn being reduced to courses that offered answers to challenges faced by the educator in his/her practice."*
> *(Fusari, pp. 42).*

The reductionism of this conception of professional preparation of human resources, as pointed out by Fusari, stems from another reductionism - that of the technicist approach to the analysis of school and its problems. The problems of schools are exclusively viewed as technical problems, so nothing would be more adequate than to train teacher on new and modern techniques. The aim of those actions of teachers training was to improve the teacher technical competence.

Following that trend, the São Paulo municipal Secretariat of Education created a Division of Training and Improvement of the teaching staff and carried out during 1973 a programme of courses for first grade teachers and for pedagogical assistants. Gatti and colleagues assessed those two training programmes and the results are presented in two papers (1972,1975). When analysing the actions of training commonly carried out in education they consider they **lacked:** a) A clear, broad and objective definition of their aims. b) Professionals with suitable qualification to conduct the actions of training. c) Material conditions for carrying out and following up the actions, resulting in waste of human and material investments on the sector.

Besides those problems Gatti and colleagues mention another issue, more related to the strategies chosen. Citing Cartwright (1968), they argue that the actions of training pick people out of their work environment and, if values premised in training happen to conflict with those of the school where they work, there is little possibility of any effective change taking place. In a recent paper, Azanha (1996) argues in the same direction: improving the teacher qualification, as an *individual*, does not assure that

the quality of education will also be improved. A teacher may be 'good' in a school and 'bad' in another... It will depend on the concrete working conditions that each school has. This position is considered very interesting for its potential to inspire a new understanding of teacher professional development. The concept of competence, as an attribute of individuals is questioned. To stay within the concept of competence, a more profitable direction to invest in and to investigate, inferred from the author's propositions, would be to help schools, not individual teachers, to become more 'competent'. That is a very important point. We will return to it shortly, in the next subsection.

Feil (1985) also presents some criticisms aimed at the traditional way of carrying out teacher professional development. Training programmes, conferences, courses have been carried out but the results achieved are unsatisfactory regarding the improvement of the quality of teaching. The author raises some of the problems that, in her opinion, can be identified as contributing aspects to that situation. First, the courses usually are not demanded by the teachers. Second, their topics are not based on the problems the teachers feel they face in performing their job. Third, there is no follow-up of these courses that teachers could count on to sort out the problems and doubts which usually emerge during the process of putting into practice the orientations, proposals or methods.

Joyce (1979) has pointed to the importance of sustained in-service training activities, particularly if teachers are expected to learn complex behaviours, to change their classroom practice. The in-service programmes should have all five of the following elements: theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching. These basic elements mentioned by Joice (1979) were not present in most of the actions of in-service education carried out in Brazil, as the practice is separated from theory, and the other elements – feedback and coaching – are not even mentioned as necessary and indispensable steps on the question of TPD. The fragmentation of the work at the school is a consequence of the technicist approach. 'Theory' is left to the specialists[84] to be 'translated', put into simpler terms, so that teachers can understand it. In this process of simplification theory runs the risk of becoming a set of rigid rules to be

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[84] People that work at the intermediate and central levels of the SSE, and University academic staff.

followed by the teacher. Teachers are viewed as implementers of someone else's ideas and proposals.

Feil defends that a new way of working with teachers should be developed. It should be grounded on a participatory planning, involving everyone including parents, and addressing the real needs of the target population. A proposal such as that, she considers, would face resistance from teachers due to the clear division of labour that characterises the education nowadays where teachers are mere executors of programmes. Her proposal implies a decentralised approach of in-service education: the so-called 'school-focused' approach. Other studies in Brazil have pointed in the same direction (Patto, 1990; Andaló,1989, and Souza, 1991). It is interesting noticing that the 'school focused' approach of teacher professional development, and the proposal of involving all the participants, has the same spirit of taking the school as the unit of reflection and intervention, not individual teachers. In other words: we consider that a more fertile proposal of TPD should take the **school** as an object of work and analysis, and as the concrete context within which teachers and students work. It should not focus on individual teachers, usually considered incompetent. The work with teachers should be part of an fuller project – the school project – developed with the participation of all the parties involved in the process of schooling: school staff, students and parents.

A similar line of reasoning is presented by Henderson, 1979 (cited by Howey, 1980).

> `'A methodology which attempts [only] to identify the deficiencies of individuals teachers with a view of correcting them is doomed to failure. Rather, the methodology must involve co-operative, professional self-evaluation. This does not, of course, imply that needs analysis should only be an inward-looking process. Some needs will arise from the interaction of the professional aspiration of the school and of is individual teachers with the needs of the parents, the local community, the region, and the nation, as well as with the knowledge about educational methods. The problem is how to incorporate all these elements into the school's analysis. (Henderson, 1979, p22).*

Howey (1980), in the synthesis report of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) reviews the effort for school-focused INSET. He argues

there is a strong agreement that in-service efforts have frequently lacked a conceptual framework, or at least theoretical principles, to guide them. At the same time it seems too much has been made of in-service being set up as either theoretical or practical, often in a dichotomous way. In spite of Brazil not being one of the countries analysed by Howey, we believe their considerations apply to the reality Brazilian teachers and Brazilian schools face. The separation between theory and practice, thinking and action, has crucial consequences to the failure of most INSET programmes, says Fox (1978). This distinction between theory and practice is a historical phenomenon, a human creation rather than a natural or rational course of events.

The same line of criticism is followed in Brazil by Kramer (1989). Two approaches were identified as the most frequently used in teacher continuous education activities in Brazil. The educational systems, with a few ephemeral and localised exceptions, have been using similar strategies for in-service training courses. They intend to deal with current difficulties from the unsatisfactory initial teacher education. The strategies are training through a **"cascade method"** and T-Groups. The former strategy has been used to implement the dissemination of educational innovations. Some comments can be made about this method, as it has been conducted in Brazil.

Considering that time and other resources are usually limited, this method is extensively used when medium to large education systems are involved. Some professionals of the educational system, particularly those working at the intermediate echelons of the Secretariat of Education, and also head teachers and coordinator-teachers, are called to attend short courses, talks and workshops so that they get familiar with the features and requirements of the desired innovation. They are supposed to be trained. So, when they return to their schools and offices (in the case of the professionals from the intermediate bodies) they would pass on what they learned to their fellow teachers. The first consideration regarding this strategy will be made using an analogy. A child play very popular in Brazil is what we call 'wireless telephone'. The children sit side by side and one child whispers a word to the child immediately beside her. This child, by her turn, whispers the word to a third child and so on until the last child is reached. Children love this play because they make them laugh a lot! Usually the word that reaches the last child has nothing to do with

the word the first child said. Teachers, however, have no reason to laugh when they are the last link in the chain of an implementation process that is based on a 'wireless telephone'.

The 'cascade method', typically used in Brazil, is based on a linear conception of the policy process. The generation and the implementation of a policy are seen as two separate moments of the process where generation is a remote and detached phase from implementation. A chain of implementers then assures the policy will be executed. Theory and practice are also fragmented. The experts are those who "think" and the teachers are those who "do". The underlying belief is **the lack of capacity of teachers to participate actively in formulating useful proposals that affect their own practice**. As Cardoso says (cited by Kramer, 1989), the traditional way in which in-service training has been carried out "conceives the teacher as somebody who has little to offer but, on the other hand has much to learn" (1987,p.2).

As the staff at the intermediate bodies of the education system usually do not master the knowledge that guided the elaboration of the new programme, it assumes a rather prescriptive tone: **theory is converted into fragmented discourse** and themes for discussion become norms (Kramer,1989, pp. 194-5). Treated as objects, as a "resource", not as persons with capacity for thinking, some teachers develop strong criticism towards these training courses and new programmes (Fullan, 1991; Patto,1990; Souza,1991 among others). The resistance of teachers seems to be stronger when they feel that their previous experience on teaching is severely criticised or, even worse, dismissed. Others tend to implement or incorporate the new pedagogical programmes in the way they understand that it could be useful for them, modifying it sometimes in such a way that the final practice bears only a pale resemblance to the original proposal (Souza, 1991).

T-Groups is another strategy used in continuous education. The focus is not on content and techniques but aspects related to feelings (emotions and beliefs). It involves various kinds of activities: laboratory of sensibility, analysis of "cases", music, drama, etc., aiming to relax teachers and stimulate co-operation with their peers. Kramer argues that, apart from the character of an "event" that those activities may assume, it is not possible to restrict the analyses of school problems to a matter of attitudes and

feelings, thereby blaming teachers for the low quality of teaching. And she asks: "How is it possible to achieve change without a critical knowledge and without promoting an organised and collective, systematic reflection about the practice?" (p.196)

As we said early on this section, Andaló (1989) analysed the first research about teacher's training courses, conducted in 1961 with primary teachers in the State of Rio de Janeiro. It was an inquiry to know their opinion about the courses that they had attended. The teachers considered unsatisfactory the overall approaches of the courses they have been offered. Eighty percent of the teachers suggested that changes should be introduced to the courses to make them an opportunity to discuss practical issues of interest for the primary teachers. Sixty-nine percent of the teachers also suggested that the courses should take the real problems brought out by them as a starting point. Forty percent of the teachers considered that it should be taken into account their suggestions for the preparation of the courses. The teachers also suggested that the teachers on the beginning of the career should have special courses (49%) and receive more orientation (65%). Nearly thirty years later, Andaló noticed on her own research on TPD that teachers were not satisfied with the possibilities of professional development they were offered by the official bodies of the Paraná State Secretariat of Education (SSE). More recently, Perosa (1997) conducted also a study about the courses of teacher professional development that the São Paulo SSE offered to teachers. Analysis of courses offered by an agreement between the SSE and the Universities[85], revealed that the teachers' evaluation pointed out two problems. The first problem involves the courses' organisation (such as unsuitable period of the year and lack of information), and the second problem is the distance between the proposals by the academics and the concrete possibilities of implementing the proposed changes in the school practice. The evaluation made by CENP[86] and the Universities pointed to the insufficiency of the adopted format of the courses: the frequency of the meetings and the duration of the courses were regarded as excessively limited[87]. The diagnosis of the problems involving teachers continuous education is rather monotonous: teachers complain courses do not address the practical issues which most concern them; little improvement of pupils

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[85] The agreement between the State Secretariat of Education and the São Paulo State Universities (USP, UNICAMP, UNESP) from 1984 included also some private Universities: PUC-SP and PUCCAMP, the Papal Universities of São Paulo and of Campinas, and the UNIMEP, the Methodist University of Piracicaba.
[86] CENP stands for 'Coordenadoria de Ensino e Normas Pedagógicas' – Bureau for Studies and Pedagogical Norms.

learning; dichotomy theory and practice; imposition of courses on a top-down basis, problems with strategies, and so on. The reflection on the matter leads us to the conclusion that most of the attempts at teachers' continuous education in Brazil had taken the **individual teacher** as an incompetent resource that need to be trained. Perosa (1997) pointed out that the stigma of 'stubborn' and 'resistant' has followed the primary teacher for decades. When analysing the proposals for teacher professional development carried by the São Paulo SSE, she also noticed that the proposals are permeated by the belief in the teachers' incapacity. The underlying opinion is that "If teachers were different, if we had better qualified teachers, the quality of education would improve greatly..." That has been 'the logic'. **The schools and the concrete job conditions, the career are not included in the process of change that teachers are expected to undergo.** She concludes her research affirming that:

> " *In short, this research allow us to say that it is necessary to rethink the alternatives proposed during the 80's to deal with the school failure. Investments in human resources, without a substantial change in the concrete conditions of the teaching work, have been not only costly but also little efficient. In fact, these programmes ended up contributing to mystify the aspects that have a decisive influence to the permanence of the school failure phenomenon, and to conceal the objective conditions of teacher's education and work that are ultimately responsible for the perpetuation of our education system as one of the worst in the world.* " *(pp.123)*

3.1.2 Some dissonant voices on the approach of teacher professional development

Similarly to what is reported by Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), while discussing the approaches to teacher professional development, the TPD approaches that are focused on improving the teacher's knowledge and skill are 'the overwhelmingly dominant approach to planned teacher development activity in modern school systems' (pp. 2). That is undoubtedly true in the Brazilian case. Nevertheless, as the authors point out (discussing the reality in Britain, Australia, the United States, and Canada), there are alternative and more critical forms of conceiving and dealing with teacher professional development. Other models that take into account the whole

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[87] Perosa, 1997, citing Hypólito (1996).

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person of the teacher not only her behaviour and attitudes, and, moreover, 'address the characteristics of the system as well as the skills of the individual' (pp.7).

In Brazil, some authors claim the need for rethinking the in-service education activities developing alternative strategies to deal with teachers. Andaló, 1989 have proposed that some kind of work should be carried out with teachers at school level and that that is important to establish opportunities of dialogue between them when a critical discussion could be fostered to overcome the fragmented and partial awareness that usually characterises their understanding of the education process. These would be a possibility of overcoming the distance between those who plan and those who execute, "a permanent effort to combat the split between theory and practice" (Andaló, 1989, p. 206). With Andaló we ask about the willingness of teachers to take part in actions of professional development that are based on the idea of their incompetence.... This strategy seems even more mistaken when considering the isolation and 'trial and error'-basis on which the majority of Brazilian primary teachers build their professional experience.

Patto (1991), grounding in Agnes Heller's ideas, considers the work with teachers in 'small groups' at school as a promising alternative to the traditional approaches of teacher professional development. Considering there is a need of an interlocutor – in the sense of someone to talk to about the everyday teaching practice – usually manifested by the teachers, the question emerges of defining the nature of such dialogue between the teachers and that interlocutor. In general terms, she says that, "Such professionals should be capable of a 'listening' that, critically informed, takes into account the fantasies, anxieties, and defences that accompany any process of change" (pp. 252). Andaló, along a similar line, suggests also the establishment of discussion groups, which should have a co-ordinator able to hold a vision of the totality of the education process. It would also be necessary that those co-ordinators (she does not specify what kind of professional that would be) could deal with the anxieties and defensive mechanisms that emerge during a process of reflection about the practice. The author stresses that her proposal has nothing to do with group therapy inside schools.

"The suggestion refers to the establishment of groups in which the purpose would be a critical reflection upon the pedagogical practice that has been carried out relating it to the social and institutional contexts. The emerging emotional aspects need to be taken into account but always in reference to the task." (p. 209)

In an earlier work, we have gone in the same direction, Souza (1991). We suggest the establishment of a work proposal with teachers, based on a very close contact with those teachers that are interested in having some kind of orientation and follow-up. Therefore, the work in small groups is also advocated. In these groups the point of departure would be their professional experience and current practice, taking the questions and doubts involving them, not the wish to "transmit" the up-to-date theories in education. We emphasise the importance of establishing a practice of discussing the problems faced in the teacher professional experience. Teachers need interlocutors, good listeners and not "deliverers" or "translators" of theories and techniques, even because when 'translating' theories the risk and negative consequences of oversimplifying them may not be properly considered. Studying some topics or theories can be part of the work when viewed as relevant by both teachers and specialists (working as interlocutors).

André and Fazenda (1991) also present an alternative proposal for continuous education for teachers, in partnership with them. The idea of teachers "as subjects of their own pedagogic practices and not as mere executors of activities or techniques" is at the heart of it (pp. 3). Citing Martins (1996) they consider that the teacher develops a *'practical didactics'* resulting from the encounter between the academic preparation and the classroom practice. Having those ideas as basic principles they decided upon a strategy of work in which the teachers assume an active position thinking about their own practice in a critical way. This approach regards the teacher as someone capable of critical thinking and as someone able to take his or her teaching practice as an object of reflection. Therefore, this approach does not accept the idea of the incompetence of the teacher. In this approach neither the 'theory' nor the 'new techniques' are mythicized; the status of 'practice' is not inferior to that of 'theory' within the professional development of teachers. Teachers are supposed to take into their hands their own professional development.

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The research in collaboration with teachers and the autobiographic narratives was the strategy Bueno (1993, 1996, 1998) has chosen to try to deal with the mutual dissatisfaction that usually characterise the relationship between the University and the schools. To rethink the role of University in the production/dissemination of knowledge that may benefit teachers and students at school seems to be the tenet of Bueno's work. A four-year project of continuing education (1994-1998) was developed within the Study Group "Teaching, Memory and Gender" in collaboration between Bueno and a group of schoolteachers. Her work follows a line of research that gains strength from the mid-nineties. Some authors have pointed out the importance of turning the attention to the teachers lives and to the meaning they attributed to their work, involving them in researching their own practice (Ivor Goodson, Frederick Erikson, Marylyn Cochran-Simth and Susan Lyttle, Antonio Nóvoa, Gaston Pineau, and Pierre Dominicé, to mention a few). The project, although involving a limited number of teachers, represents a different alternative to the area of teacher professional development.

Azanha, (1996) although deeply convinced of the bad professional preparation of the majority of teachers, is very critical of the possibilities of teacher professional development, as it has been carried out, and presents an interesting argument. **The acknowledgement of 'the sad reality' of the bad professional preparation of São Paulo teachers turns his concern not to the teacher, as an individual, but to the school as an institution.**

Azanha argues that the line of action that takes the in-service education (through the advances of the new technologies) as a means of correcting faults of initial education, *although apparently coherent and sound* disguises some mistakes. It is what he calls 'another preconceived idea' of the policy of Teacher Professional Development (TPD). His arguments seem to follow a basic line of reasoning: schools belong to a unit of analysis (institutional level) that is not embraced by the ordinary schemes of TPD that privilege the individual level. So, he believes there is no guarantee that a personal improvement (by an individual teacher) is a relevant aspect to the school improvement in the concrete conditions of a given school. Therefore,

``The question of the quality of education is an institutional question. **It is the schools that need to be improved.** *Without this institutional effort the isolated improvement of teachers does not guarantee that such improvement will be met in practice by conditions favourable to an overall improvement of teaching (...)* **In short: the entity that should be the object of action of a teaching improvement policy is the school.** `` *(pp. 53, our stress)*

So, to improve the quality of education means to invest in improving schools by stimulating the school and its agents to build their own pedagogic project. And he finishes his paper with some considerations that invite all involved with TPD to seriously think that:

"The very idea of school autonomy, which stimulates the development of pedagogical projects specific to it, presupposes that the entity to be improved is the school and not the teacher. The latter should receive attention as a participant of a school project. Other than that, the individual improvement of a teacher is a personal matter for which the educational Administration can and must create facilitating conditions, **but not turn it into a public problem. The public problem is in the school.** *" (pp. 54, our stress).*

We claim that Azanha makes a significant change of approach. Another line of reflection and action is opened. A line that takes the school, and not the individual teacher, as its object. The professional development of individual teachers assumes a different meaning when planned and developed within a broader school project.

By emphasising that it is in the school that investments (both human and financial) should be made trying to create conditions for its autonomy and for the construction of its pedagogical project, Azanha proposes an important shift of attention: from the individual level to the institutional one. He joins some dissonant voices on the subject and redirects the look (including the theoretical one) to the school. We propose to investigate the teacher and his/her work from that same point of view, regarding such work as part of the school and its environment, and not as a simple result of the professional training.

At first sight, the idea that it is the school that needs to be improved and not the teacher seems to deny any proposal for continuing development of teachers, except when such proposal is part of the pedagogical project built by the school. The

distinction between personal professional development and staff development made by Aylward (1992) may prove that that is not necessarily the case. Although there is no clear-cut separation between them, the personal professional development is more related to the individual needs while staff development is related to the school requirements and improvement. Both kinds of development overlap, but they **are not the same.**

Citing Hewton (1988), Aylward defines that the primary aims of staff development is to increase the quality of pupils' learning by the development of staff potential. Hendon found that there was a great support from teachers for this aim of staff development. Other four items are presented as subsidiary aims: a) To recognise and employ staff strengths in seeking the best teaching practices. B) To provide experience and guidance likely to contribute to career development. C) To make professional development a right and a duty of all staff, and responsibility of management of LEA. D) To create the most favourable climate for ensuring the continuance of staff development.

Aylward indicates that these aims seem to be a sound foundation upon which to build the staff development within the school.

The similarity between the content of items C and D and Azanha's ideas is clear. The Administration of the education system has to provide the conditions (in every possible aspect) so that teachers can conceive their professional development as being at the same time a right and professional duty.

An interesting aspect of the proposition by Hewton refers to what is **absent** from his proposal: the concept of incompetence. Hewton's is grounded in the recognition and employment of what he calls 'the teacher's strengths'. This strategy of staff development was never attempted by the Brazilian policy makers. This thesis considers that it is likely that such a strategy would have a better chance of capturing the teacher's sympathy and professional commitment to it.

3.2 The Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos - RBEP-(Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies)

This section presents an analysis of the papers published from May 1983 to August 1995 in the *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos* – RBEP- (Brazilian Journal of Pedagogical Studies). The RBEP was chosen for some of its features. First, the Review has more than fifty years of nearly uninterrupted publication and is of national circulation. Being a joint publication by the Ministry of Education and the INEP (National Institute for Pedagogic Studies), the RBEP has been taken as an expression of the official ideas on education matters being therefore an important source for this study (Patto, 1990; Sarti 1999)[88].

The RBEP was analysed with the central theme of teachers' education, particularly teachers' continuing education. We intend to continue our work of tracing how the concept of competence (and the idea of the teachers' incompetence) appears in the literature on teacher professional development. Other papers, also in the RBEP, were also included for their implications on the subject. Thus, resulting in seventeen papers (see Appendix "RBEP" for full list of papers). It is noticeable that several of the more recent results are published on the 'Research Notes' section, an indication that the interest on the subject is relatively recent in the Review. This is confirmed by André (1998) when analysing the summaries of PhD and MPhil works on Teacher Education carried out on the Postgraduate Programmes in Education in Brazil between 1990-1995. She used an important source of information: a compilation of data by the National Association of Research on Education (ANPED). She observed an increase of the numbers of works along the years, particularly from 1994 to 1995.

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[88] The RBEP had its composition slightly changed during the period analysed, but its main structure was kept: A 'Research Notes" section, where the projects in development are reported, a bigger section of 'Studies', where the more extensive and substantial papers are presented. And two other sections: 'Reviews' and 'Communications and Information'. The analyses performed refer to the first two sections (Studies and Research Notes) as the papers are presented there.

3.2.1 Mid-to late-eighties: the apogee of the idea of teacher's poor initial education and the consequent teacher's technical incompetence

Initially, it is important to mention that between May 1983 and August 1987- a period of more than four years- only one paper is found concerning the theme of TPD (Kramer and André, 1984, No 151) and still TPD appears as a side issue. There is also only one reference of researches in progress (Warde and Boulos,1984, No 151). This fact confirms the analysis by Fusari (1988) and Andaló (1989) about the shortage of researches and studies on the subject. Andaló mentions particularly the lack of critical studies concerning the assumptions, aims, contents of the courses as well as the results and the meaning of those courses for those teachers who saw them as concrete possibilities of professional development[89].

The first reference to the theme of teacher education appears on the section 'Research Notes' (1984, No 149). The research carried out at the *Carlos Chagas* Foundation by Warde and Boulos, aims to investigate the courses of the initial education of teachers of the 1st to 4th grades of Primary Education (known as P1 teachers). It is a quantitative research based on questionnaires sent to 101 schools of Pedagogy and 136 courses of licentiateship at Secondary Education level[90]. The general hypothesis of the work is that "the initial education of the teachers of the 1st to 4th grades is not providing the necessary preparation in order that the teacher will acquire the required competence and criticism the pedagogical tasks he/she is supposed to fulfil", pp 171. At the time they were reporting the research, a partial analysis was done as well as the analyses of the legislation on the subject. They conclude for the unsuitability of both courses (Pedagogy and licentiateship) for being 'unspecific'. "The future teacher has not received a careful or assuring preparation to

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[89] In contrast it calls attention the number of papers addressing literacy issues and the cognitivist approaches. The presence of those issues on the RBEP reflects the increase of studies on literacy (taking cognitivist/construtivism as theoretical framework) observed from the eighties onwards. The advances on that field influenced the area of Teachers Professional Development (TPD) for topics of literacy and psychogenetic approaches became compulsory *content* (sometimes on simplified versions) of courses, talks, conferences and similar events addressed to primary teachers. Courses about 'construtivism' became fashionable particularly after mid-eighties.

[90] The team had a high percentage of replies to the questionnaires: 65.34%, and 71.32%, respectively.

develop with the pupils in primary education the elementary abilities of reading, writing and counting."

Re-thinking the initial teacher education, more specifically the so-called licentiateship[91], was the main concern of a group of lecturers from the Department of Education – at the Catholic University – Rio de Janeiro. A large group of professionals dedicated themselves to the theme of teacher education in Higher Education Institutions – HEI – developing two sequential projects. Fávero (1987, no 160) presents results of a first project, in the last issue of 1987 and a second, continuing project, is reported by Candau and a large group of colleagues (1987, no 160), in the same issue. Both projects examined the teachers training in HEI. In general, the researchers had a threefold aim: a) to make a review of the literature on teacher education in the seventies; b) to analyse teacher training in Higher Education Institutions –HEI; c) to present suggestions to the field of teacher training. The results presented by Fávero indicate the need for a larger partnership in decision making within the HEI; revision of Curricula; revision of Pedagogy courses (in charge of preparing the school specialists) and the urgent abolition of traditional training programmes as they were then structured. By the end of the second study, the authors aim to provide analyses of data to support the reformulation of the teachers education courses offered at the higher education level. The teacher initial education was now in focus.

In the 1987's last issue a study of teacher professional development is found. The author, Tania Brandt Santos (no 160) takes the teachers professional development and the preparation of human resources as (main) factors to improve the quality of education. She adopts an empirical focus on the education policy carried out by Curitiba City from 1983 to 1986. The relation between teachers continuous education and the improvement of the quality of education is clearly established and mediated by the pair of concepts proposed by Mello (1982): technical competence and political commitment. The adoption of Mello's ideas seems to be faithful to its formulation: "Competence is the foundation that allows the teacher to build a vision of teaching

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[91] Licentiateship is the course, at University level, organised by area (Mathematics, History, and so on) that prepare teachers to work on grades 5th to 8th of Primary School and all three grades of Secondary School.

that is more integrated and politically committed to the interests of the popular classes; if that competence does not exist it is necessary to create it starting from the existing conditions (...)" (pp 711). The changing of meanings is also a feature of Santos's work. The term competence assumes another meaning: as synonym of efficiency, as in the following passages:

> "Those aspects are linked to the problem of the competence of the education system that face the challenge of school failure and dropout of children (...)"

> "The needs and demands for transforming society require the significant presence of the teacher, whose pedagogical action calls for theoretical and practical instruments that promote a competent teaching" (pp.711)

The first paper that directly addresses the issue of teacher education appears in the last number of the 1984 edition. The importance of this paper is due to its being the first of a sequence of three interrelated papers (Kramer and André, 1984; Kramer, Pereira and Oswald, 1987; Kramer, 1989). The last two are more concerned with teacher professional development than the first. In the direction of privileging the sphere of teacher professional development, Kramer and her colleagues (1987) present the results of a case study developed with a "successful teacher"[92]. This work reviews the discussion about the 'well-succeeded literacy teachers' (Kramer and André, 1984) but now with clear concerns with the issue of teacher professional development. This additional concern seems to have introduced a practical orientation that to a certain extent marred the critical analyses that characterised their former work (presented on the next sub-section as a dissonant voice). After presenting the conclusions of the work – interesting and revealing of the internal dynamics of a successful literacy process – some suggestions are made concerning supervision and teacher professional development. Among them is the recommendation that the contributions of various fields such as Linguistics, Psycholinguistics, Psychology, Cognitive Psychology and others, should be "translated" in pedagogical terms to improve teachers practice. To shorten the distance between the academic knowledge available and the practices used at schools they propose the establishment of "a

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[92] In Portuguese Language: "professores bem-sucedidos"

systematic process of reflection upon the practice, from which new information and questionings would be put forward" (pp 93).

The proposal of establishing spaces of reflection by teachers about the pedagogic practice represents an alternative considered promising by some authors[93]. Such a proposal assumes a level of qualification and confidence in teachers to be reflective. Nevertheless, there exists some discrepancy between this proposal, in the manner that it was formulated, and some results obtained in the two studies carried out (1984 e 1987).

It can be seen as a contradiction to try to shorten that "huge distance" between the academic knowledge available and the practice developed at schools through the "translation" of that knowledge in pedagogical terms after having recognised (both in the previous work and in the last one) the heterogeneity that characterises the work of the good teachers. It should be remarked that the authors refer to a whole range of successful teachers varying from representatives of the "traditional school" to adepts of the "renewed school", recognising "the impossibility of identifying a single pattern of successful teachers" (Kramer e André, pp 536).

We consider that many teachers seem to wish for the possibility of collectively reflecting upon their professional practice. However, the proposal of translating the "educational novelties" (as some teachers refer to them) seem to respond more to the needs identified by the intermediate and central levels of the Secretariats than to those of the teachers. The latter frequently resist the adoption of new proposals and methods precisely because they realise the implicit or explicit devaluation of the "know-how" they acquired through their professional experience. Besides, such proposals are embedded in the misleading conception – based on the argument of competence – that **the improvement of the quality of schools is a technical question of teachers incorporating new methods and knowledge.**

It seems that the proposal for a joint effort between lectures (or other professional in charge of the courses) and teachers, which in itself implies the belief that teachers are professionals capable of thinking for themselves, is at times overwhelmed by the

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[93] See Schön, 1987; Nóvoa, 1991, 1992; Copeland, Birmingham and Lewin, 1993; Calderhead, and

more convincing argument of teachers' unfitness for the task; such incapacity would be, in a charitable version, attributed to teachers' inappropriate initial formation that denies them the necessary competence. Allied to the belief in teachers' incompetence (and in the inferiority of their knowledge acquired through practice) is the notion that imparts indisputable superiority to the scientific production, particularly about the literacy process.

A paper published in 1990 may help to exemplify the ideas presented above. Lair Levi Buarque conducted research on "the relation between styles of teacher's performance and their effects on the literacy". Departing from the statement, founded on the educational literature, on the need of developing classroom researches to understand the school failure she suggests "the teacher as a variable to be investigated" (pp.33). The research identified mainly two alternative teacher's styles in classroom: the "mechanicist" and its opposite, the "elaborative" (there was also a third teacher style that combined the two). Half of the 12 teachers of the sample belonged to the mechanicist style. The author reaches a surprising conclusion: *"Results do not show a correlation between the style of the teacher and pupils' learning."*

The question presents itself: If it is was not possible to correlate pupils' good performance with any particular teaching style, why should massive investments be made in preparation courses that aim at spreading the constructivist proposal (that closely resembles the "elaborative" style described by the author)? The results by Kramer and André (1984, 1987) go in the same direction. They have concluded that there is **heterogeneity** of pedagogical practice amongst 'good literacy teachers' (in Buarque's terminology that would be the 'teacher style'). So, why insist on (con) forming teachers to fit a single style?

In 1993 again in the 'Research Notes' section, two researches on teacher education are reported to be in development. Miguel André Berger and Maria Rita Berger (1993) are based in the work of Mello (1982) and Cunha (1975). It is clear in their work the line of reasoning that attributes the situation of state education to the bad

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Gates,1993, 1988; Lally and Scaife, 1995; Patto, 1990; Andaló, 1989, Souza, 1991, Santos, 1991.

initial teachers' education. They start from the statement that the teacher initial education is inadequate and that it is one of the causal factors of the social selectivity and exclusion that characterises the Brazilian education system. Their proposal is to analyse and compare the pedagogical practices of schools with the innovative and traditional curricula. Focusing on the importance of re-defining teachers' initial education curricula, Selma Garrido Pimenta (1993) draw attention to the role of apprenticeship terms. She proposes to carry out a study to search for alternatives for apprenticeship terms of future teachers of the 1st to 4th grades. As it is clear, both these two lines of work intend to deal with issues of teacher education Curriculum, considered being of utmost importance. Here 'teacher practice' figures as the privileged focus. Again the simplistic logic behind it is that if one wants to improve the quality of education the main aspect to be changed is the teachers pedagogical practice. And within it (the teacher's pedagogical practice) the main aspect to be dealt with is the professional preparation of the teacher, be it at the initial level or as a result of continuous education.

Ruth da Cunha Pereira (1994) discusses the professional development for primary teachers in Rio de Janeiro City. Her concern is with the planning of in-service education activities. Pereira, grounding on Joyce, Howey, Yarger (1976) argues that there are four dimensions involved in the matter, in what the operational structure is concerned: decision-making; the learning process; facilitators factors, and finally the modalities of in-service education. She believes that "the efficacy of in-service training depends on the productive interaction of those four dimensions" pp.34. The paper, essentially individual-based in its approach, is considered as a vivid, unaffected expression of a concern shared by the majority of the collaborators of the RBEP during the analysed period: to pursue a more competent teacher education so that a higher quality of education is, on its turn, achieved. Despite her intention of developing a critical analysis of the schemes of teacher in-service education (for instance, by stressing the importance of involving teachers in decision making, rethinking courses' contents and strategies, the need of permanent follow-up and proper assessment) after reading the paper it is noticed that she did not discuss critically the teacher professional development per se. Its relevance, possibilities, and limits are not discussed. Nevertheless she says: "To improve the school is to improve

the people, offering time and resources to them (...)" It may be timely to recall Arroyo's words when pointing to a certain 'logic' that requires urgent questioning:

> *"... the logic follows the same linear reasoning: let us qualify and re-qualify our teachers and we shall have a high quality school for, we do not have a school of good quality because we lack professional quality." (pp. 48).*

In 1995 Ruth da Cunha Pereira reports on a study of 'in-service training' carried out in Rio de Janeiro in the late eighties. Her report begins by reaffirming that teachers' poor initial education "if it is not the only cause of low quality of teaching, can be placed among the main factors responsible for it", revealing that the belief in teachers' incompetence as the main cause of the failure of the state school was still alive within academia. It is interesting to note that the author explicitly uses Arroyo's ideas to highlight the de-skilling of teachers, seemingly overlooking Arroyo's argument that the de-skilling of teachers is just ONE aspect of a **larger de-skilling of the school itself.** And so the author carries on to argue that those that want to fight for the democratisation of schooling cannot forget that resources for in-service training must be guaranteed.

The need to highlight the relevance of the teacher professional education, assuring investments to it, leaves little room for a broader view of the factors involved in the low quality of education. The emphasis placed on the teacher education ultimately overlooks the concrete conditions under which the teacher develops his/her work.

The belief on teacher's incompetence (due to the unsuitable teacher initial education) as one of the main aspects to be tackled seems to be still engaging the attention of educational research and policy makers. The reformulation of teachers initial education is considered to be necessary but limited, for only the future teachers would benefit from its improvement (Kramer, 1989). There are always the current teachers to be 'trained'. The recognition of that, says Kramer, leads the professionals working within the education system (from Universities to all levels of the SSE) to organise activities of teachers continuous education. Their main role has then been "to overcome the deficiencies caused by the inadequate initial teachers education" (Kramer, pp. 194).

3.2.2. Some dissonant voices on the RBEP and new tendencies

Despite the overwhelming influence of the idea of teacher's incompetence as the major element to be dealt with if any improvement in the quality of education is to occur, there are also some dissonant voices, apparently unknown or unheard by those in charge of defining the Education Policies.

As early as 1984, in the initial years of the so-called democratic government, Kramer and André (1984) present results of empirical research on the practices of 'good literacy teachers'. The authors work represented, at that time, an innovative approach as they privilege a different angle of the school reality. At a time when the concern with the school failure dominated the education scenario, they turned their attention to the successful literacy teachers. Their findings are quite interesting while portraying insightful descriptions of the pedagogical practice of teachers, represented a dissonant voice in the educational scenario for they seem to be seduced neither by the convincing idea of the teachers technical incompetence nor by the constructivist approach to literacy.[94] While presenting their findings, the authors question the two central concepts used by Mello: the technical competence and political commitment. Kramer and André identified in their 'successful' teachers a commitment that they rather call 'professional commitment' for it is related to the seriousness and dedication with which the teachers conduct their work. In what concern the 'competence' they disagree with Mello's distinction between 'competence' and 'love'. Mello says that those teachers that do not know what to do, they substitute their ignorance with love. The authors argue that their research, on the contrary, found that the 'successful' teachers they observed established strong affective relationships with their pupils. Moreover, the whole atmosphere of the classroom was "built by the teacher's manifestations of identification with the pupils, by the assistance in doing the tasks, by the establishment of disciplinary norms and by the children's reactions" (pp.534). So far as the pedagogical practice is concerned, their research showed that the successful teachers do not fit a single profile but combine both traditional and innovative approaches. Until the mid-nineties no other work is found in the RBEP that questioned the argument of teacher's incompetence.

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[94] See Souza, 1991, pp 16-19 for a detailed analyses of Kramer and André' s researches.

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Carmem Rita Guimarães Mattos, in a paper of 1995, reports an ethnographic classroom research in collaboration with teachers. The critical ethnography was one of the perspectives that during the nineties in Brazil have joined the dissonant voices that provided elements to question the argument of teacher incompetence. It is intrinsic to that perspective of researches the belief on teachers' capacity to think, research, and reflect. In short, to produce worthwhile knowledge.

Calderhead and Gates, (1993) consider that reflection has been widely recognised as a fundamental element in professional development of teachers. However, such claim has rarely been subjected to a detailed scrutiny. This terminology (reflective), they argue, has been used in various ways and informed by diverse theoretical frameworks: Dewey and Shön (reflection in-action), Kolb (experiential learn and adult learning) Carr and Kemis (critical theory). The papers presented in their book pose some further questions and point some areas for further development and research, however,

> *"they collectively point towards a view of professional growth which recognises teaching as a complex activity that is highly demanding both cognitively and affectively and is a process of continuos development in which teachers themselves have a high personal as well as professional investment, working as they do in a context of powerful ideological ad physical constraints. It is through a greater understanding of this professional growth through reflection that many researchers, teachers educators and teachers are currently seeking to improve the quality of education in our schools"(pp. 9-10).*

Some papers published around the nineties denote the influence of the idea of the "reflective practitioner" by Shön. The teacher is invited to research his/her own practice, reflecting critically about it: the teacher as 'a critical intellectual'. The field of teacher continuous education is then the privileged place to discuss and reflect about the practice. Lucíola Santos, 1991 clearly grounds her suggestions on Shön's and Giroux's (1983,1988) thoughts. Taking the ideas of teacher as a 'critical intellectual' and 'reflection-on-the- action' she proposes a reformulation of the curriculum of teachers education courses. The reformulation of the courses would be "oriented by a pedagogical approach where the teaching-learning activities would have the solution of future problems of the practice as the central axis" (pp. 324).

3.3 Closing remarks

The review of the literature undertaken so far showed the presence of the linear logic, observed by Arroyo in the synopses of Conferences on Teacher Education: teacher education should include more theory and practice. The idea of teacher's incompetence is underneath the logic that has oriented the reductionist conceptions and actions of TPD; such logic can be enunciated as follows: "we do not have a school of good quality because we lack teachers of professional quality (or professional competence)."

As we presented on section 3.2, the selected papers from the RBEP frequently use the idea of teacher's competence, particularly from mid-to late eighties. Our analysis revealed that the concept of competence is used in connection with its opposite: the idea of the teacher 's incapacity and incompetence to teach. We argue that there is, at the level of the educational literature on teacher education, a group of ideas concerning teachers, teaching and the strategies of dealing with its problems, which are collectively named here as the *"argument of the incompetence"*. It affirms basically the following:

> The quality of state education is low because we have badly trained teachers. They do not have adequate initial education, hence the teacher does not have the required (technical) competence to teach (Warde and Boulos,1984; Fávero, 1987; Candau and coll,1987; Kramer, 1989). The teacher should then be better trained. The reformulation of teachers initial education is necessary but limited, for only the future teachers would benefit from it (Kramer, 1989). Teacher continuous education would supply the teacher with what is missing: new theories, methods, and techniques so that the **quality of education** could be improved (Brandt, 1987; Kramer et al, 1987; Kramer, 1989; Berger and Berger, 1993; Pereira, 1995).

The *'argument of incompetence'*, as found in its version in the educational literature, may sound logical and convincing. That is so because it lays its grounds on propositions and ideas that are, to a certain extent, correct such as the low quality of most of the teacher education courses and the need of providing teachers with TPD activities. As we presented in Chapter Two, subsection 2.1, the uncontrolled manner in which the expansion of the private sector occurred in Higher education had

negative effects to the quality of primary education. The quality of the courses offered by the vast majority of private institutions was, and still is, highly unsatisfactory. The primary teaching was directly and indirectly affected as most of the leavers of the private schools found work at the state basic teaching, either as a secondary or as a primary teacher. Therefore, we do not disagree with the result of the studies that revealed the poor quality of the initial education that is being offered by most of the institutes, faculties and universities dedicated to prepare primary and secondary teachers. We do not agree with the conclusion that many educators and researchers have reached from that analysis: "we do not have a school of good quality because we lack teachers of professional quality (or professional competence)". That is because there are problems in that conclusion and inaccuracies that need to be taken into account. Let us do that by analysing *the 'argument of incompetence'* in its main components:

a) *"The quality of state education is low mainly because we have badly trained teachers. They do not have adequate initial education, hence the teacher does not have the required (technical) competence to teach".*

Yes and No. Yes, there is no dispute that teacher initial education (both at the University and at the Secondary levels) must be improved. Therefore to a certain degree teachers are not being adequately prepared to teach. Initial education does play an important role in teachers' practice, which is, in its turn, one of the elements involved in the attainment of a good quality education. But is the teacher education the sole or primary cause for the low quality of education? Is the teacher education the sole or primary contributing aspect to the actual teacher pedagogical work? The answer is "no", for both questions. To centre our attention only on the level of teacher education is a reductivist strategy that restricts and rather simplifies our understanding of the aspects related to the teachers' pedagogical work. Perosa, with Therrien, refers to a tendency within the educational field of establishing a direct relation between (poor) quality of education and the (poor) quality of teaching practice, the (poor) teacher education being chosen as the explaining factor of the (poor) quality of teaching practice. To alter the teacher pedagogical work attention is required (and action) not only to the level of teacher education. The importance of the concrete conditions under which the teacher develops her/his work is not to be

underestimated nor overlooked. Maria Laura Barbosa Franco, 1995 argues in a similar direction[95]. She pointed to fact that "downplaying the relevance of social and material difficulties faced by the school, insisting solely on the pedagogical dimension, can result in a linear and simplistic outlook".

Arroyo also warned us about the *linear logic* underneath the statement: "*we do not have a school of good quality because we lack (teachers) of professional quality*"(1996, pp. 48)

b) "*The teacher should then be better trained. The reformulation of teachers initial education is necessary but limited, for only the future teachers would benefit from it*"

Yes, it sounds right to claim that teachers should have a professional education. If that is true, it seems correct to advocate that some scheme of TPD should be implemented as any reform of the teacher initial education would have a limited scope as only the new teachers would benefit from it. Teachers may benefit from attending TPD activities. In fact, it seems there would be no controversy around the proposition that teachers not only have the duty but also have the right to continuously develop themselves as professionals. However, we consider being highly problematic to base the whole enterprise of TPD on the grounds of teacher incompetence. We argue it is at least tactically mistaken. We see that it is not wise to try to convince a teacher that she (he) should, for instance, attend a course on new literacy theories on the grounds of her (his) incompetence. Our experience with teachers demonstrate that in a context where the social image of state schools are negative, the teachers feel the need of developing to themselves and to the close community a more positive image of their work. The mistake is to suppose it would be easier (or indifferent, perhaps) to persuade a teacher to continuously develop herself *because* she has been an inadequate (or incompetent) professional.

Even considering that there are problems in the education of teachers, some studies showed that teachers are not convinced or not aware of their deficiencies, (Mello,

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[95] Franco. Maria Laura P. Barbosa "Qualidade total na Formação profissional: do texto ao contexto.

1982; Gatti et al. 1975; Trezza, 1985;)[96]. Teachers may accept incompetence as long as it is an attribute of the 'other'. Trezza (cited by Andaló) argued that primary teachers ``... do not muse on the role of competence and professional improvement unless they refer to the incompetence of others". She argues that ``... the problems of a bad professional formation do not appear as an explanation for a possibly poor action, nor does the issue of competence arise as a cause of unsatisfactory learning by pupils; but it does show up in references to the 'beginners' poor formation' and 'the incompetence of others', particularly of the education experts or school's deans." (Trezza, 1985 p. 102,103.) That is probably a side effect of the 'argument of incompetence': the difficulties faced by the participating agents in sharing responsibility when that would mean to assume his/hers incompetence. As we have already pointed out in a previous section, with Henderson (1979, p. 22 cited by Howey), we argue that an approach of TPD which is based on the strategy of identifying and 'correcting' deficiencies of individual teachers is destined to fail.

c) "Teacher continuous education would supply the teacher with what is missing: new theories, methods, and techniques so that the quality of education could be improved"

We disagree with that statement. Our perspective is in line with what have been labelled the "dissonant voices". They help us to go resist the dominant trends of TPD. That is: to take TPD alone as a way of correcting the faults of initial education.

As discussed before, teachers do not need "suppliers" or translators of new theories, methods, and techniques (Andaló, 1989; Patto, 1990; Souza, 1991, amongst others). It has been argued teachers need interlocutors, good listeners.

We allow ourselves to play a little with Mello's words: What is most missing? Is it teacher professional competence or governors and policy makers' true political

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[96] Gatti, Mello, and Rovai (1975) evaluate a training programme for first grade teachers carried by the municipal Secretariat of Education in the seventies. In what concerns the evaluation of the content of the course (topics of Literacy and Mathematics), the results show that the achievement of the group of teachers was very unsatisfactory. In addition, the data revealed that the teachers difficulties were in the areas (of literacy) that both teachers and monitors believed were those areas they were better prepared.

commitment with the state education? Some authors argue that the professional preparation of teachers have improved lately as a result of the intense debate around the idea of developing their "competence" (Garcia, 1996; Arroyo, 1996), but the result for the quality of the school is not necessarily proportional, as the basic indicators consistently testify.

A possible answer is given with Azanha's help: the improvement of individual teachers does not necessarily lead to the improvement of the school itself. The school belongs to other unit of analyses (the institution). The schools are not the mere result of individual teachers... And most of the attempts at TPD had taken *an individual approach* aiming it is the teacher, "unfit for the task", that need to be trained, retrained and improved.

Our alternative model takes the view that to improve the quality of education is necessary to improve our schools, to help the school to build, collectively, its pedagogical project.

The *'argument of incompetence'* has been used as a powerful explanation for the low quality of education and it justifies the adoption of teacher professional development programmes as a way to deal with the teachers' incompetence.

The review showed that the concept of competence pervades the literature over the years but it was particularly strong in the mid- to late-eighties, the apogee of the argument of teachers incompetence. The latter *argument* shows some signs of decline in the mid-nineties, as other concepts emerge: the reflective teacher, researcher-teacher and collaborator-teacher. The teacher started to be asked to reflect upon his/her own practice (Santos, 1991) or to develop research projects in partnership with University lecturers (André and Fazenda, 1991; Mattos, 1995, Bueno, 1998).

As we said earlier on the Introduction, the lack of studies about teachers professional development contrasts with the real blooming of teachers professional development programmes and courses observed in the period. There is then a certain lack of researches, as the actions of continuing education (as part of the education policies)

were increasingly gaining importance and effectively being developed since the mid-eighties.

In this context, a detailed critical analysis of the education programmes developed by São Paulo State between 1982 and 1993, including their programmes of teacher professional development, and the perspective of those directly involved in the *actions* carried out by the SSE, are important elements of our research. Our purpose is to continue with the task of tracing how the idea of teachers' incompetence appears at the education policies level. Some questions still remain to be answered: How does the concept of competence (and the "*'argument of incompetence'*") appear on the education programmes? And how is it understood and used by all the agents involved with the matter? How do the education programmes address the teachers? What has been expected from the teachers? How do Policy Makers view teachers? These are the questions that oriented the analysis of the educational programmes, presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Education Policies and the domain of the argument

of incompetence

This chapter aims to present a critical analysis of the education programmes developed by São Paulo State between 1982 and 1993, including their programmes of teacher professional development. We are particularly interested in following how the idea of teacher incompetence emerges at the education policies level. As we pointed out in Chapter Three, the argument of the teacher incompetence appeared in the educational literature and had its apogee in the mid-to late-eighties. That includes the period of time of the education programmes we analyse. Our analysis showed that 'the *argument of incompetence*' has its domain in the level of the education policies. The form it takes and the political role it plays are presented in the last section of this chapter.

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 aim to set the policy and political context for our subsequent analysis of the three education programmes discussed by this thesis. These two initial sections contain the history of the education policies we are interested in. In section 4.2 we discuss the character those policies took when developed and implemented as educational programmes in some of the most influential states in the country, namely, the Southeastern states, with special attention to São Paulo State. The two main educational programmes carried out by the state of São Paulo are presented in detail and critically analysed in section 4.3. The Quality School Programme and the Preparation Programme are the subject of the discussion carried out in section 4.4.

4.1 Introduction

The socio-political context in the eighties played an important role in the new education policies scenario. The period between the end of the seventies and the late

eighties was characterised by the 'fight for democracy' (Cunha, 1991)[97]. The year 1982 was a landmark in the process for the re-establishment of the democracy in the country. Direct elections for Governors took place that year. After a long military dictatorship the opposition party managed to win the elections in ten out of twenty-three states across the country, including the most populated, economic developed and influential states such as São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Paraná and Minas Gerais[98], as well as to increase the number of opposition member in the National Congress. The climate of re-democratisation affected all spheres of social life, including education.

The opposition governments that took power at state level in 1982 were elected with the political platform of re-establishing democracy. The more organised sectors of the population that worked to elect those governors expected their governments to be more committed to good social policies than the previous military governments were.

State Education occupied a special place in the social policies carried out by the government of those states. A common feature among the educational proposals carried out by those Governments is the emphasis on achieving a better quality of state education for the popular sectors.

São Paulo State launched the Basic Cycle Programme with the purpose of improving the schools. From 1982 to 1994 the SSE carried out three education programmes aiming to tackle the so-called school failure. The analyses of the programmes show that gradually, the in-service education programmes started to figure as the strategy of choice in dealing with the low quality of the educational system. More comprehensive and extensive programme of that kind was carried out in the beginning of the nineties. It was called Preparation Programme. This programme shall be analysed later. In order to provide a wider context in which this programme is placed, an account of previous educational programmes is presented and discuss first.

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[97] This period was analysed by Cunha (1991). While discussing the education policies and the process of democratic transition Cunha privileges an issue he considers as of the utmost relevance: the opposition between the supporters of state (public) education and those in favour of private education. Within this issue he discusses two aspects: a) destination of public resources, and b) laical public education.

[98] These four states gathered then 48% of the national population and 62% of the Gross National Product (Cunha, 1991,p.107)

4.2 The education policies: teachers work as the main target

This section presents a trend observed in the education policies carried out by São Paulo State between 1983 and 1990. The analysis shows an increasing tendency to focus on the teacher and their professional development. Evidence of that is presented from the analysis of the education programmes implemented during the period, presented next. It can be also confirmed by the increase in the number of TPD courses. The analysis also showed that the State Secretariat for Education (SSE), through its central and intermediate bodies, carried out in-service education projects aiming at **improving the teachers' competence**.

Another feature observed refers to the relations between the group of teachers and the upper levels of the SSE. The analyses of the literature demonstrated tensions underlying the relations between teachers and upper levels of the SSE. Although teachers are usually regarded as an important element for improvement to the quality of education, they have been mainly considered (and treated) as an **incompetent resource** rather than co-participants in the formulation and development of new educational programmes. Teachers tend to be viewed as mere executors of programmes that were designed at higher levels.

4.2.1 The first elected governments and their educational programmes: 1983-1990[99]

This section discusses the way the Southeastern states of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, with special attention to São Paulo State, developed and launched their education policies. The role attributed to teachers within the education policies is also analysed. The information about Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais states will be used as a matter of comparison in order to examine if the trends observed in São Paulo State are peculiar to it or have more general status.

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[99] Respectively at São Paulo State: Franco Montoro 1983-86 and Orestes Quércia 1987-1990.

4.2.1.1 Rio de Janeiro State

Education was considered of maximum priority by the state government that took office in 1983. In the beginning of his mandate Leonel Brizola[100] creates a special Commission of Education and Culture to define and execute the policies in the areas of Education and Culture[101.] The Commission defined the aims and plans for education in a document entitled 'Quadrennial Plan of Education'[102]. While awaiting for the approval by the State Council of Education and by the Legislative Chamber, the Commission's co-ordinator decided to promote a general meeting with primary school teachers in order to discuss the education problems and the government proposal for education.

For this purpose, the Commission prepared a document called Theses *("Teses")*, to be discussed by all teachers. This document contains 45 items for discussion. After two rounds of meetings, 110 representatives of teachers prepared the final reports to be discussed in a third meeting, known as The Mendes Meeting.

The Mendes Meeting ended up in a confrontation between the members of the Commission and the teachers' representatives. An analysis of *Teses,* prepared by the Commission can help to understand why the teachers' reaction was so negative. The analyses in this document emphasise the discriminatory and elitist features of the school and **the role played by the teacher in that**. The school is described as unjust, dishonest and inefficient for it has not been able to teach the majority of its pupils. The document, in Cunha's words:

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[100] Leonel Brizola was exiled from Brazil following the military coup of 1964. He was allowed to return to the country in August 1979 with the sanctioning of the Amnesty Law.

[101] The chairman of this commission is the vice-governor, Darcy Ribeiro, a well-known anthropologist. The other members are the state secretaries of education, science, and culture; the municipal secretary of education, and the chancellor of the State University of Rio de Janeiro.

[102] The Quadrennial Plan of Education (Plano Quadrienal de Educação) is part of the general state planning for economic and social development – State of Rio de Janeiro Economic and Social Development Plan 1984/1987 (Plano de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social do Estado do Rio de Janeiro 1984/1987).

*"did not spare the teachers of charges of them acting as instruments of this discrimination, **qualifying them as incompetent, accomplices** and beneficiaries of the lack of commitment towards the education of the poor children (without using these words)" (Cunha, 1991, p. 138).*

The intention of debating with teachers seems to have the specific purpose of obtaining their political support to the Government's proposals. The suitability of the proposed programmes was not on the meeting's agenda. From the moment teachers started to disagree with the analyses and with the proposals the attitude towards them changed. This is clear in the dismissal of teachers' opinion on the CIEP[103] case. None of the groups of the teachers' representatives supported the CIEP project; some considered it utopian within the current conditions of schools. Others reject it for its patronising features. Instead of building a parallel network of big full-time schools (the CIEP) teachers suggested the expansion of the educational system through building medium-size schools. Nevertheless the education policy is announced the next year: it is centred around the CIEP. The existent network of schools is considered **"unrecoverable"** in respect of both material and **human resources.** Conflicts between teachers, through their Association, and the intermediate levels of the education system persisted until the end of the mandate of this government.

4.2.1.2 Minas Gerais State

Tancredo Neves[104], the governor elected in 1982, choose as the Secretary of Education a young but experienced lecturer at Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), Otavio Elisio Brito. He formed the directive staff of the SSE with lecturers from the Institute of Education - UFMG.

The composition of the SSE did not please the powerful conservative forces within the state of Minas Gerais and the Secretary did not get their political support. In this

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[103] CIEP stands for "Integrated Centre for Public Education" (Centro Integrado de Educação Pública). That was the leading, full-time school government project

[104] Tancredo Neves was a very influential politician not only in his State but also within the national scenario. In 1985, an alliance between all the oppositions political parties was made around his candidacy. He became the first civil president elected by the National Congress. Unfortunately he died a few days before taking office.

context, the Secretary and his team had to muster political support from other groups. Hence, they organised the "Minas Gerais Congress of Education" in which all interested parties were invited to participate: teachers, school staff, parents and students. The aim was to define guidelines to establish education policies for the state from the analyses and suggestions made during the Congress. Schools in all the municipalities were the gathering place for all people interested in discussing the education and its questions. A great number of people were involved in the organisation of the Congress and the community attended to the event in force[105]. The education policies proposed were constituted on a document produced as a result of the whole process. This was the Basic Cycle- CB Programme, proposed and implemented in 1983.

Despite the relative success of the event, criticisms were made by both the organising committee and by the school staff union[106]. It is interesting to observe the different nature of the criticisms made by the two groups. The differences indicate an underlying tension in the relationships between them.

The organising committee made the following criticisms:

a) The "community" did not participate as much as it was expected. That was so either because of the authoritarianism of some head teachers that did not invite parents and students to the debates, or because of the scepticism of some teachers about the whole process. This way of conduct the debate would disseminate the same scepticism among colleagues and parents.

b) The problems raised during the municipal meetings were not properly discussed in the regional meetings. The latter became only a place to complain and to make demands.

The school staff association made criticisms that are much more organisational in nature.

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[105] More than 15,000 schools participated in all its four phases, including state, municipal and private schools.

a) The criteria to choose the representatives were **not democratic**. The Union wanted to have representatives of all professionals working at school.

b) The Union claimed it should be given special attention in **their demands for better conditions of work at schools.**

c) The School staff union and the State Teachers Association of Minas Gerais considered of high priority to hold elections for head teachers and *delegados de ensino* (a directive position among the local authorities). They claimed, as well, deliberative powers to the school council.

The relationships between the teachers and the "government" were tense, as it can be noticed by the criticisms made during the *Minas Gerais Congress of Education*. It could be said that on the one hand, teachers were asking for better conditions of work and for decentralisation of the decision-making. On the other hand, the "government" criticises teachers for the use of the Congress as an instrument to make material claims. Cunha argues, however, that Minas Gerais State had made a step towards a more democratic way of conducting the formulation of education policies.

4.2.1.3 São Paulo State

The political platform of the candidate *Franco Montoro* was based on the thesis defending the expansion of the 'democratic life', priority to social policies, and institutional-administrative reorganisation (Perez, 1990).

With respect to Education, the diagnosis made by Montoro's government pointed out serious problems with the educational system: low quality of teaching, high rates of dropout, low teachers' wages, very bad conditions of work on schools, and unsuitable teachers in-service training. This scenario would be a consequence of the bad use of funding on education, political patronage and corruption within the educational system, and imposition of educational reforms without the participation of the interested groups.

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[106] União dos Trabalhadores do Ensino - UTE (Union of Workers in Teaching)

The proposal of Montoro's government to cope with those problems can be roughly summarised in the following actions: a) decentralisation of the SSE transferring responsibilities to the regional bodies. b) introduction of changes into the teachers' conditions of work, such as redefinition of the teachers' time spent in and out of classes. c) increase of daily attendance on the first grades of primary education.

As it occurred in the Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais states, an initial contact with teachers was attempted by the first secretary of education[107]. The "re-democratisation" climate of the country at the time meant that such "politically correct" forms of relationship should at least be given a chance. The *Education Forum* was intended to be a channel for expressing the demands in the area. A document was prepared for discussion by the 200,000 professionals in education working in the state school system. The document asserts that the new government does not have a closed proposal but a range of possible ways of dealing with problems which would be discussed with teachers. So, the analysis of the official documents shows that the strategy chosen by the Government would be the identification of problems and proposition of solution by the schools. The SSE would work in the direction of providing the support to each school's plan.

However, according to Cunha 1991 the *Forum* failed in its purposes: "the effort to provoke a debate and make new proposals ended up melancholically" (Cunha, 1991, p. 198). Comparing the *Forum* with similar events carried out by the other secretariats of education, it neither worked as a means of spreading the ideas of the secretary, as in Rio de Janeiro, nor as a means of articulating the diffuse demands, as it occurred in Minas Gerais (Cunha, 1991, p.196). Cunha argues that that occurred due to the lack of a clear political and pedagogical direction by the SSE. It did not know what to do with the huge amount of varied claims and proposals sent by the schools.

After that first attempt, represented by the *Forum*, a significant shift in the position adopted by the SSE is evident. Instead of working **with the teachers**, through their participation by the definition of a school based plan, the SSE ended by defining a

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[107] The Montoro's government had three Secretaries of Education (1983-1987)

centralised action, compulsory to all schools. The Basic Cycle (CB) was devised and imposed on the state school system, against the promises of participation and school autonomy with respect to pedagogical, administrative and financial aspects. Specialists from the SSE interviewed by Cunha unanimously said that the CB represented an intervention into the education system.

So, at the end of 1983 the CB Programme was announced as the new educational programme. This programme was much more a result of the ideas from consultants than from the teachers' suggestions. Our interview with Louise, one of the members of the central level body supports this same conclusion. She mentioned a group of projects developed at the Carlos Chagas Foundation - FCC (1982) as providing the inspiration to the CB programme. With respect to the demands by the *Forum* she argues that "that assessment of what the teachers aspired to... it was very reactionary (...) the things they asked reflected this deeply entrained amalgam of the reactionary thought". The interviewee's conservative conception about who is entitled to be involved with policy making is evident. She attributes a much higher value to the knowledge produced within the academic spheres when compared to that produced by the teacher's practice. Teachers are viewed as too conservative and their analyses biased by self-interest.

In 1987, the first Secretary of Education of the Quércia government announced the ten guidelines of his actions on the SSE. The first two are directly related to the teachers and their professional education: a) to value the teachers and b) boost initial and continuing education of teachers. As it was noticed when compared with the Montoro's Government guidelines, **teachers and their education became more and more in focus**.

In 1988 the SSE launched a complementary programme, once again in a top-down model, modifying some features of the CB. It was named *Single Work Shift to teachers and pupils of* Basic Cycle- or simply *Single work shift* - CB-*JU*. This was, as the CB, a top-down programme. Their main features shall be presented and discussed shortly.

4.2.2 New Governors, new programmes, old relations

Conflicts and tensions permeated the relations between the SSE and the teachers (usually through their associations). Disagreements on the suitability of the proposed educational programmes were observed. The level of disagreement can vary from state to state but teacher strikes demanding the establishment of better policies on salaries occurred during all three mandates becoming a sad reality in the schools during the decade. Our position is that it is of vital importance to pay due attention to issues involving teachers' career and salaries. These issues have not been considered seriously by the Secretariats of Education. Their importance to the establishment of a good quality of the school system has been overlooked by education authorities and governments.

Despite their initial intentions of imprinting a more democratic way of conducting educational matters, the Secretariats of Education ended by **defining and imposing on a top-down basis their educational programmes.** This way of defining and implementing the social policies is not new in the political-educational scenario. On the contrary, it is very much in tune with the old traditional manner inherited from the authoritarian military governments[108]. The expectations that the civil governments would build a more democratic way of conducting the social life were not met. The re-establishment (or perhaps the construction would be a more precise term) of more democratic social practices is an ongoing process. However, one of the required ingredients seemed to be missing: the educational authorities' belief in the teachers' capacity to make reasonable considerations. But, if teachers were considered 'incompetent' or 'accomplices' of an anti-popular school, they would hardly be viewed as 'partners' in the formulation of new educational programmes. The teachers' disagreement is either ignored by the authorities or treated as 'irrational' or 'reactionary resistance to change,' not as a symptom to be understood

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[108] Unnecessary to say that this way of conducting the social policies is not peculiar to the military regime. But in the Brazilian context (perhaps in the South American Regimes) 'authoritarianism' became associated with 'military'.

or as an opportunity to 'stimulate critical reflection about and collective change in practice.'[109]

4.3 Basic Cycle (CB) and Basic Cycle in a Single work Shift for teachers and pupils of basic cycle (CB-JU) (1983 – 1989)

4.3.1 Introduction

Until the previous government the logic of the compensatory education, in tune with the Deprivation Theories, was one of the higher priorities (Triennial Plan –1980-1982). Perez (1990) argues that the intra-school causes are considered by the Plan but the emphasis is placed on the so-called **'exogenous factors'** when the polices for the period were defined. Among them is highlighted "the need of early insertion in the work market of a significant part of the students that is associated with a series of bio-psycho-social deprivations and insufficiencies". (Perez, 1990,pp.6 apud Plano Trienal)

The former education policies were still conceived under the influence of the Deprivation Theories. So priority was given to actions to **compensate** the supposed deficiencies of the students, as early as possible, ideally at pre-school age. The school and the teacher remained still very much out of the criticism. The CB, however, took the first step (in terms of education policies) **to bring to the debate the school and 'the way it works'**. The teacher emerged as the main target due to his/hers chief role on the teaching-learning process. So, three out of four changes introduced by the CB were related to the classroom level involving therefore the work of teachers.

This section contains a descriptive analysis of the Basic Cycle- CB and *Single Work Shift to teachers and pupils of* Basic Cycle- CB-*JU* programmes, based in the official documents.[110] It is also presented a detailed critical analysis of the education programmes developed by São Paulo State between 1982 and 1993, including their

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[109] Hargraeves and Fullan, op cit, pp. 5.

[110] The complete list of the consulted documents is found after the references.

programmes of teacher professional development, and the perspective of those directly involved by the *actions* carried out by the SSE. Within that it is also presented how the idea of competence (and the "*argument of incompetence*") appear on the education programmes. Finally, we describe the context for the empirical fieldwork, presented in Chapter Five.

4.3.2 Basic Cycle CB

4.3.2.1 The CB rationale

The CB Programme was launched at the end of the 1983. The CB aims at dealing with the high rates of repetition and dropout that are persistently found in the first grades of primary education, which have been historically regarded as the main problem of primary education. In its first article, the aims of the programme are established:

> "*I- To assure the pupils will have* **enough time** *to master the literacy process according to* **their learning pace and their sociocultural background.** *II- To offer the necessary conditions for the pupil's development required for the other curriculum subjects. III- To assure the schools will have the required flexibility to organise the curriculum with respect to: distribution of pupils among the groups; content; criteria for the assessment of teaching-learning process.*" *(Decree Number 21833, 28/12/83; our emphasis).*

In a document prepared by The *Technical Advisory on Planning and Educational Control* (ATPCE) the Basic Cycle proposal is detailed. The CB is grounded on the following reasoning:

The urban development that took place in previous decades was followed by an increase of the demand for education. The education system has been expanded to meet that demand but the goal of democratisation of primary school is still to be achieved. Rates of repetition on the first grade are very high (40% in average) and only 1/3 of pupils manage to complete primary schooling in eight years (i.e. without repeating any grade). The causes for this situation are, amongst others, the way school works. What are these 'others causes' they are referring to? Whatever they may be, why they are not considered? Would they be the suitable conditions of work,

for both teachers and pupils? Would they include the teachers career and decent salaries? The documents do not mention that.

Their analysis follows the reasoning that:

> *"When the school became available to the popular classes it was not reformulated to receive a different clientele."* *[São Paulo (estado), 1986, page 11, our emphasis].*

What is then this "way school works?" And who are the "different clientele"? In what aspects are they different? Those questions are addressed by the documents and pedagogical materials published by the SSE.

The document, then, continues arguing that 'the school' (as an abstract entity, not considering as concrete institutions with heterogeneous and various practices and conceptions[111]) expects pupils to learn to read and to write in one year; thus "it does not take into account the cultural background and the individual development which act as variants on the required time for learning the reading and writing" (op. cit., page 12). The document continues "every pupil - even those from a **culturally deprived** background - can learn how to read and write if they are given enough time and adequate condition to do that" [op. cit., p 12, our emphasis].

These 'adequate conditions' involve the reorganisation of the classroom work and the pedagogical practices: more time for learning reading and writing and the adoption of new literacy theories.

Our analysis confirmed what has been pointed out by Cruz, 1994 and Perosa, 1997: the adoption of the Deprivation Theories to explain the causes of the school failure, mainly in its Version of Cultural Difference[112]. In short, according to that version, the North-American society is multicultural but the values and standards of the middle classes are dominant. So the school follows the culture of the middle classes,

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[111] See more about our conception about the heterogeneous character of schools in Chapter Five.

[112] See chapter Two for the discussion of the explanations of the causes of the school failure, and the criticisms of the Deprivation Theories. The Deprivation Theories were devised in the 60's in the USA. It resulted from several studies and researches made by professionals from various areas of knowledge. This thesis follows a grouping of that theory suggested by Patto (1984): Version of Cultural Deficiency (or Deficit), and Version of Cultural Difference.

giving rise to conflicts with the other minority groups. Those groups, with a "different culture" are psycho-socially deprived. The school would be unsuitable for that "different child".

The same position is found in the full time school project – the CIEP – at Rio de Janeiro State and in many other educational programmes, as the DT was an influential and hegemonic body of ideas in the 70's and 80's (Paro at alli, 1988). Cruz 1994, on her research project about the processes of appropriation of the Basic Cycle, draws attention to the preconceptions and prejudices against poor children and their families underlying the CB proposal. In her words "It is worth noting that the CB conception seems to be based on the belief in the incompetence of poor people, disseminated within our society." (pp. 31).

Despite the criticisms that can be addressed now, at the time the CB programme was implemented the Cultural Difference Version represented a position adopted by large sectors of academicians and educational authorities.[113]

Resuming the CB's rationale: the school (particularly, **the teacher**) does not take into consideration the socio-economic and cultural background of the working classes children. They have a 'different learning pace' (meaning slower) [op. cit., pp. 11-2].. So, it is important to assure to all pupils the possibility of continuing the process of learning This possibility would be given by the reformulation of the organisation of the school, the criteria of assessment having a central place. That is: the first and the second grades would be joined in a cycle of two years, removing the possibility of repetition between these grades.

The following actions were taken:

A) The first and second grades no longer exist but are re-constituted into a **cycle of two years.** The purpose is to assure the continuity of the literacy process.

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[113] For a comprehensive critical analysis of the Cultural Deprivation Theories, see Patto, 1984 and 1990.

B) "New" alternatives of pupils' distribution among the groups can be used. Pupils can be **transferred** from a group to another during the academic year, to make the groups more homogeneous in terms of pupil's learning paces.

C) Pupils with learning difficulties would receive two extra daily hours of a more individualised attention (Supplementary Aid Group - GAS)

D) Two-hour meetings per week, for teachers.

An important change in the explanations for causes of the school failure is noticed in the Education policies within the period analysed. And this change started with the CB: from the extra-school factors to intra-school.

4.3.2.2. CB *Implementation: scope, strategies and evaluation*

a) scope

In 1984 the implementation of the CB reached 842,238 pupils and around 30,000 teachers in both urban and rural areas. In 1985, in its second year of implementation, then involving also the former 2nd grade, it reached 1,547.000 pupils across the state and around 50,000 teachers (Document B- SSE, 1986, pp.15).

b) Strategies of implementation

The early times of the CB were especially difficult for teachers. Many teachers used to express their impression of the programme implementation saying that 'it appeared overnight'. That was not so far from what happened. Without prior notice, a **decree** introduced the CB programme on the closing days of 1983. In the beginning of the next academic year, in February 1984, teachers working with the first and second grades would be working under the CB rules.

Teachers were not informed or prepared in advance to work under the 'new' scheme. That was done 'during the process'. It took some time until more comprehensive organised actions were carried out to try to reach a greater number of teachers. During its first year the structural measures were the main concern of the SSE as a new pedagogical proposal was not yet clearly defined. According to Cruz, the central level of the SSE was aware of the need to rethink the current pedagogical practice.

So, from 1985 technicians from the central levels in charge of actions of professional development and preparation of pedagogical materials, made efforts to articulate a new proposal of literacy. The contributions and studies of the fields of linguistic and psycholinguistic, particularly Emília Ferreiro and Ana Teberosky, were the main theoretical framework of their proposal to understand and to develop the activities involving literacy [114]. The 'cascade method' was used to inform and prepare the professionals that would be involved with the CB the SSE through its three organisational levels. Conferences, Meetings, seminars were developed. The leading professionals working at the central level organised meetings and training sessions with the intermediate levels of the system. The professionals of this level, by their turn, organised meetings and training sessions with the *Delegacia de Ensino*'s professionals. And then, the DEs re-passed the information to the schools.

This strategy proved to be problematic, as is recognised by the agents of the central bodies of the SSE.

> *"As the information flow within the SE is hindered by the complexity of its structure (it has to go through three administrative levels before it gets the school) it was found that by the end of the first semester [115] of 1984 a great number of teachers and head teachers did not have the required information about the* Basic Cycle". (Document B -SSE, 1986, pp.17)

Serious problems regarding the use of the cascade method were reported by Kramer et alii (1987), and already commented in Chapter Three. To recall two of them: the linear conception of policy process and the *prescriptive tone* that the programme usually assumes.

To fill the gap of the implementation, and to reach a greater number of people in a shorter period of time the SE developed in the second semester of 1984 the **IPÊ Project**[116], a modality of distance education[117]. The project involves short courses for teachers using a multimedia system: television programme, radio, and written

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[114] Cruz, 1994, pp 34.

[115] The school year in Brazil is made of two semesters: from February to June/July and from August to December.

[116] 'IPÊ' is a type of Brazilian tree

[117] The **IPÊ Project** will be discussed more extensively after presenting the CB-JU programme.

materials, in a coordinated action. Teachers (compulsory attendance to CB teacher) other professionals of education, and student teachers attended the sessions. The module 'Basic Cycle' was made of seven television programmes and papers for debate.

Over the years, the central bodies of the SSE (mainly CENP) prepared various documents to back the implementation process at the same time the teacher would become more *qualified*, in the sense of professionally developed. Teachers had contact with the material basically through meetings held on the three levels of the system and by the IPE project. The analyses of those documents produced in the first two years show they had two main purposes: **to inform** teachers about the CB programme and **to form** them to work within the CB pedagogical proposal. Our analysis of the content of the documents reveals that the issues involving Literacy were dominant, initiating a trend followed since then. The reading of the titles and brief note about the content of the papers[118] shows that Literacy is the main theme discussed. This information was also confirmed by the interviews with the team in charge of the Project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice'.

c) Evaluation of the implementation

CENP[119], through its research section (SE), was supposed to follow-up the implementation of the CB. In a study about its level of implementation the SE applied a questionnaire to a sample of 314 schools (Document A). It intended to investigate the 'opinion of the teachers that work with the CB, preferably the one with greater experience with literacy'. The criterion to choose the teacher with more

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[118] The documents are the following:

1) IPE Project – Basic Cycle Module (CENP 1984/1985"). It is a modality of distance education. Seven small papers to be discussed after watching the respective TV programmes on CB issues. The content of the seven documents involved issues such as literacy, assessment, learning problems.

2)Rethinking Literacy - 1985). It is a series of five papers written by well-known lecturers. These papers are complemented by TV programmes. The papers discuss issues related to literacy practices, oral and written languages in the school context, criticisms to the Cultural Deprivation Theories

3) Basic Cycle – Special Edition 1984.

4)Literacy to Working Classes – Didactic of the Pre-Syllabic Level (1985). Paper used on the I State Meeting on Literacy, organised by CENP.

5)Basic Cycle and the Reorganisation of First Grade Teaching – Evaluation System

6)Resuming the Literacy Proposal (from document A CENP/SE, 1986, preliminary document, pp7)

[119] Stands for ' *Coordenadoria de Ensino e Normas Pedagógicas*' – – Bureau for Studies and

experience with Literacy is not explained by them. It is possible to question whether or not the sample is fully representative of the CB teachers. We believe that at most the results would provide a profile of the more experienced CB teachers[120].

The main findings were the following:

a) On the features of the CB teachers:

In 1983, to work at the first four grades at primary school required an especial course at Secondary Education level called *"Magistério"*. To work at the last four grades in the primary school and at the secondary school preparation at Higher Education level was required[121].

With respect to the CB teachers of the sample, all of them fulfil the legal requirements to work as CB teacher and nearly half of them have completed also a Higher Education course. He/she is tenured (83,1%), with ten years or more of experience (78%) and a good deal of experience of literacy classes (42% with more of ten years).

b) With respect to the implementation:

The data presented concerning the reading, understanding, and proper use of the information in the documents show evident problems. After two years of its beginning, **none of its documents was read by more than 65% of the teachers**. Moreover, a special edition prepared by CENP concerning the Basic Cycle seems to have reached less than half of the teachers[122]. The percentage of 'no answer' on all the documents is very high, being 37,2% the average among the twelve documents.

Pedagogical Norms.

[120] It is necessary to clarify that in Brazil primary teachers are not specialised in a specific grade. For example, a teacher may assume a CB group a certain year and assume a fourth grade in the next year. This condition introduces an extra element to increase the difficulties of reaching the teachers working on the CB as they may vary from year to year, as well as to count that the same group of CB teachers that was 'trained' will continue next year. There is no general information about the percentage of teachers that stay within the CB (or any other grade) for at least two consecutive years.

[121] New legislation (LDB) in 1996 introduced some changes to the mentioned requirement. As it is established, preparation at Higher Education will be obligatory, at medium term, to work at all levels of teaching.

[122] The document referred to is Basic Cycle – Special Edition 1984.

This could be an indication that teachers: a) did not receive the documents; b) received the documents but did not read them; c) received and read the documents but did not remember about their content; d) refuse to answer the question. Whatever is the case, the teachers still had little information on the proposals of the CB via documentary sources. The information they managed to get was given by other sources, probably by their colleagues and superiors, not necessarily as accurate as it would be by the proper reading and discussing of the documents. Considering the high level of rejection suffered by the CB, particularly in its early years, described in the literature and confirmed by the interviewed team (see Chapter Six), it is possible to argue that the programme was interpreted by the CB teachers taking into account much more other people's opinions than their own reading of the documents.

72,7% of the teachers declared they had understood the CB proposal from the reading/discussing of the documents, but only 38% declared they had managed to implement it. That is certainly a point to think about regarding the development of policies of Teacher Professional Development. From the data provided by the teachers, we understand that:

a) From those teachers that say they could understand the proposal, **half of them** could not implement it. Why is that? If one **understands** a proposal, what may prevent them from putting it into practice?

b) Only 27,6% of all the teachers interviewed (remember that, as we argued before, they can be representative of the most experienced teachers, not of all of them) managed to work with the CB rules.

c) Nearly 30% of the teachers admitted not understanding the CB proposal (with the reading and discussing of the documents) but apparently that did not appear to them as a problem needing to be sorted out.

So far as in-service education and similar activities are concerned, the scenario also presented serious problems. For the complementary activities (in-service courses and pedagogical meetings) nearly half of the teachers 'just read' the documents without carrying out any other follow-up activity. *Only 7,6% of the respondents mentioned in-service courses.* This indicates how few opportunities of TPD were provided by the SSE, at that time, to the teachers. The IPÊ project which was created to reach a

greater number of teachers in a shorter time, is mentioned only by 2,2% of teachers as a source of orientation[123]. Pedagogical supervision, when existent, is given either by the intermediate levels of the system or by the head-teacher. There were, however, one third of teachers that declared they received *no orientation on their work at all*. This problem is interpreted by the document as a possible problem of lack of close collaboration between the teachers and the 'educational technicians'.

On its Final considerations, the document begins by saying:

> *"So far as the teachers' education is concerned, the* CB *has a personnel **formally prepared** to the good accomplishment of the educational task, although facing difficulties of technical-pedagogical, material, physical, and human natures."(op. cit., pp. 30, stress not on the original)*

Teachers *formally prepared* but facing all sorts of difficulties, including technical-pedagogical orientation to work under the CB new scheme. *Lack of suitable communication* between the intermediate bodies and the local level. These are the main problems the report identified[124].

The evaluation done by the ATPCE showed serious problems of definition and implementation, involving nearly every aspect of it. Problems were observed such as: a) disregard for teachers' opinion when defining the policies; b) lack of initial preparation and follow up activities; c) problems of distribution and discussion of the pedagogical material; d) problems of communication among different levels of the SSE; e) negligence of the anxiety and difficulties that follow any process of change... and so on.

Teachers suggested that opportunities to exchange experience with colleagues to acquire more information on the Curriculum subjects, have more opportunities for in-service education and the support of a pedagogical co-ordinator would provide the required conditions to implement the CB.

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[123] Considering the item 'from several mentioned sources' this percentage would be increased a little. Even in this case, it would not even reach 10% of the teachers.

[124] The discussion on these two elements shall be further developed in Chapter Six where the point of view of the Central level team is presented.

4.3.3 Single Work Shift to teachers and pupils of Basic Cycle- CB-JU (1988)

A new governor usually means a 'new' educational programme will be launched. Unfortunately, the discontinuity on the education policies has been the rule within the Brazilian scenario. Each governor - and sometimes each secretary for education - wants to have his name linked to a new programme that is generally presented as "the redemption" that will solve, once and for all, every problem education has. Some governors are clearly overblown.

> "... At the beginning of this year, the Secretary of Education made a true revolution that has caused impact all over Brazil. That is the Single Work Shift". (Orestes Quércia, Governor – Document 1-JU, 1988)

The *Single Work Shift to teachers and pupils of Basic Cycle-* or simply *Single Work Shift* (CB-*JU*) was the programme launched in 1988 by the second directly elected governor. From the same political party of the former governor, Orestes Quércia had a moral (and political) obligation to keep some level of continuity on his actions. He does so but not for the reasons just mentioned[125]. His first secretary for education introduces the new programme "as a pioneering project of structural recovery of São Paulo State Education". (Document 1-JU SSE, 1988, pp. 4)

The analyses of the programme show that in fact the *Single Work Shift* basically introduces some changes on the previous CB programme. That is in itself a positive feature as it represented some degree of continuity on the education policies.

The implementation of the *Single Work Shift* programme was to work to deal with some new and some old problem. These are that:

1) The rates of repetition in the CB were still around 40%.

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[125] The political short-sight of the majority of politicians is evident when, for instance, instead of stressing the aspect of continuity of their social policies (that is a positive aspect) the governor/secretary present it as 'new'. Even the name of the programme is chosen with that concern. Later, the 'natural' name is used: The Basic Cycle in a Single shift, which keeps the term 'Basic Cycle, which was clearly avoided in its original and official name as it was nicknamed 'Single Shift'

2) The pupils were attending school for only three hours and thirty minutes per day, in schools working in three shifts.

3) A change on the teacher's working agreement that resulted in inconsistencies between the CB proposal and the agreement [126]. The teacher on a part-time contract worked only four days a week with his/her class. In the fifth day the group has another teacher. The pupils who were in the supplementary aid group could have even another teacher. So, it was argued, the teacher responsible for the group did not spend enough time with his/her class[127] [Document 1-JU, SSE, 1988), p. 11-13].

The justification of the programme remains the same. That is: "when the school became available to the popular classes, it did not reformulate to receive a different clientele". Moreover the document that presents the CB-JU programme (SSE/1988), on its item 'justification' shows it was based on the CB programme's justification[128]. The rationale of the new programme is basically the same as the CB proposal. Again, the centre of the proposal is in tune with the Cultural Deprivation Theory: the increase of the school daily time so that children would have more time for learning. We consider that the argument of the 'difference' of the school clientele has contributed to: a) spread negative images about the majority of the pupils; b) lead to the mistaken idea that the teacher does not know her 'real pupils' due to poor initial education, when in fact we lack serious cultural studies on the various segments of the Brazilian popular classes (see discussion on the subject presented in Chapter Two, item 2.3); c) induce teachers to develop low expectations about the pupils from the popular classes, thereby contributing to the 'Pygmalion effect'[129].

The CB-JU introduced some changes in the conditions of work, for both pupils and teachers. Among the changes, the main ones are:

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[126] New legislation was introduced (LC 444/85) that resulted in reduction to the teacher's time spent in class. There were three types of contract: 1) partial journey (20 hours / 16 of them in class)2) complete journey (30 hours/ 24 of them in class) 3) full journey (40 hours/ 32 of them in class).

[127] It is important to bear in mind the possible negative consequences for the pupils' learning of having two or three teachers at the first grade. Souza (1991) stresses that the process of adaptation to the school involves a necessary understanding of the school rules, and those rules vary not only from school to school but also from teacher to teacher. So the pupil will have to readapt to each change of teacher.

[128] It is not impossible that the same group of persons had written it.

[129] We refer to the classical work of R. Rosenthal and L. Jacobson (1968) "Self-fulfilling Prophecies in the Classroom: teachers'expectation as unintended determinants of pupils' intellectual competence. ".

1. Increasing the daily attendance by the pupils on the CB.

2. Settling the teacher - in a full-time basis contract (40 hours journey) - in a single school with a single class.

3. Using the teachers' extra-class paid time to allow for **their continuing professional development** and to their following-up, supervision, assessment and control upon the teaching learning process (it is not clearly established in the documents what is meant by these activities).

Each school was now to have a **CB co-ordinator**. He/she is supposed to promote an integrated work among the CB teachers. The co-ordinator carries out - with the teachers - activities of planning, follow- up, control and assessment[130].

As is been argued, **gradually** the concern with teaching practice and activities of teacher professional development started to figure in the documents and in the practice as the strategy of choice in dealing with the low quality of the educational system. The CB-JU, in comparison to the CB, is more explicitly devised to modify the work of teachers at the classroom level. Teachers were expected to gradually change his/hers pedagogical practice. This practice (and the theories that inform it), usually regarded as 'traditional', had to be substituted for newer and better ones. The CB-JU, more than the CB shows such concern. Two concrete measures introduced by CB-JU clearly denote such concern: the extra-class paid time (HTP)[131] and the new position of a 'CB co-ordinator'.

The first measure, the extra-paid time, works as follows. CB teachers have, in principle, six hours per week - pedagogical- time -hour (HTP) to use with complementary activities to the classroom (pedagogical meetings, preparation of materials, attend in-service courses), as long as they are related to CB teaching. The teacher has to prepare a work plan at the beginning of the year to use these six-hour periods. These six hours-class are supposed to be spent, preferably, in the school.

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[130] The co-ordinators are elected on a yearly basis among primary teachers by their peers. They have to have one year (at least) of experience on teaching first grade groups. The co-ordinator works under a 20 class-hours a week working contract.

[131] The working agreement is 40 hour-class per week. One hour-class corresponds to fifty minutes. The time of the teacher is distributed as follows: 26 hours-class in class, 6 hours-class of pedagogical work (pedagogical meetings, in-service courses, appointments with pupils parents) and 8 hours-class

But, teachers have also eight hours-activity per week to use wherever it pleases him/her. So, if on the one hand schools/DE have the control on the HTP, the teacher has on the control over the eight hour-activity (they usually argue that these 8 hours are used to correct pupils works).

To attend a course, for instance, the teacher has to know well in advance the details about it to include it in the work plan. Otherwise, the school or the DE may not let the teacher attend to the course. Teachers, as a rule, do not know if and what are the possibilities of courses to include on their work plan. That is not always possible, for many reasons. To mention a few, a course to be run in August, for example, is not expected to 'advertise' in the beginning of the academic year, in February. A course can be offered, withdrawn or changed at short notice. Thus, to impose to teachers that they have to include in their work plan in the beginning of the year a course, **with all details**, that she intends to attend is unrealistic.

The second measure is the creation of the position of a CB co-ordinator. Related to the HTP, the CB co-ordinator would organise a weekly meeting with all the teachers involved with the CB. He/she should also attend regularly meetings at the DE level to get informed/ formed. Afterwards he/she is expected to re-pass all the information/formation to his/her colleagues.

4.3.4 In-service education activities and the "IPÊ Project" – 1984-1990

Since 1984 the SSE explicitly declares its policy of *re-training the state school*[132], being the CB its first measure in that direction (Document D, SSE, 1988 – pp. 5). Since then, written materials were produced and disseminated. The concern with spreading recent scientific advances on areas such as Psychology, Linguistic and Pedagogy is present in the publications produced by the CENP. Besides that, some actions concerning the professional development of teacher and other specialists of education were undertaken. The IPÊ project was the most comprehensive in scope in the period.

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to prepare materials/activities wherever the teacher chooses.

The IPÊ project was created in 1984. It is established to respond to 'the need of updating and improvement of teachers and other specialists in education taking into account the priorities of the SSE'[133]. The IPÊ project operates through distance education. The project involves short courses (30 hours) using a system of multimedia: television programme, radio, and written materials, in a coordinated action. Over the years, it was modified. Radio and telephone were abandoned because, according to the documents, they proved to be inefficient resources.

From 1984 to 1990 the Project ran three courses, all related with issues on CB, mainly on literacy (Document D). In other words, the CB professionals were the main targets of these actions concerning professional development. Very little was done concerning the professional development of the remaining group of teachers and they have constantly complained about this. The scope of the actions of TPD was then very limited in this respect.

The first module (Basic Cycle/*CENP 1984/1985)* was composed of seven booklets to be discussed after watching the respective television programmes. The content of the seven documents involved issues such as literacy, assessment, learning problems (Document B).

The second (*Rethinking Literacy 1985*) was a series of five papers written by well-known lecturers. Television programmes also complement these papers. The papers discuss issues related to literacy practices, oral and written languages in the school context, and the updated criticisms on the Cultural Deprivation theories and the explanations of the school failure. (Document B)

The third course was carried out in the second semester of 1988 (*Basic Cycle in Single Shift).* It was a 30-hour course, made of six sessions, addressed to teachers, other professionals of education, and 3rd and 4th grade student-teachers. After watching the programme and having read the complementary paper a discussion would be carried out, under the course monitor's co-ordination. (Document C)

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[132] The original idea in Portuguese is *'requalificar a escola pública'*.

[133] (Document C - SE/CENP, 1988) Ciclo Básico em Jornada Única: relatório de avaliação do Projeto IPÊ -pp.9).

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Comparing with a course run in 1987 ("This is learned in Basic Cycle"), the teachers responded very well to the 1988 call (considering it was not compulsory). The number of participants was much higher than in the course carried out in 1987, as showed in the following table. This increase in the number of participants gives an indication of the interest of the teachers in the subject.

"This is learned in Basic Cycle" (1987)		"CB in Single Shift" (1988)	
Enrolled	Concluded	Enrolled	Concluded
20,872	17,376	58,300	48,516

Source: Document D, SE/CENP,1988, pp.20

As CB-JU was implemented in the beginning of the year, teachers wanted to know more about it. Naturally, CB teachers formed the main group of participants, representing more than 40% of the total participants. The course monitor was mainly a CB-teacher, representing the majority of the professionals that worked as course monitors. The interest in knowing more about the new programme was partially fulfilled as only the first session was new and directly focusing the CB-JU. The other five showed programmes already presented in previous courses. The average dropout of 16,78% is explained by the assessment of the project as due to the teachers' lack of motivation to carry on with the course, as many of them felt they were repeating things done on previous courses.

4.4 The Quality School Programme and the Preparation Programme (1991-1994)[134]

The importance and the role attributed to the teachers professional development (and to in-service education activities) gradually increased during the period studied. If in the beginning of the 80's the importance of teacher continuing education was still much more in the documents than in the practice in the beginning of the 90's it

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[134] The term 'preparation' (in Portuguese, 'capacitação') is recurrently used in all documents analysed referring not only to the actions but also to the programmes and projects. The term 'preparation' was used for its similar meaning. It refers to the professional preparation, or professional development of the professionals. From now on, the term 'preparation' will be used to translate the term 'capacitação'.

assumed a central role in the education policies. The idea of the teachers' incompetence is present in all of them.

4.4.1 The 1991-1994 State Government: the Committee of Strategic Management and the State System of Preparation.

The State Government that took power in 1991 created a Consulting Committee – *Committee of Strategic Management* to advise the government on the formulation of the education policies.

The educational reform undertaken by the then current government was grounded on the analysis and suggestions made by the *Committee*. One of its reports is of particular interest as the issue of TPD is discussed there (Document 02).

Acknowledging the strategic role education plays in the solution of economic problems, in reducing social inequalities, and in the consolidation of citizenship, the document advocates the need for profound changes on state education. The document argues that the school has to become the centre of concerns and the focus has to shift from the administrative structure to the *school level*. To make this happen, it is of vital importance that the personnel, at all levels of the SSE, be technically qualified.

The document seems to be the result of the work of a group of professionals with background in management of business. The main concern involves the preparation of qualified human resources, competent to the effective exercise of their specific roles. With this underlying concern the bureaucracy of the educational system is criticised due to its old-fashioned ways of working. The use of more suitable and "modern ways" of system management oriented to the establishment of a "policy of results" is advocated. The education system has to achieve better efficiency and productivity, with lower costs. The Total Quality Management approach is supporting the document's approach. That is the base on which the professional development of school professionals is placed. Sometimes, within its 25 pages, the document gives the impression that its proponents wish they could simply change the current structure for a 'better one', the one they idealised. Other times the impression

is almost the opposite: the proposal was never truly intended to become reality, given the huge distance it is from the reality.

After criticising the functioning of the SSE and the way activities of professional development have been carried out the document proposed a reformulation of the SSE and the implementation of a *State System of Preparation*. The establishment of a *State System of Preparation* would substitute the system working so far. Its implementation would avoid the multiple central bodies in charge of activities concerning the professional training, as it was the case so far. Duplication of actions in some areas and lack of actions in others were usually observed.

The need for creating a new structure to take care of professional development is justified with the argument that minor changes on the present structure would be a conservative and a partial solution. The document also says that what the main agencies of SSE have understood as professional preparation had been limited to actions concerning the pedagogical issues "without deepening the required competencies to the treatment of the other variables that determine the organisational efficiency as a whole". (Document 2 pp.7)

Therefore,

> "*the new actions of professional Preparation should provide support and content to the required knowledge, values, and competencies to an integrated action of the school team over the following variables: a)* **strategic** *(related to formulation of pedagogical and administrative projects, supervision and management); b)* **behavioural** *(related to team support, motivation, leadership oriented to the quality of the results) and c)* **results** *(assessment of the quality of the educational services, and benefit-cost relation)". (Document 02- pp. 7,8)*

In short, the aim of the preparation process is "to foster **changes of behaviour** fitting the individual abilities to the responsibility of the positions held" (Document 2 pp. 9, our stress).

The head master is the element of critical importance and the actions of training have to take the head masters and their management teams as the priority group. The head

master is considered as the link between the higher levels of the SSE (where education policies are defined) and the school/community level, where the educational process takes place (pp. 9). Despite that, the actions concerning Preparation should involve also all the central and intermediate levels of the SSE as well as the institutions in charge of teacher initial education. That effort is required because of the "**imperative need of training** the whole group that composes the bureaucratic machine of SSE, as well as the institutions involved in teachers initial education (...)" (pp. 10, our stress).

We consider that the criticism of the functioning of the three levels of the SSE and the proposed line of actions clearly reveal a **negative and homogeneous view of the educational agents, on all its three levels**. The use of abstract categories and typologies (such as the school, the teacher, incompetence and so on) produces a kind of discourse that cannot provide reliable descriptions of the concrete school practice (Azanha, 1990). Everybody has to be trained as they are not prepared to take the responsibility of the positions they hold. Nobody is spared of criticisms. But it appears that the harder ones are addressed to the central bodies of the SSE, namely CENP and FDE. Perhaps because of the co-ordination role they should have assumed more 'efficiently'. In the following quote, the remark made involving the huge number of professionals directly or indirectly involved on actions of professional training by CENP and FDE sounds ironic. "It is difficult to find another institution with such a good ratio of trained personnel to total personnel employed. However, the problems are recurrent", assures the *Consulting Committee*.

An Educational Reform is urged. To carry it out a complete and new system needs to be implemented: the *State System of Preparation*. This System, to a certain extent would substitute the then current scheme of professional development.

4.4.2 The Educational Reform and the Quality School (EP) (1991-1994)

Still in 1991 the SSE produces one of its first documents establishing the policies for education. The proposed Educational Reform is centred on the *Quality School*. As usually promised, the new programme is supposed to initiate a "profound educational reform". This document traces the general directions of the educational policies and

of the *Quality School*. The word 'modern' – or similar terms – is recurrently used. The 'modern' is associated with the new technologies of education such as multimedia, the use of computers and more modern and efficient ways of communication between the local and the upper levels of the SSE.

Quality School -main features

The model school does not have to have "anything of spectacular or uncommon other than offering high quality education", says the document (Document 01 -pp.3). This statement contradicts the Educational Reform proposed. The *Quality School* and the scheme for training the 'human resources', assumedly ambitious, go more in the direction of the 'grand deeds'. In fact, the impression one may get from reading the documents (Document 1, Document 3) is that the Educational reform, as it was devised, was never truly intended to become reality; not at least for all the schools. At the time the fieldwork was carried out only 1,306 schools were included in the Quality School Project. That number represents less than a quarter of the total number of schools in São Paulo State (6,359). We consider that given the concrete conditions of schools, simpler measures, certainly not so politically profitable in the short term, would have been more adequate[135].

The official government publication, in its resolution SE-268 (15 December 1992) established the *Quality School*. The existing structure is kept: The Basic Cycle (CB) followed by six grades. The school should work with only two dayshifts and one nightshift in a daily journey of 6 hours-class (5 hours) plus time for rest. The maximum number of students per class is fixed at 30 for the Basic Cycle, and at 35 for the other grades.

To meet the proposal the teacher has to work in a single school. For primary teachers (1st to 4th grades) the former scheme for CB teachers is extended for all working on

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[135] Cutbacks in the budget for the Secondary Level schools, overcrowded classrooms and lack of basic materials such as chalk were reported by the member of teachers Union interviewed. For those not familiar with the reality of the state schools in Brazil, it is worth mentioning that it is not uncommon to find schools with three or even four daily shifts plus a night shift. So one can easily conclude how ambitious the proposal was.

the CB to the 4th grade: 30 hours-class in classroom, 6 of HTP, and 8 wherever pleases the teacher.

For 5th to 8th grade primary teachers and secondary teachers: 25 hours-class in classroom, 7 of HTP and 8 wherever it pleases the teacher. It could also be added 4 extra hour-class as supplementary hours.

The school has to offer conditions to teachers, head master and administrative personnel to develop their talents through permanent mechanisms of continuous professional development. It should provide conditions of work and payment compatible with the social importance of the teaching profession. It should also provide suitable infrastructure and facilities. And above all it has to have substantially increased pedagogical, administrative, and financial **autonomy**.

A system of additional financial rewards (not incorporated to the basic salary) is established. But only to professionals working on the *Quality-Schools*[136]. Some co-ordination positions were created proportional to the number of teachers in each school. The *School Support Team* [137] is created, to be staffed by tenured assistants, including school secretary (2,000 positions), school-helper (2,900 positions), school-officer (24,000 positions) and school administrative assistant (5,000 positions). The teachers work-shift is modified. Their contract has a full time basis, to include time for pedagogical meetings and in-service education activities.

Inevitably, from our point of view, the Project caused uneasiness among the teachers. A few schools would have better conditions of work, including financial rearwards, and the others would get nothing. It was promised that all the schools would join the Project before the end of the mandate. That would involve 6,359 schools, 6 million students and over 350,000 professionals, including administrative personnel. But it did not occur. In its first year (1991), only 306 schools were selected to become

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[136] In summary the financial rewards are the following: a) plus 30% for teachers and other specialists in Education. B) plus 20% for teachers and other specialists in Education working at night. c) Head-teachers received : plus 40% for those at schools with more than 1,500 students; plus 30% for those at schools having between 700 and 1,500 students, and plus 20% for those at schools with fewer than 700 students.

[137] In Portuguese: Quadro de apoio Escolar (lei Complementar no 7.6698, de 10/01/92)

"*Quality Schools*". The criteria to choose the first schools were neither clear nor openly discussed. During the process of implementation it became evident that the schools that already had better conditions of work were the first to be incorporated[138]. To facilitate the implementation of the project the strategy was to privilege the already privileged. The project was severely criticised for its discriminatory feature. It had affected less than five percent of the schools while the majority remained in the usual state of neglect (APEOESP, 1991, pp.2).

4.4.3 The Preparation Programme

The implementation of the *Quality School* involved a substantial **in-service education programme** called Preparation Programme [139]. The Foundation for the Development of Education (FDE) was assigned by the State Secretariat for Education (SSE) as the central body in charge of planning and supervising the in-service education activities for the professionals in education, at all levels.

Despite being *in principle* addressed to the school system as a whole, the preparation programme was primarily addressed to the *Quality School*. That introduced another discriminatory feature to the Project. It was not just that only a small number of schools were included and benefited from belonging to the *Quality School* project but also their teachers had priority to attend the courses.

As it was said before, the analyses and suggestions by *the Consulting Committee* do not lead to introducing minor changes into the existent system but to the proposal of a complete new system, with co-ordinated and complemented actions, involving all levels of the structure, from the central level down to the school. The FDE was, as said earlier, chosen the central body to co-ordinate all the actions of Preparation. The principle of the school autonomy is said to be the touchstone to the actions involving Quality School, particularly in what the policy of professional development is

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[138] The schools that had the buildings in better conditions, with possibility of being enlarged, with a school library, with tenured personnel, head-teacher included, working in two daily and one night shifts, and so on.

[139] In Portuguese: Programa de Capacitação.

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concerned. The System involved new infrastructure developing three modalities of Preparation: in-service education, face-to-face courses, and distance education.

So far as infrastructure is concerned[140]:

1. **At the central level:** Creation of fourteen units of *CARHs* (Centre for Development of Human Resources). A central unit was to be set up at FDE, which was to, together with COGESP and CEI, organise, implement and provide technical support to the 14 units. Those units will be established at the DREs. (Document 2-1 pp. 3)

The *CARHs* should offer permanently courses, conferences, talks, seminars and other activities of professional development to all the professionals of all levels.
They should aim at: a) providing capable personnel to act as multiplying agents of the preparation programme; b) developing technical competence of the professionals to become able of deal with modern teaching technologies; c) documenting and spreading studies and researches on the creative solutions to problems of teaching (Document 04 pp. 16).

2. **Multimedia integrated System:** CARHs and schools would have increased their possibilities of communication: fax, videos, telephones, telex and satellite to be able to receive teleconferences and distance education.

3. **At school level:**

3.1 The current school libraries would be substantially improved. They will be the *CICs* (Centre of Information and Creation). They would receive materials to include in their archives to cover the following functions: school library, Quality School's Document Centre, Citizen Library, Educational Projects' Bank and Pedagogical Support Kits.
3.2 Science laboratories would also receive a boost to become Science and Technology Laboratories.

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[140] The proposed System in fact uses the existent infrastructure. The CARHs would function in the

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The proposal for creating the Educational Projects' Archives aims at documenting, integrating and spreading educational experiences that offer creative and innovative solutions to ordinary problems of the teaching-learning process. They should also help to identify pedagogical trends, spread new techniques and pedagogical material to give support to educational projects in schools. To do so, a partnership should be established between the SSE and the State Universities.

4.4.4 Modalities of Preparation

There are three modalities of preparation: in-service education, face-to-face courses and distance education.

The in-service education is understood as "the actions developed at the school level to recover the collective work (...)" (Document 3 pp. 9). The head-teachers, helped by other professionals, would prepare plans of continuous and permanent actions. The school would count on all the education system to do that. The HTP (Pedagogical working-time) is set as the time to be used for the proposed actions. Regular and occasional courses will be offered; some by *CARHs*, others in partnerships with the Universities.

The HTP is clearly defined as the space where the activities concerning teacher preparation should occur. That is to say: **at school level**. The use of that time to attend courses is left open. In other words, it may or may not be used to attend courses. However, it is not made clear who shall decide on this. In practice this kind of decision is usually left to the head-teacher to make.

Head-teachers will be privileged in the beginning of the professional preparation actions as they are considered to be ultimately responsible for the elaboration and co-ordination of the pedagogical-administrative school plan. Other group was also receiving special attention: the CB co-ordinators[141]. There is a special Literacy

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previous DREs (intermediate level), the CICs would be implemented in the school libraries and so on.
[141] In the Quality schools the position is the CB-to- 4th grade co-ordinator.

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project aiming to provide activities of professional development for the CB-coordinator[142].

In 1993, 250,000 places should be offered in courses, seminars, workshops and talks, addressed to all professionals, at all levels of the system. The activities will be carried out at the CARHs (central unit and the 7 implemented until then), at the DREs, DEs and schools.

The actions involving the CB to 4th grade have around 75,000 places and the programme is developed in two projects; the *Literacy –theory and practice*, and the *Preparation of teacher-educators*.

4.5 Closing remarks

When directly addressing the teachers the analysed documents on the Education Policies show the conceptions behind them. The following quote is reproduced here to illustrate two important and linked aspects related to the arguments we are defending.

> *"To create the Single Work Shift to* CB *teachers means to respond to one of the most recurrent claims made by the teachers who recognise in this victory a possibility of constituting themselves as a professional group more competent and more prepared to take on its social responsibility.*
>
> *To increase the number of hours for teachers professional preparation and in-service education activities, as well as for the follow-up, control, supervision and assessment of the teaching learning process, makes possible, consequently, to deal with the still critical bottleneck of the initial grades."(Document1 –JU, SSE,1988, pp.4)*

The document then lists all the measures taken by the Secretariat that would work in benefit to the improvement of the quality of the state education. And then it continues,

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[142] On the metropolitan region the World Bank provided the funding.

*"Dear educator, we have, however, the conviction that the success of all the measures now announced **depends fundamentally on the political commitment, on the leadership and on the professional competence** of those that are, on a day-to-day basis, in charge of our schools, and fighting for the rights and interests of children"(Document 1-JU, SSE, 1988, pp 4,5 our stress).*

The same approach is found on a special publication that the SSE devoted to the subject of teacher professional development during the implementation of the *"Quality School"* (Document 03). In its 'Introduction' the central role attributed to the professional development is again made explicit, as well as the strategy of attributing the final responsibility of the success of the intended Reform to 'the others'. In this case to the teachers.

"The success of the São Paulo State Educational Reform – devised to improve the quality of teaching- is subordinated to the existence of modern and permanent mechanisms of professional development of the human resources working at schools. Without massive and regular investment in the education and in the cultural and pedagogical updating of the teaching professionals no educational reform will be able to survive. One is conscious that, to succeed, the qualitative change of the state education is, above all, in the educators' hands" (Document 3, SSE, 1991, pp.2).

The last quotations show how demagogic and politically bounded the discourse of the central levels of the SSE may become when speaking to teachers. Teachers are called 'educators' more to sound "politically correct" than to imprint a respectful approach on their relationship with teachers. By a supposed initial recognition of the important role of teachers, their leadership and political commitment are used in fact to call to attention their responsibility for the success of the whole enterprise. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) remind us about a feature of the particular context usually linked with skill-based teacher development approaches. As they so well put it:

"(the context is) one of technocratic and bureaucratic control, in which the rhetoric suggests bottom-up development, but the reality reveals top-down implementation" (pp.7).

The Reform, it is argued in the documents, has to provide "massive and regular investments" in the professional development of teachers. Given such condition, the success of the reform - or 'the qualitative change of the state education' - would be in

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the "educators' hands" (Document 3, op cit.). So, let us centre the resources and energies on re-training the school staff to obtain technically competent professionals. In other words, *improving teacher continuous education was seen as a means of improving education in general.*

As such there is nothing objectionable here. It is when it is constituted in the simplistic and 'linear logic' that Arroyo has mentioned that the problem emerges. The linear logic Arroyo presented in the Synopses of the Teacher Education Congresses we find at the education policy level: "Let us train and re-train our teachers and we shall have a high quality school for, we do not have a school of good quality because we lack professional quality."(Arroyo, 1996, pp 48).

We argue that gradually the education policies - and their in-service programmes came to be *in tune* with that trend: to take TPD as the virtually the sole means of improving education in general. The analysis of the education policies confirmed that teacher continuous education gained increasing importance as a strategy in dealing with the low quality of education. Even the last programme – the Quality School – that was expected to introduce important changes in the organisation of the school life (such as decreasing the number of pupils per class, settling the teachers in a single school, and starting to improve teachers' salary) affected only 5% of the total number of schools.

Within that trend, the concept of incompetence (sometimes qualified as *technical*, other times as *professional*) is recurrent in the official documents of the SSE. As a companion-concept *political commitment* emerges here and there. The latter seems to be more frequently used in the politically driven documents, and less frequently in the pedagogically driven ones. incompetence, though, is always there: overtly or not. "Teachers incompetence" emerges as a foundational idea on the policies and actions carried out on TPD. At the level of the educational policies this idea is expressed by the approach of teacher development chosen by the SSE central bodies. Being essentially knowledge and skill-based approaches they were imposed on a top-down basis on teachers and other professionals of education by the external 'experts', not

rarely from the Universities[143]. As Clark (cited by Fullan and Hargreaves 1992) argues teachers are viewed as people to be trained and developed, and not as people capable of developing and improving themselves. Teacher's resistance was a result to be expected since they felt disrespected, and saw their practical knowledge in managing the classroom disregarded.

As we have demonstrated the 'argument of incompetence' is present at the level of the education policies analysed in this chapter. The 'argument of incompetence' was borrowed from the educational literature, but when it reaches that level it is stripped down to a rough and oversimplified idea. That level is its domain. The 'argument of incompetence', at the level of the education policy, basically proposes that teachers professional development programmes should be offered to teachers as they need to be trained and re-trained because their initial education did not prepare them well to teach the real pupils. The role played by the teacher in the improvement of the quality of education is central. Therefore is it solely in the teacher's hands to make any reform a success or a failure.

This version of the 'argument of incompetence', provides the policy makers with the 'academic ratification' for the lack of government responsibility in case of failure of the proposed programme.

The analyses carried out on the documentary sources of education programmes lead to the conclusion that those in charge of defining the policies seem to *visit* the educational literature choosing the more suitable arguments (rationales) to the definitions of the actions to be carried out by the SSE. Some are more suitable to enable actions than others. Some are **politically more convenient** than others. Some produce actions of higher **visibility** than others. During the process of reconciling several needs (and purposes) the academic debate has been simplified. During this process it seems that only fragments of the original debate are kept, and developed. Its disagreements, uncertainties and subtleties are left aside in favour of a more prescriptive attitude.

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[143] For a summary of other conceptions of teacher development see Hargreaves and Fullan (1992).

The *'argument of incompetence'* satisfies both requisites: for **visibility of actions** (the huge number of places, for instance, offered by the Preparation Programme and all *grandeur* that follows the Quality School), and, **political convenience** by attributing the final responsibility to the teachers, it excuses all other parts, including the SSE, of any blame.

As we demonstrated, teacher professional development was taken, between 1982-1993, as the critical point to foster teacher technical competence. Having accomplished one of the aims of our research, as defined in Chapter One – that is, to identify the logic behind the increase of TPD programmes offered by the São Paulo SSE and to trace its presence and origins in the educational literature – it is now necessary to take a further step and to analyse the repercussions and modifications of that linear logic when interpreted by those professionals directly involved in the proposed TPD programmes.

We also have shown the presence in both the academic literature and education policies of what we have denominated the *'argument of incompetence'*. Having done that, we need now to analyse how this argument trickle through intermediate levels down to the school level, as we have decided to contribute to the knowledge about the perspective of the professionals involved in the actions of TPD. Some questions still are to be answered: How was the idea of teacher's incompetence appropriated by the people that work on the three levels of the SSE? How did the *'argument of incompetence'* appear in context of TPD activities? And also: How did the intermediate level professionals view teachers? And how did the teachers view themselves? What were the difficulties and challenges that those directly working with teachers' professional development face? How did they see each other's place?

To answer those questions we have organised an empirical study. We decided to focus on a TPD programme that was in development at the time of the fieldwork: the Preparation Programme. As the Preparation Programme is very large, this thesis focused on the Project "Literacy: Theory and Practice". The basic reason for choosing that particular project is related to its main target population: the Basic Cycle teachers and co-ordinators. As the CB is the only recent programme of Primary Education that has persisted along the years, it was considered important to

analyse the then current projects offered to CB teachers and to relate them to the former actions of teacher professional development. A second reason was related to the team in charge of the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice". Some of them were involved on the issue of teachers' professional development for many years. It was considered that those professionals would be of particular interest, for their information and reflection on the subject. They were considered to be "qualified informers". In that sense they were not chosen at random but purposely. The discussion on the empirical focus and fieldwork is presented in the next chapter.

Chapter Five

The construction of the fieldwork

5.1 Introduction

The fieldwork aimed to provide elements to complement the discussion of the documentary source in establishing the arguments for our thesis about the *'argument of incompetence'*. The documents of the educational programmes provide indispensable data to the analysis of the justification of their need, rationale, basic intentions (explicit or implicit), main lines of action as well as their relation with the broader socio-political context. That is an important part of this thesis. But how do the *proposals* of teacher continuing development (an important part of the educational policies) leave the documents and become *actions?* How are the proposals and intentions interpreted/transformed by the people in charge of implementing the Preparation Programme? What were the offered concrete conditions to implement it? What were the difficulties and challenges faced during the process? Moreover, what do they think about the strategy of the SSE of investing mainly on TPD? What are their evaluations of the proposed courses? This information can be best obtained from those people directly involved in putting the programmes into practice. It is by interacting and watching the agents involved in implementing the programme that it is possible to know what has been made of it[144]. So, the qualitative research, in particular the *case study*, presented itself as a suitable approach capable of answering those questions.

During the initial defining stages of the fieldwork an idea grew stronger: to hear what teachers had to say about the educational programmes; to give voice to them. The review of the Brazilian literature had shown how little their opinion had been taken into account on any matter regarding the educational programmes and their

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144 It was explored as a possible alternative the strategy of combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. An initial survey where the general picture of implementation of the Preparation Programme would be constructed and a case study, to allow a closer and more intimate contact with the everyday conditions of its implementation. The decision, however, on how the best way to get the desired data had to take into account the concrete conditions of time and resources this research had. Being time and resources limited, a survey was not undertaken. It is considered necessary a research team and suitable resources to carry a research as that. So it was considered that a case study of one

respective projects of professional development (Perosa, 1997, Andaló, 1989 Souza, 1991 to mention some). André 1994 argues for the need of researches and interventions on the state school that include the voice of teachers. The international literature showed also how important and enriching it can be to take their perspective into account, and to get closer to their world, culture and life. Goodson 1992 points also to the importance of the articulation of the teachers' voice in the process of professional development[145].

Brazilian teachers and their standpoints have been either ignored or treated as having nothing valuable to say about their own work. As it was shown in Chapter Four, teachers have been usually regarded merely as a resource, and of bad quality. Moreover, the idea of 'teacher's incompetence' figures as the main argument used by various levels of 'authority' to justify and to shape the actions of professional development. So, to take further the discussion this thesis is developing it was of vital importance to obtain additional data to check **if** and **how** the idea of 'teacher's incompetence' reaches the teacher.

It soon became obvious that, in addition to teachers, the main groups of professionals involved with the Preparation Programme at the time should be heard, and more specifically those involved with the "Literacy Theory and Practice" Project. It was considered that listening to the agents more directly involved would help us to form a more complete view about the Project and it would be essential to see if and how the idea of 'teacher's incompetence' was appropriated by them as well as its repercussions to their work.

That would mean to include teachers, course monitors[146], programme staff and programme managers[147].

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project of the Preparation programme would provide the elements needed.

[145] Another way of listening to the teacher is through life-history accounts. Life-history researches have been advocated by some as an enlightening way of understanding the culture of schools and teachers (see Goodson, 1981, 1983). This methodology of research has also been proposed as a promising strategy of working with teacher education.

146 They are also refereed to as ' course monitors'.

147 It is arguable that parents and students are also involved in the issue of teachers' professional development as they are in virtually every school matter. However, their point of view is not directly discussed in this work. This decision was taken given limitations of time and other resources.

The importance of taking into account the people's perspective or the subjective meanings have been recognised as of vital importance in achieving a fuller understanding of educational matters (Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1994).

The main concern of the fieldwork was then to obtain information from the *various perspectives* of the key participants so that they could be compared, confronted and discussed. Their perspective is taken in this work as part of discussion conducted in this thesis. They are taken as a necessary and important starting point but the analysis shall go beyond them. Pollard (1991) explains what is meant here:

> "(...)In this way, ethnographers attempt to classify the common-sense and taken-for- granted knowledge of the participants and try to suggest analytical concepts by which such tacit knowledge can be named and made available for reflection"(Pollard, 1991. pp. xi)

Our experience as a researcher has shown it to be quite common, inside schools amongst teachers and other levels of the SSE to use idea of the incompetence of teachers when discussing, for example, the difficulties of working with pupils. The initial idea of 'teacher's incompetence evolved as the analyses developed to what we call here as the 'argument of teachers incompetence'. We use in this chapter the phrase 'idea of teacher's incompetence' instead of the *'argument of incompetence'* to indicate the way our ideas were formulated at the initial phases of the fieldwork. The concept of 'argument' was constructed during the course of the analysis. The noun 'argument' was chosen because we think it reflects the idea of something that is intended to persuade, and that originates in the academic world and influences the world of politics.

Fullan addresses the issue of *teachers' perspective* while discussing educational reforms and their implementation process. By proposing that the **problem of meaning** is central to the issue of the educational change he calls the reader's attention to both the *small picture* and to the *big picture*.

> "The small picture concerns the subjective meaning or lack of meaning for individuals at all levels of the educational system. (...) It is also necessary to build and understand the big picture because educational change after all is a socio-political process".

As Rockwell (1991) points out, the challenge lies in writing a report in such a way that the specific local features (small picture) are preserved while at the same time the phenomenon under study is made understandable in the broader context (big picture).

Ezpeleta and Rockwell (1986)[148], in their turn, claim the importance of taking the subjects' perspective for theoretical-methodological reasons. For them, the need of taking the people's perspective into account relates to the concept of *'non-documented history'*.

Explaining better. Ezpeleta and Rockwell propose that *the school and all those involved on its daily life should be taken as a new object of study*. This proposition is grounded on the idea of the *social construction of the school*.

> *"We think the construction of every school, even embedded in a broader social movement, is always a local and particular version of that movement. (op. cit., pp11)."*

Schools are not the same across Latin America or even within a single country. That is because the expansion of each educational system takes a particular path introducing peculiarities. The peculiarity results from the articulation between the civil society movements and the educational policies proposed by the State (within certain national and international context). There are also regional differences, differences on the social organisations and syndicates (teachers' syndicate, as an example), various influences of the Churches that inevitably will be present in the origin and life of every school. The actual 'plot' by which education takes place is then the result of the power relations, the working conditions, the teaching traditions

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148 Elsie Rockwell and Justa Ezpeleta are mostly known in Latin America but their influence is important in many countries in the region. Working at the *Departamiento de Investigaciones Educativas – DIE – Mexico City* Rockwell and her group developed a more 'indigenous' ethnographic tradition, closely related to the critical ethnography. Differently from Britain and the United States, where the symbolic interactionism was a influential theory in ethnographic studies, their work is grounded on Antonio Gramsci's (to build their conception of institution, as historical formation well characterised, dependent on the political forces that permeate the institution, at each time.) and is grounded on Agnes Heller's ideas (in her sociology of the everyday life, on the features of the everyday life). In Brazil, as well as in Mexico, the introduction of the ethnography in educational studies was done through its critical versions, that is, the methodological perspective called 'critical ethnography'. See also, Rockwell, 1991.

and the local priorities. All that being expressed *by and through the interactions of individuals,* with personal and professional histories.

> *"It is an ever ongoing plot that articulates local histories – personal and collective –, and in face of which the abstract State Wish takes body; that Wish may be incorporated or ignored, distorted or recreated, giving variable room to a bigger or smaller hegemony" (op. cit., pp. 12).*

The school and schooling are products of all the sectors involved in it, not only of the wishes of the State. The school, as produced by those people that 'shape' it everyday day, is neither coherent nor homogeneous. The school is a live social formation; it is accumulated history. Inside the schools authoritarian, democratic, 'modern' and technocratic conceptions and practices coexist. Each school has a history, or histories; fragmented and contradictory, sometimes. Schools and teachers are different. Teachers have singular personal and professional lives that combined with the variety of local communities histories result in heterogeneous rather than homogeneous school practices.

Therefore taking the *perspectives of participating actors* is important because it is by and through the individuals that 'the ongoing plot along which education takes place' is enacted. By calling attention to the variety of people's attitude before the determinations and prescriptions of 'the State' they stress the **heterogeneous character** of the schools and their agents. Consequently, with them we disagree with the way the school and their agents are **conceived and described** by traditional theories. Both its positivist version (Durkheim) and its critical versions (Althusser and Bourdieu) tend to put in evidence the homogeneous features of schools[149] and to point out **its deficiencies** (the teacher's incompetence, is certainly an example) for they take into account only the documented history of school, without considering its **non-documented history**.

The school is built from the appropriation each subject makes of the State

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[149] The reproductivist theorists had a important contributions, as we discussed on Chapter Two. So far as the school is concerned, their analysis are limited for they aimed to describe general and contínua structures or formations; systems, abstracts structures that can be generalised. The logic of the particular formations are excluded as they were not concerned with doing this level of analysis.

prescriptions (through its education policies with its projects of continuing development, for instance). It is from this process of appropriation that homogeneity becomes multiple realities.

By bringing the attention to the acting subjects and their way of conceiving and re-signifying the State prescriptions the individual dimension gains place. However, not in a restricted and simplistic psychological view. *The individual is not detached from the social and cultural factors of the situation being studied but produced by and producer of them.* The perspective of the individuals (conceived in this way) is the point of departure to build the non-documented history of the "Literacy Theory and Practice project". The non-documented history, as it was said, is that where the school and schooling gain material form through the practices and processes carried out by their actors; namely, teachers and other school staff, parents and students.

In that sense Ezpeleta and Rockwell's work is important to this thesis for drawing attention to the *incompleteness of the abstract, general and homogeneous descriptions about teachers, their conceptions and practices.* The central critical point being made is that the use of the 'idea of teacher's incompetence', in shaping the conceptions of TPD is considered highly problematic and probably misleading for it cannot encompass the diversity of teachers and school practices.

The importance of including the analysis of the heterogeneous character of social life is also stressed by Patto:

> *"It is only when we are able to discern the heterogeneous within the apparently homogeneous, the plural where the singular is usually employed, that we capacitate ourselves to ascend from the abstract to the concrete of which speaks the dialectic materialism."*
> *(1990, p4)*

But how to grasp the heterogeneous in the apparent homogenous? And how to avoid the risk of losing oneself within the diversity of multiple perspectives? How to present the empirical material in a coherent and meaningful form? That involves two different (but related) challenges: the organisation of the fieldwork and the preparation of the material for the analysis of the data.

So far as the fieldwork is concerned, the decision was taken in favour of an approach where the people's perspective is regarded as a central issue. This led to the qualitative empirical research approaches, particularly to the ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis within the format of the case study. It was decided that the case study was to be of the Literacy: Theory and Practice Project'.

The qualitative research is well established and has been for quite a long time largely accepted as a legitimate and promising approach in Education (Hammersly and Atkinson,1983, Erickson, 1973, 1986, to mention some). The knowledge derived from this type of research advances through the accumulation of case studies. According to Ludke and André the basic features or principles of the case study are: 1)it aims to the discovery. The initial theoretical framework serves as a basis to which other aspects can be added as the study advances. The knowledge is continually built and rebuilt. 2) it emphasises the interpretation within the context, that is: to take into account the context in which the phenomenon is included. 3) The case study aims to portray the reality in a deep and complete manner. The situations under study are complex and multideterminated. 4) It uses a variety of sources of information. 5) It reveals the vicarious experience and allows naturalistic generalisations (Stake, 1983) of the reader with his/hers own experience. 6) It aims to portray the different and sometimes conflicting points of view present in a social situation. The researcher will bring out in the analysis the divergence of points of view among the subjects and also of his/hers own outlook. 7) The report of a case study uses a language and form more accessible than other research reports. (Ludke and André, 1989)

The decision was taken in favour of carrying out a case study of the project "Literacy Theory and Practice ". The main instruments to collect the data were semi-structured interviews, observations and analysis of documents.

It is timely to remember that the way a qualitative researcher prepares and conducts the fieldwork results from all the professional experiences she/he accumulates by doing qualitative research. Therefore, we opted for describing as much as possible the steps involved in the construction and execution of the fieldwork, as well as the

difficult and long process of analysis. By doing this it is believed that the successes and shortcomings can be better assessed and shared with the reader.

5.2 The definition of the fieldwork

5.2.1 Initial steps

The fieldwork had two complementary phases during 1993. The initial phase of the fieldwork took place between March and April 1993. The preparation for this initial phase involved a good deal of work. The practice of discussing upon written materials prepared by us was essential to the good follow up of the work. It was decided that this first phase would have an exploratory character, while obtaining as much information as possible to shape the second, longer, phase of the fieldwork. With that purpose it was decided to select key-persons to be interviewed. In the case of our research, the key-persons are those that either occupy a key position relative to the object of study we are building, or are experienced and influential professionals in the field of TPD. For example: we decided to interview the staff of the central and intermediate level bodies in charge of the projects of TPD. We used our previous knowledge as a university teacher and researcher in the field of Education, as well as information gathered with some colleagues to decide who should be first informally interviewed.

Seven semi-structured interviews were carried out with professionals working on the central and intermediate levels at the Secretariat of Education as well as with a coordinator of Basic Cycle, and with a member of the teachers' union[150].

A set of basic questions was prepared to guide the interviews but the purpose was to let the interviewees talk 'freely' during that exploratory phase. The general concern was to get as much information as possible on the Preparation programme[151]. It was already clear that the three levels involved in actions concerning teacher professional

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[150] The person interviewed held a position within the central group of the Union. As one of our interviewees was her acquaintance, we took the opportunity to talk with someone from the Union only to get in touch with his ideas concerning the 'Quality School' Programme.

[151] The Preparation Programme is a substantial in-service education programme carried out by the FDE (Foundation for the Development of Education between 1991 and 1993 (for details, see chapter 4, sub-tem 4.4.3.

development should be taken into account: the central, intermediate and local levels. We supposed there would be differences (and similarities) in positions, ideas, and perspectives between the professionals, and that letting representatives from each of these parts to talk to us would be richer in helping us to understand the implementation of the Preparation Programme than to either exclude any of them or to get an indirect source of information.

The Foundation for the Education Development (FDE) was the Central level institution in charge of organising and managing the Preparation Programme.

For the **Central level**, the contact was made with the team in charge of the main project addressed to CB teachers and co-ordinators: the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice". The team manager and the co-ordinator, as well as three members of the same Project were interviewed. The general purpose was to obtain basic information and documents about the project. Receptivity was good, considering they are very busy professionals[152].

Key-persons were also interviewed at the **intermediate level** of the Secretariat of Education: the *Delegacia de Ensino (DE)* (Education Authority). An Education Authority (*Delegacia de Ensino*) involves a cluster of schools in the same geographical area of the city. The size of Education Authorities can vary both in terms of number of schools under their responsibility and in terms of the size of the geographical area they cover. The one in this study has 49 state schools under its supervision.

The particular *DE* taken for this study was chosen according to the following criteria:

a) Heterogeneity (concerning socio-cultural and economic aspects) of the area in the city and in the schools under its supervision (to avoid studying a region with singular features);

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[152] The researcher was introduced to and could interview several members of the team. Despite their general availability to talk to us it was felt that that would be the main opportunity to obtain the information. Therefore, most of the interviews with the central level team were done at that time.

b) To be in São Paulo City, to facilitate the convenient geographical access to the field, as many interviews and observations would be required[153].

c) The clear acceptance of the proposal for the fieldwork, as this is an essential condition for the good development of any research project.

An initial phone contact was then made with the intended *DE,* through the CB pedagogical assistant[154] and a visit to the *DE* was arranged. At this stage of the research, the aims of the meetings were basically:

a) To gather information to build a general idea of the projects (past and near future) and actions concerning teachers professional development carried out at the *DE,* particularly those related to the Literacy: Theory and Practice project.

b) To explore the possibilities of carrying out the fieldwork within this *DE's* area.

c) To make an initial step towards the establishment of a positive relation with the professionals working at the *DE* level.

A three-hour long interview was carried out with the CB's pedagogical assistant. During this first visit other professionals were also introduced, including the District Officer herself. The receptivity of the staff of the *DE* to us was very positive. The fact that the research was being developed from abroad seemed to contribute to that. That feature seemed to confer a special status to both the researcher and the research imparting to the staff a certain mixture of honour and apprehension. That could not be fully understood at that moment but it would certainly have to be analysed later. Apart from that another feeling also appeared: their satisfaction at having someone (from outside) to talk to. As we go 'down' to the school-level, the need of educators of having **'good listeners'** becomes clear. The possibility of sharing with the researcher their concerns, doubts, projects and even feelings was seized upon by virtually all the interviewees. It was also frequently found that people took the opportunity to try to rescue the good image of both state school and teachers. That

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153 As the researcher lives in São Paulo City, the choice of the unit of the DE was made taking limitations of time and resources into account. And also, the previous knowledge of the area of the city would facilitate the fieldwork, at least in what transportation was concerned.

154 The pedagogical assistant works in the *DE.* The position involves to work with co-ordinator teachers giving pedagogical orientations and support to them; it may include to organise short courses and seminars. The work is mostly developed at the *DE* level, being the teachers called there usually every two weeks for meetings.

was the case of the pedagogical assistant. We considered important to pay attention to similar manifestations so that we could better understand their meaning. It seemed that it had a relation to the way the actors at that level deal with the idea of teachers' incompetence. We understand that their need to try to convey a good image of their work appears because that image had been threatened in the past (or still is).

Two other interviews were also done. The first with a representative of the Teacher's Union, and the second with a primary school teacher[155]. The purposes of these interviews were basically to know their point of view about the current policies of professional development carried out by the FDE and to establish the initial contacts for the development of the fieldwork later that year. The primary teacher was particularly receptive. She remained until the end of the research as the one of the persons we could count on.

After this initial phase of the fieldwork, the interviews were transcribed and a preliminary analysis made in preparation for developing the focus of the second part of the fieldwork. The initial plan of opting for a qualitative approach was confirmed along with the case study as the best choice. We had already done some initial analyses of both the documents and the education literature and formulated the hypothesis that the idea of teacher's incompetence was present both at the level of the academic literature and of the school practice. So we needed to adopt an approach that allowed a close contact with the participant agents (teachers, course monitors and policy makers) so that we could see how that idea – later developed as the *"argument of incompetence"* – pervades all intermediate levels of the SSE down to the school level.

This aspect of our research, mostly qualitative in its approach[156], would be grounded on **semi-structured interviews, observations, and analysis of documents.** Hence, in the following months a careful planning and preparation for the main body of the fieldwork was one of the main tasks. The schedules of the interviews to be carried

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[155] At that time that teacher was in charge of the co-ordination of CB in one school and in charge of a 3rd grade group in another.

[156] We collected some "quantitative date" from a simple form during the second phase of the fieldwork aiming to have a general profile of the CB teacher in the area covered by the DE studied. Those data are presented in the Chapter Eight.

out with the three groups involved were prepared (See a translation of them on Appendix Schedules of interviews).

5.2.2 The second phase of the fieldwork – the definition of the focus of the study.

After that initial exploratory phase, where a broad account of the Preparation Programme was obtained, the next step involved a *progressive focusing* of the study[157]. That is, to circumscribe the problems under focus, in order to orient the fieldwork. This took the form of addressing two key questions, namely, "Is the idea of teachers incompetence used by the participating actors of the 'Literacy: Theory and Practice project'?" and "If it does, how it appear in connection with the actions of professional development?"

As we have seen in Chapter Four, the Preparation Programme is too extensive to capture its totality, so the empirical work focused on the 'Literacy: Theory and Practice Project'. The basic reason for choosing that particular project is related to its main target population: the Basic Cycle (CB) teachers and co-ordinators. As the CB is the only recent programme of Primary Education that has persisted throughout the years, it was considered important to analyse the then current projects offered to CB teachers and to relate them to the former actions of in-service education. A second reason was related to the team in charge of the project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice' project. Some of them had been involved with the issue of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) for many years. It was considered that those professionals would be of particular interest, for their information, experience, and capacity for reflection on the subject. They were considered as a "qualified informant". In that sense they were not chosen at random but purposely (Ludke and André, 1981).

The second phase of the fieldwork was carried out from August to November 1993.

The general aim of this phase was to obtain information about the points of view of the professionals working at all levels of the project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice'

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157 Ludke and André, citing Stake,R.E. (1981). Progressive focusing. Annual Meeting of AERA. Los Angeles.

(teachers, course monitors, programme staff and programme managers). The information gathered was on each of the following:

a) The Literacy: Theory and Practice project and the way it had been implemented. The intention was to identify and to discuss:

- The strategy(ies) adopted by each party involved in TPD.
- The teachers' response to the chosen strategies.
- The nature of the problems that have occurred (political, technical, and others).
- Tensions and contradictions between policy and practice, intentions and reality.
- The similarities and dissimilarities in viewpoints among the various groups involved as well as the tensions and interests at stake.

b) The way they saw themselves and significant others within the project; their role and the role of other groups.

c) The uses of the term 'competence', which may have more than one meaning/concepts associated with it.

In order to obtain the required information two settings were defined to develop the fieldwork: the Basic Course offered at the chosen DE and the pedagogical meetings between the pedagogical assistant and the CB co-ordinators[158]. We expected to diversify as much as possible the settings of observation. That would serve two purposes, at least. First to analyse the kinds of activities (or actions) of professional development that teachers have been offered (such as courses, conferences and seminars, pedagogical meetings) what they think about them and the presence of the idea of teachers incompetence.

a) The fundamentals of theory and practice course (Basic Course).

The Basic Course is the introductory and main course of a set of three courses of the project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice'. It is offered by the FDE, on a decentralised basis by teachers and other professionals of education across São Paulo State under

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[158] Our initial plan included observations of pedagogical meetings at school level. Unfortunately those meetings were seriously affected by the teachers 'strike that took place during most of the time of the fieldwork. So, we made only two or three observations in a couple of schools. Until this moment we are not using directly those observations for we consider the teachers were involved with the strike itself and its consequences rather than their pedagogical practice.

the supervision of the central level team. CB teachers and CB co-ordinators are this course's target population. One group running on the DE under study was observed from August to November. Field notes were taken during the classes and were further complemented[159]. The initial idea was to pay attention to: a) the issues that come out during the classes; b) the organisation of the course; c) the teachers' conceptions of theory, practice, experience, and the importance of each of them. d) the strategies of teaching used by the teacher-educator. e) the dynamics of the group. These worked as initial guidelines but they could be modified during the fieldwork, understood here as an ongoing process of defining the object of study. Both the course monitor and all the student-teachers were formally interviewed (see appendix for the schedule of the interviews). The interviews with teachers aimed at obtaining information on their evaluation of this particular course and on the courses they had previously attended. It was important to identify, from the teachers point of view, the role played by this approach of teacher professional development as well as the role played by the contact with their colleagues and their pupils, their own studies, and those of others.

b) Pedagogical meetings between CB co-ordinators and the pedagogical assistant at the *D. E.* (intermediate level).

The meetings between the CB co-ordinators and the pedagogical assistant occur on a regular basis, every two weeks. They are part of the cascade method used in the last years to implement the Basic Cycle programme. The pedagogical-assistants and the school-supervisors received orientations from the former institution in charge of the in-service education, the CENP[160]. They were expected to pass on those orientations to CB co-ordinators and, sometimes, even directly to teachers. The CB co-ordinators, in their turn, are the connecting elements with the teachers.

These meetings were observed and the professionals involved were formally and informally interviewed.

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159 See more details on this discussion in the next item 'data collection'.
160 CENP stands for "Coordenadoria de Ensino e Normas Pedagógicas" – Bureau for Studies and Pedagogical Norms

As indicated above, a case study was developed about the project Literacy: Theory and Practice.. The use of both interviews and observation, in two settings (classes of Basic Course and meetings of the School District) combined with the documental analyses helped to form a broad picture about these practices of TPD.

5.3 Data collection and data analysis

The fieldwork was intended to offer the opportunity for a continuous dialogue between data collection and preliminary data analysis. The purpose of using such a strategy is to redirect (if necessary) the data collection, or to introduce aspects which present themselves as relevant to be further explored. Another advantage is that the researcher gets more and more embedded in the data he/she is obtaining which facilitates analysis. That was particularly important in this study since during the larger part of the fieldwork a long teacher's strike took place. That had to be considered and its effects on the teacher's state of mind certainly included in the analysis.

A wide range of sources of information resulted from the fieldwork: observations, interviews (formal and informal) documents and newspapers. During the observations notes were taken. The field notes were expanded into *complemented notes* within twenty-four and forty-eight hours of the time that they were taken. This is important to help the memory to work in the researcher's favour, not against her/him. The quicker we are in expanding the notes the better. The complemented notes have the observations in detailed and also the fieldworker impressions, the questions that arise in the field, and the researcher's feelings.

Concerning the interviews, the decision was taken to fully transcribe them (40 interviews of approximately one hour each amounting to approximately 750 pages)[161]. The transcription of interviews is sometimes left to professionals. This was not the option made in this work, mainly for methodological reasons. This rather mechanical task has a vital meaning if taken as an opportunity to get more and more

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[161] The interviews were fully transcribed in Portuguese. We translated all quotations used in this work. Our main concern was to keep the meaning given by the interviewee.

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immersed in the data. In this process, the first connections start to appear and it is important to make notes on them. These may lead to the emergence of more developed categories afterwards, as the process of analysis continues.

The material obtained was the following:

1) Concerning the Basic Course

- Observations of classes of an in-service course (Basic Course) offered mainly to first and second grade teachers, and to co-ordinator teachers.

- Twenty-eight (28) interviews with teachers and co-ordinator teachers who attended the Basic Course in 1993 and in 1992 (14 from each year).

- Three interviews with the course monitors in charge of the three groups offered at the *DE* in 1992, and two interviews with the course monitor in charge of the Basic Course's group observed in 1993.

- Some general data about all the interviewees, such as years of teaching experience, age, gender, etc.

2) Central Level (*FDE* level)

- Five (5) interviews with members of the staff in charge of co-ordinating the Basic Course

- Documents produced by this level as well as other documents that have given support to the Preparation Programme.

3)The D.E. Level

- Field notes of meetings between co-ordinator teachers and the pedagogical assistant (six meetings);

- Two interviews with the pedagogical assistant;

- Some general information on a sample of first and second grade teachers (148 teachers) working at the DE's area such as: age, gender, years of teaching experience;[162]

- Some general information about the current co-ordinator teachers: years of teaching experience and years of experience as a co-ordinator.

4) Political context of the fieldwork

- A collection of articles published on the main newspapers from August to November 1993 about the teachers' strike.

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[162] During the pedagogical meetings, we get to know the coordinators teachers. We decided to ask them to ask the teachers that work with them to fill a form with those mentioned information.

The data collected do not present themselves in a prepared form to be analysed but in a disorganised and rather dispersed way. The first challenge any researcher faces in this initial phase is to develop ways of dealing with the whole material he/she gathers during the fieldwork. The preparation of the material, particularly interviews, required a considerable amount of our time and energy. The first step was to fully transcribe all the interviews. That decision was taken for we considered that to be the best way of getting familiar with the data. This task involved around two months. The order of transcriptions followed a rather subjective choice. We did first the interviews we considered being the more informative and interesting. After that we read the transcriptions and the expanded notes, several times. Some initial memos were written. From the re-reading and writing some regularities (and also differences) were noticed concerning the idea of incompetence between the groups interviewed. We kept our mind open to identify and develop analyses with other themes that could emerge. The memos are the first ideas from which the analyses are built. For example, during the reading of the interviews with the team in charge of the project analysed, the idea of establishing a network of competent course monitors was recurrent. We developed it further into the idea of 'networking competence' (see next chapter). A challenge is to decompose the material in its 'parts' without losing their relation to the 'whole'. The greater the number of interviews to deal with the more difficult it is to perform that task. We faced some difficulties while analysing the interviews with teachers, due in part to their large number when compared to the number of interviews with the other groups.

The analysis has to take into account not only the manifest content but also the latent content. As Ludke and André say:

> "The analysis should not restrict itself to the explicit material but it should try to go deeper, unveiling implicit messages, contradictory dimensions and themes systematically 'silenced'." (pp. 48).

So, a necessary step was to find the logic underneath the discourse of the three groups of people involved with teacher professional development.

It is important for this kind of analysis to compare and to confront information, to search for contradiction, and not only for confirmation of the hypotheses. By comparing, confronting and contextualising the initial categories with all data

(triangulation) and with other researches and theories another level of categories can be constructed: analytical categories. These are more concerned with theoretical discussions, with developing theories.

In chapters six, seven and eight, we present the result of the analysis of the material obtained during the fieldwork. Whenever convenient we complement the data from the observations and interviews with the analysis of the official documents of the Preparation Programme. The next chapter presents the analysis on the policy makers' opinions, conceptions and strategies regarding teachers professional development. It presents also a detailed analysis of the project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice'.

Chapter Six

Policy makers[163], teachers professional development and the argument of teacher incompetence

This chapter presents the analysis of the policy makers' conceptions, strategies and opinions on the theme of teacher professional development. The empirical material was provided by interviews with the six team members of the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice" as well as the analysis of official documents [164].

The initial sections discuss the Project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice'. A brief account of the background of the Project is presented in subsection 6.2.1. The main courses and the complementary activities of the Project are described in subsection 6.2.2. The main document where the Project is detailed is analysed in subsection 6.2.3, and the team's perspective of the Project is the subject of subsection 6.2.4. As for the interviews with the team we organise our analysis in three sections, according to three main themes, as following: a) their conception about the role attributed to TPD in the improvement of teaching practice and pupil's learning, section 6.3; b) their strategy of TPD, revealing the team's feeling of distrust in the ordinary channels of the SSE, section 6.4; c) the team's use of the idea of incompetence, section 6.5.

The articulation between these themes provides the basis for the understanding of the *strategic aim* of the Project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice': **To build a parallel network of competent course monitors** that would progressively promote the achievement of more competent teachers. It would be in parallel with the already existing ordinary schemes of the SSE. This strategy reveals that the team articulates its actions of professional development in line with the argument of teachers' incompetence: i.e., to increase the quality of education it is sufficient to improve the

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[163] We refer to the co-ordinators of the Project 'Literacy: Theory and Practice' and its team as they were the authors of the referred project, not only its implementers. This Project is part of the 'Preparation Programme', discussed in Chapter Four. When referring to 'policy makers' here, in Chapter Six, we mean the co-ordinators and the team of the project Literacy: Theory and Practice.

[164] From now on, the project Literacy: Theory and Practice shall be denominated the Project.

level of competence among teachers. Moreover, they had developed a strategy to achieve that: the parallel network of competent teacher educators.

6.1 The Preparation programme

As discussed in Chapter Four, the Foundation for the Development of Education (FDE) was assigned to be the central body in charge of activities concerning teachers' professional development. In the beginning of 1993 the FDE prepared its annual programme with the activities to be developed within the Preparation Programme. The document reaffirms the Secretariat of Education's policy of taking the *Preparation* as the chosen strategy to improve the quality of education.

> *"The State Secretariat of Education (...) is convinced that regular and massive investments in the pedagogical and cultural preparation of teachers will be necessary to revert the current conditions of teaching in São Paulo State"(Document 7- SSE, 1993, pp. 1)*

The Preparation Programme was organised in two areas: Curriculum and System Administration. The curriculum area was mainly addressed to teachers, from the pre-school to secondary level, although the emphasis is on the CB to the 4th grade. The administration area is addressed to all professionals working on the intermediate level of the SSE plus head teachers and co-ordinators, these two belonging to the local level

Besides curriculum and system administration, seven other projects were also planned to be carried out discussing various 'contemporary themes' such as indigenous peoples' issues, cinema and art, environmental issues, use of computers at schools amongst others. The activities included debates, seminars and short courses. In the document it is clear the intention of not only presenting 'impressive figures' but also showing that well-known professionals, many University lecturers, were among the professionals hired by the FDE to collaborate on the courses[165]. The

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[165] The referred document mentions the names and affiliation of the professionals that are in charge of the courses and activities included in the Preparation Programme. We understand this as its intention of showing the SSE's concern of hiring competent professionals from the most prestigious Institutions of Education in the country.

financial support to all the activities was assured by a very significant budget available to the FDE.

In 1991, the São Paulo State obtained a loan of U$ 245 million from an international bank to finance the IEB project (Innovations on the Basic Education). A complementary fund of U$ 323.7 million would be provided by the State Treasury. Part of these funds was spent on building and refurbishing the schools, which shows awareness of the poor material conditions in which the state network was left. However, the bulk of it had the Preparation Programme as the beneficiary (79,9%)[166]. In 1993, 250,000 places were to be offered in courses, seminars and workshops. However, during the same year FDE faced difficulties to meet the financial demands of the ongoing projects. Cutbacks and delays in payments were reported by some interviewees. Apparently, the State Treasury was not fulfilling its part in the agreement and the bank had consequently suspended the transfers. This had negative consequences for school refurbishment and for the projects of professional development, as reported by the team members interviewed.

The 'Literacy: Theory and Practice' project was one of the main projects addressed to the first grades of Primary Education. This project is presented and discussed next.

6.2 The Project Literacy: Theory and Practice

6.2.1 Antecedents of the project: its non-documented history

As was already presented, the Project "Literacy: Theory and Practice" is part of a broader project for TPD called "Preparation programme" launched by the FDE in 1991. It is, however, deeply rooted on a former project of teacher professional development. It seemed important to us to present, even if briefly, the history of the Project so that the reader can understand this project as a background to our subsequent description and analysis.

The Project "Literacy: Theory and Practice" was clearly conceived to be in continuity with a former project of teacher professional development called "For a Literacy

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[166] Including the production and acquisition of pedagogical material to give support to the Programme,

Without Failure", developed by Telma Waiz in partnership with CENP (the central body formerly in charge of teacher professional development) [167].

> *"In continuity to that project, now at the institutional level, we proposed to the teachers that took part in the project "For a Literacy Without Failure" that they would take on the role of monitors helping groups of teachers to deepen their theoretical and practical knowledge about literacy. That is how the project Literacy: Theory and Practice emerged" (Document 9- SSE, 1993, pp 3 [168]).*

The project "For a Literacy Without Failure" was carried out over four years, between 1988 and 1991, each year starting a new group and continuing with the former groups. In 1988, sixty teachers and other intermediate level staff became the first group. Waiz's proposal was to carry out a 'theory-practice reflection' on literacy issues based on the psychogenesis of the written language. As Mary, the team co-ordinator describes: *"It was not a course, it was a reflection throughout the year, it was an activity of professional development."*

The proposal required a close and continuous work with teachers. After four years, this project worked with 300 professionals. Considering that there are more than 6,000 teachers in the state education network, the project "Literacy Without Failure" was not devised to be a large scale action of TPD.

In 1991, still as part of the project "For a Literacy Without Failure", Waiz was preparing a pedagogic material made of a textbook and four videotapes. This material was later used as a reference material for the Basic Course[169]. FDE assumed that the edition of that material signalled its intention of continuing with Waiz's project. The new project, however, would not have Waiz but her students as course monitors[170]. The graduates of the project "For a Literacy Without Failure" were

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NEPP/UNICAMP, 1995.

[167] The project "For a Literacy Without Failure"started in 1988 with a selected group of sixty teachers. By 1990 around three hundred educators were involved on the project. The candidates were selected by Telma Waiz and CENP's team. The information on the project "For a Literacy Without Failure" presented here was mainly given by the interviewers.

[168] The list of the documents analysed is presented after the references.

[169] The material referred to here is called "Behind the letters"(Por trás das letras).

[170] Telma's Group continued to meet in a regular basis, so they could count on Telma's support. Telma Waiz was a consultant of the project Literacy: Theory and Practice.

invited to become the course monitors of the Project because they were considered by the interviewed team (in charge of the Literacy: Theory and Practice Project) to be competent professionals, as the following quote shows:

> "Initially the idea was to invite the people we believed had built a competence through their participation in a project during four years. And this group of people still keep in touch, but outside the institution. So, from that group, that was formed at the CENP, but not as......how could I say....not in an institutionalised way but it was formed with state teachers that took part in that project from 1988 to 1991...."(Nancy, team member)

When explaining why there is a shortage of 'competent professionals' in the educational network, Nancy and Yvonne, team members of the project, claim that the previous scheme of TPD, in which they had active participation, did not work as expected. Following the cascade method, there were basically pedagogical meetings held at central and intermediate levels, some talks, and short courses (30 hours long). The CB monitors and CB school supervisors were the main elements in closer contact with teachers. Nancy and Yvonne argue that the scheme could not assure to the teachers an effective reflection upon their practice. They believe that such reflection requires a continuous dialogue between theory and practice - that these short courses cannot provide- supported by close and continuous contact between teachers and a competent peer. Therefore, two conditions were missing: the space for such dialogue and a competent professional to co-ordinate the meetings. The project "Literacy: Theory and Practice" was a strategy to deal with that problem. And the former participants of the project "For a Literacy Without Failure" were chosen to work as course monitors. They came to be known as 'Telma's Group'.[171]

6.2.2 The project: its main courses and complementary activities

The project initiated its activities in 1992, the leavers of 'Telma's Group' being the monitors. Following the model developed by Waiz, the idea was to carry out a theoretical-practical reflection (what Telma calls as ' problematising the practice') throughout the academic year with teachers while discussing an alternative approach

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[171] 'Telma's Group', is the way they used to refer to the professionals that had participated in the Project by Telma Waiz.

to literacy, the psychogenesis of the written language (Ferreiro and Teberosky 1985, Ferreiro, 1985)." This strategy intends to deal with the relations between theory and practice.[172].

In 1992, 214 Basic Courses were run. The project's team initial plan was to have only 60 groups. However, the demand for the course was much higher than the team initially expected, and besides that the FDE's guidelines, which the team was supposed to follow, were to increase as much as possible the number of teachers involved in the Project. After this first year, the evaluations of the team pointed to the need for increasing the scope of the Project in both quantitative and qualitative terms. In 1993, the team organised three different courses: the Basic Course, the Advanced Course and the Improvement Course.

a) Basic Course: Is a 90-hour course carried out during the academic year. It is offered on a decentralised basis by teachers and other education staff across São Paulo State under FDE supervision. It is addressed mainly to CB teachers and co-ordinators of the Quality School. In 1993 one hundred and ninety groups were expected to run involving 7,200 teachers (Document 9 pp. 5). The course aimed to discuss the CB proposal and the psychogenesis of the written language starting from the teachers' practice.

b) Advanced Course: Is a 60-hour course also carried out during the academic year. This course is addressed to the teachers that attended the Basic Course in 1992. In 1993 one hundred and twenty groups were expected to run, involving 4,800 teachers (Document 9 pp. 5). It aims to deepen the teacher's knowledge on issues of the written language.

c) Improvement Course: Is the longest course, a 180-hour run in partnership with the Catholic University (PUC). This course is addressed to 30 Basic Course monitors and also to their student-teachers, involving then 1,230 teachers. This last

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[172] The references are: Ferreiro, E and Teberosky, A. (1985) Psicogênese da língua escrita. Porto Alegre, Artes Médicas. Ferreiro, E. (1985) Reflexões sobre alfabetização. São Paulo, Cortez/autores associados.

modality of activity was introduced because of the team's concern with the education of the course monitors[173].

Those three courses represented the main stem of the Literacy: Theory and Practice Project but there were also complementary activities such as seminars, and 30-hour workshops. The intention was reaching those complemented actions to all the regions across São Paulo State[174].

6.2.3 Analysis of the documents of the Literacy: Theory and Practice Project

The document that describes the project is made up of six parts set out in 19 pages (Document 9). Most of it simply lists and describes the sub-projects and courses for 1993. Its justification and aims hardly fill two pages.

As far as the aims are concerned, there is not much to comment upon. The central aim is "To create a researcher-teacher able to enlarge his repertoire of possibilities of action starting from a critical thinking upon his own practice"[175] (Document 9, pp. 4). The item 'justification for the project', despite its brevity, requires a few comments. The first comment refers to its content. The title given to the project (Literacy: Theory and Practice) is not accidental. This choice reveals its double anchors: the concern with literacy and the intentions of dealing with the interrelations between theory and pedagogical practice. The importance that literacy, as a theme, assumed in the last years nearly seems to excuse the authors of the document the trouble of making a longer justification for their choice. Its relevance is simply taken for granted. Those working with Basic Education in Brazil are conscious that issues related to literacy gained space among educators and researchers alike. Hundreds of papers were written and research projects were carried out at the University level taking literacy as a research subject. From the second half of the 80's onwards,

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[173] Course monitors are those teachers that run the courses of the Project.

[174] The workshops planned, in number of eleven, are to be developed in every DRE outside the capital. The material to be used in these workshops is the one prepared by Waiz as the last part of her project. This same material is used by the teachers monitors in the Basic Course.

[175] The central aim is then followed by three complementary items: "- to help in the search of new ways that allow the teacher to develop his daily work with more confidence; - to promote the advance required by the current stage of the knowledge on the field of literacy; - to develop a form of action that promotes the decentralisation, the strengthening, and the autonomy of the regions (of the state of São Paulo)"(pp. 4)

discussing literacy issues – new methods and new theories – became also one of the priorities of the SSE. Seminars, conferences and short courses were carried out; videos and written materials were produced. Although the actions were as yet non-systematic that trend was becoming clear. More than simply discussing literacy it was discussing a particular way of viewing literacy: the cognitivist approaches of child development inspired by Jean Piaget's ideas, particularly its constructivism[176]. As a consequence, the traditional approaches to literacy were severely criticised and the interactionist approaches, particularly the constructivism, gained space. Gradually it became virtually 'the' approach capable of providing the most meaningful explanations and the right tools to understand the process by which children learn to read and write. The traditional approaches to literacy had then to be substituted by new ones. The constructivist wave was taking shape. The hope of having found the solution for the chronic problems of primary education (particularly the high rates of repetition in the initial grades) led many teachers and other professionals in education (such as those working on the central and intermediate levels of the SSE) to deepen their knowledge of this "new theory". The mastering of constructivism would introduce teachers to a more "advanced thought" on literacy; viewed by many as a necessary step to sort out school failure. It was then important to find ways of "spreading the good news" among the teachers. To a certain extent, both projects "For a Literacy Without Failure", and the "Literacy: Theory and Practice" shared that ambition.

Having the conceptual tool chosen, it is then a matter of disseminating it among the teachers. This led to the second anchor of the project: the relations between theory and practice. The document is very economical when discussing this issue, limiting itself to the following statement:

> "Any project in Education has to consider the relations, not always easy, between theory and practice. These relations become clearer as we take practice as a source of constant questioning and hypothesis that can be answered by the theory. At the same time, theory is valid only if proved by the practice" (Document 09 pp. 3).

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[176] See glossary.

The practice feeds the theory and vice-versa. That may be a summarised way of saying the same thing. We consider that this statement, to make sense in practice, would need further discussion. The interviews with the team members and with teacher-monitors bring more detail to light on this subject.

To finalise the discussion of the "justification/aims" of the project a last comment is made. From all it was said it is not surprising that a clear and direct relation is established between the school failure and dropout, and the pedagogical practice of literacy teachers.

> *"(We believe) that literacy teachers have a practice that **must be known**, as it constitutes the reality of the (São Paulo) State everyday literacy. And this practice **must be re-thought** due to the high rates of dropout and repetition in the first years of schooling".*
> *(...) It is only knowing the literacy teachers conceptions and actions that will make it possible to act to change the repeated history of failure that a considerable part of the Brazilian population seems to be condemned to. (Document 9 pp. 3, 4, emphasis not in the original)*

Two comments shall be made about the quote. Firstly it reveals the authors' commitment to the improvement of the quality of the education, while at the same time showing their oversimplified view of the nature of the problem being dealt with. To argue a simple cause- effect relationship between the pedagogical practice and the high rate of repetition is not only wrong but also misleading. The literature on school failure has shown how complex this phenomenon is, and the inner mechanisms of the school system directly related to it[177]. The commitment to the improvement of the quality of education is not by itself sufficient to break with the technicist approaches to teacher professional development.

Secondly, there is an interesting ambiguity to be noted here. The authors apparently recognise how little is known about the classroom practice of literacy teachers ("that the practice of literacy teachers **must be known**)[178]. Nevertheless, they seem to forget immediately that lack of knowledge and pass to argue the need for rethinking it.

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[177] See Chapter Two, section 2.3- 'Explanations of the causes of the school failure'.
[178] Azanha (1991) goes in this direction arguing that we know very little about the school culture, its processes and practices.

Without diminishing the importance of literacy and the first years of schooling to the school history of the pupils, it seems mistaken to count on the recovery of the quality of education after simply introducing new theories and methods in the work of the literacy teachers. Such expectation is unrealistic. And moreover, the failure of this enterprise leaves open the possibility that it will be once again credited to the teacher's lack of professional commitment and competence.

6.2.4. The Team's Perspective on the Project

The project's team comprises a manager, a co-ordinator and ten members. The interviews were made with the team manager, its co-ordinator, and with four of its members.

The team have a long experience in the field of teacher professional development; hence, they spoke very confidently about the subject. That condition was particularly interesting to the development of the interviews as, in general, neither the researcher nor most of her questions and comments seemed to intimidate or to disturb them. Therefore, the climate of the interviews was largely free of tension.

The activities of the Project started in 1991 as Louise and Mary, the team manager and co-ordinator, respectively, went to work at FDE[179]. They have been working together for quite a long time, which seems to have allowed them to develop common views on many aspects related to the state network and to the issue of teacher professional development. When interviewed, they gave each other support (including gestures), transmitting the impression of being real partners. Louise was more transparent when talking about her opinions while Mary preferred to adopt a little more cautious attitude. They left no room for doubts about their self-confidence in the work that they are developing through the Project. They also tried to provide the researcher with information about themselves so that she would be convinced of their expertise and qualification to occupy the position they hold. The path chosen to do that was to recapitulate, yet briefly, the history of the CB programme and its connections with their own professional history. So, while discussing the subject of

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[179] FDE stands for *"Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação"*. A possible translation is Foundation for the Development of Education.

teacher professional development, constant reference is made to the CB programme. For them, as well as for some of the team, to talk about the current Project of teacher professional development is to talk about their history of struggle to assure continuity of the kind of work they believe in. This is probably a vital feature of their sense of professional identity.

The concern with the **continuity** of their work is one of the first themes that emerged during the analysis of the interviews. In the following section, this theme is discussed along with the worries about the possible **discontinuity**.

6.3 TPD as the chosen strategy to develop 'professional competence'

Louise and Mary worked previously in the CB's team at the *Bureau for Studies and Pedagogical Norms* – CENP. In 1993 CENP was a normative body of the education system in charge of curriculum development and production of written materials. In 1991/1992 CENP was still one of the central institutions in charge of organising and providing activities of TPD. While working in the CB's teams Louise, Mary and some other members of the Literacy's team, such as Nancy, Diana and Yvonne, were deeply involved in these activities[180].

Mary and Louise belong to an influential group within the central levels of the SSE. The last decade of their professional history is strongly linked to the CB programme. They have been involved with CB since its early days assuming leading positions, writing and organising materials to be distributed to teachers and staff of the intermediate levels. For those working in the central and intermediate levels of the SSE, their names became associated with CB issues. From their point of view, they belong to a group of people that have taken into their hands the task of trying to make CB's pedagogical and political proposal a reality. They understand the CB programme as the way of making schooling more democratic. Over the years, they say they have always felt they have had to struggle to implement the CB's ideals and to assure its continuity within a political context where discontinuity of social and educational policies is the rule.

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[180] All the names are pseudonyms, gender being maintained.

"This week we've been analysing the 10, 12 years of CB. My hypothesis is that it was thanks to the people involved in the CB that it has managed to keep its continuity in a country of a political environment of constant discontinuity. The CB programme has not survived by accident...but because the social fabric in education has been supportive to it. We belong to this group of people that understand that the CB is a proposal that matters, that is important, it is the way to democratise education. We are resuming this history..." (Louise, team manager).

Louise, in particular, shows the concern in relating to the researcher the history of the CB. She traces the origins of the CB back to a series of research projects developed in the late 70's by a well-known Department of Educational Research[181]. Patto (1990) with the purpose of analysing a shift observed in the educational research also recognises the influential role that particular series of research projects had[182]. While Patto saw the influence of the FCC (1981) in the trends at the level of educational research, Louise also asserts its influence in the policy-making level:

"The studies were co-ordinated by Bernadette Gatti. There were five studies: Lia's about the school demand, repetition and dropout; Elba's about head teachers; Guiomar's (Mello) on the social representation of teachers, Rose's on Curriculum; Maria Malta's about the exclusion of the people's point of view. That material more or less pervades the educational platform of Montoro's government (...) and led to the Basic Cycle proposal (Louise).

In Chapter Four, we have already discussed how the CB programme was much more a result of the ideas from specialists than from suggestions given by the teachers in the *Forum*. While referring to the document teachers prepared during the *Forum* with their demands, Louise argues that:

*"That assessment of what the teachers aspired to... it was very reactionary (...) **the things teachers asked reflected this deeply entrained amalgam of the reactionary thought**". Therefore, Montoro's education programme had "some points, of course, based upon the teachers evaluation (Forum) but it (CB) had a lot to do with the studies (referring to the FCC projects) and **with the***

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[181] Fundação Carlos Chagas (FCC) – Departamento de Pesquisas Educacionais (1981). Educação e Desenvolvimento Social. São Paulo. FCC/DPE, 8 vol.

[182] To recall Patto's statement, see first quotation in section 2.3 – 'Explanation of the causes of the school failure'.

points these studies pointed to as central."(Louise)

As the last quotation indicates, the team has a conservative conception about who is entitled to deal with policy making. In its view, the scientific knowledge is 'the source of worthy knowledge'. The knowledge from the experience of teachers cannot be trusted. Teachers are viewed as too conservative and their analyses are biased by self-interest. Teachers asked for fairer salaries and better conditions of work *"but to those demands proposals for the re-organisation of the school (represented by the CB project) were added". That is where the CB started."*(Louise).

With Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), we consider it to be necessary to make an important criticism about the way to define the educational reforms. The nature of research-based and top-down reform is highly anti democratic, for it is imposed on everyone, disrespecting teachers, and disregarding their knowledge and points of view. It also runs the risk of falling into the trap of a 'scientific knowledge': the over-confidence in the supposedly accurate and logical findings of educational research as a justification for the 'new' teaching methods and 'scientific truth' they promote. We agree that,

> *"In a rapid changing post-modern world characterised by indeterminacy and unpredictability, this faith in the certainty of educational research findings is both exaggerated and misplaced."(pp. 4)*

We draw attention to another function that the appeal to the superiority and worthiness of the scientific knowledge has performed. By linking the origins of the CB programme with the conclusions of research projects (as it is clear on Louise's last quotation), she aims at conferring legitimacy not only on the programme itself, **but also to her own way of understanding what the democratisation of education involves and within it, the role played by teacher professional development.**

> *"I believe that a programme of professional development is not the only thing but it has an interesting strength (...) But effectively it is not something that goes by itself, you have to provide the conditions. **But in my point of view it is better to have people that***

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believe they can build the change than to have material conditions and lack the people. People that understand that to change the teaching is fundamentally to change the didactic relation. The other things help but they are not fundamental."(Louise, our stress)

Their involvement and dedication to the field of teacher professional development seems to cloud their eyes, obscuring a broader analysis that would take into consideration other aspects, of no less importance, in achieving a better quality education, such as the concrete conditions of work at school, teachers careers, decent salaries, to name a few. This position is not peculiar to the team; it is actually in tune with the mainstream educational literature, as discussed in Chapter Three. We agree with Franco (1995) that "downplaying the relevance of social and material difficulties faced by the school, insisting solely on the pedagogical dimension, can result in a linear and simplistic outlook" [183]. Louise, then, although recognising that a programme of TPD 'is not the only thing', tends to overlook the relevance of social and material conditions of schools and teachers.

Following the then prevalent line of reasoning, TPD would play a very important role, in the process of changing the teaching. Yet, the acknowledgement of such importance and the development of effective lines of actions were recent, which indicates an incipient recognition of her responsibility in the course of the actions of TPD that had been carried out so far. In analysing the kind of work done previously under the Secretariat of Education auspices (in which several members of the team took part), they argue that an extensive and comprehensive programme for professional development was never carried out then as it is being done nowadays.

"This is the first time the professional development[184] is being universalised, in a broader way. The World Bank's project (the part of the Literacy project that is funded by the World Bank) will reach 25% of the São Paulo metropolitan region. There were some courses before, there were points of movement...Where the thing got thorough with strength there was a substantial improvement but it was not statistically representative of the educational network. Now the 'Literacy: Theory and Practice' project tends to be spread throughout São Paulo State and to become statistically representative" (Louise).

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[183] Op. cit. , pp,124.

[184] *'Capacitação'* is the term mostly used to refer to the actions of TPD carried out by the FDE.

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Decision-making, possibility of broadening the scope of their work (and consequently of their influence), and the perspective of proper funding: these three elements were certainly taken into account by the team's members when they left CENP and went to work at FDE. Their long experience working on the SSE has taught them how to search for and obtain better conditions of work for themselves. As Mary puts it:

> "We didn't want our work to suffer any discontinuity, so we thought we should continue with what we have been doing but in another...within another context".

The need for continuity and the worries about the possible lack of it are often expressed by them when discussing the CB programme, TPD and educational policies in general. It seems that behind the concern with continuity, the team aims not only at carrying on activities similar to a former project but to continue to exert influence, and to broaden its scope both upon the educational scenario (in what the professional development of primary teachers is concerned) and upon the school network itself. A complementary explanation is that the context of instability of the state education guidelines favours a kind of attitude displayed by Louise: that of defending (with all her arguments and energies) the kind of work of TPD she believes in, reaching even the point of overestimating its possibilities in an attempt to guarantee (to us and to herself) that there are no doubts about the highest relevance of TPD to the improvement on the quality of education.

According to the persons interviewed, the new context offered by the Preparation Programme would provide the possibility of meeting the need for reaching a greater number of schools and teachers, ideally every region of São Paulo State. However, that turned out to be a difficult task to accomplish. And that was due not only to the huge number of schools involved but also, and perhaps mainly, to the features that the team interviewed understand there are on the school network[185]. The team

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[185] The SSE has under its administration 6,359 schools, 44 technical schools, and 35 agricultural schools; around 6 million students; a staff of over 350,000 workers, including teachers, head teachers and administrative personnel (Document 01 pp 01).

members, some overtly other more indirectly, mention the difficulties in dealing with the school network.

> "It is always the central schools that are first attended by the reforms. Why? Because when you think about doing a reform, you need to have the minimum conditions of infrastructure. Where do you have that? In the central areas of the city. And how do we find the outskirts? Crowded, with unstable staff .....These things are very difficult to deal with...(...) In my point of view, it is on the central schools that you have....it is there where they understand 'autonomy' as "I do whatever I want and no one says anything" (...) in the sense of not having interference from the central bodies. (Louise)"

> "One of the claims 'in the air' is that the FDE should redistribute the funds to the DE. And that the DE itself would take on the activities of TPD. Considering the way they are I think they won't. I'm not trying to defend...But they won't. They won't because these things are not clear yet. These things are not built, are not discussed. On the contrary, one sees that the things happen in parallel because the DE itself has not incorporated the possibilities of renewal, of carrying on a discussion of an alternative project, of having a different practice. (...) I have bad experiences, very bad, very bad...for example: In Bauru city it is a disaster! Its Education Authority Officer is a 'political person' connected, as all of them are, with the local politics, with Members of the Local Council."(Sybil)

Hence, as they understand it, the conservative, old-fashioned, bureaucratic and politically bounded features of the network have to be slowly but steadily undermined. The strategy to achieve such a goal could not be the direct confrontation. To try to bypass the hierarchic structure of the network, which in practice meant to avoid the intermediate levels of system, was the team's initial strategy while implementing the Project. By doing that, a **parallel network** of competent professionals would be built inside that very network.

> "In 1989 we were mapping people and regions: where there were people and where there were not, we went to get them. (...) We were providing some infrastructure to Telma Waiz's project so that the network would gradually get people in the various regions of the state that would represent the more... advanced thinking...yeah, more advanced with respect to this issue" (Mary).

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This strategy of building a parallel network of competent professionals had started in 1989 during a project carried out in partnership between a Waiz and CENP[186]. The team started the Project not using the educational network but working in parallel to it[187]. It is in *parallel* because it did not follow the formal channels of the structure of the SSE (in the sense that it did not use its intermediate levels) just as Waiz's project had not followed them either.

> "When we started the project, we started despite of, or in parallel to, or at the margin of the structure (education network). We took the teachers straight from the classroom...those people that we could count on for the project. Some were school supervisors, others were head teachers, and other teachers.... But we did not use the structure (education network) (Yvonne)

The idea of building a parallel network of competence involves that initial step mentioned by Mary as 'mapping people and region'. That is, to identify where the professionals 'that represent the more advanced thinking' are. Where, within the education system, the professionals are that are familiar with the constructivist approaches to education. Those would be the persons to become the team's point of reference, their first contact when developing any TPD activities in the area. By investing in them, the team would start to build a 'parallel network' of a more 'advanced thinking', that would exert influence on their colleagues.

It is remarkable that professionals working **within SSE's own structure** devised a strategy of TPD that tried to bypass the ordinary channels of the SSE, particularly the intermediate levels (DREs and DEs). That choice is a result of their distrust in the ordinary channels of the SSE. This theme is discussed next.

6.4 The feeling of distrust

The continuity of the CB programme - and even its effective implementation- has been a challenge. Not only because of the ever-so-common practice of launching

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[186] 'For a Literacy Without Failure' (CENP/1988)

[187] Afterwards, in the second year of the project, the team had to develop strategies to involve the educational network due to the expansion the project went through in 1993. They intended to offer 60 groups of the Basic Course in 1992 but to meet the demand they had to offer 214 groups. In 1993 there were 190 groups of the Basic Course and 60 groups of the Advanced Course.

new educational policies without taking into account the previous ones, but also the implementation of any educational programme which intends to introduce changes into the daily lives of schools and teachers depends very much on the people that will be involved in it. The problem of meaning is central to the process of implementing any educational change. As Fullan(1991) puts it,

> "(...) educational change is a process of coming to grips with the **multiple** realities of people, who are the main participants in implementing change."(Fullan pp.95, emphasis in the original)

Our research confirmed what some previous studies and researches showed about the strong criticism and resistance the CB programme faced from intermediate and local levels (Souza, 1990;Vieira Cruz, 1994, Hypólito, 1997 Perosa 1997 and others). The criticisms addressed to the CB programme and the resistance to accept it were particularly strong during its early years but even at the time the fieldwork was conducted, after more than a decade of existence, the CB and its pedagogical approach have been neither totally accepted nor fully understood by a great number of teachers and professionals from the intermediate and local levels. As the team recognise,

> "The statistics of the CB show something really serious. The high rate of repetition moved to the 3rd grade and **there is a hidden repetition on the CB**. These are things that we have to tackle. (...) What is the meaning of these two things? What do they represent? That we do not improve sufficiently the quality of the literacy's work. And that the hidden repetition is an offence to the law. The repetition is forbidden by a governor decree. (Louise)"

> "Denise: Do the teachers use their pedagogical meetings (HTP) to carry out actions of professional development?

> Mary: It varies. They have the conditions, the time, and the space but the issue of the teacher-coordinator is not resolved. Because the teacher-coordinator does not know how to carry out a collective work of studies.... She does not have the habit of reading and of reflection upon the practice. The meeting ends up with each participant telling the others what she has done.... It depends on the teacher-coordinator. There are schools where the HTP works and others where it doesn't. (Mary)"

Those people that have close contact with primary teachers, be it as intermediate level staff, or be it as a researcher, had several opportunities to hear from teachers that the CB programme would lower the quality of teaching. This would occur as a consequence of the pupil's automatic promotion to the third grade after the two-year cycle. As some teachers disagree with the policy of automatic promotion an unofficial (but known as the last quotation shows) practice of keeping some pupils more than the expected two years in the CB was established among the schools (which means the persistence of the pupil's repetition of the first or second grade). Far from being an 'offence to the law', as Louise claimed, this practice clearly denotes the teachers strong disagreement with CB. Moreover, it is a strategy developed by them to carry out teaching within a framework that is compulsory.

The "hidden repetition", as it came to be called, could be read as a symptom of failure in providing the teachers with the tools and correct information concerning the pedagogical proposal of the CB. Explanations such as 'teachers resistance to change', usually offered by the central levels of the SSE are simplistic and mistaken. To accuse the teachers of incompetence repeats the same mistake. No training was provided before launching the project and neither was an **extensive** in-service education during its first years. As Louise herself acknowledges, *"this is the first time the preparation is being universalised"*.

When asked how the courses' participants are responding to it, Nancy and Yvonne, two members of the team answer,

> *"N.: (disheartened gesture)...with resistance...*
> *Y.:...I would tell you that from A to Z, there are B, B', C, C', there*
> *are people with various understandings of it.(...) (Nancy and*
> *Yvonne).*

Such resistance is usually analysed by the team as teachers' resistance to change their pedagogical practice and conceptions. The criticisms addressed to CB are also regarded as a problem of teachers' resistance to change[188]. In fact, teachers' resistance

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[188] Teachers' resistance to change is used here to refer not only to teachers but also to the other professionals of the state education network such as head teachers, school supervisors, pedagogical assistants and other personnel of intermediate levels.

to change usually is, within the team's discourse, a recurrent and self-explanatory idea: teachers resist to change because they are conservative and stubborn.

> *"Some teachers would rather die than give up the textbook ("cartilha", the traditional literacy teaching book)! They don't want to put a text in the pupil's hand because they understand it is easier to work with the lessons from the textbook (...) The head-teachers understand autonomy as 'I do whatever I want and no one says anything! (...) they understand autonomy as not having interference from the central bodies" (Louise).*

> *"The teacher has to return to her studies... If we think about what content we propose to be in the Basic Course, that content is already in the documents published by the SSE...If you ask the teacher, and show her, for instance, the front page of the document "That is what we learn with the CB", she says "Oh no!! This again!!" It's gathering dust in the schools!! The teacher has already seen it but she doesn't....She does not realise that she has to read and discuss it..." (Nancy, team member)*

However, the team in charge of the project Literacy: Theory and Practice recognises that an extensive and comprehensive programme for professional development was never carried out as it was till now being done. So we understand that the teachers' reluctance in 'changing' and their conservatism could be explained as coping strategies they developed while working without concrete opportunities of professional development, and not understood as a feature of personality shared by the teachers.

We consider that the so-called "teacher resistance to change" and the "feeling of distrust" are closely connected within the team's perception of the conditions under which they have to develop their work: the team feel they cannot trust the intermediate levels of the education system because of the resistance of the professionals that work on those levels. The teachers' resistance to change would work as the justification for their chosen strategy of teacher professional development (the parallel network), being consequently more easily apprehended in their discourse. But the feeling of distrust also emerges, as on the following quote, reproduced from the end of Mary's interview.

> *"We are calling the DE's heads here to establish a more favourable atmosphere. There are many levels down to the school... If there*

are blockages in any one of them the information cannot get there and the teachers do not even get to know about the courses. (...) There were sabotages. There is sabotage in all levels, so we've got to be careful " (Mary).

The team felt they could not fully rely on the professionals working at the intermediate and local levels. Boycott might come from anywhere and an alert stance was always required.

Their understanding of the motives for the teachers' resistance to change and their reasons for not trusting them are grounded in the way they see teachers and the staff of the intermediate levels. The team tend to have an ambivalent attitude toward teachers. Sometimes they show sympathy and understanding of the teacher's difficulties in carrying out their work under unfavourable conditions. Other times, however, they describe teachers as apathetic and self-centered. The teachers would use their adversities as mere excuses not to commit themselves to the required changes. The following quotation is illustrative of the ambiguities and differences found between team members. We quote at length because is necessary to show how they alternate their opinion during the interview.

N: "Being a teacher, he has to want to go back to his studies...but studying seriously, and there is no such tradition within the teaching profession....the teacher that graduate 20 years ago.., he did not... what courses has he attended? (....)
Y: I think we have to deal with that issue that is in our Culture...
D: But why does the teacher not seek for improvement?
N: That's what I mean.
Y: I guess he does not have encouragement.
N: He does not have encouragement... it is not a part of....of...of.. the education, of the culture of the teaching profession to seek for that....And another thing, we've noticed that many times teachers criticise the (CB) proposal without any basis. He criticises because he heard someone saying that the proposal is to "let the child write wrongly". That is their discourse!! (...)
Y: But I think there are other things..
N: There are many things, but what I 'm trying to say, what I think is that the teacher....
D: Let's go deeper into this. Why do some teachers..(interruption)
Y: Look, I don't think that (interruption. They talk together)
Y Because if we analyse,... the demands for the courses... We could not say that the teacher does not want to do a course. He wants.
N: He wants. He is searching for that..
Y: He is searching for that...

N: That is because of that demand that. (interruption)

Y: Look. If we started proposing 60 groups for last year and we ended up with 213, that is due to the high demand. That means that...

N: They are searching for that...

Y: A lot of teachers are interested in attending the course. I think there is the interest, but...

N: Even knowing that many teachers go for the course because of the certificate and for the points they will get (to increase their salaries).

Y: That's it.

N: Even knowing that, we have the information that some (teachers) really want to know what is going on... (...) They want to understand better the things.

Y: There are other sides to the question...(,...) it is a long course, off hours, that requires a lot of availability by the teacher, a lot, and we recognise that. Besides that, there is a strong feeling... it has to do with their low salary.. These are questions that we cannot disguise, they are there. So, the teacher possibly thinks: "Gosh! To receive that salary, what is the point? Why do I need to get more things to do?" (...)

N: What other aspects prevent the teacher.....or is he.....or he is apathetic (they speak together so we cannot understand)

Y: There is, for example, the question of...the obstacles imposed by the dynamics of the structure itself (not possible to hear the tape), the school works in 3 or 4 shifts, low salaries...

They argue that teachers do not seek the right information, they are apathetic. All the team, however, agree that teachers are very practically-minded persons that need external help to improve their teaching methods and change their conceptions and theories about the literacy process. As the last quotation showed, not even the very high demand to attend the courses offered by the Project seems to present a strong enough reason to change their opinion about the teachers. In 1992 the team expected to run approximately 60 groups of the Basic Course, but by the end of the year they had run 214 groups. In 1993 there were 190 groups of the Basic Course and 60 groups of the Advanced Course.

The staff of intermediate levels, however, are more consistently seen by the team in a negative way: there are too many political interests going on at that level, they argue. Therefore, vested interests underlie their actions, such as mere self-promotion, and the use of their positions to their own benefit.

It is not very clear what the team mean by 'political interests'. However, so far as their motives for not trusting the staff of the intermediate level are concerned, it is possible to assert that among the central reasons are: a) the team's perception of an ongoing abuse of power and their involvement in the local politics[189]; b) their professional incompetence (to be settled in the section 6.5).

As a summary, we understand that the feeling of distrust usually does not emerge in itself, as something without a reason or as a mere prejudice against teachers and staff from the other levels of the educational system. It appears connected to their rationale for the shape the Literacy project has taken and for the strategy chosen to carry it out. The course monitors of the Literacy project had to be carefully chosen. The average professionals of the educational network were not seen as the natural partners to work co-operatively on this enterprise. Analysing their interviews it becomes clear that from the team's point of view, the success of this project requires not only to work with reliable persons but also in partnership with persons with a characteristic they believe is not frequently found in the average professional: **competence**. This leads to the last element of the team's discourse identified here.

6.5 The team's use (and abuse) of the idea of competence

The idea of diversifying the courses in 1993 by offering three different modalities[190] instead of one, targets two needs: to increase the number of teachers involved in the project, and to invest in the preparation of the course monitors.

> *"When we decided to offer different types of courses, the idea was to deal with the great challenge of extending the reach, because the education network is very big, while at the same time also trying to deepen a little bit more (the discussion) with the Advanced and Improvement courses" (Diana, team member)*

The team believes that meeting these two different aims is a real challenge. The professionals that assumed the position of teachers educators of the Basic Course

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[189] The team was vague when mentioning the subject and we noticed that only after the fieldwork was over, during the course of analysis. So, we lost the chance of clarifying the subject.

[190] See subsection 6.2.2, earlier in this Chapter, to the description of the three courses: Basic Course, Advanced course, and Improvement course.

have not been prepared for this work as such. The Improvement Course intends to deal with these needs. The FDE's policy of increasing **as much as possible** the number of participating professionals working in the school network is not always compatible with the conditions the team understand they have.

> *"Actually, the course monitors were prepared to reflect upon their own practice in the classroom. They were not prepared to work with groups of teachers....They organised some pedagogical meetings at the DE level, but even that was uncommon"(Diana).*

Doubts emerge about the professional qualifications the monitors have to develop the TPD activities proposed by FDE. At the same time, there also appears another kind of problem, that the team mention, not always directly, with which they have less control.

> *Nancy: (Evaluating the activities in 92) "Not all monitors have, how can I say..., the same level of competence, or the same level of understanding of their own work. We are trying to build up...I wouldn't say something ideal, but at least...It is clear there are some important needs.*
> *Yanna: I don't know...(showing disagreement with Nancy).* **We have problems with the network itself***, the structure of the network.... (Our emphasis)*

Yvonne points out that there are some limitations on what they can change in the network, and that there are not enough well prepared professionals within the intermediate level to deal with the teachers' demands for qualification.

Ideally they would like to be able to reach every CB teacher *"but to do that we count on people to help us in this project. And we've noted during all these years.... we have very concrete difficulties in counting on these people... with people that we can say are prepared. Today I've questioned myself: Is there anybody prepared?"*(Yvonne and Nancy, team members)

The FDE's policy of increasing as much as possible the number of teachers reached by the Preparation Programme seems to be against the strategy devised by the team. Their idea seemed to be to increase *gradually* the number of teachers involved, by mapping the regions in the State of São Paulo, identifying and preparing the

professionals with the required competence to develop the work of continuing education during the academic year. The project (and the model) devised by Waiz, which is basically what they used in the Project, did not intend to reach the entire school network but to carry on a proposal of continuing education, during the year, with a limited number of groups of teachers. The problems start to emerge as that model, devised to work with fewer teachers, is expected by the FDE senior management to quickly meet the needs of an education network as big as São Paulo. The team would then have to count on people that were not trained to work as course monitors.

Yvonne's doubts about the qualification of the teachers are related to what she identified as a lack of proper assessment of the former actions of professional development. That is why she felt the need to *map competencies* to develop the Project.

> *Y: (...) Today I've questioned myself: Is there anybody prepared?*
> *N: Because there was not an effective work with them...*
> *Y: Or even when there was, we did not evaluate it. For example, what kind of people are we forming with those courses? We do not have an assessment. We have a kind of assessment through the informal contacts, the chats, some reports but.... Then what we have is a sort of.....*
> *N: It is just bits...We are trying, from the last year, we are mapping the regions in terms of the quality of the work that is been developed...*

To fill that gap, the team believe they need to devise strategies to get a closer and more personal contact with the course monitors through meetings and reports to prepare the action of the team.

Despite all the doubts and questionings the team had, the pressures of everyday demands of continuing education, as posed by the Preparation Programme, cannot wait. The number of groups running in 1993 was increased by nearly 50%. To meet the number of monitors required to run all the 310 groups in 1993 (190 of Basic Course and 160 of Advanced course) the team had to count on leavers of the Basic Course in 1992. This strategy was severely criticised by some of the monitors interviewed, as will be further discussed in the next chapter. The increase of the

number of groups in 1993 involving those professionals is understood by some monitors as an expression of FDE's lack of true commitment to the quality of education. They understand the FDE's top management would be more concerned with showing 'figures' to their funding agency, an international Bank.

All the six interviewees use the term 'competence'. Some of them make use of this term more frequently than others. However, they do that without noticing how dependent on this idea their conception of teachers professional education is. If we intentionally overused this phrase here, the team, or at least some of its members, did not do so in the same way. On the contrary, it seems to be a rather unconscious use, and a not well-defined idea of competence. The following passages from Nancy's (N.) and Yvonne's (Y.) interview illustrate this.

When answering the question: "In your opinion, what is a competent teacher?" a sudden discomfort starts to build up.

> "N.... We talked about this last time, but is was about the course monitors, wasn't it?...
> Y. Yes...competent teacher, as I understand it..., first of all, I don't like this word. I don't use much 'competent'...
> D. People talk a lot about 'competence', don't they?
> N. How could we talk about the teacher's competence if there wasn't even a plan of teacher development in the Secretariat?! How can one talk about competence if...
> Y. But, what do we mean by 'competent teacher'? When we use this word.
> N. Competent teacher?...

And later, when it is asked, "What do you think that teachers think a competent teacher is?" they are clearly uneasy, catching each other's eyes searching for mutual support. They seem to be quite annoyed by the question. The following passages try to reproduce in words something that has much of body language.

> "Y. Running all the risks.... I think this is a difficult question, first because I have never asked them this question, so I'm very much running the risk of making a mistake.
> (...)
> N. I think we never dealt with this social representation...
> Y. We never dealt with this social representation, so it is very complicated...

(...)

Y. We have never asked the teachers this question, Denise, I'm not going to answer you...I think it is a curiosity we have, I think it is something we could ask them...No, I wouldn't dare to answer you this question... No...

D. I'm asking because this word is used a lot, isn't it? Competence.

Y. It is. I think there is a lot of.. of..

N. I don't know if we use 'competence'...I don't use it very much...competent teacher?

D. But you use the term 'competence'.

N. But not so connected with the issue of professional development...no

Y. Yes, you do. Here in this very interview. Many times.... I hardly use it because I don't like this term..

D. People use it a lot.

Y. I, for instance, use it very little. I don't like this word, I think it is very complicate to discuss competence.

N. Yeah, I think that 's it!(...)

As Yvonne recognises, Nancy does use, as well as the other members of the team do, the phrases 'competence', 'competent teachers' and 'competent course monitors'. It would be possible to reproduce here many other passages from their interviews where such phrases abound. However, this would be not only unnecessary but also monotonous.

> *Mary: "The big issue today is the following: the CB teacher is now understanding some of the questions that we pose to them. I think that they have improved a lot but there is still a lot to be done. But the 3rd and 4th grade teachers are resisting. (...) so we are still working to form coordinators to work with the teachers of those grades. The CB coordinator will be working with them. This coordinator already exists but she does not have all the competence to do that..." (Mary, team member)*

The pivotal use of the term competence by some of the team's members was evident in the interview data. So too was the uneasiness that the reference to it caused, which is related to the reactions and emotions that emerge when this idea which is so familiar that they do not even think worthwhile reflecting about it.

As was discussed in previous chapters, the phrase 'technical competence' became widely used and highly accepted within the educational community. It was coined by Mello, and after some debate within the academic sphere the term was disseminated among the teachers and other educators.

Competence is the term used nowadays. The meaning of this concept for the various participants involved in teachers development may vary. To talk about what is a competent teacher evokes uncomfortable emotions and feelings for some of the interviewees as we have discussed before. Yvonne, after that dialogue reproduced earlier, says that:

> " Y.: (...) Competent teacher is the one which can manage to teach
> the child writing and reading; not to return to the school the
> 'school's words' but in such a way that the child could be able to
> write his (hers) thoughts and feelings, to be really a subject. "

Yvonne also says that a competent teacher is herself a user of the written language and she works with her pupils so that they can also be. And she continues arguing that if the teacher cannot do this today for whatever reasons she works to do it in the near future. A competent teacher, she claims, is committed to her work and to her students.

Other member, Sybil, does not seem so disturbed by the same question. From her perspective a competent teacher is as follows:

> "I think that it is a teacher that can read the situation, the context,
> the role of school, her role as a teacher... as somebody that would
> transmit certain contents to the children... .It is the one that has the
> ability to articulate these things at the school level and in her
> pedagogical practice. "

Sybil adds that a competent teacher also seeks for developing his/her knowledge, his/her understandings through a process of continuous education.

Taking these definitions given by the members we would conclude there is not much divergence between them. It is not, however, the way one of the interviewees sees it. Sybil believes there are differences and divergence among the team in what concerns their conceptions of competence and of teacher professional development. She is, among the team, the one that had a more critical stance towards the work of the group. She was apprehensive during the interview, speaking sometimes in half words, combining with gestures of uneasiness. She shows signs of disagreement with what she understands to be the team's approach.

S: Yes, the school needs input from the outside. What happens here is that there is an illusion, and it is an illusion that comes from a serious misunderstanding, a misunderstanding that also happens here (in the team), and that is the idea that what the teachers' lack is information, is competence, is pedagogical content and a new practice.
D: And from your point of view, that is not so?
S: No, it is not only that. It is much more than that. It is the whole discussion of how the institution is organised, what is the role of school within this society, how the school is reflecting about its own practices, and how all this structure reflects on what is being done inside the school. It is quite complicated without carrying this discussion on the 'micro and macro' (levels).

It is then clear that there are tensions within the team's perception of the theme of competence in their work. Sybil's main criticism concerns what she identifies as a lack of a well-defined axis along which the contents of the Basic Course would be organised.

She is the one that clearly confirmed our hypothesis about the important influence, exerted on the team's conceptions and proposals, from the work of Mello about the technical incompetence of teachers.

D: "Do you think the team agree on what is a competent teacher?
S: No. We disagree very much...We have different conceptions on what is professional development.
D: Do you think this conception is strongly linked with contents?
S: I do.
D: And where does it come from?
S: Since CENP's time. Guiomar...(Christian name of Mello).
D. It is something that has a history...
S. I have the impression... If this discussion on the teacher education was carried out here (within the team)... it was done via those people (Mello). This is the discourse that remains, even if not very clearly... how can I say...this remains as...
D. A legacy?
S: Hum, hum... (agreeing) nobody mentioned Mello's work here but between the lines, that was what influenced most consistently... that conception."(Sybil)

These quotations are then taken here as part of the evidence that have helped us to confirm our hypothesis about the influence on the teams' conceptions and lines of action for TPD exerted by Mello's work, particularly her loose definition of

'teacher's professional competence' and its chief role in the improvement of the general quality of education.

6.6 Possibilities and limitations of Teacher Professional Development

The interviews with the team's members indicate that the team's work, considering its task of dealing with primary teachers, is in tune with the chief role attributed in the official documents to the actions of TPD. That is:

> "The new actions of professional development should provide support and content to the required knowledge, values, and competencies to an integrated action of the school team over the following variables: a) strategic (related to formulation of pedagogical and administrative projects, supervision and management); b) behavioural (related to team support, motivation, leadership oriented to the quality of the results) and c) results (assessment of the quality of the educational services, and benefit-cost relation)". (Document 2- pp. 7,8)

In short, the aim of the professional development process is "to foster changes of behaviour fitting the individual abilities to the responsibility of the positions held" (Document 2 pp. 9).

This is understandable; some of them have dedicated a good deal of their professional lives to this cause. That experience in the area allows them to execute an important reflection on the limitations of the traditional ways of conducting TPD, and the difficulties of achieving a better education through it.

The team's members argue that the CB and the CB-JU programmes, implemented on early days, had introduced some changes that on their own were not enough to improve the quality of education. Yvonne and Nancy claimed, during their interview that it was not enough to increase the teacher's and the pupil's daily time of attendance at school, to introduce the HTP (extra paid time) for meetings, to produce and distribute pedagogical materials and to have meetings with the school supervisors and CB monitors. "All that did not ensure an effective work of reflection (...).To get success at school it is necessary to discuss theoretical issues (Yvonne).

As they understand it, the discussion they intend to achieve during their courses[191] requires three conditions: a) to be carried out throughout along the year; b) in a face-to-face contact; c) with a competent colleague. These three conditions were not found in the previous scheme of TPD. The former scheme was based on the cascade method (meetings of pedagogical orientation in the three levels). As complementary activities there were short courses (30 hour), also criticised by the team for not including a follow up and for being mainly theory-driven. Other important limitation was the scheme's lack of feedback with respect to the team.

> *"It was based on theory-driven courses, and in reality it did not give us, people that work with TPD, that feedback we need. In other words: how those courses are reaching the classroom? Are they getting there? If so, how? So we could review and re-discuss them. That, we believe, can be only obtained by a course carried out during the year with practical activities included."(Yvonne)*

> *"(For the pupil to succeed) it is necessary to discuss theoretical issues. But these questions, if they come as mere theory, through texts, videos or changes in the school curriculum, cannot reach the teacher in the same way as when the teacher has the opportunity of working with a peer. And above all, when the teacher can do what we always ask that has to be done during the course..., the balance, the dialogue between the theory and the practice. To do that a certain closeness is required and also a group of people capable of doing such dialogue.... Competence is also required..."(Yvonne)*

The team, following the guidelines of Waiz project, attributed a chief place to literacy issues in their actions of TPD. Their intention is to use a strategy of work defined as "problematising the practice[192]". It intends to deal with the relations between theory and practice. Sybil offers an explanation of what is the proposal.

> *"Problematising the practice" involves discussing, from inside the pedagogical practices, the questions of content and the way through which that content is present in the way she (the teacher) uses it in her practice. From all that, the intention is to help the teacher to understand what she is doing (Sybil)*

The quotation above is intended to illustrate the complexities of the proposed process. It involves to take the teacher's pedagogical practice as a point of departure

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[191] The three courses are: The Basic Course, The Advanced Course, and the Improvement Course, described in subsection 6.2.2.

discussing with the teacher the conceptions of teaching and learning that are underlying it, to question the suitability of those conceptions in the light of the new discoveries of the child's processes of literacy, and to enhance the teacher's confidence that she can work within an alternative approach of the teaching learning process.

Therefore, we understand that the team had to face a conflict. Their proposal of TPD, based on the project "For a Literacy Without Failure", requires a close and regular contact between the teachers and the teacher-educator. Moreover, it implies a follow-up work, carried out during the year. It is clearly a model that follows a logic of gradual and focused process of reflection and change. Without a medium-time perspective of work and a huge input of resources it could not involve a great numbers of teachers. Therefore, the team had a challenging task of adjusting their initial proposal to the concrete demands of work within the new scenario: to reach *every* region of São Paulo State.

The initial project, developed by Waiz, by being much more modest in its scope could not be expected to be "the solution" for the state the education had been left in by the previous administration. But by increasing its scope (in number of courses and places) it is signalled to the team (and to the public, in general, to some extent) that the main effort made by the Secretariat of Education would be to 'train' teachers and other school specialists.

Professional development assumes then such a vital role that it seems to cloud the team's eyes to other aspects that are of no less importance in achieving a better quality education, such as to take care of the material conditions of schools, proper pedagogical materials, suitable school infrastructure, promising teacher career, financial, pedagogical and psychological support for the school team. In this sense, we consider that the team's understanding of TPD was under the influence of the *'argument of incompetence'*, as their *analysis and actions* give privilege to a single aspect involved in the improvement of the quality of education – teachers'

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[192] In Portuguese "tematização da prática".

professional development – disregarding other important aspects that should be taken into account in articulation with it. The following quote is an evidence of that.

> *"I believe that a programme of professional development is not the only thing but it has a important strength. (...) In my point of view, it is much better to have people that believe they can build the change than to have material conditions and do not have the people. People that understand that to change the teaching is fundamentally to change the didactic relation. **The other things help but they are not fundamental.** "(Louise, team manager)*

Underlying this function that the TPD alone cannot fulfil there is still a residue of the technicist view of education: that is to say, that the main problems of state education are of a technical nature deserving therefore technical solutions[193]. So it would be a matter of finding the right methods and techniques of teaching.

With a single exception represented by Sybil, the team's members are so convinced of the wonders that constructivism can do for the teacher and for the teaching that everything else seems secondary to mastering the constructivism. This belief appears also in the form of Louise's subtle criticisms of the Quality School Programme due to its ambitious and politically bounded features.

> *"In the beginning (of the proposal of the Quality School)was like this: **30 pupils per classroom, three shifts, laboratories ... forgetting that the teachers that are there at the schools are not trained to work with labs.** It is a symbol, a fetish. It is there but nobody knows how to use it, nobody ever used it in his own training. But it is a symbol, something the population find charming, **they focus on material conditions as if they would solve the problem, as if having well-equipped installations in a school would improve the teaching of science.** There is always moments when the discourses answer to the expectations that are, in my view, wrong ones. The smaller thing, that thing that gives less political dividends, which is to respect the pupils' hypotheses (on their process of learning), to understand that the pupil is a person, that one has to give them some room, that is not a political banner. Then what sounds good is to say that the school is going to have microcomputers, labs, that we are going to modernise it, to do the education of the 21st century. But with time people 'get real' and*

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[193] The term 'technical' is used in this thesis with a negative meaning, as related to a simplified approach to the understanding of the nature of the school problems. Such approach restricts the analysis and the action on the teaching practice to the level of its techniques and methods, overlooking other dimensions such as concrete conditions in which schooling takes place, and the relationships established inside the schools and classrooms, to mention some of the more relevant aspects.

see the true possibilities" (Louise, team manager)

The last quotation speaks for itself. Louise, clearly says that to provide the teacher and the schools with better material conditions, including smaller groups, fewer school shifts, well-equipped installations and labs are not so important to improve teaching. She considers them as 'symbols', 'fetishes' used by the politicians to earn points with the naïve population...What really matters, is to 'respect the pupil's hypothesis'. Which means to make the teacher to master a particular approach of literacy given by the constructivism.

In summary we argue that the team interviewed tends to **overestimate** not only the **importance** but specially the **possibilities** of TPD for the achievement of a better quality education, overlooking other aspects such as adequate material conditions of work and the teacher's career. Moreover, they attribute an unbalanced place (and role) to issues of Literacy and to the dissemination of a particular conception of learning process (constructivism). In the next chapter, we will show that some of the course monitors recognise that the adoption of the constructivism, in the manner it has occurred, has led sometimes to a fanatic-like appropriation by some. That has led also to an equivocal evaluation of the determinations of a successful or unsuccessful schooling. Such a mistake is not peculiar of the team interviewed. The course monitors, to a certain extent, also share that vision. The *'argument of incompetence'*, understood as a partial but convincing rationale for the determinants of the quality of the processes of schooling, helped fuelling the mistake of not considering as vital the other elements involved in the consecution of the improvement of the quality of education that we have mentioned a few paragraphs above[194].

Firstly, the *"argument of incompetence"* provides the justification for privileging activities of the teacher professional education, as discussed in Chapter Three: "we do not have a school of good quality because we lack professional quality". So, to fill this 'gap' we should invest mainly on TPD activities. The documents published by the SSE establishes a clear relationship between TPD and the success of their education policies, as the following quote shows:

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[194] On page 190.

"The success of the São Paulo State Educational Reform – devised to improve the quality of teaching- is subordinated to the existence of modern and permanent mechanisms of preparation of the human resources working at schools. Without massive and regular investment in the education and in the cultural and pedagogical updating of the teaching pr+ofessionals no educational Reform will be able to survive. One is conscious that, to succeed, the qualitative change of the state education is, above all, in the educators' hands" (Document 03 pp.2).

Secondly, it obfuscates a more comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic determinants of the process of schooling, as the interviews with the team members showed. Thirdly, it helps to find **the guilty party** (the teachers) excusing the others, as *'to succeed, the quality change of the state education is, above all, in the educators' hands'*.

In this chapter we have discussed the team's conceptions and strategies for Teacher Professional Development as well as their opinions and feelings regarding the same subject. The strategic aim of the Project was then to establish a parallel network of competent course monitors that would increase the number of competent teachers. How do the course monitors understand their task within the Project? What are their opinions about the Project? What was their experience as course monitors? We will answer these questions in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven

Course monitors, teacher professional development and the argument of incompetence

The final goal of the Preparation Programme could be simply stated as the improvement of the quality of the teaching labour force. This thesis has been arguing that to build up a network of competence is the strategy that the FDE team has chosen to achieve this goal. In the previous chapter it was argued that the team in charge of the Project aimed at building up a parallel network of competent course monitors which would gradually promote the development of more competent teachers. This chapter will present and discuss how the course monitors understand their task, the problems they have faced in performing their work and how the argument of teachers incompetence has been appropriated by them[195].

From the point of view of the FDE staff, as was discussed in Chapter Six, the course monitors of the Basic Course had to be carefully chosen because the project's success depends on the reliability and competence of the professionals that would run the courses. As the FDE team see things, these two qualities are not frequently found amongst the average professionals. Therefore, the participants of the project 'For a Literacy Without Failure' - or simply Telma's Group - were the chosen professionals (see footnote 163).This means, for the FDE team the participants of Telma's Group are seen, to a certain extent, as their partners.

How do the course monitors understand their role within this project? What are their evaluations of the project? What are their objectives and expectations in carrying out the Basic Course? Do they see the FDE team as their partners? These are important issues as the course monitors are those professionals that work directly with the teachers. In that respect, the course monitors are those that implement the team's policies of TPD. They are the ones that relate with both levels of the education network: policy makers' (central level) and teachers' (local level). Their

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[195] The discussion that follows is based on the analyses of interviews with the four course monitors in charge of the Basic Course that was offered at the DE^{195} in 1992 and 1993.

interpretation of the main objectives of the Project, and of the conditions they were offered to run the courses are important elements to build a broader understanding of the Project as it was put in practice. These issues are discussed in this chapter.

A summarised account of the course monitors' professional background is presented first, in section 7.1. The course monitors' views, evaluations and considerations regarding the Basic Course, as well as their relationships with Telma's Group and with each other are presented in section 7.2. Their position on the proposal of 'the network of competence' and their possible partners for this enterprise are the subject of the last section of the chapter.

7.1 The Professional background of the four course monitors

We noticed that each of the four interviewees felt the need to present to the researcher their professional background and experience, their accounts varying in length and depth[196]. As will be discussed later in this chapter, this 'informal presentation' seemed to serve the purpose of **distinguishing** themselves and their work from the mass of teachers. This is understood as a symptom of the *'argument of incompetence'*. As the professionals working at the state school system have been blamed by for the low quality of the education offered, the monitors feel they have to distinguish themselves from the other teachers, to construct in the researcher's eyes an image of a competent professional.

A more direct explanation to the course monitors' need to present to us their professional background (not contradictory to that first) could also be given: the course monitors took the interview as an opportunity to reflect on their work and on their professional lives. That is particularly true about Donna, who had retired very recently, and this was a favourable condition to embark on reminiscences.

Donna, Yanna and Rachel were the monitors of the Basic Course in 1992. Anne is the monitor of the same course in 1993.

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[196] See appendix 'Basic Course' for the schedules of interviews with the course monitors.

Donna worked for twenty years as a primary teacher. She graduated in Pedagogy in 1981 and got a specialisation on School Supervision and Administration in 1982. In 1986 she was invited to assume a position as pedagogical assistant at the *DE* from where she retired in 1992, after twenty-seven years of work. At the time the fieldwork was carried out, Donna was working as a head-teacher in a public primary school where she has been working for some years. To work in both private and state sectors, not without difficulties, has been a very common strategy teachers use to tackle the low salaries paid in the state sector. The low salaries have pushed teachers to organise strikes claiming for increase of their salaries and better conditions of work. It was during the second half of 1993 that one of Brazil's longest and strongest teachers' strike in the last twenty years took place. Approximately 220,000 teachers, 6,500 schools and 6,5 million students were involved. The teachers' salary had reached its lowest level of the last thirty years.

The double and sometimes third daily shift of work undermines the possibilities of developing good teaching. Again, the concrete conditions of work offered to teachers are of crucial importance for the consecution of a better quality of education and their role in undermining the achievement of good teaching should not be underestimated.

Yanna worked as primary teacher for twelve years, two of them as CB co-ordinator. During this time she worked mostly as a literacy teacher. She graduated in Social Sciences in 1969. With Donna's retirement in 1992 Yanna was invited to assume her place on the Basic Cycle 's pedagogical assistance, a position that she still holds.

At the time the interviews were done Rachel was in the process of retirement[197] after having worked for twenty-five years. During this period she worked for six years as CB co-ordinator and three years as deputy head-teacher. She graduated in Pedagogy in 1973 and in Arts in 1978. In 1992 she got a specialisation in psychopedagogy. At

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[197]By 'to be in the process of retirement' we mean that she had already initiated the long process of retirement. Many calculations have to be done concerning the number of days one has worked as a teacher. In Brazil, the legislation concerning retirement changed recently and the rules now are the following: a female teacher is entitled to retire after thirty years of work, a male teacher after thirty-five years. After retirement the teacher receives hers (his) pension from the State Social Security. The actual value of the pension can vary from person to person as it involves some mathematical calculations which take into account aspects of the teacher career which also may vary from one

the time of the fieldwork, she was a primary teacher on the municipal school network and in a public primary school, the same as where Donna works.

Anne, the youngest of them, worked during the first nine years of her career as a primary teacher and as a deputy head-teacher. Since 1990 she has held a position as school advisor. Since the beginning of her career Anne has been involved with literacy and claims to have 'a true passion' for this subject. Anne has also graduated in Pedagogy with specialisation for School Supervision and Administration.

7.2 The course monitors, "Telma's Group" and the Basic Course

The Basic Course is offered by FDE through the "Literacy: Theory and Practice project". It is offered in a decentralised basis by teachers and other professionals of education across São Paulo State under FDE's supervision. The aim of this ninety-hour course, as defined by the FDE's team, is to carry out a theoretical-practical reflection during the academic year taking the constructivism as an alternative approach to literacy[198]. It is primarily addressed to CB teachers and CB co-ordinators.

In 1993 the Basic Course was offered for the second consecutive year. The course monitors interviewed were then running the course for the second time as they have participated on this project since its beginning. Their participation as the monitors of the Basic Course has a history. As happened with the members of the team of the Project, the monitors felt the need for talking about it. Their participation on the project is not something that has happened by chance. On the contrary it had strong and clear links to the course their own professional development had taken on their recent professional history. In this history their participation on the Telma's Group was understood by all of them as one of the most important recent opportunities which had provided a real breakthrough on their professional growth[199].

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person to another.

[198] For a description of the Basic Course, see subsection 6.2.2 The Project: its main courses and complementary activities.

[199] The analysis of the project Literacy Without Failure was not originally addressed by this research project. However the constant reference to it by the monitors has made its analysis a necessary step. The project Literacy Without Failure, as we could learn, offered the singular opportunity of deepening theoretical issues concerning literacy taking the teacher's practice as both a point of departure and of arrival. It was carried out during an academic year, which made possible the necessary dialogue with the classroom practice while discussing in a group the theoretical questions. And most importantly, Telma's Group, as they prefer to call it, met on a regular basis during the following years and this

Our purpose (in the Telma's Group) was almost of conducting a research, I mean, we wanted to know if that theory (they were learning) would work in practice and how well we would do. And when we had some kind of trouble we had that large group of Telma's. It was not only Telma, everybody discussed and the difficulties we were facing, other people were facing too. So I think that that space...Telma remained with this group for four years, I only took part during the last three years... But I think that gave me a lot of confidence to develop both the Literacy: Theory and Practice course, (...) and the work at the private school. I manage to get excellent results up to the 8th grade. (...) So you see that was all a result of that work (with the group), of nothing else..(Donna)

Donna speaks about the pleasure of teaching.

"Nowadays, for me, to give a course is a pleasure! If I'm not doing something of this kind I fell that something is missing, you understand?

Anne talks about the pleasure of learning.

"I always enjoyed very much studying, I was always attending courses... and also working with the teachers-coordinator in the field of literacy, or I would stay in the supervision of this area because I really like it. And then I started doing courses about literacy, both with Virginia Balau, and with Telma Waiz. It's people like that that changed my mind, I don't know if that happens to you Denise, but suddenly you read a book, or listen to a seminar, and that strikes you and changes you so much!!!" (Anne)

The interviews and the informal contacts we had were taken by all of them as a rare opportunity to reaffirm themselves as committed and competent professionals. In a social context where schools' and teachers' performance have been frequently criticised and the educators' morale constantly undermined this attitude of the interviewees is understood here as an attempt to safeguard their professional image not only in the interviewer's eyes but also for themselves. It is argued that they wanted to distinguish between themselves and the mass of teachers. They have not said that explicitly; but that is our interpretation of their speech. An axis of the course monitors interview is related with this need of distinguishing, being therefore present

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provided a continuous support for them.

here and there, as in the following passages, where the course monitors say, for example:

'we were almost conducting a research.. " (Donna).

"I always enjoyed very much studying, I was always attending courses...." (Anne)

" The way Telma works with us... I mean... many things simply matched. Her reading of the situation is very much taking the social aspects of it. As I graduated in Social Sciences ..." (Yanna).

They are including themselves in the group of teachers that enjoy reading and studying and that regards 'theories' as a necessary element to the development of a good classroom practice (which sets them apart from the stereotype of the primary teacher in Brazil). They are also trying to make us see them closer to the group of professionals that belong to or are familiar with the field of educational research.

So, Anne talks about her passion for literacy and how this subject has ever been at the centre of her work as a teacher or as a school advisor. This strong interest in literacy's issues has driven her to deepen her knowledge of the subject. She attended some workshops and courses, between them the one run by Telma Waiz. After that she got more and more involved with the questions related to literacy and this involvement led her to accept the FDE's invitation to work as course monitor of the Basic Course. As the following quotation shows.

> A: "I've been always in love with the issue of 'literacy' (...) so I worked mainly with 1st and 2nd grades. As I had a very fast career, when I started to work as a head teacher I devoted a lot of attention to the literacy, without neglecting the other areas, of course, but with that special concern with literacy, literacy teachers and those classes of 'multi-failing' pupils (...) So, as a head teacher I used to choose the teacher, I mean, I used to do it differently from the usual practice. What is the current practice? The first grade that 'nobody wants' goes always to the less experienced teachers, doesn't it? So, I considered that to be a very important grade, so I chose to do a good job.... It was not compulsory for the teacher to accept, but I tried to make them realise how gratifying it was to work with the initial grades(...) When I became a school supervisor I went to work with the Basic Cycle. I've always attended courses, I always liked to study (...) and I also worked with the coordinator–teachers for literacy (...) And then I started to attend to those courses, with

Virginia Balau, and with Telma Waiz about literacy. They are the kind of people that changed my mind (...)"

Donna traces her reasons back to 1986, when she was invited to assume the Basic Cycle pedagogical assistance at the *DE.* To accept the CB pedagogical assistance represented for her a real challenge. She wanted to be able to develop a good work with the CB co-ordinators. Donna comments at length on her work while in the CB pedagogical assistance and their struggle at the *DE* to develop a meaningful and systematic work with the CB co-ordinators. The course with Telma Waiz then represented a good opportunity to broaden her knowledge of the questions involving the literacy process as well as on the skills required to be a course monitor. She considers that to attend Telma's Group was a rare opportunity to improve herself as an educator. So she demonstrates her gratitude and feels that she has a moral obligation to share her knowledge with the other teachers that did not have the same chance, as the following quote shows:

> *D:" I felt very much obliged (to offer a group of Basic Course), I thought it was a privilege to take part in Telma's Group.(...)For instance, my case, as a pedagogical assistant, and let it die...and do not make it grow...when the FDE itself and the team were trusting us to do that. They did not push anyone but they said "Look, you participated during all that time and you have now conditions to disseminate it to a broader group of people". So I felt that really I had the responsibility....(...) I used to put that I'm a head teacher of this private school, and this school has a pedagogical proposal that I gradually implemented from the 1st to the 8th grade since 1986. And the discourse I have in the state school is the same as I have here, and I have excellent results until the 8th grade... At the level of literacy with 4 and 5 years-old, of course, having all the conditions that the private school can offer... And you see, this that I have here resulted from that work (with Telma Waiz). So it was very important for me..."*

Donna, in this last quotation, also touches an important issue: the role played by the working conditions to achieve a good work with pupils. Unfortunately she does not speak openly and at length about it. She recognises the differences in working conditions between state schools and private schools. In the private school she had access to all kinds of facilities to implement her projects. She also had the explicit support from the owner of the school, which used to attend their pedagogical meetings.

Rachel also refers to the differences between the private and the state education sectors. She calls our attention to the number of pupils per class and the differences in salaries.

> R. The teacher can work, even considering the difficulties she has (in the state schools).... It is like I was telling you...there are moments that you need to act so that the child can progress... but the teacher is not around because she has more than 35 pupils on the 1st grade!! The pupil is then the one that loses out. I think that the teacher has to believe it is possible to work under the constructivism, but if it is imposed on her it is not going to work. (...) Now, there are other questions that there is no point even talking about them... it would be really nice to have better salaries at state schools, but I think that is not the issue here....

Yanna also traces her reasons back to the time when she was CB co-ordinator. She chooses a feature of her personality to illustrate her commitment to her work: determination. Through Donna, at that time the pedagogical assistant, Yanna learned about Telma's Group. It was not easy for her to get a place in the last group of Telma's course as the DE she where worked had already had its quota taken up. Yanna knew that was the last year of the Literacy Without Failure project and she could not afford to miss its last group. So, she decided to go anyway to the first classes to try to convince Telma it was worthwhile investing on her. She eventually managed to have her place. When FDE called the graduates from the Telma's project they initially called only those participants of the first three years. In spite of that and encouraged by Donna, Yanna attended this meeting and was accepted to run one of the 92 Basic Course's group.

Yanna also comments at length on her work as the CB pedagogical assistant. One of the events the DE has carried out is the Annual Literacy Meeting[200]. Her account on her motives for carrying out the 1992 Literacy Meeting shows the struggle some educators face to change their image of themselves' in the public's eyes. Yanna wanted to show to the teachers themselves, to the upper bodies of the Secretariat of Education, FDE included, and to the other institutions invited to the event, that there

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[200] Since 1991 the 14th DE has organised an annual event at the end of the academic year: the Literacy Meeting. This event is made of lectures, workshops and presentations by the schools. Each school is invited to present the results of a small project or classroom activities based on the Basic Cycle pedagogical proposal.

are serious and competent professionals working in the state schools. She believes that within the *DE* 's work it is important to care **not only for the pedagogical issues but also for the professionals' morale.**

> *"There are very good professionals working in the state network that could offer a great contribution to their colleagues (she mention then the professional expertise of some of her colleagues). I wanted to have this recognised and make also recognised the work that has been developed in each school.(...) It was an attempt to bring our people here to recognise them because within our work the proper pedagogical aspects are important, of course, but it is even more important to recognise the human being and his political concerns. I think we are so underrated as a professional class because we never try to show our work. In this patronising context we keep waiting for somebody to resolve our problems with respect to salaries and for somebody to recognise our work. And nobody does anything and the word on the street is that the state school is rubbish and that nobody works and that everybody is incompetent". (Yanna)*

Their discourse on professional development, including their own, do not follow a straight line of reasoning which would make it easy to understand. Our analysis and description have to carefully unfold and explicate her line of reasoning. As the last quotation well illustrates there are many issues at stake. Teacher professional development has to do with helping teachers in mastering theories and methods of teaching: that is the reason for offering to them courses and pedagogical meetings. But it has also to do with recognising the teacher as **an individual and as a professional** and also to enhance teachers' political commitment. It can be clearly seen Yanna's concern for recognising that there are good teaching developed at state schools. She has experienced the effects of the negative social image of state teachers and schools. She is also conscious of the importance of changing this image through disseminating, among teachers, the successful experiences they have in the schools of the *DE*. With Yanna we realised how stressing it can be to work in an environment where, in addition to her normal duties, she has to spend part of her energy in dealing with negative social images about her competence (as the professionals are homogeneously viewed as incompetent, and unprepared to do the work) and about the quality of the work of state schools. They are suffering the effects of the *'argument of incompetence'* which is attributed to the teachers because of their

'stubbornness'[201]. Teachers' incompetence has been blamed for the inefficiency and low achievements of the school system.

In this sense, the course monitors held Telma's project in high esteem because someone was not only investing in their professional growth but also recognising their potential as educators. The course monitors were given the opportunity to work against the convincing argument of teachers incompetence by offering the teachers concrete opportunities of meaningful studies connected with their practice and problems, as well as by providing follow-up to ensure they were able to build, with time, their own self-confidence.

In a context where few opportunities for professional development are offered through the ordinary channels of educational system, Telma's project represented a singular one. And it was addressed to a selected group of teachers[202]. Therefore Telma's Group represented for them something which was professionally special. So, also, was their relationship with Telma Waiz. A mixture of profound respect, identification and idealisation is at the heart of this relationship, as the following quotation well illustrates.

> "The course with Telma was something really important for me. Her way of putting the things is...different. She masters not only the questions involving practice - because she worked with children and CB - but also she has got a great knowledge. When she comments on something, if the group follows her, she goes really deep into the issue. For me it was something that I was looking for, that I was after. It was something that made me re-think everything. Besides, the way she works with us.., I mean...many things simply matched (...) Her 'readings' of the situation is very much taking the social aspects of it. As I graduated in Social Sciences we very much agreed on the analyses and so on. (...) So, I felt we were in tune and that gave me a push to my work on professional development. You

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[201] Perosa (1997) offers an interesting explanation for the so-called teacher's resistance or stubbornness. She says that to better understand a defence mechanism (as the resistance) it is necessary to observe its counterpart, namely the threat, real or fantasised, that engenders the defence mechanism. She argues that the 'avalanche of the constructivism' that occurred in the 80's can be seen as a threat to the teachers professional identity, stimulating their resistance (pp 101).

[202] The project Literacy Without Failure started in 1988 with a selected group of only sixty teachers. By 1990 around three hundred educators were involved on the project. The candidates were selected by Telma Waiz and CENP's team. Yanna's struggle to get a place on the project was not unusual. Mary, currently on the FDE's team and at that time on the CENP's team, confirms that teachers had to 'fight' for a place.

know... all the support she gave me, the possibilities she opened to me...her participation in the Literacy Meeting we organised at the DE...you know, she never accepts any invitation of such a kind and she did with us....So I felt she was investing very much in me."
(Yanna)

Telma is described by all the four interviewees as a challenging and supportive person. Moreover, as someone they could always count on. In a context where teacher professional development is mainly a personal enterprise, they see in Telma someone to guide them along this rather solitary and difficult road that has been their professional growth under the circumstances as it occurs in São Paulo. They use a metaphor to describe their relationship: Telma would be a "good mother" that provides intellectual food and emotional support.

As frequently occurs in the teacher-student relationship, the teacher is taken as their model for practices of professional development. On planning the activities and deciding the strategies to work with their student-teachers the course monitors use similar activities and strategies used by Waiz: To challenge teachers to rethink their conceptions and practices as they were challenged. They try to establish a supportive environment and a group work practice as Telma's Group was for them. In short, they tend to have in Telma's Group and in Telma herself not only their model but also their main source of support. They tend to see their colleagues as partners rather than the FDE team itself, as will be discussed next.

7.3 Posing a challenging task: who are the partners?

This section presents and discusses the course monitors position on the proposal of 'the network of competence' and their possible partners for this enterprise.

Donna offers us an interesting metaphor for the way she understands their role as course monitors: sowing seeds. She tells about a work-group she has participated with other colleagues, also course monitors, where they worked on the preparation of some activities to be carried out by the classroom teacher, such as activities with fairy-tales, newspapers, and alternative ways of working with the child's name. Then she says:

"So, with this work...That is why I used to say that I could not feel I've retired because if I tell you all the things I'm still doing! This work has been multiplied, this course by FDE has been multiplied. Within the DE we have organised workshops at the end of last year (The Literacy Meeting, mentioned earlier), so everybody was there discussing these questions. So, this is a very interesting thing to see, isn't it? It is like that story of the little seed...To make this seed grow and produce huge fruits!!"

Donna points out the long-run perspective of their work as course monitors. That is so because the changes teachers have been asked to introduce in their work cannot be characterised as minor or simply ones. They have not been offered as a pre-packaged innovation and neither can a step-by-step model be followed[203]. They have been invited to reflect upon their current classroom practice, to identify the old-fashion pedagogical theories and conceptions that have been feeding such practices, and eventually substitute them for new ones. The new conceptions, the course monitors believe, would provide more suitable conceptual tools to both overcome the so called 'learning difficulties' of the children from the popular classes, and to further the development of a critical individual which is required if a more just and democratic society is to be built[204]. That is why during the interviews the course monitors claim the changes they have been pursuing in education involve *the whole person of the teacher*, not only the improvement of her professional abilities as a primary teacher, and have implications for their stance towards life. This point of view is in accordance with a line of teacher development that gained importance and adepts during the 1990's. This approach to teacher development intends to take into account *the person as a whole,* not only the person's behaviour and skills. Teacher development involves more than changing behaviours, techniques and teaching methods (as the constructivism has been taken). It has to do with changing the *person the teacher is* and the *context in which the teacher works.* In this sense, her ideas are closer to this other approach of TPD going then well beyond the limited and restricted model proposed by the '*argument of incompetence*'. As Hargreaves says,

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[203] We are not defending that this kind of proposal should be carried out. It is just pointed out the complexity of changes teachers are asked to take.

[204] The Basic Course programme prepared by Anne shows she is familiar with the critical educational theories which have stressed the political nature of state schooling. However, she seems to be struggling to move beyond the language of critique and domination. By addressing the political and social implications of education they introduce a critical view on TPD activities which is in itself a

"Training teachers in new classroom management skills, in active-learning, co-operative learning, one-to-one counselling and the like is the main priority. These things are important, but we are also increasingly coming to understand that developing teachers and improving their teaching involves more than giving them new tricks.(...) The quality, range and flexibility of teacher's classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth – with the way they develop as people and as professional."[205]

Donna is conscious that any process of change involves loss, anxiety, and struggle, as also reported by Fullan (1991) when discussing 'planned' educational change, its theories and practices. In this sense she knows that an opposition to a particular proposal of change may be due mainly to anxieties and uncertainties involving the process of change in general. Changing can be also threatening and confusing.

"Something that always happens is that when the teacher decides that she wants to work within the new proposal, then she accepts the challenge, when she goes for the course.... we have noticed the person passes through a certain anxiety. It is the anxiety of changing.... of that thing that has been deeply rooted for years and years inside you (...) We expect that the teacher will get some confidence with the course."

Therefore, the course monitors have before them a huge task, a real challenge. We have no doubt these course monitors have taken their work seriously. As well as FDE team, they seemed to be truly committed to the project. The course monitors share with FDE team the idea of networking competence across São Paulo State, or at least to make their contribution to that. Their enthusiasm and even eagerness when speaking about their work may assume sometimes a rather missionary tone, as if they have got the Word to spread. This proposal of 'networking competence' implies the construction of a network that works to provides information, pedagogical and emotional support to its members, to its partners[206]. Who are then their partners in this enterprise?

The FDE's team could be the monitors' first natural partners as they are the organisers of the Project Literacy: Theory and Practice. However, partnership could

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positive movement.
[205] Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), foreword.
[206] We are using the expression 'partners' because some of the team members refer to the course

hardly describe the relationship between FDE's team and these monitors. During the interviews, as well as during informal meetings, the course monitors did not spare FDE of severe criticisms. In this sense if FDE's team would to be viewed as partners at all, it would be as partners that they could not fully count or rely on. The level of dissatisfaction with the FDE team performance varies amongst the monitors so far as the first year is concerned. However, with respect to the second year the four of them considered unsatisfactory the support they have got from FDE team.

So far as the first year of the Basic Course is concerned, the course monitors received two main materials: a book and two videotapes. Other additional literature could also be used according to the evaluation of each monitor. In this sense this course offered a certain degree of flexibility for the monitors on the definition of its content, strategies and activities. We believe that this feature has potential positive implications. Not being a pre-package course allows the monitors to adapt its content to suit the needs and interests of her/his particular group of teachers[207]. On the other hand, flexibility in the content may have negative consequences if the monitors were not given the required support on both planning and running the course. Two of the four monitors interviewed refer more explicitly to that lack of adequate support from FDE's team.

> "Last year we helped each other a lot. This year... that's why I'm telling you about this change of their thought..., They (the FDE) are more focused on the advanced courses than on the basic one. (...) Last year we had fantastic people coming to give talks, seminars, all very good indeed. They are very competent people in terms of the (the topic of) language(...) But this year leaves a lot to be desired... "(Anne)

> " It was the first year of the project. There was no discussion about the work. So, it was a very difficult year...We managed to have some discussion here, at DE. We discussed what was happening on the course, we prepared the material together. We prepared a project and presented to the FDE's team. They made some comments on some people's project, they asked them to do some changes but our project received no comments at all. I mean.. you

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monitors as their partners in the Project 'Literacy : Theory and Practice'.

[207] Considering the heterogeneity that characterises not only the pedagogical practice of teachers (Kramer and André, 1984, Kramer, 1989), but also the daily life of schools (Azanha, 1996, Penin, 1989, among others), such flexibility should be recommended.

prepare a project and... What about the content? Was it all right? That was it what we were expected to do? That was how Telma worked with us?(...) I heard that the majority of the projects were very ambitious (in terms of the content) and that the monitors did not have the conditions to accomplish it. (Yanna)

They describe the first year the Basic Course was offered as a very difficult one. Anne, Rachel and Yanna talk clearly about the difficulties and uncertainties they faced in organising the course[208]. There were twice-monthly meetings between the monitors and the FDE's team which apparently were not sufficient to cope with the doubts that emerged as they were preparing and actually running the course.

"Last year was very difficult because we didn't have from where to start..., we were given two video tapes and the little book 'Behind the Letters'. That's what we had. (...) We started by preparing a plan of work. It was, however, class by class, that we defined the next steps. That's why I told you, it was very tiring this 'class by class'..." (Anne)

"I very much felt last year running the course that.. you know, you attend courses, you read books this kind of things but it is when you are actually running a course that all the problems and doubts come out. And the FDE didn't create the moments for us to discuss our practice. I mean, Telma's course was a discussion upon the practice. We, as monitors, didn't have this discussion, I mean, we had meetings at FDE every month I think, or every two months, I'm not sure. But you see, someone was going there to give us a talk, run a little workshop and that's all! You then made a report, they made some comments, but...you can't discuss much in a report! (Yanna)

In coping with the difficulties the course monitors felt they had to count very much on themselves. Donna, Yanna and Rachel met almost every week to study, prepare classes and discuss the course. Anne met a friend regularly, also a school supervisor, to prepare and discuss the course. From the very beginning they established a network of mutual support. Perhaps established would not be the better word in this case as they actually have been working as a group at least since the project "Literacy Without Failure". They simply continue working with each other but now with a new task and within a new role. They were a special group of professionals. The members of the so-called Telma's Group have built up a history together as it

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[208] The course monitors complain also about the infrastructure provision: copies of material to work

was pointed out earlier. Moreover, Telma's Group has helped to forge between its members a strong sense of group identity. Therefore, they were bound to see each other as natural partners rather than FDE team[209]. The partnership with FDE was yet to be built.

In the first year the monitors' complaints involved mainly lack of proper help in organising and carrying out the course. Their criticism in the second year were of different nature. From their perspective, the situation became increasingly worrying.

In 1993 the project had its scope increased. Besides the Basic Course, two new courses were offered which demanded appointing new course monitors. The 1993's monitors were asked to suggest some of their former students to become themselves monitors. A selective process was carried out by FDE to contract new monitors.

Anne and Yanna, more than the Donna and Rachel, openly criticise FDE policy of extending the scope of the project. They do not criticise the proposal of offering two other courses, as the idea originally came from the group of monitors itself. Their criticism is addressed to a supposed careless selection of the new monitors and of the FDE policy of increasing – in their view, too rapidly – the number of groups. If there were not sufficient number of competent professionals to increase the scope of the project (considering number of groups), they argue, it should not be increased. Behind this they see FDE's lack of true commitment with teachers professional development and even vested interests.

Anne is the one who makes the strongest criticisms. She feels the course monitors have been used to benefit of FDE's vested interests. Among them, she identify the dispute of power between the two institutions in charge of TPD activities, *FDE* (the current) and *CENP* (the former), their eagerness for getting funding from the World Bank which has worked against the interests of the professional development of the teachers.

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on the course and proper school facilities such as video.

[209] As we have said earlier on chapter Six, Telma's Group continued to meet in a regular basis, so they could count on Telma's support. Telma Waiz was a consultant of the project Literacy: Theory and Practice.

The criticism about the competence of the new group of course monitors emerges as they talk about the increase on the number of groups in 1993. To meet the demand, the management of the Project had to count on former student-teachers of the 1992 Basic Course.

> *"When the FDE launched the Literacy Project, they invited people that had participated in that project, I mean, people that had gone through all that process in Telma's course. That was their initial idea, but afterwards they started to take people that had not attended Telma's course, so things started to get messy. People that were with Telma had a certain approach to the course while those others didn't. (Yanna, pp4)*

Anne, in her turn, is even more severe in her criticism of the management of the Project. She believes that the FDE was concerned with increasing the figures' without assuring the maintenance of the quality of the courses offered.

> *"This year the proportion number of courses have assumed!!...Although FDE had taken some care on selecting the course monitors, I have seen people with a very low level of qualification being in charge of the courses...People with a very limited level of knowledge working as course monitors, and that was not the reality of the last year (...).And when you see an Advanced Course running on such low level, not being taken seriously, you think: So that's it, it's just a façade".*

Anne changed her opinion about the FDE true intentions and concern with the improvement of the level of teaching. She argues that they do not even believe in the success of the project, moreover, they did not really care. In spite of that she believes that the course monitors and the teachers should take as much advantage as possible of this opportunity to benefit the pupils.

As it was not clear within FDE's structure which groups were the main targets of Anne's criticisms, we encouraged her to be more specific, as the following quote shows:

> *"D.- You are saying this (the criticisms) about the people that are in charge of the co-ordination of the project or about the top management of FDE?*
> *A.- I think this has to do with the whole politics. It is not so much that Louise...I think Louise is an idealist, really, I think she is an*

idealist but I think she is pressed to give an account of her work as a member of the management.

D-. In terms of numbers, of increasing the number of courses?

A.- That's it, exactly! So, the situation is like this:....the management has to account for their work; the institution has to get its funding and this depends on various conditions, so....I don't think Louise acts in bad faith. I think that whole situation is due to the demands of the Power." (Anne)

It is interesting to note that when addressing the most severe criticisms Anne blames a rather abstract entity named merely as 'The Power'. Despite the conspiratorial tone, Annes' discourse may take here and there, she refers to, without being fully aware, the limitations and constraints FDE's team have in carrying out the Project. For Anne the close connections between FDE team and 'The Power' can make the former mere puppets of the latter. That would be, perhaps, part of the reasons why their partnership with FDE must be of a cautious nature.

1993 was a difficult year. And not only for the course monitors but also for the Educational sector as a whole and the negative repercussions emerged particularly in the second half of the year.

The FDE's financial condition was insecure due to cuts in funding. Part of the scheduled activities had to be suspended including the meetings between the course monitors and FDE team. Their last meeting was held at the beginning of the second semester in September[210]. The monitors' payment was delayed for several months, which may explain part of their disappointment with FDE [211].

It was also during the second half of the year that one of Brazil's longest and strongest teachers' strike in the last twenty years took place. As we have mentioned earlier on section 7.1, approximately 220,000 teachers, 6,500 schools and 6,5 million students were involved. The teachers' salary had reached its lowest level of the last thirty years[212]. For seventy-nine days teachers all over São Paulo State kept on strike demanding 186% pay rise. During this period the teachers' movement had serious confrontation with the police resulting in ten teachers injured. There were also many

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[210] The academic year in Brazil is composed of two semesters. The first goes from February to June and the second from August to November.

[211] It is important to bear in mind that the inflation rates in 1993 were very high, say 30% per month in average. Therefore, long delays on payments necessarily mean decrease on the payment.

[212] As an example, a teacher with ten years of teaching received less than £ 75.00 per month.

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situations of direct conflict with the Governor and the Secretary of Education. The same Government that was carrying out a policy for teacher development was refusing to negotiate and establish a decent wage's policy. It is not surprising then that the course monitors showed a strong dissatisfaction and disbelieve in the seriousness and commitment of this Government to education in general and to teacher professional development in particular. The situation becomes complicated when the course monitors identify in a rather simplistic manner the FDE team with the Government (or Power). Consequently their relationship with FDE team is ambivalent and to establish an alliance and working in partnership with them a rather complicated task.

To understand better the course monitors' ambivalence towards FDE team it is necessary to develop the analysis of their relation with Telma's Group and appreciate their understanding of the links between the two projects, "Literacy Without Failure" and "Literacy: Theory and Practice". First, will be considered the relations between the two projects.

As we learned from the interviews, the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice" was considered by the FDE team and the course monitors as a continuation of the Project "Literacy Without Failure".

> "Telma was really working to prepare teachers educators, so much so that she even 'sold' her project to FDE, I mean, in a sense that FDE 'bought' her idea. So, the thing would not die, it was her research project and she wanted it to continue so she gave it to FDE."(Yanna, pp.8)

The FDE team had stressed the close connection between the two projects as well. The current project was expected to be in continuity with the former. However, Yanna is pointing out something else. In her understanding the idea was to carry out a project for preparing course monitors which is in fact Telma's idea. FDE has just 'bought it'. To a certain extent, it can be said that for the course monitors, they expected that the Project ' Literacy: Theory and Practice' would follow the guidelines and approaches developed by Waiz.

As was said before, the relations of the monitors with Telma and between themselves were already consolidated, and grounded in a strong sense of group identity, whereas with the FDE team it was yet to be built. As Telma is seen as the 'charisma' while FDE team as 'the bureaucracy' the course monitors' relationships tended to be idealised with the former and ambivalent with the latter.

Taking that into account, the course monitors turned their eyes to Telma's Group, and to Telma herself, as their safe and reliable source of support, as their partners. The course monitors follow the same line of analysis carried out by FDE team when criticising the hierarchic and bureaucratic structure of the state network. The course monitors's alliance with FDE should be of a cautious nature because of FDE's bureaucracy and politically bounded interests. The same feeling of distrust in the ordinary channels of the educational system observed in the interviews with the Project's team is present here. We understand it has contributed to undermine the relationships between the Project's team and the course monitors.

The monitors face still a subconscious conflict to resolve. On one hand, the success of the proposal of establishing a network of competence, to which they are truly committed, implies that the number of more competent professionals would need to increase. And they would like very much that to happen as it means the success of an enterprise that is also theirs. On the other hand, in a social context where their images as competent professionals are constantly threatened and very little financial reward is obtained it has been very important for them, in safeguarding their image (and self-image) as good professionals, to feel they belong to a very **selected group of teachers**. Having that recognised by their colleagues and superiors have probably been one of their main sources of reward. From our contact with them, we understand that their pride in belonging to a selected group of teachers has been an important source of energy for them to carry on with their professional duties. The extension of the 'network of competence' working would diminish their current (and main) source of reward for them by undermining the clear boundaries that currently separate them (the competent) from the other teachers (the not competent) as it would increasingly disappear. A potential conflict is then installed. That would perhaps partially explain why, at a subconscious level, they have been opposed to the extension of the project (at least in the way it was being done) by questioning the

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competence of the new monitors. In the struggle against the *'argument of incompetence'* it is easy to fall into such traps. The idea of competence, especially when represented by its negative counterpart (the incompetence), and when connected to inadequate conditions of work and career (and that is what is happening amongst the course monitors), can ultimately work against what it is expected to do: to improve the quality of teaching.

As we argued on this chapter, the purpose of policy makers and, to a certain extent, that of the monitors while running the Basic Course was to establish a "network of competence". Are the teachers themselves aware of this intention? If so, how do they interpret it? Do they have a different or a similar purpose when attending the Basic Course? What are their evaluations of the Basic Course? Does the "argument of competence" reach the teachers? If so, in what form? The next chapter deals with those questions.

Chapter Eight

Teacher professional development and the argument
of incompetence

This chapter is based on a set of 28 interviews with the teachers who attended the Basic Course in 1992 and 1993[213]. Whenever possible we check the information obtained with interviews with the data collected during the class observations of the Basic Course and in the observations of meetings between the CB co-ordinators held at the *DE*.

The aim of this chapter is to present our analyses of the interviews with our group of teachers. The analyses indicate that teachers have been also influenced by the *'argument of incompetence'*. This influence is noticed in their testimonies, presented and discussed in this chapter. The version of the *'argument of incompetence'* as it appears among teachers takes a particular form. The result of our analyses of the interviews with the group of teachers indicates that teachers tend to safeguard their self-image as competent professionals. They do that by *distinguishing* themselves from the 'mass of teachers' and by attributing the *'incompetence'* to *'the others'*. This is the version of the *'argument of incompetence'* as it emerges among teachers.

This chapter is organised in four sections. Section 8.1 presents general data about the teachers interviewed concerning their age, teaching qualification and teaching experience. The teachers' conceptions and perspectives related to the theme of TPD are discussed against the background of their strike. Some basic issues concerning the teachers strike are presented in section 8.2. The central discussion with respect to the teachers conceptions, doubts and anxieties concerning their teaching practice in general and their evaluations of the Basic Course, in particular, is the subject of section 8.3. The last section articulates the discussion involving the *'argument of incompetence'*, teachers' burnout and their *need of distinguishing*.

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[213] See appendix 'Basic Course' for the schedules of interviews with teachers.

8.1 Our group of teachers: some general data

The twenty-eight teachers interviewed attended the Basic Course. Fifteen of them attended the Basic Course in its first year (1992).[214] The other thirteen teachers attended the Basic Course in 1993, the year the fieldwork was carried out. The distribution of our group of twenty-eight teachers, according to the grade they were teaching in 1993, is the following: twenty-two CB teachers and CB co-ordinators, and six 3rd and 4th grade teachers.

The tables reproduced below show the distribution of our group of teachers according to age, teaching experience, and professional qualification.

TEACHERS' AGE

AGE RANGE	N	%
a)20 to 30 years old	4	14.30
b)31 to 40 years old	6	21.45
c)41 to 50 years old	**16**	**57.15**
b+c)31 to 50 years old	**22**	**78.60**
d)51 and over	2	7.10
Total	28	100.0

TEACHERS' EDUCATION

GROUPS	N	%
Initial teacher education (ITE) only	14	50.00
ITE + University	14	50.00
Total	28	100.0

TEACHERS' TEACHING EXPERIENCE

GROUPS	N	%
a)Novice (2-5 years)	4	14.30
b)Medium-experience (6 to 15 years)	12	42.85
c)Experienced (16 and over years)	12	42.85
b+c)Medium-experience and experienced (6 and over years)	**24**	**85.70**
Total	28	100.00

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[214] We decided to interview five teachers from each of the three Basic Course's groups that were run that year at the studied DE.

The teachers interviewed are all women, with 41 years of age as an average. They belong to an experienced group of teachers as nearly half of them have 16 and more years of teaching practice, and the figure reaches 85% when considered the teachers between 6 and 15 years of experience. So far their teaching qualification half of the group attended University. Until recently, the only official requirement to be a primary teacher was the so-called *magistério*, a course at secondary school level. Therefore, a great number of CB teachers fulfilled more than the minimum official requirement as half of them also attended University courses.

8.2 Talking with teachers about their work and professional development

8.2.1 The teachers' strike in the background

There is one issue vital to mention concerning the context in which the fieldwork was conducted: the teachers' strike. It is not within the scope of this study to discuss in depth the issues around the teachers' strike. However, we cannot overlook them. The strike is here considered as part of the background against which teachers were interviewed and observed. The possible negative effects of the strike upon the teachers' state of mind have to be considered. The attitude and reactions by the State Government regarding the negotiations with teachers and their Unions are also taken as part of a necessary analysis for this work as they taken here as expressions of the way teachers are viewed and treated. That is, the Government's reactions to the teachers' claims provide a unique opportunity to evaluate the Government posture and effective actions regarding important aspects directly related to the achievement of an education of better quality, such as teachers career and salary.

The previous strike had happened in September 1992. After three weeks teachers obtained 30% pay rise plus the promise, not fulfilled, of the establishment of a salary policy (Folha de São Paulo, **14/08/93** p.01 c.3).

On 13th August 1993 ten thousand teachers assembled and voted for a strike. The 220,000 teachers of the state education were on strike during most of the time the

fieldwork was carried out[215]. They demanded an increase of 186% in their salaries to make up for past inflation rates, and the establishment of a salary policy that included monthly pay rise (following the inflation rates). Teachers' salaries had reached their lowest level in the last decades. According to the calculations of the teacher's Union – APEOESP (*Associação dos Professores do Estado de São Paulo*) –, published in a newspaper during the strike, São Paulo State teachers had lost 88% of their purchasing power during the last thirty years[216], (O Estado de São Paulo, 26/09/1993 – pp A- 34). In March 1993 their salaries real value was only 34% of that of March 1987 (APEOESP, Folha de São Paulo, 17/08/1993, p. 08 C3).

Strikes have become common in the Brazilian political and economic context. Particularly since the late 70's the most organised professional sectors have been going on strike to have their claims met. Pay rises to compensate for high inflation rates is the most common demand. Brazilian society had to learn to live (most only to survive) with high rates of inflation and consequent strikes as a result of the economic policies that have been implemented in previous decades[217].

The educational sector is not an exception. There have been strikes in several states all over the country. São Paulo State has one of the strongest and most organised teachers' Union in the country, APEOESP (*Associação dos Professores do Estado de São Paulo*). During the 1980's and early 1990's APEOESP organised teachers' strikes almost every year.

Teachers are then, in a sense, used to strikes despite not felling comfortable while on strike. Strikes are often a stressful time. On the one hand strikes may bring teachers together through sharing common goals. On the other hand, it may aggravate previous tensions and rivalries between and within groups. Pro- and anti-strike

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[215] The general figures concerning the state education system are: 6 million of students, 220,000 teachers, 1,500 school supervisors, 6,500 head teachers, and 6,300 schools (Folha de São Paulo, 03/09/1993. P. 01 –C3)

[216] In fact teachers were not asking for a real pay rise but for salary revising due to very high inflation rates observed at that time.

[217] Since the "Real Plan" and the economic plans implemented since 1994 by the current Federal Government the rates of inflation decreased significantly and are, so far, under control. That was achieved at the expense of the deceleration on the economy and the consequent increase of unemployment rates.

sectors were in constant struggle particularly when successful negotiations with the government were not quickly achieved[218].

In 1993 the negotiations between the teachers' union and the government went through very difficult and stressful phases. Sometimes the government even refused to talk with the union leaders in flagrant animosity to them. The governor himself, clearly lacking reasonable arguments, claimed that he did not "*deal with strikers*". It was only after 35 days of strike that the Governor set a first date for a meeting with the teachers' representatives (Folha de São Paulo, 21/9, p. 3 C-3).

That strike had dramatic moments such as confrontations between teachers and the military police, which ended up in scenes of violence, as registered by the press (see photographs in the Appendix 'Violence'). Five hundred military policemen were called to control a teachers' public manifestation in front of the "*Palácio dos Bandeirantes*', the government headquarters. The police made use of gas bombs. The confrontation was initiated when a group of teachers walked through the security line set up by the police. At least 13 people were injured, including 10 teachers and 3 policemen (Folha de São Paulo **27/8/93** p.1 c.3). The teachers however, proved to be very determined to carry on with their claims. The first violent confrontation with the military police served to strengthen their movement as it gathered more and more supporters around it. The 1993 strike was one of the longest and strongest ever seen in the State of São Paulo. Not all the teachers and co-ordinators interviewed were on strike but virtually all of them mentioned and commented on it at some point during the interviews. The teachers' movement was too strong to be ignored.

Despite the strike, virtually all courses organised by FDE were trying to 'run normally'. On the project "Literacy Theory and Practice" teachers and monitors discussed the matter and decided not to interrupt the classes. During the course, the

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[218] We are separating here the pro- and anti-strike groups in a rather simplistic way. In fact, there is no clear distinction between these two groups as teachers usually do not take a clear and coherent position regarding strikes. An example of an ambiguous stance towards this strike is given by the attitude of some CB co-ordinators. The majority of CB co-ordinators occupied two positions simultaneously: they were CB co-ordinators and 3rd or 4th grade teachers. It was common to hear the CB co-ordinators argue that as co-ordinators they **were not** on strike, because the teachers they co-ordinate were not striking. But they claimed to be on strike as teachers. They did not seem realise the incoherence in their attitude.

teacher and the monitor of the observed group used to share and to discuss the latest news of the teachers' movement in general and of their schools in particular as well as the latest information on the negotiations between the government and the Unions. Our field notes registered moments, particularly at the beginning of the classes, when teachers and the monitor were upset with the situation involving the strike. But, in spite of that, they continued with the course as they had previously decided to do. We understand that attitude as a manifestation of their professional commitment, as they could have simply argued that they were on strike, and therefore they would stop everything, including the course.

The observed 'technical orientations meetings' (OT)[219] held at the *DE* were more disturbed by the strike. The OT was composed of two parts: courses in the mornings and supervision in the afternoons. Yanna, the pedagogical assistant, decided to keep only the first part because the person invited to run the classes would not be able to postpone it to some other time. So, every Wednesday, around seven o'clock in the morning teachers were gathering at the *DE* to attend to a course. The supervision for the co-ordinator teachers was suspended. After the school advisors and the headteachers had joined the movement virtually all the activities at the *DE* were suspended.

Teachers seemed to work in a climate of discontentment. Such a climate was present, to a greater or lesser extent, in all the interviewees. It does not seem reasonable to think that the strike was the sole cause of the teachers' discontentment. If they were happy with their conditions of work and with their career prospects they would not have embarked on a strike. Nevertheless the strike offered a perfect context to complain about the government's policies and to point out their perception of the lack of true commitment shown by that Governor to state education. It was, after all, the same government that was proclaiming their good intentions towards state education, and investing in expensive programmes of professional development that was refusing to increase the level of teachers' salaries up to reasonable standards, in their view.

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[219] In Portuguese *Orientações Técnicas - OTs*

8.2.2 Establishing the contact

There were no major problems to contact the teachers nor establish a reasonably trusting relationship with them.

The 1993 Basic Course's teachers were either directly contacted in the coffee break of the classes or by telephone. They were asked to be interviewed about the course they were attending. As in the beginning of the observations of the classes we had talked shortly about the research project, we were not total strangers. We reminded them of the research project on teacher professional development we were carrying out, and that it was very important to us to know the teacher's views on the subject. Teachers usually responded positively to this approach.

The initial plan which was to contact the 1992 Basic Course' s teachers was not fulfilled. We thought there would be a list of all the participant teachers of the Basic Course in 1992. However, surprisingly, there was no such list. The FDE team had only a list of the monitors and not of the teachers. The team informed us they were trying to keep that data in their records of the 1993 courses. We had then to make our own list (only of the DE under study) gathering information from different sources. The monitors were particularly helpful on that. One of the monitors had kept some notes from which we could recover part of her list. It was a task in itself. Having those partial lists the teachers were contacted by telephone. The teachers contacted, with a very few exceptions, accepted promptly to be interviewed[220].

We left it up to teachers to decide when and where they wanted to be interviewed. Most of them preferred the school as the place; a few teachers invited us to go to their homes.[221]

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[220] We decided, for methodological reasons, not to insist with a teacher if she showed signs of unwillingness to give the interview. We would have just one single contact with the 1992 Basic Course's teachers - the interview - therefore we could not afford to have additional difficulties to establish a good rapport with them.

[221] All but one interview were tape recorded, lasting around one hour in average, being 40 minutes the shortest and 90 minutes the longest.

8.3 Primary teachers talking about professional development

The interviews with the group of teachers provided ample material for analysis, not fully explored in this thesis. We approached it in two complementary ways aiming to shed light on the central theme of our thesis: the *"argument of incompetence"*. We identified some cross-themes, present in the interviews, and we also took some teachers in particular to make a more in-depth analysis.

8.3.1 Taking the interview as an opportunity to 'let steam off'

Most teachers immersed in the daily lives of their classroom practice face sometimes overwhelming problems. Their discourse sometimes shifts from one topic to another. They reveal dissatisfaction with their conditions of work, in various levels and different ways of expressing it, as a common ground. To give an interview was taken for most of them as an opportunity to protest and to let steam off. They complain about the isolation in which they carry out their teaching practice.

The teachers interviewed are, as a rule, talkative persons. The interview was taken by teachers as an opportunity to talk not only about their views on professional development but also to express their worries and problems with their pupils, their relationship with colleagues and superiors, their doubts and uncertainties towards the profession. In fact, all these issues are connected to their current conditions of teaching and of professional development. To speak about their conceptions and understandings about TPD brings to light their particular conditions of teaching, their real students and their concrete problems. The professional development is not abstractly considered, it is always referred to their concrete teaching practice and conditions of work. It follows the results of our analysis of the interview data.

When asked about the Basic Course, the teachers talked about the aspects that were related to the teaching practice, as they experienced it. So, at a first glance, some teachers' discourses seemed to assume quite an irregular style, as it was full of mixed issues. Going deeper into the analysis we understood that some teachers represent a vivid expression of the way teachers may feel about the challenges of their profession and the inexpressive place that activities of professional development have occupied in their lives. The everyday routine, under the unsuitable conditions of

teaching most teachers have, leaves little room for activities of reflection, study, and self-organisation. The daily pressures to solve immediate problems can be overwhelming.

Rita is one of those teachers. She is a young woman, with 11 years of experience, who attended the Basic Course in 1992. During that year she was in charge of a very difficult CB group. She had no experience with literacy groups. Her school, in common with many others, adopts the practice of streaming and she was left with a group of children with a history of several repetitions. So, she attended the course with high expectations of solving the difficulties in dealing with the challenges that group posed to her. Probably feeling alone, Rita started her interview with no hesitation. She seemed anxious to talk to someone.

> "I started doing the course because I was working with a CB group and I've never worked with CB. I have eleven years of experience teaching all kinds of group except literacy. So I started the course because of that. I was working with a very problematic group; all my pupils were again in the CB. They were a 2nd grade group but they were in fact on the 1st grade level. They were on the 'A, E, I, O, U' (meaning the earliest phases of the process); there were children that still didn't know that after the first year. So I was asking for help. I was really desperate! I could only cry, and I cried and cried. I did not know how to resolve that situation. Then I heard about the course, and I expected a miracle, you know. The result is that I ended up very frustrated because I had to do it by myself...So, the course helped me ... I mean, I don't even known if it helped me or not because the way they suggested to us to work with the children I already work.

We then asked her what is the way the course monitor suggested them to work, as it was not uncommon to hear teachers claiming they already worked as the course proposes. During the class observations as well as on the interviews it was noted that some teachers claimed they 'already work in that way, so the course presented nothing new'. Rita admits she knows very little about constructivism. She criticises her own initial education for been disconnected from the 'reality of the outskirts schools', and that this was therefore the reason for her disappointment. Her relationships with her colleagues at school do not seem to be good, also contributing to her dissatisfaction with her current conditions of work. All those issues emerge together, in a mixture, as she comments about the Basic Course.

"They talk a lot about the constructivism in the course, you know. When I was at school, I did not study those educators very well. I wanted to get out of the school. At that time, I was pushed into teaching... but I liked it and I decided to stay in it. (...) The way they say (on the course) we should work with the children, that is the way I already work... I have a way, you know, it is my way to teach, I don't know if I'm right or not but it is my way. I say it is a 'traditional-constructivist' way, I've never heard about it!! (laugh) (...) I tell children : "Enjoy yourselves! You're children! You've got to live you childhood. You have to believe in the world... The teachers (laugh), particularly those teachers who are disbelieving in the world. I think the majority of them are losing their faith in life. People shut themselves inside their little worlds, only their families ... and in the end, people are becoming so bitter that they get disappointed even with their own families. But why? Because you're putting all your frustration into your family. That is what happens here. If you have the opportunity, go to the staff room and listen to their chat: "I've bought this... my husband has that... I've got a jewel... a new dress ... " Nobody has money!! I don't know if they are fantasising or if they are really spending their last cash on that sort of thing, just to say they have something. Perhaps it is a way of dreaming... Dreaming by buying things or dreaming of buying things. All that stuff. Because, with what we earn as state teachers...we are in no condition to buy all that, unless you've got a rich husband. But with a rich husband, who's gonna bother being a teacher?"

Her level of anxiety was still high. During the interview this teacher was concerned with constructing a good image, trying to present herself as a good teacher, which from her perspective means a teacher concerned with the pupils. Why was she so concerned with presenting herself as a good teacher? She may fear to be accused of being incompetent, so she may feel the need of presenting herself as a good professional, and particularly, committed to her pupils.

My class last year was.... I had to speak with Anna, the headmistress. I told her: "It is either that pupil or me"...I was accused of being incompetent because I could not work with the girl. The girl beat my pupils... with me she was ok, she wouldn't make a trouble, she was well educated, but only with me. She beat her colleagues, everyone! I started to have problems with the parents, I could not work... My class became a mess!!! Then I said to the headmistress "It is either her or me, because there is no condition to carry on like this!!!" And while everything was happening, the course was going on....and no help. The girl changed schools."

The classroom pressure when taking on a big and very difficult group, as experienced by Rita, is one of the main sources of stress. The other source is the feeling of isolation and even helplessness experienced by her. The situation she experienced in the classroom could be resolved differently if the school team had had a more collective approach to the problems and difficulties teachers face in their classrooms. The situation described by Rita is neither uncommon nor insoluble: a pupil disturbing the classes, probably a symptomatic behaviour that something was wrong... We understand that with an appropriate pedagogical and emotional support, Rita would have been able to deal with the girl herself, within the classroom boundaries.

Another teacher, Ana Maria, complains about the attitude of her colleagues concerning the possibilities of developing a collective work.

> "There is a lot of individualism in teachers. They know things but they don't tell you, you see? You ask for help, you want to get some information on how to work, but they just fool around with you and don't tell you how to do it. I honestly don't know why it should be like this. It's as if everybody wants to be above the others (...) then you start to feel insecure, you don't know what to do.(...) It is stressing to work like that... " (Ana)

Our analysis of the interviews with teachers showed that they often complain of felling alone. They feel they cannot count on colleagues and superiors to deal with the challenges of teaching and the everyday problems.

> "I'd like to work in group with the teachers. I feel very much, very much alone ... I have many ideas and I'd like to discuss them with my colleagues but people do not care to listen. That is very upsetting, I feel really alone. We go along well but when I tried to talk about that... I cannot count on anyone."(Sonia)

Sonia, a young teacher, aspires to become a CB co-ordinator. She believes she would then have the opportunity to develop a collective work with the teachers. This may be the way she conceived to deal with a feeling of helplessness that she probably had, and to a certain extent still has, in her school.

> I've never been a co-ordinator, but it's a dream I have, that I could

talk to the teacher and say: "Look, there's somebody here to help you, you may not think there is, you may be going through difficult things, but you can count on me." I think that would help, that's what I miss because sometimes I'm a bit lost and I don't have anybody to run to. Should I run to my mother, who's been a teacher and is retired now ... "Mom, help me! Give me some help! What can I do?" I think if you show to the teachers that you want to help, they'll open up to you so that you can help them, and then you join forces. I think that's the way, I don't know.

Large groups of pupils, the practice of streaming, isolation and lack of pedagogical and emotional support engender stressing conditions of work. The pressure from superiors and double work-journeys can also be added to this list. Projection[222] is a powerful defence mechanism that may be used whenever the integrity of the self-identity is threatened, as it occurs in the current condition lived by state teachers. The social image of state schools and state teachers has been undermined by the *'argument of incompetence'*. So, by projecting onto 'the others' (to their colleagues) their share of ignorance, teachers adopt, without being aware, an attitude that excuses themselves of any responsibility for their pupils failure. The following quote is an example of what we mean.

Rita when asked about what are, in her opinion, the main problems the state school has answers that:

"Well, I think that it is lack of funding, lack of funding for education. And also, I think that what is missing is ... the teacher, I mean, the teachers as a group, try a bit harder, you know. I think there are some teachers that... I have also my deficiencies but some colleagues give the impression that they go to school to give their classes and do not care if the students are learning or not. I think that the teacher is not trying hard anymore. The teacher has to improve by herself, not to wait to have a course or something. I heard the other day that the government would give the teachers money to buy books. That is another absurd thing. It does not have to give money to a teacher to buy books!! Pay a decent salary, isn't it true? Pay a decent salary... and also the initial education is getting worse and worse. It's been forming teachers... terrible! What do you see!! They make basic language mistakes. The teacher does not know how to express herself, she does not know how to get to the student. (...) It is chaos! (...) Now, I will be really honest

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[222] We are using the concept of 'Projection' in its psychoanalytical meaning. "Projection always appears as a defence mechanism, as an attribution to the other – person or thing – of qualities, feelings, wishes, that the individual ignores or rejects in himself". Laplanche, J and Pontalis, J.B. (1985), pp. 481.

with you. There are some teachers that they could even earn in dollars and it wouldn't do them any good. They do not have the wish to improve themselves professionally. And I also feel that there is also that idea: 'the worst, the best'. I feel that."

Our research confirmed what has been pointed by 'the dissonant voices', analysed on our review of the literature on professional development (Chapter Three). Teachers need someone with whom to share their concerns and experiences in teaching. They need interlocutors. Interlocutors that sometimes, in the current conditions, they have not found among themselves. Their relationships do not take place in a 'vacuum' but in school contexts that are, as a rule, quite troublesome: stressing conditions of work such as double journeys and large groups of pupils, added to an institutional environment which has promoted individualism rather then collective commitment. These are important elements to be faced, included, and dealt with by any serious programme of teacher professional development launched by the SSE.

The *'argument of incompetence'*, in the version identified on the level of the educational policies, has provided the basis for blaming the teacher for the poor quality of education weakening then the already difficult relationships among teachers. Our analysis of the interviews with the group of teachers has found evidence that teachers tried to safeguard their image of competence, both to themselves and to us. They do that by *distinguishing* themselves from the 'mass of teachers' and by attributing the 'incompetence' to 'the others'. That is the version of the *"argument of incompetence"*, as it appears among the teachers.

8.3.2 The Basic Course

8.3.2.1 Teachers' motives to attend the Basic Course

"Why do you decided to attend the Basic Course?" That was one of the first questions we asked the teachers. From their answers we constructed three sub groups aiming to present the data and to organise our analysis. They are profiles, prototypes, and as abstractions they are limited as descriptions of the concrete teachers. The real teachers are likely to show aspects from some of the prototypes, rarely from a single one. The teachers' relations to their work and to their professional development are

more dynamic and contradictory than the profiles alone can convey. Taking these considerations into account, let us present the three profiles produced by our analysis, namely, 'Seeking for immediate answers', 'Seeking to improve their knowledge and teaching practice', and 'Forced by superiors or morally obliged to attend the course'.

1) Seeking for immediate answers

When attending the Basic Course these teachers were mainly interested in obtaining practical help to resolve their classrooms problems. In an extreme position is Rita who claimed to be 'desperate' when she attended the course, as the quotes reproduced before already demonstrated.

Vera, an experienced teacher, assumed a CB class that included some children that **were downgraded from the 3rd year group to the CB**: *'children that did not know anything concerning literacy'*. She heard about the course at the *DE*.

> *"I'd learned about the course through the DE, and then I went for it. I was teaching CB classes, children regarded as really weak, you know. I got interested because everything related to children with a big or small potential for learning, and that are having learning problems interests me. So I thought that doing the course I would get some tips on how to work inside my classroom, so I went there and I liked it so much, I've applied absolutely everything they gave me."(Vera)*

Both teachers were teaching difficult groups composed of CB children, pupils of various age groups, some attending the CB for the third or fourth time. That is, children, some pre-adolescents, with a school history of problems, with crystallised negative images within the school. This is an example of a perverse mechanism of the Brazilian education system: the more difficult groups of pupils get the inexperienced teachers.

Rita says she cried, and cried. Considering the situation she saw herself in, she could do nothing but cry given the state of despair she found herself. In that context, a course of professional development is not taken by the teacher as a opportunity to study, to discuss with pairs, to improve as a professional but as a **last resort**. As she

summarises "I think that when a teacher goes for a course she is already a bit desperate".

For those 'desperate teachers', and surely Rita is not the only one that had a 'class that nobody wants'[223], the anxiety of getting their problems resolved turns into an urge for immediate answers. They become impatient. They do not want to face more conflict, as the aim of the monitor is to question their practice so they will rethink it. To these teachers the course may be inadequate.

2) Seeking to improve their knowledge and teaching practice

Our analysis showed that usually the teacher that says she attended the Basic Course to improve her knowledge already knows something about the constructivist approach or, at least, is sympathetic to it. The teacher says she expects to improve her knowledge on the subject. She does not have to be convinced that it is 'worth trying' to change her teaching practice. Sonia is an example of this profile of teacher.

Sonia claims she has always been a studious person. She comes from a family of unskilled workers. Since the early phases of her education she obtained a scholarship to study at a religious private school. So, she became a primary teacher. She does not feel well integrated with the group of teachers she works with in the school.

> "I think the teacher has to be always studying. I can't get into the classroom and feel I'd like to do something that I don't know how. And I'm the kind of person that prefers to study under orientation; that is why I like to attend courses. I do not have the habit of studying by myself. So I go for courses. (...) We meet people, other teachers and you improve a lot. (...) I'm attending an English course, a bit out of my area but... because I'm tired... the strike and all these things, sometimes I feel angry: 'I'm doing so many things, studying and the guy does not want to pay me not even two minimum salaries![224] So, you get upset. (...) My family says that I studied a lot and that my salary is so low! People say that the teachers are badly paid. We are... a little discredited. People know we have responsibility, that our work is important, but they do not

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[223] 'A class that nobody wants' is the way teachers refer to those classes that resulted from grouping by '(in)abilities'. Those classes, at least the way they work in our schools, generate more problems than solutions, as the educational literature has shown.

[224] To have an idea, in 2001 two minimum salaries are equal to US 180,00 per month.

> *give very much importance also...(...) It is something upsetting, something really bad. ...But I don't know... I will have to solve it somehow ...because when I start to work with the children and I see them learning and that I'm contributing to that, I feel happy. But we cannot live only with that, can we?"*

Rosalyn, a middle aged teacher, decided to attend the Basic Course as an opportunity to invest in her professional development.

> *"It was at the start of the year, we're doing the planning, and people were walking up and down, and all that, and then someone said 'There's going to be a course about the theory and practice of literacy. Is there anybody interested in doing it?' Now, I have this thing, it's a personal taste of mine, I've always liked to attend courses, I think it's because I couldn't go to university yet. So I think a course will help me, broaden my view, something we do not achieve at the 'magistério'. Then, it's a way of keeping up-to-date, to take part in what's happening, I think it's important for the teacher to leave the classroom."*

Five teachers mentioned that they had attended other courses before, offered by private schools, investing part of their scarce resources to pay the course. Leny worked previously with illiterate institutionalised adolescents and faced serious difficulties teaching them within the traditional approaches of literacy.

> *"Then I decided to do it, to look for a course to learn more, and I took a course at the 'Escola da Vila'. 'Escola da Vila' is based on Emília Ferreiro's proposals. (...) So, that school is all about the proposals we wanted to apply. So I went with some friends and we took the course, but it's paid, it's a course for which we had to spend, well, a considerable amount of what we earn. I started to practice there, and I learned a lot. (...) They work with constructivism, drawing things from children, and I got really involved. I started to do it here at school. Then we had this course here, and I did it to help me. I didn't come to the course without knowing anything, I already had a basis. The course was to add to that.*

This kind of teacher is probably the one the FDE team expected to have, as she is not so resistant to 'change'. They are interested in improving themselves as professionals and their teaching practice.

3) Forced by superiors or morally obliged to attend the course.

Different reasons may be behind the pressure that some teachers felt to attend the Basic Course. Júlia assumed a CB co-ordination without having any experience as a CB teacher. So, she understands she should have been more prepared for this new position.

> "I was never much interested in courses...and besides there was never a course specific for the 3rd and 4th grades, the years I've worked more with. So, in terms of constructivism I was totally in the dark, I had only heard about it, you know what I mean? But once I was a co-ordinator I just had to be up-to-date, so that's the first course I had to take."

Esther, also a CB teacher, felt constrained to attend the course. The head teacher asked her to attend it so the school would receive extra pedagogical material given only to the schools that had teachers participating in the Basic Course. In her words:

> "I heard about the course from my head teacher. One day she called me and said that they were accepting applications for this course. At first I told her I was not interested, that I didn't have time for it. I was just starting as a co-ordinator. Then she told me: 'As a co-ordinator I think you should take this course, it'll be good for you.' Then I said I was going to think about it. (...) So I went home and thought about it, and I told her that I really didn't have the time, that the timetable was bad for me. (...) One day she called me again and said that no teachers in our school were going to do the course, and that the school wouldn't get the material, a box full of books. That bothered me, and I ended up saying yes."

Ana, a tenured teacher, also experienced pressure from the head teacher and yielded to her decision to avoid conflicts.

> "I wanted to take the course, but I didn't have much time, you know. I start early in the morning, and the schedule here is hectic, it's a pain really, because we stay for very long hours at school. So I didn't want to take it. But then I felt the pressure. 'Otherwise I'll have to let you go by the end of the year. I'll put you in 'availability'.' Well, I'm tenured but I thought 'You know what, the going is already tough here, it's best to...it's easier if I just go and keep cool, and then I don't have to put up with it later.' So I just

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went there, and I wasn't expecting to like it, but I'm loving it!"

Sally, another teacher that worked in the same school as Ana, also indicated to be pressed by the head teacher to attend the course.

> *S. I knew about the course from the head teacher. First, we would not attend it because of the time of the HTP (pedagogical working time). So, I did not participate in the first module of the course. Then, the head teacher forced us to do it, she threatened us with losing our jobs.*
> *D. Was it?*
> *S.. Yes. So, I said: "OK, I'll do it". We met at school and we decided.... There were some young ladies that were already doing the course. We started on the second module. We are enjoying it, we regret that we did not start from the beginning because it is very good"*

Considering the three teachers' profiles we can notice how diverse the teacher motivations to attend an activity of TPD such as the Basic Course can be: they may be 'desperate' for practical solutions, or in search of improving their knowledge to reflect upon their teaching practice, or they felt some external (or internal) pressure to attend it. These differences are directly related with their current experience at the school and in the classroom. They are dependent on the conditions of work each particular school offers, and on the past professional and personal history of the teacher. Does the school have a stable team? Is the teacher tenured? What are the relations between the school and the community? The conditions of work and the climate of the schools reported by our interviewees vary considerably, and this surely affects their teaching practice. As Azanha, 1994 reminds us, a teacher may be 'good' in one school and 'bad' in another. So, we argued that the restricted line of reasoning underneath the *"argument of incompetence"*, which indicates the teacher as the 'incompetent element' of the educational system is proved untrue. We conclude this section considering that our profiles may indicate *some elements* to understand the teachers' initial motivations to attend the Basic Course, but it is important to bear in mind that there is still much to be known about the everyday life of our concrete schools. The unit of reflection and action of professional development should be the school, not individual teachers. The challenges of such a change are still to be faced by the professionals working in the field of professional development.

8.3.2.2 Teachers perception of the FDE's intention in offering the Basic Course: the network of competence

We were surprised by the answers of many teachers to the question "Why is the FDE offering courses for teachers and what are their reasons for choosing the constructivism?" Many of them said that they had never thought about that. As if activities of professional development were something detached from their concerns. Some of them started to think about it during the interview. We found no clear indication that the group of teachers was fully aware of the 'idea of a network of competence'. This idea, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, was present in the interviews with the other two groups of participating agents, namely, the FDE's team and the course monitors.

However, the *'argument of incompetence'*, as it appears in the version of the education literature, emerged as teachers started to think about the possible reasons FDE had to offer the Basic Course[225].

In the Closing Remarks of the Chapter Three we discussed the limits of that formulation. Recalling some of them: The teacher initial education (both at the University and at the Secondary levels) certainly must be improved. Therefore to a certain degree teachers are not being adequately prepared to teach. In her own words, Vera says virtually the same:

> "The teachers are very...they leave the 'magistério' very poorly prepared these days, with no idea of what it is to be in a classroom. Children nowadays are much more lively than in my time! (...) So I think that courses are a way of salvaging the knowledge of teachers, you know, if you didn't learn much at school, who knows, if you see it in courses, it may be the way ahead (laughs)."

We argued in that earlier chapter that the poor teacher education cannot be taken as the only (or the main) cause for the low quality of education. To centre our attention only on the level of teacher education is to restrict and oversimplify our understanding of the aspects related to the teacher pedagogical practice. The importance of the concrete conditions under which the teacher develops her/his work is not to be

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[225] see Chapter 3, particularly its "Closing Remarks"

underestimated nor overlooked. Teachers know, from their own experience, that that is the case, although their ideas on that may not be well organised and articulated. Their testimony on the difficult working conditions highlighted:

a) That large groups of children restrict the possibility of individual attention.

> Sonia: "I am close to retirement...I have only more two years but I want to carry on teaching because that is what I really like to do. I will continue as long as my head works! So, I thought that I could not continue to work with my pupils in that way for I was not helping them to achieve their best. So, I went for this course, and it is being very helpful. I call the pupil to the blackboard to make an exercise... the only thing that is really a pity is that Ferreiro's proposal leaves us, how can I say... During the course, we watched videos where the teacher works with 3 or 4 pupils, and our groups have 40 pupils! Today, for instance, I called 4 children to the blackboard, I worked with them but meanwhile the class became a mess, children going up and down, a lot of noise... I know that it is normal but I think that if we had smaller groups of pupils the work would be much better. With 40 pupils, the possibility of giving individual attention to each pupil is really small...

b) That the lack of adequate buildings and pedagogical material engender poor, boring and tiring classroom activities and, consequently, teachers' stress;

> Rosa: "I think that a course has to offer me suggestions that I can use in my school, and sometimes that is not the case. ... You see here. We are a 'Quality School' but we have nothing to make it possible to diversify the activities, so we stay inside the classroom for five hours. Can you imagine a child sitting on a chair from one to six o'clock in the afternoon! The teacher needs alternatives to propose different activities. The other day I brought from home a collection of children books to the teachers to use with their pupils. And then there is the problem of the place to read them. The person that takes care of the library does not like that the children go there because they 'mess around'... Well, I say, but they have to explore the material! There are so many other problems that block the education...starting from the salary, the teachers' disenchantment. (...) I think the education in this country is a problem, you know what I mean? Even though the government say they want to improve it... they've implemented the Quality School, but in my opinion, the Quality School for us, first to fourth grade teachers, was a mistake. The child gets too tired with four hours, can you imagine with five! (...) So I asked myself: 'What's really missing? I think it is everything! It lacks money, it lacks proper conditions, it lacks infrastructure, it lacks someone to think right. People from

the FDE or from the DE know nothing about what is really going on inside the classrooms. They have been for 20, 25 years in their offices, they do not ask us what we think, as you are doing now...It never crossed their minds that we here, for instance, have to deal with grown up boys going in the girls loo to watch them ...These are really stressing conditions that we live in."

c) The absence of institutional practices that favour the establishment of collective and articulated work amongst teaching staff which is necessary to the development of a good teaching.

"Maria Alice: Last year, the relationships amongst us were perhaps a little better. This school is very confused now ... we have a new headmistress, new teachers... the climate is a bit heavy. Since we became a 'Quality School', it seems that there is a certain animosity among the teachers... we do not exchange experiences any more...
Denise: And it was not like that before?
Maria Alice: No, we had much more dialogue amongst us...
Denise: What happened, then?
Maria Alice (long silence...) The change of the headmistress, the change of the coordinator... I don't know... the coordinator is a nice person, but we have new teachers.... I do not know what happened... The headmistress has established a certain climate of animosity ... it is not a nice atmosphere... It is not favourable to the development of a good work."(Maria Alice)

The few teachers that had a prompt answer argued that the courses are being proposed because the higher levels of the education system were dissatisfied with the teachers' performance.

As we understand it, these teachers have been negatively affected by the *'argument of incompetence'* as it appears on the version of the academic literature. Ana, a CB teacher is aware of its rationale and combine it with the explanations for the causes of the school failure provided by the Deprivation Theories[226]. She thinks that the in-service courses are very important because the initial education, both at University level and at secondary level, is unsatisfactory. The in-service courses would help the teacher to deal with the current clientele of the state school, which is, in her opinion *"completely different from what is was in past times. They are deprived children, originated from unstable families, disorganised*

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[226] See Chapter Two, sub-item 2.3.2 'The primacy of the psychosocial approaches' for more about the Deprivation Theories.

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and lacking incentive from their families. Their parents think that the schools has to educate their children, and that the parents' responsibility is only to bring them to school at seven o'clock. The children are completely abandoned during the day, they are handicapped. ".

The 'argument of incompetence', in its version of the educational policies, states that the quality of education is low solely because we have badly prepared teachers. So the teacher should be better trained. The teacher continuous education would supply the teacher with new theories and new methods to deal with the current school clientele. Tina, in her own words, says the same, as the following quote shows:

> *T. Because I think that they (the FDE) thought that the methods being used were not working. The methods were...let's say...the students were declining (in terms of their learning). The rates of failure were very high, and there was a lack of interest from the school clientele, they're moving away from the school. (Tina)*

Rita, self-described as 'desperate', sees 'desperation' also in the FDE 's actions of TPD.

> *R. Oh, I think they're desperate with the teachers. I think that because recently there's been a streak of courses(Rita).*
>
> *D. Desperate in what sense?*
>
> *R. Because they see teachers more and more lost every day. Because teachers...I think the teachers don't understand what's expected of them...Then, 'let's have courses and more courses, who knows if the teachers learn something?...' (Rita)*

A few teachers were critical of the actions of professional development proposed by the official institutions of the SSE. They said they saw hidden or ill intentions behind those actions of TPD. It is important to note that their criticism can lead to two different attitudes: one that is 'positive' and other that is 'negative'. Explaining: their critical approach may lead to a position that refuses to take part in the proposed activities, as it is the case of Lucia; and, in the opposite direction, to engage in the activities proposed trying to make the best of the opportunities

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offered, as it is Maria's case. The next examples illustrate such difference in attitudes:

> L. "I don't know anything. I did not want to do any course. I know there are some but I do not feel like attending. [D: -Why not?] Because it is a vicious circle. You attend a course, you get a certificate. But you're not allowed to miss any class...And the only thing we change in teaching is the 'label', exclusively the label. Nothing else! So, when a really serious proposal appears... then I will start to believe, because those that I have done...!"

Lucia then complained about the lack of follow up activities after the Basic Course she attended. She consider that essential because:

> L: Otherwise, things get detached. You attend a course and then you go to your classroom, close the door and... there is nobody to direct you, someone to say to you: 'Look, we've learned that on the course and now we'll continue that work. So, I think that these courses are only 'for the Englishman to see'[227]...

Maria Aparecida's, on her turn, says that:

> M. Well, that (the FDE reasons for offering courses) I don't know, I can speak for myself. I can tell you first without criticising and then I can tell you my criticisms. Because we always think that there is something between the lines. I think they have chosen the constructivism because I think that here in South America, in Argentina they are very advanced in constructivism and it has worked fine. I think it's because it's something new, because it has a lot do with our modern world. You know, I think FDE have chosen constructivism because there has been so much debate about it. (...) Now the other reason for choosing constructivism is that old story we already know. There is always somebody who wants to show some work, you know, and the state governor wants

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[227] The phrase 'for the Englishman to see' is of widespread use in Brazil and means 'to do something to keep up appearances'. We have gathered that the origins of this expression date from the late 19th century, and are related to the construction of the railways in Brazil under the supervision of English engineers. When the 'Englishman' was coming to inspect the works, the Brazilian workers tried to cover up all problems and make things look OK. Interestingly enough, the negative meaning of the phrase (which varies widely according to the situation of use) impinges exclusively on the 'deceiver', none of it affecting the easily deceived inspector. In the present example, Rita is making quite a strong criticism of the FDE.

> *to show some work (...). If it were not for those types of vested interests, people that just want to show some work, so that they can get more funding. (...)*

The difference in the teachers' reactions to the alleged bad or ill intentions of the FDE is an example of the heterogeneity of the teachers' attitude and of their understanding of their role regarding the question of TPD. In Lucia's case, to notice the lack of FDE's true commitment to the state education in general, and to the professional development of teachers, in particular, led her to avoid committing herself as well. She argues that she will wait until a really serious proposal is made. Her answers during the interviews revealed bitterness, irony, and disenchantment.

Maria's answers indicate that she tries to make the best of the available opportunities of professional development. But to do that, she has to split herself in two versions: a 'naïve and happy' Maria and another Maria 'critic and sceptical'. She says she avoids thinking too much about her criticisms...

Leny talks about the difficulties in the relationships with her colleagues; they seemed to be disturbed by her attitudes that show her wish to continuously develop her learning, which reveal a commitment to her professional development. Leny's testimony reveals the *'need of distinguishing'*, expressing the *'argument of incompetence'* as it appears on the teachers' version. In the next quote, the emphasis is placed on her professional commitment.

> *L: "Working within a constructivist perspective, you have to work a lot at home. It is not just to be here and to go to the class. You have to prepare materials, prepare the classes, you have to know what to do. It is not just to open a book and decide what to work on that day. Therefore, it is a lot of work, really. And they say (referring to her colleagues) that considering our salary.... we should not do all that (laugh) It is hard, very hard. To try to change the teachers mind.... Like it happened, when I enrolled for the course at the "Escola da Vila" the people said: " Are you crazy, my dear? Are you going to pay from you pocket to attend this course? With such a salary!! " I was severely criticised. In the end, you don't even know what to do...(laugh)"(Leny)*

Anna, another teacher, clearly shows a *need of distinguishing* herself from the 'other teachers'. This need is made more evident through her concern with her use of the

language[228]. She believes that it is fundamental to work with the Portuguese language. Anna claims that she has always been concerned with that, that she reads a lot. Anna pays particular attention to speaking correctly to the point of becoming upset when she makes a mistake. She talks a while about the importance of 'speaking properly' and about how that is important for the teachers. Anna comments about some student-teachers she received in her classroom: they are very badly prepared; they write and speak very poorly. She comments that the latest student-teachers she had received belonged to a very low socio-economical level, that 'could aim to be a housemaid, at most...'

Leny was also clearly concerned with constructing a good image of herself for us. A different image from that usually disseminated about the state teachers. She needed to be distinguished from the 'other teachers'. She sees herself as a committed and competent teacher. She wanted to be interviewed and to be known by us[229]. She considered it important to our work to hear her opinion, because she had the experience of attending both a course offered by the FDE and another course run by a private school. She argues that she could benefit from the course offered by the FDE because she was already familiar and involved with the ideas of the constructivism. That, however, was not the case of the 'other teachers', as reproduced on the next quote.

> D. Tell me about the course. What is your opinion about it?
> L. I... I don't know. If it was not for the background I already had....the course would not have been that good. It was a bit... But as I already have done other courses I could learn a lot. Now, the people there... they got a bit lost because it was necessary to have some basis, isn't it?

8.3.2.3 Teacher's evaluations of the Basic Course: criticisms and the emergence of the 'argument of incompetence'.

This subsection presents the teachers evaluations of the Basic Course. The analysis showed that the 'argument of incompetence' is present in the testimony of the

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[228] Anna was the only teacher that refused to have her interview tape-recorded. Perhaps she could not accept the possibility of having any 'mistakes of language' she could make recorded.

[229] When we contacted her by telephone, she said: "You know, I am anxious to talk to you. I want very much to be interviewed and I was afraid that you wouldn't choose me.."

teachers. It is discussed how it appears and its consequences to the consecution of the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice".

The Basic Course was positively as well as negatively evaluated by the teachers interviewed. Some of them were ambivalent. We will start the presentation with the positive evaluations[230].

Half of the interviewed teachers seemed to feel that they have benefited from the Basic Course. Some of these teachers belonged either to the group of teachers described earlier in this chapter as 'seeking to improve their knowledge and teaching practice' or to the third group, 'forced by superiors or morally obliged to attend the course'.

Sonia, a young teacher, liked very much the course. She graduated in Pedagogy and considers herself as a studious person. She regards FDE's proposal as good and serious.

> *D: Tell me about your evaluation of the classes, the bibliography and the materials.*
> *R: I liked it. As I said before, that was the only course that I attended that I felt confident that the proposal was good. The monitor was very capable. It was not a course only to say that the state was offering something, you know, to say that FDE was doing something, to appear on TV. It was really a serious course, well prepared, the monitor had a programme and she had to prepare reports for her superiors. It was a course really serious, very interesting (Sonia)*

Other teachers mentioned that the course was a source of reflection and ideas for both their work with teachers, in the case of CB co-ordinators, and with pupils, in the case of teachers. Donna and Anne were the course monitors that were more consistently more positively evaluated by the teachers.

> *D: Do you think that the forty people that attended the course with you agree with your opinion that the course was valid or you think that there were different opinions?*

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[230] From the 28 teachers interviewed, 14 considered the course good or very good, 7 considered it bad or insufficient, and 7 were ambiguous.

T: Well, I think they agree that the course was valid, because... I think it was really good. (...) Because, when someone starts to lose interest the person starts to skip the classes, the person does not participate and the group diminishes, isn't it? That didn't happen. The group was there until the end of the course. It could be that they kept coming only to check what the result would be, I don't know, but I felt that my opinion about the course was the same as many, particularly the older teachers. Unless they were lying. I wasn't. I found it very good. But I don't know. As I said, I knew that other groups of the Basic Course didn't have the same result as ours had. I don't know, I wasn't there, I cannot analyse. But ours was worthwhile, that it was! And all the forty participants asked for a continuation of the course, with Donna, next year. We understand her language, she expressed herself very easily...(Tina)

D: How was the relationship with the monitor?
M: Ah, it was great! She is...she is really good. I'm doing the improvement course this year, again with her. I decided to do it because.... I knew there were already two other groups, but until I did not see her name ... I did not enrol (laugh). I wanted to continue with her (Maryellen).

E. I think she is a great person, well educated... I'd like to be like her... I'd like to speak as she does... but I can't. I think she is excellent!
D. Do you think she is confident regarding the content of the course?
E. Oh yes! I don't want to sound too... but I liked her very much indeed! I liked the course... It was that kind of course in which you never feel sleepy (laugh) there was no time for that! (Emma)

We noticed that the main factor teachers take into account to evaluate the Basic Course as positive or negative is the monitor's performance. Teachers evaluate the monitor's self-confidence, professional experience, sympathy, and her capacity of communicate well with the teachers. In simple words: if they liked the monitor the course was positively evaluated, if they did not like her, the evaluation was negative. There were few comments concerning the adopted bibliography, the content, the general purpose in offering courses, and so on.

Maria attended the Basic Course in 1992, with Yanna, and was attending the improvement course, in 1993 with other monitor. Her speech is illustrative of the difference in the teachers' evaluations made by the monitor.

M: I think it is essential that the person have a deep knowledge of the subject. And that didn't seem to be the case...

D: You mean, in the other course (her 1992 group of the Basic Course).

M: Yes, that's correct. Today we have Donna as our monitor and Mary as a collaborator. The two of them are excellent, one is more to 'theory' and the other more to 'practice' but combined. That person that is more 'theory bound' she has years and years working with that. As far as I know, at least 15 years that she studies the constructivism. Nowadays he is retired but works at a German primary school. She is the head teacher. So she has a vast experience to share with us. So, I felt, for instance, that Yanna (my former monitor) she is hard-working but in fact she left the co-ordination of a school and became a monitor, perhaps did a small course... I felt that sometimes she got lost. You know how teachers are! The teacher is Machiavellian, don't you think that we are not, because we are a Machiavellian class! We were a big group and we ... we criticised her little mistakes, when she avoided the subject, in the sense of what she didn't know ... I think it is ok, it is normal, nobody is perfect, one doen't have to know everything but as you are giving a course that intends to change a lot the people's mind, you have to have a solid basis.

Lucia has 23 years of teaching practice. She attended the Basic Course in 1992 and did not like it. When interviewed she was clearly against the idea of taking part in other activities of professional development. Using similar arguments to those used by the FDE team and of the monitors, Rita, on the next quote, calls the attention to the professional competence of her monitor. She considers that a serious proposal for teacher professional development involves two conditions that are missing in the courses she has attended: a highly skilled professional and follow up activities.

"Rita: You are working and then a person comes with a different proposal. Ok, let's do it, the person has goodwill and everything. Is that sufficient? No! It is necessary to have a highly qualified person to make you see that that change is important, that it is going to work out. It is not only to say: 'what matters is that the child feels at ease, to make the child enjoy school.' All right, that I understand, but I think it is not only that...The teaching is terrible, is getting worse each year...Then something comes out and (they say):'Ah! Let's do it! Another theory! Let's go for it!' And it's just that. Why? Because it's not been taken seriously...(...) It can be a fantastic proposal but without continuity..."

Similarly to what we observed with the teachers educators (see subsection 7.1.3), and also with the policy makers (see section 6.5) Lucia questions the competence of some course monitors. At that moment of the interview, she did not do it directly but by describing a quality the course monitor should have: "it is necessary to have a highly qualified person", she says. Between lines she indicates that her monitor did not fulfil that condition. In other moments, she criticises her monitor openly, as the next quote shows:

> *L: I did not like very much the classes... It was not like when you work on a subject and then you conclude something. No. So, the course was a little loose, you know... The monitor presented a lecture and then she asked us to prepare a little work and to give it to her. I found the person, the monitor a bit insecure... I mean, a bit not, a lot insecure..."*

Other teachers also criticise the performance of the course monitor:

> *"Generally speaking, the course was not bad but I still think that...I don't know if it was because of the monitor I had. She did not know how to teach... Perhaps if I had had another monitor I'd have had I different opinion... But the way it was, I did not move from where I was in the beginning of the course. (...)"(Rita)*

Lucia's evaluation of the Basic Course is also very negative. She criticises the classes, the bibliography used, and the monitor's competence.

> *L: I considered the classes too expository. It was not something where we could work on a task and then we reached a conclusion. It was not like that. The monitor made her speech and then she would say 'you do a little work there and... you give it to me'. So, it was something too loose...I also found the monitor a bit insecure. Not a bit, she was very insecure!*
> *D: How did you notice that?*
> *L: Well, sometimes when a question emerged, when we asked: 'How does that work? How do you do that?' She answered: ' Look, let's see it together, let's make a test on your class, you do it and see as the pupils answer, and then we will see together what are the difficulties, because I'm also learning with you'. So, it was like that and it wouldn't go further.*

In spite of all the criticisms Lucia had, she did not manifest her opinions during the course although she was asked to do so by the course monitor. She says that:

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> *"We did not want to quarrel with the monitor so we used to say: 'Everything is all right!' You know the 'game of contentment'? We played the game of contentment." (Lucia)*

Lucia does not realise that while going along with the *game of contentment*, as she called their attitude, the teachers were missing the opportunity of discussing with their monitor the directions that the Basic Course was taking. Lucia seems to believe that their attitude was appropriate to the situation as *"we did not want to quarrel with the monitor"*. She was not embarrassed by her omission. On the contrary, she seemed distrustful of the real good intentions of the course monitor. As we have not observed the classes of her group (she belonged to one of the Basic Course groups in 1992), we cannot assess how supportive was the context of that group of Basic Course.

The possibility of self-criticism emerges when the context is supportive of a constructive reflection, as the interview seemed to be for her. The interview was, for Rita, an opportunity not only to 'let off steam' but also to reflect critically about her own position regarding the Basic Course.

> *R: Have you already spoken to Rosalyn? (D: Not yet. I'll see her tomorrow). So, Rosalyn, gosh! She is totally different from me! (laugh) I was not much into it, maybe that was my problem, but I think she learned a lot. She was following the course well, while I lost interest, you understand? She and also Sonia, the one you'd already spoken to... But the thing is: Sonia has other education. She graduated in Pedagogy and all that stuff. So, her education is totally different from mine, that is at the level of 'magistério'. I had started the graduation in Maths but I had to interrupt it because... I had no financial condition to support it so I stopped. I thought ... I don't know why ... perhaps because they (Rosalyn and Sonia) studied more, perhaps they had more culture than me, perhaps as they were more interested they could benefit more than me...I was desperate, but they were not. They were interested."*

In her self-evaluation, Rita recognises that she could not sustain her interest during the course but she admits that some of her colleagues could. Their backgrounds are, in her opinion, the element that makes the difference between her colleagues and her. Another interesting point mentioned by Rita refers to their initial motivation for the course. As she says: *"I was desperate but they were not. They were interested"*. She was probably experiencing a process of *burnout*, a common reaction to job stress that reduces the motivation, excitement and effectiveness of the worker. "Specifically,

burnout can be now defined as a process in which a previously committed professional disengages from his her work in response to stress and strain experienced in the job." (Cherniss, 1980 p. 18.) We discuss more the subject in the next item.

8.4 The argument of incompetence, burnout and the need of distinguishing

The analysis of the interviews presented in the former sections indicates that teachers have also been influenced by the '*argument of incompetence*'. Their testimony showed that. The version of the '*argument of incompetence*' as it appears among teachers takes a different form, due to the context in which teachers work. The result of our analysis of the interviews with the group of teachers revealed evidence that they tried to safeguard their self-image of competence. They do that by *distinguishing* themselves from the 'mass of teachers' and by attributing the 'incompetence' to 'the others' As far as our analysis goes, we understand that since the visibility of schools and more specifically of teacher's work was increased (as argued in section 2.4) the figure of the teacher has been charged with incompetence. In addition to that, teachers usually work under stressing and unrewarding conditions. To safeguard their self-image, constantly threatened, they developed a psychological coping strategy to prevent them from being identified with the 'mass of teachers', the incompetent and uncommitted ones. So, they blame their colleagues, or the course monitors of being incompetent or uncommitted to their students. To question 'the other's competence' became a common strategy used by the professionals within the school system[231]. We believe that was particularly true of those professionals that had been themselves accused of being incompetent and were subjected to a stressing environment, as it was the case of Rita and Vera, and of those professionals that were already disenchanted and pessimistic, as it seemed to be Lucia's case. This strategy has worked to divide teachers rather then strengthen their feeling of belonging to a common professional group that should have shared aims.

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[231] Perosa, 1997, citing an expression used by Silva Jr, 1996, says that there is within the educational sectors a tendency to turn to *an ideology of the incompetence of the other*. 'That is, the 'other', sometimes the child, sometimes the teacher, is always the incompetent. The other is the one that, for his incompetence, limits or makes impracticable the exercise of our competence' (pp. 103).

As we saw on Lucia's case, despite having criticisms to the Basic Course she was attending Lucia did not expose her opinions during the course. Lucia, as well as some of her colleagues, did not assume their share of responsibility in the course of their professional development.

There is, however, not much use in trying to explain Lucia's attitude in the sphere of the individual phenomena. To restrict the analysis to the level of the individual behaviour, blaming individual teachers for their lack of true commitment to their profession, would be a rather partial approach to a much more complex problem. It would mean we also have been caught in the vicious cycle many teachers are caught: the vicious cycle of mutual accusations, without taking your own responsibility. They seem to think: *"I'm not given adequate conditions of work; the Government do not play their part; parents don't care about their children; pupils are not interested in learning; pupils do not have an adequate cultural environment at home; many teachers couldn't care less about the profession and about becoming better teachers...so, why should I bother?"*

This is a phenomenon observed at the level of the individuals having, however, social roots[232]. The idea of *teacher burnout* may help us to describe it. As defined by Cherniss (1980), teacher burnout refers to negative changes in attitudes and behaviour due to job stress. Concerning the changes, Cherniss puts:

> "A major one is loss of concern for the client and a tendency to treat clients in a detached, mechanical fashion. Other changes include increasing discouragement, pessimism, and fatalism about one's work; apathy; negativism; frequent irritability and anger with clients and colleagues; preoccupation with one's own comfort and welfare on the job; a tendency to rationalise failure by blaming the clients or 'the system', and resistance to change, growing rigidity,...." (cited in Fullan, pp. 126)

The idea of teacher burnout is useful as it summarises in a single term various attitudes and feelings observed in some teachers. It does not go, however, much beyond descriptions of attitudes and behaviours. It does not provide explanations for

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[232]That attitude taken by some teachers is the result of an individual appropriation of social and economic determinants.

the causes of the job stress. This limitation may have an advantage, as the concept may be adapted to different social and economic contexts that cause job stress.

As the interviews revealed, teachers do perceive the constant threat posed by job stress[233]. In fact, some teachers, when criticising the attitudes of their colleagues concerning both the profession and their stance towards their professional development, mention exactly those changes in attitude described by Cherniss. The difference is that the teacher does not usually describe his/herself as having changed due to job stress, only how some of their colleagues **have changed.** Projection is an effective psychological defence mechanism that is largely used by the teachers when the work environment is threatening[234]. Without a supportive team to help teachers to deal with their problems and challenges of teaching, the way out is simply to project onto the 'other' qualities, feelings and ideas they cannot accept to have themselves.

Rita, the same teacher who considered herself as 'desperate' when she attended the Basic Course, claims that the majority of the teachers are not truly interested in the course, in professionally developing themselves. They are, in her words, only interested in 'their career', in obtaining 'points to their career'. In a few words, she sees them as not committed to their pupils.

> *I: I don't know if these professional development courses are worthwhile. I honestly don't know if the teachers are interested in improving themselves, if they are interested in working better with their pupils. Today I see that everyone is forgetting the pupils. "To these children? (mocking). It is good enough!". Not everyone... let's not generalise...but a great part of them. I'd say that at least 90% of the teachers are working only for...I'll not claiming I'm God, it is not that!! I just defend my way of working..."*

Teachers respond in a variety of ways to similar conditions of work. An obvious explanation is that teachers differ from one another. People have individual ways of dealing with a given situation. Some of them, like Rita, seem to be somehow overwhelmed by the adversities of primary teaching. She is tired. The daily problems

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[233] Just to remind the reader where are some of the quotes that give us support for making this remark, see, for example: Rita's quote, on page 223 and 224, Ana, on page 225, Maria Alice, on page 235, Maria Aparecida, on page 237.

[234] See note 222.

plus the constant external demands of becoming a more competent teacher seem to be more than she can currently handle. To a certain extent she has given up.

Other teachers feel they may be caught in a wave of pessimism and hopelessness but somehow they have managed to carry on. To gather strength and fight against pessimism and hopelessness to "keep carrying on" is a challenge teachers have to face in primary teaching. Teachers develop some *coping strategies*. The following passage from Maria's interview illustrates one of them. She was asked why FDE has chosen the constructivist approach.

> *"(...) But I think that the FDE, as they are in charge of the professional development, they have other interests, you know ... interests of offering those courses more and more because unfortunately we know only very well ...Actually, I hoped things were not like that, I would like to be completely wrong, I hoped I would have been excessively critical but I think that everything shows that the way the things are happening in this country ...everything makes me believe there are vested economical interests behind everything. What hurts me is that they all know a country is built upon education. There is no point in lowering the inflation rates down to zero, there is no point in that. But nobody cares. I get so upset, so hopeless...But I don't like to think much about it otherwise I' m going to give up as well and I can't, you know ...but it hurts me so much to know that ...the education is the least of their worries. The more ignorant the people are, the better." (Maria)*

Maria has a critical reading of educational matters. And she wanted to present herself as a person who keeps herself well informed on what is going on around her although she does not *like to think much about it...*As she sees it, a sustained critical approach can lead to pessimism and hopelessness.

Maria is a lively person. She tries to keep an enthusiastic approach to her personal and professional life. This is her coping strategy to psychologically survive and to keep carrying on.

To seize all possible 'psychic rewards'[235] is another coping strategy used by many teachers. Those include the pleasure of witnessing their pupils' learning; striking success with some pupils; success with a particular pupil with whom other teachers had previously failed. The following quotation illustrates this strategy.

> "D.: You're telling me about feeling diminished as a professional ...tell me more about it.
> R.: It is something upsetting, you know ...it is bad ...but I don't know.... It is something that I don't know how to decide.... We've got to put up with that, or... because when I get to the classroom and I work with a child and I see her progress I see she is learning and that I'm doing something important I get more happy. But we can't live only on that, can we? That kind of thing that keeps me carrying on. It is so nice to see a child that didn't know anything, that had difficulties and that I reached her and she has learned! I think it's this kind of thing that makes the teacher carry on ...despite the situation we are going through in terms of salary. But I don't know how this is gonna be." (Sonia)

As Sonia says, this strategy has kept some teachers in the profession. For how much longer, it is another question.

The social status and the working conditions of primary teaching as well as the perception teachers have of their career's prospect influence their attitude toward their professional development. Professionally unrewarding working conditions drive away good professionals.

As the main conclusions of this Chapter it is possible now to summarise the answers of our questions, listed in the last paragraph of Chapter Seven.

As we argued in Chapters Six and Seven, the purpose of policy makers and, to a certain extent, that of the monitors while running the Basic Course was to establish a "network of competence". Were the teachers themselves aware of this intention? The analyses on teachers' interviews showed no clear indication that that was the case. Very few teachers seemed to have really thought about the FDE's reasons for carrying out the Basic Course. The teachers' purposes in attending it were more

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[235]This term is used by Lortie (1975).

connected with their teaching practice and immediate needs. From their answers we constructed three teachers' profiles, namely, 'Seeking for immediate answers', 'Seeking to improve their knowledge and teaching practice', and 'Forced by superiors or morally obliged to attend the course'.

As for the teachers' evaluation of the Basic Course, we found that the teachers interviewed evaluated this course positively as well as negatively. We also met some ambivalent evaluations. The main element that teachers take into account to evaluate the Basic Course is the course monitor's performance. If they 'liked' the course monitor the course was considered good, if not it was 'bad' or 'useless'. There were few teachers that commented on the bibliography, the content, and so on.

The 'argument of incompetence' is also present among the teachers, in a particular version. We have found evidence that, in varying degrees, all teachers tried to safeguard their image of competence, both to themselves and to us. They attempted to do that by distinguishing themselves from the 'mass of teachers' and by attributing the 'incompetence' to 'the others'. That is the version of the ''argument of incompetence'', as it appears among the teachers. In this sense, their appropriation of the ''argument of incompetence'' has contributed to divide them rather then fostering a more collective way of work, strengthening their bounds as a professional group that faces similar difficulties and challenges in the teaching practice. As we conclude in the next chapter, the group of teachers is, when compared to the other groups interviewed, the most affected by the negative consequences of the 'argument of incompetence'.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions and Discussion Comments

9.1 Introduction

This work has offered a considerable number of statements, considerations, and interpretations based on a large variety of sources ranging from statistical data to personal interviews, and from newspaper cuttings to the academic literature. Despite every effort made to keep the arguments sharp and clear, the wish to present the evidence for our case in the most thorough manner possible resulted in a long and sometimes complex line of reasoning. Our purpose in this last chapter is to synthesise and to discuss the main conclusions of this work. These will be presented as a series of affirmations that have been grounded and demonstrated in the analyses and discussions contained in the main body of this thesis. A brief summary of the reasoning behind each statement is provided, in which the reader is pointed to the appropriate chapters for more detailed accounts.

As presented in Chapter One "Introduction", our initial analysis of the education programmes implemented by São Paulo SSE indicated that since the early 80's a trend in the education policies was gaining shape: the proposal of offering programmes of TPD as the main strategy to deal with the poor performance of the education system[236]. Our recognition of that trend raised some questions that oriented this work, such as: What are the arguments that have provided the basis for that choice by the São Paulo SSE? Is there a similar trend observed in the educational literature? What is the relation between the path taken by the educational policies and the academic educational literature?

The analysis presented on Chapters Two, Three, and Four have demonstrated that teacher professional development was taken both in the Education Policies and in the education literature as their strategic element to foster teacher competence.

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[236] The referred education programmes are Basic Cycle (CB), Basic Cycle in a Single Shift (CB-JU) and Quality School (EP).

We identified the presence of a particular logic for sustaining the increasing importance attributed to the area of teacher continuing education. That is the simplistic logic of the 'argument of incompetence'. The core of that argument states that the sole explanation for the poor performance of the education system is the incompetence of teachers. Therefore, according to this argument, the only thing to do to improve the quality of the education system is to improve the teachers' competence. This thesis has demonstrated the existence of 'argument of incompetence' in the education policy literature, in significant research statements and the education literature, and on the teachers and other educators' minds.

9.2 The 'argument of incompetence': discussing its appropriations and implications

The next items present a summary of what were our main findings as described in the last three chapters of this work, establishing the relations with the initial chapters and with the main aims of the thesis. We also discuss the implications that follow from our work, as well as some initial ideas on how this work might be developed with further research.

1- The 'argument of incompetence', adapted from the educational literature, was used by the São Paulo SSE to legitimise the mistaken decisions concerning the educational programmes addressed to the primary education developed by the three first elected State Governments (1982-1993).

The analyses conducted in this thesis, both of the educational literature (see Chapter Three) and of the official documents (see Chapter Four), confirmed the presence of a mainstream line of reasoning that we call the 'argument of incompetence'. The 'argument of incompetence' resulted from various debates, studies and works that had the understanding of the causes of the low quality of education as their broader concern. Our analysis on the RBEP (see Chapter Three, sub-section 3.2.1) showed that from the mid 80's until the early 90's a trend took shape: to claim that, due to their inadequate initial education, teachers did not know how to work with the majority of the school clientele, namely the children

from the popular classes. It was the apogee of a convincing but mistaken idea that the teacher's bad initial education and her consequent technical incompetence were the sole causes of the school failure and of the low quality of teaching. "We have a low quality of education *because* we have badly prepared teachers", that was the linear and simplistic logic that we, with the dissonant voices (see Chapter Three, sub-sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.2), questioned. We argue, to the contrary, that the teacher education cannot be taken as the sole cause for the low quality of education. Teacher education is not the only contributing aspect to the teaching practice. To centre the Secretariat of Education action only on the level of teacher education is a mistaken strategy that restricts and rather simplifies our understanding of the aspects related to the teachers' pedagogical work. To improve the teacher pedagogical work serious action is required not only to the level of teacher education. With the 'dissonant voices'(subsection 3.2.2) we suggest a critical approach that proposes that the importance of the concrete conditions of work under which the teacher develops her work is not to be underestimated nor overlooked.

However, that critical approach was not taken by those in charge of defining the educational programmes. The 'dissonant voices' were not considered by those responsible for defining and planing the Educational Policies, as that would mean to take into account other important aspects organically related to the final quality of schooling. It would have required addressing issues such as; to improve the general conditions of work at schools, to rethink teacher initial education, to reformulate the teachers career, to pay decent salaries to those involved with the teaching profession. In other words, the **school** is the entity that should be improved not only the teacher. We have argued that the low quality of education is not a technical problem, in these terms.

It is convenient to recall that in addition to the aspects mentioned above that have not been addressed by policy makers, there are other contextualising issues that have also to be properly taken into account by the Public Policies such as poor health care system, poverty, unemployment, popular habitation, etc.

Our analyses have shown that the professionals in charge of defining and implementing the Educational Policies seem to borrow from the academic world only

the more convenient and politically profitable ideas and analyses, typically those that will produce Government's actions of higher visibility to the general public. The academic debate was then simplified to favour particular forms of more prescriptive and practical proposals. And that pointed to investing in programmes of teacher professional development, a 'remedy for all school ailments' rather than defining educational policies addressed to improve the general conditions of work at schools, to reformulate the teachers career, including issues of salaries.

By attributing the success of the whole enterprise to the teachers' response, the SSE exempts all other parts, including itself, of any possible blame. We reproduce here some quotes used before in Chapter Four to recall the matter to the reader's attention.

> "Dear educator, we have, however, the conviction that the success of all the measures now announced **depends fundamentally on the political commitment, on the leadership and on the professional competence** of those that are, on a day-to-day basis, in charge of our schools, and fighting for the rights and interests of children"(SSE, 1988, pp 4,5 our stress).

Another example appears in a special publication that the SSE, during the implementation of the "Quality School" (Document 03), devoted to the theme of TPD.

> "The success of the São Paulo State Educational Reform – devised to improve the quality of teaching- is subordinated to the existence of modern and permanent mechanisms of professional development of the human resources working at schools. (...) One is conscious that, to succeed, the qualitative change of the state education is, above all, in the educators' hands" (Document 03 pp.2).

2- The 'argument of incompetence' is used by all the participant agents of education. The teachers are, however, among the groups interviewed, those that have most suffered the negative consequences of its perverse logic of concealing the educational reality.

The 'argument of incompetence', with its superficial rationale, is present in the minds of the members of all three groups directly involved in the actions of TPD carried by the SSE. However, its use and repercussion vary between the three

groups involved in TPD, namely policy makers (FDE team), course monitors, and teachers. The FDE team is the group that was more seduced by the *'argument of incompetence'* when compared to the course monitors and the teachers. The teachers are those who are most affected by its negative effects. And the course monitors are the group that seemed to have developed the initial elements to overcome it, if conditions were provided.

The FDE team as a whole are convinced that the main cause for the low quality of the state education is the incompetence of teachers. The team criticise the former activities of TPD carried out by the SSE, in which they were directly involved and consequently responsible. The manager's adhesion to the *'argument of incompetence'* is clearly noticed in her speech: *"I think that it is better to have competent people than to have material conditions and not to have people"*. Therefore, their conceptions about and activities for TPD overestimate not only in respect of the current role but also in the possibilities of TPD in the process of achieving a better quality education. Moreover, other vital elements such as adequate material conditions of work at school level, teacher career, and salary compatible to the responsibility of the teaching profession have been systematically neglected. The team have also been subjected to work with scarce resources and within an environment bound to instabilities due to political interests. Nevertheless, the interviews with the FDE team reveal that they, as a group, tend to minimise, more than the two other groups involved, the importance of elements other than the 'poor teacher education' and their professional incompetence. The *'argument of incompetence'* works for the FDE team as the academic ratification for their idea of 'networking competence', that is to increase the number of teachers that are convinced that to improve the quality of education it is necessary and sufficient to adopt new teaching methods and techniques. The *'argument of incompetence'* has provided them with the rationale to centre all efforts on dealing with the 'incompetence' of teachers.

The four course monitors interviewed agree with the FDE team's strategy of 'networking competence'. They accepted their share of responsibility in that as they had previously done with their own professional development. Their testimony revealed that the course monitors had to invest their free time, energy

and private resources to acquire the status of 'competent teachers'. Their experience in a particular project[237] provided them with some important elements regarding teacher professional development: long-run course, follow-up activities, and a challenging and supportive reference group. That opportunity, as it was experienced by the four course monitors interviewed, engendered a conception of professional development that goes beyond the limited model proposed by the *'argument of incompetence'*. They know, from their own experience, that teacher professional development involves more than changing behaviours, adopting new teaching methods and using innovative techniques. Professional growth is closely tied up with the way teachers develop as individuals and as professionals. Therefore, the course monitors were more conscious than either of the two other groups that any process of change necessarily brings uncomfortable feelings such as anxiety, resistance, loss and uncertainty. Those feelings need to be accepted, understood and, particularly, dealt with. We understand that the course monitors would have paid more attention to these aspects if they themselves had been provided with the required support and supervision by the FDE team, something that did not happen.

The teachers were the group that most suffered the negative effects of the *'argument of incompetence'*. In an environment where the quality of state education and the competence of their professionals, particularly the teacher, have been systematically criticised it has been very tough for all, particularly for those that despite the insufficient conditions of work take their duties seriously, to keep working. The dissemination of the idea of 'teacher's incompetence' - due to the poor teacher initial education - ratified by the mainstream educational literature, reached the schoolteacher. *They were ready to accept that argument, as long as the incompetence was the incompetence of 'the other'*. The school, without an environment provided by a supportive school team, makes it more difficult for the teacher to discharge their responsibility to deal with the difficulties inherent to the work with their pupils. The problems are experienced as personal problems that require personal actions. Those teachers that cannot cope with their own classroom problems are labelled as incompetent.

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[237] We refer to the project 'Literacy Without Failure' discussed in Chapter Six, section 6.2.1 and in Chapter Seven, section 7.2.

As discussed in Chapter Eight, projection is a powerful defence mechanism that may be employed whenever the integrity of the self is threatened. The stressing conditions of work teachers usually have, plus a rationale that identifies the teacher as the 'guilty party' favour the use of the projection to safeguard their self-image as 'good' and 'competent' teachers. However, by projecting the incompetence onto the other teacher, the teacher may feel also 'emptied'. The assurance of being 'competent', as the whole incompetence was projected onto 'the other' may not last long as another difficult situation will probably occur shortly. We understand that by projecting their 'incompetence' onto the other, the teacher also loses her confidence and her autonomy. As the teachers cannot see their 'bad' parts (real or fantasised) they do not exercise their capacity of self-recreation, of reflection, of increasing their possibilities and overcoming their present limits. The pessimism and hopelessness one finds when talking with some teachers may be related to this 'emptiness' we are referring to.

3- Teachers, as qualified professionals, have the right of and the duty to continuously improve themselves. However, the individual plans of activities of TPD should be part of a broader project, at the school level. To care for the quality of teaching should be taken as a collective issue, and not as an individual problem.

The official documents of the 'Quality School', the project partially implemented in the early 1990's (see Chapter Four, sub-section 4.4.2), proposed that the school has to offer conditions to teachers, headteacher and administrative personnel to develop their talents through permanent mechanisms of professional development. The SSE should provide suitable infrastructure and facilities for that to occur. And above all the 'Quality School' had to substantially increase the **school autonomy,** regarding its pedagogical, administrative and financial aspects. A proposal that expects the school's team to decide on substantive aspects of their daily life would mean that they consider them as capable of doing that. The documents state that the SSE should provide conditions of work and payment compatible with the social importance of the teaching profession. The disrespectful and inconsiderate treatment teachers received by the SSE and by the

Governor during their strike showed that those were empty words without a real intention to transform them into concrete actions.

It is then timely to recall Azanha's analysis (see Chapter Three, sub-section 3.1.2).

> *"The very idea of school autonomy, which stimulates the development of pedagogical projects specific to it, **presupposes that the entity to be improved is the school and not just the teacher**. The latter should receive attention as a participant of a school project. Other than that, the individual improvement of a teacher is a personal matter for which the educational Administration can and must create facilitating conditions, but not turn it into a public problem. The public problem is in the school."*
> *(pp. 54, our stress).*

Our analysis has demonstrated that there was a contradiction between the desired main feature of 'Quality School' (an increased pedagogical, administrative and financial autonomy) and the TPD programmes designed to implement it.

The concern with the professional competence of primary teachers is not new. Its origin can be traced back to the enlargement of the Brazilian education system. And that concern, in the initially rare instances when it was transformed into *actions*, represented attempts to improve the professional skills and efficiency of teachers, detached from their school environment (as discussed in Chapter Three, section 3.1).

As we presented also in Chapter Three, this conception of professional development reveals a reductionism that stems from another reductionism - that of the technicist approach to the analysis of school and its problems. As the problems that occur in teaching are exclusively viewed as **technical problems**, the more adequate proposal would be to 'train' teachers in new and modern techniques. The strategies have been basically the same: 'cascade methods' using short courses, talks, conferences and pedagogical meetings.

The analysis made by both international and Brazilian literature of the problems involving teacher professional development is highly monotonous: teachers complain about the courses for not addressing the practical issues; little or no improvement of pupils' performance and of classroom practices; imposition of courses on a top-down

basis, and so on. Our analysis of the literature on the subject (see Chapter Three) and of the interviews with those professionals in charge of TPD activities (see Chapter Six) allowed us to reach a conclusion. All recent attempts of TPD carried out by the São Paulo Secretariats of Education had taken the teachers, **individually and in isolation from their working context**, considering them as incompetent professionals that needed to be better trained. The schools, their social and institutional contexts and the concrete work conditions were not regarded as important elements to be dealt with neither were they taken as aspects to reflect upon. In short, the social and institutional contexts in which the schools are included and the concrete conditions of teaching each school offers were not regarded as elements that provide an important support to the process of change that teachers were expected to undergo.

Alternatively to the traditional approaches of professional development, there are other models that presuppose a decentralised action: the so-called 'school-focused' approach. Some studies in Brazil have pointed in this direction (Patto, 1990; Andaló,1989, and Souza, 1991). It is timely recalling that the 'school focused' approach of TPD, and the proposal of involving all the participants, has the same spirit of taking **the school** as the unit of reflection and intervention, not individual teachers. Regarding the field of teacher professional development our work suggests that a more productive proposal of TPD, never tried so far in Brazil, should take the **school** as an object of work and analysis, as the concrete context within which teachers and students work. It should not focus on individual teachers but on the concrete school practices. It is the school that needs improvement; the action of professional development should focus on the schools, on helping the school team to improve their school. The work with teachers should be part of an broader project – the school project – developed with the participation of all the parts involved in the process of schooling: school staff, students and parents.

That is an initial idea that deserved to be developed into a further research project. What are the necessary conditions for the school team to build their own school project? What should be the nature of a school project? What could be the participation of students? And that of parents? Do their opinions have the same value as that of the school team? What could be the parent's level of influence? Would the

school benefit from external help? If so, what would its nature be? These are only some initial thoughts on the issue that revealed a fruitful and necessary line of research to be further developed.

4- The adoption of programmes of teacher professional development as the main strategy to tackle the low quality of education represents another blunder of the Brazilian Educational Policies.

In Chapter Two, we presented a brief history of the educational policies, at national level, during the previous decades that had direct repercussions for the primary school level. That history described just a part of the mistakes of the Education Policies carried out in Brazil in the last forty years.

The demand for education increased considerably due to the disorganised and unequal economic development across the country, which generated massive internal migration from the rural and poor states of the Northeast to the urban and richer states of the Southeast region (see Chapter Two, sub-section 2.1.1). The expansion of its educational coverage, at both primary and higher education levels increased. That also occurred in a disorganised and uncontrolled way as a small but powerful lobby (from the private education sector) had their interests assured.

In short, in the last forty years the participation of the State with respect to the provision of Higher Institutions has been neglected. The State have accepted and provided all the facilities regarding tax exemptions to the private institutions. The concern with assessment and control of Higher Education institutions is very recent, and it was virtually nonexistent during the phase in which the private sector had its 'boom', during the 70's and 80's. As consequences that impacted on the quality of Primary Education it is possible to mention:

1) The quality of initial teacher education was negatively affected as poorly prepared secondary teachers teach the future primary teachers.
2) The Primary Education is also affected by primary teachers seeking those night and weekend courses either to improve their professional qualifications or to progress in their career.

From the negative consequences pointed out above, we have learned that in fact the initial teacher education, both at secondary level and higher level, needed attention and improvement. But, is the initial teacher education the only (or the main) cause for the low quality of education? Is the teacher education the only (or main) contributing aspect to the concrete teacher pedagogical work? We have reasons, presented in the thesis, to affirm that the answer is "no".

To centre our attention only on the level of teacher education is to restrict and rather simplify any understanding of the key aspects of the teacher's pedagogical work (see Chapters Two and Three). Altering the teaching practice requires attention and action not only on the level of teacher (initial or continuing) education, but also on the concrete conditions under which the teachers develop their work. The latter should not be underestimated or overlooked.

So far as this work is concerned, it is important, for the moment, to remember that with insufficient resources it is quite difficult, if not impossible, to improve the general quality of education. When the State does not provide schools with the necessary resources, namely, suitable buildings, equipment, materials and labs, and well-paid human resources it is unreasonable to expect that most teachers will be able to carry out their duties properly.

Some members of the team interviewed mentioned a certain uneasiness that was observed because the wages paid to the course monitor are much higher than those received by the professionals working in the education network. We understand that such reaction was a sign, not fully understood by the team, that together with the opportunities of professional development it is vital to take care of the improvement of general conditions of work.

We consider it to be incongruent (or a sign of economic short-sightedness) to invest considerable amounts of resources (financial and human) to develop the quality of the teaching force and to deny them good conditions of work, including fair salaries. A more qualified teacher will certainly think about moving to a school that offers more attractive conditions of work. And, regarding salaries and pedagogical support,

the private sector is bound to be the teacher's choice. Then, public money is wasted as investment for the public sector.

Therefore, we conclude that the educational policies carried out between 1982 and 1993 which emphasised programmes to 're-train' teachers without also taking care of the material conditions of schools are a vivid example of another wrong step of the Brazilian Educational Policies.

Appendix Basic Course

(schedules of interviews)

A) Rapport for the interview with the monitor in charge of the Basic course and with the teachers

In the beginning of the interview I informed the interviewee about:

- My research subject: "I am carrying out my PhD studies at the University of London about the teachers in-service education particularly that available for CB teachers and co-ordinators."
- The reasons for choosing her group: The "DE" is convenient in terms of distance from the University where I work. I wanted to observe the classes of a Basic Course within the project "Literacy: theory and practice".
- Confidentiality: I will be the only person that will have access to the interview. No one at the Secretariat of education, at any level, will have access to the interview. I will write a thesis in London using the data and perhaps a paper. The interviewees' real names will be kept only if they wanted otherwise pseudonyms will be used.
- Tape recorder: I would like to tape recorder the interview. That makes my work easier as I do not have to write and pay attention at the same time. It is important also to the accuracy of the data.
- There is no right or wrong answers to the questions and issues we will talk. It is important to me to know their point of view on the matters, so it is important that she/he can talk as freely as possible.
- The interviewee will decide the most convenient time and place to give the interview.

B) Schedule of the interview with the teacher in charge of the Basic Course.

My intention is to take this schedule only as a general guide. The sequence does not have to be followed strictly, and not all the questions have to be fully answered. Extra questions can be also added during the course of the interview.

Initial approach: "As I told you earlier, I am carrying out a research project on the teacher in-service education. I have been observing the classes and now I would like to talk to you about the course you're giving and about some other issues related to the teaching profession."

1) Why did you decide to give this course?
2) Why the FDE is offering this course?
3) Could you tell me about your work in this course?
     What is the aim of this course?
     Who defined the content of the course?
     How is the course organised? (content of classes, teaching approach, references)
     How do you use to work with teachers? (approach)
      Why do you work in this way?
     How are the relationships between the teachers in the course?
     How is the relationship between you and the student-teachers?
4) Have you had difficulties during the course? Of what kind? (concerning her own background, the teachers' background, the teachers' response to the course, and others).
5) Do you have any kind of support for conducting this course? (FDE's team, DE, other)
6) What are the teachers' needs in your point of view? Do you think the other monitors agree with you? Do you think the FDE's team agree?
What do you think the teachers think their needs are?
Do you think this course can be helpful to the teachers? In what way?
7) What have been the teachers' responses to the course?
8) Do you think the course have a model of teacher? What is it? What do you think about it?
9) Tell me how are the teachers that are attending this course?
10) How is the teacher that you expect to have at the end of this course?

Teachers professional development
1) What is the theory that the Basic course is based?
2) Why do you think it was chosen?
3) What is your own opinion on the value of this theory?
4) What do you think is your colleagues' opinion on the value of this theory?
5) What do you think is the teachers' opinion on the value of this theory?
6) I would like to ask you to order these cards in a decreasing order of importance. There are 8 cards with some aspects related to the teachers professional development. There are also two blank cards that you can add other aspects that you may find it is important and they are missing. First organise the cards considering what you believe are the important aspects related to the teachers professional development. (After the teacher fills it I intend to discuss with her the way she organised the aspects

concerning teachers professional development in order to get a better understanding of her point of view in this issue).

7) In your opinion, what is a competent teacher? And a very good teacher?(see whether they identify any difference)

8) What do you think the teachers think is a competent and a very good teacher?

The current Preparation proposal

1) Could you tell me how the Preparation proposal is currently organised?

What are the main aims of it?

What do you think about it?

2) Is it working as it should be? If not, what kind of problem is occurring?

3) In your opinion, how should be a good policy for teachers professional development?

C) Schedule of the interview with teachers attending the Basic Course in 1993

My intention is to take this schedule only as a general guide. The sequence does not have to be followed strictly, and not all the questions have to be fully answered. Extra questions can be also added during the course of the interview.

Initial approach: "As I told you earlier, I am carrying out a research project on teacher in-service education, particularly for CB teachers and co-ordinators. It is very important to me to know what the teachers think about the courses they have been offered as part of their professional development. So, I would like to talk to you about this course that you are attending: What do you think about it, why are you attending it and whatever you think is important to mention about it."

Information about the course
1) How did you know about this course? (The source of information)
2) What is the information you receive about it? (The accuracy of the information)
Motives for attending the course and expectations from it.
1) Why are you attending this course? What did you expect from it? What do you think the other teachers expect from the course?
2) Did you get what you expected? To what extent?
3) In your opinion, why the FDE is offering this course?
4) What are your needs, as a teacher? What are the other teachers' needs? What do you think the monitors think are the teachers' needs?
5) Do you think they have a model of teacher they want to set? What is it?
6) How is the teacher that the monitor expects to have at the end of this course?
7) How is the teacher that the monitor thinks she will have at the end of this course?
8) In your opinion, how will be the teacher at the end of the course?

Evaluation on the course
1) Let's talk about the course itself, how is it going?
- The content (suitability of the issues addressed during the course)
- The classes (balance between theoretical and practical issues)
- References (quality of the papers, suitability of the language)
- Method of teaching, approach
- Relationships among the monitor and the teachers, and among teachers themselves.
- The monitor's competence (Do you think the monitor has had any difficulties in running this course? What kind?)
2) Do you think this course can be helpful to you? In what way? Do you think the course can be helpful to the other teachers? In what way?
3) Do you think your colleagues agree with you on your evaluation? In what aspects?

Teachers professional development
1) What do you think is the theory adopted by the people that are running this course?
2) Why do you think they have chosen it?
3) What is your own opinion on the value of this theory?
4) What do you think is your colleagues' opinion on the value of this theory?
5) I would like to ask you to order these cards in a decreasing order of importance. There are 8 cards with some aspects related to the teachers professional development. There are also two blank cards that you can add other aspects that you may find it is

important and they are missing. First organise the cards considering what you believe are the important aspects related to the teachers professional development. (After the teacher fills it I intend to discuss with her the way she organised the aspects concerning teachers professional development in order to get a better understanding of her point of view in this issue).

6) In your opinion, what is a competent teacher? And a very good teacher?

7) What do you think the people running this course think is a competent teacher and a very good teacher?

Her experience on the CB Programme

1) As this course is mainly addressed for teachers and co-ordinators working in the CB, I would like to talk to you about the CB programme. What do you think about the CB proposal?

-her comprehension on the proposal (aims of CB, mechanisms and organisations associated with the CB, and the problems she identifies with the CB)

- her comprehension and evaluation on the pedagogical proposal

- the kind of support she has had (or the lack of support) to implement the CB programme from: colleagues; the CB co-ordinator; the DE's staff; individual studies or others.

D) Schedule of the interviews with the teachers and CB co-ordinators that attended the Basic Course in 1992.

My intention is to take this schedule only as a general guide. The sequence does not have to be followed strictly, and not all the questions have to be fully answered. Extra questions can be also added during the course of the interview.

Initial approach: "I am carrying out a research project on teachers in-service education available particularly for CB teachers and co-ordinators. It is very important to me to know what the teachers think about the courses they have been offered as part of their professional development. So, I would like to talk to you about the Basic Course you attended last year: why did you choose it and how was it."

Information about the course
1) How did you know about this course? (The source of information)
2) What is the information you receive about it? (The accuracy of the information)

Motives for attending the course and expectations from it.
1) Why did you attend that course? What did you expect from it? What do you think the other teachers expected from the course?
2) Did you get what you expected? In what extent?
3) In your opinion, why the FDE is offering this course?
4)What are your needs, as a teacher? What are the other teachers' needs? What do you think the monitor think are the teachers' needs?
5) Do you think they have a model of teacher they want to set? What is it? 5) How is the teacher that the monitor expected to have at the end of this course?
How is the teacher that the monitor thinks she had at the end of this course?

Evaluation on the course
1) What is your evaluation on:
- The content (suitability of the issues addressed during the course)
- The classes (balance between theoretical and practical issues)
- References (quality of the papers, suitability of the language)
- Method of teaching, approach
- Relationships among the monitor and the teachers, and among teachers themselves.
- the monitor's competence (Do you think the monitor has had any difficulties in running this course? What kind?)
2) Do you think this course can be helpful to you? In what way? Do you think the course can be helpful to the other teachers? In what way?
3) Do you think your colleagues agree with you on your evaluation? In what aspects?

Impact of the course
Do you think that course proved to be useful for you? If so, in what aspects? If not, Why?
Did you have any kind of follow up after the course? Do you think it is necessary to have?
Do you think you have changed your teaching approach to literacy? In what sense? Could you give me examples?

Teachers professional development

1) What do you think is the theory adopted by the people that are running this course?

2) Why do you think they have chosen it?

3) Do you think your colleagues agree with you about the FDE staff's motives for choosing this theory?

4) What is your own opinion on the value of this theory?

5) What do you think is your colleagues' opinion on the value of this theory?

6) I would like to ask you to order these cards in a decreasing order of importance. There are 8 cards with some aspects related to the teachers professional development. There are also two blank cards that you can add other aspects that you may find it is important and they are missing. First organise the cards considering what you believe are the important aspects related to the teachers professional development. (After the teacher fills it I intend to discuss with her the way she organised the aspects concerning teachers professional development in order to get a better understanding of her point of view in this issue).

7) In your opinion, what is a competent teacher? And a very good teacher?

8) What do you think the people running this course think is a competent teacher and a very good teacher?

Her experience on the CB Programme

1) As this course is mainly addressed for teachers and co-ordinators working in the CB, I would like to talk to you about the CB programme. What do you think about the CB proposal?

-her comprehension on the proposal (aims of CB, mechanisms and organisations associated with the CB, and the problems she identifies with the CB)

- her comprehension and evaluation on the pedagogical proposal

- the kind of support she has had (or the lack of support) to implement the CB programme from: colleagues; the CB co-ordinator; the DE's staff; individual studies or others.

In your opinion, how should be developed a policy for teachers professional development.

Appendix List of Papers of the "Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos" (REBEP)

Reference	Title	Year of Publication	Author (s)
Vol. 65(149): 191-192 jan/ abr Note of Research	Formação do professor das quatro primeiras séries do 1º grau: sua evolução histórica e articulações com as mudanças ocorridas na escola elementar	1984	Warde, M. and Boulos, Y.
Vol.65(151):523-537 set/dez Paper	Alfabetização: um estudo sobre professores das camadas populares	1984	Kramer, S. André. M.
Vol.65(158): 65-97 jan/abr Paper	"Um mergulho na alfabetização (ou há muito o que revelar sobre o cotidiano da escola)	1987	Kramer, S. Pereira, A.B.;Oswald, M.L.
Vol. 68(160): 524-59 set/dez Paper	Análise das práticas de formação do educador.: especialistas e professores.	1987	Fávero, M L.
Vol. 68(160):701-704 Note of research	Novos rumos da licenciatura	1987	Candau, V. (cood) and cols.
Vol. 68 (160):710-712 Notes of PhD and MPhil thesis	"Educação permanente e Recursos humanos : fatores de melhoria da qualidade de ensino numa proposta de escola aberta, em Curitiba	1987	Brandt Santos, T.
Vol. 70 (165):279-92 Maio/ago Note of Research	"O cotidiano da escola normal a comunicação de um novo saber e um novo fazer"	1989	André, M and cols.
Vol. 70 (165): 189-207 Maio/ago Paper	Melhoria da qualidade do ensino: o desafio da formação de professores em serviço	1989	Kramer, S.
Vol. 71(167): 32-5 Jan/abr Paper	"Estilos de desempenho de professoras da Primeira série e seus efeitos sobre a aprendizagem da leitura"	1990	Buarque, L. L...
Vol. 72(172): 318-334 Set/dez Paper	Problemas e alternativas no campo da formação de professores.	1991	Santos, L. L.o
Vol. 74(176) : 225-30 Jan/abr	"A Formação do professor para o ensino de 1º e 2º graus	1993	Berger, M. A. and Berger. M L.S. R.

Research Notes	em Sergipe.		
Vol. 74(176): 187-90 Jan/abr Research Notes	"O estágio como práxis na formação do professor: um estudo sobre o estágio nos cursos de magistério de 2° grau desenvolvidos nos CEFAM.	1993	Pimenta, S. G.
Vol. 74(177):279-308 maio/ago Paper	"Formação de professores: racionalidades em disputa."	1993	Mazzotti,T.B.
Vol. 75(179/180/181):33-63 Jan/dez Paper	Educação em serviço para o professor: dimensões de sua estrutura operacional	1995	Pereira, R. C.
v. 76(182/183): 98- 116 Jan/ago Paper	"Etnografia crítica em sala de aula: o professor pesquisador e o pesquisador professor em colaboração	1995	Mattos, C. L.G.
Vol. 76(182/183): 327-359 Jan/ago Research Notes	"Educação em serviço para o professor de CA a 4ª série do município do Rio de Janeiro: realidade e expectativas dos participantes	1995	Pereira, R. C.
Vol. 76(182/183): 117-138, Jan/ago Paper	"Qualidade total na Formação profissional: do texto ao contexto	1995	Franco. M. L. P. B.

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Appendix Police Violence

a de choque espancou e prendeu professores que estavam na Praça da República em

Appendix Clippings

Professores do Estado podem parar aulas amanhã

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FERNANDO ROSSETTI
Da Reportagem Local

Professores estaduais de São Paulo iniciam amanhã a segunda greve do ano, desta vez com prazo indeterminado. A decisão ocorreu sexta-feira passada, em assembléia que apoiou a deliberação de 80 das 85 reuniões setoriais no Estado. A rede estadual tem 6 milhões de estudantes e 220 mil docentes.

Um professor com formação universitária recebeu este mês CR$ 16,7 mil para dar 40 horas de aula por semana. O piso é de CR$ 6,9 mil, por 20 horas — o mais baixo dos governos Fleury e Quércia, segundo a Apeoesp (Sindicato dos Professores do Ensino Oficial do Estado).

Pelos dados do sindicato, os professores recebem hoje 34,8% do valor do salário de março de 1987 (usando como deflator o ICV do Dieese). De março de 1979, quando Paulo Maluf assumiu o governo do Estado, restou 14,7% do salário.

"O governo está pagando 48% a menos do que ele mesmo prometeu", diz o presidente da Apeoesp, Roberto Felício, 41, sobre a política salarial que o governador Luiz Antonio Fleury Filho iniciou em setembro (leia texto ao lado). "É são chamado de acordo a imposição dessa política salarial", acrescenta.
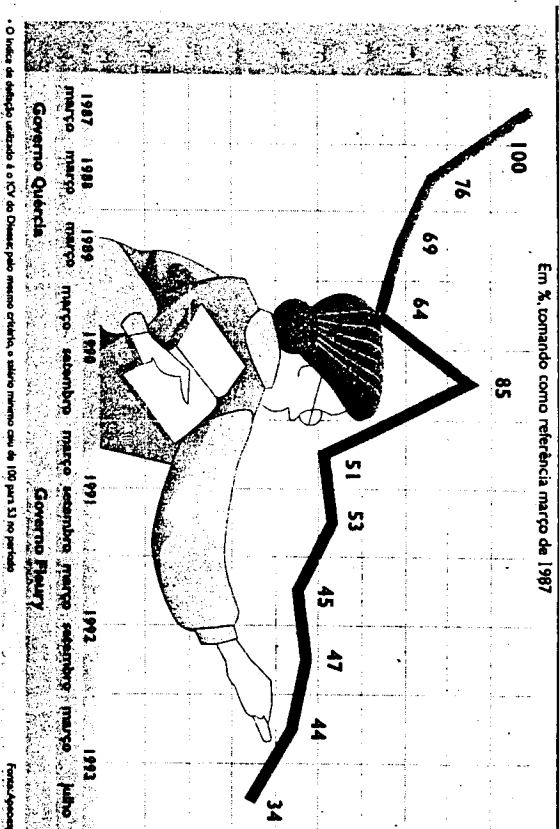

GREVE NA REDE DE SP

• Quem são: 220 mil professores de 1º e 2º graus da rede estadual

• Sindicato: Apeoesp (Sindicato dos Professores do Ensino Oficial do Estado de São Paulo), filiada à CUT

• Decisão: em assembléia sexta-feira passada, dia 13, com cerca de 10 mil docentes; segundo a Apeoesp (não há estimativa do governo)

• Quando param: amanhã

• Reivindicação: política salarial que reponha, mês a mês, a inflação; reajuste de 187%, para repor perdas desde o governo Quércia (1987)

• Contra-proposta: 10,25% de aumento este mês; reposição, em setembro, das perdas desde março

• Piso salarial: CR$ 6,9 mil, por 20 horas-aula semanais, em julho

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A QUEDA DOS SALÁRIOS

Em %, tomando como referência março de 1987

Editoria de Arte/Folha Imagem

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993
março	março	março	setembro março	setembro março	setembro março	julho
Governo Quércia			Governo Fleury			

• O índice de deflação utilizado é o ICV do Dieese pelo mesmo critério, o salário mínimo cai de 100 para 53 no período

Fonte: Apeoesp

Fleury diz que não há motivo para o movimento

Da Reportagem Local

O governador Luiz Antonio Fleury Filho afirmou ontem que não há motivo para a paralisação dos professores. "Greve para quê, se já existe um acordo?", disse, referindo-se ao compromisso que assumiu em setembro passado de que a cada seis meses reporia as perdas salariais do período.

"Os prejudicados serão os próprios professores que aderirem ao movimento. Todos sabem muito bem que eu não negocio com quem entra em greve", acrescentou o governador, repetindo a frase que usou durante os 25 dias de greve do segundo semestre de 1992, após o qual o governo divulgou qual seria sua política para os docentes: aumento mensal de 10,25% acima do reajuste geral do funcionalismo, além da reposição semestral.

O secretário da Educação, Fernando Morais, não quis comentar a greve. Disse, pel assessoria de imprensa, que aguardará a reunião de política salarial do governo, que ainda não foi marcada.

A Udemo (Sindicato dos Especialistas de Educação do Magistério Oficial), que reúne diretores das 6.300 escolas estaduais, "avaliou que não há possibilidade de greve neste momento", segundo o presidente Roberto Torres Leme, 55. "Vamos tentar ter uma reunião com o governo. Se nada acontecer até o final da semana que vem faremos outra reunião para avaliar a situação", disse.

"Eu acho que esta greve vai pegar", afirmou Elisa Toneto, 45, do Movimento Pró-Educação, que reúne pais e mães de alunos. "Um professor não merece ganhar só CR$ 14 mil por mês", disse. Mas, Elisa diz que não concorda

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Folha Imagem

O governador Luiz Antonio Fleury Filho

« *Greve para quê, se já existe um acordo? Todos sabem muito bem que eu não*

Folha/Apeoesp

O presidente da Apeoesp, Roberto Felício

« *O governo está chamando de acordo a imposição de uma política salarial*

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Confronto entre professores e polícia fere 8 em São Paulo

SÃO PAULO — Professores estaduais em greve e a tropa de choque da Polícia Militar entraram em confronto ontem à tarde, nas proximidades do Palácio dos Bandeirantes, quando os manifestantes tentavam se aproximar da sede do governo. Houve pedradas, golpes de cassetete, jatos de água e bombas de gás lacrimogênio. O tumulto terminou com seis professores e três policiais militares feridos. O professor Jorge Menezes foi preso. Segundo a PM, havia cerca de 8 mil professores na manifestação. A Associação de Professores do Estado (Apeoesp) calculou em 30 mil.

Os professores convocaram uma assembléia em frente à sede do governo estadual, mas o governador Luiz Antônio Fleury Filho proibiu a manifestação no local. Desde cedo, 500 policiais militares da tropa de choque e cavalaria bloquearam o acesso ao palácio. No início da tarde o clima era tenso. Em greve há nove dias, os professores reivindicam uma política salarial, a reposição de 187% das perdas acumuladas desde o governo Orestes Quércia, além do piso de CR$ 31,3 mil (valor de julho). O governo ofereceu reajuste de 129%.

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Poder aquisitivo de professor cai 88% em 30 anos

Em 1963, o salário para docente nível 3 equivalia a CR$ 98,5 mil; hoje é de CR$ 11,9 mil

ROSA LUIZA BAPTISTELLA
e SÉRGIO HENRIQUE POMPEU

Nos últimos 30 anos, os professores da rede paulista de ensino, em greve há 40 dias, perderam 88% do seu poder de compra. Em valores atuais, o salário do profissional de nível universitário, por jornada de 20 horas semanais, era de CR$ 98,5 mil em março de 1963. Caiu, contudo, para CR$ 11,9 mil em agosto deste ano, segundo cálculos de técnicos do sindicato dos professores (Apeoesp).

A paralisação do magistério paulista acontece no momento em que o debate sobre a qualidade do ensino público oferecido no País deixou de ser uma preocupação apenas da comunidade diretamente interessada — como pais, alunos e professores — e estrangulamento do processo de desenvolvimento econômico brasileiro está diretamente ligado à baixa qualidade do ensino, acredita o consultor de empresas Oscar Motomura. "Para a economia do País dar um salto, precisamos estar formando uma massa crítica de talentos muito superior à atual."

Na base do raciocínio desenvolvido por Motomura estão exemplos como o dos chamados "tigres asiáticos", que garantiram seu crescimento econômico a um investimento maciço em educação. A Coréia do Sul, por exemplo, por meio de planos setoriais quinquenais criados a partir de 1960, conseguiu reduzir drasticamente o analfabetismo, e atingiu, na década passada, um dos mais altos índices mundiais de formação de pessoal qualificado — a "massa crítica" a que se referiu Motomura — do mundo.

Talentos — A Coréia possui 2 mil pesquisadores para cada milhão de habitantes; no Brasil esse número cai para 400 por milhão. "O grupo industrial Dae Woo, um dos maiores do país, previa contratar, apenas em 1990, mil PhDs", conta Motomura.

Fonte: Apeoesp

Remuneração em baixa
Salário dos professores nos últimos 30 anos, em valores atuais, e a sua variação — em CR$

Professor 1 — Sem curso superior
Professor 3 — Com formação universitária
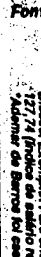
tuições de pesquisa do Brasil (1.237).

As empresas brasileiras estão descobrindo que investir em treinamento de mão-de-obra não compensa a perda de eficiência causada por uma educação básica de má qualidade. "As mudanças tecnológicas, no processo de produção obrigaram as empresas a contribuir cada vez mais com seus talentos do que com recursos naturais", diz a coordenadora do grupo de educação do Pensamento Nacional das Bases Empresariais (PNBE), Célia Tilkian. "Mas é muito difícil desenvolver num adulto, por exemplo, a capacidade de utilizar o raciocínio formal."

O PNBE patrocinou um projeto que estimula empresários a "adotar" escolas; e é a única maneira de debelar a crise pela qual passa o País, afirma Célia.

A presidente do Movimento Pró-

educação; Elisa Toreto, explande o interesse dos empresários em assumir "uma cota de responsabilidade" na questão do ensino. "As crianças que estudam na rede pública podem se tornar uma massa de semi-analfabetos", afirma Elisa. "Como empregar mais tarde esse trabalhador que será incapaz de entender manuais de instrução para operação de máquinas?"

Elisa coloca em xeque o papel do professor no impasse a que chegou a educação no País. O Pró-Educação levou ao governo do Estado uma pauta de reivindicações para elevar o nível do ensino oferecido na rede pública. Entre os itens da pauta estão o fim da estabilidade dos servidores e a revisão do Estatuto do Magistério.

Educação (que reúne cerca de 2 mil pais de alunos de escolas públicas).

Para ela, a Secretaria da Educação precisa de uma reforma, que elimine "bolsões de emprego". Elisa é contra a greve do magistério, que a seu ver só prejudica os alunos. "A reposição dos dias parados é uma farsa, serve apenas para que os professores diminuam as faltas do livro de ponto."

A greve, iniciada em 18 de agosto, tem o adesão de 90% dos professores da rede, segundo a Apeoesp. Cerca de 6,8 milhões de estudantes estão sem aula. "Depois que a greve terminar, um mês de duração, é quase impossível impedir prejuízos ao ano letivo", admite a vice-presidente da Apeoesp, Enside Moreira Lima.
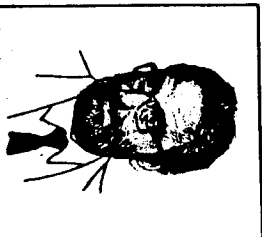
IVAN VALENTE

A greve e a autoridade

Parece inegável que, no conjunto da nossa "dívida social", a realidade dramática da escola pública, e dos professores do ensino oficial em especial, ocupa lugar central. Em vista disso, a chamada questão educacional não deveria ser objeto de tergiversação por nossos governantes.

No entanto, infelizmente, é a isso que temos assistido. A postura do governo estadual é exemplar nesse sentido. Foi eleito prometendo fazer da educação uma prioridade. Elaborou, em meio a intenso foguetório, o projeto da "Escola Padrão". Tem gasto bastante em publicidade para tentar induzir a população a crer que esse projeto é bem-sucedido e que o Executivo de fato está cumprindo sua jura eleitoral.

Ora, um dos aspectos mais questionáveis do projeto educacional posto em prática pela administração Fleury é precisamente o de não par-

O governo foi incapaz até de sustentar no cargo o secretário de Educação

drão salarial dos docentes como pedra angular de sua política. Em vez de trabalhar para superar o arrocho salarial a que está submetida a sociedade, porque, em vez de aplaudir, o povo tem condenado a retomada dos métodos do Carandiru e a brutal repressão que lançou sobre os professores no Palácio dos Bandeirantes.

Como resultado dessa política, que faz demagogia com a educação e insiste em brigar com a realidade, temos o fortalecimento do movimento grevista. Movimento que cresce e, hoje, incorpora os especialistas e os diretores, passando por cima da divisão que as políticas oficiais teimam em tentar cristalizar no interior do magistério.

O governo, porém, posta-se atrás das últimas cortinas de fumaça: em sua gestão, os professores não teriam perda e o Tesouro estadual está com arrecadação em baixa.

Num quadro de inflação superior a 30% ao mês, a tese da ausência de perda salarial, além de perversa, é impotente, porque não enfraquece-

que não vai além de 1,5 salário mínimo!

A atual greve do magistério, todavia, fez ruir como um castelo de cartas o marketing da política educacional do governo. O fiasco dessa política fica patente inclusive no fato de que ela foi incapaz de sustentar no cargo até mesmo o secretário de Educação, Fernando Morales.

Os equívocos da conduta governamental diante da greve saltam à vista. Primeiro, porque é ridículo se estar cuidar na máxima autoritária: "Não negocio com grevista" — dizer que não negocia com grevista, quando o não negocia com grevista, quando o

fismavelmente que o governo não negociou verdadeiramente, antes de a greve eclodir. Em segundo lugar, não adianta o governador flertar com os segmentos mais retrógrados da sociedade, porque, em vez de aplaudir, o povo tem condenado a ção da Cosipa.

Se o governo quiser demonstrar que não está brincando com o destino de alunos e professores, terá de mudar de conduta. Descambará para a mais uma grave demonstração de incúria e de irresponsabilidade social, se pretender humilhar os professores, jogando no cansaço do movimento. O resultado de uma prática dessa natureza será um desastre em dois sentidos: para os "estrategistas oficiais", porque o movimento docente está dando demonstração de que não sucumbirá a manobras desse tipo; e para a sociedade, porque teríamos, com isso, uma manifestação explícita da intenção governamental de prosseguir na linha de liquidação completa da escola pública, o que provocaria a justa indignação e condenação definitiva desta administração pelo povo do nosso Estado.

te ante a ausência de prioridade orçamentária para a área educacional e os generosos perdões e parcelamentos de dívida de ICMS de empresários, inclusive aos que se envolveram na negociata da privatiza-

■ *Ivan Valente, deputado estadual (PT-SP), é membro da Comissão de Educação*

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Glossary

A

Association of teachers of São Paulo

In Portuguese: *Associação dos Professores do Estado de São Paulo*

B

Basic Course monitor

The person in charge of the Basic Course. The Basic Course was part of the "Literacy: Theory and Practice" project.

Basic Cycle (CB)

'*Ciclo Básico*' – Educational programme of Basic Education that joined the 1st and 2nd grades in a single cycle of two years.

Basic Cycle in Single Shift (CB-JU)

'*Ciclo Básico em Jornada Única.* Educational Programme that modified the CB by increasing the daily time of attendance.

Basic Education

'Ensino Fundamental'. Comprises the first eight years of compulsory education, catering for children from seven to fourteen years old.

Brazilian Review of Pedagogical Studies (RBEP)

In Portuguese: 'Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos'

C

CENP

Stands for ' Coordenadoria de Ensino e Normas Pedagógicas' – Bureau for Studies and Pedagogical Norms.

CB programme

The CB (Basic Cycle) programme was implemented in 1982 in São Paulo state schools. The main change introduced was that the existing first and second grades were re-constituted into a **cycle of two years.** Its purpose was to assure the continuity of the literacy process.

CB-JU programme

The CB-JU (Basic Cycle in a Single work shift for teachers and pupils of Basic Cycle), launched in 1988, introduced some changes in the CB programme: it increased the daily attendance by the pupils to approximately 6 hours. It settled the CB teacher – in a full-time basis contract (40 hours weekly journey) – in a single school

	with a single group. The teachers' extra-class time should be used for their continuing professional development.
CB teacher	A teacher that works with the CB groups.
CB coordinator	A teacher that holds a co-ordination position with CB teachers.
Constructivism	In Portuguese: Construtivismo. The term became well known in Brazil from the 1980s after the work of Emília Ferreiro, a former student and collaborator of Jean Piaget. 'Constructivism' was a word initially employed by Piaget. Constructivism opposes empiricist and rationalistic epistemological approaches, proposing that the development of intelligence, and therefore the acquisition of knowledge, is governed by the interactions of the subject with his/her environment. The child is thus understood as the agent of her/his own learning in a continuous, but not linear, process of balancing new and old structures. According to this theory knowledge does not evolve by accumulation but by reorganisation.
Course monitors (or simply monitors)	Teachers that were in charge of the courses of TPD within the project "Literacy: Theory and Practice".

D

District officer	In Portuguese: Delegado de ensino
DE	In Portuguese: Delegacia de Ensino. A possible translation would be "School District". It involves a cluster of schools in the same geographical area of the city.

E

Education Census	In Portuguese: Censo Escolar

F

Foundation for the Development of Education – FDE-	In Portuguese: Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação

H

HTP	Stands for Pedagogical work time. In Portuguese: Hora de trabalho pedagógico.

I

IEB project	Innovation in the Basic Education. In Portuguese: Inovações no Ensino Básico
INEP (National Institute of Pedagogical Studies)	In Portuguese, "Instituto Nacional de Estudos Pedagógicos

L

Literacy: Theory and practice Project	In Portuguese: Projeto Alfabetização: teoria e prática. It was a TPD project carried out by FDE in the early 90's.
Literacy Without Failure project	In Portuguese: Projeto alfabetização sem fracasso. It was a TPD project carried out in the late 80's in a partnership between the CENP and Telma Waiz. The project started in 1988 with a selected group of only sixty teachers. By 1990 around three hundred educators were involved in the project. The candidates were selected by Telma Waiz and CENP's team.

M

Magistério	The four-year secondary-level course that prepares teachers for work at Primary Schools.

O

OT	The 'OTs' are technical orientation meetings held at the intermediate level institution of the SSE. The pedagogical assistant meets fortnightly the CB coordinators. It should be an activity of TPD.

P

Preparation Programme	In Portuguese: Programa de Capacitação. It was a large programme of professional development carried out by the São Paulo SSE.
Pedagogical assistant	In Portuguese: assistente pedagógico. The position involved working with coordinator teachers giving pedagogical orientations and supporting them; it may include to organise short courses and

seminars.

Project (or the Project)	Refers to the project "Literacy: theory and practice", carried out between 1991 and 1993. It was the chief project developed by the team in charge of developing and implementing activities of professional development for first and second grade primary teachers.

Q

Quality School (EP)	In Portuguese: Escola Padrão. It was an educational programme developed between 1991 and 1994.

R

RBEP- Brazilian Review of Pedagogical Studies	In Portuguese: Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos

S

State basic education network (or education network)	In Portuguese: Rede pública de educação básica. Comprises all the schools run by the state and the municipalities.
SSE	Stands for State Secretariat for Education.

T

Team (or the team)	Refers to the team in charge of the project "Literacy: theory and practice." That project was carried out by the São Paulo State Secretariat for Education from 1991 to 1993.
TPD	Stands for Teacher Professional Development.

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