

Objectification and subjectification in teacher training courses curriculum: revisiting the category *teaching knowledge*

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ABSTRACT

This text aims to revisit the notion of “teacher knowledge” from post-foundational social and political theory. It is part of a movement to unfold the dialogue with academic production — accumulated over two decades in the Brazilian educational field — which operates with this expression, offering another bid in disputes over its definition. It is an intellectual exercise that evidences and explores the effects of choosing the privileged theoretical approach in the analysis of matters concerning the professional teaching culture. The text is organized around two axes of reflection and interpretation corresponding to the processes of objectification and subjectivation that are articulated in the structuring of teaching degree curriculum. The essay lists theoretical challenges and research clues that contribute to reaffirming the “teacher knowledge” category as a powerful reading key to understanding these processes.

KEYWORDS

teacher knowledge; teaching degree curriculum; post-foundational theory.

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OBJETIVAÇÃO E SUBJETIVAÇÃO NOS CURRÍCULOS DE LICENCIATURAS: REVISITANDO A CATEGORIA SABER DOCENTE

RESUMO

Este texto tem por escopo visitar a noção de “saber docente” a partir de teorizações sociais e políticas pós-fundacionais. Ele se inscreve em um movimento de abertura para o diálogo com a produção acadêmica — acumulada há mais de duas décadas no campo educacional brasileiro — que opera com essa expressão, oferecendo um lance a mais nas disputas pela sua definição. Trata-se de um exercício intelectual que evidencia e explora os efeitos da escolha das lentes teóricas privilegiadas na análise das questões relacionadas à cultura profissional docente. O texto está organizado em torno de dois eixos de reflexão e de interpretação correspondentes aos processos de objetivação e de subjetivação que se apresentam de forma articulada na estruturação dos currículos de licenciatura. O ensaio aponta desafios teóricos e pistas de investigação que contribuem para reafirmar a categoria “saber docente” como uma chave de leitura potente para a compreensão dos processos em foco.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

saber docente; currículo de licenciatura; pós-fundacionismo.

OBJETIVACIÓN Y LA SUBJETIVACIÓN EN LOS PLANES DE ESTUDIO DE LICENCIATURA: REVIENDO LA CATEGORÍA SABER DOCENTE

RESUMEN

Este texto tiene como propósito rever la noción de “saber docente” a partir de teorizaciones sociales y políticas posfundacionales. Éste se inserta en un movimiento de apertura para el diálogo con la producción académica — acumulada desde hace más de dos décadas en el campo educativo brasileño — que opera con esta expresión, ofreciendo una jugada adicional a las disputas por su definición. Se trata de un ejercicio intelectual que pone de manifiesto y explora los efectos de la selección de las lentes teóricas privilegiadas en el análisis de los aspectos relacionados con la cultura profesional docente. El texto se organiza en torno a dos ejes de reflexión y de interpretación correspondientes a los procesos de objetivación y subjetivación que se presentan en forma articulada en la estructuración de los planes de estudio de licenciatura. El ensayo señala los desafíos teóricos y vías de investigación que contribuyen a reafirmar la categoría “saber docente” como una clave de lectura potente para la comprensión de los procesos en foco.

PALABRAS CLAVE

saber docente; plan de estudio de licenciatura; posfundacionalismo.

I believe in the power of words, in the strengths of words, I believe we build things with words and, also, that words can do things to us. Words determine our thoughts because we don't think with thoughts, but with words, we don't think out of our alleged geniality or intelligence, but from our words. And to think is not only to "reason" or "calculate" or "argue", like it is taught to us sometimes, but it is moreover to give meaning to what we are and to what happens to us. (Larossa, 2002, p. 21)

This text¹ has by scope revisiting the category of *teaching knowledge* from the perspective of social and political theories inside the contemporary epistemological movements that drift apart from essentialist and/or determinist approaches. It addresses an adjustment of the theoretical lenses used to interpret and analyze the educational field, in particular the matters regarding teaching professional culture. Revisiting this category doesn't imply, however, working with the idea that there could have been a better or more correct definition for it than the ones already produced so far. Here, it means to start a dialogue with the production about this theme that has been accumulating over more than two decades in the Brazilian teaching field, another bet in the fight for its definition. The choice for this entry point in the educational debate about initial teaching training has many justifications.

The first paragraph addresses the acknowledgement of the fact that the effects of the political and epistemological paradigmatic crises in the field of social sciences and, more recently, of the radicalization of the criticism about the essentialist perspectives in the reading of the world, left indelible marks in the educational field. These marks make themselves present in the very definition of the terms used like key-reading terms in this area, such as *educational reality*, *knowledge*, *teaching*, *knowledge*, *school*, *curriculum*, among others. In previous works, I have bet (Gabriel, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016; Gabriel and Ferreira, 2012; Gabriel and Castro, 2013) on working with these terms "*under erasure*" (Hall, 2000). This implies acknowledging that, even though they can carry residues of theoretical perspectives that can be target of debate, these are words that we need to count on and use in our analyses. What is at stake is to find a theoretical way out so that we can continue thinking with these words without reassurance approaches from which we want to distance ourselves. One of the possible and available ways out in the educational field is the post-foundational discursive approach (Laclau and Mouffe, 2004; Laclau, 1990, 2005; Marchart, 2009; Retamozo, 2009, 2011, 2012) whose contributions are present throughout this text.

The second reason brings us back to the place that has been attributed to teaching and to curriculum renewals in teaching training courses inside educational and political debates. Sometimes held responsible for everything that is wrong in the educational system, sometimes seen as the victim of an unfair social order, teaching has been object of reflection and polemic debates that mobilize its multiple

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senses according to different political interests at stake. Participating in disputes for the definition of the term “teaching” implies, in the academic perspective here privileged, investing in discursive mechanisms that can contribute to hegemonize and universalize a particular meaning of it. Academic research and writing is one of these mechanisms. In this way, this approach is a form of taking a stand in these fights. Revisiting the category of analysis “teaching knowledge”, as proposed here, represents the acknowledgement of the singularity of this profession and its ramifications and to think about the teaching curriculum while considering politics. This singularity that, far from being a consensus, can be seen as one of the elements activated to draw the border or as the cut line of *what is/is being* and of *what is not/ is not being* nominated as teaching and/or initial teaching training.

The third and last justification encompasses the very heuristic potentiality of the expression *teaching knowledge* to reflect about the processes of objectification and subjectification present in teaching curricula, here understood as the time-space of structuring of an organized discursive order in the middle of the stratification and hierarchization of knowledges. Interests me, more particularly, to focus on each of the two terms that compose this expression, the mechanisms that condensate the disputes that involve both the individuals positioned in the place of teaching and the knowledge/content² considered valid to be taught in contexts of initial elementary school teacher training. After all, what knowledge should be deployed in teaching curriculum, that is, in the curriculum that supports the professional practice of teaching? Considering

- that becoming a teacher is not a process that depends exclusively on the years attending teacher training courses;
- that this profession assumes the acquisition of a singular knowledge produced by the deployment of processes of permanent and temporary objectification; and
- that entering in the professional culture of teaching assumes stabilities and displacements of meanings of this craft, in which meaning of the category *teaching knowledge* is interesting for us to invest from the perspective of researchers and trainers of teachers in the sphere of the teacher training courses?

Studying teachers’ knowledge are part of a broader movement of valorization and professionalization of teaching that has been developing since the 1980’s, in particular in Anglo-Saxon countries. These studies had great repercussion in Brazil, from the following decade on, after the publishing in the academic environment of the pioneer text “*Teachers in face of knowledge: a draft about the issue of teaching knowledge*”, by Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye, published in the journal *Theory and Education*, in 1991. In this text, the authors focus on the tacit knowledge of teachers, underlining

2 Because of the objectives and approach of this text, these two terms are used here as synonymous. This implies to consider that, for the aim of the analysis proposed here, they are discursively articulated by the logic of equivalency in the same signification chain.

its heuristic potentiality for the comprehension of the teacher's work. Since then, the researches that prioritize the knowledge of the teachers have multiplied, incorporating the contributions of different theoretical perspectives and fields of knowledge.

This approach does not find, however, a consensus among the researchers of the field who work with the thematic of teacher training and, as shown by specialized literature, it has raised fierce debates and received a lot of criticism. It is not possible, under the limits of this text, to deepen or map these discussions. In function of the approach chose here, I decided, throughout this analysis, to draw on the arguments developed by the researchers from the field only with the intention of subsidize the reinterpretation here proposed over the category of *teaching knowledge*. This essay is structured in two sections, organized by the intersection of contributions coming from the post-foundational discursive approach and from the studies of teaching training which operate with this category. The first section focuses on the processes of objectification that this expression suggests, highlighting some dimensions in which these processes are anchored. The second session explores the processes of subjectification that the category in question tends to evoke, underlining its effects on affirmation and/or on the problematization of particular meanings of subject that tend to be hegemonized in the literature of the field.

The separation of these two processes in two distinct sections doesn't imply understanding them as isolated and/or separate processes. On the contrary, the hypothesis used here consists in affirming that these processes complement one another continuously and always temporarily. The interest in addressing them in this way is explained by a matter of emphasis rather than by autonomy or radical distinction between themselves. Processes of objectification and subjectification operate like communicative vessels being, then, concomitant movements unleashed as contingency because of specific contexts in which they are mobilized. After all, according to the epistemic post-foundational approach privileged here, something *is/is being* or *is not/is not being* because of discursive mechanisms which are mobilized, reassured, invented, invested, subverted by individuals that "become presence" (Biesta, 2013) and act in the world as "singular social-beings" (Delory-Momberger, 2012) in specific social-historical contexts.

Thus, in the first section, the term *knowledge* is considered as the signifier that introduces the problematic of objectification in legitimized knowledge as a teaching object in the debates of teacher training. In the second part, the term *teacher* is used as an excuse to approach the matters of subjectification that involve this discussion. Nothing stops us from operating in reverse. After all, the term *knowledge* bears a lot of subjectivations and the term *teacher* results from processes of objectification, essential for its definition. It's important to stress, however, that this choice was not random.

In the moment we associate *knowledge* and *teacher* to the processes of objectification and subjectification respectively, the intention is to highlight the option, in this text, for the dialogue with and against the epistemological traditions present and hegemonized in the area of initial teacher training, focusing on the ways they mobilize these two signifiers in the production of knowledge about this theme. In the next sections, under the light of the pos-foundation discursive approach, I will explore this matter with more details.

ABOUT THE OBJECTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE REFERRED TO AS *TEACHING KNOWLEDGE*

The discourse constitutes the primary territory of the construction of objectivity as it is. By discourse, like I tried to clarify lots of times, I don't have in mind something that is essentially relative to the areas of speech and writing, but any group of elements in which the relations develop a constitutive role. That implies that the elements do not exist before the relational complex, but are constituted through them. So, relation and objectivity are synonyms. (Laclau, 2005, p. 116, my own highlights, translation from the author)

This section focuses on exploring what is part of the order of objectification and systematization of the *knowledge* legitimized and validated in the curriculum of teacher training courses as a teaching object. It implies problematizing how the term *knowledge* has been signified and deployed in the studies about the training of this professional teacher, in particular of those who operate with the category of analysis *teaching knowledge*. What meaning of *knowledge* is fixated on the debates about training despite the fact of naming it as *teaching knowledge*? What characteristics or particularities the term *teacher* brings to the term *knowledge* when is used to characterize it? Even though they are interconnected, these two questions allow emphasizing distinct entries or dimensions in this debate.

The first question reminds us of the debate about the problematic of the definition of this term, steering the discussion about its objectification to the field of ontology. In this type of approach, it implies to analyze the mechanisms of instituting differentiation of *the being of things in this world*, in the case of this text, of the *being* knowledge. The second interrogation can be found in the debates which equally address the problematic of definition, emphasizing, however, the questions around, on one hand, specialization, and on the other hand, around stratification, which underlie the assumption of singularity of this knowledge in relation to others, bringing to the center of the debates the question of the own specificity of the teaching profession. I work with the hypothesis that the discussion about the processes of objectification of this term gains more breathe as it incorporates, in an articulated way, the two dimensions previously mentioned. This perception allows to amplify the heuristic potential of the category of analysis *teaching knowledge* in the sense that it avoids consolidating dichotomous visions and simultaneously incorporates the ontological dimension, understood here as one of the important axes in the reflection about the construction of knowledge.

As a matter of fact, if we understand “teacher training curriculum” as a space-time of socialization, of qualification, and of subjectification, the question of objectification and systematization of knowledge cannot be put in second place in those debates. For Biesta (2012), beyond the function of subjectification — about which I will detain myself in the next section — the functions of socialization and qualification justify the existence of institutions of training. The socialization addresses “many ways in which we become members and part of the social, cultural

and political orders by implies of education” (Biesta, 2012, p. 818). In the case of this text, it is about the socialization of the professional teacher, process in which the teaching curriculum is one of the instruments deployed. This function is directly related to questions of stability and continuity in the teaching professional culture, “in its desirable and undesirable aspects” (Biesta, 2012, p. 818).

As for the function of qualification, as it refers to the initial teacher training, it consists in providing the undergraduate teacher training students with “knowledge, abilities, and understanding, and almost always with forms of judgment that lead them ‘to do something’” (Biesta, 2012) that, in this case, refers to a specific knowledge and knowhow — the knowledge of how to teach something to somebody. It’s important to highlight that this function is not limited to the preparation for the working environment. After all, the action of “providing knowledge and abilities” carries a political potential that can be explored both in the sense of maintenance and of subversion of a hegemonic social order.

This way of entry in the debate simultaneously mobilizes questions related to the representation of real and to the truth, as well as the articulation between both. The further development of the relationships established between the multiple theories of knowledge and the truth would certainly, however, go beyond the aim of this text. What is at stake here is the possibility of operating with a theoretical framework that allows us to grasp this kind of problematic from the teacher training perspective. The question of knowledge objectification is a theoretical task that cannot be neglected in the debates that involve teaching professional training processes.

In the post-foundational discursive approach, the ontological confrontation of this question is not mistaken with the reflections about the differentiation or the specialization of teaching knowledge. Is not only about problematizing which knowledge to select, teach, socialize, assess, with the objective of ensuring the involvement of undergraduate teacher training student into the professional teaching culture, but of the own possibility of objectifying these knowledges so that these cognitive operations can happen.

This interrogation about the very possibility of objectification is inside the contemporary epistemological debates. How can we think about these operations after the radicalization of the criticism towards essentialist objectivism? How can we affirm the possibility of operating in our analysis with the idea of ‘objective knowledge’ or ‘objectified knowledge’ without this necessarily corresponding to the reassurance of a particular sense of the knowledge that considers it as exterior to the subject what produces, teaches, or learns it, that is to say, as something turned into a thing, that can be quantified, accumulated or measured? How can we think of other ways of knowledge objectification that do not feed this kind of understanding based on metaphysical or positivist interpretations? Said in another way, how can we think this problematic of teaching knowledge, in particular the one that influences the processes of objectification in which it takes part, without questioning the processes of structuring that inform the episteme in which it is formulated. The challenge consists indeed, like Hernández (2014) questions himself, in working with investigative lines that make possible to transit

(...) from systems of thinking based on transcendent and metaphysical principles that explain the origin of mankind, of science, or of knowledge to other forms of intelligibility that sustain the absence of final principles. (Hernández, 2014, p. 1198)

The incorporation of contributions from the post-foundational discursive approach allows this movement indeed. This epistemological approach, by removing from the edge of philosophy the ontological dimension — putting it in the debate about the knowledge production in social sciences field — offers tools to face the challenge that Hernández (2014) tells us about. Due to the privileged scope of this text, I present below just a few categories of analysis that were developed in the context of post-foundational analysis that help to sustain the hypothesis about the objectification of teaching knowledge. I refer to the categories of *speech*, *hegemony*, and *antagonism*, highlighting that, such as reported in the Theory of Discourse from Laclau and Mouffe (2004), it's unavoidable to think politically about the definition/objectivation game.

THE DISCOURSE IN THE POST-FOUNDATIONAL AGENDA

Laclau's (2005) quote chosen as the heading for this section establishes a direct relationship between the words *objectivity* and *discourse*, in which the latter means "primary territory of construction" regarding the former. Without denying the world's materiality, this particular sense of discourse authorizes social readings that stand for the impossibility of immediate access to reality, that is, without language interference. Language, on its turn, is considered to carry out a function which goes beyond representing something whose existence is defined outside its field, that is to say, as if its meaning were in some metaphysical essence or ground. Seen as a "meaning producing matrix" (Hernández, 2014, p. 1200), the term *discourse* is used in the post-foundational theorizations to name "any set of elements in which the relations play a constitutive role" (Laclau, 2005, p. 86, my own highlights, translation from the author), highlighting the articulatory actions that happen in any signifying processes.

Thus, this approach presents itself as a powerful theoretical way out for the readings about the social which problematize notions of *origin* and of *ultimate foundations* and at the same time affirm the instituting place of language in the production of every social order. Discourse operates then, "in and over the discursivity field (or of the sedimented social practices) to build a totality that is not closed, but is always flawed" (Retamozo, 2012, p. 340). Defined as "a constant interrogation of the foundational metaphysical figures" (Marchart, 2009, p. 14) the post-foundational discursive approach must not be confused, however, with the anti-foundational perspective, by which "everything is possible". What is being problematized here is not the possibility of working with the idea of *principle*, but its own ontological statute.

As I have discussed in previous papers (Gabriel, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016), the idea of *principle* is seen as simultaneously impossible and necessary, so that

both the signification processes and the disputes between them, materialized in the internal political fights in the educational field, can happen. If the idea of impossibility weakens the ontological statute of the transcendent principle, the need for temporary closures introduces in the debate the possibility for us to operate in our analysis with the idea of contingent principles. Thus, the principle/center perceived as explanatory origin of all things, doesn't have a fixed-place approach, doesn't exist before structure, doesn't place itself outside the language game. As Hernández (2014) affirms when referring to this term: "is not only a place, but a function, it operates as an organizing point with the intention of stopping the game of substitutions and combinations between differential elements that, by themselves, do not conform a structure" (Hernández, 2014, p. 1199).

In this comprehensibility picture, any principle is seen as a product of private, contingent and antagonist decisions among disputes for the establishment of order and for the control of conflict. Instead of operating with signifiers of plain positivity, with everlasting unambiguous, paralyzed and stabilized meanings of identities, the post-foundational discursive approach recognizes that giving meaning is a political act that happens in a system of difference where any meaning closure is seen as impossible and necessary. Thus, the process of structuring a social order is seen as the result of a discursive operation in a relational and differential system.

Instead of denying all and any possibility of production of an objective knowledge that can be identified as a teaching object in the context of training, this theoretical horizon offers tools to think about other possibilities of production of meaning for the term objectivity, or if we prefer, another pattern of objectivity, different from that one hegemonized by and in the illuminist modernity. It's about understanding the processes of objectivity of the social in the perspective of the idea of production of contingent principles, which assumes the comprehension that these are produced in the middles of language games.

Laclau's statement that "relation and objectivity are synonyms" (Laclau, 2005, p. 116) opens interesting tracks to explore possibilities of objectivation in the perspective of articulatory logic. According to this perspective, the production of contingent principles among disputes for the signification mobilizes two logics — equivalence and difference — that operate in a relational way in structuring a discursive order. The first one acts in the way of establishing an equivalent chain between different differential unities. The second intervenes in the sense of breaking with the processes of equivalence mobilized by the first one that tends to be endless. This rupture produces a radical limit, a boundary, expelling out of the chain the antagonistic, the Other, that starts to work as its *constitutive exterior* (Laclau and Mouffe, 2004). The establishment of a radical cut and the production of this antagonistic is what characterizes any process of signification. Thus, to assign meaning is the condition to access the materiality of the world and to act politically.

In this theoretical horizon, three characteristics of what could be considered as a post-foundational objectivity pattern could be highlighted post-foundational:

- its insertion in the political game of inclusion and exclusion;
- its contingency; and
- its temporariness.

These characteristics radically drift away this possibility of definition from any argument based on the consolidation of a cleavage between objectivity of knowledge and political-ideological dynamics.

HEGEMONY, ANTAGONISM AND OBJECTIVITY

To aim is an intellectual operation inscribed in the political logic, moving two categories of analysis — *hegemony* and *antagonism* — that as defined in the Theory of Speech from Ernest Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (2004) — present themselves as unavoidable for argumentation around another objectivity's pattern. In this perspective, knowledge process of objectivation assumes a contingent production of hegemonies and antagonisms around the structuring of a discursive order in a system of difference. In other words, it results from two simultaneous and complementary movements: the one of articulation between differential units in a same equivalent chain inside a specific discursive field and the one of exclusion of this same defining chain of so many others for the process of signification to be implemented.

The first movement corresponds to the process of building hegemony that invests in the need for closure and of suture, even if it's only temporary, of the processes of signification. The hegemonic fight is the fight for occupying the place of the signifier that acts as a radical limit in the different structures of signification. According to Laclau and Mouffe (2004) all hegemonic discourse is a particular one that becomes hegemonic and becomes universal by implies of an action that is contingent, precarious and built upon possible negotiations. In this approach a hegemonic relation is a particularity that acts as the universal function. As pointed by Giacaglia (2006, p. 106): “the logic of hegemony constitutes a logic of articulation and of contingency”.

The second movement corresponds to the irruption of antagonism, whose discursive functions consists of restating the impossibility of any definitive closure. After all, “the hegemonic articulatory practices define their identities by opposition to the antagonist articulatory practices. The antagonism finds the limits of all objectivity, as this is never fully built” (Giacaglia, 2006, p. 107).

Inclusion and exclusion — seen as permanent and temporary movements — are founders of any objectivity. In this text, it interests us to emphasize the effects of theoretical contributions of this approach to rethink or recreate a new epistemic value for the processes of structuring/objectivation of knowledge that can serve as an alternative to the hegemonized *system of knowledge* marked by the petrification or stiffening of a particular sense of the interface truth-objectivity. This supposes to question the understanding of truth as correspondence, that is, problematizing “the thesis that sustains that the task of science is to produce a knowledge that reflects the exterior world and that can support the truth of its statements in contrasting them with the exterior world” (Retamozo, 2012, p. 329).

In a system of knowledges where the idea that “the mind would work as a mirror of nature” (Rorty, 1983 *apud* Retamozo, 2012, p. 329) prevails, the notion of objectivity associates itself to the trust rate of loyalty of object to reality. The meaning of truth, on the other hand, refers to the possibility of verifying the degree of adequa-

cy of the fact to reality. To sum it, a knowledge considered true is equally signified as objective, that this, faithful to reality. The idea of objectivity articulates itself, in this case, with the idea of neutrality, that is, seen as a guarantee of the possibility of production of true knowledge. It is not an accident that it was in the middle of the articulation, in a same equivalent chain, of terms such as *knowledge*, *truth*, *neutrality*, *objectivity* and *reality* that the hegemonic definition of modern science was built.

The dialogue with the post-foundational discursive approaches allows to precisely put “*under erasure*” these signifiers as fixed in this hegemonic discursive articulation. As a matter of fact, this theoretical emphasis authorizes reactivating the instituting moment of each one of these terms, displacing the meanings of objectivity. Instead of insisting in classifying or denying the possibility of classification of *teaching knowledge* as an objective knowledge — in the perspective of criteria mobilized in an equivalence chain hegemonized in the illuminist modernity, which already shows, since some decades now, signs of exhaustion — wouldn't it be more productive to analyze the mechanisms that determine the boundary of *what is* and of *what is not* “objective”, reactivating the political meaning of every definition process and thus reminding the contingency of any social-discursive order?

This questioning reminds us directly of the second perspective or entry point, made explicit previously, and that refers to the question of definition/objectivation under the perspective of specialization of knowledge. To what extent qualifying this knowledge with the signifier *teacher* interferes in the process of its own definition/objectivation? Considering the understanding of the objectification process in the post-foundational approach, it is possible to affirm that “differentiating” is part of this same process. Differentiating is producing an antagonist cut in the undefined chain of equivalences, seen as a condition for the process of signification/objectivation to be established even if it's only in a contingent and temporary way. To define *teaching knowledge* is to articulate this term with other signifiers such as: *science*, *theory*, *practice*, *experience*, *values*, *competences*, *subject contents*, *cultures*. That implies to make the logics of equivalence and of difference (Laclau and Mouffe, 2004) intervene in a way to produce a hegemonic equivalent chain from the simultaneous movements of approximation of meanings between some of these terms and of expulsion, from this same chain, of others, that start to occupy the antagonist place. Thus, logic of differentiation is, equally, a logic of the political order, temporary and relational that establishes itself in the middle of building hegemony of particular meanings and of antagonism production. To understand these processes and mechanisms of differentiation of this term is a theoretical and political task that requires making the necessity and impossibility aporia to work at the border of its contingent definitions.

The argument that I have built so far aims to support the heuristic potentiality of the idea of objectivation of process of *teaching knowledge* from a double entry, corresponding to two axes of problematization in the debates about patterns of objectivity: objectivity-identity- differentiation and objectivity-stratification-specification. Both, as I tried to show, are inscribed in a language game among disputes over signification. We will continue below to explore some arguments developed in area of teacher training studies which operate with the category *teaching knowl-*

edge (Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye, 1991; Tardif and Gauthier, 2001; Tardif, 2002; Schon, 1992; Borges and Tardif, 2001), highlighting its power to think about other patterns of objectivity from these two axes.

As it was made clear before, the work of revisiting the category *teaching knowledge* proposed here is inscribed in a reinterpretation movement from a specific theoretical horizon. Thus, to make this category work is to explore *meaning threads* woven in the discursive field in which it emerges as an object of study in educational field. I highlight two of these threads present in the debates about this theme that deserve to be explored:

- the arguments developed for its own definition; and
- the spotlight place given, in these arguments, to the expression *experience knowledge*.

In what concerns the first meaning thread that was mentioned, a nonsystematic analysis of the specialized bibliography about *teaching knowledge* points out that in the debates that happened in 1990 in Brazil it's possible to recognize some convergences between different authors that work with this category. One of the most highlighted labels used to define and differentiate teaching knowledge from other types of knowledge refers to its plural and heterogenic nature. This plurality, pointed out in terms of its production and configuration, is affirmed with the objective of defending teaching as a "*profession made by knowledge*, that covers many types of knowledge which are mobilized by the teachers and his/her own practice" (Nunes, 2001, p. 33, highlight from the original). Among these types of knowledge, we can find disciplinary knowledge, curriculum knowledge, knowledge from educational science, knowledge from pedagogical tradition, teaching knowledge, knowledge from pedagogical action, just to name few of the most mentioned ones.

The affirmation of plurality and heterogeneity of this category can be seen as a clue for the recognition of the presence of different elements in its composition, offering a possibility to problematize its definition by using an assumed positivity and unanimity of meaning. It is important to observe, however, that in the developed arguments the terms plurality and heterogeneity are activated as characteristics of teaching knowledge more in the perspective of valuing the teacher's work than in order to problematize the epistemological or ontological nature of this kind of knowledge.

One of the effects of this positioning can be seen in the unbalance in the theoretical investment in terms of the two discussion axes previously mentioned about objectivation processes. Said in another way, in these debates the reflections concentrate more in the subject-teacher and in ways he/she relates to knowledge than in the ontological and epistemological problematization of the term knowledge. In this context, the discursive articulation between objectivity-identity-differentiation is questioned or problematized in as much as this critic contributes to reinforce the argument, recurrent in these discussions, of the need for recognition of the singularity of the teaching profession. The articulation objectivity-stratification-specification in the reflection about knowledge's own nature which singles this profession does not constitute, in turn, object of theoretical reflection among researchers of the field.

This unbalance between the two axes of problematization is not noticed, however, as a weakness or an explanatory limitation in this category. After all, the analytical power of any category is not found in itself. The category *teaching knowledge* is not powerful *in itself*, its analytical strength is not found outside the discursive order in which it is thought, not being thus, way from political and epistemological questions that justify also its formulation and deployment in the educational field. In the same way, no category is self-sufficient, capable of handling all theoretical challenges and political demands of the time in which they are formulated or activated.

It's never enough to remember that the urgency of this expression in the Brazilian educational field happens in the middle of fights around the valuing of professional experience by reaffirming the singularity of teaching practice in a context where this singularity, when recognized, would tend to be disqualified no matter the critical positioning of the pedagogical trends represented in the debate. As a matter of fact, as Fiorentini, Souza Junior and Melo (1998) state:

In the 80's decade, the sociopolitical dimension would dominate the pedagogical speech, even more in the sociopolitical and ideological relations/determination in the teaching practices (...). Even though the teaching practice in classrooms and teaching knowledges have begun to be investigated in this period, the researches didn't have the intention of explaining it or value it as valid or legitimate ways of knowledge. On the contrary, they intended to highlight, as would say Ezpeleta, Rockwel (1986) and Geraldi (1993), the negativity of the pedagogical practice and the teaching knowledge by their flaws or confirmations in relation to a theoretical model that idealizes them. (Alves, 2007 *apud* Fiorentini, Souza Junior and Melo, 1998, p. 313-314)

Studies in the area (Borges, 2002; Alves, 2007) that aim to systematize pedagogical traditions present in the educational field that daily affect the debate about teacher training, consider that the displacement, in the beginning of the 1990's, of the perspective centered in teacher's behavior in behaviorist tradition to a perspective that "worries about what teacher think, know, notice, represent about their jobs (...)" (Alves, 2001, p. 266) implied a true paradigmatic change. Embracing analysis of different theoretical approaches, these studies produced relevant effects on the debates at that time, problematizing the hegemonic meanings of teaching profession. Thus, the emergency of the *teaching knowledge* category and the debates about its definition from the perspective of differentiation in relation to other knowledges are inside this movement.

It's not a coincidence that in these debates the term *strategic*, together with *plurality* and *heterogeneity*, are also used to mark its singularity. It announces the crucial place, occupied by this category, in the fights that involve the definition of this profession in the teacher training courses curriculum. These terms refer exactly to the political connotation that this expression carries in these debates. The expression, *teaching knowledge* had, at that moment, a discursive function of simultaneously producing an articulation between different elements that characterize teaching

and expelling out of this chain so many other that would occupy the antagonist position. I refer to the hegemonic meanings of teaching used so far and that had in common to reinforce the “negativity of teaching practices” and the “deficiencies” attributed to this profession. This way, investing in the idea of a different and specific knowledge of teaching profession was and still is a way of entering the fight not only for the term teaching but also for the validation of the own training contexts.

To develop this strategic function, however, implies continuing theoretical efforts to keep this position and participate directly in the struggle for hegemonizing teaching meaning. As it has been stated before, it implies to participate in a permanent way in the political game of inclusion and exclusion in relation to the defining chain of this profession. What can be considered as moments in this chain? What is placed as its antagonist? These two logics — of equivalence and of difference — do not obey, on their turn, general laws. They are indeed mobilized in contingency as a function of the demands more and more present where this discussion is faced.

This observation is important to the extent that it allows understanding the debates from these last decades between the defenders of the training approach who operate with the category of *teaching knowledge* and their fiercer critics. The emphasis by the first, in valuing the pedagogical practice in a context of low criticism in educational field about the objectivity patterns, produces the effect that the debates tend to reactivate classical dichotomies between terms like *theory* and *practice*, *macro* and *micro*, *critic* and *non-critic* or even *structure* and *subject*. The debates that circulated around the search for arguments to affirm the rationality of this knowledge (Tardif and Gauthier, 2001) trying to move away from the notion of scientific knowledge — in the way it has been hegemonized in modernity — exemplify the path that has been taken, in the recurrent way, in challenging the questions related to the singularity of this profession. In a general way, the fixation strategies of the specific features of this knowledge have fed this dichotomic vision to the extent that it has been associated, in a single equivalence chain, to terms such as *experience* or *practice* expelling signifiers such as *theory* or *course content*. It is relevant to notice that this configuration of language game is not inherent to the category of teaching knowledge. There are many interests at stake and it would make sense to ask to whom it interests to invest in this dichotomic perception.

It is in this movement that interests us to explore the second thread previously highlighted. I refer here to the expression *experience knowledge* which occupies, in these discussions and polemics, a key role. It is possible to notice, in the group of texts produced about this issue in the last decades, that this expression strongly emerges in defense of a meaning of teaching which assumes the positivity of pedagogical daily practices as a defining element of the specificity of this profession and becoming at the same time the main target of criticisms addressed to this perspective.

The statement below allows us to consider that there are other possibilities of reading this category which are available in the debate, and offer possibilities of continuing to be explored in the scope of post-foundational approach. The *experience knowledge*, beyond referring to the place where it is produced can be seen:

(...) as the vital nucleus of teaching knowledge, from which the teachers try to transform their exteriority relations with knowledge in interiority relations with their on practice. In this sense the experience knowledge is not as knowledge as the others, it is, on the other hand, formed by all the others, however re-translated, “polished” and submitted to the certainty built in the practice and in what has been lived. (Tardif, Lessard e Lahaye *apud* Nunes, 2001, p. 34)

It can be noticed from this definition the articulation function carried out by the signifier experience in processes of objectification of teaching knowledge. It functions as a nodal point capable of simultaneously articulating different knowledges and producing an antagonism built around another defining chain of what would be “teaching non-knowledge”. Thus, it implies to invest in some configurations of this exclusion and inclusion game in detriment of others. The investment in signification processes that put, on one side, “the *instrumental technical interest*, in which objective scientific explanations are used, based in the model of technical rationality” (Fiorentini, Souza Junior and Melo, 1998, p. 315, highlight from the original) and, on the other side, “the *practical interest*, which carry out the interpretation of meanings produced by practitioner of world-life as a subsidy for the issue of a practical judgement” (Fiorentini, Souza Junior and Melo, 1998, p. 315, highlight from the original) is not presented, necessarily, as the most fruitful bet to think the objectivation processes of teaching knowledge.

This text invests in the analysis possibilities that recognize the political potential of the moment of re-activating contingency, thus, authorize us to think about opening spaces to produce other hegemonies and antagonisms in the process of signification. In this perspective, it interests how to think about the term *experience* less as locus of knowledge production by teachers and more like a strategic discourse function which destabilizes the hegemonic boundaries that define it, bringing to the game other possible definitions of rationality and subjectivity. Among these other definitions of rationality, the expression *give meaning to things* that happen to us configures as a moment of this discourse chain.

Beyond the articulation functions among heterogeneity and plurality of knowledges that configures teaching knowledge and the destabilization of hegemonized discourse of objectivity, the expression *experience knowledge* allows to introduce in the debate questions related to subjectification processes which need to be equally addressed in this reflection. This last potentiality is outlined in the definition which appears in the “opening” text of this debate in Brazil. Thus,

Would this imply that they live in the subjective certainties accumulated individually throughout the career of each teacher? No, to the extent that these certainties are at the same time shared and sharable in the relationship with peers. It is through the relationship with peers and thus through the confrontation between knowledges produced by the collective experience of teachers that the knowledge experience acquires a certain objectivity: the subjective certainties shall, thus, systematize themselves in order to be translated in a discourse of experience capable to inform and to form other teachers and to respond to their problems. (Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye, 1991, p. 230)

After stating the “origin” of *knowledge experience* in “daily practice of teachers in confrontation with the conditions of the profession” (Tardif, Lessard and Lahaye, 1991, p. 230), these authors advance with arguments which give evidence to the presence, in these debates, of classic tensions in the field of social sciences — subject and structure, individual and society, singular and common — mobilized by theorizations of contemporary subject.

ABOUT THE CATEGORY *SUBJECT* DEPLOYED BY THE SIGNIFIER *TEACHER*

The rupture with essentialisms and transcendentalisms to think about the subjects conduct us to consider the constitution of subjects as unfinished and in process. (Retamozo, 2011, p. 85)

The reflection about the processes of subjectification condensed in term *teacher*, which qualifies the type of knowledge, object of rereading in this text, under the light of the post-foundational agenda, allows us to resume the debates and polemics around the centrality attributed to the term *experience knowledge*, focusing now on the category *subject*. Thus, it is not by chance that, in a methodological perspective, the studies about *teaching knowledge* from the end of 20th century were concerned about “giving voice to teachers”, having as a starting point the qualitative analysis which focused in the life histories of teachers. In these approaches the notion of experience has a prominent position, destabilizing not only the hegemonic boundaries which define both *knowledge* and the *subject* who bears this knowledge.

More than three decades have gone by and the concern in “capturing” empirically the teacher-subject remains up to date in the debates about his/her training, now added to ontological questionings raised by the crisis of subject and the representation of reality such as it has been hegemonized in essentialist perspectives. How to define/to objectify the category of subject whose professional experience is to be valued, in times of crisis of humanism, of subject death and of criticism to the philosophy of conscience? How to think about *the who* of education, in the case of this text, the teacher-subject, after the radical criticism to any possibility of previous definition of subject, to any truth about human subjectivity? Which implications this challenge brings to the reflection about curriculum of teacher training? How to think about this discursive context as spaces where this individual in formation can “become presence” among the relationships established with knowledge? These interrogations move us away from perspectives of analysis which insist in looking for an essence, a substance of subject, reifying in such a way that *the who* of the subject turns to be frequently understood as the question about *the what* of this *who* (Nancy, 1991, p. 7 *apud* Biesta, 2013, p. 66).

In agreement with Nóvoa (1992, p. 27) that “it is necessary to positively invest in the knowledge that the teacher bears, working on it from a conceptual and theoretical point of view”, the arguments developed in this session bet that a possible way in this type of investment consists in exploring the heuristic poten-

tial of the signifier *experience*, having as a starting point the contributions of the post-foundational discursive approach.

As it has been explicit before, this approach operates with the idea that the meanings attributed to words are not defined out of the language games. The signifier *experience* can, thus, bear multiple and different meanings in function of interests in dispute in the discursive context where it is mobilized, as well as the theoretical framework in which it is thought. It interests me, thus, to bring to this reflection some fixations available about the term *experience*, which can contribute to problematize the subjectification processes of the place of teaching and from the perspective of an epistemic stance here adopted. To accomplish this, I highlight three dimensions of the subjectivity problematic which cross the contemporary epistemological debates in the field of social sciences:

- the conception of the category subject itself;
- the positioning of subjects in the place of teaching; and
- the production of political subjectivities in these contexts of training.

The first dimension relates to hegemonic struggles for the definition of the *self* subject. The other two dimensions are directly related to the approach that one aims to prioritize. Although these are dimensions which cannot be thought about in an isolated way, they present differences in terms of the attack angle privileged by each one. As stated by Howarth (2000, p. 108): “if the concept of subject position explains the multiple forms by which individuals are produce as social actors, the concept of political subjectivity captures the way through which social actors act”.

In terms of the problematic presented by the definition/objectification of the signifier *subject*, the articulation between *knowledge* and *experience* reveals clues to think about other rationalities, equally offering tools to face this question from another epistemic perspective. Nowadays what is at stake in this discussion is the possibility of the displacement of a definition of the “general subject” to the “comprehension of the self of the subject as a single individual” (Biesta, 2013, p. 66), without, however, reaffirming individualistic and essentialist conceptions: to what extent recognizing the teacher as a subject who bears an experience knowledge can handle this to this displacement?

The answer to this type of interrogation becomes even more complex as far as the context in which it is formulated relates to the professional training of individuals. These concepts tend to mobilize some meanings of subject hegemonically fixated by occidental philosophy which considers that “the *ego cogito* or conscience comes in first place (...) and that conceives the primary relationships of the ego with the world and with other beings as a knowledge-relationship” (Biesta, 2013, p. 76). In the debates about these issues, to define teaching as a knowledge profession, highlighting the *experience knowledge*, doesn't imply, necessarily, from a theoretical-conceptual point of view, that this hegemonic meaning of subject-teacher who bears these knowledges is problematized. The term *experience* can be deployed without the dichotomic pairs theory/practice or science/technique, with which is common to think about teachers training, are questioned.

Thus, the challenge consists in searching for theoretical tools which allow us to think about the teacher-subject simultaneously as *knowledge subject* and *experience subject* in contexts of training, however, without refeeding the field of absolute or transcendent subjectivity. This challenge demands the reflection about meanings of the interface subject-experience and positioning in face of the hegemonic relations that produce it.

One of the meanings of this interface, mobilized in a recurrent way in the debates about *teaching knowledge*, relates the signifier *experience* to the context in which this knowledge is produced. As stated by Scott (1999, p. 4), in these discursive configurations: “this the evidence of experience becomes evidence of the fact of difference, instead of a way to explore how difference is established, how it operates, how and in which ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world”. In this case, the notion of experience is reified re-activating the idea of an “ultimate foundation” in replacement of the cartesian-cogito which plays this role in essentialist and rationalist perspectives. The reflection about the *experience knowledge* which reduces the meaning of the signifier *experience* to the locus of specific knowledge production of the teacher to be valued tends to reinforce these perspectives. How to speak or write about experience without making it essentialist? One theoretical-conceptual way out to this interrogation can be given by the investment in destabilizing the hegemonic meaning of the rational autonomous modern subject. Thus, as Scott (1999) invites us to think:

It is not the individuals who own experience, but the subjects themselves are constituted through experience. The experience, in agreement with this definition, becomes not the origin or our explanation, nor the authorized evidence because seen or felt, which sustains the knowledge, but what we want to apply, that thing about which knowledge is produced. (Scott, 1999, p. 5)

In the same line of reflection, Larossa (2002), when proposing to think education from the perspective of the pair experience/meaning, underlines that the experience knowledge is the one that is acquired “in and through what happens to us” (Larossa, 2002, p. 27). In relation to the teacher training syllabus this understanding produces displacement in the comprehension of this profession which seems powerful to put into dialogue with educational field. In the perspective defended by Larossa (2002), the experience knowledge can be seen not as knowledge acquired from what happens in daily pedagogical practices, but, in turn, from what individuals, positioned as teachers, respond to what happens to them along their professional trajectory. This definition allows to resize the idea of *reflexivity*, present in these debates, without updating its understanding as something from the order of individualist introspection deprived of criticality as it is common to characterize the critics formulated in educational field, as the expression *reflexive teacher*.

In relation to the reflection about different approaches to the subjectification process, it is worth to highlight that the signifier *experience* “reintroduces the place of subject in its double sense: as subjected-subject and as agent-subject” (Retamozo, 2012, p. 343). The first sense, in relation to the thematic of teacher’s

training, refers to the positioning or the subjection *un-subjecting* of the individual to the teaching culture organized as a group of practices hegemonically settled and temporarily stabilized around a signifier capable of regulating the dispersion in a system of differences. The term *experience* bears the potential of exercising this discursive function simultaneously evoking the singularity of the teaching professional culture and giving meaning to daily pedagogical practices despite the different forms to deal with this profession, depending on the singular trajectories of individuals in formation. Around this term it tends to consolidate, to stabilize a defining chain of teaching professional culture.

This dimension contributes to the teacher training syllabus to exercise the function of professional plural socialization as mentioned before. It implies to think professional culture as a collective experience of individuals positioned as future teachers: in another word, and paraphrasing Larossa (2002, p. 27): “the experience and the knowledge which derives from it are what allow” teacher training students and teachers to appropriate themselves of this professional culture. The intentionality to build a *repertoire of possible practices* that can be shared among teachers, defended by different scholars (Tardif and Gauthier, 2011) in the field, operates with this idea. The effects of this intentionality on the political game of fixation and destabilization around the definition of teacher-subject depend, however, on the fixed meaning of *experience*. As warned by Scott (1999): “the project of making experience visible stops a critical exam of the system functioning and its historicity, in opposition, reproduces its terms” (Scott, 1999, p. 5). For this author “any way in which meaning is considered as transparent, reproduces, instead of contesting, ideologically established systems” (Scott, 1999, p. 4).

This type of criticism brings to the discussion an aporia which needs to be worked on in educational field and is related to the political potential of comprehension of the interface subject-experience as a result of the articulation between the subject-singular-social being and the subject-agent. It allows to incorporate the subjectification function of training institutions which, according to Biesta (2013), works in opposition to the socialization function to the extent that, for this author: “it is not precisely about the insertion of recently arrived to existing orders, but it is about the ways of being which suggest independence from these orders (...)” (Biesta, 2013, p. 819). How to reactivate the tension between *structure* and *agency*, moving away from essentialist and determinist approaches of subjectivity? In which terms the interface subject-experience contributes to subvert the theoretical formulations which explain the political action of the subject either by an absolute voluntarism or by the reduction of his/her role to the reproduction of pre-built structures?

In a recent work, I defend (Gabriel, 2015) that the post-foundational discursive approach offers some tools to face some of these issues. The interface subject-agent concerns the production of political subjectivities. In the theorizations of post-foundational discourse to act politically implies to make decisions among an infinity of possibilities opened by the reactivation of contingency. It is in this identification process that political subjectivities are created and formed (Howarth, 2000). Thus, what does it imply to act politically in the role of teaching? In which ways the subjects positioned as teachers or future teachers participate in the struggle for the signifi-

cation which involves the definition of their own profession? I have been exploring (Gabriel, 2015) the idea that, in our disputes for the signifier teaching we need to search for mechanisms in the teacher training syllabus, so that this profession, whose meaning tends to be hegemonically fixed as a subaltern “place” can start to be seen as a powerful place for production of rebel political subjectivities. If we consider the unequal, hierarchical and exclusive structuring of the knowledge system hegemonic in teaching system, it is possible to notice that the interface teaching-knowledge tends to be considered as minor place, a discursive field of less prestige when compared to other positions of subjects who equally relates to the signifier knowledge, such as research. As a matter of fact, it is precisely this acknowledgment of discredit that is implied in the debates about teaching knowledge and, in particular, the investment in the expression experience knowledge.

As previously made explicit, the signifier *experience* can be invested of a meaning which operates theoretically with the idea of the teacher as a unique and singular subject, not in terms of substance or essence, but in their capacity to respond, to produce demands of knowledge and articulate itself to others. This understanding can imply to start clues to unfix the crystalized meaning of “political subject” and to search for other theoretic outcomes. One possibility to be explored in future works is the effects in the theoretical reflection about the political subjectivity of the articulation between the terms *experience* and *demand*. As stated by Retamozo (2009, p. 113): “the demands emerge as a place of mediation between a structural situation of subordination and the construction of possible antagonisms and displacements”. In the same way, if we agree with Scott (1999, p. 20), that “what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor defined, it is always questionable, thus always political”, the interface demand-experience can be productive for us to think the question of subjectivity, not as rational autonomy, but because of the forces and processes, which are beyond rational control (Biesta, 2013, p. 169).

The arguments developed along this text should be seen as threads of a thick line of thought which have only started to be pulled. As explained in the introduction, in proposing a reflection about objectification and subjectification processes in teacher training syllabus from the perspective of revisiting the category *teaching knowledge*, the text invited the readers to start a dialogue with the studies accumulated in educational field about this thematic. The post-foundational epistemic stance here adopted has allowed bringing some lances to the signification game around this expression. The dialogue remains open. The invitation, I hope, remains valid.

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