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Encouragement: curricular policies, reformist rhetoric and responsibilisation

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ABSTRACT – Encouragement: curricular policies, reformist rhetoric and responsibilisation. Between the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, reform policies in educational systems have become constant in the global world, both at regional and local level. In less than three decades, education systems have undergone several reforms: one reform has not fully settled when a new one is enacted, generating a sense of confusion that results in chaos and unrest in school life. *Encouragement* constitutes an appeal to teachers for change when educational policies, as reformist rhetoric, places innovation on responsibilisation. Managing change and uncertainty becomes a matter of attitude, intelligence and responsibility that falls on schools.
Keywords: **Curricular Policy. Reformist Rhetoric. Daily School Life. Responsibilisation.**

RESUMEN – Animarse a: políticas curriculares, retórica reformista y responsabilización. Entre fines del siglo XX y principios del XXI las políticas de reforma de los sistemas educativos han sido una constante en el mundo globalizado, expresado tanto a nivel regional como local. En menos de tres decenios los sistemas educativos han vivido entre reformas. Cuando una no termina de instalarse viene otra con la que se solapa generando un clima de confusión que deriva en caos y malestar en la vida escolar. *Animarse a* es el modo que asume la apelación al cambio hacia los docentes cuando las políticas vueltas retóricas reformistas descansan la innovación en la responsabilización. La gestión del cambio y la incertidumbre devienen una cuestión de actitud, inteligencia y responsabilidad que gravita en y sobre escuelas.
Palabras-claves: **Políticas Curriculares. Retórica Reformista. Cotidianeidad Escolar. Responsabilización.**

Introduction

Over the last few decades, debates on the curriculum and, in particular, on the corpus of knowledge that should be taught in school have gained ground. These discussions have focused not only on the design of the education reforms implemented since the end of last century in different regions and countries, but also on the configuration of the so-called learning societies (Biesta, 2005; Simons; Masschelein, 2008) and their impact on school life. Among others, these aspects resulted in the redefinition of teaching, emphasizing the teacher's role as a classroom manager and a learning facilitator (Saraiva; Veiga-Neto, 2009; Grinberg, 2008). In the case of Argentina, where this research work was carried out, several authors have noted how the curriculum has gained centrality in the educational reforms adopted locally, from the 1990s onwards (Braslavsky, 1995; Terigi 2004; Palamidessi, 2000). In fact, the design of school curriculum reforms has brought together many educational priorities in the form of expectations, pedagogical guidance, and guidelines for content selection, organization and evaluation. The importance acquired by the curriculum design in these educational reform processes is also evidenced through the creation of ad-hoc technical teams, along with the sanctioning of national and provincial laws that introduced transformations in the structure of the educational system.

In this work, we describe some singularities resulting from the enactment processes (Ball; Maguire; Braun, 2012) of the transformations in the school curriculum, framed in the reform called the *New Secondary School*, launched in 2013 in Santa Cruz, Argentina. Specifically, we aim at analysing the statements interconnected in dynamics that, since the end of the last century, have started to configure the reformist rhetoric. We especially focus on the description of the processes of official communications about transformations, addressed to school administrators and advisors. In such communications, a rhetoric aimed at developing skills such as innovation, creativity and self-review is shaped for the successful enactment of changes. In other words, the ways of managing the reforms are defined at the institutional level in order to cope with changes designed by official agencies affecting the school possibilities of compliance. Thus, through the analysis of the empirical material, we describe how the circuits of responsibility distribution are formed resulting, in turn, in school and teacher responsibilisation. The term *encouragement* is used in official communications to motivate school managers and teachers, in order to implement the reforms designed, in a context lacking of basic time and space resources that would render such innovation possible. Consequently, even if these structural reforms include many inclusion initiatives[1], they turn into a chain of responsibilisation and voluntarism that do nothing but weaken school life.

Firstly, we analyse the statements as they appear in the curricular prescriptions, and then, the official communications about transformations addressed to schools. In this context, a reformist rhetoric is cre-

ated between these two instances, strengthening and articulating one another. It should be noted that the multiple analysis of texts and ethnographic records under study does not attempt to compare or verify the degree of correspondence between one and the other, i.e. between written text and practice. We are dealing with the identification of statement recurrences as discursive practices (Foucault, 2011). Here, notions such as flexible subjects, open to change and able to carry out innovation practices that are negatively perceived as traditional, constitute the truth of our curricular time (Ball, 2002; Grinberg, 2008; Jódar; Gómez, 2007; Saraiva; Veiga-Neto, 2010).

Therefore, we believe that through the accounts of teachers and advisors, we come closer to the description of reform practices as technologies of government (Foucault, 1988; 1990; 2000). These technologies lead the own subject and others to become flexible and creative, to invent and reinvent themselves in everyday life. The term *encouragement*, arose in the fieldwork, is proposed as a hypothesis to refer to the ways in which reformist rhetorics configure the school dynamics. As discussed below, in the everyday school institutional life, the enactment of reforms run the risk of becoming the result of boldness and individual good will. The study of these dynamics is crucial, not only to analyse the previous reform practices or those that may be implemented, but also to understand why many policies of social and educational inclusion are criticized due to their poor results[2]. In this regard, we believe that focusing on the reform enactment and, specifically, on the moment when reforms are introduced in schools, become essential to understand these dynamics.

In this work, we present, firstly, the conceptual notions from a comprehensive approach on the micropolitics of reform technologies, focusing on how they are assembled. Then, we explain the decisions and strategies that comprise the methodological approach of this research. Finally, we discuss analytically the field work, and we try to explain how the idea that a curricular reform needs more innovation is introduced. This innovation is related to the teaching of contents rather than of the content knowledge itself, i.e. more attitude than knowledge.

The reform of the self as part of the curriculum reform

Curricular policies constitute key elements of the pedagogical devices and entail, according to Da Silva (1998), the definition of teachers' and students' roles. Thus, they establish a specific rationality associated to subjectivity production by introducing regulations that engage educational actors in the implementation, feasibility and expected outcomes. Government and self-government practices produce individualization effects that highlight some virtues and attitudes over others. In management times (Du Gay, 2003; Grinberg, 2008), such as these, the rhetoric behind educational and curricular reforms enhances subjects' autonomy, professional development, creativity and continuous inventiveness in opposition to bureaucratic, submissive and prescriptive

practices; that is, the aim is creating a subject in a continuous process of learning, i.e. a permanent configuration of the self (Saraiva and Veiga-Neto, 2009).

The curricular policies embodied in documents and texts are, initially, the result of the official preparation of communications, agreements and negotiations among different groups. These texts on curricular policy become the source of lesson planning for teachers. Here, we are interested in the political recontextualization that takes place in the school setting, taking into account the methodological rigor required to contextualize this kind of research problem; that is, the study of the microsocial and corpuscular relations (Deleuze, 2014) inscribed in extensive and long-lasting processes (Graizer, 2016), such as the reconfiguration of pedagogical devices and, clearly, the reform of educational systems.

If, as Popkewitz (1994b) states, reforms involve social regulation technologies, as well as the regulation and self-regulation of behaviours and specific rationalities that define cultural thesis on lifestyles, including regulatory practices of school life, then the question arises regarding the idea of establishing the reform of the self (Grinberg, 2008) as part of the reform of the curriculum.

Ball (2002) claims that educational reform processes mainly entail mechanisms that seek to reform the *ethos* of being a teacher. The political design of curricular reform implies systems of reason with respect to the changes that teachers have to undergo on themselves to accompany broader transformations in the school system and the world. Through the use of government technologies, procedures and practices, this reformist rhetoric strives to make teachers aware of the crucial importance of bettering themselves (Grinberg, 2008). The effectiveness of what Foucault (1990) defines as technologies of power and self-technologies relies on the subjects' self-development, the thoughts that they have about themselves, and on the modification of their behaviour by identifying flaws, and constantly searching for improvement. Thus, it is worth mentioning Foucault´s notion (2007) of governmentality, since it entails the convergence and articulation of regulation and government of others as well as self-regulation and self-government.

Jódar and Gómez (2007) analysed the constitution of subjectivities in post-disciplinary societies, and argued that the external and omnipresent surveillance of disciplinary societies gives way to a more poignant and internal monitoring: self-surveillance. Moreover, this self-surveillance as an instrument of social regulation becomes not only necessary but mandatory for the subject. In Grinberg´s words (2008), the self becomes the own object of reflection, mapping and action, not that on others. As Jódar and Gómez (2007, p. 393) described:

> It is a subjectivity – of teachers and students – that devotes most of its time and energy to adapt to the new and changing requirements of the environment [...] Neo-liberal educational subjects must be competitive, adaptable,

> flexible, mutable, willing to reformulate their choices and to be self-responsible for the control of their productivity, in order to increase their contribution to excellence. This subject has to be an entrepreneur and needs to run all the time to keep pace with a participatory and responsible training, in a never ending competitive and individualistic game.

Just like someone who runs a marathon and never reaches the goal because it changes, it moves further away and becomes crueller, the subjects in reform need to reinvent themselves continuously through the development of entrepreneurial attitudes, innovation, generation of projects and self-reflection (Lopez-Ruiz, 2007). In management times, and even more, in contexts of educational reforms, the stress is placed on individual autonomy and on the capacity to adapt, to become agents of change in a changing world. Thus, a reformist speech that encourages subjects to innovate, change, revise and break with traditional practices, among others, establishes a personal sense of responsibility, making teaching an even more individualized practice (Done; Murphy, 2018; Peters, 2016). For Peters (2016) responsibilisation refers to self-government of the individual who makes decisions about his/her life and profession. This responsibilisation shapes a kind of subjectivity that promotes cost-benefit calculations and prioritization of personal interests, excluding other social and collective values and interests.

Nowadays, change never ends; rather, it is actively promoted and encouraged. Everyone is aware that change is necessary, but the reasons why it should be done, are not so clear. Subjectivity is squeezed at the expense of such change, and its effects become readily apparent through feelings of unease, weariness and the pressure not to lose pace in a relentless pursuit of self-optimization. This means to live in a state of confusion that involves continuous self-search and self-review.

Du Gay (2003) claims that the way in which the contemporary discourse of public administration and management enhances the proactive and entrepreneurial virtues of subjects. If bureaucratic organizational models valued the strict adherence to procedures renouncing to personal enthusiasm, policies today encourage the opposite. Criticism to bureaucratic and traditional models constitutes the mainstay of business-like management in education. The reform of the 1990s in Argentina enforced these models in such an overwhelming fashion that, with time, they were strengthened. Since the reform processes in 2006, these managerial discourses (Grinberg, 2008) have not disappeared but they are presented in a more subtle manner emulsified through speeches on education as a social right and social inclusion; so that, the pedagogical models defined as traditional as well as routine teaching practices became the obstacle and obverse of the desired changes. Thus, the acquisition and display of entrepreneurial capabilities, virtues and dispositions to counteract enemy bureaucratic culture becomes pivotal for subjects (Du Gay, 2003).

The procedures used to direct conducts, to urge others to implement a series of self-modifications or to develop entrepreneurial, positive and proactive attitudes affect and pierce thoughts, emotions, beliefs and desires. Being subjected to this kind of regulatory practices, in a microphysical sense (Foucault, 1990), accounts for government involvement through actions that shape the self. Perryman et al. (2017) referred to the creation of a subject governed by self-reflection and self-responsibility as governmentalisation of the teaching profession.

Some dimensions of analysis on the call for the reform of the self, within the context of the school curriculum reform are discussed below.

Notes on the Methodological Approach

This research work is part of a qualitative study, strongly anchored within the ethnographic approach (Batallán, 2007; Rockwell, 2011; 2013; Rockwell; Anderson-Levitt, 2015; Rockwell; Ezpeleta, 2007), carried out between 2013 and 2017. The fieldwork consisted, simultaneously, in visiting at different times several school spaces, as well as analysing reform-related official documents. A total of 25 in-depth interviews and 18 participant observations (Guber, 2005) outside the classroom were conducted in two public secondary schools of Caleta Olivia, in Santa Cruz Province (Argentina). Additionally, researchers participated in institutional workshops where the official reform texts were presented. During the five years of fieldwork, there was a gradual, yet continuous, presence of researchers in the schools, aimed at establishing bonds of trust with the educational community. In this work, we combine the fieldwork with the analysis of reform texts and the ethnographic records obtained in sessions of policy dissemination. A voluminous total of 14 official documents were tracked and systematized. They were written between 2009 and 2017 in relation to different aspects of the educational reform in general, and the curriculum, in particular. References are included at the end of the article.

The analysis of these documents was focused on which aspects and/or topics were more emphasised, which set of concepts were most frequently mentioned, and which guidelines were more relevant to schools. During this process, the statements (Foucault, 2011) that comprised the reform implemented were studied. The aim was not to correlate the texts and their implementation or the formal curriculum and the curriculum in action; rather, these documents were examined to describe the way in which the processes of curriculum design and transformation were experienced. According to a Deleuzian point of view of microphysics (2014), laws cannot be separated from their cases and their conditions of application. That is, the prescriptions that configure the reformist rhetoric are materialized in complex processes of reading, interpretation and translation, carried out by the subjects in schools.

The reformist rhetoric, as we call it here, constitutes what Foucault describes as discursive practices. The statements analysed here

were extracted from the aforementioned policy texts and their dissemination sessions. A statement has material thickness, it is produced here and now, it is specific: "[...] circulates, is used, disappears, allows or prevents the realization of a desire, serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation or rivalry" (Foucault, 1972, p. 105).

Thus, in our methodology approach, statement analysis neither dives into hidden or repressed meanings, nor engages in the impossible task of deciphering the intended meaning; rather, it focuses on the materiality marked by spatial and temporal coordinates in relation to what was said. This is what Foucault calls the surface effect of statements.

Thus, we describe the statements in their enunciative function which entails:

> [...] various units (these may sometimes be sentences, sometimes propositions; but they are sometimes made up of fragments of sentences, series or tables of signs, of a set of propositions or equivalent formulations); and, instead of giving a 'meaning' to these units, this function relates them to a field of objects; instead of providing them with a subject, it opens up for them a number of possible subjective positions; instead of fixing their limits, it places them in a domain of coordination and coexistence; instead of determining their identity, it places them in a space in which they are used and repeated (Foucault, 1972, p. 106).

Therefore, statements always occur in sets of relations, propositions, senses, objects, interests and subjects. They are linked with each other, with those that precede and follow them, and, according to Foucauldian approach, it is important to analyse how they appear, here and now, within the web of statements.

As noted above, this methodology entails analysing the statements taken from policy texts as well as those of dense descriptions included in the records of the participant observations carried out.

Ii is worth noting that the curricular reform described was implemented in Santa Cruz Province, as part of the general reform of the education system, established in the National Law of Education (LEN for its Spanish acronym) of 2006 (Argentina). In the Province, this process started in 2009 through a preparatory stage, but it was not applied in schools until 2013. The production of policy texts aimed at reforming the provincial educational system began in 2009, increasing in number and strength by 2011 and 2013. In this work, four policy texts, referenced below, are analysed. These texts comprise provisions related to curriculum transformations for the new secondary education, including changes in its structure (from a three-year optional polimodal education to a five-year compulsory secondary education), pedagogical organization (creation of basic and oriented training cycles, incorporation of teaching positions to accompany students´ paths of study, in order to support their continuity in school), and in the curriculum (new

curricular structure that maintains the organization of disciplines, but includes basic and common training in the first years with a new curriculum design), among others.

Encouragement to review, innovate and renew

In 2013, the reform started to arrive at school in waves, sweeping out what was obsolete and keeping what should be enacted. These untimely and permanent succession of waves caused disorientation regarding what to do and how to do it. This problem was not related to technicalities; rather it raised political questions with respect to the lack of sensitivity in the design and enactment of the educational policies in schools. Thus, like the sea that takes away and brings back, that mixes and stirs, that drowns and hits, the curricular reform becomes permanent. This movement, caused by the waves of reform and the expectant attitude of subjects, is described by interviewees as follows:

> [...] we already had a draft, and this year, at the beginning of February, another one arrived with new spaces. It's all very recent, really, really new. We always have to keep an eye on new things because something always happens at the last minute (Pedagogical Advisor, 2016).

> [...] there are changes every year. Every year (things) are changing (Elena, Teacher, 2017).

Some accounts tell how new curriculum design for secondary education is communicated. "First, it arrives as a draft, then, as a new design; and in-between, changes that must be carried out in an untimely manner at the beginning of the school year are communicated". "Every year since 2013, the school year started with some kind of reform. Official policy texts including drafts, preliminary designs or projects arrive suddenly to schools at the beginning of the school year, with little time for its implementation".

From this perspective, we focus on the analysis of the new curriculum design and three other reform-related policy texts (Ball et al., 2011) that called for review, innovation and renewal, addressed to teaching staff in schools.

In 2016, the new provincial curriculum design for secondary education came into force. The requirements of the *new secondary school* are included in this document:

> [...] implementing a pedagogical model that includes comprehensive, continuous and diverse school paths, in a different format of school that reflects on its performance and generates relevant and meaningful proposals, in a complex world characterized by constant changes driven by a new international order. The influence of information and communication technologies on this society of knowledge should not be ignored, since they force renewal in pedagogical formats, expanding the frontiers of the school, and promoting different ways of relating with knowledge (Curricular Design, 2015, p. 5).

This is only an excerpt, but the issue of change internationalization, linked to information and communication technologies, is a diagnosis that appears in more than one document. Consequently, in a complex world of constant change, schools need to be different and self-reflective. These features conflict with a school format which has almost not been altered during the last 200 years. The question is, then, how to innovate when grounded on what has been invariable. According to the official documents, the answer is to give preference to renewed, relevant and meaningful proposals to replace the existing ones, allegedly to be out-dated, insignificant and irrelevant. Innovation gains centrality by opposing existing pedagogical practices which are not those carried out by teachers, because political agents little can write about education policy texts without having set foot in schools. Moreover, the addition, or rather the convolutedness of requirements "[...] to promote innovative educational practices that break with a homogeneous school model…" (Curriculum Design, 2015, p. 9).

Totalization is one of the features of this curriculum design which, as shown, urges to break away from a homogeneous pedagogical model. Subjects would hardly part with traditional models just because others say so. Reasons that justify such modification are necessary, beyond the argument of being part of an international order of change. Moreover, and in line with the comprehensive nature of the document, it alludes to a single pedagogical *model* and *format*. Nonetheless, when referring to teaching and/or pedagogical practices, it uses the plural form, revealing again the insurmountable gap between the generation of new and different proposals and a school format that, structurally, is almost unchanged since its creation. "The pedagogical model resulting from the process of institutional reflection should, therefore, promote new ways of teaching, new strategies and ways of thinking the educational act, focusing on a subject that learns in his/her context" (Curriculum Design, 2015, p. 9).

This reformist rhetoric is created through a set of interrelated terms that gain importance in the different texts that arrive at schools, and that are grasped by teachers, counsellors, and principals, making them their own in different ways. The effectiveness of the semantic field structured around the reform becomes evident in the circulation of these terms in schools. As the new terms are installed and used, the reform acquires a self-serving logic: technology regulates school life. That is, the content, reasons and purpose of the reform are replaced by the reform itself. For this reason, we argue that, beyond the clarity of reform basics and contents, the reform produces reform effects that function as a technology of regulation (Ball, 2002; Popkewitz, 1994a; 1994b). This happens, among other aspects, through the instauration and dissemination of a group of terms and ideas suggesting that we should start thinking differently about school and what we do in it. The call for reflecting on school and teachers' performance, coupled with the requirement of innovation and the appeal for a volitional and committed attitude, are woven in a complex manner:

> [...] to review pedagogical and institutional practices, promoting a willingness to a collective change, in order to put a strain in the relation between innovation and tradition [...] this new scenario, in which renewed teaching strategies are designed, involving different ways of addressing knowledge; suggesting innovative formats in disciplinary proposals; respecting and taking into account the ways that young people adopt to learn in the current context, requires the willingness and commitment of all the actors of the Education System of Santa Cruz Province (Curricular Design-Specialization in Arts, 2015, p. 10).

Traditional practices become an obstacle to change, while the lack of an entrepreneurial attitude, without commitment, makes teachers responsible for it. The way in which this rhetoric is configured involves subjects personally, implicating them in the achievement of goals to the same extent as other *actors of the educational system*. Consequently, enacting these changes becomes a personal enterprise that results from reviewing, and developing a pro-active and committed attitude. The burden of being entrepreneur and committed takes a heavy toll at the subjective level since, as Done and Murphy (2018) state, those who do not demonstrate sufficient will and spirit of change may be branded as a not entirely successful entrepreneur. Innovative spirit and willpower, or predisposition, constitute desired characteristics, valued positively, whereas other qualities, which do not necessarily oppose them, are perceived as negative features that impede change. Because of this, the call for developing entrepreneurial and committed attitudes becomes critical to the success of the reform, a reform of everyone, but mainly of oneself (Ball, 2002; Grinberg, 2008; Jódar; Gómez, 2007).

However, compromising and responsabilising the others of the issue entails regulatory practices, procedures to control conduct – in terms of Foucault (1990), on the exercise of power, and implementing actions on the actions of others.

Some of the official documents under study contain curricular prescriptions, which are especially addressed to teachers, include diagnoses of pedagogical practices, asking them for reflection and innovation. For example, the *Lineamientos para la mejora pedagógica e institucional del Tercer Ciclo de la Educación General Básica* [Guidelines for institutional and pedagogical enhancement of the Third Cycle of Basic General Education] of 2009 describes the pedagogical practices of teachers as non-diversified, bureaucratized and routine. It also proposes renewing the pedagogical-organizational model, and teaching practices that promote strengthening *professional development* in order to respond to the contexts of action, aiming at generating operability and speed. There are practically no precedents that assess existing practices in schools. Apparently, there are only negative diagnoses, and change is not only necessary but urgent. A reform does not imply improvement and progress *per se* (Popkewitz, 1994b; Viñao, 2002) even if it has the best intentions. The tension rises from a reform that apparently blames teachers and their pedagogical practices but, at the same time, makes

them responsible for its implementation and wants them to become its followers. To take this matter into account may help us understand the appeal to professional development discourse, albeit with reservations and with a technicist imprint with respect to the resolution of problems.

There are two other documents worthy of note that include multiple suggestions about the organization of teaching practice and assessment. The document *The Pedagogical and Institutional Organization of Compulsory Secondary Education in Santa Cruz* [Organización Pedagógica e Institucional de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria en Santa Cruz] from 2013 states that educational institutions should propose new ways of teaching and organizing teaching work with varied learning experiences by combining groups, times, places and formats. The document *Academic Regime of Compulsory Secondary Education of Assessment, Accreditation, Promotion and Mobility of Students in Santa Cruz* [Régimen Académico de la Educación Secundaria Obligatoria de Evaluación, Acreditación, Promoción y Movilidad de los estudiantes de Santa Cruz] from 2014 establishes the creation of varied alternatives for the assessment of students, including differentiated curricular proposals, integrative compensatory proposals, pedagogic proposals that meet students' interests and organization of multidisciplinary seminars and/or socio-community activities. It also points out that teachers should *reflect on what is taught and what is learned, avoiding the mere teaching of content*. This last recommendation leads to ask specifically for the place of knowledge in this curriculum reform, since there is an emphasis on how teachers should think about teaching, on what kind of proposals are desired, but there is a significant lack regarding what to teach, i.e. the content. Even though the aim is not to analyse curricular content, it should be mentioned that it shares this rhetoric of change; that is, teaching is asked to focus on the development of renewed and innovative practices. The main concern is innovation, *how* to do things, a procedural matter aimed at implementing changes as if change were beneficial *per se* (Grinberg, 2008). This *how* is obscure since practices are expected to be different. They are somehow enunciated, even including their denominations, but these documents do not specify what is, for example, a differentiated curriculum proposal, a multidisciplinary seminar or an instance of support, among others.

In short, in times of reform, we find policy texts that communicate the reform and establish the transformations, expressed as a circle that turns on itself. As prescriptive texts (Foucault, 2003), documents set out rules of conduct demarking out-dated practices, and installing others as novelty that are inherently good. In this context, reform terms and ideas are assembled, based on the responsibilisation (Done; Murphy, 2018; Peters, 2016) of subjects in schools. They are involved in the enactment of the reform, making them responsible for the achievement of objectives, disregarding the social, economic, temporal and spatial conditions of schools that, in many cases, determine the success or failure of the reform. Policy texts show at least two tensions: on the one hand, there is a demand for innovation and nonconformity in a school format

that remains structurally unchanged; and, on the other hand, there is an invitation to become pro-active, self-reflective and flexible subjects that enact and materialize the reform, but these are the same subjects who, according to the documents, are responsible for the current state of education, described as routine, traditional and lacking renewal.

Change is a Matter of Attitude: Intelligence and Responsibility

If, as we claim, the whole educational reform entails configuring a set of terms that indicate that we are faced with new ways of understanding schooling, teaching and learning, policy texts are those which bring these new terms and ideas to the institutions. For this reason, the ways, in which the content of those texts is communicated, are key to the enactment of the reform. In other words, the instances and modes of communication enable distribution circuits of the reform ideas that strengthen the materialization of changes.

In this section, we present the records gathered in the field, in relation to the presentation of the new curriculum design for secondary education, held by the Provincial Curriculum Technical Team (CTT) [Equipo Técnico Curricular, ETC].

The main arguments and the terms and/or concepts around which the reform revolves are the focus of analysis from the perspective of the CTT, i.e. those who developed the new curriculum design. As explained above, we observe that the emphasis is placed on *how* to teach, although there is not too much detail about the topic, in comparison with *what* to teach, or the school content. This is also noted by CTT members:

> [...] it is not so much about changing content as it is about changing teaching [...] the different formats are included in the different school subjects in the planning (CTT member, Area of Social Sciences, 2015).

Then, the issue about the curriculum reform tackles the transformations in the ways of selecting, organizing and distributing culture. Based on the fieldwork, we can say that in this reform, the emphasis is on changing practices and formats, on how to teach or transmit, relegating what the school should transmit to a second place. We are facing a reform that upholds a set of theses about change as dependent on subjects' attitude and development of personal capabilities. Thus, it appeals to mutable and reflexive subjects (Jódar and Gómez, 2007), disregarding what they know (Grinberg, 2016), and focusing on what they can do, i.e. the development of skills and attitudes about their activity is prioritized:

> What actually changes is the way in which teaching is carried out, focusing on formats, on how we teach, how we pass on new issues (CTT Coordinator, 2015).

We do not deny the need to question teaching design; but we would like to point out that the weight of the reform falls only on the

how – closely related to innovation. Moreover, the call to change teaching practices, focusing on teaching methodology but not on content, relates to another statement also linked to attitudes and skills. This call seeks to challenge and engage teachers at a personal level. Examples of this are the words of CTT members:

> This is achieved through 'intelligent' organization (CTT member of the Area of Social Sciences, 2015).

> It is an exercise, but this is what it is all about, of changing practices. It entails 'having the courage to' enable new forms (CTT Coordinator, 2015).

The articulation of the management discourse in educational policy is not new. Since the end of the last century, this type of discourse, that claims that change should be faced with willingness and responsibility, without fear and with a clear aim, is installed in and through educational policies (Grinberg, 2008). Through the use of some phrases, which almost become slogans and belong to the sphere of managerial thought, such as *intelligent organization*, responsible practices, and the exercise (of changing), a web of meanings is configured, creating perceptive subjectivities to such call, and able to learn how to modify themselves. If intelligent organization mainly comprises adaptability and the capacity of taking risks, the reformist rhetoric is based on a stimulating component, in terms of *encouragement* to change, to be intelligent, to be responsible, to try new formats; basically, encouragement to overcome daily uncertainty. Just like when someone encourages a team during a difficult match, teachers are encouraged to enact a curriculum reform in precarious situations of institutional time and space, under unequal conditions that are not taken into account by the enacted design of policies (Villagrán, 2018). This encouragement or motivation results in responsibilisation (Peters, 2016) and voluntarism. Transferring one's task to another individual affects subjects by making them responsible for something that does not necessarily depends on them. Here, the notion of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011) becomes relevant, since the promise of what is to come halts the questioning of present conditions. The forthcoming changes related to improvement and innovation of the *new secondary school* leaves in stand-by the questioning of the temporal and spatial elements of the reform[3] and its enactment. Ultimately, the issue in question is the policy design. Almost like someone who is trying to soften the situation, this CTT agent points out that:

> There are positive experiences to learn from, experiences that should be performed by everyone, this is what they do all over the country and in this Province. They reflect upon approaches, objectives, capacities (CTT Coordinator, 2015).

With the motto *if others were able to do it, you can too,* a search for other experiences or *good practices* is promoted. The freedom to search and choose also falls within the spectrum of the management theory. Again, the emphasis is placed on the choice of approaches and skills of subjects.

In short, we face the enactment of a curricular reform that is supported by certain guiding statements referred mainly to the ways in which subjects are and act. Such a reformist rhetoric and its modes of communication constitute a government technology that becomes self-government by promoting self-judgement, self-review and self-change. Policy texts and the ways in which they are communicated speak of the creation of an *ethos* based on the development and expression of attitudes such as voluntarism, innovation and motivation.

Conclusions

> *Each time you feel like you are falling into the void, open your wings and start again* (Written in the hall of one of the secondary schools, 2016).

As part of the cruel optimism that not only Berlant (2011) describes, the call to open the wings and start again is present in schools. As if taken out of a self-help book, encouragement to motivate others and being motivated is part of the cruel fabric of reformist rhetoric where responsibility becomes voluntarism, and in turn, responsibilisation. This article is aimed at describing how reform technologies conduct the subject him/herself and others (Foucault, 1988; 1990; 2000); in this case, referring to school life and the people involved in it on a daily basis. This was done by analysing, on the one hand, the reform texts that arrive at schools as prescriptive texts (Foucault, 2003), and on the other, the communication modes of those texts by which battles of senses, regimes of truth and authorizations to express those truths are configured.

The tension exposed here shows the secondary place given to knowledge in a curricular reform that favours the development of attitudes. Consequently, in the twenty first century, knowledge seems to have lost prestige in comparison with capacities and procedures (Grinberg, 2016).

Our concern has led us to the heart of this general reform of the education system, always keeping in mind issues related to governmentality. The configuration of the reformist rhetoric gives an account of a semantic field around change and how to manage it, or rather, how to change and manage oneself. Inherently positive changes require subjects that are skilled at managing change. Thus, from the perspective of this rhetoric, the call to think differently, to self-review, to renewal, to intelligence and innovation seems to be the principles of the reform and its enactment. Throughout this article we have tried to understand the minimum processes of these terms and their senses in the subjectivities, where change depends on the stimulus of *encouraging* and becomes a part of an exercise of a self-help group.

Just like someone who falls and gets up again, like a phoenix that is reborn from its ashes, the quotation on the wall of the school urges to open one´s wings and start again. The contemporary subjectivities, in this case the teachers called to be flexible and committed in order to

overcome changes and the multiple obstacles, should constantly reflect upon themselves, and review the educational principles and values that guide their practice to enact one reform after the other, doing nothing more than weaken schooling and teaching.

Notes

1 For example, the goals and objectives in Section 11 of the Law of National Education to ensure educational inclusion.

2 Criticism on public education accompanied by apocalyptic diagnoses, especially derived from national and international procedures of measurements, are gaining ground in the press along with budget cuts and the suspension of educational policies.

3 This aspect is not developed here, since it is not the objective of the study. Further analysis is found in Bocchio, Grinberg and Villagran (2016).

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