Teaching work and equality in the official pedagogic discourse in Argentina (2003–2019)

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Abstract

This article is aimed at analysing the modes in which educational instruction and equality are joined together in the official pedagogic discourse in Argentina during the period 2003–2019. This short period encompasses two moments of engaging in debates over the nature of this articulation—namely, the presidencies of Néstor Kirchner followed by Cristina Fernández (2003–2105) and that of Mauricio Macri (2015–2019). The analysis will be constructed through conceptual tools and methodologies arising from a political analysis of the discourse and will involve a set of documents that constitute expressions of the official discursiveness on the national level. The trajectory realised in this review considers three political-pedagogical antagonisms throughout the length of the period analysed: regarding (i) the idea of equality in official discourse, (ii) pedagogy as specific language for the construction of educational policies, and (iii) the degree of politicizing in the training and work of teachers.

Keywords: *Teaching work, educational equality, educational policies, pedagogic discourse, educational inclusion*

Main text introduction

The period of 2003–2019 in Argentina was a time when key definitions were developed within educational policies concerning teaching work and equality. These conceptual orientations recognised a series of specific coordinates that clearly differentiated two distinct political moments: the presidential governments of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández (2003–2015) and that of Mauricio Macri (2015–2019). In effect, in the first of those periods, Argentina saw a group of interventions linked to the leadership of the state, the right to education, the relationship between school attendance and equality, and the centrality of instruction in teaching work. Subsequently, in the period 2015–2019 the country observed a strong decrease in the responsibility of the state concerning education, a redefinition of the right to education and of the relationship between schooling and equality, and a displacement of the centrality of instruction in teaching work. Both periods encompassed moments of key definitions with respect to these political-pedagogical aspects and because of that characteristic will be subjected to the following scrutinization and analysis.

Materials and methods

From a postfoundational perspective, teaching constitutes a dynamic field, impossible to link to a unique meaning that is invariant over the course of time (Cherryholmes, 1998). On the contrary, the history of teaching movements is stringently bound to the trajectory of struggles to fix—always in a provisional form the different possible meanings of the work of teaching. These intents have been developed by diverse sectors, as the national States, the teaching unions, the local administrations, the international organisms, the religious confessions, and the diverse social and teaching movements, among other social entities. The result of these disputes produced rules and senses for the work of teaching that configured the daily scholastic practices of the teachers.

Teaching constitutes a space that cannot be linked to a single meaning, for which reason, in this article, the analysis of the discourses on teaching work will concentrate on the processes of production and the articulation of meanings (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) with respect to teaching as an open signification. This openness implies addressing the processes that constitute the practices of teachers and professors and that express attempts to dominate the indetermination of that which is social in the field of teaching work with the intention of producing an ordering and an organization.

In the same way, the idea of educational equality constitutes an open field in permanent redefinition, within which semantics struggles emerge over establishing what should be understood by the term. Both the identity of teaching and the meanings attributed to significant equality were not only never static or maintained exempt from conflict but were rather the object of a series of struggles to crystallise their meaning. These same productions of meaning that articulated notions on the position of teachers had to assume ideas regarding how to proceed, in a manner contingent and provisional, in the face of what was defined as unequal and necessary to be modified (Southwell & Vassiliades, 2014).

This paper proposes to analyse the modes in which teaching work and educational equality have been articulated in the official pedagogic discourse in Argentina in the period 2003–2019. This short time interval was selected since it covers two moments precipitating debates on this issue: the presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and of Cristina Fernández (2003–2005) and that of Mauricio Macri (2015–2019). The analysis will be constructed through conceptual tools and methodologies arising from Political Discourse Analysis and will involve a set of documents that constitute expressions of the official discursiveness on the national level.

The field work developed in this investigation consisted in the localization, compilation, and systemization of written document sources related to the implementation of teaching policies on the part of the National Ministry of Education during the period 2003–2019 with an aim at the identification and reconstruction of the core principles, with those having the meaning that they organised. Plans and programs related to the initial training of teachers and their operation were revealed; while documents on teaching work were produced for official occasions, texts that argued for the necessity of developing processes of reform within the scholastic ambit along with normative mandates and initiatives related to the proposal of coordinates for the evaluation of teaching work.

Once this documentary corpus was built, the research carried out a content analysis process to classify and systematize the data. This task focused on the survey and categorization of the compiled material, from which a qualitative and interpretive analysis was carried out (Piovani, 2007) of the documentary sections that reflected the national state position on teaching policies in Argentina. This progressive construction of knowledge was deepened through Political Discourse Analysis, a theoretical-epistemological horizon that directs social research to the reconstruction of meaning in discourses (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Southwell, 2014). From this perspective, the articulations of meaning that the empirical material accounted for were investigated as their cores of meaning were being reconstructed. This approach assumes that these articulations construct interpolations—i. e., modes for convoking those of the teaching subjects that can possibly be grasped through approximating their political-pedagogic and epistemological effects on the construction of senses around teaching: how this work must be seen, comprehended, and considered.

Results

Teaching work and equality in Argentina in the presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and of Cristina Fernández (2003-2015)

One of the central axes of the official pedagogic discourse in Argentina in the period 2003–2005 has been the reformulation of the modes in which teaching work and equality were articulated. This latter notion, displaced from the official discursiveness in the final third of the twentieth century, is explicitly incorporated in the formulation of the educational policies from 2003 on. In a general way, this idea was accompanied by another notion, namely that of inclusion on which many of the initiatives implemented were based. After a decade such as that of the 1990s—a devastating period with respect to the validity of a substantial number of social rights and the economic and political crisis of 2001—a major part of the educational policies that were implemented from 2003 on were sustained discursively in the need to increase the dynamics of inclusion and to construct more egalitarian scenarios.

The reformulation undertaken by the official discursiveness in Argentina occurred with respect to the discursive equivalence of educational equality and inclusion endowing both terms with the relationship of new meanings that are superimposed with certain ones of considerable data. This construction is supported by two chains of related signifiers that sustained that equivalence. The first of these articulated the notions of educational equality and inclusion in the affirmation of education as a social right, the state leadership in relation to guaranteeing the validity of education, the restitution of what is common as a horizon, and the consideration of diversity in pedagogic work. The second, for its part, linked those notions to the arguments of repositioning instruction *per se* into a central place within the task of teachers, the necessity to develop a specific work with situations understood as "educational inequality", and of—

within this framework—activating certain modifications in the daily scholastic organization.

The first of the chains of signifiers found expressions in certain legislative milestones. In effect, not only the affirmation of education as a social right and the leadership in the role of the State but also the restitution of what is common as a horizon were affirmations that were crystallised in the articulation of the National Education Law (NEL) [Ley de Educación Nacional (LEN)] passed in 2006. This norm, as such, reformulated certain central aspects of its forerunner, the Federal Law of Education (1993), characterised by promoting a subsidiary role for the State (Feldfeber, 2000), by displacing the idea of what is common as a horizon and deemphasising the notion of work involving a diversity. The sanction of the NEL, in addition, occurred in the context of political changes within Latin America in which, after the dictatorships and the governments of neoliberal-neoconservative courts of recent decades, political processes were promoted that, in certain countries, drove significant dynamics of social transformation (Saforcada & Vassiliades, 2011).

The leadership of the state and the affirmation of education as a social right that the NEL establishes were accompanied by an introduction of the notion of equality and the premise of what is common as an axis in the process of schooling. Both these principles established by the NEL are associated with the "national" character that education must assume—which feature constitutes an incipient revision of certain particularist logic in the pedagogic field in the last third of the twentieth century—to guarantee access and permanence of pupils in the years of schooling:

> Education will provide the opportunities necessary to develop and strengthen the complete training of individuals throughout their entire lives, promoting in each pupil

> the capability of defining their life's work, based on the values of freedom; peace; solidarity; equality; and respect for diversity, justice, responsibility, and the common good" (Ley de Educación Nacional. Article 8).
>
> The aims and objectives of the national educational politics are:
> (a) to ensure an education of quality with equality of opportunity and possibilities without regional imbalances and social inequalities; [...]
> (d) to strengthen the national identity, based on a respect for cultural diversity and local particularities and open to universal values as well as regional and Latin-American integration;
> (e) to guarantee educational inclusion via universal policies and pedagogic strategies and the allocation of resources that grant a priority to the most underprivileged sectors of society;
> (f) to ensure conditions of equality, respecting the differences among individuals without permitting gender or any other type of discrimination" (Ley de Educación Nacional. Article 11)

Together with the statement of the notion of equality, the NEL incorporated a combination of elements related to linking inclusion with the work with cultural differences, delineating—together with other policies—a revision of certain parameters that had organised historically the idea of scholastic inclusion, as those policies that associated it with the eradication of differences (Dussel, 2004; Southwell, 2006). Thus, the NEL established certain educational modalities that were sustained by an idea of inclusion associated with incorporating into the curriculum subjects that were found to be excluded from that process and with the assessment of the cultural norms of diverse social groups. In this last instance, Bilingual Intercultural Education was proposed as a modality at the initial, primary, and secondary levels as a guarantee to the indigenous peoples:

> [...] an education that contributes to preserving and strengthening its cultural norms, its language, its weltanschauung, and its ethnic identity . . . a dialogue mutually enriching acquaintances and values among indigenous peoples and ethnic populations that are linguistically and culturally different and conducive to a recognition and respect toward such differences” (Ley de Educación Nacional. Article 52)

The way the implementation of this modality proceeded to become consolidated has had diverse expressions in the provinces that gave way to different forms of including the values, acquaintances, languages, and other social and cultural traits of the indigenous peoples. In addition, the NEL reserved a section for a group of policies that denominated “the promotion of educational equality”, which proposed to resolve situations of injustice, marginalisation, stigmatising, and other forms of discrimination—stemming from socioeconomic, cultural, geographic, ethical elements, or of gender or any other nature—that might affect exercising the right to education. These policies likewise were presented as joined with inclusion recognition, and integration of all children, youths, and adults at all levels and modalities, principally those that were obligatory, thus emphasising the necessity to guarantee the "equality of educational opportunities and results" and the provision of material and pedagogic resources to those students, families, and schools that were found to be in an unfavourable socioeconomic situation.

These meanings with respect to inclusion, associated with extending the access and continuation of students in the educational system and promoting diverse modalities that supported this process were also seen as embodied in the National Plan of Obligatory Education of 2009. This Plan concerns a national policy of three years that dealt with the obligatory schooling, most of the school districts at all levels, and the design and implementation of institutional models and organisational alternatives. Likewise, the value of equality was formulated in terms of being able to resolve situations of grade repetition and dropping out school, which problems were situated in the plane of "inequalities" to resolve, with equality being placed in proximity with the compliance with obligatory schooling.

While the State has been capable of increasing schooling, thus permitting that more and more children have their right to education put into effect, it has still not been able to secure for them an education of quality and equality of conditions. Therefore, in addition to the efforts for inclusion and equality, new challenges arise for the educational system and for all of society that can be summarised in ensuring the completion of obligatory education for all students and reducing the gaps in the quality of the learning. To respond to those challenges is no easy task, since the solution implies greater recourses to ensure that the best teachers are there where they are most needed and, above all, an extensive revision of the educational practices to address an expansion of the obligatoriness.

The above history reveals how the equalitarian mandate appeared to characterise an education to which students had a right. This objective was associated with the definition on the part of the Ministry of Education of common contents of the curriculum and priority kernels of learning for all levels of obligatory schooling. Furthermore, the Ministry established that teacher training had to promote "the commitment to equality and confidence in the possibilities for teaching students" (Ley de Educación Nacional. Article 71), situating the policies regarding the training of professors on the plane of the promotion of greater levels of equality and inclusion in the terms analysed above.

Those notions regarding inclusion were, in general, founded on a universalist rhetoric. Within this context, in 2009 the Universal Assignment for the Son (UAS) [Asignación Universal por Hijo (AUH)] was implemented, a policy of the National State that continues at the present time and that grants a benefit to families for their children whose members are found not to be in a situation of formal work—and therefore do not receive the benefit that the formal workers do for theirs. The UAS is directed at family groups in an unemployment situation or that participate with only |an informal/a part-time/an inconsistent| economy. The payment is contingent upon the compliance of the children with obligatory schooling along with a realization of an initial health examination and a previous vaccination. Despite their denomination of "universal", the AUH is directed at certain specific sectors, although it advances with a proposal that is more inclusive upon incorporating itself within the policies of social security (Feldfeber & Gluz, 2011). In general, these measures have represented a reversion from certain of the policies from the 1990s within the context of significant economic growth and the intervention of the State oriented at guaranteeing social rights (Gorostiaga, 2010) that on the pedagogic plane appears to be deployed from the equality-inclusion duality.

A central element in the ways in which consolidating the value of equality and inclusion was proposed constituted the affirmation that the central task of the teacher must be instruction. In debate against pedagogic positions that, in the 1990s, had reduced teaching work to the plane of attendance and the affective contention in the face of the dramatics of the social consequences of neoliberalism, the postulates of the period 2003–2015 sought to point at instruction as the centre of the task of teachers and professors (Birgin, 2012, 2014).

These discussions began to be deployed essentially from 2004 with the implementation of the Comprehensive Program for Educational Equality (CPEE) [Programa Integral para la Igualdad Educativa (PIIE)] on the part of the National Ministry of Education. The Program constituted an initiative directed at a thousand primary schools over the entire country that pertained to sectors under conditions of social exclusion and consisted in support through financial resources and pedagogic accompaniment for the development of initiatives on the part of the scholastic institutions. The program introduced a revision of the meanings associated with teaching work to affirm the presupposition of equality of opportunities as a dimension of the social equality to try to guide the pedagogic initiatives toward the strengthening of teaching practices.

The value of educational equality, which appears in the title CPEE, subsequently had diverse expressions within its proposal. First, this notion joined previous elements proper to focused policies—the priority of the sectors under conditions of social vulnerability, the concern to guarantee "basic education"—with aspirations to social and cultural development for the entire citizenry, a consideration of the situations of exclusion, and the presupposition of instruction as a central task in teaching work, within a context of a repositioning of the state headship/leadership within the educational field and other spheres of the social realm.

These orientations and the emphasis placed on the development of a policy of national character presupposed a rupture with respect to the logic that had organised the earlier reform of 1990—it characterised by a state irresponsibilization and a jurisdictional and institutional hyperresponsibilization that occasioned a dramatic increase in educational fragmentation. In another way, these new measures were manifested in the necessity to link educational activity to the task of instruction, leaving behind a series of problems that, from this discourse, exceeded the work that was specifically scholastic.

> The CPEE starts out by recognizing that in recent years—owing to the critical economic and social situation that spread through our country—the schools have seen themselves confronted by a diversity of demands and problems that in certain instances exceeded their functions and possibilities and that occupied the pedagogic territory with innumerable activities imposed by the urgencies" (ARGENTINA, 2004, p. 8).

With respect to the idea of repositioning the teaching, the proposal of the CPEE placed the realization of the right to education in a relationship with the distribution of goods and an improvement in material conditions as one of the paths to attain the equality of opportunities associated with social equality. Likewise, another of the expressions that the value of equality assumed in the PIIE's proposal is the asseveration of the equality of capabilities of all the subjects as points of departure from the pedagogic practices. This concept implied a change of relevance in the official discourse with respect to considering that what was termed "educability" was not a static condition that depended on the family surroundings of the child, but rather could be played with through what an educational institution did. This premise was also present in a series of elaborations and definitions in the relative curricular documents relative to the pedagogic and institutional organization of the schools.

In contrast to the policies focussed in the 1990s, where the proposals were not accompanied by an operation on the conditions that generated the situations of inequality, the wider socio-political and economical context in which the implementation of the PIIE was written had to do with the major reduction in the indices of poverty, the strong increase in the levels of employment, and the rise in the percent gross domestic product assigned to education, at 6.47%

between 2011 and 2015. Likewise, the reorientation of the value of equality in the proposal of the PIIE presupposed a rupture in the face of the reformist discourse of the previous decade, constituting a delegitimizing of those practices that were opposed to said value as socially unjust.

The recuperation of the centrality of teaching was proposed as the unique path for guaranteeing children's right to education. In keeping with the official discursiveness, the means of constructing equality was to restore the place of what is common and what is shared, through the transmission to the new generations of the knowledge and experience that constitute the cultural, national, and universal heritage. Thus, the value of equality is presented as a horizon to which one should advance starting with the necessities of learning on the part of each student, postulating that all of them will do so. Equality thus presupposes a common consideration toward all students—"all can learn"—while attention to the differences, peculiarities, and necessities of each one is likewise implied. From that point of view, a questioning was insisted upon as to the conditions offered to each student for them to be able to learn. These enunciations on the centrality of teaching did not occur in a vacuum, but rather, in part, found a propitious condition in the reduction of scholastic and teaching work down to a dimension of attendance and of food subsistence within the framework of the neoliberal policies that had unfolded in the 1990s. Something similar occurred in the notion of equality, excluded from the pedagogic discourse in favour of equity and the consideration and respect for the differences in the aforementioned decade, which on a number of occasions occurred in their naturalization. Therefore, equality was proposed as a horizon based on the premise that all the students could learn and that the school must help them to perform as students and trust in their possibilities for learning.

The centrality of the teaching also was associated with the necessity to organize the scholastic institution. In 2009. the Board of Curricular Administration of the Province of Buenos Aires urged "putting into operation the institutional practices to produce equality of access to cultural goods" (BUENOS AIRES, 2009). That proposal was iterated in 2010, when the necessity to rethink the institutional organization was proposed with an aim at taking advantage of the times and spaces available to convert learning into the centre of the daily scholastic duties (BUENOS AIRES, 2010). Teachers were called upon to review the daily practices to examine if they could not find devoid the meaning that those procedures had had in a previous moment in history and, therefore, were ending up not using part of the time for teaching. The revisions of the institutional formats appeared to be necessary, especially when the latter were producing situations of educational inequality.

The flexible and alternative groupings of teachers and students are strategic and respond to differing purposes in different moments of the year—namely. for developing individual sequences, deepening certain contents, favouring the interchange of students that initiate a cycle with those who are finishing the year, and sustaining a particular grouping at specific times during the day when dealing with students at risk of accumulating repeats in the scholastic cycle who have frequently not attended classes or require prolonged times of individual remedial work (BUENOS AIRES, 2008, p. 29).

Equality and inclusion thus appear as values that are both associated with overcoming inequalities of origin and characteristic of quality teaching—it being directly linked to the possibility of becoming repositioned in the centre of the pedagogic vocation and concomitantly guaranteeing the student's access to knowledge.

To improve scholastic quality implies placing teaching at the centre of the concerns of educational policy and the challenges confronting it to the effect of guaranteeing the right of all children, youths, and adults to have access to the knowledge necessary for the fruitful participation in life in a critical and transformative manner. This aim presupposes the development of policies that have as a concern the proposals that a school offers, not only in terms of content but also with respect to the processes of transmission and the forms of organization, as well as the pedagogic materials available and the conditions that obtain. Producing better conditions for the school each day for both the students and the teachers implies a concern for the ways in which the equality of access to knowledge on the part of children, youths, and adults can possibly be verified (ARGENTINA, 2009, p. 5).

These premises also oriented the proposals for teacher training on the national level in Argentina during the period 2003–2015. Teaching was defined as a profession whose specificity was centred on instruction as an activity for transmitting culture in the schools and for developing the potentialities and capabilities of the students (Consejo Federal de Educación, 2007). The professors were conceived as both subjects and professionals who developed those tasks, sustaining the validity of the social right to education in commitment to the value of equality as stipulated in NEL.

As has been indicated thus far, the period 2003–2015 has been a historical time involving a strong condensation of meanings with respect to teaching work and equality. These meanings were articulated by kernels of ideas that were driven and sustained by the national educational policies. In particular, the latter established that instruction was the central task of the work of teachers that was stringently linked to the construction of what is common and to sustaining inclusion, with both being horizons for the students for whom the schools were responsible. In the following section, we will linger on the ways in which teaching work and equality became (un)articulated during the period 2015–2019.

Teaching work and equality in Argentina during the presidency of Mauricio Macri (2015–2019)

The rise to power of the ex-president Mauricio Macri in December 2015, for Argentina, implied the direct enactment of the process of conservative restoration that the region experienced until the middle of the previous decade. The government condensed, in the "shift to the right" that it represented, the restitution of neoliberal principles that the former presidencies of Néstor Kirchner and Cristina Fernández had displaced.

These reformulations were directed at a challenge of the value of the public school and the disarmament of the link that had been fashioned between inclusion and quality. They settled on the idea that the removal of that link responded to the dynamics of the policies developed between 2005 and 2015. Thus, the principal argument was that a greater incorporation of students that previously did not attend the scholastic institutions would have had consequently a diminution in "educational quality" during that period. New student bodies—most which individuals were the first generations of students in their families to access the schools—at the middle and upper levels would have produced a decline in the quality of education as a result of that diversification.

These interventions were framed in a collection of norms that were directed at repositioning the training and work of teachers in terms of the expectations, horizons, and coordinates in which they must develop. The National Plan for Teacher Training 2016–2021, elaborated by the government of the ex-president Macri, was an exponent of those displacements. The document possessed a series of milestones synthesised as "visions", in the usage of the entrepreneur world, for presenting the aims of an organization that stressed the affirmation that a training of teachers of quality was one that succeeded in developing "capabilities" in students for being themselves future professors.

> Strengthening the practices of teachers and exercise instructors
> VISION: Let all the teachers and exercise directors participate regularly in moments of training that permit them to develop the fundamental capabilities of the students. (...)
>
> The National Teacher-Training Institute (NTTI) [Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente (INFD)] will promote the training of teachers in pedagogic innovations that are demonstrated to have an impact on the development of fundamental capabilities in all the students" (Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente, 2016, pp. 5–15; capital letters sic in the original).

The teacher training adopted a doubly peculiar anchorage: the moments of training were promoting capabilities in each teacher, in an individual form, and that approach permitted them thereafter to develop capabilities in the students. The pedagogic task distanced itself from the notion of instruction—scarcely proposed in the document—and was simply approaching accompaniment and being a guide.

> The wager is centred on the training of teachers that accompany students in the construction of the capabilities for acting with freedom in different spheres of social life. Among those abilities, creativity, comprehension, regulating one's own learning, collaborative work, communication, initiative, openness toward learning, commitment, empathy, and critical thinking." (...)
>
> With the goal of constructing a society prepared for the future where the social, individual, economic, and cultural development depends on access to fundamental

> capabilities by all members of society, this plan proposes policies for training solid, critical, and motivated professors" (Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente, 2016, p. 3).

The horizons for teaching remained reduced to forming capabilities to act "in freedom", oriented around nonspecific attitudinal aspects ("comprehension", "communication", "commitment", "empathy"), elements linked to the regulation of "one's own learning"—thus avoiding involving one in instruction—and a mention of "critical thinking". Clearly, teacher training appeared linked to neither the value of instruction nor the pedagogic central foundations nor the intervention in a society marbled by inequality. Within this framework, the only allusion relative to the justice proposed by the National Plan for Teacher Training was overcoming the "gaps" among the students that were not building up the same learning in their scholastic trajectories.

> Four principles guide the national policies for teacher training oriented around a compound training system, namely those of the Upper Institutes for Teacher Training [Institutos Superiores de Formación Docente (ISFD)] for both state and private administration as well as for that of the universities. The first of these elements, linked to the concept of educational justice, directs the training of teachers that were capable of developing in students' common fundamental abilities after taking into account at the same time their different contexts, cultures, and learning styles. Through the policies of teacher training, and in articulation of other educational and social policies, the national and provincial governments assume the responsibility of prioritising those sectors most vulnerable and guaranteeing the right to a shared curriculum in order to reduce the learning gaps among the students more or less underprivileged" (Consejo Federal de Educación. Resolution 286/16, 2016, p. 4).

The notion of educational justice on which the plan worked rested on the accomplishment of "common fundamental capabilities" after taking into account—in a nonspecific way—the students' cultures and styles of learning.

There resided the sole allusion to what is common that the National Plan for Teacher Training had realised. The right to a shared curriculum—which is not the same as the accomplishment of common fundamental capabilities—was the horizon and the limit of the definition of what is common, which concept does not involve a diagnosis of what the unjust situations were or the ambit of the inequality that were necessary to operate on. Nor was established what possibilities the teaching had of approaching those scenarios.

These assumptions give an account of the pronounced veering off that Macriism provoked in the proposal of the links between education and inequality. Proposing that this latter entity to be the result of meritocratic logic based on the presumed force (or lack of force), the "entrepreneur" model of individual success (Canelo, 2019; Feldfeber, 2020) oriented the teachers around companions whose capabilities they were to develop to be introduced to it. This proposal is articulated with the notion that the individuals ought to live in a society crossed by the idea of "meritocracy", where success presumably is gained through personal effort and for which goal the incorporation of abilities linked to leadership and "entrepreneurism" is necessary.

This shift upset drastically the relationship between scholastic education and the inequalities that were seen reconfigured by the pedagogic discourse of Macriism. Inequality came to be naturalised and understood as an expected product of a meritocratic society in which certain members deserved more and others less. Possibly in this veering off was one of the major interventions of the governmental educational policy of Macri into the pedagogic trajectory of the governments that preceded between 2003 and 2015. The teaching policies of Macriism were positioned in a search for interpellating teaching identities from a particularistic standpoint.

Within this context, the teacher to value had to, as a precondition, adopt a motivating attitude oriented at the development of their individual capabilities:

> The second principle sustains the assessment of teachers. This plan seeks the development of the teaching profession, starting with previous experience and knowledge, but in addition banking on strengthening the motivation in their task, their capabilities, and a more collaborative connection between members of the same collective faculty. This emphasis will enable a repositioning of the teacher within the public scheme. a consolidation of the link with families, and the creation of a bond of confidence in order to favour the appropriation of the processes of change with the continued support of the State" (Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente, 2016, p. 5).

Valuable teaching was associated with the development of motivational aptitudes, whereas the teaching of professors appeared subordinated to the "demands": of determining changes or societal models, such as that referred to as "the society of knowledge", which did not appear to be approached critically:

> Finally, the fourth principle proposes the necessity of renovating teaching. The transformation of the teaching practices is imperative for those to be effective and permanent with the demands of the society of knowledge in which the objectives of the school are more and more ambitious and where the traditional authority of the institutions is in permanent questioning" (Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente, 2016, p.5).

The "assessment", furthermore, involved the development of personal and motivational attitudes on the part of the teachers, displacing the foundations and discussions proper to teaching that could conceivably involve these same definitions. The central underpinnings of teacher training were displaced to settled proposals in a banal incorporation of discourse on the neurosciences and on emotional education (Abramowski, 2018).

These coordinates were articulated with contemporary movements of challenge to the training and work of teachers: those spaces that the national governmental policies gave to nongovernmental organizations—such as the Varkey Foundation and its program "Teach for Argentina", which proposed a "training" for four months based on vocational components; the proposal of the Ministry of Education of the City of Buenos Aires to close 29 higher institutes of teacher training in favour of the creation of a new university (the UNICABA), with the argument that that undertaking implied hierarchization of the training because that change would transfer the training to a university ambience; the extended underfunding of the public universities (in those that trained teachers and those that carried out research teaching work); and the displacement of the teachers in instances of debate on the public policies, to those to which the sectors of business and the financial world were widely summoned.

The pedagogic discourse of Macriism articulated a displacement of the pedagogic field into the design and definition of public policies for the training and work of teachers. Within the framework of a technocratic-particularistic restitution, the problems of education were proposed as subjects to resolve individually, with an "entrepreneur" impulse and a stake of intrapersonal skills, at the same time diluting each horizon of what is common and what is collective. These interventions converged with the public display of discourses on the teaching deficit that strengthened the notion of a devaluation of the teaching task (Vassiliades, 2020).

Within the framework of these interpellations, the pedagogic relationship was displaced to a purely commercial facet: the teachers would obtain diverse tools (invested with neutrality) in their training to employ them thereafter in their daily practice to cause the students to acquire capabilities whose politicism became invisible. The commercialization of the pedagogic relationships positioned teaching work in an individual service oriented around a particular demand in which the vision of what is collective, what is common, and what is of the state became diluted.

Finally, the National Plan for Teacher Training 2016–2021 constructed an idea of training broken off from the knowledge and experience that at that time produced a series of daily pedagogic practices that the teachers carried forth in the schools. The objective of accomplishment that all the teachers counted on as "capabilities" were not supported in those instances; and, when they were used, their choice remained reduced to presumptive "good educational indicators", which label denoted that the contact with them would be favourable:

> A strategic policy for guaranteeing a greater quantity of novel teachers that count on the knowledge, the capabilities, and the attitude necessary in the performance of the profession requires securing the training of the management teams and of the professors of the National Institute of Teacher Training (...). One frontier of action on what is advanced in the previous decade is the strengthening of the professional practices during the initial training, which began to be realised from the first year of training and must be accompanied by the schools of the Institute. Finally, the jurisdictions will be supported to strengthen the bond between the Institute and the associated schools and to generate the necessary institutional conditions to be able to select these schools according to objective criteria, in such a way that they be of diverse contexts, have potent pedagogic-institutional proposals, and present good educational indicators while they constitute a very significant example on which the teaching of future teachers is modelled in some manner" (Instituto Nacional de Formación Docente, 2016, p. 9).

The invisibility that the Macriism pedagogic discourse configures over the potency of teaching practices also approaches the ways in which the evaluation is proposed (in terms of watertight measurement) of the teaching system and the function of investigation in the training institutes. The production of this "weathertightness" on the pedagogies that are hatched and disputed in the scholastic daily life found a maximal expression in putting into circulation a specialised speech about education. A set of interventions deployed between 2015 and 2019 promulgated certain immovable meanings linked to the pointing to presumed disvalues in public schooling and teaching work. These perspectives standardised the outlook on educational problems furrowing the pedagogic field and trying to hegemonize the way in which the task of teaching was spoken about, interpreted, and understood.

Discussion

This article has sought to analyse certain aspects of the ways in which teaching work and educational equality were articulated in Argentina during the period 2003–2019. To that end, a series of expressions of official pedagogic discourse has been analysed, demonstrating that those utterances recognised that teaching constitutes a field in permanent movement, marbled by struggles to fix a meaning. A substantial part of the productions of meaning has been riddled with disputes on the idea of equality, which concept appears to have constituted one of the organising axes of the regulations of teaching work during this time.

A look at the region of Latin America during recent years, as indicated by Kessler (2014) reveals that persistent inequality continues to be the overriding Latin-American enigma. The approach to this problem must consider the multiple and many-faceted character of an inequality that is interdependent on other phenomena and locations worldwide (Jelin, Motta and Costa, 2020). This article has had the intention of proposing an approach to the Argentine case between 2003 and 2019 to explore the forms of state regulation of the links between teaching work and the idea of equality, as a means of becoming aware of the categorizations and productions of meaning regarding inequality put into circulation by the public policies.

The Argentine case, as analysed throughout this article, highlights the way in which the issue of equality entered as a nodal aspect of educational policies, unfolding disputes around its meaning. The research carried out allowed us to detail the features that were articulated around this process starting in 2003, constituting an axis from which teaching policies sought to displace the main regulations that had been deployed in the previous decade. This discursive operation positioned the value of equality as a central aspect of educational practices and, especially, of teaching work as from 2003. As observed in this article, this notion was articulated to the idea of the centrality of teaching, the state responsibility in guaranteeing the right to education and in the revaluation of the common as an inalienable horizon of schooling practices. These articulations organised the main cores of meaning in the period 2003-2015.

The shift experienced in Argentina to a new neoliberal cycle in the period 2015-2019 showed a set of features that, in the context of regional changes of similar sign in other countries, impacted the way in which teaching work was conceived. At the local level, as we have shown in this and other articles (Vassiliades, 2020), this movement was based on the withdrawal of the State in its role as guarantor of the right to education, the displacement of the idea of equality towards particularistic logics, the fading of the common and the contestation of teaching as a central task of teaching work.

The trajectory adopted in this article takes into consideration three pedagogic antagonisms throughout the period analysed. In the first, the idea of equality ended up being expressed by the public policies in 2003–2005, remaining confronted by a substitution of particularist premises in 2003–2015 that strengthened the neoliberal character of those reforms. In the second, the specific language of pedagogy for the construction of teaching policies, central in the reforms implemented in 2003–2015, was displaced by the inception of a dialogue with private foundations, companies, referents of the financial world, and exponents of a new pseudo emotional discourse linked to a self-construction of an entrepreneur profile and of leadership. In the third, the politicity of teacher training and work, nodal trait of the policies of the period 2003–2015, was contested in the interval 2015–2019 by discourses of technocratic bias that maintained that those ambits were possible to be resolved through interventions that were presumably aseptic and linked to the promotion of individual capabilities for participating passively in an uncertain, changing, and unevenly growing society. Thus, the visualisation of the underpinnings that reconfigured the links between teaching work and equality during the period 2003–2019 in Argentina results in an indispensable step for imagining policies that return to establishing a common and emancipating pedagogic horizon.

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