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Future teachers and social change in Bolivia: between decolonisation and demonstration

Lopes Cardozo, T.A.

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Theoretical and methodological framework to understand social change, teacher education and teachers in Bolivia

'Hope provides the basis for dignifying our labour as intellectuals, offering up critical knowledge linked to democratic social change, and allowing both students and teachers to recognize ambivalence and uncertainty as a fundamental dimension of learning to engage in critique, dialogue, and an open ended struggle for justice'
(Giroux, 2003b: 49)

'You have to be committed to study, to become the light and hope that Bolivia needs for its development'
President Morales in an address to secondary school students in Santa Cruz
(Ministerio de Educación de Bolivia, 2011)

2.1 Introduction

'One state has died, and one state has been born. The colonial state is no longer, and the national state has arrived, bringing hope, for all the people of the world'. These are Evo Morales' dramatic words as he is inaugurated ritually as the first indigenous leader of Bolivia in the ancient site of Tiahuanacu in January 2006.[14] Hope is often mentioned in relation to processes of change, as the above quotes reveal. This hope-change nexus becomes particularly relevant in highly unequal societies, such as Bolivia, where historically marginalised groups with great anticipation struggle for a better future. This chapter discusses theoretical insights that help to understand the complexities and tensions between the discourses and reality of Bolivia's transformation processes, and the role of education and educators in working toward a better world.

Theory helps us to make sense of the (in)visible world around us. Theory is both time and space bound (Cox, 1996) and fluid rather than static, as it is constantly rethought and reshaped on the basis of fieldwork (Dale, 2010). 'Doing' social science research is, however, anything but a simple task. This is even more so the case for fieldwork research in Bolivia and its constantly changing society and politics. With this chapter I hope to make a modest contribution to creating a suitable theoretical frame for understanding contemporary transformation processes in Bolivian education and society. My approach to studying Bolivian teacher training in its changing socio-political context includes interpretations and variations of key aspects of critical

[14] See BBCs video reporting, 'Evo Morales sworn in as spiritual leader', http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8473899.stm (last accessed 01-04-2011).

ethnography such as reflexivity, (multiscalar) dialogue and solidarity – for this particular study interpreted as a longer term dialogue, engagement and dissemination strategy with various groups of respondents involved in the study. Research grounded in critical methodology is particularly suitable for understanding pre-service teacher identity, agency and the stance toward social justice because it seeks to document the process of empowerment of voice and human agency. This way, '*critical pedagogy constitutes an emancipatory and democratic function for school and research so that marginalized voices are heard*' (Moore, 2008: 590). Although the scope of this research is limited, in the sense that it cannot fully do justice by painting a generalisable picture of the whole Bolivian teacher education system, as it only includes two of the twenty-seven Normales in Bolivia, it does aspire to contribute to a better understanding of this under-researched field.

2.2 Meta-theoretical inspirations

With regard to ontological and epistemological perspectives, this study most closely adheres to the theoretical perspective of critical realism. More specifically, it draws from a particular version of critical realism, which has been at the basis of Bob Jessop's work on Cultural Political Economy (CPE). As Susan Robertson's book *A Class Act: Changing Teachers Work, Globalisation and the State* (2000) suggests, critical realism is a powerful methodology for studying the social world of teachers. Ontologically, critical realism affirms there is a reality that exists independently of our observation of it, since structures and processes can only partly be experienced at the empirical level (Fairclough, 2005: 922). It thus avoids a positivist assumption of empiricism (Hall, 2009), since multiple interpretations of this reality exist (Hay, 2002a: 122). According to a critical realist approach, theory is a tool that should be utilised to explore and explain the three domains of reality, being: 1) *the empirical* (visible experience of the real and actual); 2) *the actual* (visible and invisible events and processes); and 3) *the real* (or the invisible structures, causal mechanisms and powers) (Jessop, 2005: 41). Epistemologically, critical realism pleads for a critical constructivist approach, which starts from the appreciation that we cannot understand (political) behaviour and power relations without understanding the *ideas* actors hold about their environment. Thus, it recognises a complex and dialectical interaction between material and ideational factors (Hay, 2002a: 208). Furthermore, critical realism asserts that knowledge is produced through continuous confrontations between 'retroductive theoretical hypotheses' generated through processes of enquiry (Jessop, 2005: 43) by asking '*what needed to have happened for this to be the case*'? (Dale 2010).[15] This 'version' of critical realism aims to explain social phenomena and to make generalisable claims about them. Bearing in mind the intrinsic tension in case study research, between particularity and generalisability, the conclusions of this research, about social transformation and teacher education in Bolivia, should be located within a specific time and place, while at the same time, with great care, it outlines some generalisable insights in its conclusions.

Building on the critical realist recognition of the importance of both the discursive and the material, the Cultural Political Economy (CPE) approach developed by Jessop and colleagues at Lancaster University takes 'the cultural turn' in political and economic research seriously

[15] 'The social structures, institutions, mechanisms, rules, resources, etc. that human agents draw upon in order to initiate action, can in principle be *retroduced* and their operation uncovered and *explained*', Dale explained during a lecture at the University of Amsterdam in August 2010, '[From a critical realist perspective] evidential statements are the mediated results of investigation and so never directly reflect real or actual phenomena'. Statements derived from the lecture included in this thesis (Dale, 2010) were agreed upon by R. Dale in personal communication, May 2011.

(Jessop, 2004b: 160). Jessop's approach to CPE draws mainly from (critical) Marxist theoretical models, as it seeks to follow the cultural turn without disregarding '*the articulation of semiosis with the interconnected materialities of economics and politics within wider social formation*' (Jessop, 2004b:159). This perspective thus stresses the importance of including semiosis in political economic analysis, with semiosis being defined as 'the intersubjective production of meaning', including narrativity, rhetoric, hermeneutics, identity, reflexivity, historicity and discourse. Closely linked to Latin American coloniality debates (discussed below), CPE's epistemological stance emphasises the contextuality and historicity of knowledge claims (Jessop 2004b), whilst at the same time stressing the materiality of social relations, and the constraints agents face (Robertson, forthcoming).

A relevant interpretation of CPE for the field of education is provided by Susan Robertson, and carries the name 'cultural political economy of education' (CPE/E) (Robertson, forthcoming). The CPE/E, as well, takes the cultural turns seriously by also examining the role of semiosis. It sees education '*not as a pre-given container or universal and unchanging category of social relations and life-worlds, but as a complex terrain and outcome of discursive, material and institutionalised struggles over the role of education in the social contract*' (Robertson, forthcoming). From a critical pedagogical perspective, Robertson reminds us how education is '*a key site of cultural production and social reproduction*' (Ibid.). In summary, the CPE/E helps us to disentangle and disclose the complex (and contradictory) ways in which discourses/ideas/imaginaries (such as development, knowledge or decolonisation), actors/institutions (such as the nation state, international organisations, as well as sub-national educational institutions including the Normales) and material capabilities/power (resources, aid, information) are mobilised to strategically and selectively advance an imagined (decolonising Bolivian) economy and its material reproduction, within which education is now being re/constituted in particular ways.

Although this thesis has an empirical focus on the level of Bolivian teacher training institutions, it places these organisations in a broader local, national, regional and global context. The research aims to refrain from seeing globalisation and regionalisation as predominantly one-way processes of influence from the top (global and/or regional levels) down to the national and local levels. In order to avoid methodological nationalism, there is a need to explore the relationships between 'the different scales of governance' (Dale, 2005: 124), with governance being defined as '*the work of governing broken down into independent sets of activities*', not necessarily performed by the state (Dale, 2005: 129). Thus, instead of only applying a narrow analysis of Bolivian 'Education Politics', I aim to also engage with the 'Politics of Education' in Bolivia (Dale, 2005: 139-141). Dale's 'politics of education' approach seeks to understand and explain the 'social contract' for education: what does society give to education, and what is expected in return? Through what 'logic of intervention' does education work; *how* does it seek to deliver on its part of the social contract? Should it restore the status quo? And, should it modernise or control its population? (Dale, 2010; 2006). This thesis deals with the varying answers to these questions for Bolivian education over time, with the most current 'logic of intervention' being 'decolonisation through education'.

The thesis also embraces some of the ideas of Roger Dale's Globally Structured Educational Agenda, particularly his conceptualisation of 'Global', implying the '*social and economic forces operating supranationally and transnationally, rather than internationally, to elude, break down or override*

national boundaries, while reconstructing the relations between nations' (Dale, 2000: 428).[16] In order to understand Bolivia's new education reform for decolonising education, I both look at the 'Program' of the ASEP law (the content, the innovative policy itself), as well as the 'Program Ontology', or *how* this policy was designed and works (Dale, 2005; Pawson, 2002). In other words, it is not the ASEP policy itself that 'works', rather the actual implementation of the policy initiative depends on '*the nature of their subjects and the circumstances of the initiative'* and *'the resources they [the initiatives] offer to enable their subjects [teachers, curriculum developers, etc.] to make them work*' (Pawson, 2002: 342). This *process* of how various actors interpret the ASEP law is called the 'program mechanism'. Thus, it is this programme mechanism that triggers change, rather than the actual 'programme' (the ASEP law) itself. In summary, from a critical realist inpired politics of education approach, this thesis, in its design and analysis, engages with the various scales and actors of the Bolivian education field that are inherently involved in processes of societal change – either as drivers or resisting forces.

2.3 A social justice and (neo)Gramscian perspective on socio-political and educational change in Bolivia

Following from the rationale of this research presented in the first chapter, present day processes of social transformation in Bolivia are not just about an economic redistribution of wealth (and educational and work) opportunities among different classes, it is also very much about struggles for cultural recognition and political representation of large and varying groups that for so long have been excluded and discriminated against in Bolivian society. Struggles for social transformation in Bolivia are thus about a struggle for social justice, interpreted in this thesis by following the Bolivian understanding of the concept of *vivir bien* (to live well), which encompasses environmental and gender justice, a recognition of cultural and linguistic diversity, political/democratic representation for all Bolivians and the restructuring and redistribution of a fair and equal economic system that benefits the Bolivian nation.[17] I find Nancy Fraser's comprehensive understanding of social justice useful for interpreting and understanding the contemporary socio-political strategies in Bolivia. Fraser (1995: 82) defined two types of remedies to social injustices including: 'affirmative remedies' – correcting the outcomes without changing structural frameworks; and 'transformative remedies' – correcting outcomes by restructuring the underlying generative framework (Fraser, 1995: 86). Rather than an affirmative multicultural approach, or what Hale (2002) termed a form of 'neoliberal multiculturalism', Bolivia's current 'politics of change' with, at its core, the new 'revolutionary and decolonising' education law, are hence about a struggle for transformative social justice. Based on historical developments of gender (in)justice, Fraser (2005b) provides a three-dimensional normative framework of social justice, which includes the concepts of redistribution, recognition and representation (2005b: 300, 305).[18] As illustrated in Table 2 below, this social justice framework analytically distinguishes three

[16] Although Dale's Globally Structured Education Agenda approach is linked to the phenomena of capitalism as a common interest of transnational forces, I also find elements of his work useful for the analysis of ALBA's regionalism – a counter-hegemonic and anti-capitalist initiative – and particularly the dialectical interference of the Bolivian proposed education Reform and ALBA, as discussed in chapter 3.

[17] Though some might argue the concept of social justice is perhaps viewed as a 'Western' or 'neoliberal' in the Bolivian context, in my research I have not encountered such views.

[18] In her earlier work, Fraser (1995) made an analytical distinction between socioeconomic injustice (with redistribution as a solution) and cultural injustice (requiring culture-centred politics of recognition), while

interlinked dimensions: the socio-economic dimension (linked to *redistribution*); the cultural dimension (or *recognition*); and the political dimension (of *representation*), the latter one including three levels of misrepresentation.

Dimension	Socio-Economic	Cultural	Political
Remedy to injustices	**Redistribution**	**Recognition**	**Representation** 3 levels of misrepresentation: - Ordinary-political level - Boundary setting level of misframing - Meta-political level

Table 2, Fraser's three-dimensional conceptualisation of social justice (2005a,b; see also Muhr, 2008b: 58)

The third concept of representation is developed to open the framework of analysis to the multiscalar complexities of the political arena. Decisions taken at the state level, often impact the lives of people above and below the state (at local levels, but also in the wider region beyond the state). Similarly, international institutions and mechanisms may have an influence on processes of (in-)justice on national and local scales (Fraser 2005b: 304).[19] Fraser explicitly stresses the relevance of this three-dimensional approach to challenge maldistribution, misrecognition and misrepresentation for social movements, such as the indigenous movements who gained political strength since the 1990s in the Latin American context. Particularly in the *third meta-political level of misrepresentation*, large groups in society are excluded from participation in meta-discourses that affect them. Indigenous groups, environmentalists, development activists and international feminists have started to claim their rights to stand up against the non-territorial powers or structures (e.g. the international financial market, global governance on climate change, or exclusionary forms of schooling) that influence their lives. Similar to having a relevance to this study, Aikman applies Fraser's three-dimensional theory of justice to study indigenous education initiatives in the African continent (2011).

While social justice is nowadays a fashionable term in the education field, the meaning of social justice and its relation to education is far from settled (North, 2006) nor unproblematic.[20] In line with Fraser's arguments, more socially just education would need a combination of both redistributive and recognition approaches (North, 2008: 1187). Calls for redistribution in education often include equality of access to education, and an economic redistribution of material goods and social services to educational institutions. Education for recognition, then, seeks to respect and include all students while stimulating critical and meaningful dialogue. The

emphasising the two are intertwined (Fraser, 1995: 72-73). In her more recent work on feminism and gender justice, she goes a step further and presents the three-dimensional conceptualisation that is applied here.

[19] This dimension does not only deal with the first level *ordinary-political misrepresentations* (denying full participation as peers in social interactions), it also deals with a second level *boundary-setting mechanism of misframing* in the context of globalisation, criticizing the framework in which the national state is the sole political space that excludes marginalised groups from any influence. On a third level it states that many injustices in the world are not territorial in character, and that chances to live a good life are not fully dependent on internal (state) political constitutions, but also on, for instance, regional political agreements such as those constructed through ALBA (see chapter 3).

[20] There seems to be a separation in academic debates on how to approach a just society through education. One the one hand, there are the more conservative researches that argue for assimilation and maintaining educational philosophies that serve to continue the status quo (of a severely unbalanced power structures). On the other hand, critical theorists relate to the struggle for social justice in education with the specific goal of depicting and eradicating those power structures their opponents seek to hold on to (Boyles et al, 2009: 37).

liberal idea of individuals' entitlement to equal opportunities and rights will not do the job of creating a more just educational environment, let alone society. Equality in education does not necessarily lead to more justice, social cohesion or poverty alleviation, since the effectiveness and outcomes of education (policies) depend on the 'educability factors' (a set of material, social, cultural and emotional conditions) that facilitate *learning*, rather than *attending* schooling (Bonal, 2007).

From a social justice perspective, there is thus a need to look at both macro (institutional) and micro (interpersonal relations between staff, professors and students) levels of power, as well as the relations between those dimensions and power relations that extend beyond the school space (North, 2006: 523; North, 2008: 1190). Building from these insights, this study aims to gain insight into the complex power relations between the structures and the agents, the governance of teacher training institutes and their inhabitants, the macro and the micro levels, and beyond. By applying Fraser's approach I try to avoid methodological nationalism through the inclusion of the multilevel dimension of representation in the analysis (Fraser, 2005a). The effects of, and influences on, teacher education do not stop at the gates of the teacher education institution's premises. Rather, this study shows the interconnectedness and dialectics between what happens in Bolivia's Normales in relation to various political processes, discourses and strategies at the supranational, national and subnational scales.

Gramsci on hegemony and counter-hegemony

What theoretical inspiration, then, can help to further explain why radical processes of social transformation are a chaotic and troublesome undertaking, even when a newly democratically elected government drives these processes? Why are processes of social change aimed at social justice, in this case illustrated in the area of Bolivian teacher education, successful or unsuccessful? In order to understand Bolivia's present processes of social transformation, being part of a wider Latin American turn to the left (Rodriguez-Garavito et al, 2008), I draw from (neo-) Gramscian thinking on hegemony and counter-hegemony. Gramsci's work was originally written in the first part of the twentieth century and largely during his imprisonment under Italian fascist rule. Gramsci tried to explain how, in the case of Italy, taking state power was not enough to push for a nation-wide revolution, as the state was just one of the locations of power in Italian society. While traditional Marxist theories are criticised for being too economically focused in their analysis, Gramsci's work acknowledges the relevance of cultural hegemony, and the role of civil society and cultural institutions – including the education arena – in understanding balances of power and processes of societal change (Femia, 1975: 30; Bieler and Morton, 2004: 92; Bates, 1975: 353). Educators, in Gramscian thinking, are consequently seen as important transmitters in gaining political as well as cultural hegemony, or in other cases as working as an important counter-hegemonic force.

While recognising the obvious differences in time and geography between the case of early twenthieth century Italy and the possibilities of socialism, and 21st century Bolivia under president Morales, Gramscian ideas are still useful when developing an understanding of contemporary changes and counter forces in the Bolivian society, through the lens of education. Various authors (for instance Morton, 1999: 5-6; Harris, 2007: 2) have suggested how Gramscian ideas on hegemony are particularly helpful in understanding the Latin American 'strategic sites of

political struggle', where various forms of resistance to hegemonic structures (but not necessarily states) take place – for instance in the case of the Mexican Zapatista movement, as well as indigenous social movements in the Andes region.[21] Obviously, there is no single theory that perfectly explains the dynamics, complexities and (lack of) success of processes of social transformation around the world and to look for one assumes a reductionist approach to science (Harris, 2007: 23). There is, however, a need for understanding the 'democratic dialectic', which helps us grasp the dynamic interconnection between the state, civil society and the market in processes of social change, particularly in cases such as contemporary Bolivia and Venezuela (Harris, 2007). Exploring this relationship is also especially important for understanding the work of teachers (Robertson, 2000). The teacher training sector in Bolivia works and interrelates with all these terrains, and forms part of this democratic dialectic. In the words of Harris: '*If we hope to develop a relevant theory of social change, we need to study the important battles of today that have raised the banner of alternative globalisations. One such battle has been taking place in Bolivia*' (Harris, 2007: 11). I argue for the relevance of applying Gramscian thinking on hegemony and counter-hegemony to explain the complexities of the struggle for state power alongside cultural hegemony through the project of decolonisation of teacher education in Bolivia.

In the following chapter 3, I demonstrate how Gramsci's notion of an 'organic crisis' is apparent in contemporary Bolivia, where the majority of the population have given their vote to Evo Morales rather than the old ruling elite. Morales, however, might have taken state power, but has not yet succeeded in installing counter-hegemony in the cultural domain of civil society and education. Gramsci, in his Prison Notebooks, called this moment of an incomplete transition due to unprepared political forces an organic crisis, since '*the old is dying and the new cannot be born*' (Gramsci 1975, in Martin, 1997: 47). An organic crisis is manifested as a crisis of hegemony, in which the population cease to believe in the national leaders and traditional parties (Bates 1975).[22] Creating a counter-hegemonic culture, as is attempted by the current Bolivian government, is a long and conflictive process. Bolivia's current counter-hegemonic cultural-political project is uneven in its success and support amongst different socio-ethnic groups and geographical locations, as Morales' supporters are primarily (yet not exclusively) indigenous peoples inhabiting the Western and central highlands, as will be illustrated in chapter 3.

According to Gramsci, civil society – again including education institutes and educators – play a crucial role in a 'war of position', for which popular social forces need to build counter-hegemonic institutions that challenge capitalism and occupy autonomous social and political space. Besides this 'war of position', Gramsci developed the notion of a 'war of manoeuvre', defined as '*a frontal or insurrectional attack against the state or a period of intensive and active struggle, such as*

[21] Anderson (in Martin 1997, and in Kohl, 2006), one of the main critics of Gramsci's work, stated how Gramsci gave the notion of hegemony various and even contradictory meanings, and that we should rather perceive hegemony as a multiple concept that incorporates both civil society and state hegemonic strategies. This critique is addressed in Jessop's strategic-relational approach (SRA, see below) which employs a broad perception of 'the state' as a 'social relation' (Jessop, 2007: 1-9).

[22] There are various pitfalls of an organic crisis, according to Gramsci. The ruling class might for instance respond by blaming their own failure on the opposition – or in some cases on (ethnic) minorities – which can even go as far as an attempt to exterminate these forces (Bates 1975: 364). Inspired by Gramsci, Bates advocated the need for a strong moral rationale of revolutionary forces: '*the meek, the ignorant, the foolish, and the immoral, no matter how understandable their condition, will never be able to build a new order. Only those who are proud, strong, righteous, and who know how can organize a new society and create a new culture which, after all, proves its historical superiority only when it replaces the old*' (Bates 1975: 366).

strikes and mass protest' (Harris, 2007: 3).[23] The title of this thesis, 'Between Decolonisation and Demonstration', already shows the relevance of Gramsci's notions of position and manoeuvre for teachers in Bolivia. Gramsci's three 'moments' of the 'relations of forces' in a society are helpful in analysing the troublesome and often long lasting processes of transformation (Crehan, 2002: 91-97; Gramsci, 1971: 175-185), and will be further elaborated in the discussion of Bolivia's social relations of production and Morales' complex and difficult alliances with social movements and the wider civil society in his project for decolonisation (Book part II, chapter 3 and 4). For the discussion here, I particularly draw from the Neo-Gramscian School of International Relations' theorist Robert Cox. He sees (Neo-)Gramscian thinking as a way to address the overemphasis on structures and consequently a neglect of agents and agency, of both traditional Marxist thinking as well as Wallerstein's World System Theory (Novelli, 2004: 26). Cox's critical theory broadens our understanding of 'hegemony', by categorising it within three spheres of activity: firstly the *social relations of production* as a starting point of analysis – including the (re)production of knowledge, morals, social relations and (educational) institutions; secondly various *forms of state* – consisting of historically constructed state-civil society relation; and thirdly, different (and alternative) forms of *world order* (Bieler and Morton, 2004). Similar to CPE discussed above, this perspective encompasses a totality of *material, discursive* and *institutional* forms of social relations that bring about social change. Thus, within the three spheres described above, the three reciprocal elements of 'ideas', 'material capabilities' and 'institutions' constitute a particular 'historical structure' or 'historical bloc' (Bieler and Morton, 2004), and will be demonstrated for the case of Bolivia in chapter 3.

Latin American theories on coloniality, knowledges and education for emancipation

The importance of the cultural and discursive domains of Bolivia's counter-hegemonic project is reflected in Latin American debates on coloniality. When writing about Bolivian politics of teacher education in the context of the new reform for decolonising education, one cannot avoid academic discussions related to coloniality theory. '*Decolonisation is at the centre of political debate in Bolivia and the wider Latin American region*', said Felix Patzi, a Bolivian sociologist and the first Minister of Education in Morales' government in 2006, when he opened a seminar on Decolonisation and Education in October 2008. Patzi was responsible for the very first drafts of the new ASEP law for decolonising education, which is clearly inspired by regional debates on coloniality. A growing number of academic debates on education in Latin America deal with issues such as coloniality, critical (border) thinking and 'other', 'alternative', or 'indigenous' knowledges (see e.g. Escobar 2007; Grosfoguel 2007a, 2007b; Mignolo 2000, 2007a, 2007b; Quijano 2005; Walsh 2007a, 2007b). These debates are connected to the global rise of social (including indigenous) movements, together with wider processes of economic and cultural globalisation that opened up alternative ways of looking at political, theoretical and epistemic approaches (Saavedra, 2007). Debates on the coloniality of societies and education systems aim to understand and at the same time deconstruct historical structures of injustices, and construct an equitable and socially, politically and economically just future. The interlinked idea of critical border thinking then suggests that an epistemic dialogue between Eurocentric and other approaches to thinking and knowledges is necessary in order to understand and deconstruct injustices (Weiler, 2003).

[23] It is important to mention Gramsci saw these notions of position and manoeuvre as dialectic and fluid, rather than static and unidirectional.

From this postcolonial perspective, modern educational systems are considered conservative, Eurocentric and exclusionary. The construction of knowledge, closely linked to educational processes, is central to the coloniality debate. The construction of knowledge relates to the 'politics of knowledge', or the control over and access to a diversity of knowledge cultures (Davies, 2006b: 1035). Walsh (2007) discusses the 'geopolitics of knowledge' in the context of Latin America and argues how, in this continent, the production of knowledge has been subject to colonial and imperial design for a long time. In Latin America, European thought is dominantly seen as scientific truth, while other epistemes, such as indigenous and Afro-descendent, have long been considered subaltern. Walsh (2007b) argues how social movements, and particularly indigenous movements, have worked on building a cosmology and epistemology based on their own knowledge, yet in dialogue with other knowledge*s* (in plural).[24]

In relation to the acknowledgement of alternative 'knowledges' besides the dominant Eurocentric paradigm, as well as the idea of education for emancipation, I also draw from the critical theoretical perspective of Boaventura de Sousa Santos on 'oppositional postmodernism', which distinguishes two forms of knowledge: '*knowledge-as-regulation, whose point of ignorance is called chaos and whose point of knowledge is called order, and knowledge-as-emancipation, whose point of ignorance is called colonialism and whose point of knowledge is called solidarity, [with]colonialism being the conception of the other as object, hence not recognizing the other as subject*' (Sousa Santos, 1998: 128-129). While knowledge-as-regulation has been (and often still is) the dominant form, Sousa Santos' encourages to reinvent knowledge-as-emancipation and the need for 'alternative thinking of alternatives' (1998: 129). Embracing the reinvention of knowledge-as-emancipation as a paradigm of knowledge from a critical postmodernist theoretical point of view means shifting from 'monoculturalism toward multiculturalism', which requires a 'politics of translation' (Novelli, 2006: 280). This entails recognising 'the other' as a producer of knowledge, while bearing in mind a 'sociology of absences' – or an understanding of the hierarchy of the available hegemonic and sometimes silenced counter-hegemonic discourses; a move from decontextualised absolute knowledge to forms of contextualised knowledge; and to focus on the duality between conformist action and rebellious action – particularly attempting to reconstruct the idea and practice of *emancipatory social transformation* (Sousa Santos, 1998: 133).

2.4 A critical theoretical perspective on teaching – social justice, Gramsci and critical pedagogy

Part of the educational function and strategy of social transformation was Gramsci's idea that intellectuals – including educators – should instill a 'critical self-conciousness' in the masses of the population, to free them from the dominant hegemonic culture and to develop an alternative order (Bates, 1975: 360; Femia, 1975: 35).[25] Intellectuals, according to Grasmci, form a crucial group that can stimulate '*the passage from organic terrain of economic life to effective political organisation*' (Crehan, 2002: 95). Baud and Rutten (2004: 6) assert how since Gramsci, and even more so since

[24] Based on the thinking of Sousa Santos, Muhr and Verger (2006: 9) explain how alternative forms of knowledge from the Global South, or 'an epistemology of the South', are preconditions for alternative societies, since using various 'transformatory' forms of knowledge leads to a 'democratisation of knowledge'.

[25] Gramsci distinguished between 'traditional intellectuals' – officially independent, but in reality defending the interests of hegemonic groups, as opposed to 'organic intellectuals', possessing fundamental ties to, and defending the interests of, a particular class (particularly non-hegemonic, yet also hegemonic groups (Baud and Rutte 2004: 3).

the cultural turn in social movement studies, a broader conception of 'intellectuals' replaced the old dichotomy between the (educated) intellectuals and the masses. Education institutions, including schools, universities and teacher training colleges, can function as places of '*creative ideological work and as places where activist intellectual networks may be formed*' (Baud and Rutten, 2004: 213). This thesis employs their comprehensive conceptualisation of 'popular intellectuals', being '*persons who – educated or not – aim to understand society in order to change it, with the interest of popular classes in mind*' (Baud and Rutten, 2004: 2), and particularly their argument that individual agency is important in processes of social change, which applies to the analysis of Bolivia's future teachers as potential agents of change in chapter 9. Bolivia's attempt to decolonise the education system and teachers' presumed key role in this political project, could be perceived as such a strategy. However, this thesis also shows the limits to which teachers will be naturally engaged in these processes of transformation.

From a Gramscian perspective, education is part of the hegemonic functions of the state. This provides a theoretical justification for posing the research question whether, and how, educational institutions and actors – in this case in the area of teacher education – can be, and are, willing to actually change according to the ideologies of a new regime in Bolivia under Evo Morales. Following Gramsci, education institutes are sites of conflict and negotiation, in which both state and civil society actions come together and are mediated. Schools are, therefore, neither completely resistant nor fully cooperative to adopt policy reforms from the Bolivian state (Talavera Simoni, 2011: 19). Teachers, as popular intellectuals, tend to borrow from globalised ideologies and transform meaning to apply to their local contexts (Baud and Rutten, 2004: 208-209) and often adopt similar strategies of adaptation when it comes to implementing state reforms.

In addition to this state-to-school-level of reform adaptation Tabulawa (2003: 11-12), from a World System theoretical perspective, discusses the international level of transferring of certain education reform models. Teaching methods such as child-centred pedagogy and constructivism, according to Tabulawa, have been transferred from core to periphery states. As a result of these global processes of education policy transfers, the Bolivian 1994 Reform also strongly drew from the constructivist philosophy of knowledge production (Delany-Barmann, 2010: 183), and is consequently called a neoliberal and foreign-imposed reform by some. This critique fits Tabulawa's (2003: 12) criticism that the spread of the individualistic Western culture through constructivist based and child-centred pedagogical reforms are '*deemed necessary for an individual to survive in a pluralistic, democratic capitalist society.*' Tabulawa claims this is part of a reproduction process of capitalism in peripheral states, and is indirectly adopted by international aid agencies that see education as an instrument for political democratisation (2003: 18). In response to these global tendencies, Bolivia's current educational reform undertaking is a search for an alternative way of pedagogy. This means an indigenous and context-specific pedagogy, which is inspired by a progressive tendency in Latin American pedagogical approaches – also known as popular education (or critical pedagogy in the US) – that particularly draw on Freire's Pedagogy for Liberation and broadly strives for progressive social changes and more egalitarian social relations. These approaches often entail problem-based learning and critical dialogue, the transformation of teacher-student relations and the incorporation of local or indigenous knowledges in teaching processes. Bearing in mind the premature phase of the decolonisation

project for education in Bolivia, these alternative and indigenous pedagogies are a necessary field of research (Semali, 2001; Tabulawa, 2003).

Here, the work of critical pedagogues (see for instance Giroux's, 2003a/b; Sleeter, 1996; 2009; and Yogev and Michaeli, 2011) on transformative education and teachers as transformative or 'organic' intellectuals, provides useful ways to think about the complex roles of teachers in triggering or hindering processes of social transformation. The relevance of thinking about the transformative role of education and teachers is exemplified in, for instance, the recent special issue of *Development* on 'Education for Transformation' (Society for International Development, 2011), as well as the similarly entitled International conference of the Comparative and International Education Society in Montreal (May 2011). Robertson (2000:1) convincingly argues how transformation is what teachers are *engaged* in; change is the outcome of their labour. Building from a critical realist perspective, Robertson (2000: 11-13) helps us to understand the limits to teachers agency and strategies, in terms of the '*accumulated history*', a historical path of events that shape and limit the changes possible in new institutional structures. Since the context of teachers struggles are time and location specific, a systematic analysis of the changing nature of teachers' work requires an exploration of the changing realtionship between the state, civil society and the market, and the way in which the state both mediates and is transformed through social and political changes. These relations between the state, the market and civil society are either fought out during periods of crisis and transition, or institutionalised through processes of compromises and consensus, into a 'social settlement' – which in turn is always vulnerable to resistance and thus impermanent.

Focusing in on the role of teacher education programmes, Yogev and Michaeli apply Gramsci's ideas on 'organic intellectuals' to a transformative teacher education model, that '*is intended to train teachers as "involved intellectuals" whose professional identity is based on strong intellectual self-image, awareness of social activism, and commitment to public activity*' (2011: 313). They argue how turbulent social and political contexts '*causes teacher training to apply conservative models that provide an illusion of security but obviate the possibility of developing dynamic, productive pedagogic thinking*' (2011: 315). Bolivia's rather conservative Normales (chapter 7), as well as a generally resistant attitude of a large group of teachers (chapter 5), show the relevancy of both Robertson's and Yogev and Michaeli's statements for this study. In order to bring about transformations in a problematic socio-political reality, Yogey and Michaeli suggest a teacher training model directed at nurturing teachers as '*active intellectuals*', who are equipped with social and political awareness, by deepening future teachers' understanding of society, while at the same time having them engage in (accredited) '*experiential service learning*' (2011: 317-318). While building from Giroux's and others' 'American' critical pedagogy conceptualisation, Yogev and Michaeli also criticise its '*postmodern tendency to suspect each and every truth*', thus moving away to construct a '*concrete system of values*'; something that is a necessary for student teachers in order to create a civic-social identity (2011: 316). In order to do so, teacher training institutes need to redefine their self-perception and responsibilities not only in the field of education, but also for the wider society. Hence, teacher education should challenge, rather than reproduce hegemonic conservative educational ideologies and practices (2011: 322).

A social justice pedagogy for teacher education

In the conclusion of her book, *Reforming Teaching Globally* (2007), Tatto draws attention to a main strategic dilemma for teacher education policy and practice; the question whether teachers should be seen, and thus trained, as professionals or as technocratic bureaucrats. This leads to the question whether teacher training is required to bring about critical reflection and extensive professional discretion/autonomy, or whether teaching is seen as more procedural, as a scripted activity that asks teachers to deliver the standards of a prescribed curriculum only. In a similar line of thought, Cochran-Smith (2004) explains how there are currently two fundamentally different debates about how to define the outcomes of teacher education. The first agenda is intended to reform teacher education through professionalisation, in order to guarantee fully-licensed and well-qualified teachers. This approach is based on the belief that public education is vital to a democratic society. Proponents of the professionalisation agenda refer to a '*professional teacher*' as a '*knowledgeable and reflective practitioner willing and able to engage in collaborative, contextually grounded learning activities*' (Yinger 1999 in Cochran-Smith, 2004: 206). The second agenda is based on a market approach to the problem of teacher shortages and through deregulation ensures that larger numbers of secondary school graduates (often with little or no teacher preparation) enter the teaching profession, resulting in an erosion of public confidence in education. In line with the increased popularity of including social justice in educational debates, Cochran-Smith, among others, promotes a third '*social justice approach*' to teacher education, that takes the professionalisation agenda a step further: '*it is important to ask, however, whether this emerging professional image also includes images of the teacher as activist, as agent for social change, or as ally in anti-racist initiatives [...] to adjust teaching practices according to the needs and interests of 'all children*'' (2004: 207). Cochran-Smiths' triple division in approaches to teacher education seems legitimate considering the similar categorisation of Zeichner (2003), including *the professionalisation agenda, the deregulation agenda, and the social justice agenda.*

Social justice teacher education (SJTE), in the United States (US) context, originates from efforts for multicultural education since the 1980s. However, conceptually SJTE shifts the focus from cultural diversity issues to broader matters of social justice and social change, and teachers' individual and collective activities in struggles for that cause (McDonald and Zeichner, 2009: 596-599; Moore, 2008). The most extensive body of literature on interrelated themes of '*reflexive teacher education*', '*teacher education for social justice*' and a '*social reconstructionist approach to teacher education*' comes from the United States (see for instance Greenman and Dieckmann, 2004; Liston and Zeichner, 1990; Lynn and Smith-Maddox, 2007; Price, 2001). In addition, we can also find relevant insights into critical forms of teacher education outside of the US and from contexts somewhat more similar to the Bolivian one. Especially the element of 'cooperation' – between teacher educators and students, between students and guiding teachers and among students and among teachers – is an issue mentioned often by other authors in relation to 'transformative' forms of teacher education (Talavera Simoni, 2002; Tatto, 1997; Pilar Unda, 2002). A review of this literature clearly shows the need for more research into the *what*, *how* and *why* of SJTE, and this thesis aims to build into these debates by portraying and analysing older and particularly the new developments of Bolivian teacher education.

Regardless of the popularity of the concept of social justice in education debates, there is, however, still conceptual obscurity on what SJTE exactly means (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009;

McDonald and Zeichner, 2009; Sleeter, 2009). The ambiguity in terms of the conceptualisation and practical implementation of SJTE allows a wide variety of programmes, with very different agendas, that claim to be part of this vision of preparing teachers (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009; McDonald and Zeichner, 2009). In an attempt to overcome the conceptual vagueness and plurality of interpretations of SJTE, Sleeter (2009) provides a useful analytical framework that includes three key strands of SJTE: 1) equitable access to high-quality, intellectually rich and culturally affirming teaching; 2) to prepare teachers to foster democratic engagement and dialogue; and 3) to prepare teachers as equity advocates for children and youth, challenging a dominant 'culture of power'. The author also outlines three 'key areas of action' of SJTE: recruitment; professional coursework; and guided fieldwork. These three strands and three areas of SJTE are further discussed and analysed for the case of Bolivia in chapter 7.

Key criteria for SJTE: developing teachers' agency through an action research methodology for critical thinking and reflexivity

Within the critical pedagogy debates, action research is recognised as an important tool in promoting reflective practice and educational change, as it aims to enhance teachers' agency – or space for manoeuvre in (passively or actively) adopting their strategies for or against transformation. Here, Vongalis-Macrow's tri-component model of teacher agency, which looks at teachers' obligations, authority and autonomy, is helpful. In the context of a global crisis in the teaching profession (chapter 1), in many countries teachers' obligations have been downplayed to a mere pedagogical role to 'deliver' well-performing students, leaving aside the societal roles of teachers. Often, policies add more regulatory tasks and tighter controls to teaching work, resulting in a '*commodification of teachers' agency*'. Likewise, teacher authority is being reterritorialised to the level of policy-makers. Teacher agency is 'reterritorialised', as teachers' authority is intentionally *within* the four walls of the classroom (Vongalis-Macrow, 2007: 431). In contrast to the '*commodification of teachers' agency*', the current government of Bolivia sees '*teachers as the soldiers of change*', and emphasises – at the discursive level – the importance of teachers' agency (obligations, authority and autonomy) in bringing about both pedagogical and socio-political roles of the ideal teacher (chapter 8).

A large number critical pedagogues concerned with social justice underline the importance of developing teachers' *critical thinking* and *reflexivity* (see for instance Avalos, 2002; Davies, 2005a; Davies, 2006a; Freire, 1970; Kane, 2002; McLaren, 1989; McLaren and Farahmandpur, 2005; Morrow, 1998; Robinson, 2005; Tatto, 1997; Tatto, 1999).[26] As explained by Greenman and Dieckmann (2004: 240), critical pedagogy serves to develop a critical lens and '*may be seen as pivotal for becoming a professional educator who is a reflective practitioner embodying a passion for equity and social justice*'. Reflection and critical thinking – both needed for *meaningful intercultural dialogue* – are also part of the decolonisation and critical border thinking ideas (Escobar, 2007; Sousa Santos in Dale and Robertson, 2004, among other authors) that are influential in current-day Bolivian discourse and politics. Relating to the discussion on Frasers' triple dimensions of social justice and the multiple tasks of education for social change, teacher education should provide future teachers with the opportunity to develop appropriate 'knowledge' (on subjects but

[26] According to Davies (2006b: 1035-36), reflexivity is the development of emotional intelligence that comes from dialogue and encounter, play (or protest as a game) and humour. Ideally this needs to be taken up in '*reflexive schools*' and '*reflexive teacher training colleges*'.

also on concepts such as social cohesion and social justice relevant to the local context), 'skills' (such as reflexivity, critical thinking and fostering intercultural dialogue), and 'values and attitudes' (such as respecting diversity, commitment to equality, a sense of identity) (Davies, 2006a).

The US debates often connect SJTE – and the key elements of critical thinking and reflexivity – to an action research approach (Liston and Zeichner, 1990; Price, 2001; Zeichner, 2009). Understanding the debates on the link between teacher education and an action research methodology is important, since action research is also applied in Bolivian Normales in the '*Practica Docente e Investigacion*' [teachers' practice and research] course (PDI, see also chapter 7). Action research – whereby research findings directly feed back into the environments from which they are produced – was developed as an answer to demands for more participatory and emancipatory research processes (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 10). According to Price (2001: 43) there is still a lack of investigation of what it would mean for pre-service teachers to engage in action research. Price argues that the goals of social justice and equity should be central to the action-research process, with the purpose of critically examining opportunities for the transformation of existing schooling practices. This critical view widens the goals of action research as a vehicle for educational change. The process of creating the conditions for change through action research should take place at three levels of the work of teachers: the personal; professional; and the political level (Noffke 1997 in Price, 2001). Action research has the potential to transcend the traditional schism between the theory and practice of teaching (Price, 2001: 48), an argument that similarly has been made in Bolivia as a rationale for the PDI course. The old 'exposition-assimilation-repetition' education paradigm was replaced by the 1994 Reform with an alternative education paradigm of 'experience-reflection-action' (Ipiña in Lozada Pereira, 2004: 71), employing action research as a teaching technique in the Normales, which is continued and further developed in the current ASEP law. Incorporating action research in teacher education is a way to build knowledge locally, and to make this knowledge more accessible to other educators (Noffke and Stevenson 1995 in Price, 2001), and this links to what is known in the current Bolivian education reform as productive education.

In short, action research can ideally function as and produce knowledge for change; it can enable future teachers to produce and control knowledge in order to enhance their agency, and act upon desired educational and societal changes in a critical and reflexive manner. However, it depends on the quality of the practical experience and the level of support teacher students receive during their 'guided enquiry' in school communities whether these actually help to build a social justice awareness and understanding, or if it will function as a reproduction of the status quo, merely reinforcing rather than challenging negative stereotypes (McDonald and Zeichner, 2009: 604; Sleeter, 2009: 619-620). The PDI course is thus an interesting entry point to gain insight into how and why in practice, the ideology of decolonised education actually works or fails to work, and is taken up in chapter 7.

Critiques to Social Justice Teacher Education

Zeichner wisely warns us to be cautious against uncritically accepting concepts such as social justice, reflection, action research and professional development in teacher education, without any closer examination of the purposes toward which they are directed in practice, and their actual consequences (Zeichner, 2009: xvi). The most commonly debated limitations and critiques

to social justice teacher education adhere to dominant conservative and neo-liberal thinking on education, often originating in the US but adopted at a global scale. These range from the *ambiguity critique* with social justice teacher education 'being anything and everything', and the *knowledge*, *ideology* and *free speech critiques,* criticising the content, purpose, gate-keeping issues and intellectual climate of teacher training programmes and institutes.

While acknowledging the powerfulness of these critiques in mainstream debates on teacher training, a number of authors in favour of social justice teacher education convincingly deconstruct these critiques, by arguing that there is no dichotomy between knowledge and social justice. Besides, the push for an apolitical teacher education system is invalid, on the one hand since these critiques are political in itself (coming from the neoliberal and conservative sides of the political arena) and on the other hand since any form of teacher education, including SJTE, is inherently embedded in and connected to (an understanding of) politics and society (Cochran-Smith et al, 2009). Relating back to Fraser's third dimension of social justice of representation, social justice teacher education is also concerned with the genuine levels of participation of teacher students and trainers in the design and implementation of teacher education policies, which in many cases is still very limited (McDonald and Zeichner, 2009: 605).

2.5 The Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) and a conceptual scheme

This section argues for the relevance and utility of the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) as a heuristic tool. In this section, I position the SRA within relevant discussions of critical pedagogy, in order to be able to explain how both structural and agential factors affect teachers' (un)intended strategies in the classroom and wider society. The relevance of the Strategic Relational Approach (SRA) as a heuristic device lies in the fact that it supports the analysis of this study in its aim to reveal the open as well as the less overt structures, mechanisms and agency that support or resist the present changes in Bolivian (educational) politics. The SRA builds on both Bashkar's (and Archer's) critical realism and Giddens' structuration theory of the interconnectedness of structure and agency, and aims to go beyond a more 'dualist' perception of structure and agency (Jessop, 2005: 38, 40). The SRA pays tribute to Bourdieu's 'methodological relationalism'; an insistence on treating social phenomena in terms of social relations (Hay, 2002a: 89, 127). By re-formulating Giddens' theory of structuration, and the related concepts of *structure* and *agency*, the SRA tries to understand *the relationship* between structures (or contexts) and agency (or conduct), and sees this relationship as dialectical (Hay, 2002a: 89, 127).[27]

In the SRA, *structure* refers to context and to the fact that institutions, practices and routines appear to show some regularity or structure over time. *Actors* are conceptualised as 'concious, reflexive and strategic' within the SRA. *Agency* implies not only political action or conduct, but also a sense of free will, linked to concepts such as reflexivity, rationality and motivation. Jessop aims to bring agency in to structure – producing a 'structured context' – and to bring structure into agency – producing a 'contextualised actor' or 'situated agent' (Hay, 2002a:

[27] This dialectical relationship between structures, agents and their agency is also taken up in Robertsons' CPE/E approach, which is closely linked to the SRA, in that it aims to understand 'the structured and structuring role' of education in political economies, and how structure privileges some actors over others, while, at the same time, understanding how (individual and collective) educational actors might respond to this strategic selective context in their strategies (Robertson, forthcoming).

94-95, 128-129, 131). This 'structured context' is also explained as being a 'strategically selective environment', which favours certain strategies over others. *Strategy* is thus a central concept in the SRA, meaning '*intentional conduct oriented towards the environment […] to realize certain outcomes and objectives which motivate action*' (Hay, 2002a: 129).

In the SRA approach, change is about the capacity of actors to shape their environment and about the ability of actors to make a difference. Both contextual and agential factors are central to explanations about social and political change, which is reflected in the design of this study.[28] Actors face an uneven distribution of opportunities and constraints in their contexts, thus different access to strategic resources (knowledge, capital) may be a significant determinant of the capacity of actors to realise opportunities. Agents acting in a routine manner are more likely to reproduce existing structures of social and political relations over time, while actors that resist norms and conventions will most probably transform existing institutions and practices (Hay, 2002: 166, 379-383, 390). Particularly during moments of socio-political change or crisis (like in Bolivia) 'new ideas' are important and interesting to analyse because of their potential political impact (Verger and Novelli, 2010).

In the SRA, ideas matter and so do practices. Actors must interpret and reflect on their context in order to act strategically, the context however determines strategic selectivity, and thus the discursive (ideas and discourses) is only relatively autonomous of the material (context, structures and mechanisms) (Verger and Novelli, 2010). Teachers' interpretations, or ideas, matter when we realise that most changes in policy are often preceded by changes in ideas (Hay, 2002a). This appears crucial when applied to Bolivia, particularly in the education field, where different political ideologies and the recent 'discursive turn' from *interculturalidad* to *inter-/intraculturalidad* and *descolonización* (Howard, 2009) play strong roles in the way people – including teachers – identify themselves and the world around them. Thus, in times of various competing and circulating discourses (Foucault in Luke, 1996), (future) teachers need to be able to reflect critically upon them in order to act strategically. However, while ideas matter, actors need a certain level of influence (power) and material resources in order to disseminate them and to formulate successful strategies (see below). In line with the thinking of Gramsci and Lukes, the SRA as developed by Hay argues how those that are able to shape '*cognitions, perceptions and preferences*' have a considerable influence over society (Hay, 2002a: 214). Thus the discursive and material are inherently and dialectically linked.

When we combine the SRA with perspectives from critical educationalists such as Apple and Giroux, we see that the dialectics between structure/agency and reproduction of knowledge and practices have also been discussed at length in the broader educational debates. In the early 1980s, Apple elaborated on structure-agency debates in relation to education. At the same time, he contributed to the ongoing debates around social, cultural, political and economic reproduction through education. Education was described '*as part of a larger economic and ideological configuration*', in which '*reproduction and contestation go hand in hand*' (Apple, 1982: 6-8). Linked to the Gramscian perspective that education institutes are sites of conflict and negotiation, in which both state and civil society actions come together and are mediated (see chapter 3), Apple

[28] Part III focuses more on the 'structured context' of Bolivian teacher educational governance, Part IV on the 'contextualised agential factors', and Part V on the eventual strategies: (future) teachers' agency.

illuminates this relationship between the state, civil society and the education system, as being '*an arena of conflict over production of knowledge, ideology, and employment, a place where social movements try to meet their needs and business attempts to reproduce its hegemony*' (1982 in Scott, 2008: 65-66).

When applying the SRA to the study of (future) teachers, we should see *teachers as strategic political actors* that act according to their reflexivity, rationality and motivations, and are embedded in a *strategically selective context* that creates both opportunities and constraints to teachers' level of agency. Hay's notion of *strategically selective context* in educational terms can be understood in Apple's words: '*a space of schooling as a site of contestation, resistance and possibility*' (1980 in Giroux, 2003: 6); or as explained by Giroux (2003b: 48) we should: '*view schools as economic, cultural and social sites that are inextricably tied to issues of politics, power and control. [...] schools actually are contested spheres that embody and express struggle over what forms of authority, types of knowledge, forms of moral regulation and versions of the past and future should be legitimated and transmitted to students...*'. Although much of the critical pedagogy work is primarily engaged with the US context, these ideas nevertheless support my argument that the SRA is useful in viewing teachers, in the Bolivian context, as crucial *strategic political actors* in promoting or resisting progressive social changes.

From a critical realist perspective, and building from the SRA, we should see teacher training institutes as complex and emergent sites of struggle, contestation and mediation of power relations (Jessop, 2005: 28). From an SRA perspective, we can view teachers as active subjects who have a choice and can develop their own strategies. By applying the SRA an analytical distinction can be made between intuitive and explicitly strategic action. Both types of action are based upon teachers' perceptions of the strategic context, being, in this case, the Bolivian education system and within that the institutions of teacher training. '*Intuitive strategies and practices'* can often be described as routines, habits, rituals or other forms of un-reflexive action and contain a strategic component of 'practical consciousness' (adapted from Giddens, Hay, 2002a: 132). On the other hand, '*explicitly strategic actions'* rely upon the configuration of opportunities and constraints of the strategic selective context (chapters 6 and 7), and implies a conscious attempt to indentify and enact those options that will most likely bring about individual and collective intentions and objectives (Hay, 2002a: 132-133). In reality, most actions combine both intuitive and explicit strategic actions. Using SRA-terminology, teachers are knowledgeable and reflexive individuals who monitor the outcomes of their actions. These outcomes can be *'direct effects*' – producing a (minimal) and (un)foreseen transformation of the structured context – as well as '*strategic learning*' on the part of teachers – raising awareness of the opportunities and obstacles of structured context and informing possible future strategic actions. These relationships and effects are illustrated in the adapted version of Hay's conceptual scheme that is presented below.

Conceptual scheme

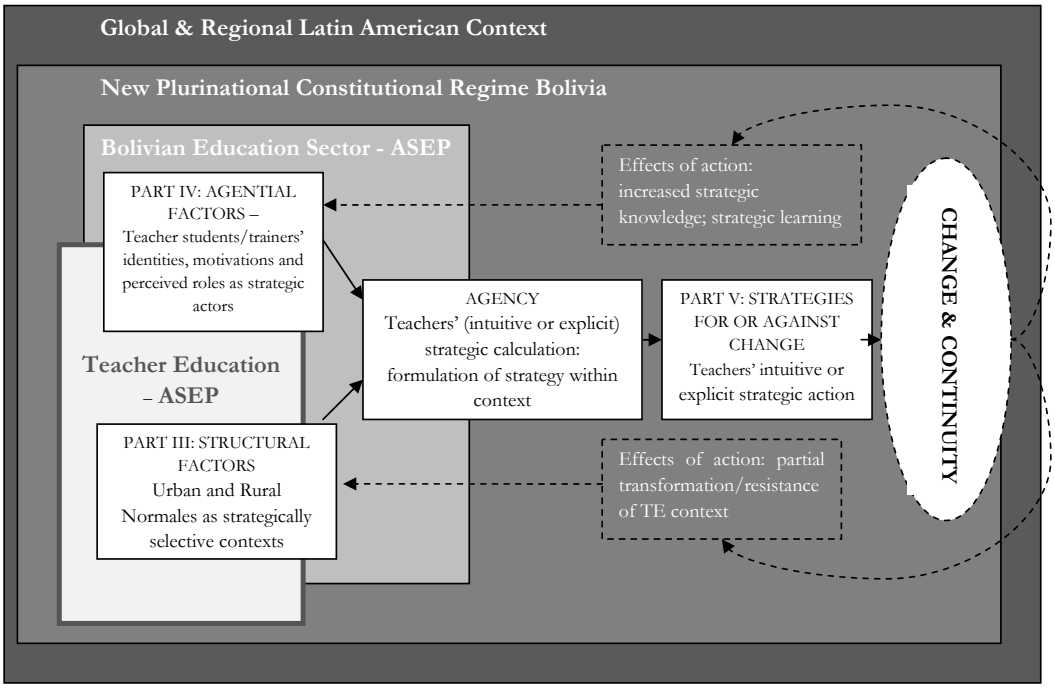

Figure 1, adapted from Hay 2002a: 131

The conceptual scheme (Figure 1) illustrates the main research concepts (see also definitions in chapter 1) and their relations, and is an adapted and extended version of the conceptual scheme of the SRA developed by Hay (2002a: 131). Teacher training institutes are, furthermore, located in the strategically selective context of local communities, the contemporary Bolivian education sector, Bolivian society and political economy, and the broader Latin American and global context. In an attempt to overcome 'methodological nationalism' (Dale 2000; 2005), the conceptual scheme presented below adds this multiscalar perspective to the figure; I have added various layers, including the global and regional context (outer layer), the national context of Bolivia's Plurinational Constitutional Regime, and the level of pre-service teacher education which is the focus area. As shown in the conceptual figure on the bottom left hand side, understanding and explaining *structural* factors – or the strategically selective context of the governance of Bolivian teacher education, is the core aim of chapters 5, 6 and 7 of the book (Part III). In addition, understanding the *agential* factors – or future teachers and their trainers as strategic actors – is taken up in chapters 8 and 9 (Part IV). Two arrows show the influence of both the structural and agential factors on teachers' agency. Chapter 9 (Part V) then combines all of these insights and looks into the (intuitive or explicit) *formulations of strategies* as well as the *strategic actions for or against change* that in turn will contribute (positively or negatively) to processes of societal transformation, as is shown on the right hand side of the figure. Considering the developing nature of the present day teacher training system in the context of a new education reform, it is perhaps too early to make clear statements about the *effects of these strategic actions* and that is why these boxes and arrows have dotted lines.

2.6 Critical theory in action

Having set out the meta-theoretical and methodological framework that informs this thesis, I now turn to the more specific aspects of this thesis' research design, its methodological tools, the units of analysis, research methods and ethics. With the aim to understand both the material and the semiotic, or the structural and agential interrelated factors, as set out by the SRA, the research design is influenced by insights of critical ethnography and critical discourse analysis. Particularly the insights and guiding principles of critical and engaged ethnography (Burawoy, 1998; Mathers and Novelli, 2007; Novelli, 2006) and Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 2005) have guided the design of the research approach. The following sections on research locations and units of analysis and (primarily qualitative) methods explain the choices of the research design. The chapter concludes by reflecting on the ethics and limitations to the research and the challenges I encountered doing fieldwork in Bolivia.

Critical ethnography

In critical ethnography, theory is not seen as static but it evolves through fieldwork.[29] To think of ethnography as 'the performance of critical theory' or 'critical theory in action' is an interesting and productive description (Madison, 2005: 13). Critical ethnography responds to the claims of Latin American coloniality theorists to give a voice to 'subaltern peoples'. Critical ethnographers *'will use the resources, skills, and privileges available to her to make accessible - to penetrate the borders and break through the confines in defense of – the voices and experiences of subjects whose stories are otherwise restrained and out of reach. This means the critical ethnographer contributes to emancipatory knowledge and discourses of social justice*' (Madison, 2005: 5). This relates to what Bolivian sociologist Saavedra mentioned in an interview in May 2010: '*The real validity of the information we collect during processes of investigation ultimately is determined by many factors, including personal ones; if there is no confidence, or even if there is no real solidarity, people will just give us the standard information, or they will tell us what they think we want to hear*'(114:19). This thesis was inspired and guided by the two main characteristics of critical ethnography: firstly *(self-) reflexivity* or *positionality* (or to acknowledge the power structures, priviliges and biases of ourselves and our research subjects); and secondly, the notion of *dialogue* between the researcher and other participants in the study (Madison, 2005: 9).

From a loose genre of critical qualitative educational research, critical ethnography over the past decades became a more widely used term in other disciplines such as anthropolgy, sociology and cultural studies, yet there is no clear consensus on what it exactly entails (Carspecken, 2001). Therefore, this study draws from the insights of a specific version of a critical ethnographic approach, namely Burawoy's (2004; 1998) ethnographic approach called the Extended Case Method (ECM), and the interpretation of that in Mathers and Novelli's (2007) 'engaged ethnography' based on the work of Burawoy, Bourdieu and Sousa Santos. The benefit of ECM is to understand the micro-processes at the institutional level, while, at the same time, embedding these in a broader multiscalar environment in which macro processes (or 'macro resistance to neoliberalism') occur (Mathers and Novelli, 2007: 230). This leads to a methodological framework that aims to overcome the main criticisms of 'conventional

[29] Theorising – or the process of reconstruction – in critical ethnography involves moving from concrete to abstract (what is this a case of?), from simple to complex (how might this case be articulated with other cases?) and then to 'move back' in the reverse direction (retroduction): from the abstract back to the (newly theorised) concrete, from the complex to the (newly theorised) simple (Dale, 2010).

ethnography', being the value neutrality of research and the failure to capture power issues related to broader structures of inequality. Instead, ECM advocates a reflexive research technique with dialogue as a core principle, and intersubjectivity between participant and observer as its premise (Mathers and Novelli, 2007: 235; Burawoy, 1998: 14). The reflexive model of science embraces engagement rather than a positivist detachment to the world under study as the '*road to knowledge*'.[30] This way, it aims to extract '*the general from the unique, to move from the 'micro' to the 'macro', and to connect the present with the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory*' (Burawoy, 1998: 5).

In relation to Burawoy's notion of *intervention* or the extension from being an observer to becoming a participant, there are limitations to this study in the sense that as an outsider and visitor, I never was fully part of the teacher training system. In that sense, my 'engagement' had its limitations. However, because of returning to meet the same institutes and participants at various times over a period of four years, and by wide dissemination of the research results, I try to engage as a 'participant' in (opening) the debates on this topic in and beyond Bolivia, in academia, the policy and public domains.

Critical Discourse Analysis

In this thesis I draw from Fairclough's (2005) interpretation of CDA, in order to critically examine institutionalised beliefs, policies, practices as well as personal discourses, and to understand the 'how' of social justice in (teacher) education (North 2008). Discourse in this approach is interpreted as the analysis of 'texts' in a broad sense, including written texts, spoken interaction, multimedia texts as well as other forms of semiosis such as visual images (photos and murals) and body language (Fairclough, 2005: 924). Discourses are, for instance, essential to understand the 'politics of knowledge' – the knowledge-power relations that influence teacher education policies and practices; to reveal the different ideas on 'the ideal Bolivian teacher'; and to explore teachers' identities. Luke (1996:10), drawing from poststructuralist analyses of social history and contemporary culture by Foucault, mentions how teacher education has been re-examined as an arena where dominant socio-cultural discourses compete to construct and position teachers and students.[31] Fairclough acknowledges the causal powers of both structures and agency, and the potential of human agents (in this case teacher students and trainers) to transform or reproduce existing structures (of teacher education in Normales). I applied CDA to unravel the various perceptions of the influence of the new regime's ideological discourse and policy developments on teacher training. Although drawing from insights of CDA and partly employing its approach, it would, nevertheless, be unfair to claim a complete carrying out of CDA considering the lengthy and complex process of analysis this approach calls for (including interdiscursive and linguistic/semiotic analysis).

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[30] It begins with dialogue between researcher and participants (often during interviews, and called *intervention*); it unpacks situational experiences and social interaction (the *process,* or situational comprehension of the discursive and non-discursive messages) and it embeds this within the external field of local processes and external forces (*structuration*), through a constant engagement with a dialogue with theory itself (*reconstruction*) (Burawoy, 1998: 5).

[31] 'Foucault described the constructing character of discourse, that is, how both in broader social formations ('epistemes') and in local sites and uses discourse actually defines, constructs, and positions human subjects. These knowledge-power relations are achieved, according to Foucault, by the construction of 'truths' about the social and natural world, truths that become the taken-for-granted definitions and categories by which governments rule and monitor their populations and by which members of communities define themselves and others' (in Lukes 1996: 10).

Due to its roots in critical realist ontology, and being closely related to Jessop's work on SRA in its dialectical understanding of discursive-material and agency-structure relations, I see Fairclough's version of CDA as a well-fitting tool for my analysis, particularly in relation to understanding institutional change (Fairclough 2005: 935). CDA is helpful to unravel the various constructions and perceptions of potentials and obstacles to institutional (or organisational) change in teacher education, as presented in primary and secondary documentation from the policy level, institutional level and non-academic Bolivian publications, as well as transcribed interviews concerning the governance issues of teacher education. CDA helps to understand and explain key questions relating to institutional change: '*when organisations change, what is it that changes? What makes organisations resilient in the face of change, resistant to change, or open to change? How are external pressures for organisational change internalised in organisations, how may members respond to them, and what outcomes are possible?*' (Fairclough, 2005: 935). He further argues how while change in discourse is often part of organisational change, this represents only a small part of the full and multifaceted picture in which social interaction and processes (including texts) are dialectically affecting and are affected by social structures. Basing himself on CPE, Fairclough developed a number of assumptions about institutional change, which basically see '*strategies'* as '*mediating the relationship between the change which is inherent in social interaction and texts, and change in organisational structures*' (Fairclough, 2005: 931). Or, in other words, strategies mediate between semiosis and materiality. Table 3 details out Fairclough's (2005: 931-932) assumptions for examining institutional changes.

Table 3 Institutional change: Fairclough's six assumptions (2005: 931-932)

1	**Organisational structures are hegemonic structures;** structures which are based in and reproduce particular power relations between groups of social agents, **which constitute 'fixes'** with enduring capacity to manage the contradictions of organisations in ways which allow them to get on with their main business more or less successfully.
2	**Organisational structures may come into crisis;** generally as a result of a combination of both external and internal changes and pressures, when the 'fix' is perceived as no longer viable.
3	**In situations of crisis,** groups of social agents develop their own particular (and opposing) strategies for achieving a new 'fix', and through a process of hegemonic struggle **a new hegemonic 'fix' may emerge.**
4	**Strategies have a partly discoursal character,** including particular discourses and narratives which represent in particular ways what has happened and is happening, and construct imaginaries for what could happen. Discourses and narratives may be 'recontextualised' from other organisations.
5	**Change in the social process, including change in texts, may have transformative effects on organisational structures** in so far as it becomes incorporated within successful strategies.
6	**The implementation of a successful strategy is a matter of the operationalisation of new representations and imaginaries** – or new discourses and narratives – in new ways of acting and being and new material arrangements.

These assumptions can be summarised in four analytical concepts related to institutional change, being emergence, hegemony, recontextualisation and operationalisation (Fairclough, 2005: 931-932). I use these four analytical concepts to explore the changing nature of the teacher education arena in Bolivia over the past two decades. In chapter 7, I take a closer look at how Fairclough's

six assumptions, presented above in Table 3, help to understand institutional transformation in Bolivian Normales in the context of Morales' governments' politics of change.

Reflexivity and dialogue in this research

The insights and guiding principles from critical ethnography and CDA have guided the planning, intentions, practices and analysis during my fieldwork visits. The study employed a flexible research strategy (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 4) in the sense that the research design was constantly adapted throughout the process of fieldwork, reflection, analysis and writing. This thesis has a commitment to social and political change as the driving force when carrying out research. Consequently, it aims to engage with a 'critical public sociology' (Mathers and Novelli, 2007: 231-232), developing both theoretically grounded 'academic' outputs as well as publicly available research outcomes. The research thus endeavours to extend 'from monologue to dialogues' (Novelli, 2006), as it aims for a reflexive science approach and a commitment to processes of social emancipation, through dialogical engagement with various groups of Bolivian respondents, a (Spanish and English) academic audience and an extra-academic audience through involvement in policy and public debates. In line with the funding construction of the 'IS Academie', of which this PhD research is part, the overall research project aims to combine instrumental, critical and reflexive knowledge for a range of audiences in various contexts (Burawoy, 2004: 1608-1611).[32]

In the very first stages of the research, a primary one-and-a-half month visit to Bolivia helped me to explore a relevant and under-studied research area and to create the first networks and personal connections. Having developed a research proposal including the theoretical foundations, methodological approaches and first literature overviews of the societal and educational context of Bolivia, a second and more extensive visit followed in 2008. During those six months, the large bulk of data was gathered though various methods (see below) and staying for a longer period in Bolivia made me feel more connected and aware of the ever changing and fascinating Bolivian society, politics, culture and people. I received so much time, energy and valuable insights from Bolivian respondents and friends, and was therefore determined to stay connected and engaged with those involved in the research. In the following period back in Amsterdam, I combined analysing the data I had gathered with writing first drafts of the chapters and articles. I also started using the research as an input for lecturing and supervising students, which was helpful in structuring my research outcomes in an understandable way. At the end of the third year, I went back to Bolivia (one-and-a-half months) to present the preliminary outcomes of my analysis to various groups of respondents, both in the urban and rural institutes. I also went back to discuss my analysis and insights with policy-makers, academics and my local (academic and policy related) supervisors. I view this period as a valuable addition to the earlier 'data gathering visits' as it helped me to triangulate the findings and, more importantly, to share, discuss and further my ideas with the feedback of respondents. Although this thesis is clearly an expression and interpretation of my side of the argument, I wish to bring forward and represent

[32] Being committed to the idea that knowledge is a common good and its availability should not be limited to a privileged group of English speaking scholars, in addition to this English manuscript I also (intend to) produce research results in English, Spanish and Dutch, to disseminate through publishing in academic international interdisciplinary journals, to present and debate in academic and policy arena's (internationally and in Bolivia), to provide (online) publicly available free working papers and to insert research into teaching in university courses.

some of the ideas and voices of those that are not often heard in (international) debates on (teacher) education.

Data analysis

The data analysis of this research has been of a qualitative nature, consisting of coding and categorising main issues and themes out of the transcribed interviews, observations, field notes and documentation.[33] The data analysis software Atlas Ti was used for both data management and analysis. Whenever I quote from an interview or other transcribed document I refer to the (interview number: quote number) created in Atlas Ti. I have translated all English quotes from the Spanish transcriptions (carried out by a Bolivian research assistant). Where quotes from interviews are incorporated, they intend to illustrate broader held opinions, unless it is stated otherwise. To ensure anonymity, the numbers of the interviews in Atlas Ti, that I refer to in the text, do not correspond to the numbers in the list of interviews in Appendix 2. During the analyis and writing process, I used the output function of Atlas Ti, sometimes just for one code or sometimes combining codes, which provided the 'raw material' for analysis and input for the writing. Mind-map software was also helpful when structuring information and reflections both during the data gathering and in the analysis phase of the research.

2.7 Defining 'the case': research locations and focus of analysis

This research explores a small number of cases more in-depth, rather than looking for 'breadth'. I perceive Normales as crucial institutions in the process of knowledge production, of the production of 'knowledgeable individuals' and (future) teachers as 'strategic political actors' and the contestation and power struggles over what kind of knowledge should be (re-)produced. This study explores two cases (purposive sampling): the urban Normal 'Simón Bolívar' (La Paz) and the rural Normal 'M.A.Villarroel' in Paracaya, Cochabamba (see Appendix 7, Maps of Teacher Education Institutes in La Paz and Cochabamba). The aim of having two case studies is partly to be able to compare cetain aspects of urban and rural teacher training, but mostly to widen the source of information and to understand possible differences between the organisational contexts through qualitative methods (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 50). The urban Simón Bolívar forms the main case study and the rural institute Paracaya a secondary case (as illustrated in Map 2). The study is not comparative in the sense that it compares two similar types of cases, but rather the secondary case adds up to the information of the primary research location. Also, the cases were chosen because of their different ideological points of view and attitude regarding the new regime's education plans. During the first and last fieldwork periods I also visited four other teacher training institutes in different parts of the country, as demonstrated in Map 2. Information from interviews, photo registration and observations from these other Normales is also included in the analysis. I visited the two historically important institutes of Sucre (the first Normal created in 1909) and Warisata (where a basis was made for 'indigenous education' in the

[33] After reading through the transcriptions of fieldwork periods one and two, I made a list of codes I thought relevant for the analysis. I constantly kept in mind those 'search terms' (codes) that would later on help me to find relevant quotes for the writing process. I ended up with a long list of codes, because I decided to specify the codes according to theme as well as actors. This way, the same themes are listed several times: the codes 'Changes needed in Normal' and 'ideal teacher' – among many others – are included for teacher students (TS), teacher trainers (TT), other educators (E) and 'others', including policy makers and experts/academics), and so forth.

1930s). Furthermore, I gathered data in one day visits to the private Catholic Normal in Cochabamba and the Normal 'Enrique Finot' in the city of Santa Cruz.[34]

Map 2, Bolivia and research locations

The rationale behind choosing the urban institute 'Simón Bolívar' as the main case is based on a number of arguments. First of all, urbanisation flows led the majority of the population, including members of all different ethnic-cultural groups to live in the biggest cities – with the La Paz/El Alto region being one of the fastest growing and diverse urban areas. In this densely populated and diverse context it is especially interesting to see if, and how, the issues of respect for diversity and social justice are incorporated in teacher education. Secondly, basing the major part of the fieldwork time in La Paz made it possible to conduct interviews with policy makers, donors, unionists (with both the urban and rural unions' headquarters in La Paz), academics, university students, and educators at primary schools, but also to gather key documentation and join meetings, conferences, debates and book launches while I also worked

[34] From the 27 institutes that are operating today, I studied two Normales more in-depth, and another four institutes during shorter visits. Considering the diversity of the different geographical area's and Normales located within them, this thesis was too limited to provide an image of the entirety of 'the Bolivian teacher education system'. However, by avoiding a singular case study research approach I aspire to, at least to some extent, provide a somewhat more balanced view on the main issues for debate in the area of teacher formation in both rural and urban Bolivia.

with the students and trainers in the urban Normal. Besides, Simón Bolívar is seen in Bolivia as a powerful and leading institute in the field of teacher education.

After having decided to focus my study on Simón Bolívar, I felt the need to include another, preferably rural, institute to balance the outcomes of the study. Again, there were several reasons for choosing Paracaya as a secondary case. First of all, while in policy discourse there is no longer an official divide between urban and rural Normales, in reality their remains to exist stark contrasts between urban and rural teacher education institutes, and teachers continue to be confronted with contrasts between working in an urban or rural teaching and living context. This led me to include an institute that was rurally located and – according to its trainers – still focused on training future rural teachers. Secondly, I had already met the (then) general and academic directors of the institute during a meeting organised by the MoE in La Paz (discussing new policy directions for PDI, in October 2007). Both directors were interested in, and open to, participating in my research. Besides, they appeared to have a very engaged attitude toward the political developments around the ASEP law, which I had not witnessed in the other institutes in the same manner. Thus, including an institute that was already working on and with the new policy developments for decolonised education was an extra reason to choose Paracaya as my second location of study. Finally, the institute of Paracaya is located in a relatively populated rural area in the central valley of Bolivia and thus serves a relatively large population of teacher students.

Following a multiscalar approach to research, the thesis analyses these institutes as embedded in and dialectically related to their broader local, national, regional and global educational and socio-political and economic context. The data gathering process was not constrained within the gates of the Normales. The fieldwork research approach also included interviews, participation in meetings, observations and documentation of various actors outside the Normal, including policy makers (mainly national level and some local level), teacher union members (both urban and rural), primary school directors and teachers, (a limited number of) parents, indigenous CEPOs members, international bilateral donors and NGOs and academics. An overview of the (anonimised) interviews with these respondents is presented in Appendix 2.

Within the broader teacher training curriculum and programme, I decided to focus my data gathering around the 'PDI'-course (*Practica Docente e Investigación* – the internship and research course). The reason to centre on this PDI course, was because of the importance to bridge the theoretical contents to the educational practice through an action research model, and the potential stimulation of future teachers' reflection and critical thinking, particularly in relation to the direct school and its community – criteria that are linked to SJTE approaches discussed above (see for instance Liston and Zeichner, 1990; Price, 2001; Zeichner, 2009). Looking into the PDI course also permits an understanding of the (often complex and problematic) relationships between the teacher training institutes and the wider (school) community. Appadurai's (2006) idea of deparochialising 'the idea of research', and extending 'doing research' to a democratic potential belonging to the 'family of rights' (for all, and not just for higher educated academic researchers), also inspired my focus in the data collection phase on the PDI course: in my view, seeing (future) teachers as researchers and reflexive practitioners at the same time is a promising (policy) assumption, and deserves closer attention.

2.8 Methods

Following a reflexive science approach, both individual and group interviews and participant observation – or '*the study of others in their space and time*' (Burawoy, 2004: 25) – are included as key methods used in this study. In addition, focus group discussions and several types of workshops helped me to gather and *reflect on* the data. This research combines a 'panel study' (in which the same people are interviewed more than once) and a cross-sectional study (in which subsequent samples of new participants are interviewed) (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003: 55). For triangulation reasons, multiple methods were used, including: semi structured (individual and group) interviews; (participant) observations; focus group discussions; document analysis; a photo-workshop; participation in formal meetings and conferences; and informal accounts of teacher students' biographies. In addition, short surveys were carried out to gather data on teacher students' and teacher trainers' profile characteristics (chapter 7). The use and relevancy of these methods are now briefly explored.

Semi structured interviews

In total I carried out 119 semi-structured interviews; during the first fieldwork period I conducted 31 interviews, during the second fieldwork period 69 interviews and 17 during the last fieldwork period. An overview of all interviewees, their affiliation and their location is included in Appendix 2. The majority of these interviews were individual. However, 19 interviews were with more than one respondent (often in groups two or three). Most of these 'small group interviews' were with teacher students, as they sometimes showed up with friends/colleagues at the time of the appointment, or they asked others to join in when I asked them directly if they could sit down with me. At first I was unsure if the data from these small group interviews would be as valuable as individual interviews, but after a few of them I realised students actually opened up more in a small group, and even reflected on each others comments. This experience stimulated me to organise more group discussions with students (and trainers), particularly in the last visit (discussed below).

The semi-structured interviews of the first fieldwork period were open-ended, as my primary aim was to explore the main issues, problems and debates around teacher education. The (biggest number of) interviews I conducted during the second fieldwork visit were still semi-structured but, where possible and appropriate, I tried to cover the same themes in all interviews, in order to strengthen the analysis of various discourses and thematic issues later on. I also tried to create space in every interview to bring new issues to the table that I had not anticipated. The interviews during the last visit were still partially structured, in the sense that it was more of a discussion of the preliminary findings of my study and respondents reflecting and building on them. In some cases these interviews helped me to confirm (and triangulate) my results, but they also unveiled new insights and 'missing pieces'.

I used a flexible 'interview guide' for the semi-structured interviews during the second fieldwork visit, which specified the themes and questions I posed in interviews (see Appendix 4). The order in which these themes were discussed was always flexible and depending on the affiliation of the interviewee we spent more time on specific issues than others. This interview guide included the themes of: the new law; the main actors (including actors maps, as discussed below); teacher education's main goals; motivations to become a teacher; the characteristics of

the ideal Bolivian teacher; institutional changes and challenges; societal change; critical thinking and social commitment of teachers; teachers as actors of change; perceptions of the PDI course; perceptions of social justice; and social justice in/through teacher education.

Most of the interviews were located in the working environments of the interviewees: in the Normal (usually in an empty classroom); in the *comedor* (cantine); or with trainers also in *la sala docente* (the teachers' room); in offices of MoE officials, unionists, bilateral donors, academics, NGO workers; at primary schools in director's offices; in the school yard or in (empty) classrooms. I also was invited to some of the homes of students and trainers, which was always a pleasurable experience. Somehow, these 'home interviews' always became very lengthy and not always as focused as in a working environment. Some respondents were also very generous in making the effort to meet me in a cafe or other public space, or in the house I was staying in, sometimes being very explicit about the benefits of being in a space without colleagues around, therefore making it easier to discuss more sensitive issues.

I generally did not encounter great difficulties in obtaining interviews at any level, although it took a few weeks before doors started to open up in the urban Normal. An exception to this was getting an interview appointment with the Minister of Education.[35] Before every interview, I would provide respondents with a leaflet describing my background information, contact details and intentions of the research (Appendix 3). This leaflet also stated that respondents' information would be treated confidentially, with anonymity and that they could withdraw from any specific topic, or the whole interview/discussion, at any given time. I also mentioned the fact that I would be returning to discuss and present the findings and that I would aim to publish the results in Spanish as well.[36] I always asked for consent to record the interview and in the great majority of interviews this was fine. The majority of the interviews (as well as some of the workshops and discussions) were transcribed by a Bolivian with Spanish as her mother tongue and a wide experience of transcribing (having worked as a secretary for the MoE before), and she signed a contract to treat all information with confidentiality.

Observations

Participant observations are a second important method of this research. Observations were conducted in the Normales, in schools, but also in political and social movement or union meetings. Usually, I would take pictures, sometimes videos and always make notes on what I saw and experienced. Firstly, inside the various Normales, I observed the institutional 'daily life'; the way trainers and students relate to each other; and the conversations and interactions in the *comedores* and communal places of students and teachers. I also conducted around 15 classroom observations (of approximately an hour), in various Normales and for different subject matters. Most class observations where carried out in Simón Bolívar, for the subjects of Social Sciences, English language, Literature and (the theoretical part of) PDI. During these observations, I did not use an observation checklist, instead I took notes on the following themes: teaching style

[35] I made the effort to call the secretary every day for about two weeks in a row, and eventually she called me one afternoon to say that the Minister was able to see me within the next half an hour. At that particular moment, I found myself in the middle of a teachers' march at the other end of the city centre of La Paz, but I managed to get to the Ministry in time. A few weeks later this Minister was replaced again for someone else.

[36] I often discussed with respondents the limitations of 'only' translating to Spanish, and not in any indigenous language. There is, unfortunately, no easy solution to this, as financial resources are limited and translation to one or two of the 27 official indigenous languages would also not solve the whole dilemma.

(traditional banking education, teacher or student centered teaching, innovative/participatory teaching methods); student-teacher relations; student-student relations; use of teaching materials (books, copied material, black/white board, other); and, when relevant, I also made notes on the content of the class, for instance during social sciences classes on relevant socio-political issues, and PDI classes that discussed the problems and successes of students' internships. Gaining access to the types of data used in this research – including observations of the daily routine and classes, joining meals, having informal conversations, organising conversation and discussion groups with students and trainers, and even taking over some English classes from absent teachers who asked me to do so – meant a considerable but worthy investment of my fieldwork time as it gave me a chance to look inside the institutional cultures of the Normales.

Also outside the Normales, the participant observation method was a useful tool. I joined various larger and smaller meetings/conferences/debates organised by either the MoE, by Unions, the CEPOs and/or by international donor agencies. Through my local supervisor Maria Luisa Talavera, who lectures at the Universidad Mayor de San Andres in La Paz, I joined a number of classes from university students working on anthropology in educational sciences. Here, I met students in the university courses whom I met again (and interviewed) inside the Normal since they were studying the two careers at the same time.

I drew together an important part of the data on PDI, and the link between teacher education and the actual 'educational reality' in schools, through visits to six primary schools during a period of one month. I particularly focused on one primary school located on the border between La Paz and El Alto called 'Colegio Italia'. I was introduced to the cooperative school director by a teacher trainer from the Normal who was assigned the task of following up on the internships of the teacher students. The director facilitated 'open access' to the classrooms where the interns were working (together with their guiding teachers), and the majority of 'guiding teachers' were open to interviews in their breaks or free time.

I joined in several teacher demonstrations and marches through the streets. These were quite intense and insightful experiences, as people were often very straightforward in their answers to my questions. Dynamite was exploding as we marched through the streets and the police were not hesitant in using tear gas or other means to control the crowd of protesting teachers. I actively interviewed people while walking down the streets and, during a march in October 2007, a befriended university student helped me to video-tape the whole demonstration while I continued to interview the demonstrators.

Focus group discussions, photo workshop and feedback workshops

Another method used for data collection and reflection was to organise thematic focus group discussions with teacher students. These discussions were often located in the classrooms of the Normal, in some cases after the official class hours, but sometimes also during class time if trainers explicitly asked me to do so (and some trainers used this as an excuse to disappear themselves). Between May and November 2008, I managed to have five of these group discussions with whole classrooms full of students (ranging from 20 to 40 students) or with a smaller group of around ten students on the theme of social justice. We discussed how students defined social justice, if they thought social justice was part of their training and the broader relationship between teaching and social justice.

In this same fieldwork period, I also organised a 'photo-workshop' with a smaller group of five final year students, all working on their final internship period and linked thesis/pedagogical project. We met four times over a period of one month, the first time simply to hand out the cameras and discuss the aim of the workshop. In line with the problem-based learning approach of the PDI programme, students were asked to explain in pictures what their main observed 'problem' was about and how they thought of a solution to this 'problem' in the school where they did their practice. The second meeting took place in the primary school where the students were doing their internship, to check whether students were encountering any difficulties or had questions. During the third meeting, students handed in the cameras so I could print the photos (for the students and for myself). The last meeting resulted in the actual 'workshop', in which the students organised their photos in categories and in this way they explained to both their peers and I how they experienced their final part of the PDI practice. The students were then able to use the pictures for their final thesis document and the cameras were left with their teachers for further use in the Normal.

During the final fieldwork period in April and May 2010 I organised another type of 'reflection and feedback' focus group, with both students (in total six discussions, with four in Simón Bolívar, one in Paracaya and one in Enrique Finot/Santa Cruz) and teacher trainers (one in Simón Bolívar and one in Paracaya). During these meetings, I usually started with presenting some of my preliminary findings. Participants then responded, posed questions and provided reflections. The atmosphere of these discussion meetings was often quite positive and informal. Following the advice of my local supervisor, I brought (coca) tea and cakes (as she was not entirely convinced people would show up or stay). The tea was nice but proved unnecessary, as people appeared genuinely interested to hear about the preliminary findings. At the same time, particularly in the rural institute, the group of trainers expressed that they had also expected this of me (since I had the funds to do so and because I had promised them to come back), and they took their time to critically question my methods, analysis and results. Although this was not the easiest experience I had, I am grateful for the serious engagement and critical attitude of these trainers, as they helped me to (already) defend my choices and research approach, as well as to think through the outcomes further.

Short surveys to help construct students' and trainers' profiles

With the purpose of creating a picture of the backgrounds and characteristics of teacher students' and trainers' profiles in my thesis, I designed a short and simple survey (see Appendix 5). In Simón Bolívar 164 first and third year students filled out the survey form and in Paracaya 158 first and third year students (with a balance between the number of first and third year students). These students were chosen arbitrarily by approaching their trainers at the beginning of their class and asking for 15 minutes of their time. The outcomes of these surveys were imputted into Excel and helped me to analyse and write about the student and trainer profiles presented in chapter 7.

Actor maps

During most of the interviews in the second fieldwork visit, I asked different respondents – including trainers, students, policy makers, unionists, donors and NGO-workers – to draw 'actor maps', portraying the main actors in the field of teacher education and their power relations. As

soon as the discussion turned to the main actors in the field of teacher education, I asked respondents to take over my note book and pen, and instead of only speaking about their ideas I invited them to draw a scheme, a table or any sort of overview of the way they viewed the main actors. I always asked them to show what the most important actor, or actors, were in the field, and how they related to each other. Often, respondents would themselves draw and discuss those actors that are resisting or against the current policy plans. If they did not mention this themselves, I would ask them whether they thought there were also actors that were resisting current policies. With my notebook and pen in their hands, some seemed to take the role of a teacher, really trying to make me understand their points of view. Since the conversations were recorded as well, I could also use the transcribed recounts later on, together with the drawings. These institutional maps and the power relations they reveal are used in the analysis of chapter 5.

Teacher students' life stories

One of the most inspiring and satisfying experiences during my stays in Bolivia were the relationships and friendships I managed to build with some of the respondents and my local supervisors. Being able to be a small part of their lives during several periods helped me to understand better the personal side of becoming a teacher, or, for non-teacher students-friends, what it is like to live and work in Bolivia today. Stimulated by my local Bolivian supervisor, I started to write down reflections and accounts of the stories of the lives of my teacher student friends. In addition to these notes, I also kept a diary to write down fieldwork notes and other reflections on my stay in Bolivia and on the developments of the research. I also used Mind-map (MindManager) software to brainstorm and keep track of the different sources of data I collected, people I met and those that I still wanted to contact.

2.9 Limitations, ethics and challenges

Carrying out reflexive social science research is unavoidably 'trapped in networks of power'. There are various self-limitations of power effects that should be taken into account here, being *domination*, *silencing*, *objectification* and *normalisation* (Burawoy, 2004). Firstly, a social scientist that 'intervenes' by interviewing and observing cannot avoid *domination*, or being dominated because of the ever-present power relations. In my case, this was clear through, for instance, the bureaucracies of needing permission to do research and enter the Normales, which became easier with each time I returned. In the beginning mentioning some key names (of my local supervisor for instance) helped in gaining access, later on it was just a matter of passing by the right person in the MoE in order to get the correct letter and stamps. However, stamps do not guarantee *genuine* access. It took a couple of weeks to create an atmosphere of acceptance (first) and then trust (later on), particularly in the urban institute. The fact that my contacts spread according to a 'snowball effects' (of acquainted teachers and students), my study is 'dominated' by the (inter)views and observations of only a particular group of trainers. It was much easier to connect to trainers that showed an interest in my study and those were mostly the teachers of languages and literature, social sciences and pedagogy (which I, luckily, also see as the subjects most relevant to this study to observe).

A second limitation is what Burawoy calls *silencing*, and is related to those voices that are not represented and are absent from debates. Although this thesis aims to include the perceptions and voices of various actors, it is limited in terms of its scope (excluding for instance children

taught by teacher interns and private schools), geographical coverage and, naturally, my choices in the way various voices are represented. Thirdly, Burawoy warns us that if we use *objectification*, or see social forces as natural and external instances, we should always be prepared for unforeseen and unexpected processes to erupt and break up the field of forces we identified. In my research, the constantly changing staff and Minister of the Bolivian MoE, as well as the staff of the Normales, shows how 'the policy level' cannot be assumed as a constant network of powers, as these changes in staff also bring about changes in power relations.

A fourth limitation brought forward by Burawoy is a process of *normalisation*, or 'double-fitting', in which complex situations are tailored to fit a theory and, in turn, theory is tailored to the particularities of the case under study, reducing the world into categories that can be investigated. Social scientists can challenge or mitigate normalisation by embedding the analysis in perspectives and categories that are designed from below, by those whose interests are supposed to be served by the study (Burawoy, 2004: 22-25). The ethnographic and multi-method approach – including observations, interviews, focus group discussions and various types of reflexive or feedback workshops with different groups of actors – was designed in order to address, to some extent, the limitations of silencing and normalisation. In addition, I constantly worked and reworked the theoretical frame that guided this study according to insights from the fieldwork. The scope and duration of this research did, however, not allow for a comprehensive inclusion of all of the actors in the (teacher) education sector – for instance with my decision that private education was not a key aspect of this thesis and only including a one-day visit to a private institute in the first fieldwork visit. Furthermore, the scope of this thesis was limited to only two main research locations, with some hints of practices in other Normales, yet far removed from a comprehensive study of the full arena of 'Bolivian teacher education'.

Another limitation of this thesis is its focus within the broad curriculum of teacher training on the PDI course. Instead of an in-depth analysis of the whole (old and new) teacher training curriculum documentation and implementation, I narrowed down to studying the 'practical and research part' of students education. I feel this choice was legitimate in the sense that PDI is a crosscutting course throughout the whole training of teacher students and part of every future teachers' training. Besides, it serves the purpose of creating an understanding of a Bolivian response to 'teacher education for social justice', as it directly engages with the wider community and applies a version of action research. The limitation of this choice, however, is clear in that I cannot make statements about the whole array of content and pedagogical approaches of 'Bolivian teacher training'.

As for the (security) situation Bolivia, I have not encountered serious difficulties during my stays in the country. However, the (sometimes country-wide) strikes, road blocks and (violent) uprisings have influenced the planning of my travels around Bolivia.[37] Last but not least, this research stops at a certain point in time, whereas the ever-changing developments in Bolivian society and education arena clearly continue. I therefore decided to 'stop' the data gathering process on the last day of my last fieldwork visit, 23rd May 2010. Of course, crucial and indispensable developments that took place after that period – such as the final version of the

[37] This was the main reason why only in the very last week of my last visit, I was finally able to visit a Normal in Santa Cruz.

ASEP law of December 2010 – are still taken up until the last writing and editing stages before publication. Some other limitations involve the challenges encountered during the research and my personal role in this research, as elaborated in Appendix 1.

As a final note for this chapter and relating back to the discussion on solidarity and engagement, whilst carrying out research in the diverse and partly 'indigenous context' of Bolivia, it is worth taking into account the arguments of Tuhiwai Smith (1999) about 'indigenous methodologies' and that '*research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions*' (1999: 5). Bearing in mind that 'sharing knowledge' is a long-term commitment (Smith, 1999: 15-16), I intend to 'report back' and 'share knowledge' in different languages and for different audiences, extending the period of my PhD, including the publication of a Spanish and adapted version of this thesis for circulation in Bolivia.