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

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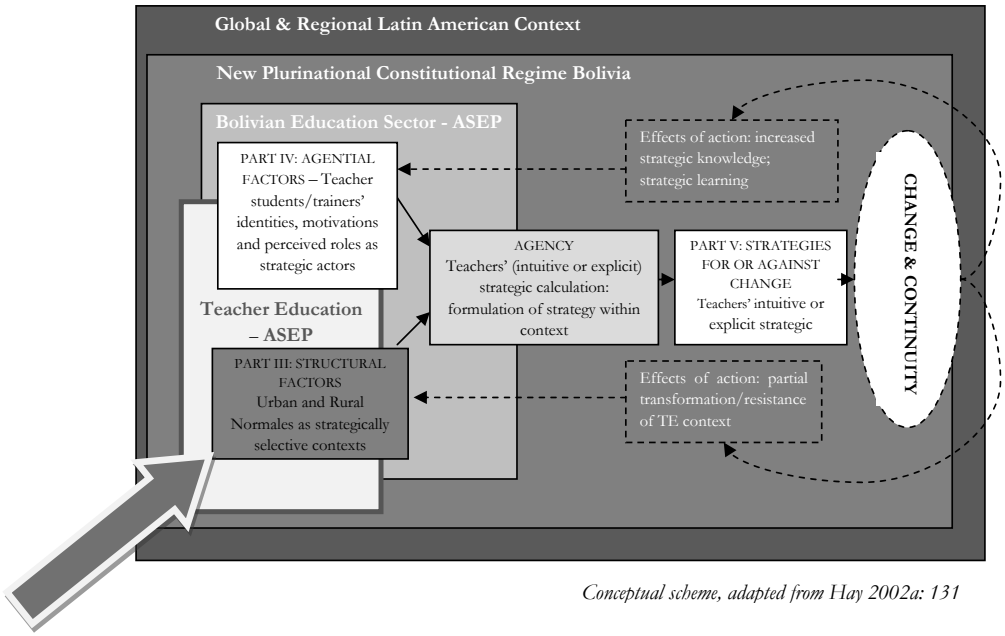
PART III

STRUCTURAL FACTORS: INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE



Conceptual scheme, adapted from Hay 2002a: 131

In the third part of the book, I aim to respond to questions related to the historical and present-day governing and inter-institutional relations of *Normales*: their institutional governance (Jessop, 2005: 35) and the structural institutional obstacles and opportunities for change (as illustrated in the conceptual scheme above). Over the past two decades there has been an increased recognition (within and beyond the social sciences) that 'institutions matter' in theoretical, empirical or practical contexts (Cummings, 1999; Jessop, 2004a). Before this 'institutional turn' their existence or relevance has been largely ignored and denied. Methodologically, this means the discovery that the institutional aspects of social life provide a rich entry point for exploring and explaining the social world, without excluding other themes or explanatory factors in research. Ontologically, institutions constitute the essential foundations of social existence in this approach. Without doing justice to the full elaboration of the debates on institutionalism, this research draws from some of these insights, in particular Fairclough's (2005) theoretical considerations on institutional change through the lense of Critical Discourse Analysis.

Furthermore, I draw from Jansen's (2001, 2005) 'politics of policy' and his ideas on political symbolism and non-reform in educational practice. In response to '*the under-exploration of a potentially powerful theoretical construct in third world sites*', Jansen developed a 'politics of policy' theory to explain the (non)transformation from educational policy into practice in contexts of '*third world transitions*', where '*politicians do not always invent policy in order to change practice*' (Jansen 2001b: 210, 212). His insights on non-reform and continuing policy-pratice gaps in low income contexts help us to understand Bolivia's earlier and current reform implementation challenges and 'non-reform' at the institutional level, and continuing policy-pratice and discourse-practice gaps in Bolivian education. In this thesis, I both draw from and criticise this interesting account. Drawing from a set of case studies on the transition to post-Apartheid in South Africa, according to Jansen, education policy making demonstrates a '*preoccupation with settling policy struggles in the political domain rather than in the realm of practice*' (2001b: 200).[88] In addition, the 'symbolic value' of education policy '*is revealed by the way that politicians and the public lend credence and support to the production of policy itself, rather than its implementation*' (2001b: 201). A relevant part of Jansen's analysis of political symbolism is the use of 'participation' as a process of legitimisation of policies, rightly emphasising the impact of unequal power and expertise of the 'participants' (2001b: 207).[89]Another relevant aspect for the case of Bolivia is Jansen's recognition that while financial constraints are pertinent to explaining educational non-reform, researchers need to look for other and different explanations for reform failure as well, including local and global constraints (2001b: 212). While Jansen's insight on the idea of political symbolism in many of its features is relevant to the Bolivian case, there are, nevertheless, also some divergenes with Jansen's analysis, perhaps not surprisingly considering the differences between South African and Bolivian histories and societies. Drawing from the outcomes of this study, in the final concluding chapter (11) I will suggest some ways to nuance or elaborate the idea of political symbolism.

I also find Cummings' (1999) theory on the InstitutionS of education useful in informing my analysis of Bolivian teacher education.[90] Cummings' framework of the 'InstitutionS of Education' (1999) perceives educational institutions as comprised of '*complex norms and procedures*' oriented toward realising a specific ideal. The capital S in InstitutionS emphasises the recognition that there is not one single institution of education, but that education systems are constituted out of several institutions. The specifics of these various institutions, including teacher training institutes, vary greatly. They have different incentive structures, with '*some that are favourable and some antithetical to development*' (Cummings, 1999: 422). According to Cummings, education varies across regions depending on a number of factors such as their historical underpinnings, the 'representative schools' (embodying new ideals), the definition of the ideal person, learning theories, school and classroom technologies (including curriculum), the system's administration and style, its sources of finance, and its systems of accountability. In Cummings' framework, the

[88] Jansen argues the first four years of the new political configuration in South Africa (1994-1999) can be typified as a period of 'political symbolism', geared primarily to an ideological-discursive shift, which '*is disconnected from immediate concerns about educational practice*' in South Africa's classrooms (2001b: 200-201).

[89] Similar to the situation of 'non-reform' in Bolivia after the 1994 Reform (discussed in chapter 4), in South Africa a clear implementation plan was not immediately there, and studies showed how revised syllabi often never made it to the schools, or went without accompanying training and support (2001b:203).

[90] As argued by both Cummings and more recenly by Clandinin et al (2009: 151), there is a need for a shift in studies on and approaches to teacher education, moving away from questioning the what and how of teacher education, by moving to understanding the why of teacher education. This study aims to combine these suggestions, by examining the when, what, why, who, how of teacher education policies and practices in the Bolivian context.

concept of the ideal person is the core of the education system and educational reform emerges as a result of rapid ideological, political and economic change and is often aimed at the creation of a new concept of the ideal person. Notions of '*who should be taught, what they should be taught, how people learn, and how education should be organised follow from a society's conception(s) of the ideal person*' (Cummings, 1999: 426). This study shows how in the light of Bolivia's changing socio-cultural and political context, the discourses on the ideal Bolivian citizen and teacher are shifting and informing the development of a new decolonising education reform. Even though Cummings' theorisation of the InstitutionS of education is relevant input for my analysis, his framework for comparison between states has, however, some limitations for its application to this study, as I will demonstrate in chapter 6.

More recently, Tatto in her edited volume 'Reforming Teaching Globally' (2007) underlines the relevance of Cummings theoretical frame specifically for research on teacher education, since the education of teachers mostly occurs within institutions. Tatto adds to Cummings' theory by arguing for the need to understand both new conceptualisations of the ideal person, as well as conceptualisations of *the ideal teacher for the ideal person* as envisaged by teacher training institutions (Tatto, 2007: 15, 269). She (2007: 12) stresses how the effects of any reform for teacher education institutions are highly variable. Basing herself on Cummings theory, change in these institutions is '*conditioned by strongly ingrained institutional patterns*' and educational models that evolve around the culturally defined notion of the ideal person in a particular society. In line with Cummings, Tatto brings forward how teacher training institutes are by no means homogeneous, nor should they be seen as passive entities. Teacher educators use their agency to actively or passively resist reform initiatives in their institutions. A variety of rationales behind teachers' resistance, ranging from '*good sense*', '*social justice struggles*' to '*defending working conditions*' are reflected in Tatto's work on resistance in teacher education institutions: '*this resistance to change can be seen as a legitimate attempt at cultural preservation and to maintain control in defining national identities, indigenous knowledge and pedagogy, and 'locally grown' accountability mechanisms. [...] In other contexts resistance can be seen as a way to maintain power over teachers' lives, such as the teacher union in Mexico*' (Tatto et al, 2007b: 12-13). Tatto also discussed the different power relations that play out in the field of teacher education. Education systems are shaped by well-distinguished institutional patterns that in turn provoke 'counter-patterns' (Tatto, 2007: 16). The impact of these counter patterns, that often fill the gaps left by the dominant or traditional system, depends on the openness of the political system and the strength of the opposition parties.