

Emerging knowledge in Argentine teacher training. Policies, discourses and demands to think about these times

Saberes emergentes en la formación docente argentina. Políticas, discursos y demandas para pensar estos tiempos

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Abstract

Through a post-foundational and post-structural approach anchored in the contributions of political discourse analysis, this article inquires into the ways in which educational policies, contingencies, and demands influence, change and shape knowledge around the gender perspective and comprehensive sexual education in initial teacher training in Argentina, particularly in the courses of Secondary Education in History and Geography in a Higher Institute of Teacher Training in the south of the Buenos Aires suburbs. We describe a movement of activation of demands, identities, and sensibility from the women's and sexual dissidence's movements that produce effects on the teaching positions of those who inhabit this institution, among which are the creation of an institutional space for addressing the gender perspective, the mobilization of training paths resulting from these demands, and the redefinition of the horizon in which teacher training is inscribed. In times of the rise of denialist discourses and challenges to certain types of knowledge as indoctrinating, we recover some coordinates to discuss, from a pedagogical concern for the construction of the common, the link between the knowledge of teacher training and the open demands of our time.

Key words: teachers training – educational policies – sexual education – political discourse analysis – knowledge of the teachers.

Resumen

Desde una perspectiva posfundacional y posestructural y anclado en los aportes del análisis político del discurso, este artículo indaga sobre los modos en que las políticas educativas, las contingencias y las demandas inciden, varían, forjan los saberes en torno a la perspectiva de género y la educación sexual integral en la formación docente inicial argentina, particularmente en las carreras de Educación Secundaria en Historia y en Geografía en un Instituto Superior de Formación Docente del sur del conurbano bonaerense. Describimos un movimiento de activación de demandas, identidades y sensibilidades proveniente del movimiento de mujeres y de disidencias que producen efectos en las posiciones docentes de quienes habitan

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esta institución, entre los cuales se encuentra la creación de un espacio institucional para el abordaje de la perspectiva de género, la movilización de las trayectorias formativas producto de estas demandas y la resignificación del horizonte donde se inscribe la formación de docentes. En tiempos de auge de discursos negacionistas y de impugnaciones sobre determinados saberes como adoctrinadores, recuperamos algunas coordenadas para pensar, desde una preocupación pedagógica por la construcción de lo común, el vínculo entre los saberes de la formación docente y las demandas abiertas de nuestro tiempo.

Palabras clave: formación de profesores – políticas educativas – educación sexual – análisis político del discurso – saberes docentes.

Introduction

Knowledge in initial teaching training (ITT from now on) is inscribed in the field of political struggle due to its meanings of negotiation and discussion that construct different ways to conduct ITT within the framework of demands and contingencies that have an impact on its significance together with educational discourse, pedagogical traditions, educational and curricular policies, and institutional projects and identities. They are contingent hegemonization processes – never entirely sutured – in which this knowledge is interwoven.

These contingent hegemonization processes impact the definition of ITT knowledge and the meanings of the school. In times when the imperative of productivity (Crary, 2015) is being expanded and neoliberal reasoning has become ubiquitous (Brown, 2016), a conceptualization of the school is also a vindication of the horizon that provides meaning to teachers' formation and work. We understand the school as a space where the right to education becomes concrete through a dual-meaning equality: assuming the educability of all students (everyone can learn) and upholding the Comenian utopian aspiration that everyone is entitled to a part of the world (Masschelein, 2018), seeing the school as a precarious organization that owes its durability to material, strategic and discursive conditions (Dussel, 2018) where policies acquire a central role. It is a space that seeks to be separated from the household, from production, from consumption (Larrosa, 2019), and from the algorithm of platforms, placing the student in the experience of being taught by (Biesta, 2016), that generates a suspended time to be able to start (Masschelein, Simons, 2014) and that aims to inscribe in the world those who will do it freely, escaping our wills as educators (Meirieu, 1998), a time and a space that can offer equality (Rancière, 1988).

Based on these assumptions, we intend in this paper to reflect on the link between educational policies, social demands and contingencies, and their impact on the knowledge of ITT through the institutional policies and formative experiences produced in the Higher Teacher Training Institute of the Province of Buenos Aires located in the Greater Buenos Aires Urban Area. To this end, taking into account the contributions of Laclau & Mouffe's political discourse analysis, as well as Southwell & Vassiliades' study of teaching positions, we will analyze the insti-



tutional translations (Ball, 2002) of the gender perspective¹ and the agenda on comprehensive sexual education² (CSE), considering gender policies and the activation of the demands of the women's and dissidences' movement. About this we ask ourselves how the members of this educational community processed, appropriated and translated these policies and demands on an institutional scale.

This analysis is in turn inscribed in the studies on ITT in Argentina, and in particular in Birgin's hypothesis (2023) of the reconfiguration of the teacher training system, through which we inquire into the reconfiguration of knowledge of the ITT. To this end, we retrieve the partial results of doctoral research work³ whose main question was how the contingencies, demands and activations of the political impact, vary, and forge knowledge in the ITT in a Higher Teacher Training Institute (HTTI) in the south of the Greater Buenos Aires Urban Area.

The article is organized in three sections. In the first one we retrieve some theoretical coordinates to analyze the knowledge of teacher training through post-foundational thought, in particular political discourse analysis and teaching position analysis. In the second one we address the field of study where the questions in this article are inscribed, the reconfiguration of the teacher training system in Argentina, and in the third one we analyze the mobilization of knowledge and identities involved in highlighting and addressing the gender perspective and CSE in the training institution where our field work was conducted. We finish the article with some conclusions about the link between contingencies, demands, discourses, policies, and knowledge.

Methodology

As for the methodological aspects, they are of an exploratory character in research conducted through an inductive qualitative-interpretative approach (Vasilachis, 2006), where we adopted the instrumental case study methodology (Stake, 2007). The information was produced through field work throughout 2020 and 2021, which included periods of observation and (direct and virtual) recording (Pink *et al.*, 2016), as well as open, in-depth interviews with members of each educational community.

As for the research sample, it is based on a group of people who are not representative of the universe or population being studied, so its aim is not generalization in probabilistic terms

³ Stemming from a doctoral dissertation directed by Alejandra Birgin, Los saberes en la formación docente inicial. Tramas entre contingencias, demandas y políticas educativas en un Instituto Superior de Formación Docente del Conurbano Bonaerense (2023) within the Doctorate program in Educational Sciences of the UBA School of Philosophy and Literature.



¹ When we speak of gender perspective we refer to the field of problems, viewpoints and programmatic horizon that highlights and questions power and oppression relationships based on sex-gender differences, recognizes the heteropatriarchal social construction of the bodies, contextualizes, and denounces them (Femenías, 2008). In the field of Argentinian education, Báez's (2013), González del Cerro's (2018) and Blanco's (2012) theses construct their objects of study through this perspective.

² In this article we do not stop to analyze which are the privileged contents on CSE addressed in the experience of this institution and how they are appropriated by the students through different scales of analysis. For that, see Faur & Gogna (2016). Neither do we analyze the different strategies established through the educational policies that seek to make CSE more effective in the different educational levels. For further analysis see Baez (2021), as well as studies about teacher training such as Lavigne & González Martín (2015) and Lavdovsky (2024).

(Fernández Sampieri, 2010). It is a sample of voluntary participants in which we interviewed higher level (third and fourth year) students doing their teaching practice in the majors for Secondary Education in History and Geography, female Geography alumni, students who participate from union groups, different authorities (principal, regents, area chiefs), practice professors and participant professors of CAI commissions. We also conducted observations of activities and working days remotely through the institution's social networks, and systematized national, jurisdictional, and institutional documents. We interviewed a total of 40 students: 5 who participated from a union group (student center or body of delegates), 16 History students, and 19 Geography students. We also interviewed 17 people more between authorities, teachers, and staff who carry out other functions in the institution. In total, the sample comprised 57 people from the institution, with whom we conducted 124 interview sessions between February 2020 and December 2021.

3. Post-foundational thought, political discourse analysis, and teaching positions. A theoretical approach on the analysis of the movement of knowledge in education

Following the contributions of post-structural studies in education, several scholars began to wonder how to construct knowledge about education, concerned with the production of senses, subjects, and social practices (Buenfil, 2019). The research outlook turned towards the different modes of production, reproduction, and transmission of senses in different periods and contexts (Vassiliades, 2012).

These were views positioned in the post-structural and post-foundational approaches, which are fertile to inquire into the contingencies of the past that regulate the present and reconfigure the role of truth in research. What seems to be true in the present needs to be inquired upon and problematized in order to learn about the contingent historic forms that give it such power. We debate thus the notion of truth as unique, unchangeable, and ready to be discovered.

The post-foundational approach begins with the impossibility of an ultimate foundation, which makes the notion of contingency central and a link to the political, as an attempt to build a partial and failed foundation (Marchart, 2009). According to Laclau (2005), there is space sutured with an ultimate foundation, but rather an attempt to construct a totality through contingency and politics. Thus, the arena is open to the plurality of social movements that try to found a society, without being able to do it entirely, based on contingent foundations (Butler, 2001). This concept assumes the absence of an ultimate foundation, pluralizes the possible foundations, and opens up a perspective of analysis of the movements and the efforts to stabilize them, and announces the indeterminate character of social processes (Blanco, Sánchez, 2014; Marchart, 2009).



Indeed, we analyze which contingencies produce given identities, demands, and discourses in the ITT and the ways in which they interweave with knowledge in search of their legitimation. It is the task of research to inquire into what emerges from the field under analysis as problems, and in particular how they are constructed (Oliveira, Oliveira, Gomes, 2013). We need to understand the ways in which our questions are answered, translated, and run through by the subjects in the field of study based on the discourses at our disposal. In this respect, a notion that became relevant during our fieldwork was that of *emergent knowledge*, because it allowed us to bind together the gender perspective, CSE, and the pedagogy of memory, 4 among others.

At the same time, it also generated questions about its conceptual roots, so we reviewed again some assumptions through the post-foundational approach; in particular, the place of the notion of *contingency*, insofar as it reasserts the open, not sutured character of the significance of teacher training, and particularly its knowledge. This association between emergent knowledge and the struggle for significance made us wonder about the link between social movements and the demands about some given knowledge. We will delve into this theoretical approach in the next two sections. In the first one we retrieve some elements of political discourse analysis, and in the second we address its declination in the field of education through the category of teaching positions.

3.1 Political discourse analysis: Laclau and Mouffe

Through the rationale of the post-foundational approach, Laclau & Mouffe (2015) inquire the process of fixation of meanings in a society that as a whole is an impossible object, but that thanks to it functions as a condition of possibility for the fixation of meanings. For their analysis, the authors differentiate the social from the political. Indeed, the social is structured through a dual movement of fixation/defixation, while it is always overflowed by the "excess of meaning" that surrounds it. Therefore, the meaning of the social becomes unfixed in an infinite play of differences known as "the discursive". The social is defined as the realm of sedimented discursive practices, which conceal the original acts of their political and contingent. Sedimented social practices are a constitutive part of every society, and not all of them are questioned or exposed. In this sense, from a post-foundational approach politics is differentiated from the political as that which always escapes any attempt at domestication (Marchart, 2009).

Mouffe (2005) defines the political as a space of power, conflict, and antagonism that constitutes societies, rather than a space of freedom and public deliberation. The political is that which is "linked to the antagonism latent in society and [...] may emerge in a wide range of human relations" (Mouffe, 2014: 22). In turn, he defines politics as a set of practices and institutions through which and order is created and human coexistence is organized in the context of the

⁴ In De Marco (2024) we analyze the effects of social demands on the knowledge of the ITT in regard to the policies and pedagogy of memory.



conflictiveness derived from the political. In this approach, the political is defined as the moment of institution of the social and of reactivation of the contingent nature of each institution (Laclau, 2000; 2014), although the moment of reactivation does not consist of a return to the origins but of rediscovery of the contingent character of a supposed "objectivity" (Laclau, 1996). The political would imply the visibility of the acts of social institution. Thus, it becomes impossible to determine *a priori* what is social and what is political without a contextual reference. The boundary between the social and the political is essentially unstable, implies displacements, and requires constant negotiations between the social subjects. The "natural" in a society is the result of sedimented practices (Mouffe, 2005) that operate in layers.

Educational research inquires into the legitimized sediments of knowledge to discern their political character and the contextualization of the construction of meanings (Buenfil Burgos, 2019). In these lines we analyze the fabric through which different discourses are appropriated to construct what can be said, thought, or desired by the subjects in a particular HTTI. The political analysis of the discourses that circulate in a given time and space is the doorway to understand the social reality constructed by these subjects. For this reason, we want to retrieve some lines about the way to understand discourse understood as an articulated whole where every element occupies a differential position.⁵

In every whole there are elements that cannot be entirely articulated, which allows us to view it as historic, not sutured, and limited by a constitutive outside (Etchegaray, 2011). Precariousness is a constitutive feature of the discursive whole that makes the construction of meanings always something in the present, since there can only be partial fixations. The political as discourse implies negotiations of meaning in search of the hegemony of a given meaning which, provisionally and in a contingent fashion, occupies the center and can bring together other meanings in dispute (Oliveira, Lopes, 2011).

According to Laclau (2000), dislocation means that the subject can only construct an identity through acts of identification. Based on that, Laclau differentiated identity a contingent with a temporary and relational fixation of identification as the way to complement the subject from its lack (Biglieri, Perelló, 2015; Etchegaray, 2011; Southwell, 2020). Identities and conditions of existence are inseparable in a dialectic relationship between need and contingency, since every identity depends on conditions of existence that are contingent, so identities have a necessary relationship with conditions of existence (Laclau, 2000). Based on the notion of identity as a differential relationship, Mouffe (2005, 2014) argues that collective identities must be created in which the "we" can only exist through the demarcation of a "them". Every identity is constructed based on a constitutive outside that creates a difference. Therefore, a precondition to construct an identity is the existence of a difference from other(s) who constitute this outside.

⁵ Throughout his work, Laclau varied his conceptualization of "antagonism", incorporating later the categories of dislocation and heterogeneity to delve into these conceptualizations and on populism.



Identities are constructed through operations of signification in which the affective dimension that every signifier has occupies a nodal spot (Laclau, 2005): "affection (enjoyment) constitutes the very essence of investiture" (Laclau, 2005: 148). Desire becomes a fundamental axis to reflect on the construction of identities. Every hegemonic symbolic construction involves an affective charge that allows us to understand its fixation in the long term and the difficulties of its displacement (Blanco, Sánchez, 2014; Biglieri, Perelló, 2020). Mouffe (2018: 90) explains that by "discursive practice he refers to meaningful practices in which the meaning and the action, the linguistic and affective components, cannot be separated". Retrieving the affective dimension of discursive practices is key, because part of the fixation of meanings is explained by this dimension. To address affection, Mouffe uses the term passions intentionally to differentiate it from the concept of emotions, and refers to the latter as "a certain type of common affection used in the political realm to construct the forms of identification us/them" (2014: 35). In this article we regard the subjects as run through by contingency and by a demarcation of their conditions of existence interwoven with the circulating discourse. When we analyze later the knowledge that emerged from our field work, the conceptualization of passions allows us to understand the decisions and interests of the subjects who inhabit the institution.

Articulatory practices do not intervene in a field without signification; they always take place covered in sedimented layers of flexible, variable traditions (Marchant, 2009). These practices bid in the general field of hegemony, where an articulatory moment of elements is not enough, but they must also deal with antagonistic practices. Hegemony refers to the discursive construction that questions a wide equivalent chain of meanings and a plurality of social demand. Thus, it universalizes particular ideas and values to turn them into a new popular wisdom and embody imaginarily the community order (Laclau, Mouffe, 2015). In this respect, a key concept is that of demand, defined as an elementary form of construction of the social link (Laclau, 2005). Groups are formed as an effect of discursive articulations about different demands (Biglieri, 2017), organized in two classes: democratic, and popular. Democratic demands are those that remain isolated in their claim to be satisfied in a governmental instance. However, when demands are not satisfied – even if they maintain their particular petition particular – they are joined by other demands as unattended claims. This leads to an equivalent articulation that allows them to constitute a broader social subjectivity. In this case, we are dealing with popular demands. An institutionality that responds to democratic demands operates under the logic of equivalence, while their not being recognized enables the activation of the logic of difference (Márquez, 2020; Biglieri, Perelló, 2015).

This conceptualization of democratic demands led us to wonder where and how the demands that make up some of the knowledge in this HTTI emerge. We may anticipate that we found a link between that knowledge and the grouping of different individuals in the institute around democratic demands such as the human rights movements – not addressed here – that



took root with more or less strength at different times in recent decades in Argentina. This approach also allowed us to analyze how in the institution some signifiers forge meanings on formation where the assignment of spaces in the building, of functions the institutional subjects inscribe in the institutional fabric certain interests, expectations, and demands, different from the neoliberal order (Biglieri, 2017).

3.2 Conceptual notes on teaching positions

Southwell (2013, 2020) and Vassiliades (2012) address the concept *teaching positions* and analyze the meanings of teaching work and training for it, closely linked to the discourse circulating in each context and time. These teaching positions arise from the complex link between different views – socially and historically constructed – about educational problems that are sedimented through time and *re*-articulated, always provisionally and without a suture in the present. The subjects construct these positions based on the circulating discourse available to them to respond to educational problems through provisional definitions about which situations are considered unjust, which ones reinforce inequality and exclusion, and which elements would create more egalitarian, just, or inclusive scenarios. Thus, meanings about justice, inclusion, and equality (like many others) have an unstable and open character in a dispute for their hegemony (Southwell, Vassiliades, 2014).

Every discursive articulation, being open and contingent, is framed within identifications that operate as temporal fixation processes. Positions do not belong to the individual because they are constituted by discourse: rather, the individual uses a discourse to give meanings to his or her practice through a dense and complex negotiation between the discourses available and the contexts in which the subjects are anchored (Vassiliades, 2012). Thus, the discourses that circulate about teaching constitute meanings about this work, the ways to carry it out, the problems it faces, and the challenges and utopias it projects (Southwell, 2020; Vassiliades, 2012).

Teaching positions are grounded on assumptions, ideas, and convictions about teaching that involve a relationship with the culture and with knowledge, sedimented in the history of education, teaching traditions, and discourses about teaching (Southwell, Vassiliades, 2014). Moreover, teaching positions involve a way to relate with the others and construct links of authority and cultural authorization based on assumptions about who the new generations are and what has to be done with them. Teaching positions appeal to the rational and to linkage. They call for affections, are produced interwoven with the passions that mobilize them and with sensibilities that shape the challenges that give meaning to daily work (Southwell, Vassiliades, 2014).

Based on these premises, we seek to analyze the educational through an approach that acknowledges the absence of an ultimate foundation, and to build an analytical view attentive and sensitive to the contingencies in which the discourses are grounded and allow for the construction of meanings by the subjects.



4. Studies about the reconfiguration of ITT in Argentina: is knowledge also under reconfiguration?

Teacher training in Argentina is regulated by National Education Law N.º 26.206 (2006) and by the Higher Education Law N.º 24.521 (1995), as well as different resolutions of the Federal Education Council.⁶ Historically, ITT has been conducted in two types of higher level institutions: HTTIs and universities, which have been diversified in recent decades. In both, when they are public and managed by the State, degree formation, free or not, has a cost. Another element that characterizes higher education in Argentina is unrestricted admittance to institutions (except for some institutions or specific majors). Together with the free character of higher education, these are two unique features that make up the identity of this educational level and express, since the return of democracy (1983),⁷ a political culture. These feature were incorporated in the laws in 2015, when the articles of the Higher Education Law were reformulated.

This is part of the studies on ITT in Argentina, and especially of the studies about its policies and the reconfiguration of the teaching system (Birgin, 2020, 2023), based on the following hypothesis: the reconfiguration of teachers' training takes place also in the dimension linked to the knowledge in motion, since this is permeable to the demands made by different political identities on ITT and are sensitive to the social contingencies that activate particular relationships with it.

We will look now at papers that analyze the reconfiguration of the teacher training system in Argentina through the phenomena of diversification, institutional differentiation, and broadening of enrollment (Birgin, 2018, 2020, 2023), to inscribe there the question about the knowledge of the ITT (Molinari, 2017), specifically in regard to their mobilization of knowledge in the ITT.

4.1 Reconfiguration of the teacher training system

The diversification and institutional differentiation of the higher level began with the sustained growth of institutions inscribed for the last 50 years⁸ in the Higher level (Birgin, 2018; Davini, 2005). This process went through three expansive waves of national universities in the 1970s, 1990s, and 2000s (Chiroleu, Suasnábar, Rovelli, 2012), accompanied by the gradual and sustained growth of the HTTI. However, this diversification was not only quantitative, but also with-

⁸ Until 1969, teacher training for Preschool and Primary education has conducted in Secondary schools. Since 1971, it has been taught as the Tertiary level of Teachers' Colleges.



⁶ The National Education Law (Art. 116) establishes as the Federal Education Council as a space for negotiation, agreement and coordination of educational policy to ensure the unity and articulation of the National Education System. It is constituted by authorities in education of the nation, the provinces, and the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, as well as three representatives of the Universities Council. Their resolutions are compulsory when the Assembly so stipulates.

⁷ The free character of education has a precedent in 1949 when, under Perón's first government (1946-1952), payment was suspended by presidential decree.

in the new institutions that train teachers in the higher level. Among them is the creation of new teaching majors in social management linked to social movements (Resnik, 2022), universities depending on the jurisdictions with a predominant orientation toward teacher training (Badano, 2014; Perazza, 2019; Birgin, 2020). In the 1990s, institutional growth and differentiation – along with the transfer of national educational services towards the provinces – increased its pace and after 2006, with the creation of the National Institute of Teacher Training (NIOTT), the system government was recentralized, coexisting with the institutional diversification (Birgin, 2018).

In turn, according to different studies in Latin America, and especially in Argentina, the growth of enrollment in higher education led to a process of structural, nuclear massification, marking an intense, continuous and unprecedented trend (Ezcurra, 2013; Brunner, 2012) that is part of a global movement. In Argentina, this expansion in the enrollment in higher education had an incipient beginning in the 1970s and accelerated in the 1990s, especially in training. Davini (2005) analyzes the behavior of the demand for access to Non-University Higher Education (NUHE) in recent years, and concludes that it was significant. According to Birgin (2020), between 1980 and 2020 enrollment in higher education went from 393,828 students to 2'283,307. In that period, university enrollment went from 80.8% to 67.6%, which shows that in a scenario of sustained enrollment growth the enrollment in higher education institutes was proportionally greater.

One of the items in the agenda of studies on teacher training in recent years was the inquiry on who are the candidates to be future teachers. Some research papers claim that the expansion of enrollment involves a broadening of the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the students. Enrollment in higher education of youths from social groups previously excluded both from higher education and from teaching jobs becomes evident, youths who are the first generation to get a secondary and/or higher education in their families. Nevertheless, the increase in access to higher educational levels and ITT of sectors of the population previously excluded has been limited by high rates of academic failure and dropout. To some extent, the increase in enrollment also plays out in the reconfiguration of institutional cultures and the hospitality devices being constructed (Ezcurra, 2011; Charovsky, 2013).

4.2 Knowledge of initial teacher training. Demands, relationships and experiences
The object of study of this article is inscribed in the hypothesis of the reconfiguration of teacher training in the enrollment and institutional variables, along with the question of knowledge and the bids to establish its legitimacy. It is on this issue where we find scarce research to which we wish to contribute, linked to teaching knowledge (Terigi, 2013; Mercado, 2002).

A transversal and nodal issue of teacher training is the link constructed between the knowledge to be taught and its transmission itself. In this respect, Charlot's (2008) contributions are interesting to highlight that in any teaching there is a relationship with knowledge



that builds meaning and links with that which is taught. In that sense, it is important for teacher training to inquire into which relationships with knowledge make sense, produce pleasure, and construct desire, and how they are built. The relationship with knowledge that subjects establish plays out in certain contexts and situations; that is, involve a subject who establishes relationships of desire with the world based on a given position. On the other hand, Tardif (2009) studies teaching knowledge that is diverse and comes from different sources. We want to delve into experiential knowledge, which is that which spring from the experience that validates it. It is incorporated into individual and collective experience in the form of habits and skills, of know-how and know-how-to-be. It is the set of practical knowledge acquired and necessary for the practice of the profession that configures a set of representations based on which educators interpret, understand, and orientate their profession.

In this article we inquire into the ways in which the knowledge of the ITT is porous to the demands and contingencies of a time. Charlot's conceptualizations about the relationship with knowledge and Tardif's about teacher knowledge – especially experiential knowledge – make room for the question of how the knowledge of the ITT is interwoven with the demands of different social movements on education, different social contingencies, educational discourses and policies, pedagogical traditions, and institutional conditions. If the relationship with knowledge comes into play in experiences, which are the educational policies and discourses, and the institutional conditions that cause certain relationships with that knowledge to be established? If some of the most unique knowledge of teaching is the experiential one, which are the initiatives, the experimentations enabled during the ITT so that knowledge of the teaching experience can be appropriated?

5. Knowledge in motion: making room for a gender perspective and CSE in an HTTI

We will now analyze the ways in which the activation of the political is translated into different initiatives that seek to institutionalize gender perspective and CSE in the HTTI being studied. During our field work we found a recurring demand of teachers and students for the incorporation of a gender perspective and CSE in the ITT. When we inquired into which were the experiences or contingencies that gave rise to this demand, several interviewees pointed to the "Ni Una Menos" mobilizations (2015) as the initial kick-off. The opening to the social (Laclau, Mouffe, 2015) generated in 2015 with the "Ni Una Menos" mobilization, along with the debate for the de-penalization of abortion, led to a moment of activation of the political that, under this banner, favored the articulation of multiple demands and the installation of the agenda of feminisms on the public stage. It was a contingency that allowed for the emergence of different

⁹ In June 2015 there was a first mass mobilization demanding the end of gender violence, deploying countless new languages, meanings, groupings, and demands.



demands and sensibilities (Nijensohn, 2019). After 2015, the fabric constructed by public policies¹⁰ and social movements around the CSE became more dense and widened the deployment of a movement of activation of demands, identities, and sensibilities that revolved around the contents and messages related to sexual bodies and how to address them in the classrooms of compulsory education (Morgade, Fainsod, 2018).

To analyze this fabric, we describe the demands presented in the institution for the incorporation of a gender perspective and CSE, one of whose effects was the creation of a commission of the Institutional Academic Council (IAC) devoted to its institutional application. Finally, we describe the paths followed by different individuals to train on this perspective.

5.1 Demands, institutional experimentations

During our field work, some students narrated their approaches to this perspective in study sessions held by women's and dissidences' movements. They identified that in those sessions they had experiences that allowed them to activate different questions and that led to a demand for a greater presence of a gender perspective in teacher training; in particular, that the CSE contents be addressed in their academic subjects and that they not be set aside.

Even though the current national normativity¹¹ indicates that CSE must be incorporated into the curricular designs of the ITT, the majors we studied did not include it since they were created before the passing of these norms (1999), although they had been updated in 2023, nor has it been included in the teaching majors of the province of Buenos Aires that were updated in 2015, such as the one in Language and Literature. This absence of curricular spaces devoted to CSE means that it is addressed in study sessions, specific days, or specific study subjects through their teachers' initiative.

Nevertheless, different attempts to include a gender perspective and CSE into the institute have been made. Some teachers mention that both have a greater presence in recent years, not only in institutional initiatives but also in the students' and some teachers' demands to include them: "When I began [2012] CSE was not even mentioned. In fact, even I did not think about it a lot when I began to teach" (Luz, teacher and member of the CSE Comission). "There is a demand of students to learn about what women and working people have done in different historic contexts. This interest to incorporate the dimension of gender with bibliography arose in recent years" (Lorenzo, History teacher).

Indeed, in recent years questions have been posed, views resignified, and different demands activated to incorporate this perspective in the institution. "We must be prepared to

¹¹ National Law N.º 26.150 grants every student the right to receive comprehensive sexual education from the initial level to the higher level of teacher training and of technical non-university education.



¹⁰ Some of the different gender policies produced in recent decades in Argentina are the following norms, which reinforce and enhance the rights of women and sexual and (non)reproductive rights: Law of Comprehensive Sexual Education N°26.150 (2006), Law of Comprehensive Protection of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (2006), Law of Egalitarian Marriage (2010), Law of Gender Identity (2012), Micaela Law (2019), and Legal Interruption of Pregnancy Law (2020), among others.

know how to teach CSE, it must not be an extracurricular or that you say I graduated, I'm going to take a course on CSE" (Lorena, 37, History student in the 4th year in 2020). These students perceive that they get a fragmented and low intensity training in CSE in their major. Moreover, in their previous training trajectories they received a sexual education from an approach based on traditional models (biomedical or moralizing) (Morgade, 2011). Their demand is acknowledged by the authorities and teachers who see many students interested in training in these perspectives, with the most recurrent demand linked to receiving a training that prepares them to actual work in the classroom. They demand training aimed first of all at their teaching practice. This demand is also activated based on their experience during their teaching practice, as other research shows (Sardi, 2023).

Due to these demands the institution, among other definitions, created the "CSE Project" Commission in 2020 to address CSE institutionally following the initiative of a group of teachers who included in their classes the CSE axes. This space sought to foster previous work and aims to institutionalize the ways in which this perspective enters the institution. In 2020 and 2021, despite having to move classes online due to the Covid-19 pandemic that made social relationships and teaching work even more complex, the Commission assembled virtual guides on CSE in teacher training in the institution's digital platform where a large number of productions that transversalize CSE contents were shown. Their abundance is proof of the significance of this perspective in many professors' teaching proposals. The Commission also conducted discussions and conferences with guests such as Dora Barrancos, Ro Ferrer, Mirta Marina, Norma Filidoro, or Diana Lan, produced a module on CSE for the first workshop held for new students in 2021, bought children's books related to the CSE axes, and participated in the institutional conferences with panels, forums, and samples.

Some of the challenges, difficulties and problems found in these two years of working with CSE were discussed in the conversations with the members of the Commission. One of the problems identified is the training on CSE that the institute's faculty has and the paradox constructed around the Commission. While highlighting the pedagogical work about this perspective Florencia, director and member of the Commission, told us: "It ends up being an excuse so that everything linked to CSE is left to its members. This is a problem because we need CSE to be taught in all the subjects and all the majors". This paradox takes place because these teachers are the ones who show a greater commitment to incorporate this perspective.

However, the complexity of the transversalization of a gender perspective lies not only in the institutional agreements and commitments involved in its achievement, but also in the fact that it demands an epistemological oversight and a revision of the class contents from the standpoints of this perspective (Morgade, Fainsod, González, Busca, 2016; Barrancos, 2021).

As a teacher said, by virtue of "ideological conviction" they pushed forward a space that was launched online during the pandemic at a time when many links were weakened, a space that



put into play what is relevant, necessary, and fundamentally fair during ITT. Her words express a way of carrying out just, self-managed projects that cannot wait for the external conditions to press ahead their convictions. As can be seen, there is a pedagogical production, proposals based on what summons them and places them, fabrics in which they conjugate teaching knowledge built on their practice and experience (Tardif, 2009).

This collective of female professors refer to a zeitgeist, which goes beyond this institute, where a significant number of teachers experiment with alternatives to put into effect a gender perspective and CSE in the school, as González (2018) also described. Taking these collectives into account, some social events that took place in recent years activated demands that built positions to which individuals of certain generations were sensitive, perceived from the feminine, sensitive to feminist discourse, or with previous experiences of social or political participation. It would seem that some of these elements are the ones that generate the foundations for the deployment of teaching positions committed to a gender perspective and CSE in the ITT.

Different teachers interviewed mentioned having taken different training courses – diploma courses, specializations, Master's degrees – on these issues to satisfy their training needs since these issues were generally absent or very limited in their own training, a search that, according to Barrancos (2021), extends to different regions of the country. In turn, all the professors express the importance of joint, collective and team work among peers in different contexts, whether in this or in other institutes or spaces of activism.

Finally, an issue that emerged during our field work – probably with more intensity nowadays – is the pedagogical challenge involved in training in these topics people who show no interest in the gender perspective or CSE, or who are even hostile to the social identities that personify these demands. In those cases, the challenge is to break the individuals away or distance them from the hegemonic popular wisdom, which implies recognizing, de-articulating and re-articulating the ways in which the students understand sexuality, sexual education, and sex-gender identities (Morgade, Fainsod, 2018). The incorporation of a gender perspective in the life of the institute implied a process of denaturalization of the sex-gender system, although it also shows resistances of positions that are permeable to the nuclei of meanings constructed by patriarchal discourse (Morgade *et al.*, 2016).

6. Conclusions: popular knowledge, emergent knowledge. Between contingencies and demands

This article, grounded on a post-foundational and post-structural perspective (Marchart, 2009) and based on Laclau's (1996; 2000; 2014) and Mouffe's (2005; 2014) political analysis of discourse, seeks to add to the data available on the ways in which educational policies, discourses, contingencies, and demands impact on knowledge in ITT in Argentina, specifically in the majors in Secondary Education in History and Geography of an HTTI in the south of the Greater Buenos Aires Urban Area. With these epistemological and theoretical coordinates, we understood our



field of research as a play between the social (sedimentation), the political (activation) and the contingent that generate the conditions of possibility of signification of reality by the individuals involved. To the extent that discourses are run through by historicity and temporal variations, they produce different meaning about the social reality with a relative capacity of fixation in the individuals (Laclau, 1996).

In the process of reconfiguration of teacher training (Birgin, 2018a, 2020, 2023) we inquired into the teaching positions (Southwell, Vassiliades, 2014) constructed by the subjects in this institution to make room for the gender perspective and CSE in the education of their students. We focused on these questions because the significations and articulations about the place of sexual bodies, gender identities, desires and affections, violence for reasons of gender, and especially the ways to address these topics in schools have been issues that used to be beyond the teachable (Morgade *et al.*, 2016) in teacher training.

As González (2018) argues, perspective is not a topic and gender is not a discipline. In the institute we found subjects for whom the approach to a gender perspective not only implied new knowledge but also led to a performative change in their viewpoints, their formative horizons, and the ways they understood educational problems. Thus, this perspective contributes to the construction of certain teaching positions with a concern for equality in education in which the variable gender occupies a nodal place. The incorporation of a gender perspective in the institution seeks to start a process of denaturalization of the sex-gender system, introduce new knowledge, generate a performative change in viewpoints, formative horizons and ways of understanding educational problems. It also promotes identification around a heterogeneous "us" and produces resistances that alert about an open dispute about its legitimacy. This incorporation forms part of the active sensibilities of a time that produce new problems and realities and confront resistances of positions that are permeable to the nuclei of meanings constructed by the patriarchal discourse (Morgade et al., 2016; González, 2018) and that are now, in Argentina and elsewhere, platforms on which one can enunciate with greater strength.

We tried to retrieve different ways in which the knowledge brought by gender perspective and CSE seek to resignify the training and meaning of the school (Lopes, 2012) as it also impacts on curricular development with the question about which is the legitimate cultural selection (Lopes, Macedo, 2011) in which teachers are trained. Based on the different responses and stabilize, the principles that support teacher training are redefined.

The demands of the women's movement and the dissidences' movements have been incorporated into the educational policies of recent decades through laws, programs, and curricular guidelines, giving formality, legality, and legitimacy to the contents that have emerged from those demands, despite the continuous attacks in the last year in the national sphere to the gender policies as well as the sexual and reproductive rights acquired, a drastic mutation of the scenario in which the information from the field work for this research was produced.



The mobilization of the knowledge of the ITT is also due to the permeability of the demands produced by different social movements that are translated into educational claims. The translation of these demands in the ITT intervenes in the production of teaching positions, which produces variations in the culture and in language, a product of the opening of a space that activates sensibilities on the sexual bodies, but also in teacher training and work.

During our field work we identified a movement of activation (Nijensohn, 2019) of demands, identities and sensibilities that – in educational matters, and specifically in the field of teacher training – revolves around the contents and messages regarding sexual bodies (González, 2018; Báez, 2013) and pedagogical work about them in the classrooms of compulsory education levels. The experiences collected refer to the potential that resides in the training when the questions of the students find conditions to work on in different institutional spaces. At the same time, as the teachers and students made room for CSE in the institution, its transversalization became a relevant and challenging perspective, which in order to be effective requires coordinated institutional efforts that demand more time and dedication, as well as educational policies that uphold as a State policy the right to sexual education through a comprehensive approach, as it has been legislated nationally for over a decade and a half.

In turn, we find a recurrence about the complexity and the difficulty involved in training on these issues those who do not assume themselves in the identities that forge this knowledge. We came across cases in which a gender perspective and CSE were rejected as issues pertinent to teacher training, added to another complexity: this is knowledge that makes the right to education of future generations. Some positions within the institution inhibit, restrict and hinder the knowledge linked to gender perspective and CSE, challenging them as "biased" demands of the women's and dissidences movements; that is, the difference that the political constructs between an us and a them has an impact on how the knowledge that is explicitly linked with any social movement is received. The passion dimension (Mouffe, 2014) operates in the way in which discourses impact the teaching positions both in the wager to carry out different initiatives that address CSE and gender perspective and in the resistances found. Then, how can we sensitize and train those who do not subscribe to those discursive chains? We run here into a unique problem not found in other bodies of knowledge involved in the ITT, in which their disputes form part of an argument within a field of study but are not articulated with social movements that intervene in the public political scene.

This involves a pedagogical challenge over the construction of the common (Cornu, 2012), since both gender perspective and CSE are linked to identities that struggle for their legitimacy (Oliveira, Mesquitai, Oliveira, 2013). The knowledge that emerges from the demands of some social movements, such as the pedagogy of memory or gender perspective and CSE, do not arrive to training without their articulation with the identities that promote them. This makes us consider what to do to, in pedagogical terms, bring about a transmission that does not involve



a fabrication (Meirieu, 1998) and always leaves a question open. In times of denialist discourses and accusations of indoctrination (Legarralde, 2023), this pedagogical challenge is central in the field of education.

This overview shows us that the knowledge of the ITT cannot be defined in a complete or permanent way and is configured in a thick and complex fabric with which the institutional subjects construct teaching positions through which they define what can be said, what can be desired, and what is necessary. This knowledge is in a space of negotiation, consensus, and imposition in the framework of educational demands made by different social movements, and of contingencies that arise in some contexts and activate particular relationships with the knowledge. This shows the precarious character of the foundations of the knowledge of the ITT, which are in a space of political struggle over their signification and are run through by educational discourses, pedagogical traditions, educational policies, and training institutions that make unique wagers.

Throughout our field work we found some equivalence and articulation between the knowledge linked to the pedagogy of memory and gender perspective in the students and teachers we interviewed (although this equivalence is only possible, not all the subjects of the institution are necessarily sensitive to the same issues). We may understand this articulation through the notion of demand, understood as "an elementary form of construction of the social link" (Laclau, 2009: 54). This institution is unique in its constant explicitness of the demands it appropriates. This might generate greater conditions of identification between those who share them because, when they find equivalent demands, they generate bonds of affection and common projections to a future. In turn, when these demands – enunciated by different social movements – produce knowledge for the training, they are also able to create social links.

However, when the subjects are sensitive to different types of knowledge linked to different social movements, there is an articulation between democratic demands. Laclau (2005) proposes three dimensions that make the passage from democratic to popular demandas: the unification of a plurality of demands in a chain of equivalence, the constitution of an internal boundary that divides society in two camps, and the consolidation of a chain of equivalence through the construction of a popular identity that is qualitatively broader and more complex than the sum of the particularities. The bond that links the pedagogy of memory, gender perspective and CSE, the right to higher education and the broadening of rights configure a chain of equivalence that not only constructs meaning to intervene in reality and designate the problems in education, but also articulate certain knowledge around a construction of identity that in this institution constructs the foundations that give meaning to the ITT.

We believe we may call this set of knowledge popular – always precarious in their suture – because the subjects who are sensitive to a perspective and to the contents derived from it are also generally sensitive to other fields of knowledge and demands. These types of knowledge



have in common an articulation of equivalence through which some subjects interviewed identify and construct an "us", and adopt a view of the social reality and a way to question it. Therefore, besides calling the popular knowledge we may also call them *emergent knowledge* (William, 2009) in regard to that which in our times is defined as the dominant, and also *contemporary knowledge* (Agamben, 2011) understood as a mismatch and an anachronism with the current.

Thus, the dominant has an equivalence with the current, and the emergent with the contemporary. If the current and dominant is characterized by the fragmentation, the decomposition and the individualization in favor of productivity and the domination of subjectivities, then it has as an effect an increase in inequalities and in hate discourses. By contrast, if the contemporary is that anachronic thing that does not fit, if it goes against the times, then the contemporary is the construction of the common, the enhancement of livable lives and the rights that make them possible. On the other hand, the contemporary is that which does not coincide, does not fit, or does not adapt itself to these times. Thus, if the denial of the crimes against humanity caused by the State-sponsored terrorism in Argentina forms part of the current world, the pedagogy of memory is contemporary. If gender violence is a part of the current world that does not cease to be violent, CSE and gender perspective are contemporary. In the institution we studied we found a fabric that interweaves *popular*, *contemporary*, *and emergent knowledge* that may be defined as that which constructs the common, where the other, as an Other, has a place without having to erase or conceal who they are, that wagers for equality in the present (Rancière, 1988).

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