Anti-intellectualism and Teacher Education in the 21st Century
Is there any way out?

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1. The essay by James Ladwig rightly points the problem of anti-intellectualism, both in education and teacher education. As the author explains, it is a long-standing issue that invades historical and contemporary discourses. I will not deepen the arguments raised by James Ladwig, but I will add my own perspective to this debate, and I will ask if there is any way out.

2. Recently, in preparing a keynote address on "Teacher professional development for the quality and equity of lifelong learning" upon invitation from the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union, I collected a wide range of documentation: international reports, scientific articles, political speeches, documents about teacher education, books and PhD theses, etc. When reading this material over a few days one can see the recurrent use of the same concepts and language, of the same ways of speaking and thinking about the problems of the teaching profession.

We are looking at a type of discursive consensus, rather redundant and verbose, which expands into references about teachers' professional development, the coordination of initial training, induction and in-service training from a lifelong learning perspective, the focus on the first years of professional practice and the placement of young teachers in schools, the idea of the reflective teacher and research-based teacher education, the new competencies for teachers in the 21st century, the importance of collaborative cultures, teamwork, monitoring, supervision and assessment of teachers… and so on.

All of this is part of a discourse that has become dominant and one that we all have contributed to. We are not just talking about words, but also about the practices and policies that they transport and suggest.

3. Two major groups have contributed to the dissemination and vulgarization of this discourse, here understood in the sense of *discourse-practice* that Cleo Cherryholmes gave it: "the intertextuality of discourses and practices that constitutes and structures our social and educational worlds".

In the first place, there is the group commonly known as the *teacher education community*, which includes researchers in subject areas, in education and didactics, networks and institutions. In the last fifteen years, this community has produced a number of impressive texts, which include the concept of the reflective teacher, changing how teachers and teacher education are viewed.

The second group is made up of *international experts* that act as consultants or are part of major international organizations (OECD, UNESCO, the European Union, etc.). Despite their heterogeneous nature, they have created and disseminated, on a global scale, discursive practices that are strongly grounded on comparative arguments. Their legitimacy is essentially based on the knowledge of international networks and comparative data and less on the theoretical expertise of a scientific or professional area.

4. My point is that these two groups, more than teachers themselves, have contributed to the renovation of studies on the teaching profession. While making this statement, I cannot help but remember David Labaree's warning: "The current movement to professionalize teaching reflects two key factors: (1) efforts by teacher educators to raise their own professional status, and (2) their efforts to develop a science of teaching. Proposed reforms may promote the rationalization of instruction through an authoritative, research driven, standardized vision of teaching practice".

It is important to understand the paradox which gives rise to important contradictions in the history of the teaching profession: the rhetoric about the mission of teachers implies giving them greater social visibility, which consolidates their prestige but provokes stricter state and/or scientific control, leading to a devaluing of their own competencies and their professional autonomy.

In my opinion, this situation is at the root of the "problem" raised by James Ladwig. Creating a divide between theory and practice, between professors/experts and teachers, inevitably draws a frontier that renders the emergence of a professional practice that is intellectually enriched impossible.

5. Let me go a little further in my argument. One of the most long-standing debates on education and Teacher Education concerns the relationship between theory and practice. Pedagogical literature is filled with references to this discussion, at least since the consolidation of the first teacher training schools (mid-19th century) and the development of university chairs in Pedagogy or Educational Science (second half of the 19th century). The most influential authors, on both sides of the Atlantic, from Gabriel Compayré (1843-1913) to Stanley Hall (1844-1924), from Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) to John Dewey (1859-1952), dedicate an important part of their work to the discussion of this issue.

Even if they adopt different perspectives, their conclusions always stress the impossibility of solving the problem. That is why, explains Émile Durkheim, one should talk about a *theory practice*, uniting instead of opposing these two terms. Yes, but… This operation is purely rhetorical if teachers don't consolidate their knowledge and their fields of intervention, ones which improve teaching cultures and do not transform teachers into a profession dominated by university professors, experts or by the "education industry".

What needs to be done? Perhaps it is possible to highlight two ideas, which are far from exhaustive but may help to overcome the anti-intellectualism trends in education and teacher education.

6. First, *it is necessary for teacher education to come from within the profession*. The phrase sounds odd. By using this expression, I wish to underline the need for teachers to have a predominant place in training their peers. There will be no significant change if the "teacher education community" and the "community of teachers" do not become more permeable and overlapping. The example of doctors and training hospitals and the way they are prepared in the initial stages of training, induction and in-service training can perhaps serve as inspiration.

In truth, it is not possible to write text after text about *praxis* and *practicum*, about *phronesis* and *prudentia* as references of teaching knowledge, about reflective teachers,

if teachers do not achieve a greater presence in the training of their own profession. It is important to invite the richness, complexity and beauty of teaching out of the closet by making it visible and accessible, as is the case with other scholarly and creative work, as advocated by Lee Shulman.

These proposals cannot be mere rhetorical declarations. They only make sense if they are constructed *within* the profession, if they are appropriated from the reflection of teachers about their own work. While they are only injunctions from the outside, the changes within the teaching profession will be rather poor.

7. Second, *it is necessary to promote new ways of organizing the profession*. Most of the discourse becomes unrealistic and unworkable if the profession continues to be distinguished by ingrained individualist traditions or by rigid external regulations, particularly bureaucratic ones that have become more obvious in recent years. This paradox is well known among historians: the more one talks of teacher autonomy, the more teachers are controlled, in various ways, leading to a reduction in the margins for freedom and independence.

Professional collegiality, sharing and collaborative cultures cannot be imposed through administrative means or decisions from above. It is not possible to bridge the gap between discourse and practice if there is no autonomous professional field that is sufficiently rich and open. Pat Hutchings and Mary Taylor Huber are right when they refer to the importance of consolidating the teaching commons – "a conceptual space in which communities of educators committed to inquiry and innovation come together to exchange ideas about teaching and learning, and use them to meet the challenges of educating students for personal, professional, and civic life".

Pedagogic movements or communities of practice consolidate a feeling of belonging and professional identity that is essential for teachers to appropriate processes of change and transform them into concrete practice. It is useless to appeal for reflection if there is no organization in school that facilitates it. It is useless to call for mutual, inter-peer, and collaborative training if the definition of teaching careers is not coherent within this aim.

8. In my view, it will be impossible to overcome anti-intellectualism without capturing the sense of a profession that does not simply fit into a technical or scientific conception. At the same time, it is necessary to consolidate the presence of teachers in the public space of education. I turn to Jürgen Habermas and his concept of "public sphere of action". In the case of education, this sphere has expanded considerably in recent years. However, paradoxically, teachers' presence here has also been reduced. There is a lot of talk about schools and teachers. Talk from journalists, columnists, university professors, experts. Teachers don't talk. There is an absence of teachers, a kind of silence from a profession that has lost visibility in the public arena.

In a word, it is pointless to discuss anti-intellectualism if one doesn't discuss the condition of teachers, the organization of the profession and its capacity to intervene and participate in public debates about education. What I want to say, as stressed by James Ladwig, is that the debate is not only an epistemological debate, but it implies important ideological and political dimensions.

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