ABSTRACT

This piece of work attempts to explore the notion of teacher development through case study. Framed within the qualitative paradigm, and through in-depth phenomenological interviews to three teachers from ex-secondary school in Argentina, I have tried to listen to their voices, taking as backdrop the status of education in this country, the alarming decay in educational standards in the Province, and the social construction of the image of teachers through our history.

INTRODUCTION

The scenario for this piece of research is my work at a School of Exact Sciences of a University in Argentina, where English is a one-year subject of the third year of studies of the different careers: all of them related to the ‘hard sciences’. It falls under the umbrella term of English for Academic Purposes. It is geared at reading comprehension only. When the course begins, students are given a short survey which tries to obtain some personal information, their previous experience with English, both in number of years and type of course, that is, factual information. We try to assess their expectations too. During the 20 years I have taught this course at this School, I have been receiving different comments, interesting and contradictory anecdotes, confusing messages about what had really happened during secondary school. I now have the feeling that what we have been receiving during all these years were their perceptions and representations of their encounter with the Language.
The educational arena is, undoubtedly a complex network of multiple interwoven factors which calls for a multi-referential approach. Trying to read between the lines, there began to emerge at the back of my mind what role English teachers had had during the passage of students through secondary school.

Probably because I left secondary school only after the first five years of my career, which makes my own experience remote in time, I thought of redeeming my guilt complex, by trying to put my colleagues of ex-secondary school in their proper place by listening to their voices.

Why do students have so poor opinion about the English courses they took at secondary courses? Why does everybody blame the ‘system’ but whenever the standards of education are put under scrutiny, they end looking to the teachers as the sole responsible for this? What do ex-secondary school teachers have to say on the issue? What has been their history as students themselves, at previous levels and at Teacher Education Institutions that could shed new light on their struggle to establish professional competence?

How has their experience ‘at the chalkface’ contributed to shape the teachers they are today? What meaning do they make from their experience that could help me to explore the depths beneath their surface practice?

The aim of this research is to explore the notion of ‘teacher development’ through case study. By investigating what the term means to three teachers in Argentina, how they have experienced it and what they need from it, I aim to illuminate the issues.

The Context
At the moment, as we are living the transition from the “old” system to the “new” one, approved in 1994, known as the Educational Reform. For this reason, the situation portrayed has to do more with the ‘old’ one, as the ‘new’ one is being partially implemented, as all changes obviously are. But unfortunately, most teachers did not participate; again they were the ‘others’
in another techno-bureaucratic enterprise. To make things worse, economic constraints militate against this process.

Structure of the Argentine Formal Education System, 1994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AVERAGE AGE</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>16</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory</td>
<td>Kinder</td>
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<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td>8th grade</td>
<td>9th grade</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
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<td>11th grade</td>
<td>12th grade</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
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<td>12th year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
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<td>9th year</td>
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<td>7th year</td>
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<td>2nd year</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>5th year</td>
<td>4th year</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>2th year</td>
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<td>7th grade</td>
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<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>2nd grade</td>
<td>1st grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Postgraduate: "old" Educational Reform, "new" Polymodal
It is sad to recognise, but the educational system in this country has almost collapsed during the last 15/20 years. What is more, according to some educational analysts, decay began around the 1960s, falling to alarming levels during the 1980s and 1990s.

**METHODOLOGY**

I have chosen to make in-depth phenomenological interviews to colleagues in my province. I understand it is a tall order, but I have always been interested in teachers’ voices, especially those of my colleagues from ex-secondary schools.

**Selecting Participants**

The job of in-depth interview studies is ‘to go in such depth in the interviews that surface considerations of representativeness and generalizability are replaced by a compelling evocation of an individual’s experience’ ([Seidman, 1998:43](#)). When this experience can be captured in depth, then, two possibilities for making connections develop. First, connections among the experiences of the individuals interviewed are offered to the readers’ attention for inspection and exploration. Second, the stories open up in readers the possibility of connecting their own stories to those presented in the study.

**Purposeful Sampling**

I decided to use maximum variation sampling, that is the maximum range of sites and people that constitute the population.

**Teacher one**: an experienced colleague from a big school in town.

**Teacher Two**: a teacher from a school in the interior, in the colony, who has only learnt English in academies.

In addition to selecting participants who reflect a wide range in the larger population under study, I selected a third participant who is outside that range and may in some sense be considered a negative case.
**Teacher Three**: a young student from another city, who at the moment of the interview was getting ready to sit for the last subject at Teacher Education Institute there, already working as a teacher in my town.

**Limitations of the Sample**

Some researchers argue for enough as a criterion. In this case, given the constraints of time and inexperience, I considered interviewing three participants was enough.

This approach comprises three 90-minute interviews to each participant which were conducted in Spanish for two reasons. Firstly, the thinking of both the participants and the interviewer is intertwined with the language they are using (Vygotsky, 1986:218).

Secondly, I feared a possible difficulty if the search for the words in English in all three participants. could have masked their inner thought (op.cit.:231). This second reason brings up another issue: the subsequent complexity of translation, which in turn has been time-demanding.

The interviews, taken at my School, were taped and transcribed. Their content was as follows:

- **Interview one**: Focused Life History, where I asked them to reconstruct their experience as students
- **Interview Two**: The Details of Experience, their practice as teachers and
- **Interview Three**: Reflection on the Meaning their practice has for them

**Analysis of the Material**

After the interviews, I reread the transcripts, marking with brackets the interesting passages. The next step was to label those passages, make two copies of the marked and labelled transcripts. They then appear as a single transcript. The analysis of the data is quite clearly described by Seidman (op.cit.:111): `The researcher begins a dialectal process with the material ... The participants have spoken, and the interviewer is responding to their words, concentrating his or her intuition and intellect on the process ... Categories arise out of the passages that are marked as interesting ... It is
clear some patterns are present, and selected passages connect to other passages, quantity begins to interact with quality… Then excerpts from a participant’s experience connect to each other and to passages of another participant, sometimes it connects to the literature on the subject … Some passages appear as contradictory and seem decisively inconsistent with each other.

THE CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: Maria
María is now over forty, working at a big secondary school situated in the centre of her town. She declares herself an average students at the Teacher Education Institute and a great defender of public education in general. When she begins, after speaking of her history as a student, she immediately mentions her students, their lacks, their attitude, their relationship with her. She is critical of the unethical attitude of some colleagues, who deliver private lessons to their own students. She is also very critical of the Educational Reform, and the state of affairs in education, especially during the last decade. ‘This has been a cambalache’, she says. She has had the opportunity to work in curriculum innovation, which meant a leap in her teacher development. As to her own development, she expresses: ‘I may have not developed professionally, for myself. I probably went backwards. I am conscious of this. But considering where I am, I believe I make the effort, at least. I am very demanding with myself, trying to do things well.

CASE STUDY TWO: Andrea
Andrea, in her thirties is a student at our Project School of English at the University. As she does not have a certificate or degree in teaching, she
attends a lower intermediate course so as to have a certification issued by the University. She travels more than 50 km. twice a week.

She is a typical person of the interior, she speaks slowly and is a nice person.

She has taken English lessons from childhood, with different teachers. She works in a small secondary school in the ‘colony’, near the river.

Her students are adolescents who leave home at 5 in the morning so as to arrive at school at 7. They live scattered as far as 15 km. around the school. They are very poor, so they must work to help their parents in the farm and the orchard at home.

She would not like to be like those teachers who do not identify their students as they work in different schools. ‘Each student is a surname and a grade, they do not know what lies behind that name.’

Retention is their plight: if a student repeats a year, he/she leaves school. However sceptical her students are, she has a clear objective: that students use the English language. She insists the use of the language is constant, daily, it is around them, it is not necessarily connected to going abroad, etc.: English is useful.

CASE 3: Lidia

Lidia is now a young English teacher. She married recently and came to our town because of her husband’s work. She has always been an excellent student.

She has had some unpleasant experiences at Teacher Education Institute. Once, she was not through a Final Exam and she assures the decision was not fair: ‘...But for me, that, for me, in fact, was awful... because it was something that, for example, later to study for the subject all over again was terrible, terrible. But sitting again and studying again ... for me was something that ... I don’t know if I’ve been able to overcome it.

As most student-teachers she is concerned about being able to meet new role demands, such as failing to manage a class and being seen to lose control.
Last year she began working at a school, in a poor area. Her students, young adolescents, 12 years old and over, need to finish the compulsory school cycle (until 14 years of age), but some of them are already 19. Most of them are low-achievers, they are not interested in learning none of the subjects, as far as she was told by other teachers and she looks a bit discouraged.

**DISCUSSION**

**To Teach is to Touch a Life for Ever…**

Very significant words, indeed! I cannot trace the origin of this dictum, but these generally arise from folk wisdom. And folk wisdom highlights the fundamental role teachers play in everybody’s life. Who has not recalled anecdotes from early childhood, adolescence or even adult life, beginning: ‘As one of my teacher used to say…’ or ‘I had a teacher who…’. The imprint our teachers have left in us will probably appear in innocent children play. They will appear even later, if we decide to embrace teaching as a career. I will return to this point later.

**Definitions and Descriptions of Teaching**

It would be interesting to begin by referring to teaching. Reference to some definitions or sometimes, descriptions by those who studied teaching from the inside could cast some light on the issue.

According to Roberts (1998:106), ‘it is essentially social and dynamic, an exercise of intention rather than certainty. He expounds it is probably interesting to mention a typology of teacher knowledge, but this does not capture the real nature of teaching.’

Ericksen (1984, in Williams and Burden, 1997:47) considers that ‘an outstanding teacher should be an inspiring instructor who is concerned about students, an active scholar who is respected by discipline peers, and an efficient organised professional who is accessible to students and colleagues.’
Williams and Burden (1997: 48) continue to expound there are many studies in which various personal characteristics of good teachers have been sought. These studies generally produce lists of characteristics or describe desirable ways of behaving. Although there are some attempts to translate these finding into guidelines for action, they have surprisingly proved to be unhelpful to most teachers to improve their professional practice. They explain ‘this is partly because such factors are themselves open to a variety of interpretations’.

Here comes an attempt at beginning again with a definition: ‘Teaching is not just a set of mechanically learnable skills, but is rather an art acquired and improved by the teacher through self-initiated, self-sustained growth and development’ (Kouraogo, 1987 in Strange 1996:26).

Another interesting interpretation from a constructivist approach to teaching is given by Salmon (1988:37 in Williams and Burden, 1997:52). She sees teaching ‘not as the passing on of a parcel of objective knowledge, but as an attempt to share what you yourself find personally meaningful’. She argues as a consequence that teacher are indivisible from what they teach.

Working from this constructivist view of teaching, in an autobiographical account of the understanding teachers bring to their work, (Louden, 1991 in Williams and Burden, 1997:52) summarises the struggle of a newly qualified teacher to establish professional competence: From a practitioner’s perspective…teaching is a struggle to discover and maintain a settled practice, a set of routines and patterns of action which resolve the problems posed by particular subjects and groups of children. These patterns, content and resolutions to familiar classroom problems are shaped by each teacher’s biography and professional experience. The meaning of these patterns of action only become clear when they are set in the context of a teacher’s personal and professional history, her hopes and dreams for teaching and the school in which she works.”
From these authoritative opinions, I have tried to establish some categories which seem to appear at the heart of teaching. Then, I will make an attempt to connect these to the participants:

- attitudes and intentions
- knowledge
- art
- history
- the school

In this article I will tackle only attitudes and intentions, knowledge and history.

The participants and their attitudes and intentions
If we take each of the participants, we could see that the three of them appear to have the real intention of teaching their students the English language. They seem to strive to obtain their objectives. Maria is sure her students have to be able to communicate after five years at school. Andrea insists that her students from the colony be able to handle instructions in English in pesticides, even if they maintain scepticism about its real utility. Young Lidia despairs because her students probably only need a certification of their studies along the compulsory levels. She lingers with a teaching point, makes nice activities which only contribute to her discouragement, trying to make them reflect and fluctuates: either to accept the challenge or to surrender. So far, she appears to be responding to the challenge.

The Participants and their Knowledge
Let us analyse knowledge, what do teachers know? An interesting table taken from Holt (1998:105) could help to try and summarise what knowledge the participants probably have:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Language Teacher Knowledge</th>
<th>Content knowledge</th>
<th>Curricular knowledge</th>
<th>Pedagogic content knowledge</th>
<th>Contextual knowledge</th>
<th>General pedagogic knowledge</th>
<th>Process Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowing target language systems, text types, etc.</td>
<td>Of the official language curriculum (exam, textbooks, etc.) and/or resources</td>
<td>(Content restructured for purposes and pedagogy). Adapt content and means of communicating linguistic knowledge according to learners’ needs</td>
<td>Learners: knowledge of their characteristics; appropriate expectations</td>
<td>School: norms of behaviour in class and with colleagues</td>
<td>Principles and strategies for classroom management</td>
<td>Ability to relate to learners, peers, parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Legal accountability</td>
<td>Community: expectations and accountability</td>
<td>Planning and formative evaluation</td>
<td>Study skills</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Classroom management</td>
<td>Team skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repertoire of ELT activities</td>
<td>Observational skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Aids and resources</td>
<td>Classroom inquiry skills</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Language analysis skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(taken from Roberts, 1998:105)

But before this analysis of a general ‘would be’ situation, taken from principled practice with international standards, I would like to narrow down its scope by means of reproducing the curriculum of the local Teacher Education Institution as this constitutes a closer reference. As dictated by the Educational Reform
there is a new curriculum as from the year 2000, but most of teachers in Misiones have attended TEI with the curriculum below:

Table b
Local Teacher Education Institute – English Department – Curriculum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st year</th>
<th>2nd Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Language I</td>
<td>Language II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar I</td>
<td>English Grammar II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonetics and Diction I</td>
<td>Phonetics and Diction II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory I</td>
<td>Laboratory II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Geography of the</td>
<td>English Literature I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Isles and the USA</td>
<td>History of the English Civilization I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Philosophy*</td>
<td>General Pedagogy*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elocution*</td>
<td>Educational Psychology and Research Techniques*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology I*</td>
<td>Theology II*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3rd. year</th>
<th>4th. Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language III</td>
<td>Language IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Literature II</td>
<td>Laboratory IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratory III</td>
<td>Contemporary English Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodology and Observation</td>
<td>American Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the English Civilization II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of the English Language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Didactics, Legislation and School Organization*</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Developmental Psychology*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American History*</td>
<td>Shakespeare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology III*</td>
<td>Methodology and Student-Teaching Seminar</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History of Culture*</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Civics*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ethics and Deontology*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Theology IV*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Subjects delivered in Spanish (common to all careers)
The three teachers in the case-studies would show quite different levels of expertise. Maria has attended TEI with this curriculum. At the moment of writing this piece of work (full version, mid-2000) Lidia was travelling to sit for the last subject of her career. From the analysis of her curriculum, we could see it is quite similar to the one reproduced above, the only representative difference being one course on Linguistics. What can be gathered from this is that her knowledge is ‘brand new’, fresh, and will accrue with time. With her attitude and grades, the prospects are quite encouraging.

The one who is definitely in a feeble position as to expertise is Andrea. Given she is attending a lower intermediate level, her command of the language is limited. Her life circumstances have prevented her from attending the Teacher Education Institute, hence she has not taken systematic courses in relation to pedagogic content and general pedagogic knowledge.

The two last participants constitute what is defined as ‘marginal teacher’, a significant subgroup. They are defined as ‘teachers who operate consistently on the margin of effectiveness, whose needs reflect the social conditions of their entry to teaching, identified as eased entry to teaching because of shortages, among other reasons’ (Kennedy, 1995 in Roberts, 1998:86).

Lidia is now a graduate teacher; as to Andrea, there is a light at the end of the tunnel. The Director of Foreign Language at the National Ministry of Education has socialised a scheme for the accreditation of marginal teachers at TEIs throughout the country. It will take some time to be discussed and may eventually be approved. I hope Andrea will not have retired by then!

The Participants and Their History
The next concept taken from the opinions of authorities in the teaching arena point to the history of a teacher. Roberts (op.cit.:62) devotes a whole chapter to research on learning to teach where he offers a selective summary of
research on teacher learning and its implications for Language Teacher Education (LTE) design.

When referring to the stage of pupil, he uses the expression ‘the apprenticeship of observation’ (taken from Lortie, 1975). This refers to ‘the personal theories about the characteristics of teachers, classrooms and schools we all build from incidents we experience during the some 15,000 hours of interactions with established teachers’. As Lortie (1975:66) observed ‘pupils are exposed to teaching as no other occupation.

According to Roberts (op.cit.:66), these personal theories bring the unreflective nature of prior socialisation which could act as an obstacle to teacher education. What I find as important are the implications: teacher education programmes should not leave ‘the apprenticeship of observation’ unexamined. ´If these tacit images are not revised, they may imprison the teacher in a single frame of reference. Awareness of one’s own apprenticeship of observation is therefore one form of reflective Initial Teacher Education activity… This process would seem to be essential to escape from potentially limiting images of teaching.’ (op.cit.:66)

Paraphrasing Weintroub (in Head and Taylor, 1997:26), my next task was to set out to investigate how my participants’ teachers have become ‘integrated into their teaching persona.’

As to Maria, she devoted some time in one of the interviews speaking highly of one of her teachers. For her, he had a ‘gift’ as a teacher and as a person, apart from being a refined artist (painter, dancer and theatre director).

Andrea did not show very clearly the presence of any dashing figure in her history as a student. She was not very specific, probably she was shy to tell very much of her history as a student.

But if we put forth Lidia, I have been very much concerned about the bad effect of an incident retold during the first interview. After she spoke about her life as a kinder, primary and secondary school pupil, no sooner had I asked her to reconstruct her life at the Teacher Education Institute, she retold the
incident at an exam. I felt she had not been able to recover. The frustration suffered then and the sensation of the inequity of power relations in the classroom unfortunately constitute very bad circumstances for a student-teacher (or any student, for that matter). May they have any after-effects?. She says herself that she does not want that as her model. I wonder if in the future she will be able to ‘recognise her ghosts’.

In the interests of brevity, I considered only ‘the apprentice of observation’ to illustrate the inextricable relationship between the teacher and the former student, given that it is the initial part of the history of a teacher; to cover the other stages of the history of a teacher would take endless tomes.

Education, Training and Development
I would like to very briefly touch upon the concept of Language Teacher Education, the term which encompasses the broadest meaning in relation to training and development.

I would like to begin by establishing the difference between training and development. These are some definitions that make a difference, according to Head and Taylor (1997:9)

Training: the process by which a trainer provides situations for the trainee to practice a skill, especially at technical level.

Development: It implies that more than a skill or technical ability, it has components that contribute to the development of the ability acquired and the person as such.

Roberts (1998:220) expresses INSET (In Service Teacher Education) can address training or development needs. Training is characterised by objectives that are defined by a deficit in language, teaching skills, curricular knowledge or some other area of expertise. Typically they are defined by the gap between the teacher’s current level of skill or knowledge and the level required by their role in the system.
The notion of development implies more divergent objectives, which allow for teachers’ individual differences and which are determined by teachers’ sense of their own learning needs. It also presupposes competence in basic skills and knowledge. It can be associated with the notion of a teacher as professional/independent problem-solver, who takes responsibility for personal and professional development.

Let us try to connect these theoretical concepts to the interviewees. Maria is very emphatic and recurrent in ethical issues. It seems that if ‘teacher development is the process of becoming the best teacher you can be’ (Richards, 1994:v), the best teacher she can be is one who is a coherent, straight person, who attends staff meetings, who does not act as a civil servant, one who resists corruption in the middle of the educational tragedy of the country.

Both Andrea and Lidia appear to depict the reality in Misiones in relation to the socio-economic situation. Their experience with adolescents from poor districts has forced them to adopt a social worker/apostle approach, they respond to the challenge of helping these sometimes unmotivated students to finish the compulsory part of public education. Both devote their efforts to working without the aid of a textbook, preparing photocopies free of charge, which in Lidia’s case many a time appear scattered over the floor to her disappointment and frustration. Andrea is determined to make her students understand that ‘English is close to them’, and dreams of helping to their social mobility.

CONCLUSION

In this attempt to ‘know more about language teachers: what they do, how they think, what they know and how they learn’ (Freeman and Richards, 1996:1), I tried to listen to their voices to understand how language teachers conceive of what they do: what they know of language teaching, how they think about their classroom practice, and how that knowledge of those
thinking processes are learned through formal teacher education and informal experience on the job.

I have intently used the nominal phrase Teacher Education Institute throughout this work to be consistent and coherent with my position in favour of Teacher Education as a conceptual framework for all pre-service and in-service activities. It is not a cosmetic change, it is a philosophy. Teacher Training Institute appears to me as an outmoded word.

Underlying the various surface aspects of delivery lay a rich and complex learning process, the process of learning to teach. Only recently has the pendulum shifted from training and delivery to the importance of the broader and more ambiguous questions of how the content of language teaching is learned and therefore, how it can be taught most effectively.

Within this general framework, I have tried to explicate the process of learning to teach a foreign language, from the standpoint of my own conceptualization of my profession and looking into what three of my colleagues say about their experience. But I had to quickly reconceptualise my ideas about teacher development as applied to them.

The landscape appears as disturbing, good practice seems to be attacked by all sorts of ills. Being a teacher is nowadays at the worst of conditions. Salaries are low, social recognition and prestige have vanished, all in a fashion that transverses the whole world, but which is still worse in Latin America, let alone Argentina.

Working conditions and low salaries at state school make teachers try to emigrate to private schools or institutes. Teachers at state schools are the Cinderella. Let me explain why.

Teacher development is a key element in the landscape of strategies to raise the quality of education. But the educational system has never cared about teacher development. Once a teacher was appointed, she could stay there until retirement, without being motivated to develop, not given the opportunity to do so, and its attendant consequence of not being evaluated. In brief, the
teacher has become some sort of ‘civil servant’, which in this country carries a derogatory connotation. The last chapter in the recent saga is a scheme called *titularizacion*, which in the guise of solving teachers’ situation comes to create one of the most unequal attacks against the profession.

But, if we take some time to listen to the participants’ voices, we will see the prospects are not so gloomy. It might probably be true the teaching of English at state ex-secondary schools does not give evidence that teaching is a profession, however flexible our view could be; that teachers are not engaged in teacher development as principled theory would dictate, considering international standards. But what cannot be denied is that given the conditions in Argentina in 2000, between the public and at the same time private space of their classrooms, between the vision and the reality, these teachers strive to go further than the merely adequate. They have understood that teaching is a cultural, political and ethical enterprise.

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