

**50 YEARS OF INSERVICE EDUCATION AND
TRAINING OF TEACHERS IN PORTUGAL (INSET):
BETWEEN AUTONOMY OF INTENTIONS AND
HETERONOMY OF ACTIONS**

**50 ANOS DE FORMAÇÃO CONTÍNUA DE PROFESSORES EM
PORTUGAL: ENTRE A AUTONOMIA DAS INTENÇÕES E A
HETERONOMIA DAS AÇÕES**

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to carry out a very brief critical assessment of INSET: Inservice education and training of teachers in Portugal, in the context of the 50 years since the 25th of April Revolution, in 1974. Through both extrinsic factors and deliberate choice, the approach taken to achieve this aim is limited in three key ways: firstly, given that such an assessment is clearly inspired by historical interest, it will essentially follow a diachronic logic focused on public policies, and in particular their normative role, with key milestones being the publications of Decree-Law no. 249/92 of 9 November and Decree-Law no. 22/2014 of 11 February; secondly, and as a consequence of the first limitation, this assessment will be restricted to the formal aspect of teacher education recognised by the regulatory institute, the Scientific-Pedagogical Council for Continuing Teacher Training (Conselho Científico-Pedagógico da Formação Contínua de Professores), thereby excluding the high-impact informal training carried out by a wide range of agents, which is always very important; thirdly, while it is true that the INSET system has always included a diverse range of training bodies, what the established trends show, however, is a direct association between INSET and School Association Training Centres (SATC), so that any assessment made in this area is also necessarily an assessment of these training bodies.

Keywords: Inservice education and training of teachers (INSET); 25 April 1974; Democracy

Resumo

Este artigo propõe-se realizar, de modo muito sucinto, um balanço crítico da formação contínua de professores (FCP) em Portugal, tendo por referência o arco temporal de 50 anos da Revolução de Abril de 1974. Neste sentido, quer por razões extrínsecas, quer por opção deliberada, apresentar-se-á uma abordagem marcada por três limitações principais: em primeiro lugar, e devido à motivação histórica patentemente assumida, adotaremos principalmente uma lógica diacrónica centrada nas políticas públicas, sobretudo na sua dimensão normativa, cujos marcos fundamentais incluem as publicações do Decreto-Lei n.º 249/92 de 9 de Novembro e o Decreto-Lei n.º 22/2014, de 11 de fevereiro; em segundo lugar, e consequência da primeira limitação, restringiremos este balanço à dimensão formal e reconhecida pelo instituto regulador (Conselho Científico-Pedagógico da Formação Contínua de Professores), o que exclui o lastro sempre muito significativo e com elevado impacto da formação de carácter informal realizada por um conjunto muito diverso de agentes; em terceiro lugar, sendo certo que o sistema de FCP sempre contemplou um conjunto vasto de entidades formadoras, o que as dinâmicas instituídas evidenciam, no entanto, é uma associação direta entre a FCP e Centros de Formação de Associação de Escolas (CFAE), pelo que qualquer balanço que se faça neste âmbito é também necessariamente um balanço sobre estas entidades formadoras.

Palavras-chave Formação Contínua de Professores; 25 de Abril de 1974; Democracia

1. The construction of the legitimising rationale: the emergence of a system of continuous teacher training in Portugal

The period between the April 25th Revolution and the publication of Decree-Law no. 249/92 of 9 November was essentially defined by the mobilisation of public policies in response to the commitment to universal schooling launched in the early 1970s by the Veiga Simão Reform. To a great extent driven by the lack of human resources, the major focus was on the intensive initial training of teachers, with the involvement of the entire higher education system, strengthened by the creation of new universities. The first experiments in in-service teacher training which emerged at this time left the groundwork for the model that would shape the future of Portugal's in-service teacher training system, namely, "school-centred training". These initial ventures, which were still fragmentary and assistance-based, gave rise to various forms of institutional support, in particular, the Regional Pedagogical Support Centres (RPSC), the Pedagogical Support Centres (PSC), the Teacher Training Support Centres (CAFOP) and the Pedagogical Support Teams (PST) .

As a whole, these experiments established the prevailing trend of continuous teacher training in Portugal, not only in the period immediately after the 25th of April Revolution, but also in the decades that followed. Two key aspects of this trend can be seen as constituting the essential tension in the dynamics of teacher training over the last 50 years: first of all, the importance of teacher initiative, highly institutionalised and informal in nature, based on the principle of "professional autonomy", or what can be called the rhetoric of autonomy intentions; and, secondly, the ongoing state-led provision of training mechanisms, institutionalised and more formal in nature, albeit decentralized and localised (Barroso & Canário, 1999), which in practice led to a heteronomy of actions. In these early experiments, the need for strong and direct relations with professional institutions was recognised, highlighted by ideas such as promoting the active participation of "local" teachers, liaising between schools and their communities, producing materials and making resources available or, in the case of the PST (1979-1985), communication and the exchange of experiences between schools in close proximity.

A key event at this foundational moment was the 1st National Congress on Continuing Teacher Education: Realities and Perspectives, which took place at the University of Aveiro in 1991. Bringing together a wide range of stakeholders (trade unions, primary and secondary schools, the Ministry of Education, professional and cultural associations, etc.), it was a significant milestone in the academic and scientific legitimisation of INSET, following the preliminary experiments undertaken in the years after the April 25th Revolution and the publication of the Basic Law of the Education System in 1986 (Law 46/86 of 14 October). This congress signalled a change in the focus of attention, which began to shift from initial training to in-service training, in a "new founding era for the teaching profession, in which the functionalist view of teachers tends to be replaced by an image of teachers as reflective professionals" (Nóvoa, 1991, p. 15). All the speakers were in consensus around two key ideas, both of them normative and ideological in nature: firstly, the idea put forward by António Teodoro, at the time Secretary General of FENPROF, according to which "continuing training is a particular type of adult education, which presupposes an appropriative way of working, centred on the social integration of the teacher, and leads to an organisational model based on the school and supported by a system of resources", thereby constituting a "network training strategy" (1991, p. 53); secondly, the conclusion proposed by João Formosinho, future President of the Scientific-Pedagogical Council for Continuing Teacher Education, that continuing teacher education should be based on "models that result from combinations of training bodies", arguing that, in a decentralised education system, a model based on schools and training institutions is more appropriate (Formosinho, 1991).

Thus, when the system of in-service teacher training was formalised in 1992, there was a relative consensus on a political, professional and scientific legitimisation rationale based on four main axes: the autonomy of schools, "school-

centred" training and the contexts of professional action, the professional development of teachers and pedagogical innovation of an institutional nature¹.

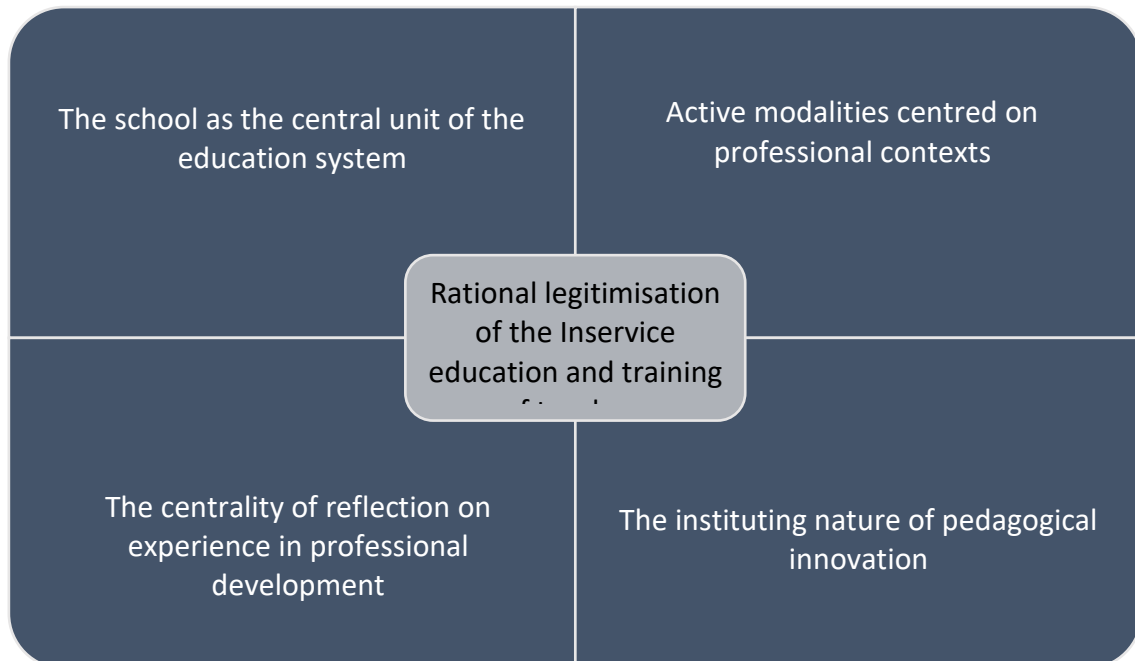


Figure 1. Rationale for legitimising the in-service education and training of teachers.

As far as the first axis is concerned, it is well known that the period in which the formal in-service training system emerged at the beginning of the 1990s came at a time of intensive reform both nationally and internationally, marked by the tendency to "view the educational establishment as the central unit of administration of the school system", and thus implying the "respective transfer of competences and favouring the construction of its autonomy" (Barroso & Canário, 1999, p. 25). Consequently, the legitimising rhetoric emphasises the instrumental nature of INSET, which is placed at the service of a new centrality within the education system: the school. It should be noted, moreover, that the SATC, by virtue of their nature, would play a central and polarising role in positioning INSET at the service of the project autonomy of each school, entailing a high level of capillarity and proximity to professional institutions.

In turn, within this context there was a tendency to view INSET from a "school-centred" perspective (Amiguiño, 1992; Barbier, 1991; Lesne, 1984) as playing an instituting role (Correia, 1989), thus favouring networking, collaborative practices

¹ Note that the normative rhetoric itself is in line with this discourse, as can be seen in the preamble to Decree-Law no. 22/2014 of 11 February: "a new paradigm is established for the continuous training system, geared towards improving the quality of teacher performance, with a view to centring the training system on the priorities identified in schools and on the professional development of teachers, so that continuous training makes it possible to improve the quality of teaching and is articulated with local and national educational policy objectives".

and the creation of territorial arrangements. This perspective is in line with the first experiments carried out in Portugal after the 25th of April Revolution, with the common denominator being the establishment of training methods centred on "professional practice, and not on the separation between the time and place of training and the time and place of work", as Canário (2005, p.136) points out. In 1999, the Scientific-Pedagogical Council for Continuing Education reinforced and, to some extent, institutionally legitimised this concept of "school-centred training", postulating that INSET "should be centred on the teacher's area of action and should preferably focus on teachers' professional acts, in their different logics: the logic of disciplinary knowledge, the logic of the student, the logic of the teacher's personal, social and professional development and the institutional logic" (Santos et al., 1999, p. 4).

With regard to the third axis, it should be noted that the period in which the current system of continuous training emerged is also defined by the concept of the teacher as a "reflective practitioner", giving "experience" a central role in teachers' professional development. Accordingly, and in line with the concept of "school-centred training", the reflective teacher movement questioned the traditional dichotomies shaping educational reforms, which, although undertaken with the desire for teacher emancipation, stemmed from a separation between prescribers and implementers, between those outside the classroom and those in the classroom (Zeichner, 1993). This trend was thus intended to counteract the prevailing technical rationality by promoting professional development based on reflection on one's own professional "experience". The rhetoric of the emerging new professionalism called for "school-centred professional development" based on the belief that the "effects of continuing training are more likely to last over time if they can be supported and adapted to the local contexts of the classroom and schools" (Day, 1999, p. 211).

Finally, an axis of pedagogical innovation was adopted in the context of a strong reformist impulse, following an institutionalised and decentralised model, whereby the changes produced must take place in the locus of action, that is, in schools. In this regard, Barroso and Canário advocated for the promotion of an "ecological change strategy" through which the "educational establishment moves from being an object to being the central unit of the change process" (1999, p. 14). The school would thus emerge as a privileged place where teachers learn and, at the same time, change their practices and professional contexts. As part of the rationale for legitimising the in-service teacher training system, there was a conviction that the isomorphic effect of training strategies would effectively be capable of inducing the dynamics of innovation, which would allow schools to assume "the status of central unit in the process of change" (Barroso & Canário, 1999, p. 14). The creation of SATC should thus be seen as associative training bodies, aimed at providing a service not to teachers in isolation, but to schools as organisations defined by collective action around an educational project with a local impact.

2. Between autonomy of intentions and heteronomy of actions: a diachronic analysis of the development of the in-service teacher training system in Portugal

Notwithstanding this legitimisation rationale, which has weakened and become rather obsolete, the development of the in-service teacher training system in Portugal over the last 50 years, particularly since 1992, has been determined to a great extent, even constitutively, by a funding logic. By this it is meant the set of financial resources that have been allocated to INSET over time, originating almost exclusively from the European Union. This indexation of INSET to European funding means that training dynamics are dependent on the pace of negotiation and realisation of the different financial envelopes allocated to Portugal under the various EU support frameworks, and the state has never adopted a policy of structural stability necessary for drawing up regular and predictable training plans². The second consequence of the overreliance on funding logic was the rapid replacement of a "demand logic" with a "supply logic" resulting from the pressure for physical and financial implementation imposed by European funding. As a result, training providers have become highly bureaucratised local agencies and, consequently, dominated by purely instrumental requirements through which, progressively, questions of content are replaced by questions of form. In other words, INSET has become the pretext for implementing funding - rather than funding as a means of achieving INSET's objectives. Moreover, this instrumentalist and managerialist approach to training came to be deeply aggravated by a professional aspect: the indexation of teachers' career progression to the number of "credits" awarded for attending training courses.

Against this backdrop, it comes as no surprise that the first results of INSET, and especially the SATC, immediately showed a huge gap between the promises and initial expectations set out in the legitimisation rationale presented above and what training actually became on the ground. In one of the most important studies carried out during this initial phase of the implementation of the continuous teacher training system, Barroso and Canário consider that, as far as the SATC are concerned, "the logic of tutelage has clearly taken precedence over a possible logic of autonomy, with the Training Centres appearing as instruments for implementing financial programmes that feed a continuous training 'market' in which the most negative features of school-based training provision dominate" (1999, p. 149). In fact, according to the same authors, a distinctly catalogue-style approach to continuous training emerged very quickly, determined by the indiscriminate provision of training actions aimed at individual teacher training, especially focused around disciplinary and didactic content. In this way, a model of teacher training was established based on the idea of "recycling" and passive consumption without any framework in the contexts and territories of professional practice. Accordingly, the grand narrative of teachers as reflective professionals capable of emancipatory readings of their work contexts and endowed with a high degree of professional

² It should be noted that, right from the start, the SATC were practically inactive in 1994 and part of 1995 and at the transition from the 2nd to the 3rd CSF (2000-2006) due to lack of funding.

autonomy duly fell apart, turning in-service training into a skewed isomorphic process: instead of the training contexts transforming the school system, the school system ended up transforming the training.

Subsequent large-scale studies would confirm this initial diagnosis³, which has come to mark the PCF in Portugal, even though the prevalence of such an instrumentalist and managerialist approach to the continuing training system has not prevented the emergence of some specific and marginal trends that seek to develop training mechanisms which are faithful to the PCF's legitimising rationale in Portugal. In a case study carried out in 2003, Silva studies the hypothesis of the school as a "training locus", taking advantage of its margins of relative autonomy and in the context of the emergence of a quasi-market for training, that is, whether "school-centred training" is possible in the context of the school autonomy, administration and management regime in force at the time (Decree Law no. 115-A/98). The results allow the author to conclude that, in the case studied, it is possible to infer that the school is "tending to produce training in which practices very close to school-centred training can actually be seen, essentially by holding numerous training activities, accredited or not, in its physical space, not only for teachers but also for non-teaching staff and parents/guardians, by defining the type of training that is necessary for the school as an organisation, by carrying out training aimed at improving professional practices and by promoting peer-led training" (2003, p. 192). Furthermore, the conclusions of this study can, to a large extent, be accepted as the main explanatory hypotheses for what, paradoxically, was to happen in the period between 2010 and 2016, during which there was no longer a Community support framework for in-service teacher training, while careers were frozen and progression ceased.

In fact, after a redefinition of the SATC network in 2008, this period between 2010-2016 was characterised by an unexpected resilience on the part of INSET, above all due to the actions of the SATC and, at the same time, a return to the foundational matrix of the continuous teacher training system, not least due to the absence of an instrumentalist and managerialist rationale associated with funding and career progression. According to Sousa, "in each area of intervention, according to an ecological logic, within the school and within the profession, all actors became involved in a systematic practice of continuous training, contributing to the subsequent increase in the volume of training that took place, despite the neglect, in terms of funding, to which the SATC were subjected" (2022, p. 2). During this phase, although there was no drop in the volume of training provided by the training providers, for contingent reasons, training activities began to respond to the needs identified by teachers and schools, the Internal Trainers' Exchange was used, local resources and various partnerships were mobilised, and synergies were promoted with the School Libraries networks or with higher education institutions. This period of interregnum funding via EU support frameworks was also marked by a kind of

³ Among the various studies carried out, we highlight the work of Amélia et al. (2011): *Continuing teacher education -1992-2007 - Research contributions for retrospective appraisal*.

regulatory re-foundation, based on a so-called "new paradigm for the continuous training system", through the publication of the new Legal Framework for the Continuous Training of Teachers (Decree-Law no. 22/2014, of 11 February) and the Legal Framework for School Association Training Centres (Decree-Law no. 127/2015, of 7 July). These are two legal documents which both reiterate and reinforce the rhetoric and organisation of the rationale for legitimising the continuous teacher training system in favour of "improving the quality of teacher performance, with a view to focusing the training system on the priorities identified in schools and the professional development of teachers" (Preamble to the Decree-Law no. 22/2014, of 11 February).

The most recent period, especially since 2018, has been shaped by three fundamental aspects: firstly, the return to funding based on EU support frameworks, with the exception of the Lisbon and Tagus Valley region which is now funded via the General State Budget, thus immediately restoring the managerialist and instrumentalist approach to training, and putting the pressure back on training organisations in terms of physical capacity and financial implementation; secondly, the unfreezing of careers and, more recently, the recovery of length of service has led to frantic demand for training to meet merely formal requirements for career progression, marking a return, with redoubled intensity, to the instrumentalization of training, based on a quasi-market logic and purely individual demand; thirdly, and with a higher intensification than ever before, in-service teacher training has become almost exclusively subordinated to national education policies in accordance with a clearly centralist approach, not only in terms of defining training priorities, as was the case with the Digital Transition Plan, but also with regard to the construction of training benchmarks, training methodologies, criteria for selecting trainees and even the choice and training of trainers, as if there were a parallel system for accrediting trainers. Although it is not a trend, what cannot be denied, in this context of clear and overt recentralisation, is the role that digital technology is beginning to play, potentially enabling deterritorialised processes of continuous teacher training conducted *sclae*, as is the case of "massive open online courses" (aka MOOCs), which are now enshrined in law.

Therefore, at a time when initial training is once again at the centre of attention, there are many reasons to wonder if we are not witnessing the re-establishment, albeit with more interstitial and subtle processes, of the "statist model" of training that Formosinho spoke about and contested in 1991, that is, a model in which "the roles of guardian, employer, administrator and trainer are articulated in a centralist logic in which the state defines everything from the survey of training needs and priorities to the way in which they are actually carried out" (1991, p. 245). Are we not returning to the concept of the teacher as a state employee, as a civil servant, whose training is subject to strict ideological control as a guarantee of alignment with public policies? Is it not reasonable to hypothesise that a system of action is being established in which the state commissions other entities to delivered training, while retaining control of the content, format and

executors, overriding the autonomy of teachers, schools and training providers? In short, is it not becoming clear that we are dealing with "a centralist model in which all important decisions are taken by the central administration or by services (regional or local) subordinate to it and integrated into the hierarchical chain or under its dependence, making the interests and points of view of this administration prevail over all others" (Formosinho, 1991, p. 246)?

3. Between the past and the future of continuous teacher training in Portugal: the essential tensions

To conclude this article, we propose a synchronic problematisation of four polarising tensions around which, it is suggested, the debate and reflection on INSET in Portugal should be centred, taking into account, in particular, the questions just raised above: localisation vs. deterritorialization, collaboration vs. individualisation, emancipation vs. control and humanisation vs. dehumanisation (Machado, 2023).

Tension 1: Localisation vs. deterritorialization

This tension between localisation vs. deterritorialization is an integral part of all training contexts, but it has become particularly prevalent as technological possibilities have given support to the rationale of recentralising training, as it is currently happening in Portugal. It is worth remembering that the regulations enshrine a model of INSET that values the localised centre ("school-centred training"), awarding school establishments a high degree of centrality and proposing the autonomy of teachers, schools and training bodies, such as the SATC. However, deterritorialization, especially through digital means, is now increasingly and irreversibly taking on massive proportions, calling into question ecological training strategies, which are based on the principle of diversity of contexts and the need for institutional innovation. The educational reformism of the 20th century has repeatedly the ineffectiveness of centralised, top-down transformations, which disregard and devalue teachers' experience and professional knowledge. For this reason, in-service training that ends up eliminating the contextual, local and territorialised dimension of training, ignoring the complexity of the school ecosystem and educational territories, without the possibility of hybrid combinations, will incur an unequivocally dangerous drift that ignores teachers as a profession with a high level of agency that is not compatible with mere technical, uniform and merely executory rationality.

Tension 2: Collaboration vs. Individualisation

The tension between collaboration and individualisation is at the heart of training policies and strategies, both initial and ongoing, and it is true, as we have

seen before, not least because of the SATC associative model, that the locus of training production is the school as an organisation and professional collectives as agents of transformation. We know that training aimed at individuals in isolation from their contexts of action and work is the type that most easily responds to the pressures of funding and instrumental demand. However, the individualisation of training systems, which prioritise the needs of individuals over those of groups, tends to favour the school system, isolated work and professional disqualification, resulting, in most cases, in a catalogue-style provision and a view of training as a mere retraining process. In this regard, in societies dominated by constant technological change, as ours, the naturalised idea is that training is merely a process of individual adaptation to the new demands of the labour market, according to the ideology of "lifelong learning" which seeks to position each worker as an entrepreneur solely responsible for their own circumstances. Of course, in this context, it is hardly surprising that information and communication technologies are the training market's favourite menu, giving rise to intensive programmes orchestrated on large scale under the banner of the "digital transition". However, based on the empirical evidence of teachers' collective efficacy, in-service training needs to train in collaboration and for collaboration. In other words, it needs to adopt training processes that are intrinsically collaborative and that, due to their isomorphic strength, are capable of strongly inducing collaboration in professional contexts. Furthermore, and especially in a profession which is intrinsically and inescapably ethical and political in its substance, the collaborative factor is essential to avoid the tendency to depoliticise education, at the root of which is the view of teaching as a simple technical activity without any reflective and emancipatory dimension.

Tension 3: Emancipation vs. Control

At a time when the "statist model" seems to be emerging in full force, this tension will become central to the debate on the present and future of public policies for teacher training, both in initial and continuing training. We should bear in mind that, in this current age of avowed attachment to so-called "surveillance capitalism" (Zuboff, 2020), we live under the aegis of behavioural conditioning technologies that aim not only to predict human actions, but also to remove any horizon of freedom of choice. Moreover, as Lyotard's (1976) prophetic vision of computerised societies points out, what is at stake is the performative capacity of education and training institutions and not the illusions of the great emancipatory narrative built by European modernity. From this point of view, the problem is not so much the possibility of a technological Big Brother, ubiquitous and omniscient, controlling all human actions and thoughts, although this is equally worrying, as it is the restriction of the horizons of human agency, which, incidentally, is the cornerstone of the teaching profession. From this point of view, what needs to be discussed is how ongoing training can contribute to a teaching professionalism

governed by pedagogical, scientific and ethical autonomy, assuming an emancipatory dynamic that is intrinsic to the great project of universal schooling. Viewing teachers merely as passive consumers of training packages that are duly prepared according to extrinsic and decontextualised needs, even if these are based on good public policies, is certainly a way of emphasising training as a process of control, conditioning and reducing teachers' agency.

Tension 4: Humanisation vs. Dehumanisation

In view of the trend towards highly virtualised relationships and the elimination of any form of mediation, which has recognised advantages for human learning processes, particularly the more institutional ones, it is important to emphasise, however, that the act of learning is a social and human process conducted face to face. In Charlot's excellent synthesis (cited by Canário, 2018, p. 13), education can be seen as a triple process in which everyone becomes a human being (process of hominization), becomes a unique human being (process of singularisation) and becomes part of a social collective (process of socialisation). In this way, as Canário postulates, "learning can be a solitary activity, but it cannot be isolated from the social" (2018, p. 14): the "production of self, by self" in which education cannot be fully realised without the transforming presence of the other. When we talk about presence, we are mainly considering its physical dimension, through which the formative and humanising difference is established. That is why it is important to keep in mind that teacher training aiming to be truly transformative cannot eliminate the spaces of dense and challenging conviviality in which each person's humanity is constructed and deepened. Indeed, if there is no doubt that this is a valid principle for all human beings and for the training of all professionals, it thus follows that it is even more valid for the training of teachers as they are responsible for the most delicate and complex of actions: the humanisation of the Other.

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