
Tendencias Toward the Adult Educator Profession in Latin America: An Exploratory, Comparative, and Participatory Study *

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In Latin America there are not any professional educators in Adult Education in spite of the advances achieved in the knowledge of this educational field, nor are sufficient resources dedicated for their formation and development. Using eight categories of analysis, which are called fundamental parameters of the profession, formation programs for adult educators were visited to carry out an exploratory study on the issue. The parameters affect each other reciprocally, which permitted their observation as a whole. The questions of the study treated them in their scope as well as in their dynamic, to attempt to observe their tendencies toward the Adult Educator profession, which is the objective of the investigation. To obtain and analyze the information, the study established two dimensions. In an extensive dimension, which has future uses, a research questionnaire is posted on the Internet to collect basic information from the formation programs for adult educators. The intensive dimension considered six experiences whose information was obtained in interviews with four types of subjects: the directors of the institution, the program coordinators, the teaching staff, and students who have graduated, using the design of a research matrix that considered criteria of tendencies for each parameter. In sorting the findings, the situation that seems to prevail in the profession in Latin America is established. In general, the first three parameters and the last one drive the work of educator formation because their tendency seems to point toward the formation of the profession, although still in a very limited way for the magnitude of the problem. The fundamental elements of the three parameters of support and "institutionality" show weakness because of their dependence on insufficient and inadequate public policies and their corresponding expression in the management of human and financial resources.

The Issue/Problem

In Latin America, adult educators are not professionals even though purposeful formation has been on the international scene more than 50 years, beginning with the First International Conference of Adult Education, held by UNESCO and celebrated in 1949 in Elsinor, Denmark after the Second World War. However, some experiences exist that develop formation programs that are focused on the formation of the profession of the adult educator.

Because of this, the interest of the investigation is centered on exploring the practices of some formation programs, whose focus is located in the work of the adult educator to try to describe some tendencies that shape the profession in Latin America¹.

In the history of educator formation, the preponderant role that the Center for Regional Cooperation for Adult Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CREFAL), created in 1950, played is emphasized in the planning framework proposed by UNESCO, through short courses and longer programs, such as the master's in Adult Education that was offered for the first time in 1974. These actions were destined for the formation of educators who were engaged, in the governments of their countries, to the attention of Adult Education. The intervention of this institution in the field has been very important.

Adult Education reached its height in Latin America beginning with the pedagogical problem posing of Paulo Freire at the end of the 1960s and during the decade of the 1970s, which particularly impacted civil society in community work, but also with adjustments to educational policies, to government programs focused on literacy and adult basic education. They are years of political activism in which the power that education

* Translated by Nikki Ashcraft

can have to change the living conditions of the most disadvantaged sectors of society was discovered. However, theoretical support referred more often to economic policy than to education.

In the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, the experiences demonstrated little impact to their promoters, and the need to carry out evaluations, and later, systematization of practices to improve them and to escape from a preponderant activism increased. The lack of theoretical support proves the need for attending to the formation of educators in a more intentional way. One of the first experiences of civil society in this sense is the Alforja Network among some Central American and Mexican experiences.

It has not been until the most recent decade of the 1990s and in the last years of the previous decade that formation programs for adult educators began to be designed and implemented in the universities of the region. Because of this, it now becomes important to explore some of the programs generated in that decade to know the formation practice developed by those experiences. This constitutes the object of study of this investigation.

Theoretical Framework

The investigation began its theoretical search with Sociology of the professions, particularly with authors like Peter S. Cleaves², Terence J. Johnson³ and T. Leggatt⁴, who discussed the parameters, that shape the professions and their relationships. Likewise, Latin American texts on teacher formation for education in general by Graciela Messina⁵ and Gilles Ferry⁶; those specifically on Adult Education by Sylvia Schmelkes⁷ and Eduardo García Huidobro⁸; and those on the focus of Popular Education, particularly of Paulo Freire⁹, Orlando Fals Borda¹⁰, and Carlos Nuñez¹¹ were reviewed.

The concept of professionalization that was initially established in the investigation, as a process in which a transit occurs from the formation practices to the profession itself, coincided with the practice in the field of Adult Education, but not with the concept of T. Leggatt and Terence J. Johnson, which can become a little restrictive and corporative in controlling the autonomy of the professional. Therefore, it was modified throughout the study and widened, finding greater identity in the concept of “professionality,”¹² understood as the possibility of professional improvement using the educational practice of the teachers or educators themselves in the idea that the professional is not necessarily created in the universities, although this is not discarded. This concept of “professionality,” most recently developed by Spanish authors like José Contreras¹³, seems to be more in accordance with the formation practice in the case of Adult Education.

The professions, with some exceptions, have not been created in the universities. These are born from professional practice, and those interested pass through a process of struggle to achieve what they know, to be taught and accredited by the universities, which is beginning to happen in Latin America in the case of Adult Education.

At the beginning of this first investigation, an initial conceptualization of the six parameters of the professions found in the literature was elaborated. They are: trade, systematic theoretical body and circulation of knowledge, code of ethics, labor and salary conditions, organization among colleagues and social recognition, specifying them for the field of Adult Education. Two new parameters related to the “institutionality” of the programs and their relationship with higher education were added as indicators of the characterization of the tendencies in the formation of the profession.

Each one of the parameters stated plays a different function in the construction of the profession. The first three (the trade; the systematic theoretical body and the circulation of knowledge; and the code of ethics) seem to be fundamental, the principal working material, although each one has its specific function. The following three (the labor and salary conditions, the organization among colleagues, and social recognition) fulfill the function of providing the means by which the profession is carried out and developed. The two remaining (“institutionality” and relationship with higher education) added by the researcher, will always be important aids, which are urgent in the present moment to promote and develop the process of constructing the field and the profession.

The announced parameters, which were adopted as the exploratory study’s categories of analysis, were modified in the course of the work, using knowledge from the experiences visited and reflection with the teaching staff to finally arrive at the conceptualization that is presented next.

1. The trade

It makes reference to work competencies, not exclusively pedagogical, that adult educators carry out daily in their professional practice, in the wide range in which they work with adults. It is the most important parameter because it includes practice, through which the profession is developed.

2. Systematic theoretical body and circulation of knowledge

It includes the accumulation of systematically elaborated knowledge, referring as much to theory as to practice. It consists of established theory, methods, techniques, and instruments.

3. Code of ethics

It constitutes the value sustenance of the trade. The identification and construction of this body of values can offer an important restraint on the development of the profession, particularly in the current neoliberal context of Latin America¹⁴. It begins with the question about the active and collective search for the values of the profession of adult educators.

4. Labor and salary conditions

Referring to the working relationship of adult educators with the institution where they work, this parameter is the material base of sustenance for the profession.

5. Organization among colleagues

They are the organizational instances created and maintained by the adult educators themselves to achieve the development of their profession in the different parameters that constitute it. It is an instance that promotes the profession, the educational field, and the educators themselves, where organizational strategies and forms of exchange among colleagues are encouraged to assure the development of the profession.

6. Social recognition

It is the valuation of the educators' work on the part of sectors or groups in society. In the case of Adult Education, the States and the civil organizations take responsibility for providing this service to society, which includes the valuation that they make of this educational field. The professions have to respond to social necessities that justify them and demand their service.

7. "Institutionality"

This refers to the strength of programs that train adult educators in the framework of their institutions, from the dynamic instituting-instituted focus¹⁵ in the history of their processes.

8. Relationship to higher education

This refers to the relation of the established demand for adult educators with the established offerings by the institutions of higher education where this demand can be satisfied at the professional level. It is an institutional possibility of professional recognition.

Specific aspects planned for the presentation of the study

The study has two dimensions: one extensive and another intensive.

The extensive dimension refers to the formation of the educator in the field, in the Latin American context, with a vision of the future. We do not know how many adult educator formation programs exist in Latin America. Neither do we know where they are, what they are called, who is responsible, how we can communicate with them, in what area they train educators, and at what educational level they are. They are basic aspects which are unknown and which are also considered in the second dimension.

The intensive dimension refers to the exploratory and comparative study of six formation experiences through the application of in-depth interviews with directors of institutions, the coordinators of the program, the teaching staff, and the graduates.

It is through the review of the history of the experiences and through the categories of analysis called parameters of the profession that the information is integrated and the conjectures about the tendencies in the profession are indicated, seeking to respond to the question: Are the educator formation programs contributing

to the formation of the profession? The set of parameters considered can give an explanation of the situation of the profession in its process of construction.

In the historical vision, decision making in the processes of change in the programs is emphasized. What decisions are made? Why are they made? Who makes them? What are the repercussions in the program and in the institution itself, in the perspective of the instituting-instituted relationship?

Among the principal aspects that investigation researched, the following were emphasized:

For the trade: The practices that the students carry out. The formation process (purpose, proposed and achieve profile). The pedagogical strategy developed (learning process, use of materials, and readings evaluation) Conception of the theory-practice relationship. The integration of the teaching staff and their intervention in the development of the program. Requirements of the market and problems for obtaining a job.

For the systematic theoretical body and circulation of knowledge: Educational focus. Literature and authors. Research activities. Publications and academic contacts for the circulation of knowledge.

For the code of ethics: What is the inspiration in the origin and in the history of the program? Values that the program seeks to promote and develop in the pedagogical bond. How these values are expressed in the pedagogical relationship.

For the labor and salary conditions: Characteristics of the institutions where the graduates of the formation program work. Characteristics of the working relationship of adult educators. Monthly salary that adult educators receive and the evolution of the characteristics of the labor and salary conditions in the past ten years.

For organization among colleagues: Existence of organizations among adult educators and their possible influence within the context of the country and their activities. Regional or national movements to claim recognition of the educational work of adult educators and their activities.

For social recognition: From the population that the educators serve, from their own institution, and from the government and civil organizations.

For "institutionality": Location and influence of the program in the country's context, relationship of the program and of the institution in the context of the formation of adult educators, quantity of cohorts that the program has served, current operation, type of certification, cost. Institutions from where the students' come and those to which they go to work.

For the relationship with higher education: Existence and characteristics of the relationship. What is the participation of the program in the process of relating? What services do the institutions of higher education provide to the program?

Data Collection and Analysis

For the extensive dimension of the study, a research questionnaire was employed that is sent via electronic mail or visited on the web page of the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional (UPN)¹⁶, to be filled out by the Adult Education formation experiences to know basic data about the programs, like their identification (directors) and characteristics: Of the program, of the formers and of the participants, to know where they are, what area of formation they provide, and what is their geographic scope.

The web page, connected to a database, permits the elaboration of quantitative and qualitative analysis in the intersection of the information. This part of the study continues to receive information, still insufficient for a Latin American analysis. In the case of Mexico, in which the distribution of the questionnaire has been most accessible, a preliminary quantitative analysis was made with information from 56 programs, though many belong to the same institution, which supports the results of the study because their specific aspects are also found in the intensive dimension.

For the intensive dimension of the study, a research matrix or methodological scheme was designed that includes the definitions of the parameters; the criteria of tendencies identifying two aspects: scope and dynamic of each parameter; and possible actions indicative of "professionalism" for the scope and dynamic of each parameter.

The scope refers to the presence of the components of each parameter. For the first three parameters it was judged pertinent to apply a classification of practices that was constructed for the field of Adult Education regarding: environment (family, work, and community); area (literacy, basic education, workplace formation, community work); target population (by age, by sex, by ethnicity) and context (urban, suburban, rural, indigenous community). For the other parameters, another type of classification was applied that was more adequate.

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The dynamic has to do with the relations that are established among the components of each parameter and with their movement, that is, the existence of a process that permits the detection of tendencies in the profession.

The design of the research matrix was established as shown in the following:

Parameters	Criteria of tendency	Action indicative of “professionalism”
1. Trade: Refers to competencies required by practice that are not exclusively pedagogical.	+Scope of the Profile of the graduate established and achieved. By environment, area, subject, and context.	-Purpose of the program. -Structure of the profile of the graduate established and achieved.
	+Dynamic: What pedagogical and other knowledge, abilities, and attitudes are being learned and developed in the formation process. By environment, area, target population, and context.	-Changes, ruptures, and advances in the history of the program and in practice. -Content, pedagogical relationship: theory-practice relationship established and achieved. -Problem of insertion into the labor market.
2. Systematic theoretical body and circulation of knowledge dealing with established theories, methods, techniques, and instruments.	+Scope of the experience by environment, area, target population, and context.	-Literature in the theoretical development of the program by environment, area, context, and subject.
	+Dynamic: Current state of the program in its process of constructing and circulating knowledge.	-Activities of systematization and investigation for theoretical development. -Diffusion activities, forums, exchange of knowledge, debate, for the circulation of knowledge.
3. Code of Ethics: Refers to the value sustenance of the work.	+Scope: Values that are considered in the formation proposal. By environment, area, target population, and context.	-List of values considered in the formation proposal.
	+Dynamic: How these values came to be included in the history of the proposal.	-What in the program’s origin inspires it to consider these values. -Minimum required and desired attitude for each value. -How these values are organized in the formation process.
4. Labor and salary conditions: Referring to the adult educators who are trained and the institution where they work.	+Scope: Voluntary work, social service for degree requirements, economic support, salary, services, contract, unionization	-Particular characteristics of the labor relation of the educators: Type of contract and its relationship with the text of the corresponding law. -Particular characteristics of the institutions where they work: Legal form, labor relations.
	+Dynamic: Evolution of labor and salary conditions.	-Current dynamic of the labor relation. How the relationship is driven, processes of change.

(Continued)

Parameters	Criteria of tendency	Action indicative of “professionality”
5. Organization among colleagues. It refers to instances outside of the experience where diverse forms of exchange are encouraged to strengthen the profession.	+Scope: Legal norms of colleges. Existence and characteristics of educator organizations.	-Enumeration of types of existing organizations (networks and others) and characteristics of territorial range, exclusivity of the field of Adult Education. -Norms of the organizations.
	+Dynamic: Process of organizations.	-Historical process of institutional development.
6. Social Recognition. It refers to the valuation of the educators’ work on the part of sectors or groups of society.	Scope: Positive recognition of the educator on the part of the demand or population. Governmental and NGO explicitness of the existence and need for the educators.	-Formulation of the demand on the part of sectors and groups of society. -Studies of the demand. -Document or statement of public policy on the formation of educators.
	+Dynamic: Changes or variations in social recognition.	-Historic location of government instances dedicated to the field. -Examples of recognition in the course of the experience.
7. “Institutionality”. It refers to the stability of the institution that develops the experience.	+Scope: Level of institutional consolidation, relationship between educator formation institutions.	-Operation of the formation program(s).
	+Dynamic: Instituting-Instituted relationship within the institution.	-The program’s stages of development in the context of its institution. -List of educator formation institutions with which a relationship is maintained.
8. Relationship with higher education.	+Scope: Existence of links.	-Description of the relationship. -Description of services received: Certification, others.
	+Dynamic: Participation of the experience in the process of relating.	-Characteristics: Constant or sporadic, exact or inexact, themes. -Services that the institutions of higher education provide to the program.

Based on the actions indicative of “professionality,” specific questions were constructed to obtain the information. The questions were organized in four interview guides, which were applied and recorded with four types of interviewee in each case: the director of the institution, to know the history and context of the institution; the coordinator of the program, to obtain specific data and a general vision of the program, related historically; the teaching staff, to know about the pedagogical bond and their difficulties in relating as a team; and the graduates, to know their insertion and labor conditions in the labor market, as well as their vision of the program.

To analyze the information, a description of each program was elaborated first to allow documentation of each case. Later, the information was organized by parameter with the goal of creating a comparative chart to look for constants and contrasts, whose analysis allowed arriving at the results that are shown in the following section. The research intentionally did not adopt an evaluative point of view.

A criteria-based sample was established that included programs because of their successful recent experience, in the context of adult educator formation programs in Latin America, through personal

connections with other adult education professionals in the region. The pertinence of these experiences to illustrate and explain the current situation in the profession was considered. No random sample was selected due to the fact that the universe of formation experiences is unknown. The extensive study is an attempt to initiate the construction of said universe.

Six cases were studied:

1. The National School of Methodology of the Mexican Institute for Community Development (IMDEC, A.C.), in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico.
2. The undergraduate degree program in Rural Development Planning of the Center of Studies for Rural Development (CESDER-PRODES, A. C.), in Zautla, Sierra Norte in the State of Puebla, Mexico.
3. Escola Zé Peao, of the Universidad Federal de Paraiba, in Joao Pessoa, Paraíba, Brazil.
4. Specialization in Fundamentals of Education for Youths and Adults of the Center for Education at the Universidad Federal de Pernambuco, in Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil.
5. University major in Education with a specialization in Adult Basic Education, realized in tripartite agreement between the Institute of Studies and Social Action (IDEAS), the Provincial Council of Education and the National University of Chubut, in Trelew, Esquel, and Comodoro Rivadavia, Chubut, Patagonia, Argentina.
6. The undergraduate degree program in Popular Education of the Education and Pedagogy Institute of the Universidad del Valle, in Cali, Valle del Cauca, Colombia.

Findings

The findings discovered in the exploratory study make reference to how the experiences visited respond to each one of the parameters that are considered as essential parts of the profession and their tendency¹⁷.

We found that the efforts toward “professionality” are few in relation to the formation needs and that the existing university programs are limited and recent. However, several cohorts of students have been attended which indicates the demand.

The existence itself of the programs found constitutes a finding although contextual elements exist which make them fragile and which makes their consolidation difficult, offering them an uncertain future.

This fragility, which crosses the whole field, is due to the low importance that the States, which are involved in the attainment of the neoliberal model, grant to this profession, which is evidenced by the lack of public education policy and its consequent reflection on scarce resources to promote plans and programs of local and national character, as much in education as in research and dissemination, which give certainty to the development of the profession.

Next, the specific findings are mentioned.

Parameter 1: The trade

In all of the cases there is purposeful formation, related to “professionality”.

The experiences show two types of purposes, one of a social character, in that they all show concern for the social and political situation of poverty in Latin American, and referring to this situation, the intention to develop in the adult the capacity to read reality and to act as a consequence. The experiences express the other type of purpose, of an educational character, in the following ways which become very illustrative: “To achieve that the trade has the support of a theoretical-political framework; That the educators have the ability to arrive at their complete reality, which can be more universal knowledge; To educate the view of the educators in such a way that they think of themselves as adult educators; The educators are professionals when they can perform in an autonomous way; That the educators are seen as scientists of Adult Education.” It seems that the level of professional demand is increasing.

The profiles of the graduate imply a more integral formation that goes beyond the technical and the methodological.

The desired profile of the graduate, not always achieved, that the experiences establish is related to certain competencies of the educator, which are coherent with the two types of purposes. With respect to the sociopolitical concern, "A social and political commitment with determined values and a capacity to critique and propose" is mentioned, that is, "a reflective educator to form citizens who fight to improve society." The educational purpose is supported in a profile that includes thematic knowledge (disciplinary content), methodological skill (competency in the way of teaching), and sensitivity to have empathy in understanding adults in their context. All of this indicates "to remove Adult Education from a rigid and compensatory model that affects daily life."

The purpose and the profile can give an idea of the tendency in which the profession is constructed. However, the way in which practice is carried out and the relation that it establishes with theory for its transformation will depend to a greater or lesser degree on "professionalism".

All of the programs visited consider the practice of the educator as the fundamental axis around which formation should rotate. They are served by teaching staff who promote the profession. Likewise, they consider the theory-practice relationship in the pedagogical bond although they visualize it as a complicated question that is little explained in the documents that give support to the programs.

Diverse establishments of the pedagogical strategy for the theory-practice relationship are found.

Even though the experiences visited assume a Popular Education¹⁸ focus, certain differences related with the depth of the scope of the purposes and of the profiles are observed, particularly in the position that they have towards the conception of the theory-practice relationship.

One position refers to practice as the main input of pedagogical activity in order to instill theory in it and that the relationship seems to show coherence between the "knowing" and "doing" of the educator. This implies *draping practice with theory*.

Another position that also considers practice as the main input of pedagogical activity is to achieve that the educators *discover the theory that supports their practice*. Not draping themselves with theory, but discovering the theory itself that is behind their practice in their formation. In this position, another step is being given in that a deeper pedagogical bond that further considers the subjectivity of the educator is required. This position seems to lead the declared purposes and profiles to their ultimate consequences because it allows, at the same time, the educators to be successful in their pedagogical bond with adults, to discover the theory that drives their life and to act on their context to transform it.

To professionalize refers then to the improved performance of work responsibilities that is achieved in the formation process through the pedagogical connection between the educator formers and the educators, whose learning transcends the link between the educator and the adult. The tendency in the profession seems to advance this second position more in this parameter.

The experiences contribute some facilitators and obstacles for the work in the classroom. Only one makes instruments for the formation of educators explicit, like the profile of the members of the group, the guide to follow-up the educator, the weekly attendance card, the planning and realization of visits in situ. Almost all the experiences make the periodic academic meetings of the teaching staff with the coordinators of the program to review the daily difficulties and the better knowledge of the educators in formation explicit as a follow-up mechanism.

However, the principle difficulty of an organizational character expressed by some of the experiences is the real impossibility of meeting as a teaching staff to follow up the pedagogical strategy and the former-educator in formation relationship due to excessive work responsibilities, a problem that has to do with the working conditions reviewed in the 4th parameter. Other difficulties of the teaching staff have to do with individual conceptual differences and with inadequate conflict management.

In relation to the educators' practice, a difficulty is found in the fulfillment of their role regarding their authority in front of the group of adults, which oscillates between authoritarianism and "democratism." Both extremes negatively affect the pedagogical bond. Group work and work on the subjectivity of the formers and of the educators¹⁹ can contribute solutions to some of these difficulties.

Parameter 2: Systematic theoretical body and circulation of knowledge

The criteria of a tendency are identified in different elements of the parameter: the lack of definition of the field, the focus, the literature, the research, the publications, and the meetings or academic contact for the circulation of knowledge.

Fragility and diversity in the theoretical body of the field are observed because of its lack of definition. The definition of a theoretical body has to do with the structuring of the field of intervention of Adult Education, which in this moment is evaluated as still undefined and under construction, given the limited

research on the diversity of educational practices with adults and the lack of an organizing framework regarding environments, areas, contexts, and adults that they serve, for example.

Fortunately, literacy and basic education are no longer the only areas considered by Adult Education. However, lifelong education is a concept that although it opens the spectrum of the field to multiple practices, it also limits it. It would seem that it is everything, but it does not clarify what are the parts that constitute it. The field is undefined and under construction.

The 5th International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V) and the previous Regional Preparatory Meeting, celebrated in Brasilia 97²⁰ established seven areas of priority demand: Education and work; education and youths; education with peasants and indigenous people; literacy; citizenship, human rights, and participation; education, local development, and sustainable development; and women's education and gender equity. Without ignoring their priority and concerning the definition of the field, they are not precise enough to include all the areas of application. Content is crossed with environments and areas, and the family environment, for example, is not considered as such.

The generic theoretical/methodological focus of the experiences visited is that of Popular Education. All of the experiences have literature and authors selected for the program that they offer. However, only one had them available and in one other could a list of the most consulted authors be elaborated on during the course of the visit. In some experiences it was indicated that the authors consulted depended on the decision of the teacher who imparted them. It was difficult to find clear responses to this question about the literature in relation to the theoretical body, which seems to speak to this educational field being still undefined and under construction.

A commonly accepted theoretical body does not exist from which particular theoretical bodies can be detached related to the area of formation required for each program.

The reflection, which is realized on practice, is still insufficient for its theoretical construction. Its systematization is little and urgent²¹.

The development of systematization activities of the programs is still not sufficient. Three of the six experiences have a document that systematizes their experience in educator formation.

The investigation that is conducted is on one area of application of the field and on the contexts that they serve, not about the problems of educator formation. The research carried out by the institutions in which the programs are located are also very reduced, basically due to the lack of educators/researchers and the almost nonexistent budget.

On the other hand, it would seem that the universities in their recent arrival to the field are preparing educators/researchers. It is encouraging to find research as formation content for educators. The programs, in their great majority, promote research in their formation process. Research is carried out by the educator, usually for diagnostic knowledge about the reality that adults experience.

Regarding publications, the literature found on the formation of formers reports what is referred to as the teacher formation of teachers in the educational system. Specific treatment of the problems of forming adult educators is very rare. Of the six experiences, all have publications, but only one has an editorial line with abundant didactic material and texts, although they do not refer to the formation of educators, but to adults.

All of the experiences report activities to organize events and to attend meetings. It would seem that the Adult Education scholars would give priority to the problems of the field and its development, and they still do not do it for the particular problems that forming educators encompasses. This is due to the struggle that they are fighting in respect to claiming the field with governments. For some, in the extreme, their existence is at risk, and it becomes a success just to avoid disappearance. For others, the lack of definition of educational policies and the limited budget allotment are intentional limits of the governments, which are related to the "institutionality" of parameter 7.

Alternatives like certification of work competencies and a functional focus to give a direct response to the job markets and to resolve the problem of unemployment are part of the neoliberal establishment. Education for the market and education for the development of people are established in a contradictory manner.

The existence of the programs is an element of tendency directed to the construction of the profession since the majority of them establish the use of theoretical bases to modify practices in their purpose and in their design. There is the specific intent to professionalize, to systematically train, to think of practice in the formation process. There is a presence in some universities, and there is some substance in the research. Let us recall that it is not but in the last decade that formation programs for adult educators began to be established in the universities.

It becomes urgent to recover the experience of a Network promoted by the Council of Adult Education for Latin America (CEAAL) that was interrupted due to lack of financing since currently there does not exist a network of Latin American universities for the formation of educators, which would permit, among other things, a greater circulation of knowledge.

Parameter 3: The Code of Ethics

This is perhaps the least tangible parameter in the professions, although all include it.

The experiences do not make the values that they promote in the formation process explicit although they consider them implicitly in an important way.

The values are observed in the purpose of the programs and in the theoretical focus they adopt. The view is put forward not only in the educational work but also in the conditioners of social development for the improvement of the quality of life of youths and adults.

The implicit values are equitable social justice, democracy, respect for human rights, and the culture of poorer youths and adults.

The values that were mentioned as intended to be developed in the experiences were the following:

In the purpose of the Program: Social justice, genuine commitment, and solidarity with the most disfavored groups in society.

In the theoretical focus: Political action, professional rigor, participation and teamwork.

In the attitudes of the desired profile: Responsibility in autonomy as a capacity to respond, respect for cultural differences and differences in thought, tolerance, capacity to listen, dialogue, criticize and acknowledge.

A philosophy of social justice that inspires the programs drives them, due to the Popular Education focus in general. It is possible to emphasize that in the practices explored a tendency to consider in an important way social values and not only individual values is clearly seen, which seems to be characteristic for working with adults in Latin America. It is fundamentally directed toward the dispossessed, which does not happen in other parts of the world for this field. Unlike children, the dispossessed already have the capacity to act socially, and they do it more efficiently when they are not alone, but organized.

However, few experiences, and in a limited way, were able to make explicit the way in which the values are incorporated in the programs through the pedagogical strategy in the relationship with the students and the way in which they purposefully and systematically reflect on the subjectivity of the educators and their attitudes.

In a formation program, values are inevitably transmitted in the educational relationship. They can be manifested in a more intentional and convincing way through the work of the teachers, when they are integrated as a team, following-up the formation process.

It seems that the relationship of values with purpose, the profile, the pedagogical strategy, and evaluation is not explicitly constructed. Is there a lack of didactics for the teaching of values? The values have sustenance in theory, and being able to make them explicit and to incorporate them from the practices into the pedagogical connection can help to achieve them.

In relation to the pedagogy of values, greater precision to establish and evaluate attitudes is lacking, so that they can be achieved with educators in a more purposeful and clearer way in the formation area. The new transversal themes developed in Latin America like democracy, interculturalism, gender, human rights and the environment, for example, have their principal sustenance in values.

In the profiles of the graduate, the values would have to be made widely explicit enough to permit the pedagogical strategy to reformulate them and specify them to relate them with practice.

In the present moment in which neoliberalism is promoted, the necessity to attend to value formation in all the areas of the field of education is shown, due to the polarization in the distribution of wealth, which is a fundamental lack of ethics. The neoliberal values do not consider the solidarity, which is an essential part of the construction of social consciousness, particularly in Latin American culture.

The practice of the trade implies values, which are lived in an important way in the experiences, which speaks to a clear tendency. In the field, values are found in a very emphasized way, precisely to give meaning to the educational work, even though values in which educators are formed are not made explicit. To make the values in the programs explicit would clearly recognize the tendency in the profession with greater theoretical support.

Parameter 4: Labor and salary conditions

It can be said that the work of educators constitutes a subsidy for the development of the field and the formation of the profession, given the existing labor and salary conditions in Latin America.

Three of the programs explored that attend to the formation of educators are carried out in public universities and three in non-governmental organizations (NGO), of which, two have agreements with public universities.

Adult educators, not only the graduates of the programs, work under different contract modalities, from work under formal contracts and temporary contracts to work providing social service for degree requirements or as volunteers. In the case of Brazil and Argentina, the adult educators are teachers contracted by the educational system of the country, for which they belong to teachers' unions, while the programs of other countries contract teachers who usually come from non-governmental organizations, which do not have the backing of unions. This creates differences in their labor situations.

With the exception of Mexico, voluntary work is utilized sporadically. In the case of Mexico, which has a governmental institution of national character for the specific service of Adult Education, the provision of social service for degree requirements and voluntary work is the only way in which the attention to service is resolved to carry out adult education activities.

In general terms, when a contract exists, the salary designated for the adult educator is precarious, without considering the possible benefits that each institution grants to their employees. The salary oscillates between 250 and 300 U.S. dollars a month. For the case of Mexico, no formal salary exists in the case of the volunteers in the institution mentioned. An allowance is granted for travel and food and currently a system of payment for productivity as a function of the number of adults that are able to certify has been introduced. The general minimum salary of the countries visited is 72, 120, 130, and 300 USD a month in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Argentina, respectively.

In Argentina an Emergency Law has been maintained for the past 10 years that impedes a salary increase for teachers.

In this context of neoliberalism and globalization, the economic policy in the Latin American countries has caused the salaries of educators to fall. Salary increases do not exceed the increase in inflation, which results in a decrease of buying power and living conditions. This is more controlled in the public institutions due to the generalized budget reduction in the governments.

In the NGOs, their principal sources of financing do not depend on the governments of their countries, but on foreign foundations. A reduction is seen in the funds of these foundations particularly in the past five years. It would seem that the tendency in some NGOs is to become intermediary agencies between the State and the social sector because the world finance agencies recommend to the Governments to subcontract the NGO to develop social programs. The consequence is that this can change the locus of decision-making about what needs to be done. In this case, it is the government who makes this decision and the NGO, who is in charge of carrying it out, which affects professional autonomy. The public universities are also in search of alternative sources of financing to fulfill their function.

The limited salaries force some educators to work as teachers in various institutions with the goal of obtaining an appropriate salary, which impacts on the quality of their work. It is the case that some teachers work with children in the morning and afternoon and with adults in the evening.

Although the experiences open spaces for the formation of educators, they almost always do it in spite of contextual conditions, which do not facilitate their job performance. Because of this, some educators said that with their activity they subsidize the service through voluntary work in the perspective of a possible change.

The tendency in the labor and salary conditions for Latin America in general has to do with negative changes for workers in the labor legislation to achieve greater profitability for the business shareholders. Neither the teachers nor the educators of this field escape from this tendency, which is manifested in the governments in their policies of budget reduction and privatization of state businesses. In a contradiction for the profession, the strength of values referred to in the previous parameter compensates for the deficient working conditions of the educator.

Parameter 5: Organization among Colleagues

The situation found is that this type of organization for the profession of adult educators does not exist like it is known in other professions.

The organizations of professionals constitute an element of control for the practice of the profession in the cases of medicine and law, for example. The professional associations, as an organization among

colleagues, are concerned with the professional-client relationship to control working practices. They negotiate spaces for promotion and development of the profession with the State; they invigilate the fulfillment of the code of ethics and establish relationships with universities for the development of the profession through suggestions for modifications to the plans of study, agreements to realize programs to update skills and knowledge, and contact with the graduate associations to incorporate them as new members of the organizations.

In the case of Adult Education, the tendency of this parameter is different. Currently it is seen in the defense and construction of the field through meetings, forums, and thematic networks that seek and in some cases promote the definition of educational policies for their impetus. This type of meeting can encourage the formation of an organizational space among colleagues that extends toward the profession.

The educators who work in the areas of literacy and basic education usually depend organically on the State. There is no free exercise of the profession and their autonomy is limited to the pedagogical link that they establish with the adult although, even in this area, they are determined by the plans, programs, and study materials defined by the State and in which they had no participation.

The NGOs in their relationship with the government generate a movement to preserve autonomy. However, due to questions of financing, a tendency to receive international funds through the government is beginning to appear, which can limit or negatively affect their autonomy.

The explicit absence of the recognition of an identity that is related to the diversity of practices in the field is observed. The graduates of the programs are hardly identified as adult educators. In the market, and among themselves, very diverse names are assigned such as social or community promoter, trainer, facilitator, consultant, educator, or teacher, among the 13 different names that were found. Beyond the names, a greater identity is implicitly found regarding the Popular Education focus, related more with the social and political purpose of the programs than with the identity of the teacher.

Parameter 6: Social Recognition

The work of educators is widely recognized by the social actors of the sectors they serve, but not by the States.

The poor understanding of the solidarity of volunteer personnel in the exercise of Adult Education, in addition to generating deficiencies in the quality of service and in many cases producing a second experience of educational failure, represents a devalued conception of the profession. It would seem that the labor and educational policies label it as second class work²².

On the other hand, the experiences visited are well-known because of their graduates, because they lean more towards formation to develop human beings in their different dimensions, connecting education with development of the country, beyond the short-sighted vision that the neoliberal model establishes in the education-work relationship.

The group of youths who utilize the services of Adult Education is increasing due to the expectation of finding work and even though it cannot be denied that a youth with basic education can have more opportunity to find work than another who does not have it, it is also true that the neoliberal establishment does not guarantee employment, generating a new frustration in that education loses credibility and the informal economy is promoted.

There is hardly a definition of educational policy with adults that recognizes the field in its diversity and supports it with the necessary resources, which permits the articulation of interinstitutional efforts and with civil society to cooperate in the educational work of the country with the corresponding budgets. This is the principal objective of the reunions and meetings of educators indicated in the previous parameter.

The States do not even recognize the educational work with parents or in areas like health, or job formation, for example, as Adult Education. Nor is convincing institutional evidence found in the educational commitment of the States in the seven priority areas defined in the Regional Preparatory Meeting in Brasilia and in the 5th CONFINTEA mentioned previously.

The States of the nations do not grant the educational function of Adult Education the importance it has for development. This obviously does not generate recognition of the profession and which is owed not only to budgets, but also to insufficient conceptions.

The tendency of this parameter is related to the importance that is granted to the field of Adult Education in the future, to support recognition of this educational work.

Parameter 7: “Institutionality”

The tendency of “institutionality” of the programs is shown in the positive changes realized by the experiences with stability achieved in various cohorts of students and in the recognition that they award to their graduates.

The principal changes in the history of the programs are in their plans of study, to respond in a better way to the needs of the educators who are trained, to redirect and to make their purposes and graduate profiles more precise or to change their school-based system for another at a distance and to widen their offerings to educators not served.

The programs visited have an average history of 7 to 11 years and they have been applied between 5 and 10 times, with the exception of the National School of Methodology of IMDEC, which has been operating since 1985 with 23 cohorts, and of the undergraduate program in Popular Education (at a distance) of the Universidad del Valle, initiated in 1999 with 168 students enrolled in 8 centers, with important previous experiences.

The programs that offer university studies award a college degree or a certificate of studies²³. The program of the NGO and the formation Program for literacy educators award a diploma and a certificate without curricular value, respectively.

Regarding the cost to the educators for their formation: Two programs charge²⁴, one charges but in certain cases offers complete or partial scholarships, and three do not charge.

They are successful programs, but one way or another they are affected by their institutional and national contexts, like in the grave case of Argentina, where the university major in Education with a Specialization in Adult Basic Education is suppressed due to lack of political and financial support of two of the three institutions that launched the program or because they are not permitted to rapidly advance or they are threatened repeatedly because of the lack of educational policies that support their development and expansion, in all cases.

The teaching staff, although they have had organizational or personnel changes, remain strong, which permits them to accumulate experience and to establish institutional changes. However, a generalized malaise is observed because of the effects of the national contexts²⁵.

The degradation of the instances responsible for Adult Education within the administrative structure of the government, which was previously found in a second or third level and which now is found in a fourth or fifth level, is another example of the absence of institutional priority for the field.

The programs initiated in the past decade have not been able to maintain themselves without difficulties in the institutions that encompass them, demonstrating the need for educator formation. A good tendency towards the profession is noticed thanks to the strength and perseverance of the teaching staff and to the pedagogical strategies utilized, as well as to the changes, decided among themselves and implemented in the programs and plans of study. However, this tendency is vulnerable because of the situation of the present context.

Parameter 8: Relationship with Higher Education

Of the six experiences visited, five have a formal relationship with universities, which was not expected and which is encouraging for the profession. Very recently, before the completion of this report, there were data about the intention of the sixth experience to establish a relationship with a university.

The relationships are of diverse character. In two cases, the NGOs develop the formation programs with recognition of their curriculum on the part of the public institution of higher education. In one of them, the formation of the educator formers was carried out in the Universidad Nacional de la Patagonia before launching the program. In another two cases, the undergraduate and specialization programs are imparted by public universities. In the other case, although it is not at the university level, the literacy instructors are trained in the university, and it is also the university who develops the literacy program in agreement with the Union of Civil Construction Workers, as university extension work.

There was also knowledge of the existence of three networks of Latin American universities to promote formation programs in Adult Education. Two of which have lost continuity after three or four meetings because of a lack of financing, and the other, which is the Network of Indigenous Peasant Universities (Red de Universidades Campesinas Indigenas/UCI-Red) created in July 1999, is currently carrying out organizational work for its operation in four centers in Mexico and one in Colombia.

The tendency of this parameter is positive for the profession, even though the relationship of these types of formation programs with the institutions of Higher Education is limited. Its future fragility is

observed in budget reductions, specifically in the public universities, and also signals have been received of the intention to privatize these universities in the middle term.

Impact

The establishment of the problem using the parameters of the profession was new and interesting for all the experiences. In communication after the visits, several of them commented that upon asking themselves about the profession using the parameters, in the possibility of revising their practice from these points of view, the reflection of the teaching staff had been provoked.

The proposal to classify the field of Adult Education into environments, areas, type of population, and contexts to aid in defining the field also drew attention. Something similar, although to a lesser degree, happened in different presentations of the research matrix as well as the proposal to classify the field with other audiences. With the study, a new line of research is opened, since each parameter can generate the development of specific investigations related to the profession from the diverse formation practices. In the future, the advance in the first three parameters will basically depend on the success of the trainers in driving their programs. The advance in the second group of parameters will depend on the possibilities of the educators to organize against the State in each country. The advances in practices from any of the parameters will be positive because they are all related among themselves and they affect each other.

In general, situations of a similar context are observed in Latin America; there would have to be a tendency toward the local formation of educators, the sum of interinstitutional forces, and a much closer relationship among the universities and among the educators that serve the field in Latin America. The formation of a network that undertakes the development of the field and of the profession can be a proposal that perhaps is initiated next February 2001, in a probable meeting of the six experiences visited, an initiative of one of the programs that has been welcomed by the others.

An agreement on formation at a distance among the educator trainers in the different countries that would permit the direct, on-site pedagogical link in each center is not discarded and can be an alternative for the development of the profession in Latin America that does not ignore the “institutionality” of the participating programs nor their relationship with institutions of higher education.

Finally, the interest of the investigation is also focused on the diffusion of this exploratory study with the hope that it can open a debate for the development of the profession and that academic and organizational actions that promote and develop the field are unleashed with the goal of achieving full social recognition and its consequent improvement in the working conditions of adult educators.

References

¹This interest is born from the 18 years of experience of the Adult Education Academy in the Universidad Pedagógica Nacional in Mexico serving educators in their formation through educational programs, unsuccessful on some occasions, but evaluated and reinstated at the level of undergraduate degree, diplomas, postgraduate specialization, and master’s degree. The author has been with this Academy for 12 years and has 15 years of prior educational work with adults.

²Cleaves, P. S. (1985). *Las profesiones y el Estado: El caso de México* (1st ed.). Mexico. El Colegio de México, Jornadas 107.

³Johnson, T. J. (1972). *Professions and Power*. Studies in Sociology, University of Cambridge.

⁴Leggatt, T. (1970). “Teaching as Profession” in Sociological Studies (Ed.) *Professions and Professionalization*. Cambridge University Press.

⁵Messina, G. (1997). *La práctica pedagógica en los centros de formación inicial de maestros en América Latina y el Caribe*. *Regional Investigation*.

Messina, G. (1998). *La renovación de la formación docente: Instituciones y Sujetos*. UNESCO/Regional Office of Education for Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁶Ferry, G. (1990). *El trayecto de la formación. Los enseñantes entre la teoría y la práctica*. (1st ed. in Mexico). Co edited by UNAM, ENEP-I, and Editorial PAIDÓS Mexicana.

Ferry, G. (1997). *Pedagogía de la Formación*. Formación de Formadores. Carrera de Especialización de Posgrado, ediciones Novedades Educativas, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters.

⁷Schmelkes, S. & Kalman, J. (1996). Educación de adultos: Estado del arte. Mexico, Instituto Nacional para la Educación de Adultos.

⁸García Huidobro, J. E. (1980). Aportes para el Análisis y la Sistematización de Experiencias No-Formales de Educación de Adultos. United Nations Educational, Science, and Culture Organization, Center for the Research and Development of Education, UNESCO Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

⁹Freire, P. (1996). Política y educación. Siglo XXI Editores.

¹⁰Fals Borda, O. (1986). Investigación participativa. Montevideo: Instituto del Hombre.

¹¹Núñez Hurtado, C. (1998). La Revolución Ética (1st ed.) Instituto Mexicano para el Desarrollo Comunitario, A.C.

¹²“Professionality” is a recent contribution of Spanish authors which is more identified with adult education in Latin America. It is a new word that does not exist in English or Spanish, but it is utilized to differentiate the approach from those authors who use the word “professionalization.”

¹³Contreras, J. (1997). La autonomía perdida: la proletarianización del profesorado. In S. L. Morata (Ed.) La autonomía del profesorado, Madrid.

¹⁴Ezcurra, A. M. (1998). ¿Qué es el neoliberalismo? Evolución y límites de un modelo excluyente. Lugar Ed., Instituto de Estudios y Acción Social.

The Latin American context is being seriously affected by the momentum of the neoliberal paradigm. “For some years, the notion of neoliberalism has been widely utilized to critically designate the dominant socio-economic policies on the planetary level. . . the defenders of said strategies regularly underestimate their neoliberal attributes. And that becomes possible because the concept itself of neoliberalism remains widespread” (p. 9). Initiated after the Second World War, renewed in the 80s with the “structural adjustments,” and in the 90s with the so-called “second generation reforms,” this paradigm’s “basic thesis, of neoclassic roots, is that the market constitutes the best and most efficient instrument for the allocation of resources and the satisfaction of needs. A self-regulating mechanism that would lead to the best social condition and because of this would be intrinsically superior. Therefore, said orthodoxy exalted the virtues of a minimal State and actively challenged the Welfare State, and, in general, the State as a redistribution mechanism to benefit the disadvantaged classes” (p. 14). With greater emphasis on the Southern Hemisphere of the planet, the reality is that the gap between rich and poor widens more every time, that the reduction of the States impedes the definition of necessary and adequate policies which involve greater social spending budgets for education in general and for adult education, which, by definition, particularly serves the more disadvantaged sectors. This paradigm promotes the privatization of Public Universities, which are the only alternative to professionalize the adult educator in Latin America, among many other measures basically defined through the World Bank.

¹⁵Ardoino, J. & Lourau, R. (1994). Les pédagogies institutionnelles. Collection “Pédagogues et Pédagogies” of Presse Universitaire of France (Ed.).

Institutions –like living beings, but in a different way –have stages in their processes of development. They are begun, creative and new, in an “instituting” moment. If the institution is developed, it can reach an “instituted” moment of consolidation. However, the institution has to renew itself to keep developing. These changes are new “instituting” moments that permit them to continue living, offering services. So, the institutions, to keep themselves alive, have to maintain a tight relationship between the instituting and the instituted. The relationship between similar institutions, among equals, becomes fundamental to keep themselves permanently in instituting moments.

¹⁶<<http://www.upn.mx/200.38.61.24/CEDULA>>

¹⁷The information of the findings is written for a wide reading public, beyond the three regions considered by the Cyril O. Houle Scholars in Adult and Continuing Education Program, due to the necessity of dissemination of the present situation of the formation of adult educators. Some findings cannot be so new overall for Latin American readers and their importance resides, in every case, in that the investigation confirms them.

¹⁸Fundamentally defined from the perspective of Paulo Freire.

¹⁹Pichón, R. (1978). El proceso grupal. Del psicoanálisis a la Psicología social (I). B. A., Nueva Visión.

²⁰UNESCO Regional Education Office-Santiago, CEAAL, CREFAL, and INEA in Mexico. (1998). Hacia una educación sin exclusiones. (UNESCO-Santiago, Regional Education Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ed.)

²¹In September 2000, an anthology composed of five volumes coordinated by Sylvia Schmelkes, which is a very detailed work in support of the theoretical construction of the field, was published.

Schmelkes, S. (2000). Lecturas para la educación de Adultos: Aportes de Fin de Siglo. Mexico: Noriega (ed.) Instituto Nacional para la educación de Adultos.

²²The term “rezago educativo,” or educational lag, utilized by governments to identify the subject population of the field, is pejorative. The youths and adults who decide to rejoin the educational system for a second time, to be served by this field, carry the blame for failing and dropping out with a consequent low self-esteem, without recognizing that for the most part, the causes of their exclusion are poverty conditions and the educational system itself.

²³A group of 30 graduates of the university major in Education with a specialization in Adult Basic Education have achieved, after a four year struggle, the promulgation of Law 4314, agreed upon by the Legislature of Chubut Province in Patagonia, Argentina, which acknowledges their professional title beginning in 1997.

²⁴In the case of the Specialization, the Program charges the students to pay the trainers because this public university does not consider this level of studies as postgraduate.

²⁵In some government institutions in Mexico, the educator receives allowances for transportation and for meals that should be verified with official documentation required by the budget policy. For the educators who carry out their work in small rural or urban communities, the allowance is so insufficient that they must resort to establishments located on the public road, which form part of the informal market and therefore do not provide receipts. So, they are forced to present false documents to prove their expenses. This institutional practice affects the central values of educational practice, like honesty, which impacts the general ethical framework and which can be transferred to the ethics of the profession without difficulty.