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RESEARCH ARTICLE



The politico-cultural significance of teachers' 'professionalization' movements: a compared analysis of American and French cases

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ABSTRACT

This article highlights the ideational factors underpinning the movements to professionalize teachers in the United-States and in France. It demonstrates that the deep driving force behind these movements is neither the modernization of schooling, nor the professional interests of teacher educators, but the politico-cultural hold of a philosophical paradigm that met the values and ideals of education and political systems' actors. By associating human progress with social progress based on natural laws, the naturalistic standpoint of this philosophical paradigm won the favor of the times. Nevertheless, the adaptive conception of intellectual and moral development it supports entails a separation of the mental world of education specialists from that of academic scholars. As a consequence, the major missions of formal education shifted from the training of the mind through the understanding of subject-matters to that of whole social personalities through situated or experiential forms of understanding, the paradoxical outcome being a loss of teachers' autonomy in terms of professional expertise.

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Introduction

With the expansion and democratization of education in western countries, the prime mission of the school was transformed from the training of the mind through the understanding of subject-matters to that of whole social personalities through situated or experiential forms of understanding. This change was the subject of numerous works, with a broadly historical orientation, which account for years of controversy over the meaning of education (see for example Borrowman, 1956; Herbst, 1989; Koerner, 1963; Lawn, 1988; Powell, 1980; see also Cochran-Smith, Feiman-Nemser, & McIntyre, 2008). Unexpectedly, in connection with these evolutions, the outcome of the teachers' professionalization movements is a loss of teachers' autonomy in terms of professional expertise – that is, a reduction of their rights and subjective capacities to think about their activity. This paradoxical development inspires hypotheses which call into question the overall idea of modernization attached to the concept of professionalization. One which will interest us, drawn from the neo-Weberian conflict theories, highlights the role played by the

professional interests of teacher educators in the arbitrary construction of professional requisites which are, according to these studies, detrimental to teachers and students. Nevertheless, this hypothesis cannot entirely account for the social and political support of the movements for the professionalization of teachers. According to the alternative hypothesis derived from interpretive sociology¹ put forward here, what drives these movements in depth is neither the modernization process nor class or professional interests, but the politico-cultural hold of a philosophical paradigm over the interpretive frameworks of education and political systems' actors. This analysis thus accords a crucial explanatory role to the values and ideals of social actors. It not only takes seriously the meaning that social actors, with varying degrees of reflection and awareness, assign to their action, but also takes the need for meaning to be a fundamental human trait.

In the following, the major sociological interpretations of teachers' professionalization are presented. These interpretations are then discussed on the basis of a compared analysis of the teachers' professionalization movements in the United States and in France. Alternatively, this analysis highlights that, in the two national contexts studied, the driving factor behind educational change was education system expansion. Instead of arousing interest in the teaching of subjects and their mastery, educational expansion fostered the domination, over educational thought, of a new philosophical paradigm which, by naturalizing the human subject, aroused interest in socializing aims through situated or experiential forms of understanding, and in so doing, met the values and ideals of education and political systems' actors.

Professionalization as a sociological object

The notion of professionalization is rooted in the works of functionalist sociology (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933; Parsons, 1939, 1951; Wilenski, 1964), and refers to the constitution of a professional group moving from occupational status to professional status. This change implies the functional differentiation of specific 'technical competencies' and of a normative value system.² As such, 'professionals' are supposed to have 'authority' in their particular technically defined sphere and, thus, the ability to establish control over the exercise of their professional activity. According to interpretations of a functionalist nature, professionalization accompanies the modernization of institutions and benefits both practitioners and the public. The professionalization of the teacher's role is thus supposed to provide the means to achieve the social goals assigned to public schools. For instance, in the United States, those goals are traditionally conceived of as social efficiency, through the increase of qualifications in the population, mobility through equality of opportunity, and political equality through the building up of individuals' capacity to 'function' in a democracy (Labaree, 1992).

The sociology of professions later developed critical analyses of the social construction of autonomous professional groups. The neo-Marxist interpretation generally considers the process of professionalization to be an ideological cover used to arbitrarily justify inequalities of status. It closes off access to occupations and transforms cultural capital into economic capital through the standardization of knowledge, the monopolization of legitimate competence and the regulation of 'entries' into universities (Larson, 1977). Nevertheless, Braverman (1974)'s late Marxist interpretation points to the deskilling of jobs in a capitalist economy due to systematic efforts to efficiently control in order to

maximize profit: Scientific management theories, by fragmenting production processes, separate conception from execution work and alienate the worker. This interpretation can also apply to the white-collar worker. Following in the steps of Braverman, the labor process theories which developed in the 1980s defend the idea of a 'proletarianization' of teachers' work (see Apple, 1986; Densmore, 1987; Harris, 1982; Lawn & Ozga, 1981). For example, according to Densmore, the idea of professionalization is an ideological response which deceives teachers about their degraded professional status. The latter is characterized by a loss of autonomy and control due to what is identified as proletarianization. However, Reid (2003; see also Buyruk, 2014) notes the difficulty of applying the labor process perspective to public sector employees such as teachers. To understand the process of professionalization, a close examination of the role of state education in a capitalist society is necessary. Reid defends that, rather than the question of the decline of the teaching profession, it is the question of control, inherent in the labor process theory, which is essential and likely to provide a key to the evolution of professionalization. It is justified in a crucial way by the political nature of the whole education enterprise: The control of curriculum knowledge appears as a strategic goal for domination over the education of new generations (see for example Apple, 1993; Cornbleth, 1995).

For their part, neo-Weberian conflict perspectives see in professionalization the creation of powerful and arbitrary self-interested monopolies, with political power and group interests representing driving forces in a market-type environment (Evetts, 2003; Saks, 2010). Johnson (1977) describes it as a political process to validate the privileges of a professional group, by reinforcing internal homogeneity and increasing autonomy from outsiders.

Nevertheless, according to the historian of education David Labaree (1992), whose influential analysis on this subject is rooted in Max Weber and also Michel Foucault (1972–1977/1984, 1975/1977), the professional requirements imposed by the professionalization of teachers process benefit neither the teachers nor the students, but the teacher educators. For the latter to ensure their domination, the question of control over the 'science of teaching' was fundamental.³ Labaree, when recounting the genealogy of the movement for the professionalization of teachers from the 1960s in the US, defends that this movement involves two key factors which are detrimental to educational thought: the effort of those who teach teachers to raise their own professional status and, in this aim, their development of a research-based model of teaching practice that serves their own control over classroom instruction. In this framework, Labaree's mapping of the social process at the origin of the movement for professionalization primarily involves the teacher educators' need to compete with scholars in liberal arts and science programs with greater prestige, by carrying out research and by publishing. They used methods drawn from experimental sciences and the quantitative analysis techniques that had the most power to legitimize university research. Consequently, a body of formal knowledge, underpinning educational expertise and on which demands for professionalization could be based, was built up in the 1960s so that 'teacher educators and the science of teaching arose together [...] under conditions that bonded one to the other' (Labaree, 1992, p. 144). The scientific pretensions of the resulting teaching standards have elevated teacher educators to the rank of prescriptive guides on public policies and teaching practices. Conversely, without this guarantee from the positive sciences, they would not have been able to claim any particular authority in the face of teaching practices. Therefore, according to

Labaree, the teachers' professionalization movement was the fruit of an alliance between a rising professional group and an intellectual construct, the scientific method that guided their research. This movement tended to enhance three undesirable trends: the domination of teacher educators over educational thought, the standardization of classroom teaching, viewed as a technical activity, and the decreasing influence of teachers and citizens on schooling. Teacher educators are now caught in a web of knowledge and power games that channels the way they usually think about teaching. The consequence is the development of 'an authoritative, research - driven, and standardized vision of teaching practice' (Labaree, 1992, p. 123).

The historian Arthur Bestor (1953) proposed in the early 1950s an interpretation of the progressive turn in American education in the first half of the twentieth century which can be likened, where teacher educators' professional interests are concerned, to Labaree's neo-Weberian conflict approach centered on the 1960s–1980s. Bestor's interpretation appeared as a major critique of the progressive educational movement and was, as such, widely discussed.⁴ This interpretation will be considered here independently of its polemic charge. It is based on the analysis of the system of action that was put into place in the framework of the creation of education departments in most American universities at the turn of the twentieth century under the impact of the expansion of high schools and universities. When teachers in these faculties of education began to be recruited from students trained in these same faculties, this fostered the autonomy of education as a subject per se, and the autonomy of these education departments, so that educational knowledge become progressively separated from the teaching of subjects. As in Labaree's analysis, the professional type of teachers' educators arose from their necessity to compete with scholars in liberal arts and science programs with greater prestige. To gain a position of power within the universities, the professors of education allied with administrative and political actors who,⁵ focused on school management and quantitative issues, had lost their sense of purpose in education. Teachers' educators helped them to discharge schools of their major intellectual and cultural mission. In return, their courses were promoted by the requirements laid down by State education officials for the training of teachers. They thus gained control of the teaching profession as well as of educational thought but no longer had independence and critical power in the forming of public school policies.

In the two different periods covered by their analyses, Labaree and Bestor consider the rise in universities of teachers' educators as education experts to be the key element for understanding the logic of the teaching professionalization. Their respective analyses of the processes involved have never, to my knowledge, been fundamentally challenged.⁶ In both contexts one perverse process is that those who gain from the teachers' professionalization - the education experts - achieve institutional power by competing against the liberal arts and science programs that constitute the teaching disciplines of prospective teachers. Both analyses point to a loss of effective voice in public school curriculum-making for teachers in primary and secondary schools. Finally, both suggest that the logic of power and control underlying the academic rise of a specific professional group - the teacher educators as education experts - accounts for the fundamental misconceptions regarding genuine issues of teachers' education and the closure of the political debate. Labaree notes in this regard that the ideas which dominated the professionalization process in America masked their political content, suggesting that education is a technical question that must be entrusted to certified experts.

The limits of the proposed interpretations

The above-mentioned interpretations of the movements for the professionalization of teachers each reveal an aspect or a dimension of them. However, they do not allow us to understand the deeper dynamics of these movements. The official, functionalist interpretation, which defends institutional rationalization in order to meet new education needs, fails to call into question the specific intellectual frameworks through which the professionalization of teachers is reflected upon. Moreover, it remains blind to the doubtful loss of teachers' control over their practice. The perspectives that fall within the framework of the labor process theory, by pointing to the proletarianization of teaching work due to the economic role of education in capitalist societies, lack its fundamental political dimension. The standardization of teaching and the consequential separation of work conception from execution may not be the major factor in this process of proletarianization. Especially, the development of the socializing aims of schooling that, as we will see, accompanied the movements for the professionalization of teachers, heavily contributes to stripping teachers of their own intellectual objective and turning them into employees serving governments' own education policies. In this respect, the approaches of Marxist and neo-Marxist inspiration evoked previously allow no more than the functionalist interpretation to account for the new socializing role played by the educational aims and ideas which dominate the dynamics of education reforms. This is not the case of the neo-Weberian conflict perspectives, which especially lead us to call them into question. Bestor and Labaree's respective approaches show that the rising educational aims and ideas serve, in the two different historical contexts concerned, the particular professional group that produces them, that is, the teacher educators as education experts. But these approaches do not explain the political endorsement of this dynamic and its social acceptance, except on the basis of the influence of this rising professional group. To explain it, in both cases the analyses point to this social group's alliance with external sources of power: the public schools administrators, and the 'education officials', in Bestor, and an intellectual construct, the scientific method, in Labaree. In both cases, having recourse to an exterior source of authority reflects the difficulty in understanding education experts' increased power based on their own action. The problem lies in accounting for educational change through a social process which, from the outset, is beyond the control of the social group that is supposed to be driving it. Amongst the critical reactions aroused by Bestor's work, additional factors for educational change were brought up, such as the growth of the school population and the phenomenon of industrialization raising needs for vocational competency.⁷ These factors alone do not explain the rise of teachers' educators as education experts. Ideological shifts marked by the philosophy dominating educational thought were also evoked.⁸ This will interest us in the remainder of the article. Nevertheless, ideological shifts do not simply appear out of thin air. Especially, we have to understand how the intellectual changes endorsed by education and political systems' actors may have biased the rational process of scientific selection of education theories.

As observed in substance by Bestor and Labaree, links can be traced between the rise of teachers' educators, and the development of a body of knowledge promoting education expertise conceived of as autonomous from expertise in the disciplines of knowledge. Nevertheless, these links support a deeper explanation of the growing power of education experts than the alliance with external sources of authority such as education

administrators and education officials, or an intellectual construct conferring the authority of science. According to the thesis developed here, what explains the rising role of education experts in teachers' training is the hold, over educational thought, of the philosophical paradigm in which the new education science is anchored. The paradoxical proletarianization of the teaching profession would then be the result of a politico-cultural phenomenon that is not essentially concerned with power relations between social or professional groups, but with the meaning given to the education of new generations.

In the following, having recourse to a compared analysis of the American and French cases allows to test the major explanations present, functionalist perspectives and conflict theory perspectives, and to support the interpretive approach advanced here. This compared analysis will allow us to better situate the relationships between the factors brought into play by the different theses evoked: industrialization involving a growing rationalization of the educative process against the values of particular social groups;⁹ educational expansion involving an adaptation of the educative process to the new populations in schools; the professional interests of teachers' educators, as education experts, involving the imposition of biased norms upon teachers' training and practice; and also, the politico-cultural domination of a philosophical paradigm naturalizing the human subject and involving the separation of educational issues from the teaching of particular subject-matters.

Formal and politico-cultural dimensions of professionalization: the 'modernization' thesis challenged

First, two meanings or dimensions of the professionalization of teachers have to be distinguished. One formal meaning involves the regulation of access to the teaching profession, notably in terms of accreditations by teaching institutions. The second meaning, defined here as politico-cultural, implies an ideational response to new professional needs, involving a more or less implicit interpretive prism, so that the idea of professionalization may appear as a recurrent claim in the history of professions, as shown by the two differentiated phases of the professionalization of American teachers studied by Bestor and Labaree respectively.¹⁰ In this second meaning, the question of the professionalization of teachers in the twentieth century implied the relative empowerment of educational expertise as opposed to expertise in the subjects taught and, correlatively, the mobilization of educational psychology and what are known as the education sciences. Therefore, in the present analysis, what represents the politico-cultural dimension of the teachers' professionalization movements refers in particular to educational concepts and requirements in terms of teachers' education conceived of as independent of the mastery and teaching of particular subject-matters.

The modernization thesis involves, as we have seen, the idea that, in industrial societies, the educative process is progressively rationalized under the influence of universal values. This thesis represents the most generally accepted interpretation of changes in education, and underlies the very idea of 'professionalization', evoking a form of rationalization of professional requirements. Nevertheless, both United States and France represented industrial societies in the twentieth century, sharing major scientific and technological innovations. Alternatively, the temporal dissociation of the major phases of the 'professionalization' of teachers in the two countries reveals that the latter did not occur as a consequence of industrialization but, more specifically, of school expansion.

The population of the United States doubled between 1890 and 1930, mainly due to immigration. The number of public elementary school children reflects this growth (it increased from 12.5 million in 1890 to 21.3 million in 1930) whereas, in the same period, the number of secondary school pupils increased from 203,000 to 4.4 million and to 7 million by 1940 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1982, tables 27 and 35). In the first four decades of the twentieth century, American secondary education became mass-schooling, and the proportion of 17 year-olds graduating from high schools grew from 6.4% in 1900 to 16.8% in 1920, and from 29% in 1930 to 50.8% in 1940 (see Figure 1). These schools, financed by public funds and developed mainly under the impact of urban growth during the last decades of the nineteenth century, were then in full development. In 1940, about half of the secondary school population age group was enrolled in the high schools. The expansion of secondary education was stimulated very early in the United States by laws on compulsory schooling (Hofstadter, 1962, pp. 326–327).¹¹ This helps us to understand how early the American education system expanded by comparison to European education systems, and the crucial need for teachers generated by these changes. The major expansion phases of the American and French education systems are in fact more than a half-century apart (cf. Figure 1). We will see that, in the United-States, the formal dimension of professionalization, and the politico-cultural dimension that will interest us, came together at the turning of the twentieth century and that, alternatively in France, the formal dimension had existed for a long time whereas the particular politico-cultural dimension in question here developed with the expansion of secondary education in the second half of the twentieth century.

At the end of the nineteenth century, secondary education in the United States was built on the European model. The public-school system, established during the colonial period, was developed shortly after the Revolution. Teacher training remained almost non-existent

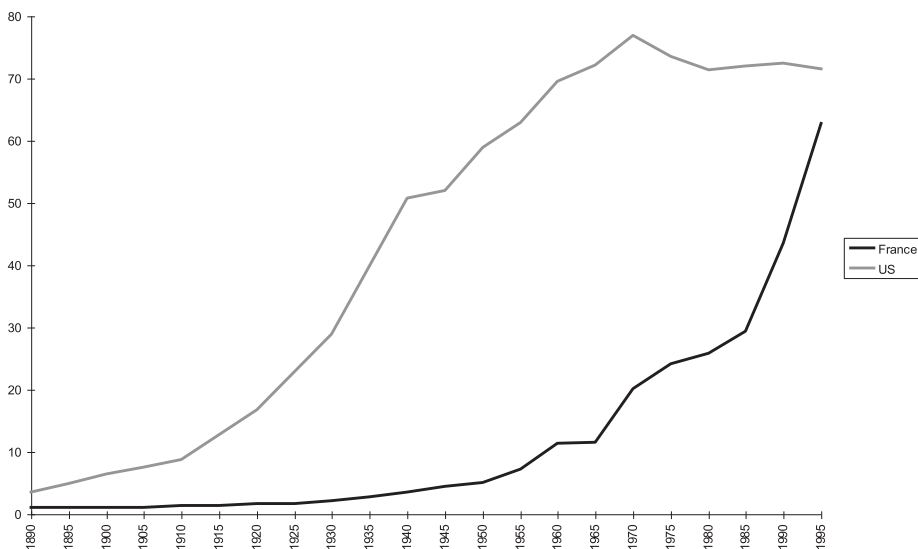


Figure 1. Evolution of the proportion of 17-year-olds graduating from high school and the proportion of graduates holding a baccalaureate in one generation between 1890 and 1995. Sources: US Department of Education and US Department of Commerce; French Ministry of Education.

until the Civil War. Students of the first normal schools that were created received an elementary education only. The level of admission rose with the multiplication of high schools, and the normal schools then offered college level education. They were transformed into ‘Teachers’ Colleges’ or ‘Colleges of Education’ in the first decades after 1900, proposing both undergraduate and graduate degrees in education to future school administrators, professors of education and classroom teachers (see for instance Cremin, 1953a, p. 167; Even-den, 1933a, 1933b; Woodring, 1975, pp. 1–7). A little more than 10% of the normal school students were high school graduates in 1890 and in not more than six States before 1900 did the legal certification standards for high school teachers differ from those for elementary school teachers. The formal professionalization of teachers is a phenomenon that accelerated in particular between 1920 and 1930 (cf. Figure 2) with a shift, for example, from a large majority of states imposing no higher education on future teachers to a minority. In 1930, college graduation represented a typical preparation for high school teachers.

Schooling expansion at the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States was correlative to the deployment of an effort by state agencies and professional associations¹² to not only raise teacher training standards but also define their general directions. The number of conferences, advisory councils, empirical surveys and reports at both local and national level increased (Cremin, 1953a). As Cremin (1953b) observes, by far the most important study in interest and scope was the six-volume report by the National Survey of the Education of Teachers, conducted between 1930 and 1933. This report will be of special interest to us, as will another one that preceded it, the second most important for the period (Cochran-Smith, 2008): *The Commonwealth Teacher-Training Study* (Charters & Waples, 1929). These two major reports will help us to capture the changes in the conceptions of the main aims of teachers’ education, revealing the politico-cultural dimension of the teachers’ professionalization movement in question.

From 1920 to 1927, the Commonwealth Fund made grants to support studies based on a committee of experts’ recommendations, mainly composed of leaders of the new psychological sciences in education (see Glover & Ronning, 1987): James R. Angell, Charles H. Judd, and Edward L. Thorndike. All of them were working, although with different orientations, under the dominant functionalist interpretation of mind as a means to

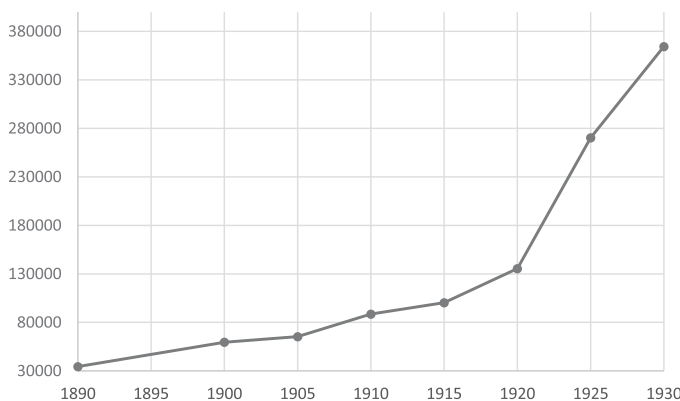


Figure 2. Evolution of enrollments of students preparing for teaching in normal schools and teacher colleges. Source: US Office of Education. National Survey of the Education of Teachers. 1933 (vol. v), Table 10, p. 66.

help the organism adjust to the environment, the foundation of which was Darwin's theory of evolution (Green, 2009). Another member was Elwood P. Cubberley, a leading progressive educator. The functionalist psychological approach pervades the whole text of the Commonwealth report which formulates the major aims of teachers' training in terms of the socializing habits to be developed in the students: 'teachers must be trained to produce the sort of citizen that the community expects from the schools' (Charters & Waples, 1929, pp. xv, 9–10). The scientific method implemented by the report, based on a comprehensive survey of the activities that teachers actually performed, was therefore applied in a clear politico-cultural perspective. Charters was among the social efficiency proponents who were calling for 'the elimination of the conventional subjects in favor of subjects that were themselves areas of living such as citizenship and leisure', and was developing a theory of curriculum 'entirely consistent with the concept of mind inherent in the new psychology' (Kliebard, 1986/2004, p. 91, 97). What is also remarkable is the clear separation, endorsed by the report, of teachers' academic training from their professional training, so that the latter is conceived of as independent from the issue of teaching subject-matters:

the curriculum must contain both professional and extra-professional materials, the latter being commonly referred to as cultural, or academic [...] under favorable circumstances, the teacher in training will have received most of the essential extra-professional training during the twelve or fourteen years preceding admission to the training school. (Charters & Waples, 1929, p. 9)

Following the Commonwealth Study, in 1929, Congress mandated that the US Commissioner of Education undertake a nationwide survey of the education of teachers, which is the origin of the six-volume report led by Edward S. Evenden, and based on the first-ever national survey on teacher education in the United States (Cochran-Smith, 2008). As is the case in the Commonwealth Report, but with more nuances, the 1933 National Education Association (NEA) Report tends to associate the idea of teachers' professionalization with general educational issues. The notion of professionalization is interpreted through ideas of 'professional education courses', 'professionalized subject matters', or 'the professionalization of teaching', principally by referring to expertise in education conceived of as relatively autonomous from the particular teaching disciplines. The Report justifies these courses by circumstantial factors such as qualitative and quantitative demands for teacher training, and the growth of education as a university subject (Evenden, 1933b, p. 74). Therefore, in the United States, the two dimensions of the teachers' professionalization movement, one formal with the regulation of access to the teaching profession, and one politico-cultural involving the separation of educational issues from the teaching of particular subject-matters, appear to have developed concurrently with the expansion of schooling itself.

The French education system, which can be generally considered as a typical model among European educational systems, was historically a precursor in pedagogical matters (Durkheim, 1938/1990). The first normal schools were created in France in the seventeenth century and developed in the eighteenth century based on a rigorous tradition of academic preparation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, future elementary school teachers, generally after obtaining an initial secondary education diploma (at the age of sixteen approximately) followed a three-year course there before taking the exam leading

to a two-year internship. Future secondary school teachers, for their part, held a baccalaureate degree and had to follow several years of studies in higher education, especially if they were to take the difficult *agrégation* exam (created in 1766). The 1933 NEA report observes in this respect that the (formal) professionalization¹³ of elementary school and secondary school teachers in Europe in general and in France in particular was achieved much earlier:¹⁴

While it is true that teaching has made rapid strides in America toward becoming a profession in the sense that medicine and law are professions, one may say that teaching is a profession in Europe while in America that statement is only half true. The prerequisites for the maintenance of a profession are definite and rather high selective qualifications for admission, long and difficult course of training that cannot be “shortcut” or obtained privately or easily, adequate compensation, economic security, and social prestige and approval. (Evenden, 1933b, p. 385)

The report adds that

taking the great body of German, Swedish, French, or Austrian secondary teachers and comparing them from the point of view of scholarly attainment, command of their subject, and professional skill in teaching, and enthusiasm, one must honestly admit that [United-States] suffer by the comparison. (Evenden, 1933b, p. 394)

Alternatively, the politico-cultural dimension of professionalization involving the separation of educational issues from the teaching of particular subject-matters, was developed with the expansion of schooling in the second half of the twentieth century in France. No major changes were made to French teachers’ professional training prior to the late 1980s. The movement for professionalization itself was officially implemented by the 1989 ‘Loi d’orientation sur l’éducation’ (Law on the Orientation of Education), which is reputed to have triggered the dissemination of neo-progressive ideas in French education (Boutonnet, 2003; Lafforgue & Lurçat, 2007; Raynault & Thibault, 1990; Sallenave, 2001; Stal, 2008). From an institutional point of view, the so-called professionalization of French teachers was reflected in the substitution of new structures, University Institutes for Teacher Training (IUFMs), from 1989, then Higher Schools for the Teaching Profession and Education (ESPEs) from 2013, for the former *écoles normales* that trained primary school teachers. This substitution not only involved an equalization of the formal educational level of primary and secondary school teachers but also, correlatively, the introduction of education sciences into the teaching preparation of secondary school teachers.¹⁵ It led to a weakening, in teachers’ preparation and recruitment, of the role of academic subjects in favor of other criteria associated with the changing image of the profession, involving a move interpreted in the literature as from a ‘disciplinary’ logic to a ‘professional’ one. Therefore, it is with school expansion that the notion of professionalization in France has been developed, and tended to be assimilated to its new politico-cultural sense.

This first confrontation of the American and French cases shows that the rise of education experts on issues related to teachers’ education developed with more than half a century of distance between the two countries. Therefore, it must be distinguished from the modernization trends associated with industrialization and the supposed rationalization of the educative process under the influence of universal values. Alternatively, this rise appears to be narrowly correlated with the expansion of schooling in the two countries studied here (see Figure 1).

The politico-cultural dimension of the teacher professionalization movements, in relation to the expansion of education, and the correlative rise of education experts will interest us in the following.

A philosophical paradigm naturalizing the human subject

The notion of paradigm does not refer here to the Kuhnian meaning (Kuhn, 1962), which assumes a systematic structure of the ideas and concepts attached to it. It is understood in an older and more ample sense as ‘shaping and directing our thought in predetermined, and sometimes quite inappropriate directions’ (Toulmin, 1972/1977, p. 107). In this respect, it brings into play a general representation of the world, resting on some broad conceptual framework. In the present case, this representation is anchored in the evolutionist doctrines that popularized the natural sciences in the second half of the nineteenth century.

New conceptions which appeared on the educational scene at the turn of the twentieth century were rooted in a representation of humankind developed under the influence of the Darwinian revolution, which had challenged the truths established in all fields of thought (Cremin, 1962). In this context, Darwin’s evolution theory fed all forms of so-called education progressivisms¹⁶ through the new functionalist premises of psychology (Green, 2009; McDonald, 1964). Functional psychology, which has been fueled by founding texts from philosophers William James and John Dewey, relies on the adaptation conception of intellectual development involving a form of continuity with organic development. Anchored in this broad functionalist framework, progressive teaching theories understand learning as ‘experiencing’, that is, as ‘an active process of interaction between the human organism and its natural and social environment’ (cf. Monroe, 1952, p. 168).

The historian David Tyack (1974) distinguishes from among the promoters of progressivism in education two general categories that are often referred to in the literature, the ‘administrative’ and the ‘pedagogical’ progressivists. Both applied new scientifically-oriented adaptive psychological conceptions to curriculum and learning. The former focused on preparation for life on the basis of social efficiency aims, and the latter on preparation for life on the basis of democratic aims. These two progressive paths were able to influence American education in different ways without them having to be interpreted – as Tyack and his followers do, including Labaree (2005)¹⁷ – as conflicting. They are both representative of the deep, general influence of the naturalist ideology of progressivism. As Sebastien Alix (2017) points out, evolutionism lies at the foundation of the ambivalent unity of the latter: It allows us to embrace aspects of progressivism that integrate and those that differentiate, those that are democratic and those that are conservative, those that are libertarian and those that are implicitly authoritarian.

The intellectual phenomenon, represented by the philosophical paradigm shift dominating American education, developed based on the dissemination of philosophical, sociological and psychological works by eminent thinkers interested in placing the new naturalist conceptions of human and social development at the service of the American society. This dissemination not only had an effect on the training and intellectual direction of education experts but also influenced actors in education and political systems. The philosophical paradigm anchored in evolutionism tended to bring together the calls for

democracy and science embodied at the time, where education is concerned, by the leadership of John Dewey and psychologist Edward Thorndike respectively. Their role on thinking regarding the child and its development are widely considered as major, even if an appraisal of the effect of either of them on the ideas of the time is not easy (Monroe, 1952, p. 25).

Evolutionism was supposed to have offered the world a new conception of society and individuals as governed by natural laws, so that a kind of pre-established harmony seemed to ensure that the results of science would serve the democratic ideal (Hofstadter, 1962, p. 338) and raise hopes in the educational solutions allowed by the philosophical paradigm shift evolutionism inspired. The scientific guarantee offered by naturalism even tended to substitute for the cautious challenge of theories. This could explain that progressive educators, as one of the first members of the Progressive Education Association critically bears witness ‘have published books and articles definitely claiming results, almost before the methods had been tried at all’ (Cobb, 1932, p. 25). Evolutionist approaches thus served the building of unacknowledged interpretive systems in the human and social sciences where democracy and social progress appeared at the horizon of the naturalist conceptions of the human subject.

The new philosophical paradigm dominating American educational thought triggered a form of ‘epistemic break’ with the rationalist tradition of liberal education. Here, this break is called epistemic because it separates fundamentally different conceptions of human knowledge and intellectual development. Whereas in the rationalist tradition there is a form of harmony (or logical relationship) between knowledge and mind, and intellectual learning aims at understanding (Hirst, 1965/1974), major functionalist trends of psychology oppose such conceptions. The adaptation principle associates knowledge development with the formation of thinking habits in reference to concrete situation problems and principally involves practical and social learning aims (see Bulle, 2017, 2019).

In the adaptive perspective of Thorndike for example, it is pointless, and even counter-productive, to explain the principles of the things being taught to enlighten the learning process and invest in a ‘so-called “system” and “logical” progression’: ‘What is learned should be learned much later than now, as a synthesis and rationale of habits, not as their creator’ (Thorndike, 1922, p. 116, 1931). Fundamentally, it is the same types of conceptions that lead Dewey (1902) to oppose learning by ‘experience’, on the basis of the guidance of subject matters, and learning governed by the ‘internal logic of the subject matters’.¹⁸ More generally, progressive educational currents, beyond their differences, ultimately come together when they bring into question the teaching of disciplines – the so-called ‘traditional’ academic curriculum (see Krug, 1964, vol. 1; Ravitch, 2001) and their denial ‘of any virtue in the systematic and sequential mastery of subject-matter as such’: They tend to discredit ‘the organization of learning materials on the basis of what may be called their internal relationships-logical, chronological, spatial, causal’ (Bagley, 1939, p. 337) and are in favor of teaching that is designed to be less verbal and more empirical, ‘functional’ and ‘instrumental’ in its direction.

This form of epistemic upheaval leads to a radical review of education’s problems and purposes. Its critical character is revealed in the 1933 NEA Report, which devotes a chapter to the educational philosophies held by the faculty members in schools for the professional education of teachers. The authors of the report observe that these philosophical directions tend to pitch education experts against academic scholars. They note that colleges

originally emphasized the ideas of ‘mental discipline’, ‘liberal education’, ‘morality and character, and religion’ and that increasing attention is given to what is termed ‘functional aims’ in relation to ‘life needs’, and particularly ‘civic-social responsibility’ (Evenden, 1933a, pp. 33–37). The polarization of education conceptions observed around the oppositions of Academic-Direct life;¹⁹ Passive-Active;²⁰ Separate mind-Naturalistic²¹ view (Evenden, 1933a, part VII)²² is a manifest result of the epistemic break brought about by the dominant naturalistic paradigm.

Considering the nature of the new philosophical premises guiding educational thought, one assumption of the present analysis is that the professional interests of teacher educators do not constitute a major causal force for changes in teaching, as conflict theoreticians assume. The meaning and impact of their action come as a consequence of the rise of the very philosophical paradigm in which their own conceptions are anchored. Accordingly, the separation between educational expertise, linked to general methodological directions in the knowing process, and expertise in a subject-matter, involving a deep understanding of its rules, its principles, and the internal links between them, is not a product of the professional rise of teacher educators as education experts. This opposition is intrinsic to the epistemic break introduced by the philosophical paradigm naturalizing the human subject. The domination of this philosophical paradigm over the intellectual landscape of education precedes the professional rise of teacher educators, and tends to explain that rise.

The rise of progressive educational thought in the United-States: the 1900s–1920s

At the end of the nineteenth century, what appeared in the history of the American school to represent ‘The most memorable document expressing academic views on secondary education’ was the 1893 report of the National Education Association Committee of Ten (Hofstadter, 1962, p. 329). The chairman was President Charles William Eliot of Harvard, a promoter of educational reform who had been active in the National Education Association and who was, at this time, ‘in the forefront of the humanist interest group’ including ‘the guardians of an ancient tradition tied to the power of reason and the finest elements of the Western cultural heritage’ (Kliebard, 1986/2004, p. 9, 23). This committee, whose major mission concerned the problem of standardizing college-entrance requirements, supported academic training for all high school students, whatever their social destination might be, on the basis of an allegiance to the universal educational virtues of the mental disciplinary power of academic subjects. Appearing at a time when school expansion was in its beginnings, the report was exposed to opposition from the promoters of the new adaptive perspectives on human psychology, such as that of G. Stanley Hall, an early leader of the child study movement in the United States, who was one of its most powerful critics (Kliebard, 1986/2004, p. 12).

With the widespread extension of compulsory schooling from the end of the nineteenth century to an average of over sixteen years in 1920 in the United States, schools saw their mission expand to progressively include the preparation of entire generations of students for future social participation, not just future elites. One of the founders of American sociology, Edward Ross, in *Social Control*, put the matter suggestively in 1900, observing that, as the social role of the priest appeared to be ending, the role of the schoolmaster was only beginning: The school was to inherit the socializing function of the church. He added that,

in opposition to this new function, the school had become less an instrument of social control than an instrument of individual success (Ross, 1900). Following this sociological perspective, the theme of social adaptation rapidly increased after 1900 with regard to the issues of teachers' education, and particularly after 1914: The new social and human sciences approaches seemed to make it possible to deal with problems arising from the significant increase in urban populations and the associated social problems. As Thomas Popkewitz (1995, p. 59) stresses: 'the pedagogical science responded directly to concerns about moral upbringing and labor socialization purpose but refocused them as problems of attitude, learning and the skills of individuals as they interacted with their environment'. Moral education was then usually conceived of as 'a life process' and the school as 'an agency for socializing boys and girls', 'a training camp where habits of living and working are established', involving 'a more systematized, rationalized and controlled social process, for the sake of greater control over the whole of human life' (Ellwood, 1921, pp. 229–31; Hall-Quest, 1920, p. 6; Lovejoy, 1932; McElhannon, 1929, p. 535; and for an overview, Krug, 1964, vol. II).

An interesting sign of the importance accorded to the role of the new conceptions of teachers' missions in the formation of social personalities appears in the value placed on the image of the teacher as a 'leader of the community' in certain European countries that have tended to put the socializing function of schools at the service of their totalitarian objectives:

Since the World War rapid changes have taken place in the work of the elementary schools and in the institutions which prepare teachers for the great folk schools of Europe. In a very general way the change in the nature of the elementary schools in the more progressive countries of Europe has dictated the corresponding changes in the teacher-training curriculum. The old elementary school, the "learning-school", where memorization of the "essentials" has given way to the "activity-school", a school in which the pupils are brought into close contact with the local environment in order to begin, of course, slowly but surely, the interpretation and comprehension of the complex life about them. [...] The sudden turn in the character of the public elementary school has brought about in many countries, especially Germany, Austria, Russia and Italy, the study of philosophy, politics, religion, psychology, ethics, sociology and political economy and other subjects. [...] The new teacher in Europe is looked upon as the educator and spiritual leader of the community – one who can take forward steps in the interpretation of and in the development of the national culture as it expresses itself in his community. No longer is he looked upon as a classroom instructor whose chief business is to transmit traditional knowledge to pupils. (Evenden, 1933b, pp. 395–396)

The movements for the reform of education at the beginning of the twentieth century in the United-States worked on the redirection of educational objectives toward the duties of life. It was a matter of translating the commitment to the socialization of youth into the curriculum and of revising each subject according to its utility in terms of the social ends in view. The dominant ideas involved notions of student's own activity, inquiry method, social service and, in particular, social efficiency (Callahan, 1962; Krug, 1964, vol. I; Miller, 1915; Noble, 1958). The concept of social efficiency generally implied, among those who advocated it, the existence of a separation between 'scholarly' or 'academic' knowledge, be it 'modern' or 'classic', and knowledge that is useful in life, then amalgamated with subjects referred to as 'practical'.

The historian Edward Krug (1964, vol. 1, p. 214, 282) writes that, in the climate dominating American education after 1905, there was little room for those who preferred Plato to works on projects intended to improve the community.²³ The central question that occupied the movement for reform between 1905 and 1915 was the bringing into question of every discipline, and every fragment of every discipline. The value of teaching subjects had to be proved scientifically, with the weight of evidence relying more and more on knowledge considered to be academic. In the minds of many critics, high schools were ‘citadels’ of reaction, which was actually less than in the colleges or private schools, but they were more vulnerable to criticism (Krug, 1964, vol. I, pp. 308–323). Their teaching body was accused of silent opposition. One interpretation of this ‘inertia’ was that most principals and teachers did not have a philosophy of education that was based on psychological and sociological principles. The mission of *The Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education* (CRSE), created in the summer of 1913, was to revise all teaching by examining it from the point of view of social interest, that is, preparation for life. Its final report, *Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education* (CPSE), officially marks the institutionalization of educational progressivism and, through it, the domination over American educational thought of functional psychology anchored in the biological model of evolution and adaptation. In this way it opens up to the affirmation according to which secondary school teaching should be defined by ‘the needs of the society to be served, the character of the individuals to be educated, and the knowledge of educational theory and practice available’. Following this logic, the value of subjects and teaching methods had to ‘be tested in terms of the laws of learning and the application of knowledge to the activities of life, rather than primarily in terms of the demands of any subject as a logically organized science’ (NEA, 1918, p. 8). The report consecrates American education’s break with the liberal education model that had inspired it only a few decades earlier (NEA, 1893). It marks the domination, over changes in schools, of the philosophical paradigm that inspires various education progressivisms. During the same period, progressive education attained organizational status through the creation of the Progressive Education Association in 1919.

The rise of education professionals in the United-States: the 1930s–1950s

Education departments were established in most of the universities at the turn of the twentieth century. According to Bestor, as well as Cremin and Hofstadter,²⁴ the relative autonomy of these education departments allowed the gradual separation of the ‘mental worlds’ of the professional educationists from that of the academic scholars. This separation of ‘mental worlds’ is actually implied by the epistemic break with the rationalist principles of liberal education that was introduced by the naturalist philosophical paradigm dominating changes in American education. This break is not necessarily understood by those who are not trained in epistemology and developmental psychology. It is even less understood since Dewey (1902) upheld, in a widely distributed work in particular, *The Child and the Curriculum*, that the ‘old education’ and the ‘new education’ opposed one another like two poles on a continuum, respectively expressing the ‘logical’ and the ‘psychological’ dimensions of the learning process, supposed to represent its outcome and its developing significance. But this postulated continuum obscures the very conditions of meaning and development in rationalist perspectives (see for instance Hirst, 1967/1974). It only retains the naturalist point of view, in which knowledge is anchored

in experience and is supposed to develop in the form of guide for action, through operational understanding:

Now, the value of the formulated wealth of knowledge that makes up the course of study is that it may enable the educator to determine the environment of the child, and thus by indirection to direct. (Dewey, 1902, p. 31)

The epistemic break introduced by the adaptive conception of human development actually explains the above-mentioned separation of mental worlds and, at the same time, the call for education experts to respond to the problems of professionalization, which were perceived to be on the fringes of the teaching of subject-matters. This separation of mental worlds is therefore intellectual before it becomes institutional and is firstly derived from the new philosophical paradigm dominating changes in education. This is why it is also to be found within the teachers' colleges and university education departments. *The College and Teacher Education* report of 1944 attests to this. It mentions 'the critical difference of opinion', the 'conflict of ideas and ideals', or else 'the great divergence of philosophy and methods of works among different departments' so that 'the initial problem of developing a common mind about any specific project [...] was actually so difficult as to prove insurmountable in half of these teachers colleges' (NEA, 1944, pp. 61–64). The report concludes, expressing the spirit of Dewey's thought, that teacher education will not be 'truly meaningful' unless it focuses on 'the typical school, functioning as an organism in its particular environment', and urges subject-matter specialists and educationists to learn to speak the same language and share the same values through, for instance, 'what is called the professionalization of subject-matter' (NEA, 1944, p. 302, 307). This break between academic scholars and teachers' educators as education experts appears a remaining unresolved issue throughout the first half of the twentieth century, as analyzed by Walter Monroe (1952), a teachers' educator and author of textbooks on teaching and educational psychology,²⁵ who concludes: 'the continued criticism of education courses and colleges of education suggests that educationists have not been sufficiently concerned about "selling" their work to their academic colleagues' (Monroe, 1952, p. 420).²⁶

The still marginal influence teacher educators have over changes in education, at the beginning of the 1930s, appears in the observation that

the feeling, too, is growing that those who prepare teachers in colleges should have more voice in determining the amount, nature, and treatment of the liberal or technical subjects taken by prospective teachers, as well as, the strictly professional work. (Evenden, 1933b, p. 75, see also Bullough, 2001, pp. 661–664)

The NEA 1933 report notes in this respect that, in parallel to the very substantial quantitative development of education teachers, linked with that of graduate schools of education, the function of these schools has become much wider than the professional preparation of secondary teachers and school administrators *sensu stricto*. As a consequence, it is suggested that greater involvement from the new professional body (constituted by teachers' educators) in concrete developments in education would be desirable.

An acceleration of changes affecting teacher training actually occurred between the 1920s and 1930s, associated with the dramatic increase in the number of enrollments of students preparing for teaching in normal schools and teachers' colleges (see Figure 2). The consecration of 'education' by universities was marked by the creation of a new specialized degree, that of Doctor of Education, and subsequent institutional developments.²⁷

To summarize, a philosophical paradigm naturalizing the human subject fostered the education principles that dominated changes in American education in the first decades of the twentieth century, which were generally associated with progressive educational perspectives. This philosophical paradigm establishes an epistemic break with the tradition of liberal education which explains the overall separation of issues relating to professionalization from the teaching of subject-matters. When this epistemic break was overlooked, the separation between the mental worlds of education specialists and those of academic scholars appeared to be a product of the action systems developed, due to the professional interests of teachers' educators as education experts. But once the epistemic break in question is taken into account, the fact that the rise of teachers' educators is subsequent to the official consecration of progressive principles in the United States consolidates the interpretive explanation of the social change proposed here. This explanation primarily puts into play the hold of a philosophical paradigm that met the values and ideals of education and political systems' actors.

The expansion of schooling and the reorientation of educational aims in France

When secondary education developed in the 1960s in France, an important body of disciplines devoted to education – sociology, philosophy, psychology and 'education sciences' – already existed, but were on the fringes, in experimental form, of educational practices, and did not relate directly to the preparation of secondary education teachers. As in the American case, a change of the philosophical paradigm dominating transformations in education accompanied the expansion of secondary education and preceded the professional rise of teacher educators.

The redefinition of school missions around the social preparation of new generations justified reforms of the curriculum in France in the 1970s–1980s, when about a quarter of a generation obtained a secondary school diploma. This was the case in the United States over half a century earlier (see [Figure 1](#)). The revision of secondary education's missions prescribed in 1981 by the Legrand (1982) report officialized the endorsement of neo-progressive principles for the education of the new school population. The consequences were that functional, and not intellectual, value was conferred on learning and, correlatively, new education missions in terms of socialization for conduct in life:

In high school, the purpose of teaching a discipline is not to produce scholars; it is to train men, that is, people capable of inserting themselves into a society that is only exceptionally "scholarly" but more generally civil and professional. The teaching of disciplines should therefore be put into a social perspective. Emphasis will be placed on transferable skills and on the usefulness of those skills for social practice. This naturally leads to interdisciplinarity: what is the interest of mathematics, linguistics, physics, and so forth, in the general training of a citizen? What is the interest for the training of a professional? (Legrand, 1982, p. 125)

This report does not carry the same symbolic importance in the historiography of teaching in France as the American CPSE (*Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education*, NEA, 1918). But it can be compared to the CPSE by virtue of its meaning. It offered a definitive official expression of the change in the philosophical paradigm dominating the evolution of education. It was during this period that the professionalization of teachers emerged as an

issue in education policies. These changes – the redefinition of the school's missions and those of teacher training expressing the rise of a new philosophical paradigm over educational thought – appear, as we have seen, to be closely linked to the dynamics of the expansion of schooling.

We can take as an example another official report that prepared the reform of teacher training in France, the Peretti report of 1982. The report describes the move toward a renewal of the objective of the profession justified by the new functional conceptions of education:

The central mission of the public service of education is to prepare young people and adults – no more schoolchildren – to develop their skills to become aware and responsible citizens, capable of living amongst themselves and with people from other countries of the world in a harmonious way, and able to contribute to the development of society. (de Peretti, 1982, p. 38)

The emphasis is placed on certain general aims of education as opposed to the teaching of subject-matters. Besides, the report makes reference to the implicit or explicit belief in the omnipotence of teacher training as a new image of the omnipotence of 'Education'. Therefore, and taking into account the old achievement of the formal dimension of teachers' professionalization, this professionalization movement essentially engaged a new politico-cultural foundation of formal education in France.

A radical critique of the cultural role of the school in France had been developed by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1964, 1970) and others later. The teaching profession was accused of reproducing, by the inculcation of a school culture associated with the dominant social classes, the very inequalities against which it was thought to be fighting.²⁸ It was the time of the triumph of structuralisms and associated relativisms. In this context of strong questioning of the academic model of education, and the development of the problem of failure at school, many and varied neo-progressist teaching approaches were promoted, under the aegis of Freinet or Piaget, and under the banner of 'modern' teaching methods such as active learning, project-based learning, and so forth. These approaches first arrived, in the 1970s, in the former normal schools where primary school teachers were trained.²⁹

The neo-Marxist critique and neo-progressivism drew from a distance from the same philosophical paradigm, which involved, rooted in evolutionist perspectives, an anthropological model of human development. This paradigm, which inspired the human sciences called upon to respond to the problems posed in schools by the expansion of schooling, progressively allowed social acceptance of the fundamental review of the aims of education in favor of a major educational mission centered on citizenship and living together. By making social preparation the prime objective of education, new educational policies promoted by education professionals took education into a specifically political sphere. But, as Labaree (1992) notes based on the American example, the new teaching ideas were presented as axiologically neutral, because they represented the voice of science. Moreover, these ideas met the values and aspirations of actors in the education and political systems, while they fed the rhetoric of education policies which assumed that teaching would now follow the true operational and motivational needs of students' thinking. Education experts therefore occupied privileged positions within decision-making bodies in the field of education. In particular, they participated in committees for the reform of the

education system and supported the neo-progressive educational trends. The development of the French education system from the late 1960s thus reveals the growing influence of the new interpretive frameworks promoted by education experts, which set as the prime aim of education a mission that was no longer driven by the idea of training the mind through the understanding of subject-matters but the whole social personality through situated or experiential forms of understanding.

The driving forces behind the movements for the professionalization of teachers

The historically complementary approaches of Bestor and Labaree emphasize the importance of the role played by the professional interests of teacher educators on the control of the curriculum and teachers' education. But the vast historical perspective offered by observation of the movements for the professionalization of teachers in the United States and in France over the long term allows us to offer a fuller interpretation of the dynamics of social change in play. Firstly, the expansion of schooling appears as a driving factor of the politico-cultural dimension of the professionalization movements studied. It tended to justify the redefinition of formal education's missions according to the yardstick of the philosophical paradigm that dominated the new education sciences. In other words, the authority over education gained by education experts appears to be not so much a consequence of their alliance with education administrators, compared to mere bureaucrat managers, and education officials, or with an intellectual construct, the scientific method, but a deeper consequence of the philosophical paradigm from which education sciences and human sciences in general principally developed. In particular, it is the epistemic break introduced by this paradigm with the rationalist philosophy of the liberal education tradition that explains the marginalization of academic scholars in the movements for the professionalization of teachers. This paradigm dominated education reforms in the major phases of school expansion because it met the values and aspirations of actors in the education and political systems. The naturalism it is based on not only tended to serve as a scientific criterion but also maintained a philosophy of progress promising an agreement of the natural laws of human development with those of social development. Through it, education experts offered – independently of any question of validity from a scientific point of view – a response to the new problem of education posed for schools under the effect of the development of schooling. As the American educator William C. Bagley (1939, p. 331) states, the doctrines espoused by the Progressives were admirably adapted to meet the need of a lowering of standards and relaxation of rigor. American education yielded to 'a quite natural temptation' by making these changes virtues but carried them 'much farther than the situation demanded'.

A confirmation of the impact, on changes in education in the expansion of schooling contexts studied, of the hold of a philosophical paradigm that meets the values and ideals of actors in the education and political systems, could be sought by analyzing concrete cases that have been sufficiently documented. An interesting example in this respect is that of Eliot, the illustrious president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909 and, especially we have seen, the architect of the 1893 Committee of Ten Report, which endorsed the educative ideal of liberal education and the doctrine of mental discipline. Eliot, sometimes presented as 'the champion of the systematic development of reasoning power as the

central function of the schools' (Kliebard, 1986/2004, p. 9), accepted to become in 1919, at the age of 85, the first honorary president of the young Progressive Education Association. Commentators on Eliot's career sometimes note his apparent radical change of mind in the first decade of the twentieth century (Smilie, 2012, p. 67). The American academic and literary critic, Irving Babbitt, may help us understand this change in Eliot's thought, which he interprets as a form of *allegiance to the times*: Eliot and other leaders of the nineteenth century faithfully espoused the dominant naturalistic philosophy. According to the assumptions developed here, this new philosophical paradigm met their values and ideals, in the context of the educational expansion they had to face. Babbitt explains that this naturalistic philosophy inspires forms of humanitarianism which, as opposed to humanism, are interested in the perfection of humanity as a whole above the perfection of individuals and, correlatively, exacerbate the idea of progress in modern thought – ³⁰ a progress, he notes, which was to be obtained 'not by transcending the phenomenal flux but by a surrender to it' (Babbitt 1929, p. 199).

Conclusion

The compared analysis of the movements for the professionalization of teachers in France and the United States during the twentieth century led to the revision of two major perspectives on these movements. It shows that the politico-cultural dimension of the professionalization of teachers, involving the separation of educational issues from the teaching of particular subject-matters, does not wholly represent a rationalization of the educative process fostered by industrialization. It is closely linked with the school expansion, and in this respect reveals a time interval of more than half a century between the two countries, which challenges the functionalist hypothesis of modernization. In addition, the influence of education experts over teacher training is not merely the gradual effect of action rationales driven by professional interests, as conflict theoreticians have supposed. This influence appears to be an intrinsic consequence of the philosophical paradigm that sustains the politico-cultural dimension of professionalization. The domination of this philosophical paradigm over thought on education precedes, in both of the national contexts studied, the rise of the teachers' educators as education experts. As a professional group, they benefit through this philosophical shift from the relative separation of general expertise in education from expertise in subject-matters. One perverse process is that they gained institutional power through an epistemic break with the liberal arts and science programs that constitute the teaching disciplines of the prospective teachers. Therefore, even if the explanation of the social phenomenon in question differs to a certain extent from that offered by conflict theories, the damaging consequence to pedagogy and teacher autonomy remains the same.

The interpretive sociological approach developed here allows the inclusion, in a single explanatory schema, of the forms taken by the teachers' professionalization movements in the United States and in France throughout the twentieth century. According to the proposed explanation, the revision of educational aims, and the consequential rise of education experts, were made possible by the expansion of schooling. This expansion underlies the success of the philosophical paradigm naturalizing the human subject and inspiring the way actors in education and political systems, and civil society as a whole, came to think about education. In particular, the scientific caution of naturalism and the

philosophy of progress it entertains – associating human progress with social progress based on natural laws – tended to engage public adhesion, while those who held back took the risk of being labeled, without any further ado, as being ‘behind the times’ (see Cobb, 1932, p. 27). Without doubt, the present analysis does not tell the whole story of this adhesion. Especially, the naturalist paradigm may better satisfy an unavowed aim of ‘control’ over the thinking of the newly educated populations than the rationalist tradition of liberal education. In any event, the proposed interpretive analysis suggests new directions of explanation taking into account the role played by the political and cultural ideals and the associated philosophical paradigm that, beyond the individual interests of its promoters, explains their commitment to what they perceive as socially desirable. The adaptive conception of intellectual and moral development introduces an epistemic break with the rationalist conceptions previously associated with the idea of liberal education, so that it entails a separation of the mental world of education experts from that of academic scholars. As a consequence, knowledge in education structurally develops independently of the specific requirements of teaching disciplines, with a tendency to put education directly at the service of politico-cultural aims instead of individual cultural and intellectual developments. The major missions of formal education are thus no longer driven by the idea of training the mind through the understanding of subject-matters, but the whole social personality through situated or experiential forms of understanding. Such a shift even justifies the necessity to develop the pedagogical skills of teachers, the paradoxical outcome being a loss of teachers’ autonomy in terms of professional expertise.

Finally, at the source of the emergence of a professional segment, the hold of these ideals over the actors in education and political systems, and over civil society itself, may explain why the paths taken by the education reforms appear to have been inevitable, and inherent to the needs for the adaptation of schooling to modern democratic societies, rather than the questionable fruits of specific interpretive frameworks. The proposed explanation nonetheless combines with the truth contained in each of the other interpretations mentioned. Indeed, it seems undeniable that changes in schooling meet imperatives of modernization, that the perspective opened up by the labor process theory allows us to identify the process of proletarianization of the teaching profession and that the neo-Weberian approaches, which call for action rationales driven by the professional interests of teacher educators and other education experts, highlight an important explanatory dimension of the movements for professionalization in question.

Notes

1. Interpretive sociology (*verstehende Soziologie*) is attached to the version of methodological individualism theorized by Max Weber, who defines sociological explanation on the basis of an ‘interpretive’ understanding, or else, a rational understanding of the subjective meaning of social action. As the neo-Weberian conflict approaches are also attached to methodological individualism, but tend to focus on the instrumental dimension of rationality (social groups’ interests), it is preferable here to preserve the sociological term ‘interpretive’ to differentiate the present approach, based on a broad conception of rationality, which brings into play interpretive systems, and also the axiological dimension of social action.
2. Parsons (1939) rejects the categories of altruism and egotism in the explanation of individual motivations. It is the social role systems intrinsic to the differentiation of professions that are

- supposed to account for the constraint exerted by the social system on motivations, through expectations of others and individual needs for gratification (Parsons, 1951).
3. Labaree's analysis followed the publication of two reports in 1986 (*A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century*, sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and *Tomorrow's Teachers*, issued by The Holmes Group, a consortium of deans of colleges of education from about one hundred leading research universities) advocating the 'professionalization' of teachers in order to overcome problems in American education, as identified in a number of reports during the 1980s, including *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983).
 4. Even if some critics of progressive education had appeared in the 1930s and 1940s (see Bagley, 1939), developments of the 'life adjustment movement', with the publication in 1948 of the *Life Adjustment for Every Youth* official report, appeared to be a final drift of progressivism. The movement was broadly inspired by the 'connectionist' psychology of Edward Thorndike's psychology, which promoted habit formation through task specific training. This drift became a major target for the historian.
 5. What Bestor describes as 'an interlocking directorate' includes three professional groups: the first group is formed by the professors of education in universities, colleges and normal schools; the second group is formed by the superintendents, principals and other local public school administrators and supervisors; the third group is formed by 'experts' and other bureaucrats in the state departments of public instruction and the federal Office of Education (the 'education officials').
 6. Criticisms of Bestor's book were relayed by specialized journals, which tended to point to the lack of scientificity of Bestor's argumentation and to focus on technical details, rather than its basic claims, or its charge against the anti-intellectualist drift in American education, which they supported. They reproached him for not clearly considering the educational needs of the new school populations, which were described as having no academic interest or abilities (see Hand & Sanford, 1953). For elements on the context of the controversy begun by Bestor, see Béreau, 2013; Cochran-Smith et al., 2008; Houston, 1990; Wayne, 2013; Kliebard, 1986/2004.
 7. See for instance Cunningham, 1959; Hand, 1953; Hand & Sanford, 1953; Susky, 1959.
 8. 'an ideological shift from the Socratic concept that knowledge is virtue to the Baconian postulate that knowledge is power; another would be an ideological shift from the other-worldliness of medieval Christianity to the this-worldliness of modern democratic secularism; another would be an ideological shift from the fixed and completed world of Aristotle and Newton to the process world of Darwin and Whitehead' (Cunningham 1959, p. 166).
 9. The basic assumption of the modernization thesis is that

a fundamental trend towards expanding universalism characterizes industrial society. Objective criteria of evaluation that are universally accepted increasingly pervade all spheres of life and displace particularistic standards of diverse groups, intuitive judgments, and humanistic values not susceptible to empirical verification. The growing emphasis on rationality and efficiency inherent in this spread of universalism finds expression in rapid technological progress and increasing division of labor and differentiation generally, as standards of efficiency are applied to the performance of tasks and the allocation of manpower for them. (Blau & Duncan, 1967, p. 429)
 10. See also Bullough (2001) for comments on these two movements.
 11. Between 1890 and 1918, compulsory attendance developed from twenty-seven states to all states, and from a mean age of fourteen years and five months in those states which had such laws in 1900 to a mean age of sixteen years and three months in 1920 (Hofstadter, 1962, p. 326). In France, the 28 March 1882 law on primary education introduced compulsory schooling for all children between the ages of six and thirteen, except for students obtaining the primary school certificate at the age of eleven. Compulsory schooling was then extended to the age of fourteen by the 9 August 1936 law. Finally, the order of 6 January 1959 took the end of compulsory schooling to the age of 16 for children who were six years old on or after 1 January 1959.

12. The first teacher associations were the Western Literary Institute, the College of Professional Teachers and the American Institute of Instruction. The most important of them is the National Teachers Association which appeared in 1857 and became the National Educational Association in 1870. In the second half of the eighteenth century, organizations of institutions also appeared such as, for instance, various regional associations of colleges and secondary schools. The American Normal School Association appeared in 1858 and became the Normal School Department of the National Educational Association in 1870 (Cremin, 1953a).
13. The report swings between the two meanings, identified here as formal and politico-cultural, of professionalization.
14. In 1915, Rollo Walter Brown (1915, chap. 7), a Harvard professor of literature, estimated that the training of young French secondary school graduates (baccalaureate level) was comparable to that of young Americans who had spent two years in higher education. Moreover, based on a survey he conducted, he assessed that US teachers of the first years of secondary school had on average only spent a few days in higher education whereas French teachers teaching at an equivalent level had spent more than three years in higher education. The average difference in academic preparation between American and French high school teachers could therefore be estimated to be the equivalent of five years of studies.
15. Prior to the creation of the IUFMs in 1989, the academic preparation of secondary school teachers was only completed by a year of internship.
16. Which grouped approaches as varied as movements for manual and professional training, for the measurement of intelligence, for student activity and child-centered education, for social efficiency, and so forth. A very extensive historiography is associated with the development of educational progressivism in the United States, of which we retain only a few key elements here.
17. In this more recent article Labaree (2005) is interested in the period studied by Bestor but, by overestimating the oppositions in play within the progressive movement, and arguing a victory of administrators over educationists, he does not sufficiently take into account the in-depth work of the philosophical paradigm in which the whole progressive movement is rooted.
18. For a critical appraisal see Bulle (2018).
19. 'For nearly a generation there has been a steady conflict between the academic tradition and an emerging insistence upon an education which focuses in the core of current life experiences. The former educates by advancing the systematic disciplines in the grasp of the new generation, while the latter sees knowledge as functions and the organization of knowledge as unique for each learner, appropriate to the course of his own experience' (Evenden, 1933a, p. 466).
20. The opposition is linked to the Academic-Direct life issue considered above: 'the latter having mainly to do with the question of where the content of the educative process shall focus, while this issue concerns itself primarily with method and attitude in the teacher-pupil, mature-immature, relationship' (Evenden, 1933a, p. 478).
21. 'Educators have not taken seriously enough the naturalistic view of the individual which has been prevalent in educational psychology of the past quarter century. They cling to the belief in an inner nature more or less independent of the interacting natural scene in which the individual is a part, and so long as they cling to it they fail to get a clear picture of the dependence of the personality of the individual upon his social, cultural surroundings' (Evenden, 1933a, p. 491).
22. The other oppositions taken into consideration are: Science-Philosophy; Traditional individualism-Socialization and Heredity-Environment.
23. To other analysts of the period, 1907 is the symbolic pivotal year, with the publication of the Committee of Seventeen report on the professional preparation of high school teachers, and with the 1907 conference of the National Education Association where views regarding the logical versus psychological development of subject-matters were opposed (see Bolton, 1907; Brooks, 1907; Bullough, 2001, pp. 658-660; Monroe, 1952, p. 203).

24. This separation led, Lawrence Cremin (1962, p. 176) writes ‘to an inexorable divorce from the arts and sciences that tore asunder the teacher preparing function of the university and increasingly insulated the work of the pedagogical faculty’; ‘Unfortunately’, writes Hofstadter (1962, p. 338), ‘as Cremin has observed, the schools of education and the teachers’ colleges grew up with a high degree of autonomy. Increasingly, the mental world of the professional educationist became separated from that of the academic scholar’.
25. It is to be noted that even if Monroe presents his work as driven by an eclectic philosophical orientation, he is heavily inspired by the functionalist educational ideas dominating his times: ‘It is only through engaging in [...] activities that the child learns. The teacher cannot communicate skills, ideas, facts, principles, and ideals directly to the student; knowledge is not transferred from a textbook to the learner’s mind’ (Monroe, 1927, p. 2).
26. The survey led by James Koerner (1963) based on the analysis of many reports, curricula, and the conducting of interviews, attests to the ideological and institutional separation that existed between education experts and liberal arts and sciences scholars.
27. Strong movement appeared after the Second World War toward the regulation of the professional preparation of teachers through the development of instances of support and control at national level. Following the six-volume report of the National Survey of the Education of Teachers by the US Office of Education in 1933, the *Major issues in Teacher Education* report was published (Smith, 1938) by the American Council on Education and, as a result, the Commission on Teacher Education was created, which began to work in 1938 on *The College and Teacher Education* report proposed in 1944. In 1946, thirty-five state education associations organized commissions or committees on teacher education and professional standards and the National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards was created, as was the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in 1948, and the *Journal of Teacher Education* was first published in 1950 (Peik, 1950, p. 14), see also Monroe (1952) and Koerner (1963).
28. The memoirs of the Minister of Education, René Haby, justifying his decisions concerning the reform of the junior high school (the ‘college’ in France) into a single institution, show that the latter constituted, for him, a response to the accusation made to the school of reproducing itself, see Haby (1981).
29. See on this subject Billard (2013, chap. 1).
30. The idea of progress throughout Darwin’s work can undoubtedly shed light on the value placed on progress, and its literal promotion in ‘progressivism’.

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