The Representations of Educational Change

Las representaciones del cambio educativo

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Abstract

This article explores the conceptual limits that the dominant metaphors of educational change impose upon us, and their intimate connection to representations of educational change. It analyzes two prominent educational change representations. One representation captures educational change in movement, and employs notions such as cycles, waves, tendencies and ruptures. The other expresses the relationship between stability and change, and illustrates its paradoxical nature by declaring its commitment to transformation, but without breaking through the boundaries of the *status quo*. The purpose is to reconsider the emancipating intentions of the critical proposals, relating modernist images of progress and change with post-structuralist and postmodern categories.

Key words: Educational change, representation, social regulation

Resumen

Este artículo explora los límites conceptuales que las metáforas dominantes del cambio educativo nos imponen y su íntima vinculación con las representaciones del cambio educativo. Se analizan dos representaciones predominantes. Una representación captura el cambio educativo en movimiento y se sirve de nociones como ciclos, olas, tendencias y rupturas. La otra expresa la relación entre estabilidad y cambio y pone de manifiesto su naturaleza paradójica, declarando su compromiso con la transformación, pero sin traspasar las fronteras del *status quo*. El propósito es reinscribir las intenciones emancipatorias de las propuestas críticas relacionando imágenes modernistas del progreso y del cambio con categorías postestructuralistas y postmodernas.

Palabras clave: Cambio educativo, representación, regulación social.

Introduction

In the public imagination, there are two perceptions of educational change that stand out most strongly, and from my point of view, it is these two that have the most prominent role in creating representations of educational change. The denouncement of proposing reiterative transformations is often put into the mouth of educators. Promoters and students of educational change, for their part, often report that their efforts for improvement, or their efforts to think about improvement, are unsuccessful, and have a limited impact on educational institutions. For David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995) the feeling of *déjà vu* is so common among educators that it cannot be dismissed when considering educational change. Among scholars, Larry Cuban (1993: 2) made famous his metaphor of the hurricane, which revealed the weak impact innovations have in the field of classroom practice, while mobilizing the rhetoric of change and stimulating the imagination.

What grounds are there for these two perceptions? And what representations express educational change? Behind these questions hides the concern about looking for better-founded and more-sophisticated evidence for innovation in educational institutions, as well as interest in reflecting on the conceptual limits imposed by constructs and images used to capture the change. Considering this new interest, one can understand the correction made by Larry Cuban (1993), creator of the hurricane metaphor. Reflecting on the preconceptions that guided his study on the influence of "student-centered learning" in the traditional practices of "teacher-centered teaching," he recognizes that his hurricane metaphor—which captured an image of surface change, but stability in the depths of teaching—was based mainly on second-hand evidence, and there had not been considered data on the possible impact the improvement programs might have on teacher-training in the schools. This empirical weakness led him to investigate the relationship between the way teachers taught and the intentions of the reform promoted during this century in the USA. His research question was twofold: he wanted to know how teachers and professors had been taught during the twentieth century in that country, and what changes had been produced in the classroom during this period

(1993: 3). To his surprise, he found that teachers had been incorporating innovations into their practice, recreating them, adapting them according to their circumstances. In this way, they had been configuring, in the form of pedagogical hybrids, ways of teaching that were gradually moving away from teacher-centered teaching, and adopting peculiar forms of student-centered learning, thanks to the reconstruction that teachers had made of the innovative proposals.[1]

- One representation captures the various forms adopted by innovations in motion. This representation is closely related to the perception of the repetition of educational change.

- The other representation shows the relationships between stability and change, and is connected with the perception of the vulnerability of the reforms in educational institutions.

The representation of educational change in motion

The representation of educational change in motion is linked to the perception of the recurrence of educational change, and uses a type of metaphor and conceptual categories that capture the various forms of innovations in school when they are considered as phenomena in motion, and when there prevails their fluid and dynamic character. These are useful for giving expression to the combination and succession of events, their pauses and accelerations. To capture this type of qualities associated with educational change in motion, there have been applied concepts such as cycles, waves, trends, and more recently, ruptures.

The metaphor of *waves*[2] is taken from the notion used by Alvin Toffler (1993) to express social change. It gives the idea of a period of relative calm moved by a specific force of change, which has consequences lasting for an interval and which loses force when the next innovative wave comes in. One of the most notorious examples of its application is found in the US reforms of the eighties and nineties. The first wave portrays the movement of the return to basics set in motion by the Republican administrations at the beginning of the eighties, and the second wave, that of restructuring.[3]

The most widespread image is that of *cycles*.[4] The cycles are much more than an image. They constitute one of the most persistent ways of representing the metaphor of growth, which is associated with evolutionist notions of progress. The notion of cycle is taken from the idea of the life cycle of living things, and reflects change as a predetermined progression of social phenomena from birth to extinction. A cycle is the trajectory of change that is natural to a being (Nisbet, 1976: 221). It is evident that it promotes a recurring vision of innovation with a clearly unchanging message: of return to the starting point and of constant repetition of an already-predicted trajectory. It captures the double phenomenon of disappearance and quests for rational explanations for their repetition (Cuban, 1990).

In the history of educational change in the US this phenomenon is observed in the alternation of the reforms focused on equality and excellence, which has been reflected in the request for common or diversified curriculums (Cuban, 1995). Such cycles of innovations survive because the tensions between the two ideals are continuous, connected with conflicting social values rooted in deeper contradictions that exist between the practices of the market economy and the ideals of democracy. What explains the cyclical nature is the relationship that educational change maintains with political talk, which is a reflection of the modification of points of view in public opinion and of their alternation. Periodically certain slogans come to the surface, because the cycles of change seem to be an inevitable result of the conflicts of values and interests in a democratic system of school government (Tyack and Cuban, 1995: 42). The cycles are part of the rhetoric of reform that acts as an intellectual and cultural organizer to define the present and project hopes for the future. This connection explains the present success of conservative discourses to link up with the aspirations and anxieties of individuals and social groups confused by the uncertainty of these times, especially of families worried about ensuring the professional success of their children in a social situation of job insecurity (Kenway, 1993; Apple, 1996b). It is a success that not only is being directly expressed through the promotion of excellence, that is, the concern about increased academic requirements and control policies, but also it is allowed to be felt more in a latent manner in certain innovations that have doubtful consequences, such as efforts related to decentralization or teacher-training (Rodriguez Romero, 1998).

But while innovations reappear, they do so in different socio-historical contexts, and this peculiarity of the scene comes to invalidate the persistent perception of a lack of novelty in the proposed changes. Thus, it becomes necessary to resort to other types of images that have been used more recently to capture the broader rhythms of change and to observe the connections between the "spontaneous dynamics of change in teaching" and premeditated efforts for innovation linked to political rhetoric.

The notion of *trend* helps situate recurring innovations in the specific context in which they reappear. Using the idea of the trend, the trajectory of reform in the public school need not be expressed either as an inevitable evolution or as a collection plagued with repetitions; it can be expressed as an interaction between long-range institutional trends and political rhetoric that creates new labels for recurrent messages (Tyack and Cuban, 1995). When innovations are exclusively linked with official reform periods, the cyclical quality of change can be exaggerated, and the gradual and spontaneous volume of change can be dismissed (Tyack and Cuban, 1995: 45). This is palpable when one observes that the incidence of changes in teaching is perceived in a most variable manner when these are legitimized by the rhetoric of reform. Thus we have cases of relatively-silent reforms, such as coeducation, which have brought momentous changes; or modest changes that have been installed in the heart of the school and have not been perceived as innovations, but form part of the school scenario. This

happened with the blackboard, and now, audiovisual media are following a similar route.

If cycles are situated in relation to the social and institutional history of schooling, it can be seen that frequently education has been obligated to deal with conflicting purposes such as socialization in obedience or in critical thinking, teaching academic knowledge or practical skills, cooperation or competitiveness, basic skills or creativity and higher-level thinking, focusing on the academic basis or allowing choice of contents (Tyack and Cuban, 1995).[5] But the struggle between opposing purposes has been unequal. Almost always, certain options have been facilitated by the social and institutional context of tradition, and others, by contrast, have had to oppose a systematic silencing. To speak of contradiction might suggest that the struggles to define educational changes are produced at the same level; however, a vision of unstable equilibrium between conflicting options is not consistent with the way education is set up. For example, saying that in secondary education there has been a continuing tension between two litigant ideologies: democracy and free market, is to say that by promoting participation or elevating quality, Tyack and Cuban forget that the first trend has faced hierarchies of social excellence already established, together with ways of perceiving knowledge that are in the marrow of the scholastic institution; and that the trend toward comprehensive secondary education is a relatively-recent achievement which is again being threatened by conservative reforms and their insistence on the evaluation of performance accreditation systems,[6] the fruit of interest in maintaining the tactics of selection that guaranteed a limited access of students to the most-valued educational areas or to those educational institutions with better reputations.

The precariousness of some of the options at stake is something that, somehow, those above-mentioned authors recognize, when they point out that both in conservative governments and democratic ones there is more agreement in the educational program than in other areas of policy making—something which is also pointed out by Ernest House (1995), and in the United Kingdom, by Saville Kushner (1997). For example, the Democrats also advocate raising standards and offering a choice of school—change practices located in the discourse community of excellence (Rodriguez Romero, 1998). In Spain, the pillars for proposing similar measures started to be imposed by the last Socialist governments, for example in their actions on the subject of evaluation and school management. In the United Kingdom, Tony Blair's neolaborist government is not only maintaining Conservative-devised strategies like the participation of inspectors from the business world in the supervision of educational institutions (Kushner, 1998), but also, in trying to locate ideologically its educational policy, does not seem to question the predominance of tactics that abound in neoliberal ways of addressing educational issues, and only one initiative, "Education Action Zones" can be considered as representative of what has occurred in the so-called "third way" (Power and Whitty, 1999).[7] Some comparative studies of the last educational reforms in several of the world's Anglo-Saxon countries display a shared tendency toward dismantling centralized bureaucracies and replacing them with school proposals having a strong presence of the choice of school by families and

competition among different types of schools to allure them. These reforms have been and are being promoted and supported both by conservative governments and social conservatives and socialists, and although there are clear differences between the countries, it can be appreciated in a general way that, despite the rhetoric, these are contributing to increasing inequality between schools (Whitty, Power and Halpin, 1998).

With these data, it seems difficult to classify the recent educational policies as ideologically consistent, and it makes sense to consider the weakness of certain proposals for changes to promote the intentions they declare rhetorically, because of the enforced invisibility or silencing of certain aspects that go unnoticed, but are those responsible for the reinforcement of previous trends, which along general lines, favor the more well-to-do in society. For example, this inertia can be appreciated by analyzing in detail the centro-peripheral trends of change and problem-solving. Careful analysis shows that the underlying assumptions of both lines of innovation approach, in their understanding of change, more than might be noted at first glance. Consequently, they agree to limit the possibilities of change "[...] through a process of organizing the existing biases designed to legitimize certain priorities, states and privileges that exist at the heart of the institutions (Popkewitz, 1988: 164).

The notion of trend shows that institutional development in education can have its own internal dynamics only loosely connected with the periods of intense attention to education which we call periods of school reform (Tyack and Cuban, 1995: 45). Considering this, David Tyack (1990) holds that the development of American schools seems more linear and consistent than the changes in the rhetoric might suggest. And, he says, precisely the trends that are inferred from the statistics go against the principles proclaimed today as slogans of the reform called restructuring.[8] His study on trends in the development of the US school shows that these seem to contradict the very principles of restructuring:

- It is said that control of the school should be decentralized and people should be more involved in school governance. However, the historical mainstream has moved exactly in the opposite direction. There has been more talk about decentralization of urban schools in the past three decades than real changes in practice. Decentralization often becomes another layer of bureaucracy with little commitment on the part of the people.

- There is a desire to make schools smaller, more intimate, but the number of students per school has risen more than sixfold in the last half of the 20th century.

- Some reformers want to restructure curriculum and instruction so that students would focus in more depth, on fewer subjects. This goes against the trend of more than a century of curriculum differentiation to fit the supposed skills, and later, the destinations of students, especially in junior high school. The number

of subjects and specialties has multiplied in the first 50 years of the twentieth century.

- There is a desire to reduce administration at the intermediate level, along with bureaucratic work, but these jobs have been expanding.

- Reformers say that teachers are the heart of the educational enterprise; however, for some decades, the increasing number of principals, support staff and inspectors has stopped the relative growth of teachers, who in 1950 constituted 70% of all staff, but in 1986, made up only 53%.

Given this disparity between institutional trends and proposals for restructuring, there are two positions (Tyack, 1990). One position would consider such a divergence as evidence of the need for radical change; one might suppose that the direction education has taken is fundamentally wrong, and the disparity would show the flaws in the public school and the need for reforms such as those asserted by restructuring. The contrary position is more cautious in assessing the meaning of the divergence mentioned, and would view with skepticism the possibility of developing a fundamental change, considering how the trends have persisted despite attempts to alter the character of the school.

The notion of *rupture* allows capturing those configurations of educational change that do not fit the image of relative continuity and propensity towards certain ends contained in the notion of trend. *Rupture* allows us to represent change as a breakdown in previous practices, which reveals a new type of rationality, its multiple effects and its diverse contexts of incidence. The emphasis on ruptures reflects a change of focus in disciplines related to history as the history of ideas, philosophy, science, thought and literature. In these fields of study, attention has shifted from the analysis of continuities and uniform demonstrations, to the search for discontinuities.

> Beneath the great continuities of thought, under manifestations massive and homogeneous of a spirit or a collective mentality, beneath the stubborn future of a science fiercely striving to exist and to finish itself off from the beginning, under the persistence of a genre, a form, a discipline, a theoretical activity, now it is all about detecting the incidence of interruptions (Foucault, 1995: 5).

In these disciplines, now the focus is on "How can we specify the different concepts that allow us to think of discontinuity (threshold, rupture, mutation, transformation)?" (Foucault, 1995: 8). This is because the discontinuous no longer plays "the role of an external fatality that must be reduced, but of a working concept that is used" (1995: 14).

In the field of educational change, the notion of rupture has been used by Thomas Popkewitz (1994a: 236) to expose the ties of educational reform with broader social dynamics, including it within the range of instruments used by the state for social regulation, and reiterating a social epistemology in which are presented the concepts and practices of schooling as social patterns established throughout

history. Within this conceptual characterization, change is fundamental as a break in the epistemological and institutional practices of schooling. Change appears in the mix of structured relationships developed at different speeds in different institutions, so that it is manifested unevenly, but connected, in different sectors of education and social systems. Thomas Popkewitz takes from Wittgenstein (1953.1966 in Popkewitz, 1994a: 41) the idea that structural relations are like a thread made up of fibers, whose strength lies in their interweaving. This image allows him to capture the plural guidelines of change and argue that the keys to the study of reform "are in the overlapping relationships that occur when many fibers are intertwined" (1994a: 239). By using this key concept, he endeavors to avoid the ideas of progress, intention or teleology in the formulation of educational theories. According to his analysis, mass schooling is the fundamental reform of modernity, and has been institutionalized for the last 200 years, during which the State has assumed the tasks of socialization and education in response to ruptures which took place in patterns of production and social reproduction.

> The formation of the school carried with it the joint appearance of a series of semiautonomous practices whose result was a break with past practices. There appeared teacher-training, modern pedagogy, school organization and educational sciences, combined with those material developments that produce the unique characteristics associated with mass education: textbooks, blackboards, hierarchical structuring of staff and the emergence of an occupation according to gender. The establishment of mass schooling was not inevitable, nor was it a natural product of a singular progressive development. The study of school reform must address the ruptures in relationships between the various elements of schooling, and society and its reform, and also the level to which curriculum and teacher-training are associated with secular ideas of moral education and labor socialization. In this sense, the relations between the various elements of the reform camp confer on the reform its meaning as social practice (Popkewitz, 1994a: 35).

The notion of rupture challenges the idea of evolutionary progress at the heart of the notion of change in education. It also allows the avoidance of chronological analysis of educational change and the tracking of multiple rhythms in the transformations that occur, for example, in the process of schooling and teacher-training (1994a: 40 and 41). This way of understanding the dynamics of educational change as revealed by studying the reform of teacher education has shown that, in studying teacher-training as a form of social regulation, substantial changes are seen in various areas of education. It can be seen that state institutions and professionals have created new mechanisms to assess, certify and monitor institutional models and the practices of educators. There have been changes in legislation, institutions, certification, and there have been created new departments of education. From this perspective, the forms of schooling, teacher-training and the science of education constitute regionally-organized multiple procedures and rules that order and regulate how one should contemplate the world, and how one should act (Popkewitz, 1994a).

To identify the projection which the image of rupture can have on the understanding of changes in education, we can draw on the above characterization by Popkewitz (1994a), as I have explained it. His characterization links the social and epistemological breaks that contributed to the delineation of schooling with the role of the State in the management of social affairs. Taking this point of reference, the social, economic, cultural and epistemological transformations of the late twentieth century would lead more than one author or writer to characterize the tensions which, due to the influence of these changes, the school was experiencing, as a rupture; or at least, would put more emphasis on the discontinuities observed in what appears to persist. Thus could be interpreted the progressive disengagement of the State concerning social and educational affairs and the increasing merchandizing of education which convert families into consumers, schools into marketing experts and identifies educational activity into management. There are authors who see the new forms of schooling and the tensions brought to education by the more general changes as a reflection of postmodernity (Kenway, 1993; Hargreaves, 1996). Others, more cautious, maintain that the changes are more superficial than might be expected, and therefore, the continuities are as striking as the discontinuities, although the forms of capital accumulation have changed, and limited changes have occurred in patterns of cultural and social differentiation (Whitty, 1997: 125).

The search for discontinuities seems to oppose the perceived stability of the school held by promoters and students of educational change, which is associated with images and conceptual categories used to represent the relationship between permanence and change.

The representation of dynamic stability/change

The representation of the relationship between stability and change is closely related to the perception of the vulnerability of reforms in educational institutions, which is routinely expressed by using the previously-mentioned metaphor of the hurricane. The study of stability has been habitually absent from the debate on educational change. Thomas Popkewitz (1983a: 1) lamented the scant attention paid to stability in this way:

> [...] While the current of organizational change and the countless efforts of the agents of change provide a rhetoric of progress, we are left with the conservation of the existing order, and we have little theory and fewer empirical studies to explain the stability that surrounds the fervor of change.

To him, it was clear that if alterations and conservation, while social dynamics, were presented in an interrelated manner, the processes of educational change also should be contemplated in consideration of their convergence. Larry Cuban (1992), much more recently, wondered why change and stability, being linked in individuals and institutions, could not be united in the school, and why the possibility of stable changes could not be considered. From his point of view one can speak of a continuum between externally-generated changes and those others that belong to emerging trends of schools and teachers themselves. Jean

Rudduck (1994: 387) considers that the conservative nature of the institutions and their reluctance to adopt reforms that may be only temporary educational fads may not be so negative, but it is problematic that the same type of resistance should be applied to reasonable, relevant and legitimate innovations. From Rudduck's point of view, the power of school culture and of the classroom to adapt, accept and reject innovations that conflict with the structures and values dominating the school culture has been underestimated; so that superficial changes are introduced with a certain ease, while changes in deep structures meet with obstacles.

Some authors have begun to explore the links that permit us to relate constancy and change in educational institutions. Here are some of their contributions.

Larry Cuban (1993: 14-15) has pointed out certain elements or characteristics that promote stability:

- Cultural beliefs concerning knowledge, teaching and learning shaped by Western civilization are so widely spread and so deeply rooted that they direct the thinking of politicians, practitioners, families and citizens toward certain forms of education, while excluding others.[9]

- Scholastic practices function by socializing and classifying students in certain socioeconomic substrata, preventing the interaction of groups with differing expectations and beliefs. The predominant beliefs are taught to children from other cultures and social backgrounds, with the aim of transforming them into citizens. Those that predominate are the ones that promote conformity, productivity and other beliefs that favor minimal participation in social and economic organizations.

- Politicians often have had no interest in implementing the reforms they have rhetorically supported.

- The organizational structures of educational administration, the school and the classroom shape teachers' practices. Barry MacDonald (1997: 24 and 25) relates an example, taken from the development of comprehensive education in England, of institutions' neutralizing the power of change. The mission of the School Council to develop comprehensive education was supposed to prepare the extension of the scholastic period by making the curriculum and teaching practice more attractive and more relevant to the life of the average student (the most liberal interpretation of the subject, thematic integration about human subjects, learning based on research, student-centered approach). This purpose was frustrated not by the conservatism of teachers, but by that of their own institutions and governing bodies.

- The cultures of teaching that have developed within the workplace promote stability in classroom practices. Along with other reasons, teachers put into practice what they experienced as students, and procedures often constitute a

safeguard against the immediacy and unpredictability of the events unfolding in the classroom.

To Elliot Eisner (1992: 210 *et seq*), schools are robust institutions, and this quality is a factor of stability. What characteristics confer that strength?

- Professional roles in school are almost eternal. Teachers constitute the only profession that is socialized from the time the child is five or six years old, when schooling begins. The images of teaching are internalized very early. And after training in a new image of teaching, going back to school has a conservational effect. The possibilities of replacing old ideals are neutralized.

- Subjection to familiar pedagogical routines, both in management and in contents, provides a source of security and an economy of effort for teachers. Both are important values, and this is produced by exclusively using known repertoires.

- The persistence of school norms is proverbial. Rule changes are needed to attain other values. If you sincerely want to change issues of intellectual development, cultivate awareness, enhance imagination, you must change the priorities. But since people usually want to solve these problems by "the adoption of the curriculum", these mechanistic approaches are doomed to failure.

- Teachers' isolation avoids the possibility of being viewed by peers. The lack of peer interaction prevents the teachers from finding out what they don't know. This isolation encourages the lack of alternatives and reproduction. Since teachers are not aware of these features of their own actions, they are not in a position to change them.[10]

- The barriers between disciplines and among teachers reinforce this isolation. One of the most problematic aspects of school organization is that it is structurally fragmented. The teaching of separate subjects not only makes it difficult to perceive the connections between these subjects, but also isolates the faculty. The most emblematic example is that of the Balkanized cultures (Hargreaves, 1996).

- The inadequacy of in-service training, stubbornly set upon the use of reactive models with a strong presence of experts, leads to forgetting that feedback needs to be focused on the actor and his/her context. What tends to happen, however, is that training is decontextualized, and so its potential is lost, and so is the possibility of directly observing the teachers.

- The distance between reformers or support staff and teachers to implement change, due to the use of top-down plans and a lack of contexts for interaction and more egalitarian exchange is a persistent problem (Sarason, 1993). It is carried out with standard models and standard programs for students, and then

centralized decisions are needed. Veteran teachers exercise passive resistance for two reasons. On the one hand, and first, because the reforms come and go every five or six years in a manner more visible in the media than in the classroom. On the other, once the classroom door is closed, schooling is a private matter. For their part, the support staff exaggerate their expertise, and instead of working more closely with teachers and supporting their role, they aggrandize themselves by acting as an instrument of external reforms (Rodriguez Romero, 1996).

- Giving power to teachers is related with giving them greater autonomy. But it is not clear that many teachers are interested in being trained to assume more responsibilities. Many educators get their most important satisfaction in the classroom, and are not particularly interested in doing research or collaboration. Moreover, it is hardly surprising that they have no wish to take responsibility and power without having exercised these before.[11] Policies of reform and innovation programs introduced as a novelty are usually added to the list of tasks already performed by the faculty. It seems unrealistic to intensify demands on teachers. To provide them with a respite, a major change is required, and this probably requires more money; but it is happening precisely at a time of cost-cutting in regard to social services. The training thus becomes more a matter of rhetoric than practice. Therefore, if we associate the latest initiatives of change, i.e. restructuring, with the allocation of financial resources, their power is neutralized. Recent interest in giving teachers a genuine role in school reform is far from clear. Particularly dubious is that this can change local policy, taking responsibility for the consequences. What is more, research on such initiatives has demonstrated, first, that in the call for teacher empowerment, what is conspicuously absent is precisely that empowerment (Garman, 1995) and, second, that greater autonomy is often accompanied by control mechanisms with contradictory consequences (Gimeno, 1994).

- The conservationist role of the school regarding social values and practices built into the very nature of the institution is an impediment to genuine change. This tendency is reinforced because the expectations of families and students are often very traditional. This conservative influence can be increased if families are therefore regarded as just educational consumers.

David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995: 85) have used the analogy of grammar to explain the persistence of school practices. The practices of the graded school arrange educational institutions in a way analogous to the way grammar organizes meaning in verbal communication.[12] Neither the grammar of schooling nor the grammar of speech needs to be consciously understood in order to be used. A great part of the grammar of schooling is taken as the natural way schools must be.[13] It is precisely the "exit" or withdrawal of customs and rules of schooling that attracts attention. Once the grammar is established, it persists because it enables teachers to perform their obligations in a predictable manner and to deal with everyday tasks without problems.

There have been tried some innovations, by which to challenge the structures and rules that constitute the grammar of the school. Some of the changes proposed have been (1995: 87):

- the nongraded school;

- the use of time, space, the number of students, the courses as flexible resources to diversify the uniformity of class periods, the size of classrooms and the breaking down of barriers between the disciplines.[14]

In the judgment of Tyack and Cuban (1995), the idiosyncratic nature of these proposals has caused them to have a very limited impact, but for better or worse, their influence still lingers—not only because of the validity of some of the proposals on which they were based,[15] but also because the legacy has been renewed in practice. While most of these experiences may appear to be islands in the array of a standardized educational system, some of them are successfully spreading, and are being configured efficiently as coalitions of schools that share certain procedural principles. This is the case of the *Essential Schools* in the USA.[16]

In Tyack and Cuban's view (1995), what has allowed the retention of the grammar of the school is less a conscious conservatism, than as lack of reflection on the institutional habits and widespread cultural beliefs regarding what constitutes a "real school". However, that common view of what a school is, as already mentioned when discussing the current situation of change in the UK and USA, has been instrumentalized by the governments of both countries to promote reforms of a clearly conservative dye (MacDonald, 1997). This naturalization of the graded school has been helped along by the kind of organization of educational institutions that provides a standardized way of processing a large number of people and that makes the grammar highly replicable (Tyack and Cuban 1995: 107).

Is it possible to break through the rules of the grammar of the school? For these authors, change in the basic organizational patterns requires not simply adding new routines to teachers' work, but replacing the traditional patterns and convincing families, students and citizens that change is good. Public participation in reform can be seen as a source of conflict and a threat to teachers' professional autonomy. However, in a democracy, reforms that seek to alter the cultural constructions of the "real school" cannot be accomplished without a great deal of public dialogue.

Certain initiatives for change require special mention, in spite of the fact that in the opinion of these authors, they have been quite successfully implanted. Corrective pedagogies, proceeding from the principles of the New School, which launched new teaching techniques for designing learning environments according to children's needs and interests, transformed the space-time categories into those which developed teaching and shifted it into the specificity of childhood postulated by Rousseau, converting it into one of the key elements of the new perception and

construction of the present-day subject: the psychological subject (Varela, 1995). Corrective pedagogies are the origin of what is known as psychological pedagogies, which have become widespread during the twentieth century, and have been responsible for the creation of new forms of social regulation or exercise of power reflected in changes in scholastic socialization. In contrast with disciplinary pedagogies, these are characterized by a weak external control, but an increasingly-stronger internal control not residing in the organization and detailed planning of the medium, but in following scientific guidelines according to the stages of child development, presumably of universal application. The control mechanisms teachers use are more subtle, and analyze students with increasingly-sophisticated codes, under the premise of a climate of less direction and more creativity. As Julia Varela goes on to explain (1995:182): "Faced with disciplinary power, characteristic of traditional pedagogies, psychopower, characteristic of psychological pedagogies, is based on technologies whose application implies a relationship that makes students much more dependent and manipulable as they become more liberated". She continues (1995: 185): "Given the outcome of individualism—the result of technologies of disciplinary power—in which the subject had to make of him/herself a competitive and ambitious being, and become successful "thanks to his/her own abilities and merits', narcissism—the result of technologies of psychopower—would belong to subjects devoted to the conquest and care of themselves, in the pursuit of wealth and inner peace." Ultimately, these changes affect the perception and construction of the world, of knowledge, and of the subjects, and have meant momentous changes in their own worldview and identity, bringing with them the loss of a sense of history and historical memory, and of the loss of identity as oneself facing identity as "I": "The current subject belongs to a society in which political passions have disappeared, decisions have been psychologized and bureaucratized, the standard of living comes before the quality of life, where not only children but adults too have become 'egocentric' beings" (Varela, 1995: 188).

The analysis of stability and change must include the way the latter has been and is now conceptualized. Borrowing the analogy of David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995), we can say that the grammar of the school not only survives, but also that there is maintained the grammar of innovation. As Elliot Eisner (1992) has shown, persistence in the inappropriate use of mechanistic and evolutionary metaphors for thinking about the process of school reform preserves a restricted concept of innovation, and impedes genuine change. Behind the persistence of that image is hidden the exclusive concern for improving the functioning of institutions, because it is well understood that social and educational achievements are now those that are appropriate (Popkewitz, 1994a). The change is interpreted solely in terms of:

> [...] manipulation of the internal mechanisms of the system with a view to achieving a permanent agreement and the legitimation of the organization [...]. The act of change becomes mere activity and movement at the heart of the existing relationships within the school. Social outcomes must maintain the *status quo* by creating the illusion that the activity is actually change (Popkewitz, 1988: 128).

The contradiction between the myth of rationality governing the school and its operation in practice brings with it a crisis of legitimacy, which leads educational institutions constantly to seek ways of maintaining the public's faith in the institutional processes and in the stability and consensus of the educational enterprise. For this reason, reforms become important for scholastic action. Rituals serve to restore normalcy and legitimacy of existing patterns. Acts of reform enable people to "see" that schools respond to social demands for reliable and rational treatment and orderly processes (Popkewitz, 1983b). This way of understanding change as social technology has paradoxical consequences that lead to immobility while claiming progress, as Thomas Popkewitz revealed (1983a).

In analyzing the grammar of innovation, we must recognize that, like pedagogy, educational change is situated within the discourses of social regulation. That is, it has served and serves to accompany state practices directed toward reforming, disciplining and "educating" social groups. For that reason, considering the regulatory aspects of educational change turns out to be a key issue for understanding the weakness of the forms of educational change expressed as a reply to prevailing educational and social forms. This is a problem that has been revealed thanks to the "heretical" analysis authors have made of critical and feminist discourses, and of the context of their institutionalization. Jennifer Gore (1996) has clearly shown that programs of emancipation are more vulnerable because their "redemptive" purposes are developed in institutional settings and through practices embedded in the dominant modes of conceiving and applying pedagogy.

The grammar of innovation has impeded the analysis of the problem of power and the reproduction of the relations it produces. Social relationships in the school have been expressed as independent of political, social and cultural processes, and there has been adopted, regarding the aims of the education system, a neutral position that has masked the values and consequences related to education as a social institution (Popkewitz 1988: 181). The question of power begins to be considered crucial by authors from different backgrounds (Rudduck, 1994), although some of them relate it in a restricted manner to families' power of choice. The analysis of power is proving to be very productive as it relates to knowledge. The relationship between knowledge and power illustrates how reform is part of a broader effort to identify schools as places where identity, value and potential are organized in a specific way through interaction among faculty, students and texts (Popkewitz, 1994b).

Reforms contribute to the reinforcement of certain ways of life in educational institutions, in whose context subjectivities are molded and needs are constructed and legitimized. This would explain the persistence of the *status quo* and the contribution of reforms to its preservation, because the models of change enfold the issues specified in the political process, following the priorities established by certain institutional sectors with the ability to define the issues related with the betterment of society (Popkewitz, 1988: 165). Reform efforts incorporate modes of

representation and styles of reasoning that not only inform us about the school, the teachers and teacher training, but also construct their meaning through the distinctions that order and define the objects of the school itself; they regulate what kind of educational discourse is possible, who can be considered serious and authorized speakers, and how wishes, aspirations and cognition must be constructed (Popkewitz, 1994b).

But the fatalism that accompanies this seemingly-inevitable trend that leads to stability, is challenged by these same alternative approaches. Reforms have been and will be evaluated differentially by the various groups that make up a given society. The relationships between the different groups involved are characterized by inequality in the number of members, welfare and power, which includes control over the economy, state apparatus, military resources and communications media. Groups struggle to extend their perspective against the reform on a terrain of contradictions; so that it is impossible to anticipate the direction reform will take, and the influence of the groups upon it. In a sense, these conflicts make room for response by counter-hegemonic actions, and in turn, constrain such possibilities (Ginsburg and Cooper, 1991: 379). This is something which has been revealed by analyzing how the voices of less powerful groups have joined in the battle to define official knowledge, after periods of more or less explicit negotiation and struggle (Apple, 1996a).

This brief review of the representations of educational change shows that the dynamics of innovation have a dense quality difficult to capture. The perceptions and images of change are used by different social groups to try to make the innovations comprehensible according to their own terms, and to legitimate specific forms of social progress. It is necessary to apply caution and reflection in the use and propagation of images and perceptions of educational change. As we can see, behind the analysis of both the perception of recurrence and of vulnerability, they have a clear socio-political base, and project on the subject of education, ways of understanding and acting that reveal the limits and possibilities among which knowledge has been configured regarding educational change and the longings and frustrations of people who have imagined it and set it in motion. The sense of repetition is the result of the conflict of values between social and political groups in dispute, and to unmask it, proposed changes should be situated in the particular context within which they seemingly reappear, and related with the more persistent lines of institutional development. The idea of rupture speaks to us about uneven and interrelated transformations, and constitutes a very productive wakeup call for the creation of educational change that would challenge the inevitability underlying the hegemonic persistence of educational change's image as cycles. With regard to the vulnerability of improvement efforts, it seems to be more "intentional" than one might suppose, because it is linked to the stability of society itself and the preservation of power relations.

Unmasking the possibilities and limitations of dominant educational-change representations can help us to "think differently" (Foucault, 1986 in Morey, 1990: 30) about change itself. Thus the claim of stability challenges the traditional way of

expressing educational change, obsessed with the rhetoric of transformation. Opposing the dominant forms of expressing change, one can see the initiative for maintaining, rather than transforming, the social and educational achievements of the public school. The predominance of neoliberal strategies in educational change is leading to a demand for what Michael Apple (1996b) calls non-reformist reforms, which try to maintain the values of social justice and democracy in the adverse scenario of global change. Stability can be contemplated, then, as a value. Similarly, it can be expressed as a discontinuity in the usual way of interpreting educational change to unmask conservative effects, including multipliers of inequality of those innovations that, in seeking to adapt themselves to the signs of the times, talk about decentralization, choice of school, and school self-management, and that turn out to be a mutation of change-management strategies that give new life to the legacy of exclusion, dressing it in twenty-first-century garb.

In the search for ways to represent the educational changes that allow the construction of meanings distanced from the obsession with progress and consumption, it gives us hope to remember, as Thomas Popkewitz has shown, and as Jennifer Gore herself has contemplated (1996), that the same dynamics of reform and the epistemological modes they promote allow space for response and production "[...] the reasonability is productive: it unfolds rules for building alternatives. Educational reform is the construction of systems of regulation and discipline, but at the same time, it is a search for alternative modes of production "(Popkewitz, 1994b: 130).

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[1] Among other indicators of change focused on: the organization of classroom furniture, the teacher's speech as compared with student speech; whether the statement is produced individually, in small groups or with the class group; the presence or absence of points of interest to organize the curriculum; the level of physical movement of students allowed without asking the teacher's permission; and the dependability of texts and the use of various teaching resources (Cuban, 1993: 9).

[2] See Cuban (1990), who equates waves, cycles and pendulum swings with educational change. Alvin Toffey specifically uses the metaphor of colliding waves, and attempts to show his vision of the radical transformations brought by technological change. His perspective has evolutionary reminiscences, such as shown by Barry Smart (1992) who has made a careful critique of it.

[3] See, for example, Petrie (1990).

[4] It is interesting to prove that the frictions between opposing trends come from years ago, as Hamilton reminds us (1996) to describe the teaching methods of the closed fist and the open hand, both of which come from medieval dissertations with divergent purposes. As we might expect, the second was criticized for "undermining the authority established by analyzing and questioning the boundaries of their own competence and knowledge" (1996: 130).

[5] More about the image of cycles and pendulum swings, and of how they are projected in educational change can be seen in Cuban (1990). The entrenchment of this metaphor is considerable; Larry Cuban himself uses it with no qualms when he analyzes the difference between

changes of first and second order, to say that there are reform cycles that leave untouchable the deep structures (Cuban, 1992: 220).

[6] Jean Rudduck (1996) shows that there is no unanimity in assessing the achievements of comprehensive education, but rather that its impact is reinterpreted according to the ideological stance of the analysts.

[7] Education Action Zones (EAZS) is an innovative program launched in June,1998; it aims to improve the social situation of deprived areas through a partnership between businesses, schools, local education authorities and families. According to Power and Whitty (1999) it prefigures ways to address the problem of multiple disadvantage in education with more inclusive strategies and new forms of civil association. Regarding the third way, see Giddens (1999).

[8] What is known by this name is a change trend observed in many Western countries, and which is connected with the new social, political and economic conditions linked with post-Fordism and social deregulation. A characteristic of its ambiguous nature can be seen in Rodriguez Romero (1998).

[9] The credibility that popular culture is beginning to enjoy is a symptom of the vulnerability of these beliefs despite their hegemony. See Turner (1990), and Aronowitz and Giroux (1993).

[10] The narrow horizon of pedagogical alternatives in which teachers are already moving was blamed by Jackson (1991) on the intellectual restrictions produced by confinement in the classroom.

[11] Use the following analogy: if a bird has been in a box for ten years, and suddenly finds the door open, we should not be too surprised if it does not want to leave. The familiar is often more comfortable than the uncertainty of the unknown.

[12] Resonances with the school as a normalizing institution are evident (Varela and Alvarez-Uria, 1991).

[13] A concept directly connected with the perpetual concept of a school that rests on the Cartesian and Newtonian proposals concerning the restoration *in perpetuo* of the natural order of things (Hamilton, 1996: 177).

[14] Classic examples of some of these reformist proposals can be found in the "Dalton Plan" and the "Winnetka System" in the US. In Europe and with the New School movement emerged educational initiatives that have given rise to many experiences of schooling endorsed by educators like Maria Montessori and Ovide Decroly. A large group of change attempts have gone further, and building on school-society interaction, have led to proposals for education based on the social commitment of the school and the teacher. This is the case of Celestine Freinet's pedagogy, structured around emancipatory engagement with popular pedagogy, confronting the capitalist school; John Dewey, and education committed to democracy; and Paulo Freire with an educational program focused on liberating action. Special mention should be made of A.S. Neill and his school of freedom, Summerhill. See Martinez Bonafe (1998).

[15] And as an example, here we have the recent reissue of Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1995) or the complete works of Freinet (1996) and the creative vitality of Paulo Freire who, until his recent death, hobnobbed with the latest generation of critical pedagogy teachers like Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, whom they recognized as ideological mentors.

[16] Founded by Theodore Sizer, these schools share an interest in focusing on the development of reflection, considering students as workers, using public assessment systems and independent forms of work by students tutored by teachers responsible for educating a small number of

students, relationship with the community, collaborative work of teachers. An example that can be consulted in Castilian is that of East Central Park Junior High School in Apple and Beane (1997). On the vitality of the ideas of Freinet and the modern school movement, see Kikiriki's monograph. 1996. No. 40.