



## **The teachers or us, the teachers? A reflection on the assumption of teaching practice**

### **Os professores ou nós, os professores? Uma reflexão sobre a assunção da prática docente**

**Evanildo Moraes Estumano**

Federal University of Pará

**Erika Camila Correa dos Santos**

Federal University of Pará

#### **ABSTRACT**

In this research, teaching practice is analyzed from a perspective of social action as a significant experience. The objective is to describe the teaching practice from the perception of teachers about the way they act in educational processes. The research was conducted between the years 2018-2020, through fieldwork grounded in the assumptions of qualitative research. The study collected data using interviews with female Basic Education teachers who work in Elementary Education from 1st to 9th grade. The results showed that the teachers have an instrumental conception of the teaching profession. The diversification and intensity of activities inside the school promote an interaction between pedagogical objectives and educational actions that escape the professionals' perception. There is, therefore, a distance of understanding between the context of the practices and the set of experiences that, in part, result from it.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical practice, Teaching knowledge, Significant experience.

#### **1 INTRODUCTION**

This text aims to present the results of the second phase of the research entitled "Teaching Practice: the teacher as the subject of action", developed between the years 2018 and 2020. This stage originated as an unfolding of a broader research, entitled "Teaching profession: investigation on the pedagogical action as a significant experience", focused on understanding the significant aspects of the teaching action, which will have consecutive, independent and interrelated phases addressing the study on the teaching practice, study on the teaching knowledge and study on the life history of teachers.

#### **2 METHODS**

This general framework of elaboration of an object of investigation linked to the educational phenomenon was deepened by its theoretical and methodological referential.



In this type of study as in research in general, the methodological path to be developed is an essential part of the knowledge production process. In these terms, this research was based on qualitative approaches, because according to Minayo (2001, p. 21 - 22) this orientation presents a "universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes, which occurs to a deeper space of relations, processes and phenomena that cannot be reduced to the operationalization of variables".

In this research aimed at teachers of Basic Education, specifically, those who work in Primary Education from 1st to 9th grade was carried out in the years 2018-2020, fieldwork was developed, during which use was made of interviews applied to teachers of a school unit in the municipality of Belem, of the state education network in the State of Pará, Brazil.

According to Minayo (2006, p. 261) the interview technique used to collect data in a scientific investigation is "[...] above all, a conversation between two or several interlocutors, [...] intended to build relevant information for a research objective, [...] of equally relevant themes".

In the process of data collection, by initial survey, it was recorded the existence of four subject areas (English Language, Physical Education, Arts, General Education) that would correspond to the performance of nine professionals in Basic Education from 1st to 5th grade of elementary school. However, one of the subject areas, the Arts area, had no teacher, reducing the number of interviewees invited from nine to eight possible interviewees (Chart 1). Finally, only five teachers participated in the research and, therefore, were interviewed due to the fact that three teachers refused to participate in the research at the beginning of the interview period, they were: the English Language teacher (BA in Literature), the Physical Education teacher (BA in Physical Education) and a General Education teacher (BA in Pedagogy).

Table 1. Number of teachers invited and interviewed

<b>NO.</b>	<b>Teachers</b>	<b>Undergraduate</b>	<b>Interviewee</b>
1	A	Pedagogy	yes
2	B	Pedagogy	yes
3	C	Pedagogy	yes
4	D	Pedagogy	yes
5	E	Pedagogy	yes
6	F	Pedagogy	not
7	G	Physical Education	not
8	H	Letters	not
9	I	Arts	there was no

Source: Elaborated by the Authors (2020).



The criterion for choosing the teaching unit was given by the ease of access of the researcher in terms of commuting between the workplace and the research site.

### 3 RESULTS

In the discussion about the possibility and conditions of knowledge about social reality, Minayo and Sanches (1993) bring two important references. First, Max Weber, who, contributing with the epistemological bases of qualitative research (WEBER, 1970 apud MINAYO; SANCHES, 1993, p.244) "elaborates the qualitative task as the search to achieve precisely the knowledge of a historical phenomenon, that is, significant in its singularity", as is, therefore, the educational phenomenon, particularly in its pedagogical dimension investigated in this study. "Weber also states that the essential element in the interpretation of action is the dimensioning of the subjective meaning of those who participate in it" (WEBER, 1970 apud MINAYO; SANCHES, 1993, p.243). Next, the authors present Granger's consideration, according to which

social reality is qualitative and events are given to us primarily as qualities at two levels: a) first, as an **absolute and unique lived** experience incapable of being captured by science; and b) second, as lived experience at the level of form, especially of **language that** scientific practice aims to transform into concepts (GRANGER, 1982 apud MINAYO; SANCHES, 1993, p. 245).

Therefore, in these terms we find the necessary structure for the undertaking of scientific research, taking the educational phenomenon as an object: its lived, practical dimension, therefore ephemeral and unrepeatable; and its experiential, reflexive dimension, which induces new practices.

At this point, the teacher's practice is highlighted as a subject of action, in the context of interaction with other people linked to the ideals of school education. It is about highlighting once again the relationship between theory and practice in educational processes from the teacher's training to the development of his or her pedagogical craft. "Así, y resumiendo, entendemos la teoría educativa como el conocimiento formal que se produce sobre la educación, y la práctica educativa como la actividad de enseñar que se desarrolla en los centros educativos" (ÁLVAREZ, 2013, p. 110).

The profile of the interviewees, presented in alphabetical order of their personal names, is as follows, based on information about gender, age, academic background, area of activity, and length of service in teaching:



Chart 2 - Profile of the Interviewees

SUBJECT	SEX	AGE	TRAINING	AREA OF OPERATION	TEACHING SERVICE TIME
A	Female	50	Pedagogy/Specialization	General Education	07
B	Female	53	Pedagogy	General Education	29
C	Female	57	Pedagogy	General Education	30
D	Female	50	Pedagogy	General Education	08
E	Female	50	Pedagogy	General Education	28

Source: Elaborated by the Authors (2020).

Four groups of questions with the following thematic scope were elaborated: 1) Conception of the teaching profession (reason for choosing it; competencies for teaching; interest in the profession); Conception of pedagogical practice (what is pedagogical practice; how it is developed; how it is evaluated); 3) Conception of class (what is class; how it is developed - in terms of objectives, content, and strategies; how it is evaluated); 4) Conception of reflection on practice (what is reflection on practice; when does it reflect; how does it reflect).

Next we have the units of meaning extracted from the set of discourse of the interviewees, highlighting particular points and general expressions representative of their common points of view:

**1. Conception of the teaching profession (reason for choosing it; skills for teaching; interest in the profession).**

- How did you get into the teaching profession?

He did Pedagogy and the job came up as a second occupation option; he was looking for higher education; he didn't intend to work in the area; he was influenced by the teaching profession.

- How do you see yourself as a teacher and what views do you perceive society has about teachers?

The women interviewed don't see themselves doing anything else except teaching; they say that "Teacher" is not a profession, because everyone is a teacher; society devalues teachers; they see themselves as participative; as teacher apprentices, seeking to learn more about the profession on a daily basis; they enjoy teaching classes; they think that teachers are not well regarded by society because of the teachers themselves who have no commitment to education. Society has a prejudiced view of teachers; they



attribute low value associated with low salaries to the fact that they go on strikes to claim their rights.

- What kind of skills does the teacher need to have in order to teach?

Skill and knowledge are only acquired in practice; ability to dialogue, to induce reflection on life; need to be interested in studying to help the student's development; understand the students' difficulties; like people, to study and to teach people of all kinds.

- What is your level of interest in the profession today?

They enjoy teaching, but feel undervalued by the education system and by their own co-workers; they stay motivated despite the salary because they aim for changes in the student; they are tired, but they continue to look for updating; they keep their interest high.

**2. Conception of pedagogical practice (What is pedagogical practice; How is it developed; How is it evaluated).**

- In general, what kind of work do teachers do in schools (what are their characteristics)?

The work oscillates between collective work focused on the student and individualized work focused on the teacher himself; the teacher's interest and disinterest in teaching.

- What do teachers teach students in schools?

They also teach values of respect: of behavior, of spoken expression; besides the subjects, they teach everything that should be the parents' responsibility; they teach the official curricular content associated to the student's reality.

- How are the teaching activities evaluated?

In various ways; by oral and written development; continuously; day after day; the acquisition of the reading skill is assessed.

- In your work, what aspects do you consider necessary for quality teaching?

The teacher needs to be qualified and updated; adequate structural conditions; investment in teacher training.

**3. Classroom design (What is the lesson; how is it developed - in terms of objectives, content and strategies; how is it assessed)**

- How is teaching done in order to achieve student understanding and learning?



At the end of the contents, they carry out fixation exercises; projects focused on image visualization tools, with texts and exercises; playful activities, games, workshops, group work to fix the content; contextualization of the content with daily life situations.

- What knowledge/skills/competencies are prioritized in the work with the content?

In this topic the interviewees did not answer the question objectively. They referred directly to the content without naming knowledge to be learned and its association with the student's daily life. When mentioning the teaching contents one can extract from their comments some knowledge prioritized in the school work: reflecting on the subject and relating it to reality; mathematical operations: addition, multiplication, division; mathematical value assignment; reading; spatial location.

- How do you get students to learn (what challenges, what motivations do you propose)?

Bring the family closer to the student; talk to and encourage the student to arrest; propose challenging activities; use new teaching materials and methods.

- What indicators do you use to know if the contents have been well taught and well learned?

They did not answer objectively. They referred to the evaluative activities and not to the expected learning. Oral questions; magazine clipping activity; written questions; conversation circle; evaluate orally and in writing;

**4. Conceptualization of reflection on practice (what is reflection on practice; at what point does it reflect; how does it reflect).**

- What means do you use to improve your knowledge (continuing education)?

They read books and official documents, watch videos of educational theorists; research websites; access current political news; buy magazines.

- How do you plan the activities for the development of the school contents?

They plan according to the knowledge level of the class; they take planned activities and plan others together with the class; they plan involving the family in order to share responsibility for the student's learning; they plan inserting playful and innovative activities; they plan the classes based on the annual planning and according to the textbook, inserting other books

- What is the source of the methodologies you develop in the classroom (your own elaboration, from colleagues, from educational scholars)?



They develop a methodology or adopt it from other colleagues or professionals in the area; the basis of the methodology is to make people read and write; they study theoreticians in the area to adapt the methodology in the classroom; they start from the student's daily life and relate the study content from the training courses they have taken.

- In what situations do you decide to keep or change the ways you teach?

They evaluate the conditions of the class to make changes; they change the lessons constantly; they prepare the plan and change it if situations arise that require dealing with another theme; they follow the global planning and innovate in order to conquer the student; they follow the activities with positive results and discard the ones with negative results.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 CONCEPTION OF THE TEACHING PROFESSION

The female teachers interviewed in this study present an instrumental conception of the teaching profession, mainly because of their little or no initial interest in the area they work in. In fact, economic conditions directed them to a type of work in which they gradually became involved in the teaching process throughout their teaching career until they considered that they could not see themselves in another profession.

What the female teachers refer to as the "involvement with the students' education", the need to know how to teach and make the students learn, that is, the teaching profession, is considered in Alliaud and Antelo's (2009) view as a central element in their proposition of a pedagogy of training that pays attention to both training courses and teaching practice, particularly in its initial moments:

*The craft constitutes the center that unites and gives meaning to the formative process. In the case of teaching, there is a craft to transmit and a craft of transmission. There are trainers and subjects in training supported by an institutional program with hierarchical values and identities. Beyond the different themes and procedures used to transmit transmission, there is a unity that can provide cohesion to the whole formative process. It is the practice of teaching. It is the practice that will bring meaning to the different approaches and practices that take place during the formative process. From this perspective [...], the teaching profession should not be an exclusive concern of certain teachers or certain curricular "spaces". On the contrary, it should become the articulating axis of the different contents developed during the training, i.e., not after but at the beginning of the course. (ALLIAUD; ANTELO, 2009, p. 96).*

Some aspects of the reflection on the meaning of teaching among the interviewees arise from the contrast with the negative meaning that society in general, or the education



system in particular, attributes to the profession, leading them to react to this vision in order to positivate it from a personal desire.

#### 4.2 CONCEPTION OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE

The context of the school, the level of knowledge and relationship with the students are directed to the exercise of a practice of urgency. Teachers need to teach appropriate types of behavior to students, which should be the responsibility of the family, so that they can develop the work with the curricular contents. In this way, teachers develop a practice conditioned to the context of everyday situations, making it difficult to carry out a didactic planning guided fundamentally by the objectives of the curricular components established for each stage of schooling.

The study by Penna (2012) highlights a result related to that found in this research, namely, the elements of the teacher's family life influencing the expectation of student behavior in the classroom and their goals after schooling, therefore, constituting a component of their pedagogical practice:

The learning they had obtained in their families of origin regarding the valorization of work and individual effort, when incorporated by the teachers, became "good morals", from which classificatory judgments are derived. This issue can be verified by the fact that this learning, incorporated by them in the form of *habitus*, was considered by teachers as something important to be taught to their students, who should learn the need to make an effort and work hard to achieve something in life, thus composing the teaching practices they developed [...] (PENNA, 2012, p. 202).

#### 4.3 CLASSROOM DESIGN

The conception of class underlying the teachers' discourse is linked to the idea of content development by the teacher and demonstration of content mastery by the student through assessment activities. In other words, the core of the classroom conception is the teaching content, expressing a pragmatic relationship between teaching and learning. None of the interviewees mentioned knowledge or intellectual skills that students should develop in the schooling process and, on a daily basis, through the classes taught. Except for one of the interviewees who informed that she prioritizes learning to read and write, when answering question 4 about reflection on practice.

Regarding pedagogical work from educational objectives Rojas (2012) reflects on the need to add to the teaching activity a philosophical look and thinking in a phenomenological perspective of using and reconstructing experience. In his words:





This thinking translates the necessary awareness of the educator, in the reflection about all the intentionality that he has and that he can launch through his look. Of that which is in front of him, which is part of his educational practices, as well as of his "I", the "other", and the world in which he lives or the world he conceives for himself. Consciousness becomes openness to the other, as to itself. [...] (ROJAS, 2012, p.136).

This philosophical view, so to speak, is done in order to maintain the personal and collective meaning of the act of teaching and learning for life, going beyond the context of the program and school certification.

#### 4.4 DESIGN OF REFLECTION ON PRACTICE.

Reflection on practice among the group investigated results from a constant search for improvement. The teachers carry out their continuing education individually and participate in training courses offered by the school system. According to their pragmatic conceptions of the classroom, the data show an intense activity of reflection on their practice in order to make the teaching process more dynamic and interesting for the students.

At this point, Nóvoa (2010) warns about the importance of continuing education associated with the exchange of collective experiences in order not to submit to the market logic of continuing education that considers that the teacher is always outdated.

The teachers have a high level of teaching experience resulting either from their teaching practice or from other dimensions of their work activities, or from their personal life, which results in a sum of activities that characterizes the work of the school itself.

In essence, the diversification and intensity of activities promote an interaction between pedagogical objectives and involuntary educational actions that was not made explicit in the interviewees' dialogues.

### 5 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the relationship between scientific knowledge and school knowledge, it can be roughly said that they are the bases on which pedagogical knowledge operates, demonstrating to have sufficient professional consensus to be identified as models for daily actions and planning, at least for certain groups of teachers. Thus, there is the creation of representativeness of certain types of knowledge in the pedagogical community that become authorities in the affirmation of educational practice.

When it comes to field data, the normative tone, of recommendation, that underlies the pedagogical discourse is reflected in general in the interviews of teachers.



For the most part, the teachers do not talk about themselves when dealing with the practice in the school environment, limiting themselves to suggesting guidelines on how teaching should be to a kind of undetermined subject that will possibly execute the prescriptions.

The time of the practice, in this sense, is always the future time; there is neither a punctual mention to a past practice nor to a current practice, present, to be evaluated, but always a practice to be done, from where the recommendations naturally derive. There is, therefore, a disconnection between the context of the practices and the very experiences arising from these practices, characterizing a teaching universe in the scope of the "to be done". Possibly the little evaluation or disregard of the effects of the practices carried out in the interviewees' judgments about future practices lies in the security that the project brings, since it (the project) has not yet taken place; unlike the actual practices that could be evaluated positively or negatively.

With this type of discourse, a psychological security field is created that displaces teachers from the dynamics of reality - in which attempts, successes and mistakes are natural expressions of the educational phenomenon - to a plane in which it is impossible to evaluate the effects of practices since they are always put into perspective. This is reflected in the constant treatment pronoun used in the interviews to describe the teaching experience: the use of the collective nominative, "we," which translates as we the teachers, or the teachers in general, which denotes the impersonality of the discourse and covers up, at the level of consciousness, the process of formation of the particular experience in its hits and misses, typical of professional cognitive constructions.



## REFERENCES

ALLIAUD, Andrea; ANTELO, Estanislao. Iniciar-se a la docência: los gajes del oficio de enseñar. **Profesorado. Revista de Currículum y Formación de Profesorado**, Granada, España, v. 13, n. 1, p. 89- 100, abril, 2009.

ÁLVAREZ, Carmen Álvarez ¿Puede superar el profesorado la quiebra teoría-práctica? Un estudio de caso. **REICE. Revista Iberoamericana sobre Calidad, Eficacia y Cambio en Educación**, v. 11, n.4, p.109-127, 2013.

MINAYO, Maria Cecília. Ciência, técnica e arte: o desafio da pesquisa social. In: \_\_\_\_\_. (org.). **Pesquisa Social: teoria, método e criatividade**. 21. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2002, p. 9-29.

MINAYO, Maria Cecilia de S; SANCHES, Odécio. Quantitativo-Qualitativo: Oposição ou Complementaridade? **Caderno Saúde Pública**, Rio de Janeiro, 9 (3): 239-262, jul/set, 1993.

MINAYO, M. C. S. Técnicas de pesquisa. In: \_\_\_\_\_. **O desafio do conhecimento: pesquisa qualitativa em saúde**. São Paulo: Hucitec. 9. ed., 2006. Cap. 10, p. 261-273.

NÓVOA, A. A escola o que é da escola. - Entrevista com António Nóvoa. **Revista Escola- Gestão Educacional**. São Paulo: n. 8, p. 23-25, jun./jul. 2010.

PENNA, Marieta Gouvêa de Oliveira. Origem social de professores e aspectos da prática docente. **Educação**, Porto Alegre. v. 35, n. 2, p. 199-207, maio/ago. 2012.

ROJAS, Jucimara. Linguagem, cognição e cultura: uma leitura em fenomenologia da prática educativa. **EccoS Revista Científica**, São Paulo, n. 28, p. 131-147, maio/ago. 2012.



III SEVEN INTERNACIONAL  
MULTIDISCIPLINARY CONGRESS