



Teacher's formation: the construction of teaching and pedagogical activity in Higher Education

Formação de professores: a construção da docência e da atividade pedagógica na Educação Superior

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Abstract

This article has been produced from an investigative network which is linked to the interlocution between research groups in relation to the studies they develop. GPFOPE, GTFORMA and KOSMOS groups, in quest of contributing for the area of teacher formation,

have produced contributions for implementing and improving educational and institutional policies, seeking the qualification of classroom and distance learning courses. The purpose of this reflection is to offer alternatives to rethink the formation processes promoted by the IES and their repercussion in the organization of the pedagogical activities they develop. In this sense, we consider that the focus of teacher formation cannot be restrict to thinking and discussing the organization of teaching and its divisions but, most of all, it is to mobilize the subjects to continue learning in the different contexts of activity. This includes reflecting upon and about the pedagogical practice, understanding the problems within the teaching, analyzing curriculums, recognizing the influence of the didactic materials in the pedagogical choices, socializing the constructions and experiences exchange in order to advance in direction to new learning, within a constant exercise of reflexive, collaborative and collective practice. It is about a process that is characterized by tensions and challenges in unknown contexts in which the trainers seek professional balance. So that it happens, teachers need to be conscious that they are subjects in permanent evolution and professional development of teachers.

Keywords: Teacher formation. Teaching learning. Formation processes. Pedagogical activities.

Resumo

Este artigo foi produzido a partir de uma rede investigativa que tem como elos a interlocução entre grupos de pesquisa diante dos estudos que desenvolvem. O GPFOPE, o GTFORMA e o KOSMOS, preocupados em contribuir para a área da formação de professores, têm produzido aportes para a implementação e o aprimoramento de políticas educativas e institucionais, tendo em vista a qualificação de cursos presenciais e a distância. O propósito desta reflexão é oferecer alternativas para repensar os processos formativos promovidos pelas IES e sua repercussão na organização das atividades pedagógicas que desenvolvem. Nesse sentido, consideramos que o foco da formação de professores não pode estar restrito a pensar e discutir a organização do ensino e seus desdobramentos, mas antes de tudo está em mobilizar os sujeitos a continuarem aprendendo nos diferentes contextos de atuação. Isso inclui refletir na e sobre a prática pedagógica, compreender os problemas do ensino, analisar os currículos, reconhecer a influência dos materiais didáticos nas escolhas pedagógicas, socializar as

construções e troca de experiências, de modo a avançar em direção a novas aprendizagens, num constante exercício de prática reflexiva, colaborativa e coletiva. Trata-se de um processo caracterizado por tensões e desafios em contextos desconhecidos, nos quais os formadores buscam equilíbrio profissional. Para que isso ocorra, precisam conscientizar-se de que são sujeitos em permanente evolução e desenvolvimento profissional docente.

Palavras-chave: *Formação de professores. Aprendizagem da docência. Processos formativos. Atividades pedagógicas.*

Starting points

The studies presented here come from an investigative network that has as links the interaction among teams involved in the research developed by partner groups: GPFOPE¹, GTFORMA² and KOSMOS³, worried about contributing to the pedagogy area of university. Through these studies, we have sought to contribute to the implementation and improvement of educational and institutional policies, taking into consideration the qualification of teacher formation courses both on-site and distance ones.

¹ Research Group Teachers' Formation and Educational Practices: Basic and Higher Education (GPFOPE). It explores in their studies and thematic research related to learning in teachers of several levels of teaching and practices, turning into two research lines: teachers' formation and educational practices in basic education; teachers' formation and the professional development in higher education.

² Research Group Trajectories of Formation (GTFORMA). Their research comes from a common concern for the formative trajectories (personal and professional) taken by university teachers, turning into two research lines: professional development and knowledge networks.

³ Research Group about Virtual Teaching-Learning Environment and Formation Networks (KOSMOS). Understood as a formation network for the formation trajectory and the professional development of participants from different knowledge areas in which the interdisciplinarity is the formative differential.

Therefore, we are going to present here an excerpt of the research we have been developing on the teacher formation in graduation courses, specially the studies related to qualitative narrative research developed with licensure professors of a public institution. When we make use of this approach, we intend to understand the trajectory of professional formation of those subjects, recognizing that it is marked by their professional and personal history.

So, thinking about teacher formation can take us to two paths: the formative trajectories understood as a relationship network in which the reflections, the sharing, the experiences reconstructing, and the knowledge are essential for that process, as well as the promotion of the activities of the research groups and intergroup works; and the formative trajectories understood as a professional development possibility from formation programs, involving students' and teachers' knowledge and activities.

The objective of that reflection is to offer alternatives to rethink the formative processes promoted by IES and its repercussion in the pedagogical activities organization. Our idea is that the teacher is above all a professional in permanent development capable of reflecting and rethinking about his formation.

We seek to share our research findings, highlighting that the understanding of formation processes implies on the construction of study activities capable of benefitting the pedagogical work/activity of teachers in different levels of teaching.

Contextualizing the theme

In this text we must highlight nodal points in order to think teachers' formation: teaching as a profession and its multiple aspects; the search for answers about how it can be learned to be a teacher in university and the relation between specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Therefore, we need to direct our attention to teaching, in a way to

mobilize the teachers involved in that process to reflect about knowledge construction behind the formative processes related.

As such, we consider that teachers' formation focus should not be restricted to thinking and discussing teaching organization and its ramifications, but most of all, it is about mobilizing the subjects to continue learning in the different work contexts. That includes reflecting in and about the pedagogical practice, understanding the problems in teaching, analyzing the curriculums, recognizing the influence of didactic materials in pedagogical choices, socializing the constructions and experiences exchange, so as to advance towards new learnings in a constant exercise of collaborative, reflexive, and solidary practice.

Therefore, we believe that the teachers' formation assumes the organization of a continual and systematic process which considers the social, psychological, personal, contextual and professional requirements as part of the professional development of teachers. It is a process with tensions and learnings in unknown contexts in which the formers seek to keep professional consistency. In order to make that happen, it is necessary to recognize its incompleteness, that is, it is necessary to be conscious that they are subjects in permanent evolution and development because only that way they will be able to build their professional identity. So, it is essential that the teachers enter the teaching world, understanding their possibilities and limits, or that they get involved with specific and formal teaching situations capable of propitiating the reflection on the pedagogical activities which were organized and developed in daily practice.

The studies of Isaia (2003, 2004, 2006a, b, 2007, 2010) Bolzan (2002, 2004, 2006, 2007-2009, 2009-2012, 2011, 2012) and Maciel (2009, 2011, 2013) define that formative process as continual and uninterrupted whose development happens along their career.

The process of teaching construction implicates in the development of conditions to analyze and interpret his own activity, benefitting the development of his professional knowledge, which incorporates and overtakes the institutionalized emerging knowledge. In that sense,

the teacher is given to the challenge to reflect about his/her choices, seeking to understand the decisions taken due to the experiences lived in teaching practice. Stepping away from the experience lived, taking it up to evaluate its efficiency; seeking references that help him in this analysis are important steps in that process. We point out that one of the challenges given to teachers is to understand the place that have in specific knowledge⁴ and pedagogical knowledge⁵ in his work as a teacher. In our research it has been clear the primacy of the first ones over the second ones. So, one of the faced problems related to the pedagogical knowledge devaluation is college itself, which directs the teachers' and students' efforts in the construction and improvement of specific knowledge. That fact points out to the formers' difficulties to see themselves at the same time both as specialists in their area and as professionals of education, since their productive efforts turns mostly to the specific area of knowledge (ISAIA, 2010).

Those understandings have been the main aspect of the investigative actions developed in our studies. In the search to investigate and foment the reflexive processes inherent to the teacher formation, we have used the narrative approach which is characterized by: give voice and chance to the teachers; help them to take their professional lives in self-reflection, meaning and transforming object; enable the understanding of how they experiment the teaching world. It is not only how they relate their trajectories, but also how they are

⁴ *Specific knowledge* refers to the knowledge about a discipline to be taught by the teacher. It is formed by conceptual and organizational elements of the contents proper of the discipline, involving ideas, information, definitions, conventions and general topics, as well as the organizational structure. It implies in knowledge of tendencies and perspectives of your specific area, including the different interpretations of a same phenomenon and their relations by the teacher (BOLZAN, 2006; MARCELO GARCÍA, 1999).

⁵ *Pedagogical knowledge* are characterized by the theoretical and conceptual knowledge, besides the knowledge of teaching practices schemes – pedagogical strategies, operating routines of didactic interventions and the experimental schemes of teachers. It refers to the institutional or school knowledge that are formed by specific knowledge that belongs to the culture (BOLZAN, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008; MARCELO GARCÍA, 1999).

interpreted and narrated by them. The same subject is simultaneously busy narrating, living, explaining and reliving his history. Therefore, the teacher and researcher voices turn themselves into a shared construction/reconstruction narrative (BOLZAN, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009-2012, 2012; CONNELLY; CLANDININ, 1995; FREITAS, 2002; ISAIA, 2008, 2010).

The warp of the fabric: the interaction of several voices

Thinking about the teaching professional implies in understanding it from the space-time in which every teacher makes himself, defining his way of being and making his teaching. That process is supported by the acceptance of principles, values, projects, and investments in the students' potential; action in the way to deal with the classroom, according to the self-conscience related to the reflection that teacher makes of his own performance, and then there is the possibility of changes and pedagogical innovations.

In that sense, the formation trajectories form a process that involves both the personal development, and the professional one, not being caused only by external agents, but constructed from: formative actions consciously developed or activated by the teachers or future teachers themselves; formative actions guided by teachers responsible for preparing the future professionals of education; formative actions from the interaction with other teachers or students (future teachers); specific contexts where the formation develops itself. (MARCELO GARCÍA, 1999).

Therefore, thinking about the formation implies understanding it as a systematic and organized process, involving both the subjects that are preparing themselves for teaching, and the ones committed to it.

The teachers' challenge consists in understanding that the teaching construction involves simultaneously the pedagogical knowledge and the specific knowledge of the area. They focus mainly on specific knowledge of their area, having as a goal to make it possible to students in initial formation, a solid understanding of the specific

field, however. We observe the teachers' difficulty to become conscious that the pedagogical dimension is necessary for the ones connected to the teachers' formation. Besides producing specific knowledge about some area, it is the master program in education teacher's role to make content about how to be a teacher. That difficulty can be seen as one of the factors responsible for the separation between the knowledge teaching and producing, something common to the academic space. The divorce between those two processes, in terms of emphasis and improvement, as well as of the misunderstanding about each one's role in higher education, induces the teaching to be many times considered as a simple elaborated knowledge transmission in different fields, then it consists in a secondary activity (CUNHA, 2009; MARCELO GARCÍA, 1999; MASETTO, 1998; SANTOS, 1997). The dichotomy between teaching and research can lead to a disruption between being a teacher and being a researcher, fragmenting the professional identity of teachers. Many times it impedes them to be responsible for the preparation of future teachers. It is not about opting for a role instead of the other, but about integrating them to the university educational practice.

Seeking to solve the dissociation teaching/research, Fernandes (1998) suggests rethinking the pedagogical practice from teaching and learning linked to the doubt, proper to research and reading of the related reality to extension.

That way, those functions are going to be intrinsically connected, providing bigger quality to higher education. The counterpoint teaching and research lead naturally to the dichotomy specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. Nevertheless, the matter with the master degree in education, as Gatti (1992) and Mazzotti (1993) affirm is limited to science that teaching is not only transmitting specific contents of each knowledge field, but enabling the transposition of the specific field of a discipline to the school knowledge and fundamentally contribute for the knowledge of how to be a teacher. Even more, enabling that kind of knowledge, which is necessary for the formative process of future teachers.

Only in the integration effort between specific and pedagogical knowledge, the master degree professor fulfills his teacher role.

In our researches, we have seen that even when the teachers' concern is restricted to specific knowledge, they seek to offer opportunity for more than reproduction. They are aware of the necessity not to fragment the knowledges, of helping the students that learned to think and to be able to discern what is relevant.

The formation to teaching also needs to take in consideration three dimensions that ensure its specificity, according to Bolzan and Isaia (2006, 2007, 2008); Isaia and Bolzan (2006, 2007a, b, 2011); Isaia, Maciel and Bolzan (2011); Isaia, Bolzan and Maciel (2011); Maciel; Isaia and Bolzan (2012): the *personal*, the *pedagogical* and the *professional*. The first one turned to the personal world is due to the fact that the teachers are capable of seeing themselves as a unity in which the person and the Professional determine the teacher's way of being. So, they are whole in teaching, representing it by the marks of life and profession. That first dimension even comprises the double movement that the teachers make related to their teaching activities. At the same time that they see themselves as teaching subjects, they are capable of distancing and becoming themselves object of their reflections. Possibly, the personal dimension associated to the implication with teaching is the responsible for teachers go beyond the technical dimension of teaching activity towards the pedagogical-formative dimension, what enables them to be a reference on how to be teacher for their students.

The second, directed to the pedagogical practice, integrates both the knowing and the knowing-making proper to a specific profession related to the way of helping the students in the creation of their own strategies of knowledge appropriation towards their formative autonomy. Then, it consists in ways of conceiving and developing the teaching, the organization of pedagogical strategies that take in consideration the transposition of specific contents of some field for its effective understanding and consequent use in order to make it

possible to transform them into eternal tools capable of mediating the construction of its formative process. That way, that second dimension involves the possibility and the need to build the knowledge to be a teacher from an individual and group reflexive process in which the experience exchange allows the construction of a shared pedagogical knowledge⁶, by integrating the dynamics of the process of learning how to be a teacher.

The third, related to the Professional experience, involves the appropriation of specific activities from a knowledge, knowings and doings repertoire set up to the teaching exercise resulting from a specific performance area, pedagogical area and teaching experience area. That dimension takes in consideration: forming teachers for basic education, forming professionals for the other performance areas and create knowledge about specific fields, as well as the construction of knowledge of being a teacher. The improvement of professional dimension of teaching implies in considering the rights and duties of teachers in their places of work. In that sense, it is considered to be relevant the policies and criteria adopted of teaching selection, monitoring and promotion during the career.

⁶ The shared pedagogical knowledge is a system of ideas with different concreteness and articulation levels, presenting dynamic dimensions of processual character since it implies in an interpersonal relations network. It is organized with variety and richness, presenting four dimensions: the theoretical and conceptual knowledge, the practical experience of the teacher, the reflection about the teaching performance and the transformation of pedagogical action. The constitution process of this knowledge implies the continual reorganization of pedagogical, theoretical and practical knowledges, of the organization of teaching strategies, of activities of study and the work routines of teachers, in which something new comes from the old, by means of adjustments of those systems (BOLZAN, 2002, p. 151). It is a base concept that refers to a wide knowledge constructed by the teacher with the mastery of knowing how to do, as well as the theoretical and conceptual and their relations. Its construction does not base itself in knowledge accumulation, but in the reorganization of pre-existing knowledges and current knowledges, in a way to reconstruct its original drawing. We can consider the teaching and the learning, the teaching activity and the study as elements relevant to this process (BOLZAN, 2006, p. 380).

We cannot mention teaching formation with referring to students in their formative processes. Therefore, as the teachers are formers, they also get formed. The construction of learning how to be a teacher is collaborative⁷, it is done in the classroom practice and in the exercise of daily basis in university. It is a social, shared benefit since it demands exchanges and representations. Then, when the teacher teaches, also learn from the students. For this purpose, He needs to be focused on the uncertainty and doubt possibility, which shows an open spirit for the new and humility not to adopt an authoritarian position at the same time it is aware of his responsibility in conducting the formative process of students, having as a goal the development of them as people and professionals. With that position the teacher is taking his *teaching attitude*⁸.

That way we could say that as the teachers discuss about his teaching tasks, expressing their perceptions about the teaching and learning process, they make it clear that the search for an enquiry path, show the direction chosen, and as a consequence a reflexive attitude about their pedagogical knowings and doings, contributing to his formation. Even though, the reflection cannot be understood as a lonely process, either as a simple creation exercise or the construction of new ideas, but as an intersubjective activity that Express the decision making, the

⁷ Collaborative learning refers to the exchange among pairs/teachers/students that allow the deepening about the subjects worked in a collective way, resulting in the autonomy of the subjects involved in this process, permitting them, from the individual restructuring of their knowledge schemes to solve different didactic and pedagogical and professional. The ideas sharing, concerns, doubts and help require the collaborative activity, benefitting the advance in the formative process going on. In this process the teacher and student learn from the analysis and interpretation of their own activities and the others (BOLZAN, 2002; BOLZAN; ISAIA, 2006, 2007, 2008).

⁸ The teaching attitude results not only in mastering knowledge, knowings, doings of a certain Field, but also involves the teacher sensitivity as a person and Professional. The teacher attitude is understood from the systematic reflection view in which the focus is on the intrinsic component to the process of teaching, learning, forming, and consequently, professionally develops (BOLZAN; ISAIA, 2006, 2007, 2008; ISAIA; BOLZAN, 2007a, b).

mediations choice, and of the conceptions that the teachers have about their educational practices.

Formative processes and teaching practices: tensions and challenges

From the reflections made throughout the text, we are able to understand some questions related to the teacher formation and the organization of pedagogical activity. From them on, we can point out five tensions related to this process.

The first tension: the relation between formation and teaching

The formation implies in multiple attention to the formative processes as they put us facing the challenge of building strategies capable of promoting the social context analysis in which the teachers are going to be in, and enable them the identification and recognition of university as one of the spaces of formation. Besides thinking about the permanent updating of pedagogical knowledge through dissemination, distribution and analysis of the knowledge elaborated culturally. In that sense it is a requirement the reflection about the practice as a pedagogical alternative capable of materializing the collective construction of pedagogical knowledge and the critical review of the social and cultural conditions in which the formation programs are projected.

The formative processes established require the understanding that the university needs to be considered as a moving space in which it is necessary to reflect over the learning and teaching events; above all it is a space in which the teaching in action can be revisited.

In that direction, the formation needs to be understood as a process in which the pedagogical organization needs to be articulated in a creative way, in a way that the pedagogical role is recognized as a road to emancipation of the teaching processes and the learning of teaching.

The reflection and the constant pedagogical action remodeling need to enable the autonomy and mobilization in the search for knowledge.

The reconstruction of a pedagogy specific for formation, as well as the development of the several engines and strategies become a challenge when it goes to organizing the formative processes to be implemented. The road is full of uncertainties, even though the situation requires that we revisit our traditions, our commitments, our conceptions, our practices in order to define the outlines of the formative field of teachers.

The second tension: between theories and practices

In this tension, it is not about claiming for a pragmatic view, but recognizing it as a knowledge object in its dimensions of social, school, educational and ethical practice. Therefore, it is essential to think in a pedagogy that has as the core, the pedagogical practice, exploring its dimensions, adjusting them to its contexts and concrete subjects. We can think in specific cases or problem-situation as a reflection mobilizing agent.

It is about creating spaces in which the teachers are capable of taking rational, sustainable, and communicable decisions, in other words, a formation committed to the transformation of actions in a process that integrates and articulates the practical situations, the study's results and the conceptual approaches, the action validation, new cases and new problems. All those elements need to go towards the formative processes that result in the understanding of specific knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and practices in their social, academic and pedagogical dimensions.

The third tension: the ideas and the actions

This tension relies on the integration between reflections and actions previously planned for the intervention. There is the need to

make the criteria, conceptions and alternatives to be adopted explicit in a way to define which paths to take.

The relevance of having the subject organizing his actions and thoughts, connecting them with the knowledge that need to be developed are the keys to the organization of the pedagogical work; besides reflecting about the use of several information sources, the confrontation of diverging points of view, the conflict overcoming, and the tackling of new challenges. It is also necessary to think about the contents, the strategies planning in order to make the students in formation be able to project the actions and operations to be developed in the spaces where they will work.

The formative processes need to take account of the space of ideas and actions expression as a way to put into practice what the students understand as their knowledge, which is a reflexive treatment about what they are learning. That can be an alternative able to qualify the practices to be implemented, as well as making their thoughts and pedagogical decisions stronger.

The fourth tension: the objective and the subjective

The reflection about the objective aspects of context for teaching formation allows the subjects of this process to analyze concrete situations, even when their ideas and conceptions express the subjective understanding of that reality.

Therefore, the reflexive study of practical cases does not end in its objective aspects, but it involves the ways of thinking about them, pointing to the review and restructuring of subjective schemes that risk its interpretation.

The objectivity in the teacher formation results in the relation among subjects. The starting points consists in having the teachers in formation Express their ideas, conceptions and experiences (subjective), in order to expose to the systematic criticism, evaluating them. In that

sense, it is important to establish a dialogue between the formers and students in a way to compare experiences and points of view. After all, we are able to say that the formation needs to conduct the restructuring of the ways of thinking, in order to benefit the observation of the teaching spaces and its performance.

The fifth tension: the individual and the collective

The proposition of a shared work results in a posture break with the one-sided and individual view in the formation. That way, the pedagogical activity needs to be organized considering the educational times and spaces to be experienced. It is fundamental to break with a technical formation that reduces the group problems and explore tools that do not stimulate the shared reflection, but they work as guides.

It is necessary to take into account the critical and contextualized reflection can be a good tool of production and pedagogical innovation; the collective and systematic reflexive work involving real situations (objective and subjective) can put into movement essential decisions to make the present and future pedagogical actions stronger; the organizational aspect of teaching as well as subject conditions to recognize the necessary routines to pedagogical practice are a base for the work dynamization in the classroom.

Therefore, the formation needs to prioritize the collective processes, the common spaces capable of propitiating the construction of the shared pedagogical knowledge.

In that direction, the incorporation of a collaboration culture results in the understanding of the mediation and interaction processes in pairs, putting into risk the decision making, essential to the cooperation strengthening, which is helping the other can illuminate my own experience, besides providing its expansion. Finally, it is important to refer the formative processes require shared reflection spaces, taking in consideration the multiple social and cultural contexts of the subjects in this process.

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