





The Construction Process of Teaching Professionals: Aspects Concerning Issues Initial Training

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ABSTRACT

This paper was written from experiences and records collected during teaching activities taught to two classes of the fourth year of the Pedagogy course of a university in the interior of São Paulo. Its main objective is to provoke reflections on the aspects of teacher professionalism that are developed or should be developed in the context of initial teacher training. For that, a qualitative study of an empirical nature was carried out, which counted on the appreciation of fifty written productions of licensees, analyzed according to the technique of Content Analysis and collated with the area reference. These productions were guided by questions that problematized the place of the initial formation in the process of constitution of the teaching professional, what can be anticipated on the teaching activity before the effective professional entrance and what are the elements capable of preparing the future teacher for a safe career start. The results of the study showed that the graduates demand a training that articulates more clearly the theory and the practice and that prepares them better in didactic and behavioral aspects for the insertion to the teaching.

KEYWORDS

Teacher training. Teaching. Teaching practice. Pedagogy course.

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O Processo de Construção da Profissionalidade Docente: Aspectos Concernentes à Formação Inicial

RESUMO

Este artigo foi escrito a partir de experiências e registros coletados ao longo de atividades de ensino ministradas a duas turmas do quarto ano do curso de Pedagogia de uma universidade do interior paulista. Seu objetivo principal reside em provocar reflexões sobre os aspectos da profissionalidade docente que se desenvolvem, ou deveriam se desenvolver, no âmbito da formação inicial de professores. Para tanto, realizou-se um estudo qualitativo de natureza empírica que contou com a apreciação de cinquenta produções escritas de licenciandos, analisadas segundo a técnica da Análise de Conteúdo e cotejadas com o referencial da área. As referidas produções foram orientadas por questões que problematizaram qual é o lugar da formação inicial no processo de constituição da profissionalidade docente, o que se pode antecipar sobre a atividade docente antes do efetivo ingresso profissional e quais são os elementos capazes de preparar o futuro professor para um início de carreira com segurança. Os resultados do estudo evidenciaram que os licenciandos reivindicam uma formação que articule com mais clareza a teoria e a prática e que os prepare melhor nos aspectos didático e comportamental para a inserção à docência.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Formação de professores. Docência. Prática Docente. Curso de pedagogia.

El Proceso de Construcción de la Profesionalidad Docente: Aspectos Concernientes a la Formación Inicial

RESUMEN

Este artículo fue escrito a partir de experiencias y registros recolectados a lo largo de actividades de enseñanza impartidas a dos clases del cuarto año del curso de Pedagogía de una universidad del interior paulista. Su objetivo principal reside en provocar reflexiones sobre los aspectos de la profesionalidad docente que se desarrollan, o deberían desarrollarse, en el ámbito de la formación inicial de profesores. Para ello, se realizó un estudio cualitativo de naturaleza empírica que contó con la apreciación de cincuenta producciones escritas de licenciandos, analizadas según la técnica del Análisis de Contenido y cotejadas con el referencial del área. Las referidas producciones fueron orientadas por cuestiones que problematizaron cuál es el lugar de la formación inicial en el proceso de constitución de la profesionalidad docente, lo que se puede anticipar sobre la actividad docente antes del efectivo ingreso profesional y cuáles son los elementos capaces de preparar al futuro profesor para un inicio de carrera con seguridad. Los resultados del estudio evidenciaron que los licenciandos reivindican una formación que articule con más claridad la teoría y la práctica y que los prepare mejor en los aspectos didáctico y conductual para la inserción a la docencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Formación de profesores. Enseñanza. Práctica docente. Curso de pedagogía.

Introduction

“Knowing more about the teacher, knowing about their work and their graduation, on the profession learning perspective, represents currently a relevant task, as for the researchers that study this thematic, as for the professionals that, working in our schools, deal with ... not the very smooth paths of teaching”.

(Translated – Maria Regina Guarnieri, 2005).

The teaching practice, like other professions, is complex and needs to be built up. Its constitution is shaped by a long formative course that goes through learning the ways of teaching and of developing continuously. In this process, it is undeniable to emphasize that the initial formation represents a formal moment for this learning to be promoted in a systematic, grounded and contextualized way (MIZUKAMI, 2013).

The initial training course of teachers has quite precise functions: to provide the learners of teaching practice with the knowledge and strategies to deal directly with real teaching situations, as well as skills to relate among other teachers and to the participants in the school universe; to promote fruitful discussions about the main dilemmas to be found in the profession, and adequate preparation on how to behave in the classroom – which can be practiced in the supervised stages –; develop skills on how to manage class and subject management; propitiate the study and the relation of the theoretical contributions with the future professional practice. These functions, therefore, cannot be restricted to reading texts and performing exclusively theoretical activities.

Recent Brazilians surveys (GATTI *et al.*, 2013; GUARNIERI, 2012; SOUZA; GUARNIERI, 2016) have warned us about the misconception committed when conferring the theory attribute to the initial formation and the practice to the professional teaching practice. Each time with more intensity, it is recommended that graduation courses must be consolidated in and for practice. It should be emphasized, however, that this proposition does not mean that the retreat of theory is the most correct. Quite the opposite. It is hoped, therefore, that the knowledge derived from the academic-scientific contributions be presented as links of connection with practical knowledge, in order to make the line that separates the future teachers from teaching more and more tenuous, which as mentioned in the epigraph which precedes the beginning of this text, follows 'not very smooth paths'.

For this reason of reasoning, it is argued that in the initial formation certain aspects relative to the **teacher professionalism**¹ should be already developed. But what would these be? Responding to this questioning, considering the perspective of graduates of a Pedagogy course, is what the present experience report intends.

¹ The concept of teacher professionalism is understood here as that which is "specific in the teaching activity, that is, the set of behaviors, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that constitute the specificity of being a teacher" (GIMENO SACRISTÁN, 1995, p. 64).

Experience Report: Professionalism in Initial Training

In this section we will discuss the work that has taken place as the analysis object of graduates' perceptions who are attending the senior year of Pedagogy² at a university in the countryside of São Paulo, regarding on how to construct teacher professionalism. It is a qualitative study anchored in teaching experiences, in the discipline of the didactics department, and in the systematization of information; being the first task carried out by the author of the article, and the second, carried out in collaboration with the co-author.

The exercise of disciplines linked to the didactics department requires the teacher to pay particular attention to the precepts that guide the educational practice. When this need was recognized, the conduction of the lectures took as a starting point a discussion about how we became teachers.

At first, despite the open and inviting approach to participation, the students remained attentive, but few of them commented. This is an expected position, especially in the first class, since the pupils of the course in question usually expresses a gradual involvement. In the following meetings, as they perceived the dialogue between the discipline and their desires, they were allowed to interact more frequently.

In the middle of readings and weekly activities, videos and seminars, the discipline got developed. Among the activities proposed, we would like to make a point of attention to the reading of an article by Kishimoto (2005) – a forerunner of all the late raised debates. In her text 'Pedagogy and teacher training in Early Childhood Education' (translated) the author produces a series of criticisms in the structure of the Pedagogy course, especially as regards the permanence of the eminently theoretical character of the formation.

The text reading and its splitting, guided by the PowerPoint resource, voluntarily awakened in the students the interest in deepening in correlated studies, which ended up evidencing, in the following discussions, the anguish feeling for being in the a senior year and still having the dilemmas on how to deal with the practice. For them, more than a conceptual reading – peculiar to the initial formation –, the text was an encouragement to the impasses that they experience daily in the stages. Thus, one of the topics covered by the author was opportune for new questions to be raised, such as the subject of teacher professionalism.

After pointing out the contributions of so many authors and extensive conversations, from the review of previous studies to the personal concerns of the students groups, it was suggested to carry out an activity, to be described in the next subsection.

² It should be noted that the teaching activity carried out with these groups occurred in the first half of 2018, and that the emphasis on the theme circumscribed in this paper extended between the months of March and May.

About The Methodological Procedures Adopted

It is our intention to develop, in this subsection, the analysis of Pedagogy undergraduates perceptions on the construction of teacher professionalism. In order to instigate them, an activity was given to them; the activity had three questions, in which the students should write a text to answer them. They are: What is the initial formation place in the constitution process of teacher professionalism? What can be anticipated about the teaching activity before the effective professional entrance? What are the capable elements to prepare the future teacher for a safer career start?

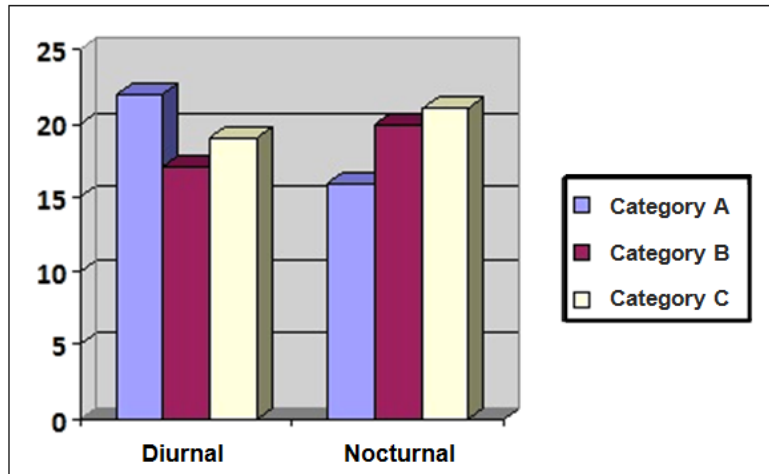
Altogether, fifty (50) productions were recorded, twenty-four (24) of the daytime and twenty-six (26) of the nocturnal. To support the study of its contents, we support the theoretical-methodological orientation of Content Analysis (BARDIN, 2011). Initially, we consider the phase that the author classifies as 'pre-analysis'.

The pre-analysis required the use of different operations, which included: sampling, that is, a methodological delimitation based on well-defined criteria of the analysis material; pertinence, characterized by the choice of fractions of information that correspond to the purpose of the analysis; and systematization, which consisted in the methodical arrangement of the analyzed material.

The second phase referred to the time of exploitation of the material. It is often too long and facile and focuses on coding operations. In the case of the present study, this phase corresponded to the interlocution between the data collected and the contributions coming from researches that investigate the professionalism of the teacher and its constitution process.

For the treatment of the data, three categories of analysis were established, being: A) Valorization of the practical knowledge and its inseparability with the theory; B) Investment in preparation by the university for the understanding of questions pertinent to teaching; and C) Adequate conditions for the insertion to the teaching in the supervised stages. The categories' nomenclatures are justified by the high frequency with which subjects related to them were mentioned in the collected materials, as shown in the graph:

Graph 1. Frequency of categories listed



Source: Authors elaboration based on written records

The categories' frequencies raised from the systematization of the students' texts have revealed that, for the diurnal class, the main aspect that configures the initial construction of teacher professionalism is the articulation between theory and practice, while, according to the class of the nocturnal, the appropriate conditions to perform the stages are highlighted. It should be noted, however, that both classes emphasized emphatically aspects concerning the three categories of analysis and that the variations between their positions were not expressive to the point of analyzing them separately.

About the Interlocution Between the Notes Obtained and the Area Researches

In this subsection, it is going to be described fragments of the written records produced by the students and analyze their content, properly organized, in face of what the literature of the area postulates.

As a first step, we could verify, in the licensees' registers³, emphases that go to the fact defense that the teacher professionalism, in fact, emerges in the initial formation. Supporting this observation, Gimeno Sacristán (1995) asserts that professionalism and formation are deeply connected. Since professionalism covers the teachers' psychological and cultural conditions, the author understands that these conditions must be covered since joining the undergraduate courses. It is up to the initial formation, therefore, to trigger strategic thinking, that is, the methods that guide decision making, problem solving, as well as the analysis and evaluation of pedagogical practices.

The more specific aspects of this relationship can be dealt with under different approaches, as shown in the categories discussed in the topics below.

³ In order to ensure the confidentiality of the undergraduates involved, we chose to designate them by the letter 'L', followed by a number, hyphen and period.

A) Valorization of practical knowledge and its inseparability with theory:

Since the 1990s, teacher training has been an expressive – and, perhaps, the most explored – tendency in the field of education. Among the main objects of research analysis carried out over the last years, we can safely emphasize the relation between the theoretical field and the practical field in the scope of initial training.

Authors like Marcelo García (1999) and Nóvoa (1992) installed the practice recognition as a source of knowledge to be developed in undergraduate courses, inspiring a series of scholars. For them, when the licensee has the opportunity to visualize in practice the concepts learned in theory, he perceives in a more meaningful way what it is to be a teacher and begins to build his/hers professionalism.

In the other hand, can we visualize this premise of valuing practical knowledge in the courses that make up teachers? Based on the productions of the Pedagogy students, we find that:

The theories addressed within the university begin to make sense for the graduate student when he/she experiences them in an intensively practice, that is, developing the activities in the schools as a trainee and then discussing them with the teachers of higher education, and not when theory is one thing and practice is another (L7 - diurnal, 2018).

The theory is highly important, but I believe that the future teacher should be better prepared for practical matters. The university must provide opportunities for the student to know the means through which theory can give meaning to practice and not simply be "applied" to it. But what we experience is the learning of a theory that does not show us paths to be followed in future professional performance (L2 - nocturnal, 2018).

It is observed in the aforementioned registers that, although the initial formation has a high potential to develop the professionalism of the future teacher, a formation of a more academic nature has prevailed, privileging "the acquisition of a set of knowledge regarding the contents to be taught and to the sciences of education " (ESTEVEZ, 2007, p.186), without a true integration of these knowledge.

Despite the contributions made by the scientific community, advances in the meaning attributed to the curricular stages over the years and even the appeals of future teachers, the space for development of practice, in most of the formative institutions, still seems to be insufficient for the licensee to be able to assimilate the complexity of teaching (SOUZA; GUARNIERI, 2016).

B) Investment in preparation by the university for the understanding of questions pertinent to teaching:

In addition to a unity between theory and practice, it is important that the university promotes its students a preparation for the handling of situations that occur in schools. About this, the graduates' productions suggest that:

[...] instrumentalizing students with methodological possibilities needs to be one of the concerns of initial training, as well as the transmission of content. Several technical questions, which are a great challenge for the teacher, can be anticipated / addressed in the initial training, such as the lesson plan, activity planning, project design, etc. And others of a more structural character, in the sense of organizing time and space. This is the beginning of the professionalism that will be developed during the career (L10 - diurnal, 2018).

[...] how to get to school, how to dialogue with the experienced teacher, how to understand the routines ... It may be that when we are acting, after being graduated, things are different, because everything will depend on our context, but it is essential that we already have a basis for being prepared to face the challenges of the classroom (L6 - nocturnal, 2018).

It is interesting to note that in the excerpt from the L10 register, the importance of learning methodologies and pedagogical practices is highlighted, while L6 emphasizes the need to know the profile of already active teachers and to align an appropriate behavioral posture in the period of insertion into teaching. Both considerations are very important in this study, since they reveal aspects that contribute to the development of teacher professionalism, already coined by Roldão (2000, p. 2), namely: ownership and production of a specific knowledge for the this function performance; the power over the exercise of the activity, at the level of the decision supported in the knowledge, and legitimized by it; reciprocity and exchanges (of knowledge and services) between professional partners; belonging to a professional community with its own culture and identity.

However, as well as verified in category A – which dealt with the relation theory and practice –, it is seen once again that the graduates design an ideal formation based on their needs. They reiterate, by authenticating the knowledge produced by scientific research, that the initial formation would have full possibility of offering them an expressive preparation for the practice, but that it remains below that expectation.

C) Adequate conditions for the insertion to the teaching in the supervised stages:

The way in which the graduation students are inserted in the schools defines in part how will be their learning level of the teaching. Therefore, it is essential to observe how the university's relationship with the schools' groups in the educational network, which is where the graduation students are received, is established, and whether or not its insertion occurs in an oriented or non-oriented way (SOUZA; GUARNIERI, 2016). Adhering to this proposition, the L7 record states:

It is important to highlight how teachers in the disciplines lead students to the internship to arrive and be well received in schools. [...] It is important, especially, that the trainee has an effective participation that aims to collaborate for his practical learning of teaching. [...] For this, a dialectic relationship must be established between undergraduate, university and school students (L7 - diurnal, 2018).

In general, the Guidelines for the Initial Formation of Teachers for Basic Education (BRAZIL, 2000, p.23) state that the contact between the two formative institutions - school and university - is restricted and inconstant, which ratifies the first failure of this moment, because usually it becomes "the responsibility of the trainee him/herself to choose and contact the school in which he will take an internship."

Another aspect worth mentioning is the type of work performed by the trainee. It is already known by the researches (GATTI et al., 2013, GUARNIERI, 2012; MARCELO GARCÍA, 2011; 1999; SOUZA; GUARNIERI, 2016) that the graduates who have the opportunity to experience the multiple pedagogical facets in an organic way tend to suffer fewer impacts when they start their careers professionally. This is because they may be able to establish appropriate attitudes and strategies in a given context because of the close and active contact with actual classroom situations they had during the internship. Graduates who, in turn, simply observe teachers' practices without being able to intervene, tend to argue that during the internship they did not acquire even a solid notion of what the teaching work is.

Unfortunately, recent research points to the second option as the most recurrent and this is also verified in the production of L11 when punctuating:

The supervised internship could be an excellent field for the development of professional teaching, but the way it happens does not give us support for this. In it, observations, regencies, lesson planning in different contents, management principles and coordination could be worked out [...] but, unfortunately, what we see is the perpetuation of inappropriate practices that are repeated throughout the history of education in our country (L11 - nocturnal, 2018).

We have seen, throughout the three categories discussed, that the initial formation represents, indisputably, a stage of construction of the teacher professionalism. However, the present records in the textual productions of the Pedagogy students have shown us, as well as the authors that investigate this field of study, that the configuration and conduct of this training do not portray the good development of aspects of professionalism.

Expressions such as 'could be', 'should be', 'need to be', were common in most productions when mentioning possibilities for strengthening insertion into teaching, articulation between theory and practice, and preparation for practice. To think of them as something that would have the potential to be great, but is not, at the same time that reveals dissatisfaction with the curricular organization of the course of Pedagogy and the way of conducting the disciplines, points to a light in the future, since the claims are already present, it may be that the change becomes tangible.

Final Considerations

In the light of this experience, our first consideration is to record that rather than simply validating the content of research through the textual productions of the graduates, we seek to value the ideas, feelings and expectations of those who are on the threshold of the

student-teacher transition. To give 'voice' to future teachers through the use of writing represented, from the point of view of teachers, an opportunity to recreate the space of the classroom, making it more inviting to collective participation, in a horizontal perspective of teaching and learning. For the students, it symbolized a chance to express their anguish and to have them perfectly open to discussion.

Without departing from our scope, a second consideration must also be given: with regard to initial training, understood as the stage preceding entry into the profession, during which future teachers are expected to acquire knowledge and develop skills inherent in educational task, it has been found that this has been a failure to prepare professionals who should be able to understand the educational challenges of an increasingly intricate and demanding society.

In view of these notes, it is incumbent on us to conclude that, yes, initial training is the territory of preliminary construction of teacher professionalism, since it has all the necessary basis for the development of an amalgam of didactic and behavioral skills, for the intertwining between scientific knowledge and knowledge of experience, always marked by the contextual contingent, and for the establishment of discussions that take into account the learning of a profession. As we alluded to at the beginning of this work, teaching, like other professions, is complex and needs to be built up. And if the other professions begin to be built up in initial formation, with frequent movements between theory and practice, why should it be different in teacher training?

That the appeals of the researches, among which the present report modestly subscribes, serve to inspire in some way the undergraduate courses curricula and, above all, the practices of the professors that minister the university disciplines.

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