

THE ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This academic article aims to examine the professional growth of professors in higher education through an understanding of practical experiences, essential for the educator's training. Thus, it seeks to reflect on the perspectives of authors who address these experiences in the university context and in daily life, both inside and outside the classroom, in higher education, in the construction of knowledge by teachers and students. The focus is on identifying the main competencies acquired in teacher training; analyzing the remaining characteristics of each, their contributions to the development of skills and competencies, and exploring the theoretical and methodological foundations that guide the relationship between theory and practice in addressing teaching topics. The research will be primarily bibliographic, focusing on theoretical studies related to the topic. Through these sources, the roles of practical knowledge in teacher training will be analyzed. To support the analysis, authors such as Monteiro (2007), Pimenta (2002), Tardif (2012), among others, will be referenced. Furthermore, this study seeks to define the key knowledge offered, enabling a meaningful connection with the social context, communities, their cultures

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and values, while also exercising our political responsibility in decision-making and effectively influencing our actions as professionals capable of shaping opinions and mindsets.

Keywords: Practical knowledge, Teaching performance, Higher education.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that teachers from various fields are in constant pursuit of a pedagogical practice that makes their knowledge viable throughout their education—knowledge that is continually renewed by the desire to confront the problems present in daily life, especially in the workplace.

The development of this study will initially be based on theoretical contributions that address the aforementioned theme, such as Monteiro (2007), Pimenta (2002), Tardif (2012), among others.

As to its purpose, we emphasize the importance of lived experience—inside and outside the classroom—as a reference for teaching. On that basis, this study intends to point out, in light of acquired knowledge, significant advantages for our teaching practice in this field, observing in which contexts greater difficulties were encountered, which theoretical-methodological assumptions were most operationalized, and how to understand the importance attributed to the knowledge acquired in this relationship. This is essential for an appropriate discursive posture toward the themes offered by teaching, in its integration with the world and with the people who are situated within it.

This article will also undertake studies within a new paradigm that demonstrates the advantages gained through an experiential trajectory, reintegrating the contributions offered by our education in the face of changes evidenced across time and space. Beyond perceiving and seeking to understand these changes, we examine the relationship established between theory and practice, thus projecting significant instruments in our formation, with the aim that they may be applied in our daily and professional lives.

In this research, conceptions offered by authors who refer to the importance that experiential knowledge exerts in our personal and professional lives will be analyzed. Such knowledge is indicated here as an important instrument for reintegrating lived experience within the socio-educational milieu,

through which we may contribute to improved reflection on teacher education—especially with regard to teaching—yet also concerning the responsibilities attributed to it.

Regarding the organization of this scientific article, it will include a contextualization composed of: knowledge constructed during the formation process; the principal theoretical-methodological assumptions applied in the interaction between theory and practice directed to the themes discussed in teaching; the importance of experiential knowledge for teacher education; and the support offered by such knowledge for the construction of teachers' skills and competencies.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN TEACHING

In fact, it is known that there are no ready-made recipes and that, many times, professional education is carried out at a distance from the reality of the field in which we are situated. Solutions often emerge through different experiences shaped by urgent needs, when, dialectically, under reflection and evaluative analysis of pedagogical action, we are able to reach the expected results.

In this context, the author describes a general framework of educational regulations from 1930 onward, adopting that date as a watershed in Brazilian education and, at times, highlighting the relationships between historical conjunctions and the characteristics assumed by regulatory frameworks.

Education, as a pedagogical practice, faces the challenge of responding to the demands that contexts place upon it. In this sense, society expects education to be able to develop a form of education that is compatible with and committed to the organization and development of the purposes of the social design (Pimenta, 2002, p. 47).

Indeed, this is an extensive theme and therefore must be studied in its theoretical-methodological assumptions, in light of its real needs, thus addressing the prevailing reality in which it is situated within the scope of higher education.

In this interim, one may infer that educational research contributes to the process of questioning and reflection already established, in which theory is related to practice in the challenge of understanding the knowledge offered.

Nevertheless, through this theme one seeks to define the knowledge offered, through which we may become capable of constructing our relationship with the social milieu, with the people who live within it, and with the cultures that exist there—regarding our political act of decision-making and, more precisely, its concrete enactment in our professional work as shapers of opinions and mindsets. At the same time, we must be capable of transforming—whether in a problem-posing and/or discursive manner—the articulation with these urgent needs in the classroom, taking into account the different environments and/or realities that permeate it.

The personal and socio-educational formation of a professional are fundamental processes within higher education. In this respect, the acquisition of knowledge provided by this construction enables a better understanding and transformation of the reality in which one is situated.

Teacher education and the exercise of the teaching profession are situated, however, within a logic that—seeking to measure the “quality” of schools and/or their students through national evaluation processes—has created a ranking exploited by the media and a source of controversy among teachers, education technicians, students, and their families. By instituting educational establishments as the starting point of dynamics of competition and parental choice, the Law of Guidelines and Bases (1996) established the darker side of the autonomy that Brazilian schools today enjoy with regard to their pedagogical proposal (Monteiro; Gasparello; Magalhães, 2004, p. 47).

In this way, the curriculum defines teaching content with the aim of optimizing teachers’ skills and competencies. However, there is complexity in this process, requiring greater proximity to experiential practice in the classroom so that teachers can discern the construction of curricular and disciplinary knowledge allied to experiential knowledge—thereby enabling effective performance in carrying out the role of educator and ensuring conditions to continue their formative process.

Experiential knowledge is rooted in the following broader fact: teaching develops in a context of multiple interactions that represent diverse constraints on the teacher's work. These constraints are not abstract problems like those encountered by the scientist, nor technical problems like those faced by technicians and technologists. The scientist and the technician work from models, and their constraints result from the application or development of those models (Tardif, 2012, p. 49).

Our forms of knowledge are present throughout our lives, but they become systematized and observably so from the moment we begin attending school, because in that environment they become institutionalized. The school context contributes to the significance of our culture based on the knowledge we already possess, adding new knowledge so that it may shape our conception of reality.

Access to this environment contributes to our intellectual development. Any information added will be analyzed, confronted, and modified by our previously constructed ideas and knowledge. The appropriation of experience has significant importance for any professional, including the teacher, because it contributes to confidence in interpretations of reality situated in time and space.

When we relate the selection and appropriation of knowledge as science properly so called, we can reflect, in the educational context, on the significant role that learning plays in higher education—starting from one's own individual action within the social milieu, in groups of coexistence, through conscious participation in society, understanding oneself, others, and one's insertion in society, and participating precisely in its construction.

If, around school failure, discourses and satisfactory procedures remain silent, this seems to push us, strategically, toward the successive displacement of attention from the observable to the sayable and to ways of saying, from deconstruction to the construction of existing representations (Monteiro; Gasparello; Magalhães, 2004, p. 52).

However, this process needs the teacher's contribution as mediator of knowledge, for the teacher is an important subject of integration in the exchange of stimuli between what is studied and what is lived, in consonance with other areas of knowledge, in the confrontation of opinions, and in the transformation of conceptions.

In view of the method still most widely used today—the conventional transmissive method, based on the sequence exposition–study–exercise–test or examination—different pedagogical currents sought alternatives by offering solutions that, in one way or another, also represented stereotyped models (Zabala; Arnau, 2010, p. 143).

Nevertheless, even in the face of difficulties in choosing an appropriate teaching method, there is awareness of the need to broaden teaching—not abandoning the conventional method entirely, but diversifying its procedural context in light of choices and criteria selected by learners—in order to make them active subjects capable of identifying their social relations with the group, questioning their reality, and mastering research practices.

In truth, when working with knowledge through a process of investigation and analysis, one of the teacher’s functions at the higher-education level is to analyze knowledge itself, having the power to classify it, thereby highlighting subjectivity and partiality.

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

With the emergence of new technologies, the gradual growth of existing problems, and the various thematic discussions within the educational field—and particularly in teaching—our contemporary world requires a deeper and highly careful study of what measures can be taken to understand such issues. Hence the need to invest, during our professional formation within the educational process, in order to find our own identity—through which we may make viable, by means of the knowledge constructed, instruments capable of meeting our real needs in the contexts in which we find ourselves.

To be in formation implies a personal, free, and creative investment in pathways and projects, with a view to constructing a personal identity that is also a professional identity. [...] Formation is constructed through work of critical reflexivity on practices and through the permanent reconstruction of a personal identity (Nóvoa, 1991, p. 70).

With regard to these forms of knowledge, they must stem from one's lived experience during teaching practice inside and outside the classroom, alongside initial formation, within a partnership between the instructor and the learner, and also in partnership with one's students.

When the teacher has these characteristics, the teacher is recognized as a subject capable of promoting change, because, in addition to speaking out against economic, political, and social injustices inside and outside the school, the teacher also works to create conditions that give students the opportunity to become citizens who are likewise critical and transformative (Giroux, 1997, p. 111).

Thus, a direction is shaped by existing needs, establishing an articulation with the forms of knowledge one intends to formalize, thereby creating essential conditions for the viability of a pedagogical practice that promotes greater dynamism in the teaching–learning process. Brito (2006) states that the teacher's thinking is constructed based on individual experiences and on exchanges and interactions with others. However, this professional often complains that initial formation leaves much to be desired, because many of these courses remain strongly attached to theory, forgetting to associate it with practice; they depart from the prevailing reality and from real conflicts, failing to demonstrate, in concrete terms, how such theory is realized so that it may be analyzed and its viability observed.

Initial training is considered by teachers to be excessively theoretical or insufficiently practical, too far removed from classroom reality and tied to pre-established models. Teachers complain that training courses do not make explicit enough the difficulties that would be encountered in everyday school life [...] and that they did not provide sufficient information about strategies for dealing with students and techniques to be applied when real problems arise (Perrenoud, 1996, p. 86).

With the formation of theoretical knowledge, and with permission to integrate it with practice, the educator will dialectically enable reflection on the concrete functionality of that knowledge acquired during formation, with greater proximity to the dynamic forms of knowledge constructed therein. Through such discernment, the educator can identify which important skills and competencies may be embedded in the know-how constructed within everyday professional experience.

The teacher is defined as an actor—that is, a subject who assumes his or her practice according to the meaning that he or she attributes to it, possessing knowledge and a know-how that originate from his or her own teaching activity, from which the teacher structures and orients practice (Ziberti; Sousa, 2007, p. 250).

Thus, with respect to competence and teacher know-how, the teacher can play a fundamental role in coordinating a teaching–learning process directed to the work environment itself and to the characteristics pertinent to the different bodies of knowledge that persist within formation, in consonance with the reality expressed by students. Giving meaning to these considerations, Veiga (2007, p. 36) offers reflections on these affirmations, contextualizing:

The teacher structures, throughout the process of constructing his or her professional pathway, the pedagogical space that expresses the knowledge of the craft, created in the context of his or her trajectory and resulting from a plurality of knowledges: knowledge related to the sciences of education and pedagogical ideas; curricular knowledge, related to the selection of academic knowledge linked to teaching; and experiential knowledge, originating from professional practice, constructed individually or through the socialization of one's work.

However, the teacher needs to be endowed with different competencies that can contribute to better performance of the function—not in a mechanical manner and without instilling objectivity, but through studied theoretical-methodological assumptions that facilitate better organization of actions around higher education in which students are promoted toward gradual growth with regard to understanding and constructing arguments that ensure participation in society. For this, the teacher must learn to have clarity about the competence acquired during lived teaching experience, which defines the mobilization of main educational intentions within skills, concepts, and attitudes constructed in partnership with the external environment and in relationship with students. In accordance with these considerations, we anchor ourselves in the following quotation:

Learning a competence is very far from mechanical learning and implies the highest possible degree of relevance and functionality, because in order to be used both the competence itself and its procedural, attitudinal, and conceptual components must make sense (Zabala, 2010, p. 93).

In fact, an educator must have the competence to establish a relationship with the role of making the student reflect, assuming responsibility in sensible attitudes, and enabling the transformation of the socio-cultural and political context. Thus, over the course of this process, the educator will evaluate the intended objectivity, perceiving the relationship between lived experience in the workplace and educational formation, analyzing the results evidenced therein.

This dimensioning of teaching work, with respect for the moral concern for students' well-being and for ethics, with commitment to the community, in partnership regarding problems, as well as professional competence in the mastery of skills and techniques, requires that a challenge be made viable: changing ways of thinking at three levels through which one passes, namely, mentalities, practices, and commitments. According to Machado (1996), the first refers to the way of thinking, judging, and acting. The second is associated with how to transform lived experiences into objects of analysis and reflection. The third moves discourse into action, articulating the real possible and the ideal, dismantling the fantasies surrounding it—the world of programs—thus managing proposals capable of dialoguing with emergent practices and realities, restoring the meaning of planning for action and the discussion of the instruments offered.

In this formation process, autonomy, responsibility, and training are characteristics traditionally associated with professional values that should be discussed in the teaching profession. Beyond these values, other spheres and/or realities involved in this experiential trajectory are also propagated, reflected in the teaching practice of teachers who faced numerous difficulties during a transitional period between the military dictatorship and democratic expansion.

According to Gimeno Sacristán as cited by Papi (2005), education involves other spheres—political, economic, and cultural determinations—and this means that teachers do not have total control over practice, since such sectors interfere in professional life. In this involvement between the construction of practice and this professional's lived experience, identity within formation is influenced, becoming linked to emergent changes and needs.

In studies referenced by Pimenta (2002), identity cannot be considered an immutable given, nor an ultimate end that can be acquired; rather, it is a process of constructing the subject as a situated transmitter of knowledge. The teaching profession, like others, emerges at a given moment and in a determined context, as a response to needs posed by society, acquiring its own status and legal imposition. Pimenta and Lima (2004) also state that it is in the formation process that the profession's options and intentions are consolidated. Thus, professional identity is built through experiences and through higher-education-level teacher formation.

From this concern, it is appropriate to analyze the contributions brought by practice lived inside and outside the classroom, acting as a teacher, in light of conceptual, procedural, and attitudinal development made effective by initial and/or continuing formation.

In the classroom, it is known that the teacher faces countless situations and/or individualities. Thus interventions emerge that the teacher makes available to undertake, and through this the teacher acquires extensive experience, which then interacts with the various forms of professional knowledge acquired. According to Tardif (2000, p. 45): "Professional knowledge is learned in practice, through experience, in contact with the reality of work and with other social actors, within a broader process that is professional socialization."

In fact, there is awareness that a highly contradictory reality persists regarding our education, including one influenced by the need for better professional qualification, as a consequence of greater incentives for initial and continuing education and of subsidized contributions that are not monitored.

Teachers, educational authorities, and the training policies themselves, however, end up assuming the premise that formation is something one receives. But it is more than that. It is a complex process of interaction that has been shaken by the growth of everyday work in schools; by instruments of control and evaluation; and by the presence of new tasks demanded by educational reforms (Monteiro; Gasparello; Magalhães, 2004, p. 51).

Formation, in this sense, constitutes a process that contributes substantially to articulating theory and practice in classroom teaching. However, constructing quality education is associated with a series of

experiences lived by the teacher inside and outside the classroom, which are linked systematically and unsystematically to students' reality.

Yet, despite all the afflictions in this sphere, one experiences gradual advancement, driven by the educator's concern to build a career in consonance with better preparation for divergent situations, thus managing—through pedagogical practice—to navigate existing problems.

The complexity of this proposed theme leads us to an exercise of analyzing different **theoretical-methodological** procedures, both more usual and more innovative. Accordingly, we were led to a bibliographic review of specialized literature in the field, investigations, and reflective sessions, thereby making it possible to classify the construction of thinking during the teaching–learning process as operationalized through the moment of formation.

With more intensive theoretical deepening, it is possible to indicate suggestions that may improve school practice in teaching. Although there still frequently exists a traditional discourse in which most teachers, in their teaching practice, do not use critical reflection as a basis, there are many limitations with regard to classroom practice.

THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

It is known that for a long time—and even today—teaching has been characterized by the traditional practice of positivism, leading students to restrict themselves in their knowledge. This type of teaching implies concern with not creating questions and not debating the content studied in the classroom, thus avoiding a critical stance and the formulation of a science with a problem.

Science plays a significant role in society's life, because in order to understand the changes that occur constantly and how scientists interact, we must study and understand knowledge itself. Hence the discussions about the teaching of science, the role played by the teacher in learning, and better preparation of this professional in teaching activities.

In opposition to these ideas, new conceptions emerged with proposals considered inverse to those preached by positivism. As an example, we highlight the Annales school, which in its three generations—represented by Henri Berr, Lucien Febvre, Marc Bloch, and Le Goff—began to value more significant participation in theoretical debates, eliminating a single specialty and promoting the practice of multidisciplinary, with more concrete discussions, in which one would not present merely corollaries, but a continuous and participatory science that takes into account the process of knowledge, situated within defined lines of research.

As we have seen, time brings about changes, and alongside them arise new concerns, research, themes, and new tendencies to which teaching adapts. Through these transformations—imposed by globalization and technology—teaching converges and allows innovations to exert influence on its themes, on the emergence of plural identities, on the strengthening of cultural democratization, on the full exercise of citizenship, and on the genders evidenced by this new way of thinking about the importance of experience for formation in teaching.

In the face of these changes—whether in socio-cultural, political, or economic aspects—the need is considerably strengthened to seek, within higher education and within the teacher–student and teaching–learning relationship, new knowledge and new methods capable of accompanying them, so that no realities, or few realities, remain deprived of information that supports their arguments for decision-making as true protagonists of this new way of doing teaching. Thus, it aims to recognize the influence and importance of the learner by enabling the learner to assign new meaning.

School and curriculum represent one of the most central social inventions of modernity. As such, they constitute particularly distinctive ways of organizing the experiences and activities of children and young people for the formation and construction of subjectivities and social identities (Goodson, 1995, p. 109).

The quotation focuses on contributing to the discussion of the character of curriculum and the importance of teaching action **to** renew and rethink culture in higher education.

However, these testimonies may be necessary for us to observe how teachers' thinking and teaching experience were taken into account in the mobilization of a formal, informal, and hidden process within emancipations, in the manifestation of knowledge that could significantly benefit the learner. This occurs through the insertion of theoretical-methodological assumptions that make viable a critical, reflective, and transformative formation in light of the academic curriculum and existing laws—projecting competencies capable of discerning and downplaying certain problem situations in the field of the sciences.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Teaching constitutes a broad field of research in an ongoing process of construction, which legitimizes and affirms itself both in institutional spaces of knowledge production in the field of Education. In Brazil, this field of knowledge is situated in an interdisciplinary space built in the interrelation of science and its knowledge, in the search for understanding the teaching–learning processes in higher education.

It is necessary for the teacher to make students aware that one cannot survive without science. It is necessary to show students that science is in full evolution and does not exist by itself, but rather as a result of ideas that add up, values that multiply, and systematic knowledge that intertwines.

In this sense, teaching practice must be grounded in higher education that is carried out through meaningful activities, in a productive dialogue between thought and action—awakening, provoking, and making possible the autonomy of being and doing.

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