

Educational Journey on the Teachers' Narrative

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Abstract: Initial and continuous education for teachers has been studied at Group of Studies and Research on Language, Teaching and Teachers' narrative (GEPLENP in Portuguese). In order to do so, we use teacher's narratives from public schools in Assis/SP. Narrative researches have been very widely spread either in Brazil or in any other country. Meaningful papers have shown how important the topic is as well as the method used. This research tries to identify teachers' social representations, which result from historic, cultural and time constitutions in order to get close to group of teachers' representations about their initial and continuous education. The individual and singular narrative method gives us the opportunity to access the history told by the participants. The results point out that initial education promotes the opposition between theory and praxis and use of tool is highlighted in continuous education, which limits possibilities of teachers' reflection on their own school role thus evidencing institutional interests.

Key words: teacher education, narratives, social representations

Teachers' education is one of the issues of a broader research that has been developed by the Group of Studies and Research on Language, Teaching and Teachers' Narrative (GEPLENP/Unesp), in a public school in Assis – SP – Brazil (The main research is been development with 40 teachers in 5 different schools situated in the suburb of Assis). The research has developed based, mainly, on teachers' narratives.

Narrative research in Education, including biographies, life histories, self biographies, oral report, testimonial, has been spread and used in the last 20 years. Researchers such as Nóvoa (1993; 2000), Pineau (1993; 2006), Josso (2006), Goodson (2008) and others have presented very significant papers in this area, which deals with educators, from their reflexive conception to their initial and continuous education. According to Nóvoa (1993, p. 18):

[...] the use of self-biography contemporary approaches is a result from social Science non satisfaction concerning the type of knowledge produced and the need of a renewing the ways of scientific knowledge... the new attention given [to this approach] in scientific field is the expression of a broader social movement...we face a cultural change that makes subjects reappear face to structures and systems, quality face to quantity, living face to what is established. (free translation)

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We could say that this option, mainly Humanities on self-biographical research is a try to understand the subject in history, that is, in his/her daily life (Certeau, 1994). It's a way to understand the triangle subject, time and space, even meeting Chartier's (1991) social representations, by considering discourse, fact and quotidian, that is, the subject, on the basis of relations and social cultural universe senses by means of social practices.

This method is based on individual and singular narratives that allow us to access one side of the story, which is told by its own protagonists. There are some mediation in the relationship between interviewer and interviewee imposed by time and space, for, according to Bourdieu (1997, p. 694), "it's a relationship that pursue effects (variants according to different parameters that can affect) on the results". We could even say that the story told by the protagonists is a counterpoint with the story officially told, for the latter is many times mediated by external and institutional facts that can meet representations of those who slowly and daily build that universe. Moreover, that story is told by others, so it seems to be a voice shift, that is, the one who acts hardly ever speaks in public, others speak for him/her.

In this narrative research we decided to consider social representations using Roger Chartier (1991) perspective in which the premise is the subject living his own environment. We started from individual reports and throughout them, it is possible to identify the group, since we can consider individual persons are the result of historical, cultural and time formation and their discourse come from their own individual memory that reflects the group memory about initial and continuous education. We chose this kind of approach to discuss teachers' education because we believe we can understand their educational processes better when they tell us stories. By telling their everyday activities, teachers withdraw from their own experience what they tell or the experiences told by others., which goes through time, remains in the memory, gestures and the way to treat others. The interviewee almost becomes a look and intimacy editor, the extract of praxis got from the way people relate to one another and to themselves (Benjamin, 1994).

Goodson, in *Syllabus and Schooling Policies* (2208) points out that it is necessary to understand what is personal and what is biographical in order to analyze what is social and political. Still, according to Goodson, for the last 30 years governmental actions with no concerning on interest, purposes and professional experiences make them unmeaningful and with no precise effects. Therefore, it is relevant to hear what the teachers have to say in order to understand the elements, which form a teachers' job and their education. So, our investigation on teachers' education gave them the opportunity of an open dialogue in order to get educational profile of those who live school, thus trying to increase reflection on their own education in that field.

Discussions about teachers' education has been used by a great deal of researchers in different groups that represent Brazilian Education, such as ANPed — National Graduate and Research Association on Education, EDUCERE — National Congress on Education and ENDIPE — National Meeting on Didactics and Teaching Practices and so on. Our contribution is only a sample of the discussions about teacher's education and it takes part on debates and theoretical reflections about life histories or narratives, as it shows Nogueira; Almeida e Merlin (2013), Alves (2013), Ducatti-Silva et al. (2013), Barreiro et al. (2013); Sarmiento (2012), Roitberg (2012), Guimarães (2012), Andrade e Souza (2011) and others.

According to Gatti (2009), worries concerning teachers' education are not recent. The new fact is that they are growing lately due to tries to overcome social and cultural inequality we are facing and the challenges future seems to hold. We also should not forget that the bad results performed by basic education students in government assessments increase discourses that try to "blame" someone. However,

It must be clear that not only the teachers and their education are responsible for the current student's performance at schools. Several reasons help that as well, such as educational policies implemented, basic education funding, society natural lack of worry about the critical situation of real learning for low income people, school structure and management, managers' education, low income parents' social and schooling pattern ("no voice" people) and also, teachers' condition, their initial and continuing education, their career plan and salaries, and working conditions at schools. (GATTI, 2010, p. 1359)

Thus, we find it important to think about education broadly and linked to several issues that can influence everyday practices. So, we share Carlos Marcelo Garcia (1999) education concept in which he states that teachers' education take place along their professional life, their teaching career, and during that there are different stages that according to the author are: "pre education, initial, notivate and permanent education", the latter can also be defined as continuous education. In each stage, there are multiple experiences and they rely on new personal, professional and social educational demands and requirements (Marcelo, 1999, p. 112). He also presented a paper at the XI Education Congress (EDUCERE, 2013) in Curitiba where he showed how demanding society has been concerning teachers' permanent education.

Una de las características de la sociedad en la que vivimos tiene que ver con el hecho de que el conocimiento es uno de los principales valores de sus ciudadanos. El valor de las sociedades actuales está directamente relacionado con el nivel de formación de sus ciudadanos, y de la capacidad de innovación y emprender que estos posean. Pero los conocimientos, en nuestros días, tienen fecha de caducidad y ello nos obliga ahora más que nunca a establecer garantías formales e informales para que los ciudadanos y profesionales actualicen constantemente su competencia. Hemos entrado en una sociedad que exige de los profesionales una permanente actividad de formación y aprendizaje. (Marcelo-Garcia, 2013, p. 31222)

Garcia reinforces that the accelerated transformation process society demands, makes knowledge with expiration date, making permanent education necessary for teachers.

In Brazil there are 1,724 teacher's training courses throughout the country. Just by those figures, it is possible to notice that they are few even if they were equally distributed in 8.5 million square kilometers, but that is not true. Most of them are in the most developed and populated areas whereas distance places lack those courses. In São Paulo state, where this research took place, there are many courses in the capital as well as in most of the cities. In inland towns, most of the courses are private (Brasil, 2012). Education conditions are different either on syllabus as on course duration.

Because demand for teachers is growing, many professionals start their practice without being prepared to face practical teaching issues. That's why continuous education has been highlighted and it was already presented on article 61 9394/96 LDB (Basis and Guideline Law) that says:

Art. 61. In order to fulfill the objectives in different levels and modalities of teaching and the characteristics of each stage of the learner's development, Education training foundation:
I – association between theories and practices, including in service training;
II – use of previous training and experience in school and other activities.

As we analyze the law, we notice that not only initial education is important, but also in service training, when the person is already working. Although the law worries about teacher's education, the same law appease teacher's disqualification process by allowing poor Higher Education Institutes creation which enables propagation of courses that rarely link teaching and research, that are fundamental to a more consistent education. According to Saviani:

The mobilization board of teachers fed the expectation that teacher's education in Brazil, after military regime, could be better considered. However, the new Basis and Guide Law (LDB) approved on December 20, 1996, after several affairs, did not match expectations. High education institutes were introduced as alternative to pedagogy and teacher's training courses by LDB that signed as an educational policy that low levelled: these institutes arise as second class schools, providing fast, cheap and short term education (Saviani, 2009, p. 148).

The author states the problems on initial education and we distinguish that it is necessary to take into account the curriculum teacher's training courses offer which doesn't seem to be as efficient as they should. "Teachers' education for Basic Education: institutions and their curriculum" project (Gatti et al., 2008, v. 1 e 2; Gatti & Nunes, 2009) has studied pedagogical projects, subjects and their syllabus in teacher's training courses for Portuguese, Math and Biological Sciences in several institutions in Brazil. It points out that there is a distance between the pedagogical projects and the curriculum in those institutions. There is no connection between specific subject content and the content of pedagogical ones. Concerning pedagogical education in Language and Biological Sciences courses, there are fewer hours on teaching education and only few courses make it clear what supervised teaching internship is, how it is done and who is responsible for it.

So, the issue we want to discuss here is related to the kind of education is being offered and the kind of teacher we want to educate, considering education as a whole — initial and continuous — that take throughout teaching career. Narrative research as well as investigation on social representations show accurately our own comprehension about teachers' education, since it enables one to think about that education from the teachers' point of view and not from something else external and prescriptive that could indicate what to do.

It's mister to say that by telling the education teachers themselves get in service, it is possible to take a broader look at public policies, for from those who education is made for, we can make a counterpoint to enlarge our reflections.

According to Moreira and Macedo (2001), the actions taken on educational policies for teachers' education must be questioned, for it goes towards a more technical education that privileges practice instead of theory. Still according to the same authors:

[...] the professional the arises from control policies on teachers' education is a more technical teacher who knows specific content and methodology and who fundamentally knows the practices and activities in their school routine. Praxis becomes the education core and unfortunately, its celebration minimizes the role of theory in teachers' action as well as the search for reducing education costs. So, theory-practice dichotomy is restated, emphasizing the latter and putting political, philosophical and sociological reflections aside which shouldn't. (Moreira and Macedo, 2001, pp. 119–120)

Teachers can't be mere knowledge giver. By taking away the possibilities of building a more complete professional, with political action and knowledge, we help fast education and professional dullness. We do believe it is necessary to reflect about practices and experience exchange is very important, however, none of them can come without discussing its theoretical aspects that can enrich professional education and also to try reflect deeply on the profession experiences, on representations that play important role on guiding didactic selections and on teachers' feeling of belonging in there action space.

Practice and teaching experience are also knowledge generators, however, with no systematization that goes through a teacher's critical attitude, theoretical discussion, a look that takes social and cultural areas there is no progress on producing knowledge founded in experience. In order to better understand this path, it is essential to identify the ways teachers have their continuing education organized by the school they belong to, so that we can

help with the necessary knowledge scenario we are analyzing. By analyzing São Paulo state public school teachers' narratives, we can identify the path proposed by the government concerning teachers' education in order to guide issues on initial and continuous education that support those actions and forward suggestions for public school teacher education.

São Paulo state schools have organized two permanent actions on continuing education. The first is during their pedagogical work and school and supervised by the school coordinator, whereas the second is organized by "Paulo Renato Costa Souza" Teachers' Education and Improvement School in São Paulo city.

Education at school, organized and supervised by the school coordinator is still presented as advocated by Moreira and Macedo (2001), that is, meetings that guide the use of official syllabus and so focus discussions about didactic procedures and the best resources in order to develop that syllabus in class. It is not a place and time for political or philosophical reflection since there are only 100 minutes for the discussions that is also shared with general information.

This moment of education at school is mainly based on responding to urgent school needs and it is taken as a time for continuous education, but actually, it is only a time devoted for institutional organization. Another complicated issue is that, frequently, Regional Education Secretaries orient discussions that take place during education at school¹, and it focus each school particularity and teachers' need from that group. According to Dutra e Rocha (2013), who have researched these educational meetings, found out that the discussed topics do not always arise from teachers' desire. What really happens is that "topics concerning teaching and learning that the Secretary chooses for educating the Pedagogical Coordinator in the same government organization" (Dutra, Rocha, 2013, p. 1365).

We observe that others than the teachers themselves build the need for education, and their education is defined from those needs. Josso (2006, p. 29) states that One of the paradoxes of education situations is when education needs are not real guarantee, if education is understood in a sense that the person is touched, affected, pushed, transformed, enriched by a project that educates, builds, and evolves.

The second action in education takes place at Teachers' Education and Improvement School "Paulo Renato Costa Souza", created in 2009 whose mission was "to help to improve the quality of São Paulo schools" and being responsible for continuing education combined with distance education by using video conference and virtual environment courses. The courses are performed with national and international, public and private institutions partners, such as São Paulo public universities — USP, UNICAMP and UNESP —, Anhembi Morumbi, Fundação Lemann, Instituto Crescer, Microsoft, Intel, and British Council. Therefore, these institutions define the syllabus of the courses proposed by Teachers' Education and Improvement School.

Once others decide education actions, school is not considered in its complexity, so it avoids teachers to reflect about real needs that are generated there.

By analyzing teachers' narratives, we can notice there is an expressive gap between teachers' representations and their education, either initial or continuous, since initial education is considered a space for specific knowledge and learning it to use takes place in the everyday classroom experiences.

I think that until my 3rd year I didn't see myself as a teacher. I used to say - Oh my God, how can I leave here and get into a classroom? I was not prepared. Yes, we had some practice but it did not prepare us to teach. I think I learned and got to be a teacher by teaching. Basic theory only. You are not prepared to teach. I know

¹ Regional Education Secretaries are part of the basic formation of Sao Paulo state Educational Secretary and they support teaching

what I am going to do. Time will build. (prof. 1)

Teachers understand initial education as a time for knowledge about some theories, which are not related to real classroom practice. Teachers' representation value practice by considering it essential to teacher's training. In this initial path, we notice that their conceptions on education, teaching and practice do not include group relations to overcome lack of experience. The solution found to classroom management was built along time, day by day.

It's too simple thinking that increasing the amount of information individually will be enough to improve or modify teaching concepts and practices. This doesn't explain the complex social psychological dynamics involved in the relation among knowledge, values, attitudes and actions. Culture, shared meanings and social environment permeate individual experiences, which build references that people act with. (Gatti, 2003, p. 197)

Initial or continuing education must consider several facts, such as teachers' representations about education, school practice besides their school experience during their life, however narratives evidence pedagogical worth:

Therefore, you know that college you go to, full of problems in your private life... I started to teach on my second year of college... because I needed the money... I started as eventual teacher... at COC... second year of college and teach...today I am ashamed to look back and see what I did in the classroom... us didn't have enough education... we learned with time... (prof. 2)

[...] I only got the most specific part of knowledge from college, nothing more. Even because I had no positive, experience in methodology... nothing [...] (prof. 3)

It was more scientific, today it is more pedagogical, but at that time it was more scientific, towards science, changes, I don't like literature. No, I don't. I do like scientific journals. (prof. 4)

By observing the above testimonials and official propositions for initial and continuing education proposed by São Paulo state government, we can notice that knowledge about didactic relations is very valued. This strengthens the desire for a ready recipe on how to teach well instead of reflective education where agents reflect on theories that seem to have been only superficially discussed, results from initial education courses.

Splitting theory and practice is a result from capitalist contradiction that divides work into physical and intellectual (Arendt, 2007). Regarding education, that division appears in the syllabus organization and in the public policies proposals in which specialists think of ways and contents while teachers make their practical activities.

According to Freire (1999, p. 53), theory "leads to insertion into reality in analytical contact with the existent to prove it, live it fully, practically". So, value theory and practice in a way to put them differently leads to poor education we have seen. If we think of emancipatory education, it is necessary to overcome the theory and practice dichotomy in order to get a kind of education that achieves its goals.

Through the reports seen before, we could see the education got daily is essential for the interviewed teachers. It seems that pedagogical learning take took place daily is not related to higher education that focuses on specialized knowledge and therefore makes us think about the university contribution on teacher's education since it draws more attention to specific knowledge and to failures and successes in school life.

Continuous education at school teacher's worries about changing their pedagogical practice are reinforced. Such changes are explained from assessment results, either in school or external ones, that increase their responsibility for students' learning, as they claim:

operational needs in a given area mediating schools to central organization (Article 70, Decree 57.141, July 18, 2011).

Now with SARESP² demand, we can see many SARESP questions, how to work with them in the classroom. (Teacher 5)

We talk a lot about what is going on, about the problems, we try to see what our colleague is doing and it's is working. The coordinators ask us to talk about our practice, what works, and how it can help students to learn better. (Teacher 6)

We discuss what happens at school; usually they promote some activity to help teachers such as reading and dynamics. (Teacher 7)

Worthing practices and experiences that lead to better results explains that product, and not process that involves education is what really basis teachers' education in those schools. According to Maués:

Emphasizing practical education is another part of international teaching reform. The reason is that like any other professions, the future teachers need to have real contact with the environment they are going to work at. From the beginning, they should takes duties and have a supervisor to do so. (Maués, 2003, p. 101)

Teachers' narratives about their education are, according to Pineau (2006, p. 41), indication of "tries of time expression lived by them" and they bring to light aspects of contemporary initial and continuous education. From these reports we need to understand that personal issues also express the group's ones, therefore they can be a portrait of teachers' education in São Paulo state schools. According to Benjamin (1994, p. 198) report, "experience from person to person is a source for narrators, so when teachers tell their education path, it enables us to know their experiences and how they are touched by them. However, the most important to research is that narrative '[...] is the image of group experience', so, by listening to some we can view the group's education." (Benjamin, 1994, p. 215)

Finally, In this article, we approached the viability of narrative method on discussing social representations of teachers in a public São Paulo state school as well as how initial and life teachers' education are understood in their profession.

By studying this topic, we found that results forward the same direction, frequently; teachers' education is marked by the gap between theory and practice. In our research, we identified initial education based on specific area contents, but no reflection about teaching. In continuous education we found how strong tool is, maybe because of the importance of practice, which is constantly claimed which empty the foundations that enable teacher to reflect about their school role and how they belong to that action space.

Social demands requires more and more continuous education for professionals, however teachers are victims of a poor professional, personal and political education. Therefore, they are lead to education that only promotes institutional interests focused to curriculum implementation by taking practical actions, which is showed on continuous education offered. Then, the relation between theory and practice are split and school is not recognized as a group education option. Through their narrative, teachers can be considered Walter Benjamin (1994, p. 200) "sedentary peasant" who by telling their stories make their experience communicative and perpetuate their representation about teaching practice. This is an evidence of a paradox in which teachers are not heard, and when they are, they repeat the institutional discourse.

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2 São Paulo state School Performance Evaluation System. It refers to yearly external evaluation carried out by São Paulo state government to assess state school students' performance.

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