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TEACHER EDUCATION IN BRAZIL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION: POLITICAL DISPUTES, CURRICULUM GUIDELINES, AND CHALLENGES IN TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: Teacher education in Brazil is one of the central pillars for understanding and addressing contemporary educational challenges, in a landscape marked by structural inequalities and constant curricular reforms. This study aims to analyze the process of professional development for teachers through continuing education, investigating its impacts, challenges, and the implications of recent educational policies on pedagogical practice. The theoretical framework traces the historical panorama of teacher education, from Normal Schools to contemporary guidelines, using Historical-Cultural Theory to understand teaching as a social and dialectical process. Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, involving bibliographic, documentary, and field- y methods. Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews with 22 early childhood educators in the municipality of Ibioporá, Paraná, with the data subjected to Bardin's content analysis. The results reveal that, although continuing education is recognized by teachers as vital for methodological updating, there are significant obstacles, such as work overload and the disconnect between theoretical proposals and the reality of everyday school life. There is also a tension between Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2015, which advocates for critical training, and Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2019 (BNC-Formação), which prioritizes a technical-instrumental approach aligned with the BNCC. We believe that strengthening teachers' professional identity requires public policies that go beyond mere curricular standardization, fostering spaces for collective construction, critical reflection, and the improvement of the structural conditions of teaching work.

Keywords: Teacher Education. Continuing Education. Professional Development. Educational Policies. Early Childhood Education.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher education is one of the central pillars for understanding and addressing contemporary educational challenges, especially in the Brazilian context, marked by structural inequalities, constant curriculum reforms, and disputes surrounding the social role of education. In this scenario, teacher education cannot be understood as a linear or merely technical process, but as a field of political, epistemological, and institutional tensions that directly influence the organization of pedagogical work.

Historically, teacher education in Brazil has been marked by divisions between theory and practice, between pedagogical training and subject-specific training, as well as by distinctions between levels and types of education. These characteristics have been reconfigured over time through various legal frameworks—culminating in recent decades in a set of guidelines aimed at reorganizing initial and continuing teacher education.

However, these changes did not occur in a uniform or consensual manner. On the contrary, they reflect distinct visions of education and society, highlighting disputes between critical perspectives—which advocate for teaching as a reflective and socially committed practice—and technical-instrumental approaches, which tend to reduce the teacher's role to the implementation of predefined curricula and competencies.

In this context, continuing teacher education takes center stage, being understood as an essential element for teachers' professional development and for improving the quality of education. More than a process of updating, it is a constitutive dimension of teaching, involving critical reflection, the collective construction of knowledge, and the reframing of pedagogical practices.

Given this scenario, the present study aims to analyze the process of teachers' professional development through continuing education, considering its impacts, challenges, and perspectives on pedagogical practice and the curriculum. It also seeks to understand how recent educational policies influence the organization of teacher training and what their implications are for teachers' work in basic education.

The research is justified by the social and academic relevance of the topic, since teacher education is directly related to the quality of public education and the development of more critical, inclusive, and contextualized pedagogical practices. Furthermore, it contributes to the debate on teacher education policies in Brazil, especially in a context of constant regulatory changes and institutional reconfigurations.

2. Teacher Education: A Historical Overview of Teacher Education in Brazil

Teacher education in Brazil has a historical trajectory marked by institutional transformations, conceptual disputes, and regulatory reconfigurations. Initially, teacher preparation was linked to the so-called Normal Schools, created in the late 19th century, intended to train teachers for the "elementary" level, corresponding to the secondary level of the time.

At the beginning of the 20th century, concern intensified regarding the training of teachers for secondary education, which until then had been carried out primarily by private practitioners or self-taught individuals. With the gradual expansion of schooling, the need for specific teacher training courses emerged. In this context, starting in the 1930s, the model known as "3+1" took hold, in which the training of bachelor's degree holders was supplemented by a year of pedagogical courses to obtain a teaching license, as discussed by Gatti (2010).

This model directly influenced the Pedagogy program, regulated in 1939, which initially aimed to train education specialists and, secondarily, teachers for Normal Schools. Over the following decades, regulatory changes expanded the scope of these programs, as evidenced by Opinion No. 161/1986, which enabled the training of teachers for the early years of elementary school.

The enactment of the Law on Guidelines and Foundations of National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996) marked a milestone in the reorganization of teacher training in Brazil, establishing new guidelines for teacher education programs and requiring a college degree for the practice of teaching. Subsequently, the National Curriculum Guidelines, instituted in 2002, sought to guide the structuring of programs, although they largely maintained the separation between pedagogical training and subject-specific training.

Despite attempts to integrate theory and practice, a training model centered on disciplinary areas persists, with limited space for pedagogical training. This configuration reinforces a historical division between the "generalist" teacher, responsible for the early years, and the "specialist" teacher, linked to specific subject-

s—a distinction that affects not only teacher training but also the social and professional status of the teaching profession.

The approval of the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Pedagogy program in 2006 significantly expanded the scope of practice for graduates, including work in early childhood education, the early years of elementary school, youth and adult education, and educational administration. However, this expansion resulted in curricular challenges, given the complexity of integrating multiple fields of knowledge into a training program with limited time.

In this context, it is evident that teacher education in Brazil remains marked by structural fragmentation and difficulties in coordinating between different levels and modalities of education. Furthermore, the absence of a common, institutionalized educational foundation contributes to the persistence of distinct and poorly integrated models of teacher education.

2.1 Recent Guidelines and Contemporary Challenges

Recent teacher education policies in Brazil reveal the existence of competing educational approaches, particularly regarding conceptions of teaching, curriculum, and professional development.

CNE/CP Resolution No. 2/2015 represented a step forward by proposing a critical, integrated, and socially committed teacher education program, emphasizing the inseparable link between theory and practice, the centrality of research, and the valuing of diversity. This perspective views teaching as a complex and intellectual practice, aligned with an emancipatory conception of education.

However, Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2019 introduced significant changes by establishing the National Common Core for Initial Teacher Education (BNC-Formação), guiding curricula toward competencies aligned with the BNCC. This shift led to greater curricular standardization and a reduction in the autonomy of teacher-training institutions, reinforcing a technical-instrumental approach to teacher education.

More recently, Resolution CNE/CP No. 4/2024 proposes the reorganization of initial teacher education, establishing more clearly defined structural parameters. However, while it represents progress in terms of curricular organization, it has not yet addressed structural issues—such as funding, teaching conditions, and integration between universities and schools—in a thorough manner.

In general, recent regulatory changes demonstrate that teacher education constitutes a field of political and ideological disputes, in which different conceptions of education clash, ranging from critical perspectives to models guided by technical rationality and standardization.

2.2 Continuing Teacher Education

Continuing teacher education has emerged as a central element in the process of professional development for teachers, moving beyond the traditional notion that training ends with a bachelor's degree. Beginning in the 1970s, educational policies began to emphasize the need for teachers to engage in ongoing professional development, taking into account social, technological, and pedagogical changes.

In this context, continuing education is now understood as an integral dimension of teaching, contributing to the improvement of teaching quality and pedagogical innovation. Institutional programs and public policies reinforce this perspective, highlighting the connection between training, pedagogical practice, and contemporary educational demands.

The implementation of the National Common Core Curriculum intensified this need by introducing new requirements for teaching work, demanding the development of specific competencies. Thus, continuing education assumes a strategic role in mediating between curricular guidelines and pedagogical practice.

From the perspective of historical-cultural theory, particularly drawing on Lev Vygotsky, teachers' professional development is understood as a social process, mediated by interactions and the cultural context. This approach emphasizes the importance of collaborative training practices, based on the exchange of experiences and critical reflection.

In this vein, continuing education should be understood as a collective, contextualized, and ongoing process that goes beyond mere technical updating, involving the shared construction of knowledge and the reframing of pedagogical practices. This understanding reinforces the need for public policies that ensure effective conditions for teachers' participation in high-quality training processes.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research adopts a qualitative approach, recognizing that educational phenomena are complex, dynamic, and socially constructed, requiring interpretive and contextualized analysis. This approach allows us to grasp the meanings attributed by participants to their practices and experiences within the context of continuing education.

Regarding procedures, this is a study of a bibliographic, documentary, and field research nature. The bibliographic research is grounded in authors who discuss teacher training, professional development, and educational policies, enabling the construction of the theoretical framework that underpins the analysis. The documentary research includes an analysis of national legislation and guidelines, such as the Law on Guidelines and Bases for National Education (Law No. 9,394/1996) and the Resolutions of the National Education Council, especially those focused on teacher training.

The field research was conducted with teachers working in Early Childhood Education in the municipality of Ibiporã, in the state of Paraná. The research subjects were selected based on their professional experience and participation in continuing education programs.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection instrument, as they allow for greater flexibility in posing questions and facilitate the expression of participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations. The interviews were conducted with the participants' consent, ensuring anonymity and respect for research ethics. Twenty-two educators from different regions of the municipality were interviewed, and they answered questions regarding the municipality's continuing education programs.

To analyze the data, the content analysis method proposed by Laurence Bardin was used. This method is organized into three main stages: pre-analysis, exploration of the material, and processing of the results, the stage in which data interpretation occurs.

Through this process, it was possible to identify and organize thematic categories related to continuing education, professional development, and the pedagogical practices of the participating teachers.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research results showed that continuing education is recognized by teachers as a fundamental element for professional development and for improving pedagogical practices. In general, participants highlight that training processes contribute to updating knowledge, reflecting on practice, and incorporating new teaching methodologies.

However, significant challenges were also identified. Among these, the disconnect between continuing education programs and the concrete needs of daily school life stands out. Many teachers noted that the training programs offered tend to be excessively theoretical or standardized, failing to address the specific realities of school settings.

Another recurring finding concerns time constraints and working conditions, which hinder teachers' effective participation in training processes. Work overload and the lack of institutional policies valuing continuing education emerge as significant obstacles to professional development.

Furthermore, the data indicate that continuing education, when conducted collaboratively and in a contextualized manner, offers greater educational potential. Opportunities for teachers to exchange experiences, study groups, and reflective practices within the school environment are identified as the most significant strategies for building teachers' professional knowledge.

Regarding educational policies, it was observed that recent guidelines directly influence the organization of continuing education, especially by emphasizing the development of competencies aligned with the BNCC. This orientation, while contributing to a certain degree of standardization, may also limit teacher autonomy and reduce the critical dimension of training.

The analysis thus shows that continuing teacher education is a field marked by tensions between normative proposals and the concrete needs of teaching practice. While its importance is recognized, challenges persist regarding its effectiveness, relevance, and articulation with the school context.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis conducted in this study revealed that teacher education in Brazil is marked by a complex historical trajectory, characterized by discontinuities, theoretical disputes, and changes in legal guidelines. From the era of Normal Schools to the most recent curriculum guidelines, significant tensions remain, particularly between pedagogical training and subject-specific training, as well as between different conceptions of the teacher's role.

In the context of current educational policies, the resolutions published in 2015, 2019, and 2024 highlight the coexistence of distinct teacher training programs. Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2015 proposed a more critical and comprehensive perspective, focused on the social commitment of teaching. In contrast, subsequent regulations point toward a trend toward greater curricular standardization, with an emphasis on skills development and a more technical and instrumental approach.

These changes have a direct impact on the organization of teacher education programs, the autonomy of training institutions, and teaching conditions. In this sense, teacher education can be understood as a field marked by political and ideological disputes, which influence both educational practices and public policies.

In this scenario, continuing education plays a significant role by providing spaces for reflection on pedagogical practice and for reinterpreting teaching experiences. However, the results indicate that major challenges persist, such as the difficulty in integrating theory and practice, the inadequacy of some proposals to school realities, and structural limitations related to teachers' working conditions.

On the other hand, training experiences based on collaboration, the real-world school context, and critical reflection demonstrate potential for strengthening teachers' professional development. These initiatives value teachers' agency and foster the collective construction of knowledge, pointing to possible paths for improving continuing education.

In light of this, it becomes evident that the consolidation of more consistent teacher training policies requires not only curricular revisions but also addressing structural issues, such as professional recognition, improved working conditions, adequate funding, and the strengthening of relationships between universities and schools.

Finally, it is important to expand research on continuing education in different educational contexts, in order to deepen the debate and contribute to the development of policies that are more democratic, critical, and aligned with the needs of the school environment.

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