

# Teacher education policies in Brazil: contemporary challenges\*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper incorporates findings from two major studies about the conditions for teachers in Brazil, conducted under the auspices of United Nations Educacional, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2009 and 2011 respectively, and discusses the policy implications of teacher education, questioning them in the light of recent data, new actions of government in this field, and connections to other dimensions of educational policies in the current context.

## KEYWORDS

teacher policies; teachers education; basic education.

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## ***POLÍTICAS DE FORMAÇÃO DOCENTE PARA A EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA NO BRASIL: EMBATES CONTEMPORÂNEOS***

### **RESUMO**

Este artigo retoma achados de dois grandes estudos realizados sobre a condição docente no Brasil, realizados sob o patrocínio da Organização das Nações Unidas para a Educação, a Ciência e a Cultura (UNESCO), respectivamente em 2009 e 2011, e discute implicações das políticas de formação de professores, problematizando-as à luz de dados recentes, de novas ações de governo nesse campo e das interfaces com outras dimensões das políticas educacionais no contexto atual.

### **PALAVRAS-CHAVE**

políticas docentes; formação docente; educação básica.

## ***POLÍTICAS DE FORMACIÓN DOCENTE PARA LA EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA EN BRASIL: RETOS CONTEMPORÁNEOS***

### **RESUMEN**

Este artículo incorpora los resultados de dos largos estudios sobre la condición del personal docente en Brasil –realizados bajo los auspicios de la Organización de las Naciones Unidas para la Educación, la Ciencia y la Cultura (UNESCO) en 2009 y 2011 respectivamente– y discute las implicaciones de las políticas de formación de enseñantes planteando cuestiones bajo la luz de datos recientes, de las nuevas acciones de gobierno en este campo y de las interfaces con otras dimensiones de las políticas educativas en el contexto actual.

### **PALABRAS CLAVE**

políticas docentes; formación del profesorado; enseñanza básica.

Teachers are the third largest occupational sub-group in Brazil. Approximately two million teachers, 80% of whom are in the public school sector, serve 51 million students in basic education schools. Therefore, it is not surprising that the education of this large professional category strongly influences the growth of higher education in Brazil.

Of the total number of courses registered by the Higher-Education Census of 2011, 26% were dedicated to the education of basic education teachers. Teacher colleges are the second most common schools of higher education in Brazil, totaling 1,801 – trailing only business administration schools with 2,279<sup>1</sup> – and the most among those that offer teacher accreditation.

The expansion of teacher education courses throughout the country follows, in general terms, the expansion of educational opportunities for the population. As a country late to introduce schooling, mandatory universal fundamental school attendance was only achieved at the turn of the millennium. In 2006, obligatory education was extended from eight to nine grades<sup>2</sup> and subsequently Constitutional Amendment 59/2009 increased compulsory schooling for children from 4 to 17 years old, which corresponds from pre-school to the end of high school. Furthermore, education as a right of young children from the earliest months of life, as determined by the Federal Constitution of 1988, also made it a public duty to offer early childhood care for children three and younger. Although the birth rate has decreased drastically in Brazil, and is below the replacement rate, the need to expand schooling opportunities is great, since this is the dominant way children and adolescents are educated in contemporary societies.

Basic education, therefore, represents fertile ground for teacher education and certainly provides a labor market for teachers of unprecedented proportions. There are, however, dynamics within the educational system, and in the market that expand or retract the supply and demand for courses that educate teaching professionals.

The National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of 1996 (Brasil, 1996) has served as a decisive regulatory framework for teacher education in recent decades. Following a global trend, this law determines that teachers of all educational levels must have a higher-education degree. Not without reason, the same law considers distance education as a form of formal education on all levels of education, which favors the expansion of required teacher training.

Although the accreditation of teachers in higher education courses is becoming the norm throughout Brazil, the quality of basic education cannot be improved simply by the offering degrees to teachers. There are problems that arise from the expansion of courses, which are also related to their quality (Barretto, 2012).

1 Courses offered by more than a thousand institutions of higher education in Brazil in 2011 (in decreasing order): administration (2,279); pedagogy (1,801); law (1,121); accounting sciences (1,104).

2 Law 11.274/2006 establishes 2009 as the deadline for all schools to conform to the measures.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EXPANSION OF TEACHER ACCREDITATION COURSES IN THE LAST DECADE

The requirement that teachers be accredited in college-level courses established by the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of 1996, particularly affects the education of teachers of the first grades of primary school and early childhood classes because previously, only a high school education was necessary to perform their jobs. For those teaching the upper grades of primary school and secondary school, a degree was already required, although the census found that a small percentage of these teachers still lack a degree and accreditation and that there are teachers responsible for disciplines that do not correspond to their academic training. According to the School Census conducted by the Ministry of Education (MEC/INEP) in 2009, 38% of primary school teachers had no college degree, nor did 52% of early childhood teachers. At the secondary school level, this was true for just 9% of teachers.

An important phenomenon to observe is that, in the first 10 years after the enactment of National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of 1996, the locus of teacher education was almost entirely transferred to higher education.

### FIRST NEW FACTOR

The growth in enrollment in the first decade of this century shows the great change in the characteristics of the course offerings. From 2001 to 2011, there was 46% growth in the number of students.

According to the Higher-Education Census, in 2001 53.8% of enrollments were in the private sector and 46.2% in the public, and they were offered mostly as classroom programs. By 2011, the proportion of classroom enrollment in the private and public sectors did not change considerably (56.7% and 43.3% percent). However, distance education courses rose from an insignificant 0.6% in 2001 to 31.6% in 2011. In this period, enrollment in pedagogy courses rose from 29.3% to 65.7% of all students. Let's see, then, how registrations were distributed by course in 2011, as demonstrated by Chart 2.

In 2011, the pedagogy courses (dedicated to early childhood and the first grades of basic education) were those most offered by private institutions: accounting for 78% of registrations (of 587,000 students), while registrations in the other courses for teacher accreditation corresponded to 42% in the private colleges (of 672,000 students). Of all enrollments in pedagogy courses, 48% were in distance learning, while the proportion of students enrolled in distance learning in other fields was just 19%. Among pedagogy students in distance learning, 88% were enrolled in private institutions, while in the other programs this figure drops to 52%. In sum, the expansion of pedagogy courses overwhelmingly occurred in private colleges and in distance education courses. This is especially worrisome for two reasons.

Firstly, because a significant number of private colleges have become large companies with market interests that quickly increased the number of campuses and enrollments in various states and regions of the country. But this was not



**Chart 2 - Percentage distribution of enrollment in teacher training courses by area and administrative type. Brazil 2011**

	Enrollments for on-site and distance education undergraduate courses								
	On-site			Distance Ed.			Total		
	Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private	Total	Public	Private
All degrees	68,4%	51,8%	48,2%	31,6%	24,2%	75,8%	1.354.918	43,1%	56,9%
Pedagogy	52,0%	32,1%	67,9%	48,0%	12,2%	87,8%	586.651	22,5%	77,5%
Other degrees	81,1%	60,0%	40,0%	18,9%	47,5%	52,5%	671.721	57,6%	42,4%
Physical Education	96,0%	27,1%	72,9%	4,0%	54,2%	45,8%	123.269	28,2%	71,8%
Biology	82,7%	57,0%	43,0%	17,3%	52,4%	47,6%	91.957	56,2%	43,8%
Sciences	93,7%	90,5%	9,5%	6,3%	94,2%	5,8%	13.757	90,8%	9,2%
Physics	78,7%	93,6%	6,4%	21,3%	89,8%	10,2%	25.944	92,8%	7,2%
Geography	80,1%	84,2%	15,8%	19,9%	44,1%	55,9%	50.365	76,2%	23,8%
History	75,7%	64,9%	35,1%	24,3%	20,4%	79,6%	76.014	54,1%	45,9%
Language/Modern Foreign Lit	75,4%	60,9%	39,1%	24,6%	40,3%	59,7%	50.527	55,8%	44,2%
Language/Portuguese Lit.	71,1%	74,1%	25,9%	28,9%	50,2%	49,8%	84.671	67,2%	32,8%
Portuguese Lit./Foreign Modern Lit.	79,3%	43,4%	56,6%	20,7%	6,5%	93,5%	37.858	35,8%	64,2%
Math	72,9%	74,2%	25,8%	27,1%	64,4%	35,6%	82.439	71,5%	28,5%
Chemistry	88,5%	77,4%	22,6%	11,5%	77,6%	22,4%	34.920	77,5%	22,5%

Source: MEC/INEP/DEED. *Sinopse estatística da educação superior, 2011.*

Prepared by the author.

## SECOND NEW FACTOR

Since the first half of the 2000s, the Ministry of Education took a proactive role in teacher education, treating it as a lifelong process that begins with initial training and continues throughout professional life. In a little more than half a decade, it assembled a huge institutional apparatus for teacher education, guided by the prospect of establishing a national education system.

To meet the strong demand identified by CAPES/MEC<sup>3</sup> for public school teacher training in higher education courses, in 2006 the Ministry of Education created the Open University of Brazil (UAB) (Brasil, 2006, law n. 5.800). Since the traditional model for higher education did not meet the challenges, the UAB enables

3 CAPES – Coordination for Improvement of Higher Education, organ of the Ministry of Education.

cooperation between public institutions of higher education, state governments and municipal systems in offering distance education courses, with injection of resources from the National Fund for the Development of Education(FNDE).

Before creation of the Open University of Brazil, it was necessary to establish a unity between the distance education and classroom based courses. In 2005, the equivalence in the diplomas and certificates issued by higher education courses was established universally in all the higher-education institutions in the country.

The intention of the Open University was to expand opportunities for education in the public sector and to extend these opportunities to those living far from the urban centers where the teacher colleges are concentrated. In addition to the Open University, in 2007 the Ministry of Education established the program for support to restructuring plans and expansion of federal universities (REUNI), whose purpose was to increase access to undergraduate courses and increase the permanence of students in them, reinforcing the intent to democratize public higher education. The program also benefited from the expansion of degree programs (*idem*, 2007; law n. 6.096).

Independent of the efforts to expand the public sector, the equivalence of distance education to classroom based courses led to increased enrollment in private institutions in much greater proportions than in public schools, despite efforts to expand enrollment in both modalities by public teacher colleges.

In 2009, the National Policy for Basic School Teachers Education was formulated within the scope of CAPES/MEC, and the National Plan for Basic School Teacher Education (PARFOR)<sup>4</sup> was created, comprising a set of federal government actions, in collaboration with public higher education institutions and state and municipal secretariats of education to provide higher education courses and in-service training for teachers in public education systems (*idem*). According to the 2009 Basic School Census, there were 638,800 basic education teachers without higher-education degrees.

CAPES recommended,, however, that degrees be preferably offered in classroom courses in conjunction with distance technologies, and for in-service education to be the domain of distance education.

#### PEDAGOGY COURSES: PUBLIC OFFER BELOW DEMAND

According to the concept of distance education adopted by the policies, it is an educational mode in which the teaching-learning processes are mediated by Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and in which students and teachers conduct educational activities at various times and in distinct locations (*idem*, 2005). In those terms, classroom courses assisted by information technology from National Plan for Basic School Teacher Education (PARFOR) are part of the concept.

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4 PARFOR is a participant in the federal government Articulated Action Plan (PAR), which in turn is part of the Education Development Plan to which all Brazilian states adhere (Brasil, 2009; portaria normativa n. 9).

There is no way to identify details regarding enrollments and course completion in the UAB/PARFOR system in the official statistics, which prevents assessing the effectiveness of the actions taken.

Nevertheless, the 2011 Higher Education Census data listed in Chart 2, indicate that the offering of public distance education courses in pedagogy (for teachers in the early grades) by Open University (UAB) and PARFOR falls far short of demand. Just 12% of pedagogy courses in the distance education mode are in the public sphere (which serves just over 34,300 students), and this includes courses offered in school systems that are not part of the UAB/PARFOR system. The greater presence of distance education in the other teaching accreditation courses offered by the public sector (48%)<sup>5</sup> indicates that they are getting a bit more attention from the public authorities than pedagogy, especially from MEC's own courses! The result is what has been observed: it is mainly early childhood and early grade primary school teachers, who are predominately female, who have been compelled to seek higher education in private distance education programs.

#### A SHORTAGE OF STUDENTS OR TEACHERS IN THE MORE DIFFICULT DISCIPLINES?

The accreditation programs prepare teachers for primary and secondary education; only pedagogy courses prepare early-childhood teachers. Some disciplines have more classes than others, but that does not explain the variability in the number of students in teacher-training courses found in Chart 2.

Physical education courses have become highly sought, probably due to attractive employment opportunities beyond schools. On the other hand, geography has had a small number of students, only higher than physics and chemistry. The latter two are separate school subjects only at the secondary school level, so they have fewer classes in the context of basic education.

Let's consider matriculations in math and science, those subjects that have traditionally lacked teachers. This is, in fact, a phenomenon that occurs in many countries. In Brazil, with the often repeated argument that there is a lack of teachers for these subjects, for many years specific programs have been proposed to encourage scientific development and teaching in the area, although in the 2011 Census, the number of enrollments in mathematics and biology is not low (see Chart 2) if compared with other accreditation courses.

In fact, we must ponder that there are problems in the dynamics of the courses, especially considering the difference in the number of students who enter and conclude the accreditation programs, which can be corrected by internal measures at institutions of higher learning. Even taking this into account, the fact is that many students who complete accreditation courses in these disciplines do not choose the teaching profession.

What is clear is that the teacher-training policies are complex and need to be addressed on different fronts. We must recognize the low attractiveness of

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5 Corresponds to 60,300 enrollments.

the profession, which must compete with better employment opportunities in the labor market. This situation is not remedied with strict measures within the teacher education programs (Tartuce; Nunes; Almeida, 2010; Vaillant, 2006).

If the professional context which provides little stimulation for the teaching profession to be the top choice for graduates, it is unlikely that even professional master's courses in specific teaching areas proposed by CAPES will be able to keep teachers in schools for much time.

According to the conclusions of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Report (2006), it is not enough to attract the best students to teacher courses and offer them good training; we must also keep them in the profession. Decent wages, working conditions and career advancement must be offered, which is far from being widespread in the teaching policies in the country.

## THE QUALITY OF ACCREDITATION COURSES IN QUESTION

The weaknesses relating to the quality of accreditation courses in general cannot only be attributed to their recent expansion. In teacher training, archetypes prevail that date back to the foundational periods of Brazil's educational systems and explain the permanence of historical imbalances in the curricula of the accreditation programs. Despite many educational reforms, pedagogy courses remain excessively generic, which is exacerbated by the fact that they simultaneously aim to prepare teachers of early-childhood education and the early years of fundamental school, as well as educational experts, and school principals and supervisors. On the other hand, accreditation courses that train teachers for the final years of fundamental school and for secondary school still have an almost exclusive focus on the disciplines taught, given the dominant belief that to be a good teacher one must simply master the knowledge related to the subjects to be taught. Generally speaking, the courses lack a clear focus on teaching.

The field of educational reconceptualization within the teacher education courses is particularly aimed at the demands made by regulatory agencies for all higher-education courses. In those courses that are well evaluated, there is clear interest in capturing the trends of certain educational phenomena and the reasons that explain them to unravel the assumptions underlying certain practices. In this way, the courses have contributed toward the production of relevant knowledge about the functioning of school systems and their social role, considering historical and specific aspects of the Brazilian educational context. They have also played an important part in reworking the pedagogical discourse and its dissemination among professionals. This knowledge is certainly essential for teacher education.

However, the preparation for the teaching profession requires going beyond a rational-instrumental regard for objects investigated by the academy, in order to face problems related to another order of demands and which are subject to other constraints, such as those that take place in school. There is difficulty in creating hybrid spaces for teacher education that propitiate the integration of academic, pedagogical and theoretical components and the knowledge acquired through

the practice of the profession, despite the emphasis that has been given to this in documents regarding rules for curricula and official policies.

Experimental course changes in different locations and regions of the country have shown their weak capacity for institutionalization. One of the most successful efforts begins with the initiative to give a new aspect to the courses, by enhancing the interaction between universities and schools through a partial but important attempt to transform characteristics of student teacher internships. Some states have initiatives of this nature including Espirito Santo and São Paulo (Gatti; Barretto; André, 2011).

#### INSTITUTIONAL SCIENTIFIC INITIATION GRANT PROGRAM – (PIBID)

The Institutional Scientific Initiation Grant Program (PIBID), an initiative of CAPES/MEC, has been disseminated throughout Brazil. The program aims to improve and upgrade training for primary education teachers by granting scholarships to undergraduate students who participate in teaching initiation projects offered by institutes of higher education in partnership with municipal and state public schools. The projects should promote the integration of students into the school context from the start of their higher education, so that they conduct didactic-pedagogical activities with the guidance of a college faculty member and primary school teacher.

Since it was established in 2007, the PIBID has already been reshaped several times, gradually expanded its scope and comprehensiveness, due to the good acceptance of the various approaches involved (Brasil, 2010). The amendment to the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of April 14, 2013 (Brasil, 2013), that called for all states to encourage teacher education through programs of this nature, suggests that it be an integral part of teacher education courses (art. 62, paragraph 5). Nevertheless, the resources currently provided by the National Education Development Fund (FNDE), mostly allocated to the public sector, come far from meeting the need for training of all students, even just those in the public sector.<sup>6</sup>

#### DIFFICULTIES OF DISTANCE LEARNING MODELS

The problems inherent to accreditation courses in general are exacerbated by those particular to the distance education model.

Those related to the UAB/PARFOR system have been repeatedly pointed out: insufficient discussion of the teaching mission of courses, which tend to reproduce classroom training, and at times slip into a reductionist pragmatism that disdains providing a foundation in the broader issues involved in education; the parceling out of teaching, with the overloading of instructors; problems in instructor training, performance and professionalism related to their precarious (non-standard) forms of employment; difficulty in integrating the courses to the

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<sup>6</sup> Source: <http://www.capes.gov.br/educaçao-basica/capespidid>. Accessed on Sept 13 2013.

realm of the colleges, with a tendency toward creating parallel structures; dual valuation of the work of university professors: with those engaged in research receiving better evaluations than those dedicated to teacher education.

In addition, the single model of distance education, produced by the financing standards adopted by the FNDE, hinders or prevents the development of practices more conducive to the different contexts of educational institutions and the needs of student-teachers. The excessive centralization of the model leads to operational difficulties, at both the institutions of higher education that work within the system, and in the basic educational systems. And although federally funded, these actions depend on infrastructure and operating conditions of the secretariats of education of municipalities and states to allow student-teachers to attend training courses, which often are not present.

A powerful catalyst, the Distance Education model generated at the central government level, winds up being adopted by private institutions of higher education.

Opportunely, the research of Almeida, Iannone e Silva (2012) about pedagogy accreditation courses via distance education discusses the conceptions of the courses, characteristics of the offerings and their national expansion, and deepens the investigation through field research. It covers five public and three private institutes of higher education in five state capitals: Amazonas, Goiás, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo and Pernambuco. At these locations, the authors interviewed students, course coordinators and administrators in strategic positions and recognized performance in academic activities, public administration and project implementation.

The difficulties in conducting this study indicate some of the most common problems in terms of access to information about this mode of teaching – which is still not fully institutionalized at institutes of higher education. These problems include: unreliable, outdated or imprecise public data from the schools that offer the courses, making it difficult to provide an overview of the offerings. There are also differences between data provided by the UAB, the MEC *site* and the *sites* of the institutions. We may also add the low response rate from the schools to the research requests (only eight of the of 34 schools agreed to participate), and the difficulties of access to the subjects: lack of availability of administrators and students, which was aggravated among the students by their sporadic attendance at the schools.

The research findings place the public and private institutions side by side in many respects, although the public schools account for only 13% of the vacancies. Among the results, we highlight the following.

- 1- Unequal expansion of the courses, with concentration of classroom education courses in the Southeast and South (where there is the best offer of classroom courses). In the North and Mid-west, there are not enough courses to meet the demand due to lack of capillarity and absence of opportunities in interior regions. Students who live in the same city as the schools correspond to 61% of students. Several states in the Northeast and

- the Amazon have no public higher education institutions with pedagogy courses. Outside the state where the institutions are based, the courses are more decontextualized in relation to local conditions.
- 2- Most of the students are women (90%); between 30 and 39 years old (30%). Many already had teaching experience. There is a low course completion rate, 18.5% of the total dropout, 21% in the public schools.
  - 3- There is unanimous recognition of the need for continued training of instructors and better resolution of their professional status and working conditions.
  - 4- Different practices for the use of technological resources were found, with the adoption of two models: the traditional cyber-classroom, with interactive chat or email and attendance at the course centers several times per week; and work over the Internet, with communication from the professor through print and digital materials in dialog form, with virtual and on-site tutoring. The federal universities tend to work with the virtual, Internet model made possible by the Open University. They use virtual learning environments with more interaction (student-tutor/student-student). The centers are preferably used as places to ask questions, use laboratories and other resources and to participate in scheduled activities. The model can provide greater autonomy to online and classroom instructors, and prepare students for the use of digital information technology, providing spaces to conduct diagnostics according to the local reality. At private colleges the traditional model dominates. The on-site instructors tend to give classes, correct exercises, and give tests.
  - 5- The opportunities are still generally limited for gaining command of ICTs in teaching-learning processes for distance education students.
  - 6- The curriculums of the private colleges tend to have a pragmatic orientation towards preparation for work in the classroom, while the public colleges emphasize the social function of schools and reflections on the practice and valorization of the student's reality.
  - 7- The spaces for practical experience are limited to internships, which are fulfilled, as with the classroom courses, predominantly as mere legal requirements. There are few initiatives involving innovation and differentiation that consider local specificities.

#### PRECARIOUSNESS OF TEACHER EDUCATION: PRECARIOUSNESS OF BASIC EDUCATION

Considering all these vicissitudes, let us consider the initial training of teachers in service that we have examined. The very fact that it constitutes a hybrid condition of initial and continuing education of teachers creates a special space and situation to combine education focused on the school and on the work of teaching, which is a situation more propitious to the interaction of academic knowledge with the reality of basic education. It is particularly more favorable because teacher

education is provided predominantly by the public sector, which tends to provide better conditions for research. There are courses that have taken advantage of this circumstance, with mutual enrichment from the interaction between a university and a school system.

However, it is necessary to be more daring. Why not try to open gaps in the Ministry of Education's singular model to allow the emergence of multiple and more ambitious forms of collaborative teaching? The institutions of higher education have in their hands a living laboratory and resources to work with individuals from the basic education system who are prepared to consider in conjunction with the academy the struggles which they face daily in school.

Maybe, these courses are not suitable to internships as are those conceived for initial teacher education courses. The PIBID is also not an appropriate model for in-service training, because the objective is not to insert the teacher-students in schools: they are already there! Rather, it is important to offer them, with the help of theoretical tools produced in universities, opportunities to actively reflect on their teaching practices, its foundations, conditions and possibilities for change and on its broader implications in the social context. Only combined efforts to provide a better foundation for teaching activity can provide the autonomy teachers need to test new pathways and create alternatives for facing the numerous challenges for which neither the school nor the university has ready answers.

For example, the *Online Mentoring Program* for new teachers, developed by the Federal University at São Carlos for training teachers with few years of experience and with support provided by more experienced teachers, with supervision from university researchers, can inspire innovative approaches (Reali; Tancredi; Misukami, 2010). Based on the procedural and social nature of learning to teach, and being a teacher, action research was conducted through constructive-collaborative strategies to implement teaching and learning experiences based on difficult situations proposed by beginner teachers. These include those relating to the composition of classes, class management, difficulties teaching specific contents, relationships with the community and others. The use of Internet correspondence between mentors and beginning teachers, reflective journals, the creation of "teaching cases" for these beginning teachers and the observational notes from weekly meetings taken by researchers and mentors favored the critical analysis of the ideas and resulting practices, the development of mutual understanding and consensus, democratic decision-making and common action, considering the specificities of the schools and the community.

Let us return, however, to the question of precariousness of teacher education in its broader implications. The expansion of primary education to the entire Brazilian population has been accompanied by changes in the socio-cultural profile of teachers in educational institutions. In past decades, teachers were recruited from the middle-class. Currently, just under one half of teachers come from the low-income classes and from families where they are the first generation with secondary education and higher education.

Furthermore, the level of education among primary school teachers varies, as do salaries at different stages. The more educated teachers and secondary school

teachers are better paid, and as the age of the population served decreases, so does the salary and the level of schooling of the teachers, from primary to early childhood education. It is also among the earlier years that we find the largest number of teachers who are women, poorer persons, and persons of color (Alvez; Pinto, 2011; Gatti; Barretto, 2009; Gatti; Barretto; André, 2011).

The higher education courses that have been training not-yet-accredited teachers have been working precisely with those segments that have had more restricted access to social and cultural assets. Among them, it is mostly the pedagogy courses, geared towards the early school years that receive the majority of such segments.

One of the benefits of Ministry of Education's direct responsibility for the in-service training of public school teachers is the fact that this has provided access to higher-education for teachers only because they had previously entered educational systems as teachers, due to the limited educational opportunities they had previously. The quite problematical functioning of these courses is justified mainly by the fact that they are new, although the service is still well below the actual needs of teachers. The recommendation that the distance education mode offered by the Ministry be reserved preferably for continuing education allows, in principle, the supposition that accreditation in this format will be phased out once current needs are met.

Nevertheless, the recent amendment to The National Education Guidelines and Framework Law/96 (Law n. 12.796 of 4 April 2013) continues to permit teachers of early childhood and early primary education to enter this field with only normal high school level schooling (art. 62)!<sup>7</sup> The text of the law adds that the states will adopt measures to facilitate access to and permanence of these teachers in higher education teacher training courses so they can work in public basic education (art. 61, paragraph 4).

The evident conservative nature of the measure is not only manifested in terms of the conception of the level of education needed to meet the educational needs of the population at all levels of the educational system, but also in relation to the country's effort to raise teaching to a new level, aligned with global trends. Moreover, it returns to a known standard of educational policies: legitimizing emergency measures as permanent ones!

One of the main reasons that may have led to this amendment to the education law is the tension created by claims of states and municipalities that they are not able to comply with the national fiscal responsibility law for the basic wage for all primary teachers, based on the understanding that they have higher education, since the Minimum Wage for Teaching Law (Brasil, 2008) established

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7 Data on teacher education in high school stopped being computed in official statistics for a period, and then re-appeared in the Basic Education Census of 2011. In that year there were 164,000 students in secondary-school level teaching courses, concentrated in the two most populous regions: Northeast and Southeast (respectively 38% and 36%).

a base pay considering professionals with secondary school level education.<sup>8</sup> This clash demonstrates the complexity of teaching policies in their various interfaces, as well as public sector limitations in providing the large volume of resources needed to raise teaching to a condition befitting the preparation that is required, and to the social and cultural function that is attributed to it by society.

We must also draw attention to the regressive character of flexible teacher training policies. As noted by Freitas (2007) and other authors, it is precisely the teachers with less access to social and cultural resources who continue to be offered more precarious training, whether within the public or private sector, and they are the ones who are entrusted with the education of the lower income children, who are subject to the same restrictive contingencies. This dynamic tends to reinforce the under performance of primary schools, which predominantly accommodate these populations and which also tend to work under more precarious conditions.

Considering this situation, the transposition of the recommendations of unilateral agencies concerning the elevation of criteria for admission of candidates to teacher education courses – generated in various social and educational contexts and conceived as a strategy for improving the quality of teaching – appears completely unfounded. It first involves advancing the perspective for formulating a national education system that enters the tough dialog needed between the regulatory agencies and private institutions of higher education, and in efforts much greater than the mere emergency training of working teachers, to achieve the intensification of and improvement in regular teacher accreditation courses to better serve the real needs of students who want to become teachers.

#### ON-GOING TEACHER TRAINING POLICIES: A WEALTH OF ALTERNATIVES

The establishment of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Fundamental Education and Enhancement of the Teaching Profession (FUNDEF) in 2006 consolidated the foundations for the development of broad policies of on-going teacher training in the states and municipalities, which is seen as a right of education professionals and an indispensable condition for exercising the profession (Brasil, 2006). The fund became the main means of regulating resources aimed at state and municipal teaching staff, determining that, of these, 60% are allocated to teacher remuneration. It also allows secretaries of education to cover expenditures for in-service training and, notably, the cost of initial teacher training of an emergency nature. It was FUNDEF that created conditions for the establishment of articulations between the secretariats of education and higher-education training institutions, which was later expanded by the National Education Development Fund (FNDE), which is administered by the Ministry of Education. Initial emergency teacher training initiatives that started in some states under FUNDEF were only later extensively assumed by the Ministry.

8 Law n. 11.738/2008 concerning the Base Pay for Teachers in Basic Education took force on April 27, 2011 based on Federal Supreme Court (STF) decision n. 4167.

The Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Enhancement of the Teacher Profession (FUNDEB), which replaced FUNDEF, adopted a similar funding system for basic education as a whole (*idem*, 2007; law 11.494).

The on-going in-service training of teachers, a role assumed predominantly by education systems directly responsible for the maintenance of basic education systems, received considerable relief in 2000.

The surveys that were part of the two UNESCO studies mentioned about teaching conditions (Gatti; Barretto, 2009; Gatti; Barretto; André, 2011) indicate the enormous variety of courses across the country, with resources from their own education systems, from the state systems in conjunction with municipalities (since states have been the historical locus for on-going teacher-training), and more recently, those offered by the MEC through the UAB system.

From initiatives that often depended on teachers themselves, on-going training has been taken on by the government on a large scale, involving a variety of partnerships. In-service teacher training has become such a large endeavor involving such a substantial sum of resources that it is appropriate to ask who, in fact, is benefitting from it, and what are the repercussions from the accumulation of accreditations that it produces, besides from the small promotions that may allow in the career of state and municipal educators.

Most of this training is still conducted in traditional forms: seminars, lectures, short courses; in other words, fragmented programs that do not produce evidence of their ability to change teaching practices. It helps refine the discourse of teachers, reinforcing a common ideology, but change in educational practices requires other strategies and demands time for consolidation that is not compatible with the duration of the courses. Even when teachers are convinced that they must change the way they act, they often have doubts and find it difficult to apply the principles proposed to their work. Lack of continued support after the training period interrupts the dialog initiated in the courses.

Nevertheless, a significant number of education systems have also sought to make the paradigm of school-focused training more concrete. However, this is not a trivial matter when considering teaching networks with hundreds of thousands of teachers like those in Brazil. Many school-focused training experiences have left institutions to fend for themselves. In reality, schools cannot do without the support, guidance and joint accountability of the educational process from various educational institutions.

In addition, the very nature of the work of teaching must undergo profound changes in the school culture, which requires that the operating conditions in schools provide support for changing from teaching as an individual and solitary work process to become a more collaborative form of work among different school agents (Nóvoa, 1992; Marcelo, 2009).

## INITIATIVES FOCUSED ON THE PROTAGONISM OF TEACHERS

Nevertheless, not everything is conservative in regard to in-service teacher training. Among the various innovative initiatives for on-going teacher training in Brazil those in three states stand out.

Considering Mato Grosso's vast territory, the state Secretariat of Education has created Teacher Training Centers (CEFAPROS) to disseminate official policies, propose and support educational activities in schools and mediate the needs of teacher training, developing network strategies that consider the local specificities. The activities offered seek to meet the needs of schools and are focused on them through the Teacher's Room Project (Mato Grosso, 2010; Máximo; Nogueira, 2009).

A diagnosis of their training needs considering the pedagogical policy project, and the School Development Plan<sup>9</sup> is conducted by teachers from each school, who create a project for what is called the Teacher's Room. CEFAPRO trainers then approve the projects developed by the schools, and help implement, monitor and evaluate them. Once the project is approved, the group is responsible for organizing a schedule of meetings for studying and training in their own work environment, accommodating for the teachers' workload and reserving part of the activity hours for the project's development.

The state of Minas Gerais created the Professional Development Program for Educators (PDP). It is dedicated to promoting the professional development of teachers and the dissemination of a group-work culture in the state schools that are part of a network of reference-schools, characterized by a differentiated experience in pedagogy or school management and which are distinguished for their community work. The PDP is based on the establishment of self-managed study, reflection and action groups, called Professional Development Groups (GDPs). The secretariat of education provides scientific and financial support to projects developed by the professional development groups, designed to implement the curriculum and improve networked teaching and learning, and receives advice from consultants who are public university professors.

GDPs consist of at least 14 teachers from various fields and/or education specialists who work at the school. They should develop work proposals to be implemented in the course of an academic year. The continuation of the GDP is based on an evaluation of the project's progress (Figueiredo; Lopes, 2009).

Meanwhile, the Educational Development Program (PDE) in Paraná, is part of the state's educational policy, which is focused on building a new curricular proposal involving teacher participation and the production of educational material to support their work, the utilization of educational technology in schools and the valorization of teachers. The PDE includes teachers, considering their professional development cycle. It consists of long-distance supervision of work-groups in networks, by teachers who are in more advanced stages of their career. The monitors undergo a two-year training program supervised by a university professor and

9 The Educational Development Program (PDE) is a program of the Ministry of Education that provides the material resources needed for execution of the program.

develop, with their guidance, a work plan that includes a proposal for study and intervention in schools, the preparation of teaching materials and collaboration with colleagues (Paraná, 2007).

#### LITERACY TRAINING COURSES: CONTRIBUTIONS

Some literacy programs can also help create new in-service training models. In recent decades, they have been the most widespread on-going training policies in the country. They took shape after approval of the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law of 1996, when education networks were challenged by poor levels of reading and writing in early primary school: the Gordian knot of Brazilian education.

In 2001, the nationwide Training Program for Literacy Teachers (PROFA), was launched during the government of President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. The long-term program proposed a constructivist approach to literacy, based on research on the psychogenesis of written language and sociolinguistics.

With the change in government at the federal level, the program has continued in São Paulo State schools since 2003, and has also been adopted by municipal schools in the capital. In the state and municipal systems of São Paulo it is called Letters and Life (São Paulo, 2007).

In 2007, the program was reconfigured, and came to be called "Reading and Writing". Maintaining the same objective as Letters and Life, the focus of actions shifted to the management group's involvement in pedagogical discussions related to literacy teaching and accompanying the results of external evaluations'. The assessment conducted by the state highlighted the need for profound changes in school operations, to help teachers introduce classroom changes and ensure the implementation of the theoretical assumptions that support the program.

A study by Bauer (2011) to assess the impacts of Letters and Life on the performance of early-year students also concluded that the program only produces significant effects when combined with other context variables.

To involve and train different educational agents, the Reading and Writing Program has expanded its structure, including on-going training, unification of curricula, preparation of teaching materials, monitoring of schools and evaluation of student performance.

These changes, and the findings from the only study of the impact of programs of this nature during the period, reinforce arguments that were highlighted by Ortega's study in 2011, which concluded that many of the conditions that sustain effective teaching practices are beyond the control of teachers. They depend on the definitions of educational policy, management styles and the organizational cultures imposed.

Minas Gerais also benefited from the continuity in the literacy policies in the teaching work. In this state, the change in the literacy paradigm triggered by the psychogenesis studies is being developed with a more incisive contribution of investigations conducted by The Federal University at Minas Gerais Literacy, Reading and Writing Center (CEALE).

In 2005, the approach, originally conceived in Minas Gerais, underwent adjustments and became the Pro-Literacy Program, which also incorporates mathematic literacy. Launched in the National Teacher-Training Network by the Ministry of Education's Secretariat of Basic Education, it was later integrated to the Open University of Brazil and became the most widespread program offered by the federal government.

However, the very existence of regional training programs for literacy and Pro-Literacy teachers, and that which followed since 2013, the National Pact for Literacy at the Right Age, questions important aspects of the initial training project of pedagogy courses. The latter seemingly fail to adequately prepare teachers for the basic tasks faced daily in schools and that, at the very least, are expected to be addressed by initial training.

In turn, the robust on-going teacher training programs tend to lose the importance they once had, since the intentionality of educative actions are relegated to the background, given the growing prevalence of a management style led by the evaluation of results in primary education policy. New trainings tend to focus on acquiring expertise in management of human resource (teachers, pedagogical coordinators, supervisors, support staff, etc.) and of schools' organizational resources (time, space, educational materials) to achieve the goals.

Since the professionalization sought from the perspective of teaching policies is based on the assumption that the skills acquired to exercise the profession are subject to continuous transformations, given that their disappearance and replacement are foreseeable, it is easier to understand why the numerous teacher-training programs tend to disappear once the political contexts in which they are inserted change.

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