

## SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING DEVELOPMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN HEALTH: SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS

### *SIGNIFICAÇÃO DO DESENVOLVIMENTO DOCENTE PARA O ENSINO SUPERIOR NA SAÚDE: REPRESENTAÇÕES SOCIAIS*

### *SIGNIFICADO DEL DESARROLLO DOCENTE PARA LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR EM SALUD: REPRESENTACIONES SOCIALES*

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to apprehend the present elements in the social representation of faculty development (FD) in higher education in health areas. FD is understood as a set of institutional tools that enable teachers to carry out a multiplicity of action to support their pedagogical practice. Social representation research with a qualitative approach. The research took place at three higher education institutions on southern Brazil, with faculty members from the undergraduate courses in Nursing (10) and Medicine (11), totaling 21. The production of data took place through in-person and online semi-structured interviews (COVID-19). The analysis technique followed Moscovici's methodological steps, through two processes of Social Representation formation: objectification and anchoring. It is concluded that the FD process is shown to the personal and professional growth of those who commit to it, providing the development of critical-reflective thinking.

**KEYWORDS:** Higher education. Measurements, methods and theories. Medical faculty. Nursing faculty.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo tem por objetivo apreender os elementos presentes nas representações sociais de docentes sobre o processo de desenvolvimento docente (DD) no ensino superior da área de saúde. Entende-se DD como um conjunto de ferramentas institucionais que viabilizam ao docente uma multiplicidade de ações para suporte a sua prática pedagógica. Pesquisa de representação social com abordagem qualitativa. Realizou-se em três instituições de ensino superior no sul do Brasil, tendo como participantes docentes dos cursos de graduação em Enfermagem (10) e Medicina (11), totalizando 21. A produção de dados deu-se por entrevista semiestruturada presencial e online (Pandemia COVID-19). A técnica de análise seguiu os passos metodológicos de Moscovici, por meio de dois processos de formação das Representações Sociais: objetivação e ancoragem. Conclui-se que o processo de DD se mostra

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*legítimo no que tange ao crescimento pessoal e profissional daqueles que se comprometem com o processo, proporcionando o desenvolvimento do pensamento crítico-reflexivo.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Educação superior. Medidas, métodos e teorias. Docentes de medicina. Docentes de enfermagem.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo tiene como objetivo aprehender los elementos presentes en las representaciones sociales de los docentes sobre el proceso de desarrollo docente (DD) en la educación superior en el área de la salud. DD se entiende como un conjunto de herramientas institucionales que permiten al docente realizar una multiplicidad de acciones para apoyar su práctica pedagógica. Investigación de la representación social con enfoque cualitativo. Se llevó a cabo en tres instituciones de educación superior en el sur de Brasil, con docentes de las carreras en Enfermería (10) y Medicina (11), totalizando 21. La producción de datos se realizó a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas presenciales y en línea (PANDEMIA COVID-19). La técnica de análisis siguió los pasos metodológicos de Moscovici, a través de los procesos de formación de Representaciones Sociales: objetivación y anclaje. Concluye que el proceso de DD se muestra legítimo en cuanto al crecimiento personal y profesional de quienes están comprometidos con el proceso, proporcionando el desarrollo del pensamiento crítico-reflexivo.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Educación superior. Mediciones, métodos y teorías. Docentes médicos. Docentes de enfermería.*

## Introduction

Reflections on the teaching profession have gained notoriety in the current scenario, in view of the occurrence of significant changes in the field of teaching practices and new methodologies (PINÃ-SARMIENTO, 2014). There is an expansion of the teaching field, resulting from the multiple needs and purposes that make up the complexity of teaching and learning (VEIGA, 2008).

Teachers, by assuming an active role, need to understand the demands and pluralities of students in order to become facilitators of learning (CADÓRIO; SIMÃO, 2018). This 'becoming' a teacher is situated in reflective practice, and it is necessary to consider the sociocultural aspects of their work, including their personal and pre-professional experiences (BENASSULY, 2002).

The profile of the Brazilian teacher is formed by intellectual autonomy, which is constituted by scientific, pedagogical and interpersonal knowledge, taking into account a structured training that ensures a theoretical and practical organization of own and educational knowledge (RAMALHO; NUÑEZ; GAUTHIER, 2004).

The concept of Faculty Development (FD) refers to all the activities sought by health professionals to improve their knowledge, skills, and behaviors, both as teachers and as

educators, leaders, managers, researchers, and academics, not only individually but also in groups. In a review research on publications regarding faculty development in the medical field, the author noted that there were the greatest number of publications between the years 2010 and 2018, with an increasing production since the 1980s (STEINERT, 2019).

It is understood that FD consists of a set of institutional tools that allow the teacher a multiplicity of actions that will support his teaching practice (CENTRA, 1978; STEINERT *et al.*, 2007). It can be considered a process of constant transformation that provides an opportunity for a conscious reflection on the professional exercise, providing greater involvement and collaboration of the agents involved in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it is a method that has been gaining space in the academic field, with the purpose of certifying the construction of the teacher's professional identity (ALMEIDA *et al.*, 2019).

Faculty can develop knowledge through experience, observation, and reflection; but, they can also improve their skills through peer coaching, student feedback, online learning, and workplace learning, often by being a member of a community of practice. The authors indicate distinct educational strategies, in various settings, aiding in the effectiveness of faculty development (STEINERT *et al.*, 2016).

When it comes to teacher professionalization, training should take into account a training process that contributes to the development of the profession and the professional as a whole (ENS *et al.*, 2009).

In this study, Moscovici's Theory of Social Representations was adopted as a theoretical reference, with a sociogenetic approach that addresses the scope of the phenomenon in relation to the conditions and processes involved in the emergence of representations. The narrative operates through the articulation of different perspectives, and the central core becomes constituted by the state of cognitive polyphasia, presenting coexistence of knowledge and distinct logics in the same representational field (ANDRADE; TEIBEL; ASSUNÇÃO, 2020).

In view of the new paradigms in education, it is necessary to have a critical-reflective look at the teaching practice and the reality faced by these professionals (BATISTA, 2004). The process of reflection on the subject's routine practice is understood as critical-reflective, in which the subject is able to understand its conducts and, based on this understanding, propose situational transformations. Such perspective is thought taking into account the contextual and specific needs of teaching-learning (MAGALHÃES; FIDALGO, 2007). Thus, in order to discuss the exercise of teaching and its multiple determinants, the discussion about the representation about the practice and conceptions of university teaching is carried out.

Therefore, this article aims at understanding the elements present in the social representations of teachers about the process of Faculty Development in Higher Education in the Health area.

### **Methodological assumptions**

This is a research of qualitative approach, using the theoretical and methodological framework of the Theory of Social Representations of Moscovici. For Moscovici (2007), the representations are a way to elucidate the everyday real thought, becoming a way to put into practice, through the knowledge developed individually and collectively, the positioning of a social group in relation to situations, events, and objects that are affected by them, promoting a social construction of reality. It is understood that "to represent a thing, a state, is not only to unfold it, repeat it or reproduce it, it is to reconstitute it, retouch it, modify its text" (MOSCOVICI, 2012, p. 54).

The Theory of Social Representations is a methodological and didactic approach rich for making visible what was unknown until now and for providing ways to know, in fact, the understanding of a certain population about the intended object of study (NOGUEIRA; DI GRILLO, 2020). The epistemological root of the theory starts from the assumption of the social construction of reality, which is presented in the form subject-object and individual-society, since the subject constructs both the world and himself. This dichotomy implies understanding the subjective and the collective in the representation of the world, constructed by human beings (SCHWARZ; SEITENFUS; BOUSFIELD, 2020).

According to Moscovici (2003), the Social Representations are not similar to all members of a group, because they depend on both common sense knowledge and the context in which the subjects are inserted. Thus, the Social Representations do not aim to understand the group in a homogeneous way, since the subjects bring with them different baggage and life experiences.

The narratives present in this study are part of a selection of the dissertation of the *Stricto Sensu* Graduate Program in Teaching in Health Sciences of the HEI of Curitiba/PR. The analysis of the forming elements of the social relations apprehended refers to the category 'Social Representations of the Process of Faculty Development in Higher Education in the Health Area' and the subcategory 'The Significance of Faculty Development for Higher Education in Health', from which two Representation Units resulted: 'Faculty Development as

a constant path for learning' and 'Social Representations as a teacher about the process of Faculty Development'.

### **Study site**

The research was conducted with professors from three Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), located in the city of Curitiba/ PR, one private for-profit and two non-profit institutions. These HEIs were chosen for offering undergraduate courses in the health area (Nursing and Medicine) and for presenting proposals for a Faculty Development Program in their institutional project.

### **Study Participants**

The research participants totaled 21 professors, 10 from the undergraduate Nursing course and 11 from the undergraduate Medicine course of three Higher Education Institutions (HEI) of Curitiba/PR. The choice of professors was due to the fact that they are representatives of the reality investigated in this study, since they actively assist in the construction of perspectives and subjectivities of the educational context, are the main actors in the teaching-learning process and experience the Faculty Development Programs. The choice for HEIs is due to the fact that they have some kind of Faculty Development Program in their organizational chart. Among the 21 professors interviewed, 19 were women and 2 were men, with ages ranging between 28 and 62 years. The time they have been teaching varied between 1 and 23 years. Furthermore, 19 professors stated they had no training for teaching before joining the higher education courses researched, and three had sought activities related to the teaching-learning process and their own training in teaching.

### **Collecting the information**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, based on a previously established and sequenced combination of open-ended questions and sociodemographic questions, in which the participants of the social group researched shared ideas, reports, and experiences on the theme in question. The initial contact with the teachers was made via e-mail or telephone. Part of the interviews was done face-to-face until the beginning of the pandemic of COVID-19; after March 2020, they were done remotely, being scheduled and recorded. Data collection took place from November/2019 to May/2020.

## Análise das informações

The data analysis of both Representation Units, which are 'Teacher Development as a constant path of learning' and 'Social representations as a teacher about the process of Teacher Development', consisted of the understanding and construction of forming elements of the social relations apprehended, following the methodological steps of objectification and anchoring proposed by Moscovici (2012), in which there are two processes of formation of social representations linked and shaped by social determinants. We also used the sociogenetic approach as a theoretical reference, by the same author.

Objectification is a process that consists of three stages: selection and decontextualization; organization and classification; formation and structuring of the elements. In the first stage, a movement of **selection and decontextualization** of beliefs of the object of representation occurs, filtering and retaining relatively what establishes a coherent relationship with reality, including group norms and values.

After the collection, the statements were transcribed in full to compose the corpus of analysis. This moment of analysis was composed of two fundamental stages that helped in the visualization of the speeches, in order to preserve the necessary information to consolidate the social representation of the researched group.

In this way, the first stage, **selection and decontextualization**, consisted in dividing the statements according to the following questions: what is your representation of your teaching practice, what is involved in this action? What are your social representations, as a HEI teacher, about the process of Teacher Development in higher education in the health area? Next, the grouping of all the answers was established, obtaining a comprehensive view of the speeches, in order to facilitate the selection and decontextualization of beliefs, which enabled the creation of a moderately cohesive whole.

In the second step, the elements were **organized and classified** in their structures, establishing a pattern of relationships between them. After a thorough reading of the speeches of the interviewed professors, three subcategories emerged that composed the understanding of the represented phenomena. In this article, the subcategory 'The Significance of Faculty Development for Higher Education in Health' is discussed.

The last stage is understood as a stage of **formation and structuring of the elements** that were decontextualized and selected in the first stage, transforming an abstract reality into a concrete one.



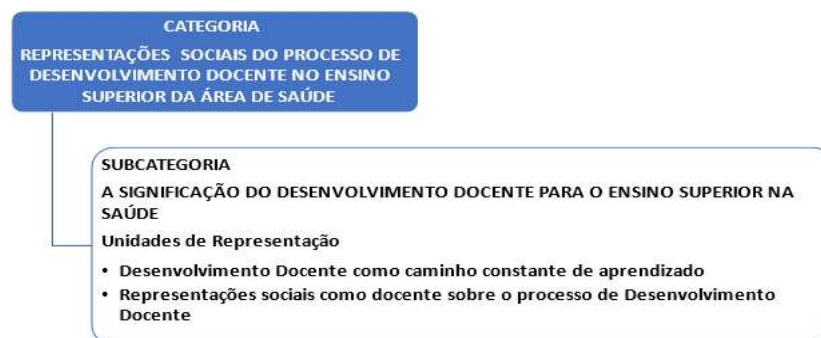
## Ethical aspects:

The research met the guidelines of Resolutions No. 466/2012 and 510/2016 of the National Health Council on the ethical aspects related to research with human beings, being approved by the CEP on research with human beings under opinion No. 3.736.6661.

## Results and discussion

For this article, the subcategory of analysis chosen was 'The Meaning of Faculty Development for Higher Education in Health', which comprises the formative elements of social representations. In turn, this subcategory was divided into two Representation Units: 'Faculty development as a constant learning path', and 'Social Representations as a teacher about the faculty development process', as shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1** – Representation of the category, subcategory and Units of Representation<sup>4</sup>



Source: Research data

From the speeches analyzed in the subcategory "The Meaning of Faculty Development for Higher Education in Health", as well as in the Representation Unit "Faculty development as a constant path of learning", it was found that FD is a continuous, multidimensional process that aims at improving skills and competencies, integrating theory and practice and providing health professors with the opportunity to approach new techniques, concepts, and tools capable of facilitating the students' academic performance. To maintain the anonymity of the

<sup>4</sup> Categoria = Category; Representações sociais do processo de desenvolvimento docente no Ensino Superior na área da saúde = Social representations of the faculty development process in Higher Education in the health área; Subcategoria = Subcategory; A significação do desenvolvimento docente para o Ensino Superior na Saúde = The Significance of Faculty Development for Higher Education in Health; Unidades de representação = Units of representation; Desenvolvimento docente como caminho constante de aprendizado = Teacher Development as a constant learning path; Representações sociais como docente sobre o processo de Desenvolvimento Docente = Social representations as a teacher about the process of Teacher Development

participants, the letter D was used to designate speech and the numbering according to the order of collection, followed by the name of the HEI to which they belong.

*I understand it as a continuous, multidimensional process of searching for skills and competencies in order to integrate theory and practice, produce new knowledge, and directly or indirectly make a difference in the reality and quality of life of the communities where I am inserted (D1, IES2).*

*For me, the process of teacher development is a constant path of learning that gives the professional who works in higher education teaching the opportunity to get closer to techniques, concepts, and tools that can combine his technical knowledge with teaching strategies that can facilitate the exchange with the students and the sedimentation of the teaching-learning process. (D5, IES3).*

Professional development is seen as a process of constant renewal and changes in teaching, being teachers active agents of the improvement of knowledge, skills and emotional intelligence, which are essential for FD (DAY, 2001). With the help of Social Representations, teachers' knowledge became evident through the knowledge built in their concrete practice, which, in turn, becomes structured, organized, and aligned with common sense, instituting teaching. Thus, besides being a reflection of reality, the FD is also a process of mediation and mental construction of the subject, providing subsidies for the formation of educational action (SOUZA; TAVARES; VILLA BÔAS, 2009).

Social Representations constitute a form of social knowledge established by Moscovici (1978), acting as guidelines for the understanding and organization of reality and ensuring that subjects can interpret and act on them through interaction with the social group.

FD ensures the quality of both the institution and the professional. Professional development involves all learning experiences, direct or indirect, with the aim of favoring those who want to learn. It is a process by which the teacher, considered as an agent of change, obtains competencies and skills (DAY, 2001). For this to happen, FD programs go through a continuous and longitudinal process, investigating what are the needs arising from the teaching professional's practice (O'SULLIVAN; IRBY, 2011).

In the Representation Unit 'Social Representations as a faculty member about the Faculty Development process', the speeches showed that the possibility of performing FD is aligned with institutional goals, the goals of innovations, improvement of the teaching-learning process, and updating

*I think that really, the teacher who takes FD seriously stands out, is always aligned with the institutional goals, because here where I work it is very clear. We have goals for innovations, for improvements, so the teacher who understands this, is quickly aligned, while we see others who are not, who*



*continue with their more traditional way, with some resistance to active methodologies (D1, IES1).*

*The institution provides several trainings, in the sense of active teaching methodologies, focused on teaching, not exactly the area we work in teaching, but focused on teaching, on how to teach and how to improve the student's teaching-learning (D2, IES1).*

*I believe that in the face of advances in science and technology and a world in constant transformation, I act as an articulator of student learning, so that they can achieve autonomy, propose solutions to everyday challenges, and find new and better ways (D1, IES2).*

The FD programs of the HEIs where the professors in this study work operate by means of training courses and workshops, which not only motivate the professor to be in constant development, but also improve his teaching-learning skills and techniques. We believe in the need for institutional investment in this professional, with the alignment of FD to the goals of the HEI involved in the process. The HEIs need to value the teaching staff, as they play an active role in the student's education, and must ensure excellence in teaching (CACHAPUZ, 2002).

Such programs help build the teachers' identity, being determined by multiple factors that talk among themselves and form the Social Representations that teachers make of their role, of their performance and of themselves, taking into account each one's life history (GARCIA; HYPÓLITO; VIEIRA, 2005). The transformation of pedagogical practice is a process of critical reflection, in which the linking of connections between practice and the wider social context occurs, helping the student in the teaching-learning process (GHEDIN, 2002).

Moscovici (2003) and Jodelet (2001) establish that there is an intelligible communication between research participants through the Social Representations, which formalize and give meaning to the object of study. The Social Representation, when spoken of in a system of interpretation, becomes a mediator between the subjects inserted in the same social group, referring to an organization of conducts and perceptions that conduct the behaviors in a contextualized chain of different personal relationships and experiences, with the consequent modification of a subjective theory into something objective, external.

FD can be considered a tool for constant updating, investigation and exchange of theoretical and practical knowledge, which enables the continuous growth of both the curriculum and the institution (GARCIA, 1999). It is a training process that occurs through the exchange of knowledge between teachers and students, with a complex movement between the personal and the social, determined and influenced by the context and intersubjective experience (TUNES; TACCA; BARTHOLO-JÚNIOR, 2005). It is through personal,

professional and institutional development that the teaching work is transformed into a constant and changeable process (IMBERNÓN, 2010).

When delineating the Units of Representation, which are the object of this article, it is possible to perform the anchoring, a process performed before or after the objectification. When it precedes, it is due to the fact that the object of representation is thought from previously determined experiences and schemas. When it succeeds the objectification, the anchoring is used as a way to understand and build forming elements of social relations (MOSCOVICI, 2012).

The understanding and construction of the formative elements of social relationships demonstrated that individual experiences and exchanges of experiences in relationships among peers are necessary to understand and give meaning to the representational object, making the messages significant.

The teacher, anchored to meaningful learning, tries to be the protagonist of his own teaching-learning process, seeking constant updating to help the students in their trajectory. It was evident that the teaching exercise is composed of cognitive, affective, and sociocultural factors, which depend on the subject's critical reflection about his or her own action. Teachers who reflect on their practice are able to self-regulate and adapt to different educational contexts and social groups.

The teacher is seen as a mediating agent in the teaching-learning process, taking on the role of instructing the student in his educational process, mediating the construction of knowledge. For this to happen, it is necessary to be aware of the changes in the educational scenario, seeking constant updating. The FD program emerges as a tool that helps teachers to improve their skills and competencies, applying them in their daily lives. In addition, it provides critical-reflective thinking and self-regulation of their practice.

## **Final considerations**

The Faculty Development programs (FD) act as support for teachers in a multiplicity of aspects related to the teaching-learning process, since the teachers must be constantly updated in theoretical and methodological terms. Based on the statements presented in this article, the Faculty Development (FD) programs are located at the junction of knowledge about educational concepts and principles, specific teaching-learning strategies, acquisition of skills, teaching performance in the classroom, improvement of teacher-student-institution relations, and appreciation of the teaching role.

The expression of professors of the two health courses at the researched institutions, Nursing and Medicine, indicates that there is a lack of preparation for the exercise of teaching, an aspect that goes beyond professional training; there are gaps in the FD involving the various dimensions that compose it, such as personal (choice for a teaching career), professional (preparation/training for teaching), and institutional (the vision/support of the HEI for teacher preparation and achievement of educational objectives).

FD has multiple interpretations and this study evidenced the citizen concern in the training of future health professionals, considering the transversality and complexity that involve this practice and the intention to contribute to the training of a critical-reflective professional prepared for the labor market, able to face the challenges of professional life.

The Theory of Social Representations, which makes it possible to unveil determinants of actions, subsidized the theoretical and methodological path of this study, acting as a guide for the reading of reality, assuming a fundamental role in the dynamics of social relations and daily practices. The teachers' representations in this research become photographs of the practice, demonstrating how representations are transformed in a movement of reciprocal influences. Teachers, through social representations, offer a network of meanings, assign meaning to their practices, re-signify actions, activate the reflection of daily life, and indicate new ways of relating to knowledge and learning.

This research also made evident the importance of investing in the training of teaching professionals to meet the demands of the students and the HEI itself, as well as the social commitment to the multiple agents involved in this process.

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### How to reference this article

FURTADO, C. T.; SANCHES, L. C.; ZAGONEL, I. P. S. Significance of teaching development for higher education in health: Social representations. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 17, n. 1, p. 0396-0409, Jan./Mar. 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v17i1.14942>

**Submitted:** 28/03/2021

**Revisions required:** 16/05/2021

**Approved:** 29/06/2021

**Published:** 02/01/2022

Management of translations and versions: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação

Translator: Thiago Faquim Bittencourt

Translation reviewer: Alexander Vinícius Leite da Silva