

CRITICAL ACTION RESEARCH IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONTINUING FORMATION POLICIES FOR EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

A PESQUISA-AÇÃO CRÍTICA NO DESENVOLVIMENTO DE POLÍTICAS DE FORMAÇÃO CONTINUADA PARA PROFISSIONAIS DA EDUCAÇÃO

INVESTIGACIÓN DE ACCIÓN CRÍTICA EN EL DESARROLLO DE POLÍTICAS DE FORMACIÓN CONTINUA PARA PROFESIONALES DE LA EDUCACIÓN

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ABSTRACT: This article aims at analyzing the contributions of action research to the development of continuing formation policies for education professionals through critical self-reflection. It presents a dialogue between studies in teacher education and the findings from a collaborative-critical action research aimed at building continuing formation policies for education professionals carried out through collaboration between the University and Teaching Networks of Espírito Santo/Brazil. It questions the study-reflection group as a principle for the elaboration of critical modes of continuing education. It establishes a dialogue between authors of the scientific literature and authors of the context, promoting the joint construction of knowledge. It takes the arguments of the managers at different moments of the Study-Reflection Group on Special Education Management (Gergees), constituted through audio-visual narratives and transcripts of group meetings. The search for critical and collaborative self-reflection possibilities of other/new ways of conceiving and producing knowledge is analyzed. Thus, the education of professionals based on critical action research is advocated as a principle for the development of continuing education policies in local contexts.

KEYWORDS: Policies for continuing formation of education professionals. Special education management. Collaborative-critical action research.

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RESUMO: Este artigo objetiva analisar as contribuições da pesquisa-ação para o desenvolvimento de políticas de formação continuada de profissionais da educação pela via da autorreflexão crítica. Apresenta um diálogo entre estudos na área de formação de professores e resultados de uma pesquisa-ação colaborativo-crítica voltada à construção de políticas de formação continuada para os profissionais da educação realizada por meio da colaboração entre Universidade e Redes de Ensinos do Espírito Santo/Brasil. Problematisa o grupo de estudo-reflexão como princípio para elaboração de modos críticos de formação continuada. Estabelece um diálogo entre autores da literatura científica e autores do contexto, promovendo a construção de conhecimentos com o outro. Toma os argumentos dos gestores em diferentes momentos do Grupo de Estudo-Reflexão de Gestão de Educação Especial (Gergees), constituídos por meio de narrativas audiovisuais e transcrições de encontros do grupo. Analisa a busca pela autorreflexão crítica e colaborativa como possibilidades de outros/novos modos de conceber e produzir conhecimentos. Assim, defende a formação de profissionais sustentada na pesquisa-ação crítica como princípio para o desenvolvimento de políticas de formação continuada em contextos locais.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Políticas de formação continuada de profissionais da educação. Gestão em educação especial. Pesquisa-ação colaborativo-crítica.

RESUMEN: Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las contribuciones de la investigación-acción al desarrollo de políticas de educación continua para profesionales de la educación a través de la autorreflexión crítica. Presenta un diálogo entre estudios en el área de formación docente y los resultados de una investigación acción colaborativa-crítica dirigida a construir políticas de educación continua para profesionales de la educación realizada a través de la colaboración entre la Universidad y las Redes Docentes de Espírito Santo / Brasil. Cuestiona el grupo de estudio-reflexión como principio para la elaboración de modos críticos de educación continua. Establece un diálogo entre autores de la literatura científica y autores del contexto, promoviendo la construcción del conocimiento con el otro. Toma los argumentos de los responsables en diferentes momentos del Grupo de Estudio-Reflexión sobre Gestión de la Educación Especial (Gergees), constituido a través de narrativas audiovisuales y transcripciones de reuniones grupales. Se analiza la búsqueda de posibilidades de autorreflexión crítica y colaborativa de otras/nuevas formas de concebir y producir conocimiento. Así, la formación de profesionales basada en la investigación-acción crítica se aboga como un principio para el desarrollo de políticas de educación continua en contextos locales.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Políticas de formación continua de los profesionales de la educación. Gestión de educación especial. Investigación-acción colaborativa-crítica.

Initial thoughts

The social, political and educational movements that have taken place in recent decades, in different scenarios, bring with them the search for an inclusive proposal in education, assuming the principle of education for all (BRASIL, 2008; BANCO MUNDIAL, 2012; PORTUGAL, 2018). The search for the construction of space-times that handle the

complexity of everyday school life, marked by difference and human diversity, imposes on us the need to rethink the formation of education professionals and its impacts on school practices and learning of students (DARLING-HAMMOND; NEWTON; WEI, 2010; FLORES, 2016; FRANCO; PIMENTA, 2008).

From this perspective, the literature points to the need to associate research (SACHS, 2016) with the strengthening of the teaching profession, assuming these professionals as producers of knowledge. Therefore, we seek a socio-critical vision of professional development and the formation of education professionals, conceiving them as transformative intellectuals (GIROUX, 1997). In this sense, it is essential to consider that continuing education curricula for education professionals should be developed by and for research (ESTEVEZ, 2006).

Action-research, in this understanding, has been constituted as an essential methodological and epistemological approach, considering that it is an activity undertaken by groups with the objective of modifying their circumstances based on shared human values. In this sense, "[...] such formation is inserted and can only be understood in the social, political, economic and cultural context of the country that promotes it, thus highlighting the importance of contextual aspects in the professional formation of teachers" (ZEICHNER, 1998, p. 238, our translation).

Thus, this article aims to analyze the contributions of action research to the development of continuing formation policies for education professionals through critical self-reflection. It emphasizes the role of Special Education management in the elaboration and transformation of continuing education policies aimed at school inclusion. Therefore, this professional needs to "[...] apprehend them in the context of social relations in which the conditions for their proposition and materiality are forged" (DOURADO, 2007, p. 922, our translation).

The text presents a dialogue between studies in the area of teacher education, results of a collaborative-critical research-action aimed at the construction of continuing formation policies for education professionals, developed through collaboration between the University and Teaching Networks of Espírito Santo/Brazil established by the partnership between university professors/students and public administrators⁵ of Special Education.

⁵ In the research presented in this article, Special Education managers are professionals/technicians who work in the Departments of Education, as a member or coordinator of the sector responsible for Special Education policies.

Our premise is that, whether in the context of the production of texts on continuing education policies, or in the context of practice, managers constitute themselves as articulators and mediators of political actions in the municipalities and/or regions in which they operate. We agree with Paro (1998, p. 4), when he states that the management/administration process performed by this manager has in its essence the characteristic of “[...] mediation in the pursuit of goals”. Thus, understanding the place that one occupies as a manager in educational policies becomes fundamental. We are also situated in Ball's perspective, for whom policy is not simply implemented; it is an action, involving local and personal values. This perspective:

[...] belongs to the context of influence, because it is part of the cycle of the process through which policies are changed, or can be changed, or at least the thinking about policies changes or can be changed. Policy thinking and policy discourse can be changed by political action (MAINARDES; MARCONDES, 2009, p. 306, our translation).

Thus, although managers often conceive themselves as mere implementers of policy, they occupy a very important place in the context of policy influence and practice. In this sense, we have defended the formation of public managers as a crucial element in the development of policies for the continuing education of education professionals through critical action research.

According to Carr and Kemmis (1988), critical action research is an emancipatory investigation that links theory and practice to critique, in a process that deals simultaneously with action and investigation. In this sense, critical educational research aims at conscious self-knowledge and effective political action. Its method is dialogue, which aims to raise the self-awareness of subjects as a collective potential, as active agents in history (COMSTOCK, 1982 *apud* CARR; KEMMIS, 1988). We agree with Habermas (1987b, p. 140, our translation):

The methodological framework that establishes the sense of validity of this category of critical statements is evaluated by the concept of self-reflection. This frees the subject from dependence on hypostatic powers⁶. Self-reflection is determined by an emancipatory interest in knowledge. Critically oriented sciences share it with philosophy.

In this context, we believe that, based on critical self-reflection, university managers and staff can form a self-critical community of researchers who investigate their conceptions and actions, seeking to understand and transform the policies put in place in their localities.

⁶ The hypostatic powers described by Habermas (1987b) can be understood as those fixed and frozen that appear as natural in social relations.

In this article, our intention is to establish a dialogue between authors from the scientific literature and authors from the context – university administrators and professionals. Our objective is, through the weaving of this discussion, to analyze the contributions of action research to the construction of continuing education policies from the perspective of school inclusion, elaborated by Special Education managers. At the same time, we want to problematize the study-reflection group as a principle for developing critical modes of continuing education. Thus, our analysis perspective is based on the premise that:

In the place of the solitary subject, who turns to objects and who, in reflection, takes himself as an object, there is not only the idea of linguistically mediated knowledge related to action, but also the nexus of practice and communication quotidian, in which the cognitive operations that have an intersubjective and at the same time cooperative character are inserted. (HABERMAS, 2003, p. 25).

Thus, we seek to build knowledge with each other. We take the arguments of managers at different moments of the Study-Reflection Group on Special Education Management (Gergees)⁷, constituted through audiovisual narratives and transcriptions of group meetings. Thus, motivated by the possibility of constituting an intersubjective community based on argumentative speech, we established discursive spaces with author-managers about continuing education policies in their local contexts and the place they occupy in the contexts of elaboration, influence and practice of these policies.

From instrumental to communicative rationality: perspectives and policies for continuing formation for education professionals

In this item, we aim to discuss the challenges posed to the ways in which we have designed and developed public policies for the formation of education professionals from a perspective of school inclusion. We can say that these have been Gergees' two main objects of analysis and discussion.

We agree with Habermas (1987a, p. 24, author's highlights, our translation) who says that “[...] rationality has less to do with knowledge, or with the acquisition of knowledge, and more with how subjects capable of language and action **make use of knowledge**”. Habermasian thinking allows us to analyze how knowledge are used in practices and in social/educational research. Thus, we can say that epistemologies and methodologies for the

⁷ The group began in 2013 as one of the research and extension actions of the Formation, Action Research and Management of Special Education Research Group (Grufopees/CNPq/UFES).

formation of education professionals are constituted by the ways in which subjects appropriate knowledge and how they use it in different initiatives and formative proposals.

It is important to consider that, in cognitive-instrumental rationality, there is no direct relationship between listener and speaker (HABERMAS, 1987a). We can see that formation, in this perspective, to a large extent, is designed without dialog with the demands of its participants, with the educational and/or school reality, as the managers report:

Some formation courses are offered in my municipality, but many with pre-established technical lectures (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2019, our translation).

This provocation I have had, which comes from a traditional formation, a technical formation, it came to me through a lot of study [...] (STATE MANAGER, 2019, our translation).

The processes, thus conceived, disregard the actors in the context as producers of knowledge. The mark of positivist rootedness, concretized in the model of the technical teacher, devoid of reflection and criticism, leads many teachers even today. We observe that “[...] when they participate in formation, they look for ready-made recipes” (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2019, our translation) or certification for counting points in selection processes. Derived exclusively from rules, theory, in this perspective, assumes the meaning of solving the problems of practice from instrumental questions prescribed by scientific knowledge.

In many contexts, the continuing formation of education professionals continues to privilege methodologies based on technical-instrumental rationality (SILVA, 2000), highlighting the role of the lecturer at the expense of the reflective, critical and participatory role of the trainees (professionals).

Teachers often go in search of accumulating certificates because they know that, in the selection process, it will benefit them, so it is also something to be reflected upon [...]. The teacher goes there and takes the course during the year, earns the certificate, passes the selection process and, when he returns, he says he is not prepared?! (SCHOOL MANAGER AND MASTER’S STUDENT, 2019, our translation).

Although they register interesting evolutions in a line of practical and critical rationality that is based on contexts and their protagonists with a view to their transformation, the truth is that there are still resistances and difficulties, often associated with the assumption of a more passive role from the people in formation and the externality of formation, especially when it is imposed and directly linked to career progression.

A public policy of continuing education involves identifying “[...] processes of resistance, accommodations, subterfuges and conformism within and between the arenas of practice, and the delineation of conflicts and disparities between the discourses in these arenas” (MAINARDES, 2006, p. 50, our translation). Sometimes the speeches were omitted, hidden or silenced. Thus, the reproduction of terms, without due reflection or apprehension of concepts and ideas, can lead managers to fall into the traps of the contexts of influence in which educational public policies are produced, that is, the contexts in which the “[...] interest groups compete to influence the definition of the social purposes of education and what it means to be educated” (MAINARDES, 2006, p. 51, our translation).

In this sense, the mechanization process disseminated in the manager's formation and work hides the real principles and assumptions of the teacher education curricula, which, for the most part, are based on instrumental rationality. This rationality is strongly marked by neoliberal policies, in which institutions such as the World Bank have been one of the most important vehicles for disseminating technical and scientific rationality in educational reforms and, more specifically, in teacher education in the world (PEREIRA, 2002).

[...] we develop and/or participate, throughout our history as educators, in a previously established continuing education, that is, we do not go through a process of critical-reflective construction and this has also made us 'less critical' and, to some extent 'accommodated' (STATE MANAGER, 2015, our translation).

By reflecting on the bases that support the formation processes that she has practiced and participated in, the manager poses for herself and for the group the challenge of other ways of thinking about continuing education. As public managers of Special Education, they act directly in the context of text production and in the context of the practice of public policies for continuing education (BALL; BOWE, 1992 *apud* MAINARDES, 2006). Taking the place of policy makers or practitioners, managers point out the challenges posed to the need for another rationality of action in formative processes:

[...] I believe that it is possible to advance a little more in the formative processes carried out within the scope of the Superintendence of Cachoeiro, especially with regard to partnerships and the process of listening to Special Education professionals (STATE MANAGER, 2014, our translation).

[...] I understand that this process comes to challenge teachers to be agents of their own formation path (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2016, our translation).

It is in this sense that we believe in a public policy for continuing education that challenges managers and teachers as producers of knowledge. That is, it is "[...] subject to interpretation and recreation and where the policy produces effects and consequences that can represent significant changes and transformations in the original policy" (BOWE, 1992 *apud* MAINARDES, 2006, p. 53, our translation).

Therefore, a policy that is based on partnerships and on the process of listening to professionals, supported by a rationality of action that moves away from plans that aim at the truth of knowledge, in order to achieve a desired end, which seeks to intelligently manipulate and adapt to conditions of a contingent context (HABERMAS, 1987a). A formation policy that values critical reflection as an enhancer of professional practices, the construction of knowledge, professional identity and professional development driven by

[...] practices of continuing teacher education, which should integrate not only technical rationality, but also practical and critical rationality that allow trainees - teachers - their continuous updating, not exclusively from a perspective of acquisition (of knowledge, qualifications), but fundamentally professional and personal development (SILVA, 2000, p. 104, our translation).

We therefore believe in policies that can be supported by a *communicative rationality* that, for Habermas (1987a), maintains a direct interaction with the listener in the search for mutual understanding.

Initially, we joined SRE Afonso Cláudio, Brejetuba and Laranja da Terra in the conception we had at the time that the first step was to reach the principals, the pedagogues who were in the schools, in the understanding that if they do not have a formed conception of what is Special Education. If they don't believe, they won't produce it with the teachers either (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2014, our translation).

It is possible to observe another way of proposing and elaborating policies, in another rationality, in which one seeks, with the other (public managers, as well as school actors), understandings and agreements. From this perspective, we evidence a knowledge that is susceptible to criticism, as it will be rational, if the speaker makes himself understood to the listener. This way of using knowledge:

[...] has connotations that, ultimately, go back to the central experience of the ability to agree without constraint and generate consensus based on an argumentative speech in which the various participants overcome the initial subjectivity of their respective points of view and, thanks to a rationally motivated set of convictions ensure, in turn, a unity of the objective world

and the intersubjectivity of the context in which they develop their lives (HABERMAS, 1987a, p. 27, our translation).

It is in this movement that we will talk about the possibilities that we have been living and experiencing as a group. In the next item, we will devote ourselves to reflection and discussion about our search for other/new ways of conceiving/producing knowledge and constituting formation processes for education professionals.

The possibilities experienced through collaborative-critical action research

We have been betting on the potential of groups to seek to break with the logic of neoliberal and instrumental production in the construction of knowledge about educational policies and professional formation from the perspective of including students as a target audience of Special Education. Thus, we assume action research in its epistemological and methodological principles as a political option in the construction of knowledge *with* the other and not about the other. This movement allows us to delineate the configurations of the study-reflection group composed of managers and professors from the teaching networks of Espírito Santo and professors and students of the university.

In 2018 and 2019, Gergees dedicated itself to systematic studies on action research and its contributions to continuing education policies in Espírito Santo's education networks. Demands are permanently discussed, which allows the group to identify their priorities in light of the needs that arise in the local contexts in which managers act.

University Researcher 1: *I even wrote down, throughout the discussion, several things I saw. I wrote it down as follows: the issue of PDI as a strategy for the formation of Special Education teachers, the issue of formation policy and teacher working conditions, school curriculum and its implications for the continuing education of teachers and some aspects of formation, for example, working with the resistance of the other [...]. Barbier's conception of critical self-reflection, sensitive listening, I see as two strategies [...].* (our translation)

Municipal Manager 1: *Resistance! Because it takes an attitudinal side. What are you going to do to break this resistance from these professionals, so that they are open to learning. I think it goes a long way towards continuing education and sensitive listening.* (our translation)

Municipal Manager 2: *Sensitive listening!* (our translation)

We can observe in the dialogue the negotiation of the group's demands at that time, looking for formative processes about teacher education. Arguments placed in the discursive

spaces of the group meetings are negotiated in a constant process of sensitive listening (BARBIER, 2007) in search of mutual understandings.

As managers share in the group, sensitive listening enables the first actions of change in education networks, in relation to continuing teacher formation policies, as professionals take the place of co-authors of the process experienced, transforming their realities (FRANCO, 2015).

What is sensitive listening? It deals with a listening-seeing. Sensitive listening is based on empathy with the other (UNIVERSITY RESEARCHER, 2019, our translation).

So, about action research, he [author of the text studied] brings the concepts, which seems to be a very easy thing to go there to study, but it is not. It's very complex! Because it's not just a cutout of reality, of what you're seeing. And it shares a lot with a sensitive listening that involves all the senses, all the perceptions (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2019, our translation).

From this moment we have this space for listening and speaking, you can involve all the characters, all these authors who are in the context of education (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2019, our translation).

According to Habermas (2004), when subjects think and argue about different issues, the theory of communicative action takes place with a view to mutual understanding between subjects. Thus, we have permanently positioned ourselves in the face of the challenge of building, collaboratively, in the group, ways of organizing our own learning and our awareness processes (HABERMAS, 2004). We have observed that the prior study of scientific production, the organization of mediation of the meetings, the open space for everyone to put their arguments, sensitive listening and critical self-reflection (individual/collective) have constituted important epistemological and methodological tools during our meetings.

Municipal Manager 1: We brought up some questions [...] that we have been part of, for a while, in the research group. Regarding the continuing education of professionals [...], we sought the conceptualization, the very origin of where the word formation comes from and where does the word formation come from, so it is an action and an effect of forming, giving shape, build something, in the case of two or more people or things composing a whole of which they are part [...]. (our translation)

University Researcher 1: Where did you get it? He is a Portuguese author, right? (our translation)

Municipal Manager 1: *Yes, I just don't remember the name [...]. Our colleagues usually put it to us when it comes to inclusive education and special education. It's the same question, and it's the same statement: 'I didn't have formation to serve this student' [...]. (our translation)*

University Researcher 2: *[...] unfortunately this discourse still reverberates and, when we make an interesting proposition, they take it and say: 'But you are the specialist!' [...]. (our translation)*

This excerpt brings one of the moments of a meeting in which the planning of group mediation was carried out by a master's student and two managers. In the previous meeting, the theme had been defined and each member of the group was responsible for searching for texts on the theme. Thus, the deepening of the scientific literature, as well as the theoretical intensification in the dialogue with the critical reflection of the lived practices, allow the group to produce knowledge collaboratively. We seek, then, to form with managers a self-critical community focused on organized self-reflection. As Carr and Kemmis (1988, p. 161, our translation) tell us, a “[...] critical social science that deals with social praxis [...] to be undertaken by self-reflective groups concerned with organizing their own practice in the light of its organized self-reflection”.

From the managers' commitment to the learning process itself and the consequent active participation of everyone, we collaboratively build the group's formative process. The group promotes the discursive space according to the assumptions adopted: communication is free from pressure or hierarchies, “[...] after all, if all members could not fully participate in the discussion, it will not be possible to ensure that the conclusions reached actually represent the best of the group's thinking” (CARR; KEMMIS, 1988, p. 160, our translation). This discursive space is rich in arguments, enabling dialogue between peers, promoting the professional identity of managers in a process of involvement as researchers (BARBIER, 1985) and converting actors into authors in the construction process (CARR; KEMMIS, 1988).

Municipal Manager 1: *And then when we bring this discussion, we refer to this formation, highlighting how important it is in these issues, because, from that moment on, we have this space for listening and speaking, you can involve all the characters, all these authors who are in the context of education [...]. (our translation)*

Municipal Manager 2: *The interesting thing is that there [in the municipality], there is the Teachers' Council, because there, the pedagogue had the practice of creating the projects and delivering them to the teachers, and then, when we started the formation, they they demanded all the time: 'But won't you give anything? Aren't you going to give us handouts? [...]. (our translation)*

Municipal Manager 1: *And the action research brings this, it taught us all this, because we were also trained for this, to receive continuous formation ready and closed, with its cute modules [...]. So this action research movement breaks the whole paradigm of this question, that the individual has to come ready to go [...] this action research movement goes against all this, right? It makes you really rethink your practices and really seek knowledge through exchange [...].* (our translation)

Thus, action research presents itself as a way of doing with the other, so that everyone critically reflects on their practices, thus building other/new work possibilities, of which everyone is part and participates in the formative process, not as supporting actors, but as authors of decisions and of the investigation itself. Therefore, in the study-reflection group, we noticed a fundamental principle in the group's organization strategy: collaboration in the process of building knowledge about continuing education policies. Instead of the lone subject/group that focuses on its object of investigation or its problem, we have a collective subject/group, that is, the “critical friends” (CARR; KEMMIS, 1988) who seek mutual understanding, the understanding of oneself, the other and reality. In this movement, we perceive the communicative action that Habermas (1987a, p. 285-286, our translation) defends and explains that this happens:

[...] whenever the actions of the subjects involved are coordinated, not through egocentric calculations of success, but through acts of reaching understanding. In communicative action, participants are not primarily oriented towards their own individual success, they pursue their individual goals respecting the condition that they can harmonize their action plans based on a common definition of the situation. Thus, the negotiation of the definition of a situation is an essential element of the interpretative complement required by communicative action.

Thus, Special Education managers, committed to their own learning processes, engage in collaborative-critical self-reflection movements on continuing education policies, seeking to interpret and transform their local practices and realities, thus becoming involved in a formative process of an emancipatory nature (CARR; KEMMIS, 1988; HABERMAS, 2000).

As a result of this dialogue, we perceive the contributions of action research that are revealed in the potential of the partnership between universities and educational networks, constituted in the mediation between theory and practice. The challenges are many, the tensions and conflicts inherent to the group are present throughout this trajectory of Gergees. However, we have sought to form a self-critical community of researchers concerned with their social practice and involved in a “[...] communication oriented towards mutual understanding and [provisional] consensus, towards fair and democratic decision-making and

towards a common action that satisfies everyone” (CARR; KEMMIS, 1988, p. 210, our translation).

From the process experienced... some considerations

From this process, many possibilities have been created regarding public policies for continuing education in the teaching networks of Espírito Santo. Action research has been incorporated by managers in training processes in their places of action.

[...] the action research process is important in my locus of work, especially regarding the collaborative-critical perspective, because, from the moment the University opened its doors for us, managers, working in the Special Education in our municipalities, we could enter and get drunk with theoretical and epistemological knowledge, it was of paramount importance. Action-research also entered, emerged in our workspace [...] (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2019, our translation).

We realized the real importance of the collaborative process and potential-power of the partnership between universities and educational networks, bringing together the much-needed theory-practice relationship, enabling managers to work in this perspective in their contexts, with teachers as authors of their own formative processes.

Faced with this individual process of critical self-reflection, managers carried out a process of continuing education for professionals based on listening and negotiating with the actors in the context. Dialogue in the group shows us the possibilities of developing formative processes based on mutual understanding, when actors seek to internally harmonize their objectives and actions with agreements reached communicatively (HABERMAS, 2003).

One of the actions that emerged from this study group was our continuing education, which is entirely from the perspective of collaborative-critical action research, that is, our formation is made up of professionals from the Department of Education, where the professionals themselves prepare together with us, the management team, the themes that will be developed during this formation, that is, all the themes come from the school floor, from the realities experienced in the teaching units (MUNICIPAL MANAGEMENT, 2019, our translation).

We have sought, through the principles of dialogue, collaboration and critical self-reflection, a concomitant movement in which, while managers seek to understand and build proposals for continuing education for professionals in their educational networks, they develop their own formation in a process of “forming by being formed” (PANTALEÃO, 2009), essential to the dynamics of collaborative-critical research-action.

[...] Speaking a little now about my involvement and my trajectory as a manager, who went through the entire formative process of this research group, [...] it was extremely important not only to constitute me as a professional only, but also, little by little, I could be witnessing and also becoming a researcher. That is, with the course of the meetings and studies of this deepening, I was also able to emerge and get involved in the context of researcher/investigator [...] (MUNICIPAL MANAGER, 2019, our translation).

From the clues we have found along this path, it seems to us that the moments of dialogue between managers, in this process of constitution of study-reflection groups, enabled the construction of a collective feeling of wanting to do, involving them as researchers. It is true that we are involved, rather, implicated as Barbier (1985) tells us.

The movements of managers in the research process, their conceptions of what is reflective-critical formation, its consequences for improving educational quality and the development of inclusive formation policies reverberate in the way they have positioned themselves as researchers-managers. With a conduct of political struggle, it is clear the emancipation process that has been followed during the study-reflection group and its vision of what it is to be a public manager of Special Education.

Therefore, the reflections presented in this text reveal an experience of change involving the participants in the decision about the meaning of their own education. It is, without a doubt, a structural-professional implication, which finds meaning at each group meeting, in our constitution as researchers and in our belief in the production of knowledge. It is through this path that we defend the formation of managers based on critical action research as a principle for the development of policies for the continuing education of education professionals, in local contexts, so that they constitute an overcoming of technical and instrumental models.

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