

**DISTANCE PEDAGOGY COURSE: REVERBERATIONS AND OUTCOMES FOR  
INITIAL TEACHER FORMATION**

***CURSO DE PEDAGOGIA A DISTÂNCIA: REVERBERAÇÕES E DESDOBRAMENTOS  
PARA A FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DO PROFESSOR***

***CURSO DE PEDAGOGÍA A DISTANCIA: REPERCUSIONES Y RESULTADOS PARA  
LA FORMACIÓN INICIAL DEL DOCENTE***

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**ABSTRACT:** Organized as an essay, this article aims to analyze implications of distance education in the formation of pedagogues, with reference to official policies. It is located in the line of research “Curricular Policies for teacher formation: Higher Education and Teaching Degree Courses”. The discussion develops based on the dialectic-historical perspective, contextualized and situated, understanding that the contradictions are made explicit in the historical movement. The study of a bibliographic nature has as its main objects of analysis the conceptions, theories and norms that currently regulate the Pedagogy courses proposed in the distance modality. The analysis of this material highlights the game of forces that act in the social fabric that is conditioned by the economic, social, cultural and political contexts. In addition, it shows that the discourse of democratization of access to higher education has strengthened public policies aligned with distance education without, however, the debate of contradictions and their implications for the quality of teacher formation and education. Thus, this text discusses the reverberations and developments of the initial education of the pedagogue/distance teacher, with the aim of demystifying the idea that this modality promotes the democratization of higher education for the popular layers in view of their labor process.

**KEYWORDS:** Pedagogy course. Profession teacher. Distance education. Democratization discourses. Precarization.

**RESUMO:** Organizado como um ensaio, este artigo tem como objetivo analisar implicações da educação a distância (EaD) na formação de pedagogos, tendo como referência as políticas oficiais. Se situa na linha de pesquisa “Políticas Curriculares para a formação de professores: Educação Superior e Cursos de Licenciatura”. A discussão se desenvolve

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*fundamentada na perspectiva dialética-histórica, contextualizada e situada, entendendo que as contradições se explicitam no movimento histórico. O estudo de natureza bibliográfica tem como principais objetos de análise as concepções, teorias e normativas que na atualidade regulam os cursos de Pedagogia propostos na modalidade a distância. A análise desse material evidencia o jogo das forças que atuam no tecido social que está condicionado pelos contextos econômico, social, cultural e político. Além disso, mostra que o discurso de democratização do acesso ao ensino superior tem fortalecido as políticas públicas alinhadas à educação a distância sem que ocorra, no entanto, o debate das contradições e das suas implicações para a qualidade da formação dos professores e da educação. Assim, este texto debate as reverberações e desdobramentos da formação inicial do pedagogo/professor a distância, com o intuito de desmistificar a ideia de que essa modalidade promove a democratização do ensino superior para as camadas populares tendo em vista seu processo laboral.*

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Curso de pedagogia. Profissão professor. Educação a distância. Discursos de democratização. Precarização.*

**RESUMEN:** *Organizado como un ensayo, este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar las implicaciones de la educación a distancia (EaD) en la formación de pedagogos, con referencia a las políticas oficiales. Se ubica en la línea de investigación “Políticas Curriculares para la formación docente: Educación Superior y Carreras”. La discusión se desarrolla a partir de la perspectiva dialéctico-histórica, contextualizada y situada, entendiendo que las contradicciones se explicitan en el movimiento histórico. El estudio de carácter bibliográfico tiene como principales objetos de análisis las concepciones, teorías y normas que actualmente regulan los cursos de Pedagogía propuestos en la modalidad a distancia. El análisis de este material destaca el juego de fuerzas que actúan en el tejido social que está condicionado por los contextos económico, social, cultural y político. Además, muestra que el discurso de democratización del acceso a la educación superior ha fortalecido políticas públicas alineadas con la educación a distancia sin, sin embargo, el debate de las contradicciones y sus implicaciones para la calidad de la formación y educación docente. Así, este texto discute las repercusiones y desarrollos de la formación inicial del pedagogo/profesor a distancia, con el objetivo de desmitificar la idea de que esta modalidad promueve la democratización de la educación superior para las capas populares frente a su proceso de trabajo.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Curso de pedagogía. Profesor de profesión. Educación a distancia. Discursos de democratización. Precariedad.*

## **Introduction**

This text addresses reflections within the scope of a doctoral research<sup>4</sup> that has as its object the analysis of the Virtual Public University of the State of São Paulo (UNIVESP), as an institution that offers courses in the field of teacher formation. Specifically, this text, organized as an essay, discusses the implications of distance education in the formation of pedagogues, mainly with regard to formative policies. It is also part of the line of research “Curricular Policies for Teacher Formation: Higher Education and Teaching Degree Courses”, by the Study and Research Group on Teacher Formation and Curriculum (GEPEFOR). The guiding axis of the discussion is the dialectical perspective - historical, contextualized and situated - in the understanding that contradictions are made explicit in the historical movement. Developing research involving the distance Pedagogy course in Brazil requires understanding its historical process and the factors that interfere with “formation for the profession” (NÓVOA; ALVIM, 2022, p. 64, our translation).

By delimiting links established around initial teacher formation through distance learning, it is possible to identify the game of forces that act in the social fabric, as this is conditioned by economic, social, cultural and political contexts. In this sense, this debate is part of the dispute over elements of the formative process of future teachers, especially in the political field. It asks about how the training process of distance pedagogy students occurs and what are the implications around the performance of the subjects involved in this formation modality (virtual tutor, teacher/author).

The apparent familiarity with the distance modality makes it natural. When Distance Education is discussed only through democratization and access to higher education, the diploma market is expanded, through the discourse of accessibility, and departs from fundamental questions that must be articulated to the initial formation of teachers, such as: pedagogical model, relationship between those involved in the teaching-learning process, teacher and tutor role, supervised internship project, presence of research as a formative axis (inherent to the pedagogical specificity of the profession), content selected for formation, teaching strategies employed in the development of courses, role of mediators in the

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<sup>4</sup> Theoretical discussion that outlines teacher formation policies articulated with the promotion of courses offered via distance mode (public and private sectors), regarding the formative process of future distance trained professionals (ZUIN, 2006). Research carried out with the support of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel – Brazil (CAPES/DS) and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the College of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of Ribeirão Preto, University of São Paulo (CEP/FFCLRP/USP). Ethical Appreciation Presentation Certificate - CAAE: 46099821.3.0000.5407. The research is located in the line “Curricular Policies for teacher training: Higher Education and Teaching Degree Courses”, of the Study and Research Group on Teacher Formation and Curriculum (GEPEFOR).

pedagogical process, high dropout rates, evaluation system for the teaching-learning process, on-site support structure, among other aspects.

In order to enter this controversial area, it is necessary to briefly discuss the narratives that involve Distance Education<sup>5</sup>. The hypnotic and naturalized discourse<sup>6</sup> of democratization via the distance modality entails capillarity and a legitimizing and uncritical veneer for Distance Education, as well as boosting the vertiginous expansion<sup>7</sup> of this modality (primarily for teacher formation). There is a veil of opacity in the economist discourse that hides the structural debate of social inequalities. Evidence of mistakes and implications of what is not said, such as, for example, dropout data, formative discrepancy, lack of political formation, becomes necessary. Furthermore, does the Brazilian population have the right to democratize access to higher education only if it is to be a pedagogue/teacher?

Distance Education has also been justified in terms of reducing geographical distances between students and higher education institutions, considering the territorial extension of Brazil (through the use of digital technologies, internet) and the flexibility of time to study. In the neoliberal perspective, the distance modality is conceived as an affirmative, compensatory<sup>8</sup>, inclusive policy (permeated by the speech of opportunity of access to higher education for populations that would not have the opportunity without this modality), therefore, without reflections that point out the reverberations and consequences of the distance formation.

In relation to Distance Education being a compensatory policy, Helene (2012) develops the issue by stating that formation of teachers through this modality could compromise two generations: that of the trained teachers themselves and that of their students. The author notes:

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<sup>5</sup> From what Fétizon and Minto (2007) argue, corroborated by Dourado (2008); Mendes (2011) and Preti (2011), the present work agrees with the dilemma of the indistinct use between education and teaching – treated as synonyms. Teaching represents instruction, and education has a broader meaning. However, in the course of this study, the expression distance education is adopted considering that it is used in the regulations and to avoid interpretative confusion.

<sup>6</sup> Giolo (2008) suggests that the implications around distance education be considered: “The arguments of those who defend the unlimited expansion of distance education are well known and, it must be recognized, some are quite convincing. However, it is time to work objectively, given the significant accumulation of information that allows for less heated and more consequent analysis” (p. 1227, our translation).

<sup>7</sup> Distance Education, in Brazil, begins its expansion through the public sector (through the Open University of Brazil – UAB, Portuguese initials), legitimizing official policies. However, there is a reversal in the early 2000s, when its offer becomes massively by the private sector, aiming at large-scale certification. (AMORIM, 2021; DOURADO, 2008; EVANGELISTA; SEKI; SOUZA, 2019; GIOLO, 2008; MENDES, 2011; NOVAES; OKUMURA, 2021; SANTOS, 2018; SHIROMA *et al.*, 2017; SOUZA, 2017; ZANARDINI, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> The concern with the admission of the less economically favored strata to the university is legitimate, however it is necessary to analyze whether the growth of the distance learning offer in Brazil follows the assumption of serving the regions less provided with higher education (MENDES, 2011, p. 8).

You don't need to be a specialist in Brazil to realize that Distance Education is aimed at the poorest and whose children will also have teachers formed through distance education. This is certainly not what we want. Letting distance learning appear in such numbers, uncontrollably and almost completely dominated by the commercial private sector, we now have one more task ahead of us: fighting to reverse this situation. And there are some final questions. Why did the responsible bodies allow distance education to reach the enormous proportions it did? Why do governments legitimize distance education the way they do? (HELENE, 2012, [n.d.], our translation).

The massification of higher education, via distance mode, to correct the process of exclusion of the poorest sectors of higher education, conceals structural issues in the social, political, economic, cultural and educational spheres.

Still, there is the argument that the distance modality would reach the corners of the country. This assertion is refuted by several authors (ADUSP, 2010; AMORIM, 2021; GIOLO, 2008; MANDELI, 2017; MENDES, 2011). Giolo (2008) states that the distribution of the population is not directly related to the need for an distance education system. If it had, a better distribution would be needed for the North and Midwest regions, considering that “the distances, in principle, would require a greater presence of distance education” (GIOLO, 2008, p. 1222, our translation). In this direction, Malanchen (2020; 2015) corroborates:

In cases such as the North and Midwest regions, such an allegation could even be accepted, but we observe that the federal government's policies for the implementation of distance education are not directed only to these regions, but cover the national territory, even the regions considered economically developed, such as South and Southeast. We can conclude that this argument is not very solid in the case of distance education policies that have been implemented in Brazil (MALANCHEN, 2020, p. 40, our translation).

[...] if one of the MEC's justifications for implementing distance education is that it should serve to reach geographically disadvantaged populations, why, then, were so many vacancies authorized [by the UAB] in regions considered the most developed in the country? [like Southeast] (MALANCHEN, 2015, p. 176, authors' emphasis, our translation).

It appears, in view of the arguments of the aforementioned authors, that the distance education offer, incoherently justified by the geographic extension of Brazil, is concentrated in more developed regions. Salata (2018), when verifying that, in the last two decades, there has been a reduction in inequalities in access to higher education in Brazil (as a result of the expansion process and public policies that occurred in progressive governments), stresses that expansion does not necessarily lead to, the democratization of the access barrier to this level of education.

It is recognized that distance education is minimally justifiable in the event of offering an opportunity to enter public higher education in regions where there are no vacancies in face-to-face courses. However, Fétizon and Minto (2007, p. 5, our translation) point out that, even so, “it is worth remembering that any possible adoption of distance learning must be accompanied by effective educational planning, in order to prevent the lack of vacancies in face-to-face courses, or their insufficiency, continue to happen”. That is, the alternative offer by distance modality must be temporary.

While the face-to-face modality grows in a continuous, timid and stable way, the distance modality grows quickly and vertiginously. Regarding the formation of pedagogues, Amorim (2021) asserts that, currently, the distance modality is responsible for formation of most pedagogues and teachers in the country, given that the graduation in Pedagogy (distance) represents 60% of courses of the area of Education. The Statistical Synopsis of Higher Education 2020 (INEP, 2022) corroborates the data. Of the 994,274 enrollments in distance education in the area of Education, 595,194 are in the distance Pedagogy course (59.8%). Hence, one of the needs to reflect on the initial formation of pedagogues in distance education.

The 1990s characterize the decade of State reforms, which corroborate neoliberal policies articulated to the demands of capital and productive restructuring, creating objective conditions for the growth of the distance modality in Brazil, through legal security of the regulations that drive its offer. Therefore, distance education presents itself as a preferred policy in teacher formation (AMORIM, 2021) regarding incentives through legislation and neoliberal guidelines that guide educational reforms in this area in recent decades.

Malanchen and Duarte (2018) explain that the reordering of social relations under the aegis of the globalization of the economy (a result of neoliberal policy) resizes the role of the State, “redirects the social policies undertaken by it and, consequently, rearticulates the social role of education” (MALANCHEN; DUARTE, 2018, p. 25, our translation). Such authors also report that the Brazilian government, since the 1990s “has been putting into practice the guidelines of the IO [international organizations] for the educational field, especially those of the WB [World Bank], which defend training as a priority in service, to the detriment of initial formation” (p. 25, emphasis added). Decker (2017) emphasizes that the World Bank, in its reports, summarily disqualifies teacher formation and advises against investing in face-to-face initial formation for this professional, as they consider it task-oriented and technical (context of linkage to the market). Shiroma, Campos and Garcia (2005, p. 430, our translation) show that multilateral organizations:

[...] through their documents, they not only prescribed the guidelines to be adopted, but also produced the 'justifying' discourse of the reforms that, prepared in other contexts, needed to build local consensus for their implementation.

Although the distance modality may have been initially encouraged with generous intentions, throughout history it has been appropriated as a marketable good (EVANGELISTA, 2013; EVANGELISTA; SEKI, 2017; EVANGELISTA; SEKI; SOUZA, 2019). It is a consensus among intellectuals<sup>9</sup> that educational policies in Brazil have been influenced by the neoliberal agenda through the guidelines<sup>10</sup> of international organizations (OI) and multilateral organizations (MO<sup>11</sup>), since the beginning of the 1990s, formalized by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDBEN No. 9.394/1996) (BRASIL, 1996). This regulation legitimizes the reforms of the Brazilian State and also constitutes the initial chronological milestone of distance education, being the first document that regularizes this modality (Articles 80 and 87).

Malanchen (2015) argues that the role of the MEC, in addition to linking the production of specific legislation for the distance modality, expands the promotion and implementation of large numbers of distance courses, to the detriment of the offer of public and face-to-face courses – under questionable justifications, such as: inefficiency of face-to-face provision for initial formation; democratization of access to higher education to “guarantee” opportunities for the underprivileged as well as those geographically distant from urban formation centers.

The educational policies implemented by the State from the neoliberal reform in the 1990s (AMORIM, 2021), represent the interests of hegemonic groups in which they resize labor relations through determinations of productive capital restructuring and, with regard to the profile of the teacher, this is reconfigured with a view to meeting market demands.

An ideological discourse pervades these organizations, that is, of persuasion. Ball (2006) argues that policies usually do not objectively guide what to do but produce “[...] circumstances in which the spectrum of available options on what to do is reduced or modified or in which goals particulars or effects are established” (p. 26). This author

<sup>9</sup> Amorim (2021); Decker (2017); Evangelista; Triches (2012); Freitas (2007).

<sup>10</sup> It is known that the guidelines are not the same for all countries, given the specificities of each one, but this reality exists (EVANGELISTA; SEKI; SOUZA, 2019; MALANCHEN, 2015; PRETI, 2011).

<sup>11</sup> World Bank (WB), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), among others.

emphasizes that other perspectives need to oppose or balance this *modus operandi* of the State and the induction of policies through international organizations.

The current Decree no. 9,057/2017 requires higher education institutions in the private sector to offer distance learning courses, even if these do not exist at the institution in face-to-face mode. With Ordinance no. 1,428/2018, the possibility of expanding the workload granted at distance from 20% to 40% (according to certain criteria) is revealed. Ordinance no. 2,117/2019, in its 2nd article, defines that institutions “may introduce the offer of workloads in the distance education modality **in the pedagogical and curricular organization of their on-site undergraduate courses, up to the limit of 40% of the total workload of the course** [and not just disciplines]” (BRASIL, 2019, p. 1, emphasis added, our translation). According to current regulations, there is a clear preference for offering distance learning courses, especially teacher formation.

Based on the assumption that research constitutes an emancipatory basis (DEMO, 2006), it is evaluated that research activity should be a category and formative principle of the pedagogue, that is, “[...] research can be the space for the exercise of dialectical thinking” (PEDROSO; PINTO, 2019, p. 176, our translation). Regarding valuing the investigative view, Pedroso *et al.* (2019, p. 47) argue that it should be the formative basis of the Pedagogy course since, “as a production of knowledge, it contributes to the formation of a political attitude of thinking about praxis and transforming it”. This exploratory lens expands the possibilities for transformation.

Another initiating aspect of formation is the mandatory supervised internship in the Pedagogy course. Is there a different format for the distance modality? It is based on the statement by Chauí (2016, p. 257, our translation), when he indicates that “The swimming teacher cannot teach the student to swim in the sand by making him imitate his gestures but leads him to throw himself into the water in his company so that he learns to swim fighting the waves [...]”. It is only through face-to-face immersion in formative spaces (with mediation between the internship field and the university) that the future teacher will learn to “swim”.

However, although it is consistent to think that the institution guarantees quality control by having a list of field schools that provide the internship, the issue here is how the selection of the aforementioned schools occurs (who decides which ones will be, who monitors them), since there is an agreement contract with a supposedly well-selected school, it also does not guarantee “quality”, given the importance of mediating the internship experience by the student on the part of those involved in the course (and in the field school).



As exposed, the conception of democratization articulated to distance has directed the policies of teacher education to the modality in question, although without deepening formative aspects concerning the conceptions, pedagogical model, supervised internship etc. Thus is out of sight the debate on fundamental questions regarding the mentioned aspects, essential to the critical professional practice.

One of the elements for the debate about the distance Pedagogy course concerns the problematization of the specific knowledge of teaching and its relationship with other knowledge that is systematized through the fragmentation of the teacher educator's work, since there are several actors that permeate the virtual learning environment (AVA), such as the tutor, the mediator, among others. At this moment, the focus is on the performance of the content teacher and the tutor, regarding the formative aspects, organization of the pedagogical work and reflection.

Regarding technological mediation for the development of the educational/formative process of professionals in the field of education, it is based on the premise that such mediations are products of human work (ZUIN, 2006). This author, through an analysis of the Open University of Brazil (UAB), discusses: distance education or distant education? (text in which he reports on the symbolic distance in the pedagogical relationship) and exposes that “the mere use of more refined audiovisual resources [or AVAs, Portuguese initials] does not mean, a priori, that people communicate” (ZUIN, 2006, p. 941, emphasis added, our translation). Therefore, technology should not be confused with human proximity and mutual coexistence. Zuin (2006, p. 941, emphasis added, our translation) further assesses that virtual expression entails a “fetish that secondary communication, that is, communication mediated by technical devices [technological, that promote virtuality], becomes hegemonic in relation to the primary, undertaken in person”.

Regarding communication in the distance modality, Preti (2011, p. 67, our translation) argues that EaD “is 'mediated' by a set of didactic resources and technological supports and 'deferred in time' (the moments of production and co-production occur at different times)”, which can have implications, on the part of students, in misinterpretations, as well as the incorrect use of fundamental concepts in their initial formation. Neder (2005, p. 189, our translation) addresses the issue through the perspective of mediation of texts (or videos), given that thinking about the communication process, “from the perspective of the communicational relationship, therefore of interactive or multidirectional communication, is essential for any educational modality, especially when this modality is distance education”.

Although the AVA has the potential of pedagogical resources, it is necessary to emphasize that, without intentionality and human mediation, it becomes inefficient and ineffective. Much more than resorting to technological media coverage, it is the human relationship, the encounter with the other that enables a learning environment. Regarding face-to-face interaction and the educational process, Fétizon and Minto (2007, p. 14, our translation) elucidate that this process:

[...] is permeated by the brightness-opacity of the eyes, the swing of those who seek, the mischievous smile of those who find, by the individual and collective enjoyment of what is apprehended, resulting in the students acquiring autonomy to formulate readings of the world and to act as historical subjects, and, through teachers, to carry out their professional, but also human, commitment. This dimension is intrinsic to face-to-face teaching and would be discarded in distance education, just as, in theory, teachers themselves would also be discarded.

The distance modality naturalizes access for working-class students. However, defending distance education for the working student is to deprive him of experiencing a university environment and maintain the discourse that the worker<sup>12</sup> can even study, as long as it is outside of his working hours (the narrative of flexibility of time and space has served to co-opt). Giolo (2008, p. 1211) talks about the university environment and the face-to-face nature of the classroom, arguing that “teacher formation must be carried out in the classroom, the locus that condenses the culture of teaching and learning and is constituted by indispensable human relations for teaching practice”. For the author, formation consists of human relationships:

The teaching activity, in its already long trajectory, has built a culture and an institutional network where it takes place: its habitat. The school, the academy, the university were conceived and constituted as specific spaces and times for the exercise of teaching and learning. [...] These spaces are for socializing, for political life, for the confluence of many expectations. Considering that this locus can be neglected as a fundamental part of the formation of young people, especially those who intend to prepare for teaching, is a colossal mistake. Virtual exchanges are undoubtedly important, as well as distance-oriented learning (knowledge acquisition) can be successful and is important. However, **what is on the agenda, when it comes to distance teacher formation courses, is not exactly teacher formation for distance teaching, but for face-to-face teaching.** Pedagogues will face a group of students, living and present, gathered in a school, and, in this environment, not only the knowledge acquired will be required, but a set of knowledge and skills (appropriate method, emotional

<sup>12</sup> Generally, the expectation of distance education students (a modality aimed at the formation of a large contingent of the working class) is to combine studies with other personal and/or professional activities. Which is legit. But it is necessary not to naturalize this conciliation.

balance, ethical behavior, mastering strategies class, disinhibition, leadership, patience etc.), things that are learned in books and, mainly, in the practice of coexistence, in experimentation, in mutual demands, in laboratories, in seminars, in lectures, in thematic debates, in cultural presentations, in supervised internships, in speeches in the classroom, in the corridors, in the university cafeteria etc. (GIOLO, 2008, p. 1227, emphasis added, our translation).

From this perspective, the university ambience, presence of the classroom, of the university's "corridors", constitute spaces for socialization, political life and debates. It is a priority to emphasize that distance teacher formation courses prepare for face-to-face teaching in Basic Education, which comes from environments and physical presence, with human relationships. Giolo (2008) stresses the inconsistency of distance teacher formation, which trains professionals to work in face-to-face teaching (Basic Education). In the same perspective, Zuin (2006) elucidates that one of the great challenges in relation to the distance modality is to provide conditions for absent teachers to become present.

One cannot be naive to the point of believing that the teacher's physical presence alone guarantees good quality teaching, given the fact that, on many face-to-face occasions, the so-called pact of mediocrity prevails, in which the teacher pretends that teaches and students pretend to learn. On the other hand, this categorical imperative of exhibiting oneself, which clings to the current ontological condition that to be is to be perceived, must necessarily become an object of criticism from teachers whose images are filtered by the transmission channels of the electronic devices involved in distance learning. In fact, the *presentification* of the teacher is done, paradoxically, through its "virtualization", that is, through the possibility of prodding the development of an increasing number of *representations* that encourage students to question the transmitted contents, which, instead of being absorbed, can be critically elaborated (ZUIN, 2006, p. 948, our translation).

In this context, situated in Nóvoa and Alvim (2022, p. 96, emphasis added, our translation), the provocation is recorded: "A bird does not fly in water. A fish does not swim on land. A teacher is not formed in current university environments [or diversified academic formats], nor in mediocre and uninteresting school environments". The authors argue that initial teacher formation, as a professional formation, should be undertaken in the university space, since this is the place for knowledge professions (medicine, engineering, teaching, among many others). The teaching work is impregnated with intentionality and aims at human development through contents, thoughts and actions, implying choices, values and ethical commitments. Paradoxically, the meanings of teacher formation are being realized and how

this is inserted in the field of teaching, supported by the scientific paradigm<sup>13</sup> since, once instituted, it guides the field of teaching and pedagogical practices.

In the same direction, Domingues and Belletati (2019, p. 117, our translation) consider teaching praxis as “intentional transformative action, resulting from critical-theoretical reflection of practice, in the sense of humanization”. In order to think about the performance of the content teacher and the tutor, it is understood that it is necessary to understand the concept of teaching, which underlies the reflections. CNE/CP Resolution no. 02/2015 presents such a concept as:

[...] educational action and as an intentional and methodical pedagogical process, involving specific, interdisciplinary and pedagogical knowledge, concepts, principles and objectives of training that are developed between scientific and cultural knowledge, ethical, political and aesthetic values inherent in teaching and learning, in the socialization and construction of knowledge, in the constant dialogue between different views of the world [...] (BRASIL, 2015, our translation).

Teaching is a specific field of knowledge that differentiates it from other professions. Based on Pedroso *et al.* (2019, p. 31, our translation), about conceptualization, being an “activity that mobilizes different types of knowledge; among them, the knowledge and methodologies about what will be taught. [...] conjugation between the educational principles, the pedagogical intentionality and the given conditions”. Cardoso and Farias (2020), when addressing the topic in the field of teacher formation, identify different perspectives in academic works regarding the concept of teaching (consisting of multiple approaches, conjunctures and perspectives). “In the productions examined, in general terms, there was a reductionist perception of the concept of teaching, limited to its doing, to its operational dimension” (CARDOSO; FARIAS, 2020, p. 409, our translation). The authors suggest that the political dimension is hidden from the conceptualizations, relegated to a subliminal dimension, almost alien to teacher education.

They also emphasize the relevance of the political dimension in the context of teacher formation and consider that the absence of this political aspect has implications for professional practice, in which teachers distance themselves from action on the “tensions that surround their practice and the lives of their students, whether on cultural, environmental issues, or with social implications, perhaps even issues related to teaching and learning” (CARDOSO; FARIAS, 2020, p. 410, our translation). Therefore, an expanded perspective of

<sup>13</sup> Dominant theoretical body for some time.

teaching stems from the acceptance of the political dimension in the ways of understanding and acting as a teacher in which he is aware of his role as a political subject. “Such expansion permeates the assumption of the political dimension in the ways of understanding and acting as a teacher responsible for the formation of other teachers” (CARDOSO; FARIAS, 2020, p. 397, our translation).

Neder (2012, p. 74, our translation) indicates that teaching skills can be thought from the perspective in which the “technical dimension of teaching is allied to the political dimension, preparing the teacher to make decisions with regard to guidelines or curricula, considering the context in which their teaching action is situated”. In the same perspective, Rios (2015, p. 647, emphasis added, our translation) argues about pedagogical formation and its specifically pedagogical knowledge:

The role of teacher brings to the individual the need for *formation*, preparation for adequate performance. In addition to mastering knowledge about a certain area of reality, which will become the teaching content, there is also the requirement to master theoretical and methodological resources for sharing, socializing – the contents. [...] Thus, we are led to conclude that the essence of degree courses, being preparation to teach, is *pedagogical formation*.

Cruz (2011, p. 205, our translation) also argues that the Pedagogy course, “in addition to providing the specific pedagogical instrumentation for teaching, needs to favor the necessary theoretical-practical formation of the pedagogue”, in general. The author (2011, p. 207, our translation) elucidates that the theoretical deepening, “through the different disciplines, needs to consider education as a social practice and the pedagogical and teaching work as the first reference of Pedagogy and, consequently, of its course”.

Teacher formation implies specific, pedagogical knowledge, with political and politicized formation. Dialogue between knowledge (from different areas) is necessary so that, in the teaching work, these do not become fragmented. It is necessary to consider that the professional activity of every teacher has a double nature – epistemological and pedagogical, that is, it is linked to educational purposes of human formation and to methodological and organizational processes of transposition and appropriation of knowledge and modes of action. As the pedagogical work is parceled out (considering the activity that Distance Education actors develop), it becomes fragmented. It questions what configures and what is the specificity of pedagogical work, that is, what does it mean pedagogically to guide students in courses offered at a distance. Costa and Zanatta (2014, p. 107, our translation) assert that “the work of the professionals involved in the distance course requires knowledge of the

pedagogical project of the course, the teaching material and the information and communication technologies (ICT) that will be used”.

Although favorable to the modality, Alonso (2005, p. 30) recognizes some problems in the way of organizing distance education, such as, for example: decomposing teaching into small tasks; excessive emphasis on student autonomy; standardization of knowledge and the “fractalization of teaching work”, which are elements to be considered in initial formation, especially that of teachers. Therefore, the rationalization of the pedagogical work is evident, bringing it closer to the factory logic in which each worker performs a specific task on the production line.

The relations of and of the teaching work are also modified in the distance modality. Regarding “work” relations, the change comes from the forms of hiring – from tenders to scholarship programs and/or provision of services (for the production of content, follow-up of disciplines, etc.). About changes in “work” relations, these materialize in the division of the teacher's work organization, in which the “product” (content) is not “executed” by the teacher worker, since it is the tutor who performs it, that is, one thinks and the other executes. The rationality of educational action dehumanizes work relationships and the pedagogical process. The objectification of work permeates the entire pedagogical process (be it the content teacher or the tutor), since the social category of workforce is abstracted from men and becomes a commodity. In this context, Malanchen and Duarte (2018), when discussing the teacher's role in directing the educational process in the light of Historical-Critical Pedagogy, emphasize that the teacher's protagonism is evident:

[...] in the selection of cultural objects (the contents), as well as in their planning in the most appropriate way, enabling the practical conditions for the transmission and assimilation of the contents by the student, in the establishment of criteria for selecting and sequencing them in a way that intentionally develops in students the ability to appropriate culture in general (MALANCHEN; DUARTE, 2018, p. 20, our translation).

Therefore, fragmenting the teaching work can make planning in its entirety unfeasible, since the author teacher does not know his group of students. That is, the teacher even has relative autonomy for the selection of contents, but is unaware of the interests, needs and difficulties of the students (detected by the tutors in some situations). It is essential that teachers get to know the students, since they start from their theoretical references to relate them to the context, with the profile of the students, educational objectives, the discipline, among other aspects. Constructing/elaborating/producing content that is disconnected from

the student and the contexts that involve him, as occurs in most distance education offers, implies fragmenting and depriving the educational action of meaning.

In view of the above regarding the technicalization of teaching work, which disqualifies it and, as it rationalizes and fragments its *modus operandi*, it is questioned about the author teacher losing his professional autonomy, given that he produces, but does not necessarily execute. This is text editor; content producer; organizer of learning situations (NEDER, 2005). Therefore, he has his work pulverized and punctual for the elaboration of contents, activities and evaluations (items together or separately, depending on the service delivery package). With regard to the content teacher, Hardagh and Camas (2017, p. 13, our translation) explain that:

In the hegemonic model of distance education, the content teacher (creator of the class) is not necessarily responsible for the mediation of the distance class. Professors can be hired as tutors or professors of face-to-face courses who take on distance classes, this often occurs without any type of specific formation for online teaching. The assembly structure of classes for distance education courses created a new work process, the teacher's praxis, the process of creating classes, designing the Course Plan, choosing bibliographies, learning strategies, resources and evaluation no longer belongs to the teacher, he receives a ready-made package of classes for which he has to appear in front of the protagonist student, but in fact, his participation is an extra. The function of guiding the learning process is compromised due to the number of students and the distance from the applied content and the lack of interactivity with the students.

Through the speech of the autonomous student and protagonist in the production of knowledge, the essentiality of “being a teacher” (of thinking, planning and acting) is extracted from the teacher, since this becomes an element that only makes up the scenario of performance in the class play (in order to give more reality to the scene), since the extra is decorative. Thus, in the assembly line of courses offered at a distance, the content teacher has a specific function, although he may be teaching in other higher education institutions.

In parallel to the issue surrounding the content teacher, there is a new piece that makes up the ingenuity of distance education: the virtual tutor. Cardoso and Pereira (2014, p. 70, our translation) divide the teaching category into those who produce and those who perform the work, under the aegis of Taylorism and Fordism<sup>14</sup>.

Basically, distance education teachers have two functions that can be exercised by different groups. The first refers to the planning of the course, dealing with the definition of methodology, content, evaluation and the final

<sup>14</sup> The Fordist model still present in the organization of the distance education system is characterized by mass production methods, segmented workforce and fragmented tasks.

format of the study and learning material. The second is tutoring, which, throughout the teaching and learning process, is dedicated to individual guidance and clarification of doubts. Both functions present challenges, as distance teaching activity is more complex than face-to-face education.

The teaching profession is complex, regardless of the teaching modality. Although the authors talk about the tutor, assuming that he is a teacher (trained in the area in which he works in tutoring), what is at issue is the separation of the teaching process between the teacher who produces the content and the tutor (mediator of the content with the student). Pesce (2007) argues that, with the neopragmatic movement in the context of teacher formation and massive attendance through the distance modality, the role of the multiplier (tutor) emerges, to the detriment of the teacher figure. The author (2007, p. 1, our translation) warns that “a poignant question is the subservience of a good part of distance learning programs to educational policies arising from the guidelines of international organizations, whose rationale arises amid neoliberal ideas”.

Santos, Batista and Santos (2020) contribute to this subject by mentioning that neoliberal rationality consists of forming an individual who does not think through contradictions and does not access the scientific concepts and methods necessary for reading, analyzing, interpreting and intervening in reality. The separation of the producer of the content (of a course) and who mediates it with the student is part of this instrumental rationality. Zuin (2006) addresses the theme, discussing the liquefaction of the teacher figure:

[...] that becomes a kind of service provider [...] shamelessly illustrates its process of reification. It is in this context that the data show, that is, the data show [currently one can think of the YouTuber teacher], expresses not only the “appropriate” way of transmitting pedagogical contents, but also the new function of the teacher: the animator of audiovisual shows (p. 947, emphasis added, our translation).

The author caricatures the new configuration of the teacher to draw attention to the fact that the formative aspect is diluted in the midst of digital technologies and the processes of pedagogical mediation specific to the nature of these means. Who teaches distance? The reification of the teaching work, the denial of the nature and specificity of education (SCALCON, 2011), distance education reconverts this work again and makes the teacher a transmitter of content. Barreto (2010, p. 1315, our translation) understands that “the teacher is not exactly removed from the scene, but relegated to a secondary role, his actions being tentatively reduced to aspects such as the time required to perform certain tasks”.

It is considered, therefore, that it is in the mutual and interactive relationship between teacher and student that elaborated knowledge is built and through the dialectical process of



teaching-learning. As much as there may be pedagogical intentionality in the action of the subjects involved in the distance education assembly line, there is a lack of inseparability between what was thought (by the content teacher), what was diagrammed (by the designers) and what was implemented (by the virtual tutors). From the perspective of totality, teaching work is pulverized, in addition to the precariousness of the work relationships of those involved in this modality.

In distance education, the tutor assumes responsibility for teaching training and has the function of mediating the pedagogical process with geographically distant students. Although there is a vast literature regarding the virtual tutor in the distance modality, the texts, for the most part, do not problematize the role of this subject and the impact on the student's education, but rather endorse it. Remembering that to problematize does not mean to deny it completely. There is no consensus in academic productions regarding the role of the tutor in the distance modality. Some authors problematize the contradiction, others cloud it. The sharing of teaching with the tutor, the organization of activities separately - one produces the content and the other executes, brings elements to think about the role of the teacher. Is the tutor a para-teacher? It is also questioned about when subjects who do not have pedagogical formation are encouraged to become teachers (at most, they have training to work in distance education). Hardagh and Camas (2017, p. 96, emphasis added, our translation) encourage reflection:

Another fact, very important in our country, is the performance of the tutor, a questionable profession from a legal point of view [...]. The professional tutor who works, in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), in online teaching, **practically supporting the demand of the pedagogical action**, has the practice of referring to the specialist teacher, only when there is something more specific and that he alone could not solve. **It is referred to the specialist teacher, to solve the student's doubt. It is worth remembering that this tutor in many institutions can be a qualified professor (specialist, master or doctor), can be an intern or non-titled graduate [...].**

For Veiga (2008, p. 291, our translation), organizing the class as a collaborative process means “establishing intentions and seeking their implementation in pedagogical actions; this implies praxis, that is, necessarily intentional human action of a theoretical-practical character”. Although the tutor does not didactically organize the class, he is the one who will mediate the contents with the students.

The tutor needs to know in depth the fundamental concepts that are focused on in the discipline, as well as historicity, articulation with other knowledge and ways of approaching methodological aspects. Regarding the mastery of content in a systematized way, the role of

the tutor is problematized when he does not have pedagogical training (or is from another area of knowledge, not linked to the field in which he acts as a tutor). How will a bachelor graduate mediate students in teaching degree courses?

Freitas (2007) emphasizes that the tutors' action is a precarious form of higher education work. For Barreto (2008, p. 925) the tutor “as a figure introduced in the Brazilian educational context by distance education and as the most fragile link in a whole chain of simplifications, is a predictable unfolding of the process of emptying formation and teaching work [...]”. The virtual tutor has assumed the teaching responsibility in formation in distance courses since it establishes mediation in the pedagogical process (student-content). As the adjectivation demonstrates, the content teacher produces the content, but it is the tutor who executes the mediation in the virtual learning environment even without having didactic-pedagogically organized the class (content). What knowledge are mobilized by tutors for this mediation, as Barreto (2008) assures, insofar as these are considered the weakest link in the production chain? In addition, there are the conditions of their work that impact on the formation of students, namely: high turnover of tutors, given the flexible working relationships without guaranteed rights; high ratio between tutor and student, among others.

### **Brief considerations**

Given the above, it appears that the training of teachers at a distance is a political choice that hides the promotion of face-to-face initial formation. Thus, it is a fact that the implementation of distance education in Brazil occurred in a light way in its diffusion, mainly, in distance Pedagogy courses. Molina (2014), when examining counter-hegemonic practices in the training of educators in the field education degree course, engenders the term “phagocytosis process” to designate the suffocation of the examined courses. Valid expression when one thinks of public attendance courses in Pedagogy and other degrees. In some courses, face-to-face formation is mutilated to legitimize the distance mode.

However, treating the issue from the historical perspective entails capturing the movement of critical reflection regarding the dissemination of initial formation courses for distance teachers. It is believed that changing the locus of teacher formation and boosting initial distance teacher formation favor reconversion. De Rossi (2005), Shiroma *et al.* (2017) understand teacher reconversion as the set of strategies adopted by different instances and centers of power to rationalize educational systems and adjust educational policies to the economic pressures of (inter)national agencies. In other words, school education and teacher

formation are subordinated to the utilitarian demands of the productive sector. In this perspective, the social function of the school and the socialization of disinterested knowledge are lost sight of – that which is not only useful for work.

The assertion that teacher formation meets demands and interests other than educational purposes is still a reality in the current period. The current discourses that support the legislation deal with the domain of contents and the “practice” being enough for teaching. It is based on Malanchen and Duarte (2018, p. 31, our translation), which contribute to the unveiling of this discourse:

[...] it is unconditional that the initial formation of teachers is the responsibility of public universities, in the face-to-face teaching model, which privileges debate, critical reflection, the humanist perspective and the inseparability between teaching, research and extension. That said, the historical-critical pedagogy, opposing the relativist pedagogies, hegemonic in contemporary capitalist society, continues its struggle [...].

The nature of initial teacher formation, socially referenced, is not reduced to large-scale certification. Would it be the suffocation of face-to-face courses to enhance the distance modality? This question is justified in the light of provocations that already point to this path, considering the upward line in the statistics of distance courses and the decline of face-to-face courses. Therefore, it becomes increasingly relevant to discuss the basic issue: formation, as changing the teacher's formative space (from face-to-face to virtual) reconfigures and reconverts the profile of this professional - which, through the distance modality, is formed remotely to work in person.

In this sense, revealing what seems to promote access to higher education through the distance modality is promising, since distance education can have contradictory and deleterious effects (it increases access, but makes education precarious). It should not be naturalized that the popular classes need to be formed at distance education because they need to work. The organicity of policies to legitimize and strengthen the formation of distance teachers is imposed through narratives as the only solution for such formation.

Aware of the interferences around teacher formation policies, we defend the construction of curricula that contribute to the development of critical awareness, class consciousness, that favor counter-hegemonic actions to the utilitarian, instrumental and economic dimensions and incorporate the interests of the working class. Therefore, problematizing the initial formation of distance educators and their reverberations is necessary in the context of the dismantling of public education.

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