

REFLECTIVE WRITING AND LITERACY OF BASIC EDUCATION TEACHERS: THE (NON)EXISTENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES FOR LINGUISTIC PRACTICE

ESCRITA REFLEXIVA E LETRAMENTO DO PROFESSOR DA EDUCAÇÃO BÁSICA: A (IN)EXISTÊNCIA DE POLÍTICAS INSTITUCIONAIS PARA A PRÁTICA LINGÜÍSTICA

ESCRITURA REFLEXIVA Y LITERACIDAD DE LOS MAESTROS DE EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA: LA (IN)EXISTENCIA DE POLÍTICAS INSTITUCIONALES PARA LA PRÁCTICA LINGÜÍSTICA



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ABSTRACT: The objective of this article is to analyze the perception of elementary school teachers from a public school in Diadema (SP) regarding the impacts of reflective writing on their pedagogical practice. The theoretical framework is located in the field of Education, engaging more closely with studies on Literacy and Teacher Training. The methodology is descriptive, using a survey as a data collection strategy. The approach is quantitative. The corpus was collected in a public elementary school in the municipal network of Diadema, a city in the metropolitan region of the state of São Paulo. The research participants are tenured teachers who have been teaching for more than six months at the school. The data reveal a perception of reflective writing that is still quite bureaucratic, which ultimately prevents a real impact of this writing modality on the reality of the classroom.

KEYWORDS: Education. Teacher training. Literacy. Writing process.

RESUMO: O objetivo desse artigo é analisar a percepção dos professores do Ensino Fundamental I de uma escola pública de Diadema (SP) sobre os impactos da escrita reflexiva em sua prática pedagógica. A fundamentação teórica se localiza na área da Educação, dialogando mais proximamente com os estudos sobre Letramento e Formação de Professores. A metodologia é descritiva, utilizando o survey como estratégia para coleta de dados. A abordagem é quantitativa. O corpus foi coletado em uma escola pública de Ensino Fundamental I, da rede municipal de Diadema, município da região metropolitana do estado de São Paulo. Os participantes da pesquisa são docentes efetivos que exercem o magistério há mais de seis meses na escola campo. Os dados revelam uma percepção sobre escrita reflexiva ainda bastante burocratizada, o que acaba impedindo um real impacto dessa modalidade redacional na realidade da sala de aula.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Educação. Formação docente. Letramento. Processo redacional.

RESUMEN: El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la percepción de los docentes de primaria de una escuela pública de Diadema (SP) sobre el impacto de la escritura reflexiva en su práctica pedagógica. El marco teórico se sitúa en el campo de la Educación, con especial énfasis en estudios sobre Literacidad y Formación Docente. La metodología es descriptiva, utilizando una encuesta como estrategia de recolección de datos. El enfoque es cuantitativo. El corpus se recolectó en una escuela primaria pública de la red municipal de Diadema, ciudad de la región metropolitana del estado de São Paulo. Los participantes en la investigación son docentes con más de seis meses de experiencia en la escuela. Los datos revelan una percepción de la escritura reflexiva que aún se caracteriza por un carácter burocrático, lo que impide un impacto real de esta modalidad de escritura en la realidad del aula.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Educación. Formación docente. Alfabetización. Proceso de escritura.

INTRODUCTION

Writing is a frequent subject of research in the context of scientific studies. Among the various academic fields that examine this linguistic modality, the humanities stand out due to their sensitive approach to the social representations that writing can convey. In this case, in a so-called ‘graphocentric’ society, conceiving of the writing process as a social representation implies understanding it beyond its structure and grammatical framework. It must be viewed as a sociosemiotic tool through which it is possible to construct meaning and foster collective coexistence (Soares, 2011).

It is within this scope that we discuss reflective writing more specifically; because it is rarely encouraged in the school context, it ends up not being a focus of teaching practice in specific situations within the teaching profession. Consequently, research on the role of reflective writing in formal education—especially at the elementary school level—has been largely unexplored in the scientific literature, which tends to show greater interest in the subject as it applies to other levels of education, such as higher education (Pereira & Moreira, 2024).

This study is an investigation that examines professional reflective writing from the perspective of a teacher working in elementary school at a public school located in the municipality of Diadema, in the São Paulo metropolitan area. In this regard, the purpose is to understand whether the school provides any incentives or context that plays a meaningful role in the production of reflective writing as it relates to the teacher’s pedagogical practice. This relates to the practices of Linguistic Literacy (LL) and Teacher Literacy (TL) through their classroom performance, as a tool that requires action-reflection-action (Kleiman & Santos, 2014).

The concept of ‘reflective writing’ that we adopt is grounded in the contributions of applied language studies, which consider writing to be reflective when it enables teachers to (self-)evaluate their pedagogical practice (Pereira, 2026).

Reflective writing promotes the creation of teaching materials that, once developed based on the weaknesses of pedagogical interventions, help foster reflective teaching practices in the classroom (Pereira, 2026). In other words, it plays a direct role in teacher training by seeking to foster more critical and reflective educators.

We chose to focus on reflective writing because we believe that, in the context of basic education, it is still not sufficiently encouraged among teachers. At times, there is little engagement with this type of writing among elementary and high school teachers, and when it does occur, it is limited to bureaucratic requirements. Consequently, there is no actual

development of literacy practices, but rather merely the performance of an activity institutionalized by the school (Salino & Gomboeff, 2021).

Therefore, the topic discussed in this study is scientifically grounded in an interdisciplinary perspective, which is established at the intersection of LL (Halliday & Hasan, 2006; Martin & White, 2005; McCabe & Whittaker, 2006; Pereira, 2022), LP (Kleiman, 2014; Silva, 2012; Soares, 2011), and Teacher Education (Nóvoa, 2024; Diniz-Pereira, 2013). This includes didactic and pedagogical aspects of teachers working in basic education, with an emphasis on Elementary School (Grades 1–4), thus taking into account the specific professional demands arising from that context.

The concept of interdisciplinarity presented in this study is based on the research conducted by Fazenda (2008), which examines the theoretical and methodological relationship between related fields of knowledge in the process of increasing the complexity of scientific research. According to the author, considering the construction of interdisciplinarity requires a perspective that brings together different scientific viewpoints, with the aim of facilitating a third, integrated understanding.

This study presents data extracted from a corpus collected through a descriptive study conducted via a survey, which greatly contributed to a broader view of the research population (Pereira & Angelocci, 2021). The study's respondents were teachers working in elementary school at a public school located in the municipality of Diadema, in the state of São Paulo.

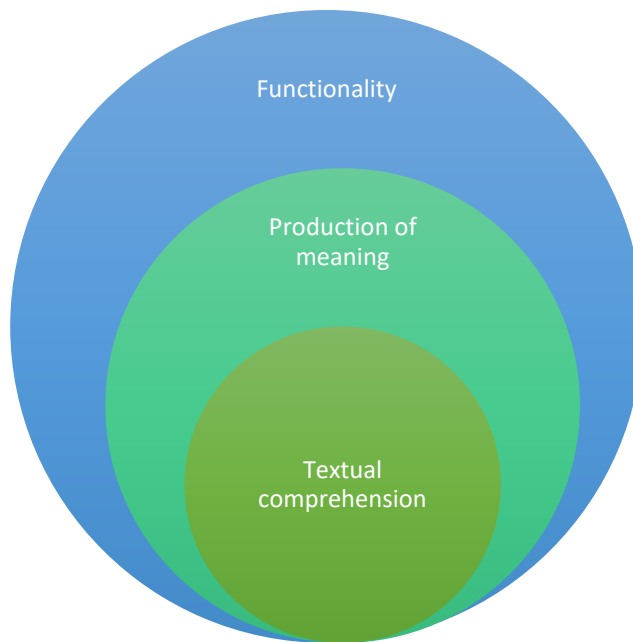
Finally, we present the following research question: How do the perceptions of elementary school teachers at a public school in Diadema (SP) regarding reflective writing at school reveal the (in)existence of institutional policies on linguistic literacy?

LINGUISTIC AND TEACHER LITERACY

The concept of literacy we adopt is based on the studies by Street (1984, 2014). According to the author, literacy is a social practice, since it is directly associated with human interaction—that is, linked to the context in which language is used. This, consequently, makes literacy something organic, just like society.

Within this framework, Figure 1 seeks to illustrate the relationship between LL and TL, which we adopt in this study.

Figure 1.
Principles of LL



Note. The authors.

As shown in Figure 1, literacy can be stratified into layers, namely: i) textual comprehension; ii) meaning-making; and iii) functionality. According to the image, these stratifications appear to operate along a linear flow.

Therefore:

the use of structures serves as a reference during textual production and *provides a model for prospective text producers to familiarize themselves with the genres to be used in their daily lives*—academic, professional, and personal. (Vian Jr., 2009, p. 407)

First, however, it is important to define what we mean by LL. It is an Australian school of thought with a functionalist basis that views writing as a conscious social practice. Thus, LL is directly associated with the conscious use of linguistic elements, taking into account lexical-grammatical structures and their relationship with the context external to the written text (Pereira, 2022).

According to Halliday and Hasan (2006), thinking about LL means considering text as a fluid instrument. In other words, even though writing has pre-established norms, it comes alive when we understand it as a sociosemiotic instrument—that is, as a representation of a specific social context and function.

In other words, the practice of literacy “refers to different strategies for conceptualizing and organizing written practices, and the roles that readers and writers assume” (McCabe & Whittaker, 2006, p. 5).

As shown in Figure 1, *textual comprehension* is fundamental to a functional understanding of the purpose of a given text. This means that the first step should be to familiarize oneself with the function of the text genre to be produced, since lexical and grammatical choices must reflect abstract aspects of social relations, such as the intentionality and practicality of the text to be written (Martin & White, 2005).

In this context, reflecting on the reflective writing of elementary school teachers becomes a complex matter. This is because, in the school setting, teachers are faced with a range of demands, which ultimately shape the specific choices and characteristics they must adopt. This can limit the practice of reflection in their writing—sometimes because these writings end up being reduced to school bureaucracy, and sometimes because teachers become overwhelmed by duties that do not necessarily foster their critical thinking (Pereira & Moreira, 2024).

The second stratification, the *production of meaning*, is the principle of semantic construction by participants involved in concrete social practices. It characterizes the production of meaning by language users based on factors outside the written text, yet which ultimately influence lexical and grammatical choices (McCabe & Whittaker, 2006).

The third stratum, *functionality*, is based on the premise that individuals are capable of constructing meaning by drawing on linguistic markers. These markers, in turn, ultimately give concrete expression to discursive issues that operate on the abstract level of relationships, such as the desires and intentions of the language user (Halliday & Hasan, 2006; McCabe & Whittaker, 2006).

With regard to LL, Eggins (2004, p. 3) argues that:

The systemic approach to language is functional in two main respects:

1. Because it asks functional questions about language: systemicists ask how do people use language?
2. Because it interprets the linguistic system functionally: systemicists ask how is language structured for use?

Answering the first question involves a focus on authentic, everyday social interaction. This analysis of texts leads systemicists to suggest that people negotiate texts in order to make meanings with each other. In other words, the general function of language is asemantic one.

When we consider the school environment, functionality becomes fundamental to the practice of LL through reflective writing. This is because, when reflecting through writing, teachers seek to be heard by school administrators and their colleagues; to this end, they share their anxieties in the hope of alleviating their struggles, as well as of participating in the school routine itself, as Pereira (2026) asserts.

LL, when associated with the context of formal education focused on teachers, becomes directly related to TL. The latter, in turn, comes to be considered inseparable from the linguistic dimension, since well-guided pedagogical practice presupposes a simultaneous relationship between practice and theory (Pereira & Moreira, 2024).

Finally, in this study, we view LL and TL as inseparable aspects. This is because the conscious use of writing is fundamental to the development of perspectives of (self-)reflection, which greatly enriches teachers in their reflective writing as well as in their pedagogical practice.

METHODOLOGY

The research method used in this study is a descriptive survey conducted online among elementary school teachers at a school in the municipality of Diadema, in Greater São Paulo. A survey is a form of research that involves mapping the characteristics of a specific reality or social group in order to facilitate an understanding of a broader context. This context should aid in the interpretation of the collected data, taking into account the unique characteristics of that group (Lakatos & Marconi, 2013; Sztajn et al., 2003).

Furthermore, according to Sztajn et al. (2003), the survey has gained prominence in the field of the humanities, as it helps identify factors that may be relevant to understanding social behavior, in addition to aiding in the characterization of research participants beyond what is explicitly stated.

In this study, we opted for the survey, based on the assumption of its potential for mapping the conditions of LL and TL practices within a specific school. We believe that this research strategy helped us map factors inherent to the school's routine, through which the conditions for requesting reflective writing may be influenced.

Descriptive research, on the other hand, is characterized by its focus on describing social phenomena, seeking to understand how data manipulation can help characterize a given reality.

In other words, it is an effective methodological approach for understanding the elements that structure a given reality (Lakatos & Marconi, 2013).

Descriptive research, combined with a survey, was a relevant approach for understanding the conditions under which reflective writing is typically required in the context under investigation. At the same time, this helps us reassess the true function of this writing practice, as we view it as a substantial component of teacher education in the current social context.

The approach used in this study is quantitative in nature, as we sought to include as many teachers as possible from the field school. This is because we believe that the greater the number of respondents, the better equipped we are to construct satisfactory analyses of the data under investigation.

The quantitative approach is characterized by the use of numbers or statistical methods through which it is possible to construct an overview of the population under study. In the field of scientific knowledge, this is a significant approach when it comes to mapping the more general characteristics of a given community or population (Lakatos & Marconi, 2013; Pereira & Angelocci, 2021).

It is in this sense that we can also affirm that the quantitative approach helps us understand the phenomena under investigation by considering a cause-and-effect relationship. Thus, it involves the understanding that the difficulties identified and quantified can assist us in analyzing the bureaucratization of reflective writing—namely, the number of responses within the investigated context (Gil, 2002).

It is worth emphasizing here that this requires putting the quantity itself into perspective; that is, whether the number is considered significant or not depends on the reality of the research universe itself. This is because, when we put it into perspective in this way, we are acknowledging the limitations of the research universe itself (Pereira & Angelocci, 2021).

The research tool used in this study was the questionnaire, which was considered a suitable method for data collection, as it allows for the formulation of hypotheses and the identification of factors that characterize a given group. For this reason, its use is common in the Humanities and Social Sciences, given its multifaceted approach to data collection and the significance of the data set (Gil, 2002). The questionnaire was developed based on a review of the specialized literature, with a focus on the works of Pereira (2026) and Pereira and Moreira (2024).

The questionnaire was administered to teachers working in Elementary School I at a public school in the municipality of Diadema, in Greater São Paulo. These professionals serve as general education teachers and are therefore required to teach all subject areas recommended by the National Common Core Curriculum (BNCC).

Before completing the questionnaire, the teachers were provided with the Informed Consent Form (TCLE) so that they could familiarize themselves with the research proposal in advance. This document assured participants that participation would be voluntary and unpaid, and guaranteed complete confidentiality regarding their personal data. To minimize any potential discomfort for the respondents, we collected only information relevant to the objectives of this study. Additionally, participants could stop filling out the questionnaire at any time if they wished, without incurring any penalty.

The questionnaire was administered online, ensuring that data was collected without any direct or in-person contact with the research participants. The questions comprising the questionnaire were made available via Google Forms, which was sent to respondents via email or WhatsApp. The questionnaire was available for completion from August 20 to September 10, 2025. To ensure greater engagement, reminders were sent via email every 5 days. In the end, we collected 24 responses, representing 80% of the study sample.

As methodological limitations, we can mention: i) the low number of responses collected, even though this number represented nearly the entire selected sample; ii) the fact that the survey instrument was not pre-tested, even though it was developed based on scientific research on related topics; and iii) the small number of questions included in the survey—five multiple-choice questions—which addressed the production and promotion of reflective writing in schools.

The study school is located in the Vila Lúcia neighborhood, in the municipality of Diadema. Considered a medium-sized institution, it serves 650 duly enrolled and regularly attending students. The school has a staff of 80, including 30 teachers. Most of the students are from urban areas. The school is surrounded by residential areas or communities, mainly in the neighborhoods popularly known as Pepsi and Coca, which are now urbanized and consist of brick houses.

RESULTS E DISCUSSION

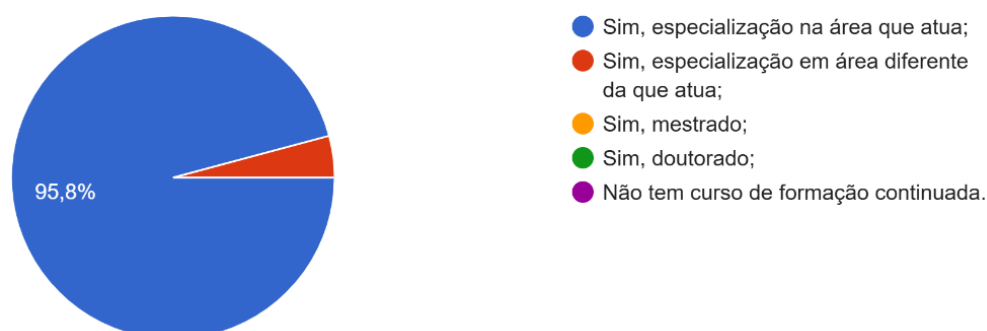
In this subsection, we describe the research data. To do so, we will draw on studies of literacy to construct meaning and, in this way, propose a framework for analysis.

Figure 2.

Have you taken any continuing education courses?

Você tem algum curso de formação continuada?

24 respostas



Note. Research data.

Figure 2 presents the results for the question “Have you taken any continuing education courses?” As shown in the figure above, the most common response was 95.8% for “yes, specialization in the field in which I work.” It is worth noting that we identified a faculty already engaged in continuing education in the broad sense, which suggests a group that does not actively participate in research activities.

Considering the positive impacts of continuing education on the development of teaching practice, it can be stated that continuing education can foster the development of a more engaged, critical, and reflective teacher profile. This is because it requires a more critical perspective on one’s own performance, taking into account prior knowledge of theory and classroom practice. This, in turn, reinforces the need for reflection on the relationship between theory and practice, as it is impossible to conceive of them in isolation from one another. Classroom practice requires theoretical knowledge to underpin practical choices, and practical knowledge to enable the application of the theoretical understanding most appropriate to the context of practice (Tardif, 2000).

A teacher’s intellectual preparation has a direct impact on their conception of the role of reflective writing. We are referring here not to the lexical-grammatical perspective on reflective writing, although this is important in establishing writing as a social tool. The emphasis lies on

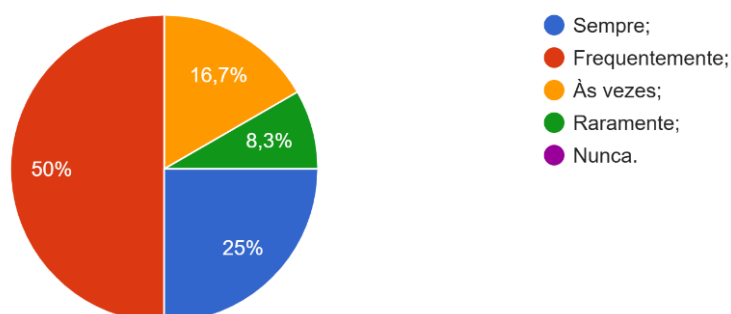
the intentional and functional perspective of reflective writing, which goes beyond the boundaries of grammar. It is essential to recognize the need to put reflective and self-reflective thoughts into writing so that this positively influences the classroom practice of all teachers who will have access to these written documents (Martin & White, 2005; Pereira & Moreira, 2024).

Figure 3.

Do you usually produce these texts consciously?

Você costuma produzir esses textos de maneira consciente?

24 respostas



Note. Research data.

Figure 3 presents the results for the question “Do you usually write these texts consciously?” As shown in the figure above, the most common responses were: 50% for “frequently,” 25% for “always,” 16.7% for “sometimes,” and 8.3% for “rarely.”

When we use the term “consciously,” we are referring to the text’s potential for reflection, which should be clear to the teacher. It is important to emphasize that reflective writing in schools tends to be overly bureaucratic, which undermines its true purpose as a literacy tool. It is not uncommon for educational institutions to place various demands on teachers beyond the classroom, which ends up causing a certain amount of anxiety among these professionals, who tend to downplay the pedagogical importance of writing and emphasize the bureaucratic nature of the document (Diniz-Pereira, 2013; Nóvoa, 2024).

Furthermore, according to Nóvoa (2024), it is important to take the participant’s circumstances into account, since when we understand the context as a backdrop, we gain a better understanding of the nuances reflected in the writing. In the school setting, the practice of writing, in the vast majority of cases, tends to be something that is required of students and not very inviting, as it is primarily aimed at meeting and documenting academic requirements.

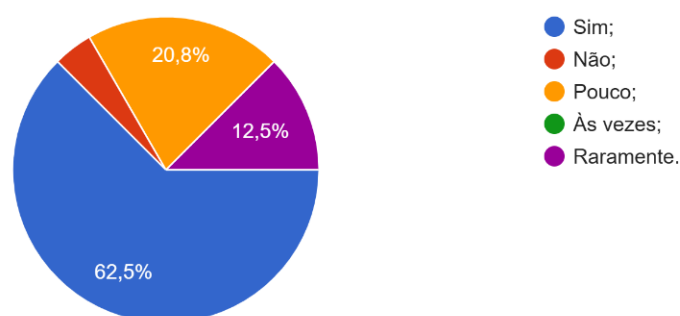
According to the data collected, we cannot rule out a trend toward the bureaucratization of reflective writing, which warrants special attention from school administrators. It is essential that the act of reflection and self-reflection not be lost amid institutional demands, thereby undermining its evaluative nature. Therefore, it is important for schools to take care not to reduce reflective writing to a tool used solely to meet institutional demands, as this would do little to advance the actual pedagogical mission or the development and implementation of teaching materials (Pereira, 2026).

Figure 4.

Does the school provide any incentives for teachers to write based on their pedagogical reflections?

Há, na escola, algum incentivo à escrita do professor a partir das suas reflexões pedagógicas?

24 respostas



Note. Research data.

Figure 4 presents the results for the question “Does the school provide any incentives for teachers to write based on their pedagogical reflections?” As shown in the figure above, the three most common responses were: 62.5% for “yes,” 20.8% for “some,” and 12.5% for “rarely.”

A significant number of responses indicate little engagement on the part of the school when it comes to raising awareness of the importance of reflective writing. This reinforces the bureaucratic tendency of this practice within the school, which likely contributes to downplaying the relevance of such writing in the practical context of teaching (Nóvoa, 2024).

On the other hand, it is also important to take into account the paradigm shift that schools have been undergoing in recent decades. Especially since the early 2000s, educational institutions have been seeking to rethink—albeit slowly—their role in fostering students’ civic development, which inevitably reflects on teachers’ practices. Although all of this may not seem clear to teachers, we must acknowledge some progress compared to the past, which likely

accounts for the significant number of responses indicating schools' efforts to encourage reflective writing. Although there is still much room for improvement, we must also acknowledge the efforts that elementary schools have made to enhance the quality of their teaching staff and, thereby, minimize traditional rigidity in the classroom (Kleiman & Santos, 2014; Soares, 2011).

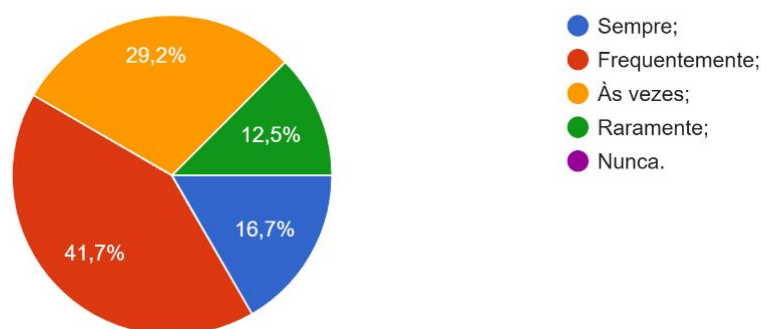
The incentive we refer to encompasses any and all forms of motivation developed with teachers with the aim of sparking their interest in engaging in dialogue through the practice of writing. This is not necessarily related to salary, but rather to an institutional policy that can be adapted to motivate teachers, which in turn can encourage the development of their literacy practices (Kleiman & Santos, 2014).

Figure 5.

Does the school require you to write a text in which you can reflect on your own teaching practice?

A escola solicita a produção escrita de algum texto em que você pode refletir sobre sua própria prática pedagógica?

24 respostas



Note. Research data.

Figure 5 presents the results for the question “Does the school require you to write a text in which you can reflect on your own teaching practice?” According to the image above, the most frequent responses were: 41.7% for “frequently,” 29.2% for “sometimes,” 16.7% for “always,” and 12.5% for “rarely.”

This response indicates a certain discrepancy with the results obtained from the previous questions. This is because, here, the evidence points to a professional context that appears to significantly favor a reflective environment for teaching practice. This invites us to consider the ideological forces that may have prompted these responses. Furthermore, when considering the external factors that may have influenced these data, we must take into account that teachers

are not social actors whose entire identity is constituted within the school setting. It is therefore necessary to conceive of the education professional as a multifaceted social actor, since they bring to school their entire range of empirical knowledge constructed in other social domains. This, in turn, influences their conception of their own values and evaluative and self-evaluative understandings (Diniz-Pereira, 2013).

It is also important to consider that the training of these teachers—whether initial or continuing—is a decisive factor in their understanding and interpretation of motivational texts. It is important to bear in mind that this greatly helps teachers understand, without many reservations, the purpose of reflective writing (Pereira, 2026).

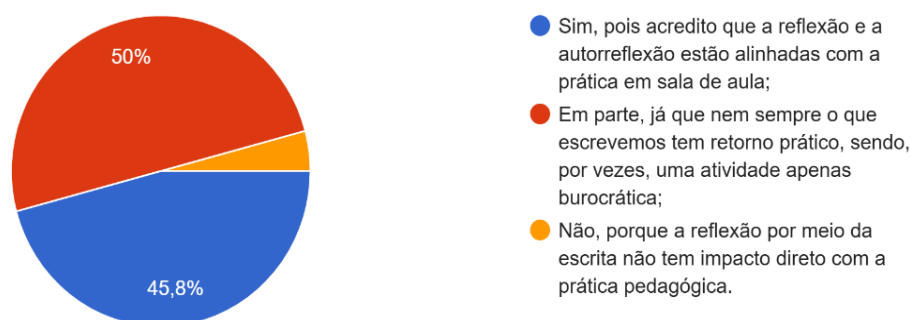
Literacy practices are influenced by the school environment—that is, the entire range of empirically constructed knowledge that, collectively, can catalyze pedagogical practice and, as a result, be reflected in the teacher's writing. Therefore, we cannot consider these teachers' literacy—whether linguistic or pedagogical—without taking into account the empiricism that guides the construction of this social actor's professional identity. Perceptions of assessment and self-assessment, although largely guided by the theories studied in the Licentiate degree in Pedagogy, are directly influenced by the teacher's world knowledge, which grants them the autonomy to contextualize theory and construct new possibilities for value judgments. Therefore, teachers take on a leading role when they come to understand all the external factors that, in some way, affirm their identity and the identities of their students (Pereira, 2022; Silva, 2012).

Figure 6.

Do you believe that self-reflective and reflective writing contributes in any way to teaching practice?

Você acredita que a escrita autorreflexiva e reflexiva colabora de alguma maneira com a prática pedagógica?

24 respostas



Note. Research data.

Figure 6 presents the results for the question “Do you believe that self-reflective and reflective writing contributes in any way to teaching practice?” According to the image above, the most common responses were: 50% for “in part, since what we write does not always have practical applications and is sometimes merely a bureaucratic activity” and 45.8% for “yes, because I believe that reflection and self-reflection are aligned with classroom practice.”

There is a duality here: while the majority responded that reflective writing is not always carried out as it should be, a large portion believes in its necessity and pedagogical value, as they recognize its connection to the practical realities of the classroom. We must therefore consider two points here: i) the understanding of the relevance of theory, most likely taught in initial and continuing teacher education; and ii) the practical reality in which reflective writing is required in the school setting.

From the perspective of literacy studies, knowing the theory is fundamental to the development of reflective thinking in teachers, but it is not enough. Teachers must be able to apply, question, and even reinterpret the knowledge acquired in university, with a view to facilitating the creation or adaptation of teaching materials. Without these conditions, literacy will be limited by what is known, rather than by what can be done based on that knowledge. It is, therefore, a process of action-reflection-action, as discussed in educational discourse focused on specific approaches (Kleiman, 2014; Soares, 2011).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this article, we identify some perceptions held by elementary and secondary school teachers regarding the role of reflective writing in the pedagogical context in which they work. To this end, these professionals were invited to complete a questionnaire addressing the potential impacts of this form of writing on classroom practice.

The results revealed that teachers at the study school perceive reflective writing as an important tool, yet they believe it does not always have a clear impact on pedagogical practice. Among the factors that may influence this perception are the lack of feedback from school administration on the reflective documents produced, as well as the lack of institutional support in creating conditions that would enable truly reflective writing.

The research also points to limited engagement on the part of teachers regarding the production of reflective writing outside the school setting. This, in turn, points to an empirical

tendency to confine reflective writing to the school setting, thereby hindering the creation of teaching materials that address cross-curricular themes.

In this regard, it can be stated that there is no institutional policy at the school level aimed at addressing these issues, which means that reflective writing is not strongly encouraged in the context of this study. Therefore, this gap tends to contribute directly to the bureaucratization of reflective writing among teachers, which may impact teaching practice, since, institutionally, there do not appear to be conditions conducive to expanding teachers' language literacy practices.

As a possibility for future research, this study invites the proposal of school policies that can foster LL and TL based on the institutional dynamics themselves. This is relevant, given that reflective writing can positively impact pedagogical practice, as it serves as a tool to enhance teachers' critical thinking. However, schools must provide the conditions necessary for the practice of (self-)assessment to become a daily reality for teaching professionals.

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