

LITERACY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM: THE MANAGEMENT TEAM'S VISION

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Abstract

This text intends to investigate the professional insertion of graduates who were participants of the Literacy Scholarship Program from 2011 to 2014 of the Pedagogy courses. Considering the importance of this program in the field of teacher education, this research intends to know and analyze, from the management team's perspective, the impact of the program at the moment of the professional insertion of those participants in Basic Education. For the research, initially, an exploratory study of the proposed theme and the analysis of the legal documents related to the programs were made. Then, in order to collect data, we have used questionnaires with closed-ended questions (egress students) and semi-structured interviews with the management team (director or coordinator) of the schools which have received the ones who students of the Literacy Scholarship program were. With the study and analysis of the collected data, we can state that the Literacy Scholarship program was relevant in the initial education by proposing the integration of the student of the pedagogy course in the professional reality, promoting the union between the university and the school environment.

Keywords: Initial teacher education; Beginner teacher; Literacy scholarship; PIBID; Public policy.

1. Introduction

Historically speaking, teacher education in our country has not effectively contemplated the articulation of pedagogical knowledge and teaching practice. Several studies on the subject (PIMENTA, 2007; GATTI & BARRETO, 2009; GATTI, BARRETO & ANDRÉ, 2011, among others) report the absence of such articulation in the syllabus of licentiate courses, despite the norms regarding teacher education for basic education (BRAZIL, 1999; BRAZIL, 2006; BRAZIL, 2002) that repeatedly consider theory-practice relations as essential. Gatti and Barreto (2009) evaluated the situation regarding teacher education for Basic Education in Brazil. The analysis of the list of options of professional training subjects in Pedagogy courses indicated that the theoretical references are predominant and modestly associated with educational practices. The analyzed list of options in the study is more concerned with "why teach" rather than "what" and "how" to teach. Also, the study points out that the internships "are fragile, appear in the curricular proposals without planning and without clear link with the school systems, and without mentioning their supervision forms." (GATTI & BARRETO, 2009, p. 259).

Briefly, the study concludes that the school, as a social and educational institution, has been offering a more abstract formation and little integrated with the real context where the teacher will act, probably because there is little articulation between Higher Education and Basic Education.

As we know, an important moment in the formation of students who take Pedagogy is when they begin to experience what happens in school. By contacting the school context, they can experience fundamental situations for their education. The joint action of university and school could provide both university teachers and undergraduate students with transformations in their educational practices since practical knowledge would be adequately related to theoretical knowledge.

Some programs linked to public policies in education fields as Literacy Scholarship aim to collaborate on the insertion of the licentiate student in the school context, preferably in the public school.

One of the guidelines of such programs is to make the student feel a little safer about working in the classroom at the end of the course, taking over the commitment to "teach".

The Public School and University Training Scholarship Program, better known as the Literacy Scholarship, was created in 2007 by the São Paulo State Government and is intended for undergraduate students of Letters and Pedagogy who, under the supervision of Higher Education Professors and Public School Teachers go along with the literacy process of 2nd-grade children. Moreover, among the objectives proposed by the Program, there is the possibility that the public schools of the state school system are research fields for future teachers, providing better integration between the knowledge developed in higher education institutions.

The apprehension of school reality situations - made possible by the program - broadens the understanding of the complexity of the educating action. It is this apprehension and its analysis that will make the Pedagogy student able to relate elements that make up the teaching action and that, in turn, collaborate on the construction of practical knowledge.

The teaching activity is complex, takes time and is something you learn: you are not born knowing how to be a teacher. From this perspective, it is important to realize that initial teacher education is the moment when the professionalization of teachers begins systematically. According to Mizukami (2013, p. 27), "the initial formative process of teaching has very restricted functions and limits: knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values cannot be fully developed in the period to be destined".

Although theories on how to teach are presented in Pedagogy courses, teaching techniques, strategies of how to present certain content, are subjects/themes that depend on being experienced and discussed in real classroom situations to be assimilated.

By establishing links with the school through training projects, some common elements must be evaluated, strategies must be undertaken, and challenges must be overcome. It is in this environment - school and university - that gradually, through shared actions, both undergraduate students and teachers, acquire practical knowledge. Such construction depends on the theoretical knowledge that will be a reference for the practice analysis that is being observed, projected, experienced, and finally, lived.

Taking into account the complexity of the initial education, the experience of the beginning teacher, and the possibilities and benefits offered by the program, this article aimed to investigate: **What is the vision of the School Principal who receives the egress beginning teacher from the Literacy Scholarship Program. For him, is the beginner teacher who participated in the Literacy Scholarship Program better prepared for teaching?**

Aiming to achieve the objectives proposed by this research, we first investigated bibliographic sources that support the theoretical foundation of the work. This foundation goes through the questions about the conception of initial formation, of beginner teacher, of the questions that deal with the teacher formation and public politics. In a second moment, we mapped the professional destination of graduates of initiation programs to the teaching. In order to execute this step, students graduating from the Literacy Scholarship have answered to a questionnaire. Thus, we not only characterize the graduates, but we also know who is acting in the teaching profession, in what type of institution, what is their professional situation and degree of satisfaction in teaching. With this data, we have located the schools that received them and have contacted the management team (the Principal or the Coordinator) and interviewed three Principals. Of course, all those steps were carried out without losing sight of the analysis of the official program documents and the proposed theoretical indications. Completing the foregoing, we have highlighted excerpts from the interviews that were representative of the proposed categories, which ultimately contributed to the consistency of the analysis.

The next step was to present the reference that subsidized the research. Subsequently, the data generated in the field research are analyzed and, finally, we make some considerations.

2. Teaching Professional Development: Initial Formation

The Literacy Scholarship Program has enabled an important connection between the university environment and the classroom context. Such a connection creates the most suitable conditions for initial formation. It is known to both researchers and scholars that a period of great importance in teacher education is when the student is inserted in the school environment; such opportunity allows him to experience indispensable situations for the base of his education. In this context, it would be very useful to unite the school and the university, as a facilitating agent that would integrate the practical knowledge to the theoretical one, providing transformation and knowledge mobilization which is typical in quotidian work, allowing a greater development for both undergraduates and their advisors.

Teacher education is a theme that has been the focus of analysis and debate for researchers and scholars from various countries for decades. Those studies have allowed a greater reflection on the processes of formation, professional development and organizational development of education contexts. According to Oliveira-Formosinho:

[...] a school-centered formation that conceives it as an autarchy will certainly not benefit the development of students and their living contexts. The training focused on school must be designed as an environmentally friendly process in a pro-ecological pedagogy to assist the students and not as an autistic process where a school closes itself ruminating its problems. (2002, p.15).

Tardif (2002), discussing which are the knowledge and skills that education professionals, especially teachers, mobilize in the classroom, points out that college scholarship students when carrying out their studies on educational practice should:

[...] step out of their labs, step out of their offices at the university, leave their computers, drop their books and books written by his colleagues that define the nature of education, the great educational values or the laws of learning, and go straight to the places where teaching professionals work, to see how they think and talk, how they work in the classroom, how they transform core curricula to make them effective, how they interact with students' parents, with their colleagues, etc. (2002, p. 258)

For the author, both teacher education and research should seek an approximation with the school atmosphere to compose a knowledge repertoire for teacher education. The university speech is still more about what the teacher should be or do than what he does and why he does it.

The Literacy Scholarship Program has sought to narrow the gaps between initial teacher education which takes place at the university and is found at school. The experience of situations of the school reality increases the understanding of the action of educating, its analysis and apprehension allow the Researcher Students (RS) to establish relationships of elements that integrate the teaching action, collaborating with the construction of their practical knowledge, the aim of which is to make graduates, at the end of their course, to feel safer working in the classroom, committing to "the teaching". The literature about the teacher in early career has shown dilemmas and difficulties experienced by him in this period. "[...] a very important period of the teacher's professional history, determining indeed his future and his relationship with work."(TARDIF, 2002. p. 84).

It is both difficult and intriguing to specify when a teacher ceases to be a beginner, as the beginning predicative is a transient and situational category, but it is the obligatory period of connection between the end of his education and the beginning of his professional life.

According to Flores (2010, p. 183), in this transition, teaching candidates sometimes bring with them a series of beliefs and ideas about teaching and the meaning of being a teacher, a process that occurs throughout their school life and makes them previously to have some knowledge of the school and classroom context.

The practice has influenced the constitution of teaching knowledge since the initial formation of teachers when they have access to schools through internships. According to Vaillant and Marcelo (2012, p.75), "teaching practices continue to be the most valued element both by undergraduate and in-service teachers concerning the different components of the training curriculum".

When undergraduates have the opportunity to study pedagogical practice, they can view educational work broadly and reflectively; that reflection when done critically and based on scientific knowledge creates the possibility of anticipating the performance of the future teacher when he is facing the activities to be developed.

That context is stressed by Nóvoa when he says that:

Teacher education needs to be moved into the profession - [...] There will be no significant change if the “teacher educator community” and the “teacher community” do not become more permeable and intertwined. (NÓVOA, 2009, p.6)

At this moment the author seeks to defend the need for teachers to have a “predominant” place, that is, to be more active in the formation of their peers. He uses as an inspiring example doctors and school hospitals, as well as their projected preparation in initial induction and service training, where interns are led to review cases, individually or together under the supervision of a team leader.

Nóvoa goes on stating that we can no longer continue writing texts about practice and internship, about practical wisdom and wisdom as a parameter of teaching knowledge, about reflective teachers, if the increase of the presence of the profession in training is not real. For the author:

It is important to ensure that the richness and complexity of teaching become professionally and scientifically visible and have the same status as other fields of academic and creative work. At the same time, it is essential to reinforce teacher-training devices and practices based on research that has teaching and schoolwork as a discussion. (2009. p.7)

For Vaillant and Marcelo (2012), initial teacher education is a part of professional development: the initial period of education. The authors, discussing the concept of professional teacher development, stated that:

[...] teaching professional development has to do with learning; it refers to work; it deals with a path; it includes unlimited opportunities to improve practice; it relates to teacher training, and it operates on people not on programs. (2012, p.169).

The professional beginning teacher needs to look for means of adaptation and overcoming several times, reflecting on experiences lived when interning, or even their childhood teachers, as he usually thinks he was thrown to his own luck in these conditions and, without having anybody to share their doubts, fears, mistakes, and successes, the inexperienced teacher only seeks to become a good teacher.

In the pursue of synthesizing the content obtained and analyzed so far, it was found with the present research that initial education needs to go beyond the university walls and that contact with schools, depending on how it happens, can contribute to a more qualified initial education.

Project Public School and University in Literacy

Known as the Literacy Scholarship, the Public School and University in Literacy project was created by Decree 51.627 of March 1st, 2007. According to the document:

Considering the provisions of Decree No. 7,510 of January 29th, 1976, which reorganized the Secretariat of Education, including in its functional field, the duties of promoting the development of studies aimed at improving the performance of the state education system, as well as stimulate the exchange of information and the bilateral technical assistance with public and private institutions;

Considering that the rapprochement between the Secretariat of Education and the higher education institutions responsible for teacher training may constitute a field for the construction of theories, research, and contributions that trigger a quality leap in-state public education,

Decree:

Article 1 - The Program “Training Scholarship - Public School and University” is instituted, intended for undergraduate students of higher education institutions that, under the supervision of university professors, will work in the classrooms and at class hours of the state school system. or in recovery and learning support projects. (SÃO PAULO, 2007)

One of the main actions of the Literacy Scholarship Project is to provide to students of the Pedagogy and Literature courses, as research students, the follow-up of the process of acquisition and practice of reading and

writing within the 2nd year classrooms of Elementary School Cycle 1 or in the Intensive Project at Cycle (PIC in Portuguese) classrooms, together with the teachers of the State Education Network.

The purpose of the project is to discuss the problems of literacy-related didactics, which are constantly alive in the classroom and which are fundamental to the initial formation of teachers. With the Literacy Scholarship we seek:

I - enable the public schools of the state school system to constitute research and professional development campuses for future teachers;

II - to promote the integration between the knowledge developed in the higher education institutions and the professional profile necessary for the qualified attendance of the students of the state school system;

III - allow educators of the state public network, in collaboration with students/researchers of higher education institutions, to develop actions that contribute to the improvement of teaching quality. (SAO PAULO, 2007)

3. Method and methodological procedures: data collection

The study presented here is characterized as being descriptive-analytical, of qualitative nature. Regarding the methodological procedures, the research included five steps: 1st Step: Bibliographic research. Bibliographic study about the proposed theme: beginner teacher and teaching professional development; 2nd Step: Documentary study. Reading and analysis of the legal documents of the Literacy Scholarship Program; 3rd Step: Conducting questionnaires with the graduates of the Literacy Scholarship Program; 4th Step: Conducting semi-structured interviews with the management team that received graduates from the program; 5th Step: Data Analysis.

The semi-structured interview did not follow a closed script. However, that does not mean that the objectives - the data obtained - were not clear to the interviewee. Besides, it is important to emphasize that the semi-structured interview has become an instrument for collecting information on specific questions previously defined by the researcher while allowing unforeseen explorations at the same time.

3.1 Analysis of the research results with graduates of the Literacy Scholarship Program

Initially, questionnaires with closed-ended questions were sent to twenty-seven graduates by e-mail, and from those, twenty-two answered what was proposed. With the data analysis, it was possible to identify personal and professional profiles. We found that most of them completed the course in 2013 and belong to the 25 to 29 age group and that they attended both elementary and regular high school in public schools.

According to the graduates, when the questions were about which teaching activities they have participated in, the initiation activities such as PIBID (which stands in Portuguese for Scholarship Institutional Program of Teaching Initiation) and Literacy Scholarship Program were the most chosen, as well as in another question, most have answered that they exercised teaching during the degree course. In addition, most of the graduates have stated that they were working in the area as teachers and mostly in kindergarten. Of the sixteen graduates who claimed to work in the field, most answered that they work in only one school, ten are registered in CLT (which stands in Portuguese for Consolidation of Labor Laws), four are teaching staff as civil servants and three as temporary workers.

Regarding teaching time, four graduates stated that they have been working for less than one year, four for up to two years, another four for up to three years and four answered that they have worked in the field for more than three years. The survey revealed that most graduates work in private schools (this explains why most teachers report that they work under the CLT regime), followed by municipal public schools and, to a lesser extent, state public schools.

As a balanced outcome of how many class-hours per week they work, three graduates responded that they work up to 10 class-hours, three others said they teach between 26 to 30 class-hours, and three teachers reported teaching between 31 to 40 class-hours per week. Two said they worked more than 40 hours and another two between 11 to 20 class-hours. Only one graduate answered he was working between 20 to 25 class-hours.

Of the six graduates who answered that they are not working in the field, two are awaiting admission by civil service examination, one is still studying and two said they have not had the opportunity yet. One of the graduates has become a microentrepreneur.

3.2 Interviews with the management team

We have contacted six schools and only three agreed to participate in the survey. As the Principals have expressed interest in answering the interview both the place and the time were determined by them. The speeches were transcribed in charts, read several times. For data presentation, we will name them A, B and C.

Interview analysis: how the beginning teacher's welcome is made

Principal A's speech shows that his vision of reception is restricted to the presentation of the school physical structure, of the community and the staff. It seems to us that there is no concern with pedagogical issues. The following excerpt exemplifies this statement:

We seek to welcome the beginning teacher with great affection, we present the physical dependencies of the school, the staff and especially information about the school community, the work we do and what we want the beginner to do. Principal A.

In the same direction, Principal B proposes a friendly reception, attentive to what the teacher could offer. It does not seem to show that the teacher, being a beginner, may at times have difficulties in teaching. The following speech clarifies this statement:

We receive the teacher regardless of the phase he is, always welcoming him, believing and trusting in his willingness to work with a focus on the student, hoping that he will embrace the school with its peculiarities, seeking a partnership of trust. Principal B.

Reinforcing what was said by both Principal A and Principal B, Principal C is also friendly and approachable to the needs of newcomers. However, he recognizes that they do not develop any work aimed at the beginning teacher. The following fragment corroborates the statement:

We seek to receive him amicably, we present the school facilities, trying to show that we are available to help him in what he needs, but we do not have a specific project or work. Principal C.

Thus, we can say that the three principals, when receiving the novice teachers, do not provide a pedagogical follow-up. It seems to us that the concern is centered on presenting the school, its physical structure and the people who work there. Any work targeted to the pedagogical practices to reflect them is still something to be built.

According to Principal A, continuing education in the school context is restricted to the meetings established in the legislation. The following excerpt will illustrate the statement:

We can say that he learns how to exchange experiences by attending ATPCs (which stands is Portuguese for Class of Group Pedagogic Work) and how to put into practice the concepts he has learned in college. Principal A.

Principal B's speech presents the school as a template where the teacher should fit into what is expected by the management team. It is an adaptation without reflection, discussion, based only on practical experience. Principal B states:

He learns how to shape himself with the routine, with the community, the language of the students, the rules that determine this school, with the profile of both the coordinator and mine as Principal, the school also develops the ATPC's. Principal B.

For Principal C, the beginning of the work is a period of observation for the teacher to learn how to act in his daily life. If the management team realizes that the actions developed by the teacher are not appropriate, the intervention of the management team is established. The following excerpt clarifies the above:

We seek to set her free by observing what she really knows, whether she is open to take on what she does not know and whether she is willing to learn, many of them do not know how to draw up a lesson plan, or how to deal with students when they start here, when I may try to help them. Principal C.

Principal A acknowledged the fact that the beginning teacher knew the practice developed at school. The teacher knew the routine and the material that was used in the classroom. In this sense, the program contributes significantly to the process of insertion of the teacher in the school context. Principal A states that:

It was a very good thing because she has come to school recognizing much of the school content with accuracy, as well as the textbooks and routine in a public-school classroom. Principal A

Principal B states that the novice teacher's inclusion process in the school context is done in partnership with the management team. Everyone gets ready to meet and develop a welcoming work with the new teachers, but with the daily tasks, the work is not always performed satisfactorily. Principal B's speech illustrates the statement:

We dispose at the beginning of the school year planning with the proposal to welcome the new teachers, trying to talk and to know their profile, however, time is crucial and with the extensive and scurry routine, the management team fails to meet their needs, yet we always try to guide them, but we also call on their responsibilities. Principal B.

In the speech of Principal C, it was comforting to observe that instinctively, spontaneously, or reflectively, even though she said previously that she does not develop any work focused on the beginning teacher, she seeks ways to facilitate and improve the work routine. The following excerpt clarifies the above:

It is challenging, as I have said, many teachers when they arrive they do not know what to do and (or) how to do it, and as we work with an age group that is also in a transition phase, we, working together, search to solve problems so that the environment becomes easier and lighter, the process is difficult and often frustrating and unsatisfactory. Principal C.

Principal A valued both the work developed by the teacher and the experience that the novice teacher gained through the Program. Director A states:

The experience gained in the Program made him already familiar with routine, content, and books such as the Read and Write Project and EMAI Project (which stands in Portuguese for Initial Mathematics Education). Principal A

Principal B, referring to the novice teacher, praised his knowledge and resourcefulness both in the use of materials and in the coexistence and work developed with the students. She states:

The teacher stands out for knowing the routine of a classroom before, he is familiar with the materials, he has some perception of how to work with students and how to make them literate. Principal B.

Principal C has no experience in receiving teachers from the Literacy Scholarship Program. However, she observed in the teacher who works in her school qualities such as: secure and active. The following fragment illustrates his statement:

I do not have much experience with teachers working in this program, but safety and resourcefulness are evident points in professional working in our school. Principal C.

Principal A pointed out the knowledge of the beginning teacher as a preponderant fact that favors the work developed by the state government of São Paulo. The following excerpt confirms the above:

Yes. Greater familiarity with the Projects developed by the State Government of São Paulo. Principal A.

In Principal B's speech, she emphasizes the safety and experience gained from the practice of reflected actions, which she does not observe in teachers who did not participate in the Program. The following quote exemplifies the statement:

Yes. Every teacher who has done a complement that involves practical experience stands out, he is more confident in his actions and seeks a reflected attitude; I also observe that teachers who have not done any complementation, have no or little theory, many are not open to learn and improve their practice, they lack teacher profile. Principal B

Completing the ideas expressed above, Principal C is vehement and enthusiastic in referring to the performance of the teacher in question, pointing out her safety and resourcefulness, both in activities and in the deal with the children. I emphasize that in answer four, the Principal mentions the fact that the teacher is the first member of the program with whom she had worked, making evident her admiration for the work developed by the professional. Principal C states:

I believe that being more accustomed to working in the classroom, to the routine of a school, the teacher feels safe to develop the activities, with her resourcefulness and the attitude that she has with the children flows, allowing a good performance of the requested work. And she knows that in time of doubt we are ready to help her, and she comes to us. Principal C

Conclusion

Taking into account the complexity of the initial education, the beginning teacher's experience, and the possibilities and benefits offered by the Literacy Scholarship Program, this research aimed to investigate the perspective of the School Principal who receives the graduate beginning teacher from the Literacy Scholarship Program.

The analyzed data showed that the managers have recognized that beginning teachers who have participated in the initial education of the Literacy Scholarship Program are better prepared for the challenges they face in the school context. Besides, they state that they are more familiar with school routines.

Therefore, we can say that the Literacy Scholarship Program was relevant in the initial education by proposing the integration of the pedagogy course student in the professional reality, promoting the union between the university and the school reality.

Finally, it is noteworthy that the Principals have not provided a proper welcome for the beginning teacher yet. When they have received the novice teachers, they have not offered a pedagogical follow up.

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