

CONTRIBUTIONS OF LITERATURE ABOUT MENTORING TO ENLIGHTEN TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN BRAZIL

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Abstract: *Initiatives and experiences from different countries and cultures are an important research issue. This article focuses on mentoring in teachers' professional development in Brazil, but it is part of a larger project that seeks an approximation in the area of teacher professional development among BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. In Brazil, mentoring in teachers' professional development is proposing interactions between University and schools. Besides this, some initiatives shed lights on this matter. We intend in this work a discussion about such a significant advance. Collaboration between institutions seems to bring new ideas in developing countries trying to overcome difficulties in teachers' working conditions. The study collects a state of the art in the main Brazilian publications in the last five years about mentoring, both experiences related and theoretical studies. The results call attention to challenges and opportunities in teacher education regarding theory-practice integration and point out the need for further research.*

Keywords: *BRICS; Mentoring; Teachers' professional development;*

1. Introduction

According to Itamaraty, a Brazilian diplomatic agency⁷, countries involved in the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) have expanded its activities in fields as economics, financial and multisectoral cooperation, since its first Summit, in 2009. The BRICS members are deepening their dialogue on the central issues of the international agenda, without confrontation with other countries. A priority in the country stays in areas such as health, science, technology & innovation and energy, to improve quality of life for the Brazilian population. Cooperation in science, technology, and innovation is essential to bridge the scientific and technological gap between Brazil and developed countries; in that sense, it includes relevant initiatives, with great potential for knowledge sharing and availability of resources for research projects.

There are not many similarities between the BRICS countries, and in the economic area, this is seen as a factor that makes BRICS' members gain economic advantages in different and often opposite ways (Stuenkel, 2015). However, its creation symbolized the increasing willingness of emerging powers to explore what they had in common with each other, as well as their areas of cooperation. The BRICs, in addition to making up 43.3% of the global population and a quarter of the land of our planet, in the first decade of the century, accounted for 27.8% of world GDP growth (Stuenkel, 2015).

⁷ <http://www.itamaraty.gov.br/en/politica-externa/mecanismos-inter-regionais/7505-brics-brazil-russia-india-china-south-africa>

2. Theoretical framework – context of the study

Although Brazil had a rapid expansion of Higher Education institutions, and here we include courses to form teachers, the country is only beginning to address the low quality of its basic education system, which produces students ill-prepared for higher education and also the low quality of most institutions of the higher education system, which is private and despite having legal influence, the state does little to press for changes. (Carnoy et al, 2013).

In 2004, UNESCO developed nationwide research investigating the state of the art regarding elementary and high school teachers' profiles, both in public and private schools. The study showed a heavy workload, between 21 and 40 hours a week in classrooms, long hours correcting tasks, difficulties with discipline and a high level of professional dissatisfaction, reasons to worry about the future of teachers we help to form. Also observed that the extent to which BRICS succeed in educating their "citizens and raising skill levels is crucial not only for reaching international education goals but also for world development" (p. 14).

Comparing Brazilian higher education with the other countries from the BRICS, we noticed that in Brazil there are some marked differences. According to Carnoy et al. (2013), Brazil is the only one that offers public higher education totally free and the only with religious universities. Brazilian private institutions are powerful and, like India, provide low-quality public primary education. However, only India and Brazil adopt affirmative action policies. From the comparative point of view, while Russia and China are prioritizing the creation of a small number of world-class universities that are at the top of international rankings, Brazil and India adopt more democratic positions, trying to ensure a minimum quality that applies to all its institutions. (Verhine, 2017). While India guarantees the prestige of its universities through the selection of its students, in Brazil the institutions that stand out in the international academic community are due to the influence of its graduate programs (Verhine, 2017).

Within this context, we point out that Brazil is a big country in extension and in challenges to overcome. We are more than 200 million inhabitants located in 26 states and the Federal district. In some regions a high rate of poverty, in others a high economic level. This diversity influences educational issues.

Veiga (2010), Masetto & Gaeta (2015), Orland-Barak (2015), Flores (2017) have stated that there are still difficulties in uniting practice and theory in the teacher education and education in general showing that not only our country is concerned about that. In addition, reports in different countries show teachers' dissatisfaction with their working conditions, especially with material conditions such as salary and school infrastructure (Marcelo Garcia, 1992, 1999, 2010). We also perceive a low interest in the teaching profession by students who enter university education. Research results show that, although the positive image of teacher's social role contributes to adding attention in or admiration for the profession, this single aspect seems insufficient to motivate the permanence of students in such career (Brandão & Pardo, 2016). The authors point out the need for changes in the working conditions and the context of the social devaluation of the teaching profession, aspects perceived as negative by these students.

Fundação Carlos Chagas (Carlos Chagas Foundation] (2009) investigated around 1500 Brazilian students graduate from senior high schools about their perspectives to enter teaching education. The results showed that even though most participants spoke highly about teaching as a profession, relevant and fundamental for society, at the same time pointed out low wages and excessive workload combined with little recognition in the community as a reason for not choose to teach as a career. The study showed that only 2% had some inclination for a teaching major as the first option, especially for elementary education that had the weakest level of attraction.

A School Census conducted by the Ministry of Education (MEC/INEP), in 2009, according to Barreto (2015) unveil "a small percentage of teachers still lack a degree and accreditation and that there are teachers responsible for disciplines that do not correspond to their academic training.

Research developed in 2013 identified approximately 430 thousand professionals in primary education were also higher education students. From these, about 48% study Education and 10% Language and Literature (Brasil, 2015). A large number of teachers work in elementary and high schools without having studied the specific subject area they teach. In Portuguese classes, only 54% of the teachers had specifically studied for the job; in Mathematics, only 38%, and in Physics, only 16.9% (Gatti et al. , 2014).

In this context, mentoring acquires great importance, for it is an effective means of helping with teachers' professional development (Day, 2004). There is also a lack of contextualization of teacher education in schools, and a large number of teachers have low wages, poor working conditions, and lack of self-esteem in their careers (Marcondes, Leite & Ramos, 2017).

The objectives of this study are to identify productions that bring mentoring as a theme in Education and evaluate the presence of mentoring in studies developed and published by Brazilian researchers in a major database.

The main research question was: how Brazilian publications see mentoring regarding teachers education being Brazil, a developing country member of BRICS? The hypothesis, considering high attention and research production around the world, was that Brazil would have considerable production following the world trend.

3. Methodology.

The methodology chosen was the literature review present in two major databases in Education. So, the current study reviews publications in the last five years about mentoring, both experiences related and theoretical studies.

4. Results.

The focus of this paper is to search in main Brazilian publications articles related to mentoring for the last five years, to shed light about what is written on the subject, concepts that sustain research in the issue. When accessing Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com.br/scholar?hl=pt-BR&lr=lang_pt&as_sdt=0%2C5&q=mentoring+2015+2019&btnG=) with the word mentoring, giving a period between 2015 and 2019, we found 16.300 results in all languages.

Refining the search for articles in Portuguese, we found 149 results. Fifty-five entries in the area of Administration, 27 entries in the field of Health, 17 in Hard Sciences, 14 in Information, 13 in the specific area of Education, 10 in Psychology, 4 in Anthropology, 2 in Arts, and 17 under others, as we found blogs, courses outlines, job offers, as examples of the ones classified as others.

This first round showed the need for a more specific choice of a database. For this work, we chose to examine the 20 entries found in Scielo Brasil and Educ@Scielo regarding the main area, abstract, methodology, and keywords. A search in Scielo Brasil (www.scielo.br/cgi-bin/wxis.exe/iah/) with the keywords mentoring or mentoring program or mentors or mentorship or mentorship program between 2014 and April 2019 found 14 entries. From those, five were in the specific area of Education, five were interfacing Education and Health, 3 were in the field of Health, and 1 was interfacing Administration and Education. Searching on Educ@Scielo database (educa.fcc.org.br/cgi-bin/wxis.exe/iah/), with the keywords mentoring or mentoring program or mentors or mentorship or mentorship program between 2014 and April 2019, only six articles were found. One was specific within

the area of Health, one dealt with orientation in Graduate Programs, and the other 4 brought contributions related to Education. After a thorough examination, we found nine articles mentioning mentoring having Education as the area of concern.

5. Implications/Discussion.

As is possible to observe, the publications about mentoring on teacher education found in this study are incipient, far from attending the needs of the Brazilian educational system. In the UNESCO publication cited before (2014, p. 23), teacher education is not mentioned. In fact, in dealing with investment in the quality of teaching to improve quality of learning, is cited that "Brazil's Federal Government has introduced a national exam (Exame Nacional de Ingresso na Carreira Docente), which all teachers candidates must pass."

On the other hand, there are recent experiences of mentoring nationwide as The mentoring program of scholarship in teaching initiation: PIBID, conducted by CAPES, and in small scale, such as Improvement Teaching Program, at Sorocaba University, and Pedagogical Residence, at State University of Rio de Janeiro. These experiences were presented in a Symposia at 2019 AERA Annual Meeting, with the title: The Role of Mentoring In Brazilian Context: Experiences In Dialogue, and will be available at AERA repository 2019.

6. Conclusions.

Research verified that, contrary to the hypothesis, there is an absence in publications regarding Brazilian public policies designed to stimulate the creation and follow-up of induction processes, such as mentoring. In 2011, Gatti, Sá, and André mentioned that there were only two Brazilian initiatives aimed at the follow-up of beginning teachers approved in public examinations, in programs that were similar to mentoring and this reality has not changed much. Despite the relevance of investigation focusing on teacher mentoring and the importance of mentoring programs, our study has shown that in Brazil, the subject is still incipient and poorly researched.

The investigation emphasizes the need for developing programs for the specific needs of initial teachers as they can ensure some understanding of the impacts on the ones beginning their career. If we are to retain promising teachers, there is an urgent need to align local and national political agendas to improve teachers' working conditions, with a constant presence of mentors. As a BRICS member, it is essential that public policies in Brazil deal with retaining promising teachers in schools to improve the quality of Education in a developing country.

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