

## NARRATIVES TOWARD TO TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ONE TEACHER EDUCATION COURSE

Vânia Galindo Massabni – ESALQ/São Paulo University- Brazil-  
vgmvania@gmail.com

**Abstract:** *University needs to collaborate and to investigate in meaningful moments that might be powerful in teachers' ways of thinking about their practice and also impact their professional development. Considering the difficulties of continuing teacher education courses contributes to this attempt, the goal is to identify critical incidents in the narratives of Brazilian teachers related to their professional development. Two narratives were collected from 28 basic educational teachers in Brazil during one course designed to improve their professional development. Narratives could be both for research and an educational instrument articulated in a theoretical framework oriented to the reflection about professionalism. Findings suggest that chosen moments in personal and professional construction are crucial, when they make a difference in their students' lives to give motivation to each teacher career. The critical incidents evidence that professionalism has been an isolation phenomenon of each teacher with the lack of support in the Brazilian context.*

**Keywords:** *professional development; critical incidents; collaborative processes; narratives;*

### 1. Context of Brazilian teachers' and their professional development

A big challenge in education is to prepare teachers and keep them working in the educational system, in a committed way during their careers. Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world and its large dimensions amplify the difficulties to teach in rural regions, poor outlying areas and in cases of violence and lack of resources. The number of available teachers is not enough to meet the school's needs, showing the system's wellness in keeping teachers (Gatti, Barreto e André, 2001).

Besides the difficulties in the country, there is a loss of both, prestige and teachers' career statute, in different countries and (Flores, 2014). Even though other logics are present in the Brazilian context, tends to a new educational management making individual or groups of teachers and schools responsible, in which the efficacy does not concern itself with the growth of social wellbeing as a right (Oliveira, 2015).

Conforming to Avalos (2011) researchers had presented the professional development as a process about teachers learning, including how to learn, and transforming their knowledge into practice for all their students' growth. Since many studies are concerned with the professional development of teachers, some of them are focused on the contribution to the reflection of narrative methods and the construction of stories within professional development activities. According to Marcelo (2009), the professional development of teachers is a concept related to self-construction as a teacher and the evolution of career, defining their identity themselves.

Universities need to collaborate and to investigate in meaningful moments that might be powerful in teachers' ways of thinking about their practice and also impact their professional development. In this way, university programs of teacher education in service could prepare better courses and other activities, such as collaboration in a community of learning at school, targeted at being a meaningful experience of learning to teach for educators. The goal of present study is to identify critical incidents in the narratives of Brazilian teachers (in São Paulo state) related to their professional development.

In this context, the question to be asked is (research question): what are the meaningful moments that might be powerful in teachers' ways of thinking about their practice? How is the context related to professional development?

## **2. Methodology and critical incidents in teacher narratives**

According to Kelchtermans (1993) the narrative is a biographical perspective on teachers' professional development. Narratives refers to a form that teachers presents the professional experiences focused on the meaning of facts in context; into a story, there are constructed meaning for teacher's professional life. Critical incidents act as "turning points" of teacher perspective with impact (positive or negative) on professional commitment and job satisfaction.

The participants (28 basic educational teachers) in one university course designed to improve professional development of in service teachers in Brazil (São Paulo state). Two written narratives were collected, in first and second classes, before any discussion of theme to not influence results. Narratives could be a research and also an educational instrument, as it was in this course, because teachers could reflect about the "self- construction". During the course, some ideas included critical incidents that were discussed in a theoretical framework oriented to the reflection about professionalism. For example, many narratives mentioned the indiscipline as a problem and questions of teachers' authority was discussed with theory support in course. For analyses, 18 narratives were considered for the first question "What is lacking in my professional development?" and 25 narratives for the second solicitation: write about your professional path and professional growth.

## **3. Narratives and student hole in professional development**

Changes in educational contexts have bringing the intensification of work in teacher profession. The intensification is evident in the time spending with multiple bureaucratic and administrative tasks and the consequence is loss of time to prepare and develop activities with students, changing the idea of professionalism (Flores, 2016). According to the same author (Flores, 2016), these changes diverge the teaching profession in its essence that are teach and learn process, and it is necessary to analyses contexts and factors acting as support to professionalism based on confidence, appreciation and recognition of teacher profession, including collaboration.

The "time" is a decisive factor to be a teacher nowadays for 6 teachers. They related lack of time to improve the practice, for example, one of teacher say "school life consumes a lot of my time. I do not have time to read, watch documentaries, prepare better lessons (...)". However, only one teacher linked major changes in professionalism and this intensification, articulating changes and responsible of teachers and all system in this context. In narratives, it is not clear how to grow up in profession for teachers, understanding that better classes and better relationship with student are patterns to professional development.

The narratives about "what is lacking for future in your professional development" were organized in 5 perspectives: 1. Necessity to support practice, considering dimensions of context; 2. Necessity to psychological support for better relationship teacher and student; 3. Lack of time; 4. Pathways to improve yourself in teacher profession; 5. Focus in methodology to identify professional development.

In narratives, the beginning of professional pathways indicated phases of greats learning and it was choice to be a critical incident for 15 among 25 teachers, results that support Huberman (2000) proposes that pointed the beginning as a survivor phases in life career. Each teacher has an emphasis on professional trajectory. The meaningful moments that might be powerful in teachers' ways of thinking are related to students in classes for 13 teachers in 28. Learning how to teach and enhance a successful practice in situation with

student are understood in the self-construction in a mental logic as “I am able to teach, so I can be a (good) teacher”. These teachers choose incidents in situations into they make a difference in students’ life or students’ dedication to schools projects. These moments give motivation to teachers to invest in their career and to seek professional engagement. Individual situations in class or with students are meaningful for teachers, an isolation form of each teacher of this study find ways to development in their profession.

Some teachers in their narratives value relationship with the principal and Educational Directory. The hole of support or constrain for professional development is different and its depending of school and personal characteristic of participants. The constrain are explain with situations of authority abuse and charging without support to class, especially in schools far from urban center in cases of violence (critical incident for 2 teachers). The support is some orientation of school principal to teacher and indication for participate in courses. But courses in formal education were rarely remembered in professional development for the most of teachers. Day (2001) understand that professional development of teachers as all spontaneous experiences of learning and also activities planned to teachers concerned to contributes to classes, in a process that involves enlargement of commitment of purposes of teach, as knowledge and emotions to an effective reflection and practices. Limitations of formal activities like a seminar for in service teacher are known according to researchers and needs to be considered to guide professional development policy and practice (Borko, 2004).

#### 4. Conclusion and implications

Teachers’ narratives were a valuable instrument to understand the meaningful stories for teachers. Teachers pointed the lacking of time: time to study, prepare classes and projects, related as necessary to their professional development. Meaningful moments that might be powerful in teachers’ ways of thinking about their practice are related to situations to construct themselves as a teacher when they perceive that student learned especially in the beginning of career. Teachers rarely choose critical incidents with other teachers or school leaders. It suggests individual effort of teachers in situations indicating an isolation factor that bringing major difficulties to transform situations in opportunities of professional development and to find ways to construct the professionalism in collaboration or face bureaucratic forms to stay in profession. These conditions of professional development in Brazil/S. Paulo show fragilities of support to face the changes. The collaboration with universities could incentive the critical thinking and teachers’ professional development in schools focused in the student, reason of profession development in narratives of most teachers.

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