

Potential of teaching cases in the training of beginning teachers^{1 2 3}

Potencialidades dos casos de ensino na formação de professoras iniciantes

Potencial de los casos de enseñanza en la formación de profesoras principiantes

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Abstract

This study investigates the potential of teaching cases as a reflection tool in the process of professional development of beginning literacy teachers. The research has a qualitative nature with a research-intervention design. A total of six beginning literacy teachers took part in the study, and data collection occurred in three moments: an initial discussion group, five training meetings, and a final discussion group. The teaching cases proved to be a training tool with significant potential for the teachers' improvement, since they provided a reflection movement on the practice and structuring of new professional knowledge to the participants, among other aspects.

Keywords: teaching cases, professional development, teacher training, beginning teacher

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Resumo

Este estudo investiga as potencialidades dos casos de ensino como dispositivo reflexivo no processo de desenvolvimento profissional de professoras alfabetizadoras iniciantes. A pesquisa tem natureza qualitativa com delineamento de pesquisa-intervenção. Participaram seis professoras alfabetizadoras iniciantes e a coleta dos dados ocorreu em três momentos: um grupo de discussão inicial, cinco encontros formativos e um grupo de discussão final. Os casos de ensino mostraram ser um dispositivo formativo com significativo potencial no desenvolvimento das docentes, pois proporcionaram às participantes, dentre outros aspectos, um movimento de reflexão sobre a prática e a estruturação de novos conhecimentos profissionais.

Palavras-chave: *casos de ensino, desenvolvimento profissional, formação docente, professor iniciante*

Resumen

Este estudio investiga el potencial de los casos de enseñanza como dispositivo de reflexión en el proceso de desarrollo profesional de profesoras principiantes de alfabetización. La investigación es de naturaleza cualitativa con un diseño de investigación-intervención. Participaron seis profesoras principiantes de alfabetización y la recogida de datos se produjo en tres momentos: un grupo de discusión inicial, cinco reuniones formativas y un grupo de discusión final. Los casos de enseñanza resultaron ser un dispositivo formativo con un potencial significativo en el desarrollo de las profesoras, ya que les proporcionaron a las participantes, entre otros aspectos, un movimiento de reflexión acerca de la práctica y la estructuración de nuevos conocimientos profesionales.

Palabras clave: *casos de enseñanza, desarrollo profesional, formación del profesorado, profesor principiante*

Introduction

The first years of teaching are permeated by moments of insecurities and tensions arising from the professional initiation and doubts about how to develop teaching practices that promote student learning. This decisive period in the career is often experienced by teachers in a solitary way, without support or institutional conditions that favor overcoming the challenges and integrating into the new work environment (Marcelo; Vaillant, 2017).

In his studies about the process of professional insertion, Marcelo (2009) shows the challenges faced in this period due to the lack of subsidies for beginning teachers and draws attention to the frequency with which they are assigned classes considered more difficult, such as, for example, literacy classes, which require specific theoretical and practical knowledge about the processes of acquisition of reading and writing.

In this professional insertion phase, most teachers feel the differences between the practical experience obtained in initial training and the real conditions in which teaching is offered in the classroom. Vaillant and Marcelo (2012) explain that, although the problems that afflict teachers at the beginning of their careers are similar to those of experienced teachers – such as unmotivated students, indiscipline, lack of pedagogical guidance, among others –, beginner teachers are at an emotional and professional disadvantage compared with more experienced ones. The authors argue that “novice teachers experience problems with greater doses of uncertainty and stress, since they have fewer references and mechanisms to cope with these situations” (Vaillant; Marcelo, 2012, p. 123).

Thus, promoting situations in which teachers can reflect on practices, finding new possibilities about the experiences lived during the teaching action, is an alternative for the process of building new knowledge, minimizing suffering in the face of insecurity to respond to professional demands and responsibilities assumed and favoring teacher’s professional development.

A vast literature in the field of teacher education discusses proposals to promote the learning of teaching and many of them refer to training devices mobilized in the initial and continuing education of teachers who take the practice as an object of analysis with narratives such as portfolio, memorial, diaries, and teaching cases. There are also devices that employ

audiovisual resources and observation of practices, but their use is still incipient in teacher training in the country.

In a recent study, Tartuce, Davis and Almeida (2021, p. 9) analyze the training devices employed by teachers who work in undergraduate teaching courses based on the francophone literature. The authors turn to Boudjaoui and Leclercq (2014, p. 10) to explain that training device “is a theoretical concept that identifies ideal, functional, and behavioral arrangements, which together form a system comprising pedagogical objectives, contexts, actors, actions, and relationships, together with the materials needed” (Tartuce; Davis; Almeida, 2021, p. 5). And since the training devices have a virtual aspect, since it is not yet known if they will be effective, and a material aspect, which are the actions and resources used to reach the intended ends, it is only after its implementation that the training device gains concreteness, which allows it to be an object of study and of reflection (Tartuce; Davis; Almeida, 2021).

In this perspective, this study uses the concept of training devices, understanding that their use in teacher education has formative and investigative value. This article uses the teaching cases with the objective of discussing the potentialities of their use as a reflective device in the professional development process of beginner literacy teachers. The cases instigate the reflective process, foster the critical analysis of practices in accordance with personal theories and concepts, and promote the construction and re-elaboration of professional knowledge (Nono; Mizukami, 2002).

To this end, an intervention-research was designed, carried out with six beginner literacy teachers (with up to five years of teaching) who work in a municipal school network in the interior of São Paulo; the research took place by reflecting on teaching cases based on the formative needs revealed by the teachers.

The article is structured as follows: first, it shows theoretical contributions about the importance of the reflective process for the articulation between theory and practice and, consequently, for the learning of teaching, as well as the potentialities of teaching cases as a training device. Next, it describes the research, elucidating how the methodological path and the use of teaching cases in the training process was carried out. Data analyses are shown, evidencing the implications on practice caused by the reflective movement with the teaching cases. Finally, the final considerations reiterate the main points of this study.

Reflective process in teacher education

The theme of the reflective teacher has been addressed in the literature related to teacher education in Brazil, especially since the 1990s, in studies that point to the role of reflection on the practice as an essential element for the teacher's professional development (Libâneo, 2002).

Among the authors who defend the idea of a reflective posture in the professional practice of teachers, the works of Schön (1992), Zeichner (1992), Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) stand out, bringing elements for discussing this theme.

In the pioneering studies of Schön (1992) on the *epistemology of practice*, the author portrays the reflection on practices in line with the development of professional knowledge by the analysis and problematization of situations arising from teaching action, seeking solutions and new possibilities. The author describes three dimensions of reflection in practice: the first refers to *knowledge in action*, a process that occurs at the time of action and is related to the teaching and to the knowledge directly triggered during the developed practice, that is, what are the objectives of a given situation, who are the students and how to develop the practice. The second dimension is the *reflection in action*, with the analysis of the practical situation and the search for the best strategies and actions in the course of the situation, but which can also occur after the situation, without involving a critical and analytical deepening of the moment. The third dimension is the *reflection on the reflection-in-action*, which follows the situation that occurred, thus the teacher has the possibility to reflect on the events, analyzing possibilities and difficulties of the moment. According to the author, procedures of registering and describing the practices observed with a view to a later in-depth analysis of the behaviors, the awareness of the intentions and strategies involved are favorable to the development of a reflective *practicum* (Schön, 1992).

In a more critical perspective, Zeichner (1992; 2008) observes that reflective practice has become a “slogan” in discussions about teacher education. The author draws attention to the individualistic bias of many studies on the teacher as a reflective professional, by focusing on the issues of teaching and the classroom, disregarding the social conditions of education and the context of teaching work. In this sense, Zeichner (1992; 2008) highlights the importance of reflection not occurring only at the individual level and explains that when reflecting collectively the teacher analyzes not only the practice itself, but various actions and theories, in a process of reflective criticism both collective and individual. Thus, teachers have more opportunities to

understand the issues of practice in a broad dimension, debating, discussing, criticizing, and relating practices to the conditions that affect teaching work in the classroom.

Deepening the discussion about the reflection of practices, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) highlight three conceptions about the movement of reflection of practices in the process of teacher learning. The conception of knowledge *for* practice understands that teachers elaborate and mobilize the professional knowledge base intending the development of practice by deepening the theories and conceptions that underlie formal knowledge. The conception of knowledge *in* practice involves a process of analysis and reflection of the action carried out in the practice of teachers, perceiving professional knowledge within the action, in a movement of partnership in the reflective processes between experienced professionals and beginners, with a view to assisting beginner teachers in the process of professional learning. The third conception of knowledge *of* practice aims at practice as a source of knowledge construction, by the investigation, reflection, and critical analysis of situations, and a broad view of practices, in a movement that involves all professionals, from beginners to those experienced, in a space of dialogue and collaborative reflection among participants, aiming at the process of construction and re-elaboration of knowledge, and at the elaboration of new perspectives on the educational system.

Thus, the authors Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2002) defend the creation of *learning communities* aiming at the collective reflection of practices, so that transformations occur in the school community and in the learning processes, since all participants can participate in the analyses, reflections, and thus promote the knowledge construction process during the professional performance of teachers.

Despite some differences in approach, these studies have in common the valorization of the role of experience and formative proposals that favor reflection on the practice, one's own or that of other teachers, in teacher training processes. They also show the relevance of the collaborative dimension in the reflective process and the constitution of research communities that place teachers as agents and co-builders of knowledge.

In accordance with the process of reflection on practices in teacher education, Gatti et al. (2019, p. 186) bring elements to the discussion of the theme – placing it in the “framework of redefinition of the role and practice of the teacher, in which the professional space is recognized as a *locus* of knowledge production, and the educator, as a historical subject capable

of producing new knowledge” – and present some consensus in the literature underlying the learning of teaching, which has been influencing the programs and practices of initial and continuing education. These consensus, according to the authors, “evidence a redefinition of the role and practice of teachers and their trainers and provide the construction of methodological alternatives” (Gatti et al., 2019, p. 186).

One of the consensuses concerns the “reflection on the articulation of theory and practice” (Gatti et al., 2019, p. 187). The authors explain that it has been recurrently made explicit in the literature that “formative practices should provide experiences that represent, as much as possible, the complexity of teaching with the intention of triggering the integration between theoretical activity and practical activity.” It is in this perspective that trainers have resorted to training devices such as “teaching cases, reflective diaries, portfolio, classroom observation, among others, which take the practice as an object of analysis.” The authors explain that they are “considered creative processes of investigation, explanation, interpretation, and intervention in reality” with the potential to promote situations for “teachers to test their theoretical knowledge, requiring that, in some moments, their principles be made explicit and revised and that different knowledge be mobilized for a deep understanding of the complexity of teaching activity” (Gatti et al., 2019, p. 187).

The authors also emphasize that “even considering the differences in the available literature regarding the concept of reflection, it is a consensus that theory plays an essential role in its dialectical relationship with practice and that there are different levels and processes of reflection” (Gatti et al., 2019, p. 187).

The contributions of the different authors point to the need for training that aims to train professionals who constantly reflect on the knowledge and actions of professional practice, promoting learning situations that are effective to the needs of each student – not only the replication of techniques developed for certain situations, but supported by the theoretically grounded analysis of the actions, the context, the knowledge, and the specificities of the students.

Training process with teaching cases

The narratives of situations resulting from the practice of teachers have been used more frequently as a formative device, contributing to professional and personal development. These training initiatives enable collective analysis and help strengthen relationships among professionals, reducing individualism resulting from isolated practices in their contexts (Gatti et al., 2019).

The narratives, as a training device, can occur in different record formats: portfolios, autobiographies, memorials, teaching cases, among other forms of written production of the experiences arising from the practice. They present both the description of the highlighted situation and the negative and positive feelings of the moment (Oliveira, 2011).

Note the possibility of different representations, since each group of teachers during the analysis will employ their own knowledge, conceptions, personal theories, generating new perspectives according to the experiences of each teacher and the discussions of the group, since at this moment they recover situations experienced in the social context, in professional practices, and even in the quality of students. Thus, Oliveira (2011, p. 292) reiterates the potentiality of the training process with the use of narratives: “the self-forming role of these instruments is undeniable since teachers produce knowledge and share the knowledge produced by other groups.”

In this perspective, teaching cases are narratives that describe in detail a situation that occurred in a real context, by reporting some dilemmatic moment, amenable to analysis and reflections about possibilities of intervention and different actions (Nono; Mizukami, 2002).

Among the formative possibilities of the teaching cases, the authors Nono and Mizukami (2002), based on the studies of Merseth (1996 *apud* Nono; Mizukami, 2002), highlight their contributions in the process of analysis, reflection, and resolution of problems arising from professional practice; in the movement to reflect on the best decisions; and, finally, to promote the exercise of reflection on the practices and process of professional development. Still regarding the potentialities, Merseth (2018) states that they enable the analysis of a situation by identifying what are the impediments, mishaps, difficulties, and possible referrals in an

environment in which participants can experience new possibilities, without the concern that their ideas will not work. Mizukami (2010), based on the studies of Shulman (1986 *apud* Mizukami, 2010), elucidates that training with teaching cases contributes to the development and organization of the reflective process. Although the dilemmas faced by teachers are unpredictable, the processes directed to reflection help in the directing and reasoning in various situations.

Nono and Mizukami (2002) emphasize that teaching cases are not models to be imitated, but instruments for the construction of professional knowledge, since the teachers mobilize the knowledge they have in an environment of discussion and collective construction about the dilemma situations of the cases, by critical, in-depth, and planned reflection. Citing studies by Wilson, Shulman, and Richert (1987 *apud* Nono; Mizukami, 2002, p. 73) the authors understand that case studies have the potential to develop the process of pedagogical reasoning by promoting the analysis of aspects of the act of teaching that involve “understanding, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection, and new understanding.”

They also highlight that the reflective process triggered in the discussion of cases allows the identification of gaps in initial training courses and topics of interest to teachers in training. It also enables the examination and questioning of conceptions and beliefs about teaching and its reconstruction, to establish practices more appropriate to a quality teaching. The use of teaching cases as a training device thus shows to be promising in teacher training processes of beginning teachers.

Methodology

This study had the qualitative research approach with design of the research-intervention, developed with a formative proposal with cases of teaching as a reflective device of literacy practices. In this perspective, the participants and the researcher are involved in the development of the research in a relationship of collaborative transformation, in which the processes determine the next movements by the development of the group of participants; therefore, all those involved actively act in the construction of knowledge (Rocha; Aguiar, 2003).

Thus, this research occurred in three moments: an initial discussion group to list the formative needs of beginning literacy teachers to elaborate five formative meetings that occurred in a second moment and, finally, a final discussion group to identify, in the perception of the teachers, the potentialities of the cases of teaching as a training device.

The participants were, at first, seven beginning literacy teachers who work with classes of the 1st and 2nd years of Elementary School of a municipal network in the state of São Paulo, with up to five years of experience in teaching in an effective and contractual position. Later, one participant withdrew from the process, with six participants continuing until the end of data collection.

This study was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the institution hosting the research and, after being approved, an invitation letter was sent to the beginner literacy teachers with the informed consent form for accepting to participate in the research. Initially, the participants answered an online questionnaire for characterization purposes, at which time they previously listed the main challenges encountered in teaching. Then, an initial discussion group was held to identify the main formative needs of the participants, to start planning the formative meetings and choosing the teaching cases.

The planning process began with searching for teaching cases that incorporated aspects of professional practice, allowing reflections on the insecurities of the participants. Total of four teaching cases were used: (i) the first shows the hardships and challenges arising from the process of professional insertion itself and is available in a book by Telma Weisz (2018), an author who is a reference in literacy studies; (ii) the second, used in two meetings, also available in Telma Weisz's book, was written by a teacher who studied with the author and has the productive grouping and the pedagogical organization as its theme; (iii) the third case focused on the hypotheses of writing, extracted from the blog and the magazine *Avisa lá*, September 2004 issue (Gubiani, 2004), which provided reports of teaching experiences; (iv) finally, the fourth teaching case addressed the context of the pandemic and was prepared by one of the authors of this article, who is also a literacy teacher.

Previously, the cases were sent for reading and a preliminary analysis by the teachers. At the beginning of each formative meeting, how the meeting would take place, the objectives, and stages envisaged were explained. Initially, there was a reading moment or an introductory video to create a space for interaction between the teachers. Then, the case was read, followed by two

to three guiding questions to promote the discussion. At this moment, the teachers were encouraged to share their analyses freely, debating and questioning during the reflections. Intending to address some specific issues related to the training needs listed before, each question had the support of a checklist of the main topics for reflection. At the end of the notes, the ideas emerging from the analyses were synthesized. And, at the final moment of the meeting, the participants were invited to evaluate the formative process anonymously, so that possible adjustments could be made, seeking the better quality of the subsequent meetings.

The discussion groups and formative meetings took place remotely with the Google Meet communication platform, in view of the social distancing imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic in the time period when data collection occurred. Both were performed out of the participants' working hours, on days and times agreed with all.

Data analysis is based on prose analysis, as proposed by André (1983). According to the author, the analysis should be guided by broad questions that help us to interrogate the data, maintaining "the focus of attention on the whole without losing sight of the multiplicity of meanings that may be implicit in the material" (André, 1983, p. 70). She also points out that constantly reflecting on our own analysis process is necessary, considering the context of the data and the theoretical framework that underlies its understanding. Thus, the aspects presented emerged in this reflexive movement of reading the reality researched, in the search for understanding the phenomenon investigated in its multiple dimensions.

Potential of cases for teacher training

The formative process with the teaching cases evidenced, above all, the reflection on professional practices as a source of teacher training in accordance with the needs of beginner literacy teachers. The set of data offered elements for understanding the formative path of the participants, but the discussion group held at the end of the meetings, when the teachers resume this trajectory and reflect on it, constituted a privileged moment for understanding this path. The analysis of the potential of the cases for the formation of teachers highlighted the development of reflective processes on the practice in various spheres of the teaching activity. Thus, among other aspects, the following stand out from the perspective of the participants: (i) *individual and collective reflection*; (ii) *analysis, problem solving, and decision-making*; (iii) *development of an investigative posture*; (iv) *perception of the relationship between theory and practice*; (v) *teacher learning*.

The teaching cases, as a reflective instrument, enabled the participants not only to analyze situations experienced by other people, but also, above all, to relate them to their own conception about the experiences and practices developed. During the meetings in which the beginning teachers analyzed different narratives about situations related to the formative needs previously manifested by the group, the participants perceived the relationship between the dilemmas faced in the cases and their own experiences, seeking new possibilities and analyzing the emerging perspectives of the discussions, since they were in a group of people with similar difficulties, anxieties, and developmental goals. This process provoked reflection on the practice both *individually* and *collectively*.

The reflection on the practice itself occurred at different times during the training meetings. For example, the reflections mobilized from the case written by Telma Weisz about her process of professional insertion, in which she exposes how she started the career and the challenges faced during the first years of the profession, including a withdrawal resulting from events she experienced. Although the social context and working conditions were different from the current reality of the participants, they reported the impact of reading, since they perceived the relationship between the narrative about the author's fears and insecurities and their own experiences as beginning teachers and found identifications with the situations and feelings reported.

To me also the first stood out, which was the "Baptism of Fire", because I identified a lot with the whole situation. So, to me, I think those two were the high points. (Tatiana⁴)

I also, I think the "Baptism of Fire" was just like that... the study of the case, of hearing what happened, how it went, how it was, how she got into the classroom. We identify ourselves a lot with it, because before it was already difficult, it hasn't changed, it's still difficult, they keep throwing us in the room without knowing what to do in class (laughter). And we find it out together with the children, together with other teachers. But if we stop to think about the "Baptism of Fire" up to now, what has changed? I don't think it's changed at all, it's still very difficult for people who are starting now. (Ruth)

⁴ To preserve anonymity, fictitious names were given to each participant.

I was revisiting the cases in my memory. Yeah, really! For me the most striking is also the “Baptism of Fire”, which was the first, but the others also filled in and brought good discussions, I really liked the grouping. [...] I think realizing that other people go through this and that it can be overcome, with attention, with research, with a work... that it can be overcome. (Lygia)

The process of reflecting on the potential of the cases to analyze practices and personal conceptions enabled the understanding of the processes themselves and the identification of training needs, anticipating possible confrontations and seeking new perspectives. Note two statements that show how the participants understood the use of teaching cases in training:

So, I guess the teaching case, I actually didn't even know that. The case of teaching is very interesting, as I said, Telma Weisz talking about her “baptism”, when would we imagine that a person that we see, so intelligent, who knows so much about education, also went through difficulty. You look, like: no, I'm not going to give up! We can do it, with effort, with study, with research, with exchange, we can do it! So, the case study is important, us knowing, I ended up learning here with you, because I had never read it, in college I don't remember reading this. So I do recommend. We having, seeing the information, when our Pedagogical Advisors can pass this on to us, do a case study with us. (Ruth)

I said that we always have something to teach, even if we don't know it and there is something to learn as well. I think we learned a lot from the teaching cases, so I would also recommend seeing how other people have been through situations that were challenging. There are even situations that we will still face, and we are always learning from each other, exchanging this information is quite enriching. (Lygia)

Ruth emphasizes the need to have moments directed to reflection, especially with teaching cases, highlighting that they are little disseminated in teacher training. The participants reiterate the formative potential of the teaching cases, corroborating the study by Mizukami (2010), which explains the importance of the cases involving a situation that requires analysis, reflection, and that contains meaning for the group and brings solutions elaborated in different manners, whether simple or complex. As Merseth (2018, p. 15) points out, “learning from the case method can be an extremely powerful and enjoyable way to acquire new knowledge and grow as a professional.”

This reflective process with the teaching cases also took place among peers, that is, the reflection was also collective. Initially, one of the main challenges listed by the teachers was the feeling of isolation from professional insertion. However, during the meetings they felt understood and welcomed in their needs and difficulties. They point out that the environment

directed to collective reflection contributed to them feeling safe, due to the support of other teachers with similar difficulties and anxieties.

It was the moment for us to be able to blow off steam, to be able to show what we think and in a group in which we realize that we are not alone. (Eva)

So that was also very important with the teaching cases, to see that we had there a support from colleagues who were learning and that everyone was in the same boat, to look for and to want more and to always want to do the best. (Lygia)

Eva's speech elucidates the importance of having formative moments planned in which teachers can debate about their doubts, difficulties, developed practices, in a space of exchange and collaborative construction. Lygia also states that the analysis of the reports of other people with similar difficulties enhances the awareness of the need to build individual knowledge. The movement exposed by Lygia about the perception of individual singularities evidenced in the collective reflective process is deepened by Zeichner (2008) when discussing the relationship between professional development and collective situations of reflection. For the author, it is in these moments that the teachers resume their theories and personal conceptions, based on the discussions and analyses, even perceiving their limitations and difficulties by a process of self-evaluation that favors new analyses and collective debates. Corroborating this perspective of collective construction, Merseth (2018, p. 15) emphasizes "respect for different points of view, ideas, and interpretations and the ability to listen, which is as important as speaking."

The interaction situations provided by the analysis of the cases that brought situations experienced in the teaching practice by the beginning literacy teachers incited a rich reflection among peers. The participants not only recognized and valued this movement, but also reported, with regret, that during the professional performance in the school network there are no moments for reflection on the practices. The evaluation of the formative meetings made clear that collective reflective processes require clear objectives and planning, not only to engage teachers in the analysis of the case, but also to mobilize the participation of all in the search for varied strategies for the resolution of situations, so that each participant is heard and can contribute to the discussions. This perspective has not only one way, but the construction and reflection of the existing possibilities, since the cases are not models to be replicated, but situations to be critically analyzed.

Note that organizing the meetings and selecting the cases according to the training needs of the participants was relevant to them. As Zeichner (1992) points out, the formations must meet the real formative needs of professionals and moments that foster the critical reflective process must be elaborated. This is what happened in the formative meetings: the reflections were directed to the main reflective demands of the participants, in a space of mutual support, in which they listened, disagreed, and questioned each other without judgments or impediments, but rather the search for new perspectives on the cases and situations listed.

The second aspect evidenced in the formative meetings are *the processes of analysis, problem-solving, and decision-making*. In this movement, the participants reassessed the practices developed in line with the aspects and practices conducted in the teaching cases.

It was observed that the reflection deepened the conceptions of literacy. Even though the concepts are known, a mastery over the principles that involve this process is necessary. The report of teachers Clarice and Ana Maria elucidate this question:

When we did the writing analyses, the writing hypotheses. For me that one, I think was the best, you know. It was the high point because I was so scared. [...] It made no difference how many I had: pre-syllabic, alphabetic, matched or unmatched syllabic, it wouldn't make difference. But formulating the hypotheses, us doing the discussion and seeing that within one hypothesis there were several others, it was very good to me, it was the best. (Clarice)

You push one hypothesis, you look again, you look at the other. [...] To see this... it's not insecurity, but sometimes, divergence of our own thinking, of the same hypothesis, I found it very cool because everyone has this doubt, everyone always gets stuck in one and sometimes people see two different hypotheses in the same writing. It's okay that you have to get it right there, but people sometimes see different things. (Ana Maria)

The teachers address the insecurity in diagnosing the hypotheses of writing only with their own experiences. This movement, however, occurred with greater clarity about the specificities of the aspects related to the literacy process, and brought more security about the practices and decision-making, when the teachers had the opportunity to take the doubts to the collective analysis and, from a collaborative effort, reached a conclusion about what would be the hypotheses of writing, the predominant characteristics and knowledge of the students. The statements corroborate the idea of Weisz (2018, p. 47) about the development of students' knowledge in view of the literacy process: "the teacher who intends to qualify himself better to deal with student learning must study and develop an investigative posture."

The process of analysis of practices contributes to the perception of the best strategies, of possible difficulties, and to a broad view of the situation, generating a range of possibilities for intervention. As Schön (1992) concludes on reflection-in-action, during the critical reflection of experiences the teacher seeks in-depth analysis of the aspects of practice. Even though this practice is constant in their professional practice, the situations of discussion and collective re-elaboration allow the teacher to see new alternatives and possible paths.

Although the discussion was directed to the difficulties in clearly identifying the hypotheses of writing, the teachers also discussed how to recognize what the students know and what they do so that they advance in their knowledge. In this process, they perceived the similarities between the case and the practice itself, thus finding possibilities in the teaching action.

The third aspect refers to the *process of developing an investigative posture*, which concerns the interest in the search for new knowledge provoked by the formative meetings. Ruth's speech in this regard is instructive:

Today, if we do not have knowledge, we seek knowledge. We have somewhere to run to, different from what it used to be. They didn't. It was like that, the student has to learn this, it was even said there, that if the student didn't learn, it was the student's fault. Today it is no longer seen this way, we find a way. [...] So, like, I think that's what I got from this meeting: that we're not the blind teachers anymore, it's not meant to be. We have to look for information if we don't know... research, study, to improve. (Ruth)

Ruth evidences the change of attitude of the professionals due to relating the current formative processes with the previous ones, since there is no efficient and unique practice, but processes to be reflected in view of the students' learning. Therefore, she does not declare herself as "blind," someone who adopts meaningless practices with students only by reproducing theories and methods without depth, nor does she disregard the knowledge of the context in which she operates, but seeks to know the students, individually and in groups, as well as the social and cultural particularities of the community in which they are inserted.

Promoting situations that lead teachers to recognize new events and act effectively in the context in which they act is a process that involves knowledge structures that are built by reflection. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2002) discuss the knowledge of practice by the critical analysis of experiences so that knowledge is re-elaborated and reconstructed by teachers, they put special emphasis on the development of the investigative posture of teachers. For the

authors, processes of reflection in a space directed to this end, with planned and systematized situations, have formative potential, since they help the teacher to look at practical issues from different perspectives, including those of the students.

During the reading of the cases, the teachers felt represented by the narratives described, in some moments finding other possibilities of action in situations that have already been experienced, and even perceiving how they could act in certain situations. The speech of teacher Ana Maria elucidates this question:

But the exchange on top of the cases that have been talked about and then the exchange because sometimes you do not imagine a certain attitude towards something that is happening. You hear from the other study, a case where you say, "wow, I didn't even imagine going down that path!" So I think that the more cases we study, the more cases we see how it went here, it gives you more clarity, it gives you more options, more paths to follow, things that we sometimes do not even talk about, that we don't even think about and to another person [...] And sometimes it's so clear, so evident and we don't think, we don't see, then we must have all this, this exchange, so it sometimes gives us an insight. (Ana Maria)

Listening to the description of the cases and the possibilities discussed by the group enabled new alternatives about the situations, building a repertoire of reflections and collaborative constructions. The participants' report is in line with the studies of Merseth (2018) regarding the possibility of testing new ideas, since as Ana Maria explains, the studies with the cases expanded the options and perceptions of the participants, as they bring dilemmatic narratives that can be solved in different ways.

The development of the investigative posture and reflective processes involves the understanding of social relations, especially the limitations and injustices that involve the contexts.

I suffered a lot with it in my beginning and with what I could do to help, it's like Tatiana said, we always have a little something to contribute. So what I can do to help, because we will only have change, if the change starts in us. Look at this so you see that, cool, some people that I helped, today already help other people. It's a change that has to come from us. (Eva)

Eva's report shows the awareness about the gaps in the process of professional insertion, isolating the beginning teacher in a new environment, with unknown people and many dilemmas about the profession. The movements listed by the participants involve the search for knowledge to support professional practice. Zeichner (2008) states that, although the reflective

process develops skills and knowledge about professional action, fostering social justice, by teachers' perception about the social movements that impact the profession, is necessary. This careful analysis provides the construction of a more just society. Zeichner (2008, p. 546) highlights: "we need to ensure that teachers know how to make decisions on a daily basis that do not unnecessarily limit the life chances of their pupils, that they make decisions in their work with greater awareness of the potential political consequences of the different choices that they make."

The fourth aspect involves the *process of perceiving the relationship between theory and practice*. Although the participants were not clear about the theory present in the processes experienced in practice, during the meetings they resumed concepts from studies on literacy in issues such as writing hypotheses, productive groupings, interventions, among other situations. In these situations, they turned to authors and studies to affirm their reflections, and to understand the notes resulting from the discussions, generating new analyses of different conceptions and educational theories.

Also, the process of reflection brought the recognition of one's own knowledge in the face of the discussions. In the course of the analyses, the movement of reevaluation of the practices themselves and the knowledge built throughout the meetings, brought clarity about other experiences that could contribute to collective learning.

By the reflective process with the teaching cases, the analysis of the situations, seeking new possibilities and perspectives, the teachers recognized the importance of recording the experiences and practices, in view of the professional development process itself.

Yes, I always write, I have a habit of participating in things and writing, because to me it seems that I assimilate more when I do so, either student report or I analyze my activities, how it was at the end of the class. [...] But I did the new things also my way because I have a very particular way of doing things, like everyone else has. You bring these experiences, I think that when we write we improve a lot. (Clarice)

[...] If you had this record I think, it is clear that each student is different from each other, but you may come across a similar case and suddenly if you registered that case, you can look there and suddenly find the solution or a way not to make mistakes. Or it's like a movie that you also watch and if you watch it more than once, you have another perception. Then you can read that case again and have another perception and say, "wow, I should have done it another way or today I would have done it another way." Because we are changing, ideas are flowing and I think that writing down the case is very important. (Tatiana)

The participants understand that the registration of practices is important so that they can be resumed at later times with a view to improving pedagogical practices. As Gómez (1992, p. 104) points out, “in contact with the practical situation, not only are new theories, schemes, and concepts acquired and constructed, but also the dialectical process of learning itself is learned.”

And finally, the fifth and last aspect analyzed is the *process of teacher learning*, referring to the movement of construction of professional knowledge provided by the discussions of the experiences of the cases and the relationship between the notes of the participants, in a space of critical reflection, collective construction, and collaborative contributions.

In this sense, the investigative process that occurred in the formative encounters with the teaching cases as a reflective device collaborated for self-evaluation, the analysis of one’s own practices, and the development of new behaviors, attitudes, ideas, and a movement of deconstruction and construction of knowledge. Note what the teachers say:

So, I tried to take a lot of advantage of the experiences of the colleagues and the cases as well, several things that I didn’t do, I’m trying to do, that little follow-up notebook, because I think we need to have it to follow the student’s performance. For us to see. Because our head is flawed, we forget, if we leave it for later. So I think that’s it, we grow a lot with learning, with the experiences of others. (Eva)

I think that many times, when we listen to other people’s experience, read other people’s experience, we reevaluate ourselves as a teacher, or even a person. And when we do a case study, we often see a coincidence, a similarity in our students as well, and sometimes with a change of attitude from us. Listening to a case and seeing that the teacher acted that way, sometimes you having an attitude similar to what the teacher had, maybe helps with your student, it’s better, more effective. (Clarice)

The notes of Eva and Clarice about the contributions of the reflective movement clearly show a change of attitudes and the valorization of one’s own professional development, in view of the students’ learning.

Thus, the reflective and investigative process with the teaching cases should subsidize a deep reflection about the practices themselves as Clarice elucidates on the transposition between the reflections and the analysis of the professional trajectory, as well as provide new analyses and discussions in view of the possibility of reformulating theories and building new knowledge.

Shulman (2014) presents the process of pedagogical reasoning, which are articulated movements, activated and built during the teaching action, namely: understanding, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection, and new understandings. This movement is evident in the notes of the participants, since they carried out the movement of transposition and evaluation of the knowledge built during the reflections, re-elaborating the practices and developing new conceptions from the peer analyses.

Therefore, teachers need to understand that knowledge is not set and finished, the knowledge base is constantly changing and transforming, this occurs by the reflection on their own teaching, the experiences and practices of other professionals, the systematization and registration of processes. Shulman (2014, p. 212), in his study on the knowledge base of teachers referring to the knowledge of practice reiterates that, although the knowledge of teachers is vast, due to the insufficiency of moments destined for the propagation, dissemination, and collective re-elaboration, many possibilities of innovation are lost, and states: “educators simply know a lot that they have never even tried to articulate.” Therefore, there is a need to mobilize spaces and moments directed to the reflective training of teachers for reflection on practices, so that there is the movement reported by Clarice in the search for effective alternatives to student learning.

During the reflective process, the difficulties and mishaps encountered by the participants were discussed and analyzed, as well as the dilemma situations addressed in the teaching cases. Consequently, the feeling of greater security developed in the beginner literacy teachers, considering the challenges present in the latent professional insertion in the discourses.

So, for me it was really gratifying, because I came in like knowing 10% and the meetings are over and I know 60%, I know I'm going to have to learn a lot still, there's going to be new stuff, new technology, and a lot of new stuff. But the fact that I know that, for example, there will always be people coming in, there is something to share, and with whom to share, I think is very good. We are not a blank slate, we always bring something either as a professional or as a person. I think this attitude of sharing the fears, the successes, the mistakes. It was really good for me. (Clarice)

You will see the case, for example, like the case of the “Baptism of Fire,” you see that what she went through in the classroom we also go through, and that she managed to overcome it. We can also overcome, with research, with study. I also agree with the girls, I think that's the biggest contribution even, you see that you are also capable, you can also be always growing, always learning. (Tatiana)

To bring more security to us, in what we are also doing, to see what other people go through that we are exchanging, learning from each other, and we are still safer in doing, in practicing, putting our actions in favor of the students. (Lygia)

The teachers evidence the perception of the need for professional development and the importance of planned moments with a specific referral to the reflective process directed to teacher learning in view of the real training needs.

Corroborating with the perspective deepened by the teachers regarding the awareness about the need for constant development and evolution, Shulman (2014, p. 201) emphasizes about teachers in the beginning of the profession: “their evolution, from students to teachers, from learners to beginning teachers, exposes and illuminates the complex bodies of knowledge and skills necessary to function effectively as a teacher.”

In short, the movement of understanding the difficulties, the formative needs, and the professional development process experienced by the participants during the reflections, as well as the perception of the knowledge built throughout the meetings, reflects on the teaching learning process. This movement is related to the process of knowledge of the practice deepened in the studies of Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999), with critical reflection and analysis of practices, in search of the development of new knowledge, the re-elaboration of knowledge and the conception of new theories in the reflections and collective investigations with teaching cases as reflective devices in the process of professional development.

Final considerations

The results of this research corroborate what several studies point out, which highlight the possibilities of teaching cases as a reflective device of the practices and processes of teacher learning.

The perspective of the teachers on the formative path experienced by them reveals that the cases of teaching in teacher training contributed to the process of reflection on their own personal practices and theories, from moments of interaction between the participants in an environment of mutual support, being possible to explain doubts, ideas, suggestions and discuss them with the group in a critical way seeking new perspectives.

Although within the limits of a study that involved a small number of meetings, with teachers who were willing to participate in a training process even without the appropriate working conditions to do so, the data indicate that the collective analysis movement provided the formation of a reflective group, favoring the occurrence of increasingly in-depth reflection processes, since the group was immersed in the same goals.

The collective reflection around cases that brought out dilemmatic situations about the professional practices of the teachers aroused the search for new possibilities, paths, and perspectives discussed by the group, to then rethink the practices and re-elaborate the theories, intending to construct new professional knowledge and change the educational system.

Therefore, moments directed to teacher training are necessary, with systematized planning aiming at the reflective process in its broadest sense, which go beyond the issues of the classroom and contribute to developing professionals that are not only holders of knowledge and practices that promote student learning, but able to understand the meaning of their practices for the construction of a more just society.

In this perspective, reflection encompasses thinking collectively, observing the social and cultural context with the collaborative analysis of practices, in view of the professional development of teachers that occurs with the understanding between the theory underlying the practice and the creation and re-elaboration of theoretical conceptions.

In conclusion, the teaching cases proved to be a formative device with significant potential in the development of teachers, since they provided the participants with a movement of reflection on the practice and structuring of new professional knowledge among other aspects.

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