# TEACHER EDUCATION IN FACE OF VIOLENCE FROM/AT SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*The unveiling of violence from/at schools has led to the development of research on initial and continued teacher education. Some analyze the professional socialization of teachers and find issues such as the new faces of the "reality shock" by teachers. Thus, an investigation on the perceptions of teachers on types of violence and on their own preparedness for teaching has been conducted. The results, obtained by means of focus groups carried out with teachers, confirm the perception that they are not prepared to experience the practice of teaching, even if gradually. Among the proposals presented by participants, we should point out the construction of a more adequate gradient between theory and practice, the more practical nature of courses and the development of the capacity to find solutions without ready recipes.*

*TEACHER EDUCATION – VIOLENCE – SCHOOL – SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION*

The development of education sciences and the transformations in society and school systems have led to a marked concern with violence. It is not that it did not exist before but it was partly hidden. Today, its most visible face is that of serious physical attacks, including multiple murders, which are perpetrated by students on their colleagues and teachers. However, what is less noted is the violence by the school and teachers against students and in certain cases against parents and the community. This includes everything from whips on the desks of countless teachers in countries in sub-Saharan Africa, not for use but to "dissuade" student behavior, they say (Chupin, 2006), to the intricate processes of symbolic violence that lead to school failure (Dubet, Martuccelli, 1996). Similarly, students also practice symbolic physical violence and resort to impolite behavior between themselves and against school staff (Debarbieux, Blaya, 2002).

One of the key-points to understanding these facts and creating a culture of peace in schools is the initial and continuous preparation of the teacher. Will a teacher, in his thoughts and actions, in his theoretical comprehension and in his strategies, be able to face up to the violence? Will he also become conscious of the violence the school itself practices, which includes symbolic violence? As for future teachers on teacher training courses what are their opinions and expectations with regard to the courses that are preparing them?

Since the teacher is a strategic school leader, a decision-taker in the classroom, it is important that he has the capability of acting when faced with violence. He should be able to act not with recipes and resources that have been learned from trial and error, but with a scientific understanding of the facts in order to be able to intervene and effectively lead the educational process. In contrast, Brazilian (Pereira, 1963) and international literature reveals the transitional shock of the teacher who leaves the institution where he has been trained for classroom practice. It is possible that this shock has become greater as a result of the new working conditions of teachers and the physical and psychological wear and tear of the profession. It is not known to what extent the curricula and preparation programs meet the needs of staff or whether continuous education fills the gaps. So it is relevant to investigate the institution that trains the teacher; what has been done, what lessons have been learned and what needs require consideration.

**OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH**

The aim of this research was to identify the needs expressed by student teachers in the Catholic University of Brasília with regard to their initial training, given the violence in schools and the need to construct a culture of peace. So one of the proposals of the work was to listen to the participants and encourage debate about their initial formation when they were trainees, regardless of whether they had had any prior teaching experience. In addition to talking about their needs, the research subjects were invited to present and discuss proposals from their own experiences about what initial training that would be suitable to the circumstances should be like. This is a way in which the University also carries out a self-assessment. The results should obey the "naturalistic generalization"[1]. They play an intrinsic part in the reality of the institution because of its peculiarities and those of its immediate social context. Another part transcends its reality to the extent that the University follows legislation and policies that are common to all higher education teacher training institutions.

## TEACHERS AND VIOLENCE

Literature is full of important reflections and research into the role of the teacher given school violence both in Brazil as well as in other countries. In addition to the changes in inclusive society the school has been transformed into a compulsory institution for the masses, at least up to a certain level. To enroll in a school used once to be a concrete hope of a better future and at the same time a privilege almost exclusively reserved for the elite. Today, to be the student is at the same time both a constitutional and legal right and duty. It does not matter if the pupil or the family wants to enroll, because it is obligatory, and not just by law. There is also a social need to be educated in order not to be excluded or to aggravate one's social exclusion: the more education one has the more education is necessary and the more time is needed for remaining in school, in a process that keeps growing. So these phenomena resulted from the confusion surrounding the agreements between the different levels of the educational system and the public they were socially destined to accept (Barrère and Sembel, 2002). Because of this it should be no surprise that violence has become a new problem in both dimension and manifestation (Chrispino, Chrispino, 2002).

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[1] Naturalistic generalization is similar to a mirror: to the extent that my case is reflected in and identifies with the case presented in the research report I can prudently apply and adapt its conclusions to my case, never forgetting that the reflected image may be distorted.

Seminal research back in the 1960s dealt with changes in the indiscipline in secondary schools in France that were rapidly becoming democratized. Testanière (1967) differentiated traditional indiscipline from anomic indiscipline. The first occurred in bourgeois schools where pupils adhered to the teaching order. The function of the indiscipline was to express and reinforce the integration of students to groups of colleagues. It was a type of regulated transgression, which was necessary for the traditional teaching system to function well, seeing that it alleviated tension. Anomic indiscipline occurred in schools whose pupils came from a low social and economic background and whose main objective was not to take advantage of the education but to get a diploma, seen as a means of upward social mobility. This type of indiscipline sprang up when more than a third of the students enrolled in the school came from the working class. The indiscipline had no prior plan, leaders or respect for rules; it just had "popular" students.

One of the major issues is that it is not possible to carry out the educational process and learning without a minimum of order in the classroom and the educational establishment. This order, which is imposed by the traditional and relatively homogenous school, no longer functions. It is therefore necessary that the whole educational community shares common definitions of conflict situations and agrees on a minimal system of norms for social coexistence, which is a difficult mission (Gomes, 2005).

The traditional and amonic types of indiscipline correspond to variations in the process of subjectivizing students from different social classes, in accordance with the research of Dubet (2002, 2003) and Dubet, Martuccelli (1996). Generally speaking, regardless of their socio-economic status the protagonism of the young people has grown, above all since the post-war period. This has contributed to adolescent and juvenile cultures that become strong in opposition to school culture and the various types of family arrangement.

Under these new circumstances socialization stopped being seen as a process in which one generation transmits to another its social and cultural heritage, like the athlete that passes on the Olympic torch. Socialization became the construction of the individual experience (subjectification) of the students, interacting both with the school culture as well as with adolescent/youth cultures. Socially favored students, who are closer to the school culture, are capable of integrating with juvenile cultures and present limited challenges to school order. In contrast less privileged students, who are more divorced from the school culture, face

problems of failure and a lack of meaning of the curriculum, which leads them into open conflict with school order.

So it is no wonder that countless teachers detest their students and suffer from burnout[2] and that students reject colleagues that are aggressive towards them and disturb the school atmosphere, which compromises learning (Abramovay, Rua, 2002). Quite often the school becomes a splintered group, in which some cannot bear the others and in which curricula and regulations make little sense, as a result of which educational opportunities for "learning to coexist" are abandoned. Such school life conditions largely translate into student lack of interest, a systematic lack of respect from the pupils for the teachers and employees who have lost a large part of their authority. The latter is frequently 'carved out' in the old way; students are indifferent to the presence of the teacher in the classroom, as if he were an inanimate object and the classroom is a scenario of aggression against the teacher, as Abramovay et al. (2006) discovered.

It is interesting to emphasize in this research that students mainly threatened teachers because they had been failed or been given poor marks, which results are related not only to the dangerous decline in the concept of merit but also to the role of the school as a place that produces social exclusion, thereby manifesting a symbolic and institutional violence that is more veiled than physical.

In such social contexts the teacher and others involved with education tend to be both cruel and victims. As Soeiro (2003) remembers, there is not only violence in schools, but also violence by the school and violence towards the school, which makes the latter both the victim and at the same the perpetrator of violence. Barroso (2003) points out that the relation between discipline and learning has its genesis in public school teaching organization. Since both discipline and indiscipline are equally violent, violence is therefore at the root of school organization. However, at least one piece of empirical research provides evidence that the concept of teacher violence emphasizes the physical type rather than the symbolic type and that the legitimacy of practicing certain acts is biased in favor of the teachers themselves (Oliveira, Gomes, 2004).

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[2] The burnout syndrome, which was identified in the 1970s, is characterized by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduction in personal reality.

In short, the world and society have changed around the school. Students take part in various social circles, with often conflicting cultures that confront each other both inside and outside the school institution, which reinforces its character as an arena or as overlapping arenas. Pupil participation depends on negotiation, while the authority with which the teacher was invested is traditionally no longer respected. In other words, new societies require new schools and new teachers.

## THE TEACHER AND THE REALITY SHOCK

Classic writers like Lortie (2002) point out specific aspects of the teaching profession and teacher socialization in his initial training and in his work. To a certain extent occupations model people and develop their own cultures, like that of the doctor, lawyer, engineer, etc. But preparation for the teaching profession, as it is known, is recent and has weak connections with the currents of intellectual development in modern society. What students learn is largely intuitive and imitative, instead of explicit and analytical. Like an art, they tend to learn it in practice and in isolation, confined to classrooms, whose doors once closed reduce the visibility of the teacher and communication with colleagues.

Unlike surgeons, once teachers have qualified they immediately start having full responsibility for the classroom: they either swim or they sink. Furthermore, the start of their career is characterized by the "reality shock", an old situation that is well-known in literature, and by a probation period which they experience in relative isolation and which contributes to their conservatism. It is not surprising that gradates consider teacher training courses as very theoretical, comprising repetitive and boring courses that have scant intellectual content. They say that they create transcendental expectations in students without providing them with the means of achieving them. There is a lack, therefore, of a suitable theoretical and practical basis, unlike in various other professions (Lortie, 2002).

As Foracchi (1960) dealt with decades ago, this is the difficult process of socialization that is experienced right from the initial training period until becoming a fully-fledged member of the teaching staff. It is worth remembering that teachers are the target not only of student violence, but also from their colleagues. Behind the pact of silence there is evidence that teacher groups steamroller over those who distance themselves from the prescribed

conduct - among whom are the innovators and "novices", - and resort to various types of violence, such as moral harassment and persecution (Blaya, 2006).

In Brazil, as in other countries, this shock is aggravated by teachers starting out being given the most "difficult" student groups (Freitas, 2002). Competition between teachers, which is regulated by career plans and other documents, leads those who have more experience to teach more privileged pupils. Students who "are unable to learn", whose failure is attributed to social and family origins, are assigned to teachers who are just beginning, thus confirming the old saying: the chain always breaks at its weakest link.

The gap between the profession as it is imagined and what it really is has led to changes in the initial training of teachers. Among the various experiments, comparative research indicated that in England, student teachers do a type of sandwich course, with 80% of their time spent in school in various experiences and having the support of the best teachers and the rest of the time at university. It is true that among its limitations Young (1999) indicated the lack of a broad overview of the curriculum and of how it integrates and the separation of the learning perspective from the development of specific skills.

In contrast France has training centered on higher education institutions, which despite the obstacles has introduced workshops and role-play, which even deal with violence in schools. In England the schools tend to be comprised of more stable teams of teachers, with support from colleagues and supervisors for those who are just beginning their careers. In France, on the other hand, classroom isolation and the solitude of new teachers are significantly greater (Blaya, 2003), which leads to intense self-socialization in the first year of work (Duru-Bellat; Van Zanten, 2006).

In the Netherlands a teacher training program was assessed with students being monitored from the time they enrolled until their third year in the profession. This program comprises increasingly lengthy traineeships that are a mixture of theory and practice. Experiences are discussed in small groups and plenary sessions. Each university supervisor monitors between three and five student trios, who are visited at least twice a week, and often more. The process culminates with a traineeship of 13 hours a week for 6 months, supervised by a mentor teacher from the school, who does not get involved with teaching activities.

Supervisors and mentors work in such a way that introduction to the profession is carried out on a step by step basis. The results show that despite all this those leaving still feel a certain degree of discontinuity between the institution where they were trained and school

reality. Even so, the conclusions reinforce previous research about the importance of integrating approaches when training teachers, which even strengthen the innovative capacity of new teachers. The work indicates that training can really make a difference when compared to the type of skills developed in the university course.

This difference is achieved by: 1. a gradually increasing the complexity of activities; 2. cooperation between trios, mentors and supervisors; 3. alternating between periods as a trainee and at university, in order to form a coherent whole; 4. a non-mechanical relationship between theory and practice through a complex integration between the two; and 5. constructing a gentle lead-in to the start of professional life.

However it is handled, the socialization of the teacher in his occupation is still very important, to the point that those who work in socially deprived areas are unable to re-socialize themselves for work in other areas, given their expectations, methodology and ways of maintaining order in the classroom (Duru-Bellat, Van Zanten, 2006). The socializing process, which starts with critical incidents, leads the teacher to construct his own personalization of the professional role in a subjective way. This is when different types of teachers appear, who may be more or less effective, with leadership and charisma being of utmost relevance (Felouzis, 2000).

As far as concerns violence in schools, the teacher feels unprepared, which increases his tension and ruins his health. Whether because of time in the career, or the gaps in their initial training, when it is a question of programs for overcoming school violence, teachers are the preferential target for continuous training. This is reported in experiments in Spain (Ortega, Rey, 2002; Ortega, 2002), Belgium (Blomart, 2002), Greece (Artinopolou, 2002) and other countries, including in Latin America (Filmus et al., 2003). These programs, the focus of which is either individual or various establishments, try and form integrated school groups, whose members do not act in isolation.

Among their objectives such programs frequently try to improve the teacher-student relationship, establish fair and coherent discipline, help manage conflict and create a climate that is favorable to the educational process, to learning and therefore to school success, with minimization of attrition for all those groups that are necessary when it comes to constituting an educational community.

There is, however, a gulf between what research offers about violence in schools and aggressive behavior and what reaches the teachers through their initial and ongoing training.

Royer (2003a), a teacher training researcher, confesses his perplexity with the distance that exists between research and practice; it is as if we were still in the time when Galileo was condemned. In contrast with reactivity in the face of violence, punitive measures and a technological arsenal for watching over and punishing, literature indicates that exemplary methods for preventing violence are based on a set of values that are shared by teachers and parents.

This is why intervention needs a reference model that is capable of explaining, predicting and understanding violence, a model that extends beyond the school and that involves the community and youth services. Rules need to be clearly defined and when they are associated with positive expectations and with a focus on reinforcing the school performance of every student they become the key elements when teaching pupils with behavior problems. The punishment approach, the improvised application of sanctions in the heat of the moment, based on common sense, tends to increase violence, which often slides into authoritarianism. There is equally no sense in blaming families and society.

Royer (2002, 2003) advocates a hands-on approach to teacher training in such a way that practice learns from research and proactivity substitutes reactivity. He therefore highlights a set of essential elements that need to be included in any strategy for developing teacher knowledge and skills, the aim being to avoid and deal with violence. He recommends nine points:

1. provide teachers with the skills for dealing with school violence, including measures that ensure they have the knowledge of how violence develops in young people;
2. ensure that the school is capable of contributing to preventing the development of aggressive behavior;
3. defend an active (not reactive) approach when dealing with violence; in other words, anticipate violence rather than taking steps after it happens, by using an educational rather than a punitive approach;
4. encourage the development of the capacity to formulate tailor-made intervention whenever necessary;
5. encourage continuous training, knowing that experience in itself is not enough for avoiding or dealing with violence;

6. ensure that knowledge based on the conclusions of recent research are passed on to teachers and included in their activities, along with the exemplary practices corroborated by these studies;

7. give priority to the development of a constructive approach in forming partnerships with parents;

8. recognize that prevention and dealing with violence are a mission for the whole school team, from the perspective of collaborating with the services offered by the community;

9. create an assessment mechanism that allows new problems, which teachers may have to face and which, in varying degrees, are related to violence, to be dealt with.

The distance between these nine points and the programs aimed at training teachers allows for an understanding of why teachers consider that their preparation is divorced from practice and that courses are over-theoretical. According to Royer (2003) several pieces of research have revealed how interested teachers are in continuous training that offers activities that are centered on their needs, that come from real school life and that develop in them capabilities that are applicable to their professional practice. In this sense, investigations have pointed to the success of teacher training programs introduced directly within the school environment and that are accompanied by corresponding monitoring. Equally, the success of a mutual help model between the teachers of teenage students who have adaptation problems was also noted. A 75 minute weekly meeting allowed teachers to ask advice from their colleagues and to formulate the intervention to be applied. In the next meeting the experience was reported on and assessed.

Castro Santander (2005) highlighted the need for the initial and continuous training to enable the teacher to perform his different activities, among which are the creation of a positive school atmosphere and new curricular approximation strategies that involve education in pro-social values and attitudes and the development of self-control and conflict-resolution strategies. In other words, education cannot just push to one side two of the four known pillars: learning to coexist and learning to be (Delors et al., 2000), thereby reducing the cognitive processes to those based on the transmission of content.

Literature focuses on the importance of teachers, emphasizing their preparation for a society and a school that are continually changing. It therefore urges that the initial training should include those elements that are necessary (albeit not sufficient for defeating violence) to avoid continuous training being a patch applied to the initial training. This preparation, according to the first legal principle of teacher-training in Brazilian legislation, must be carried out under the protection of an intertwining of theory and practice.

In short, literature indicates that on the one hand society and students are changing; all school work, the authority of teachers and the social relationship need to be redefined - there is no way of continuing with the old ways – and on the other hand, school organization and teacher training are the same, as are the inherent anxiety and, above all, the reality shock. If educational research is very much more developed today, its presence in the curricula is fading or is partly omitted and is failing to be associated with practice. The art of the teaching profession continues being practiced in isolation in the classroom, in a search for greater previous practice. Society and schools are not out of step in a linear way; it is not like a corridor where teachers seek to reduce the distance between themselves and their colleague ahead. This is not a single gap, but one that involves various complex relations and has several faces.

## METHODOLOGY

In this first stage of the research data was collected in accordance with a previously established discussion routine from six focus groups, made up of undergraduates in their last two terms at the Catholic University of Brasília, and comprising between ten and twelve participants, most whom had had teaching experience. All but one of the courses were represented. What was said was recorded, decodified and categorized. The work, which was systematically monitored by the researchers, was largely carried out by those doing a Masters degree in education at the same university, as part of their training. They had had a grounding in the literature on the theme and had taken part in constructing the project and the research instrument used.

## RESULTS

### First contact with violence

Almost all the subjects had had their first contact with violence. Several of them had chosen schools on the outskirts of towns on purpose, and not "model-schools", in order to get to know the reality. Some cases soon cropped up, like a pupil who had tried to throw a stone at the head of the teacher and who had also been dealt with violently by a security guard in the heat of the moment. In another school a game of soccer between students seemed more like a boxing match, because "they kicked everything and everybody, except the ball". What also emerged was the association between schools in socially underprivileged environments and violence. On the other hand, private schools, when they were well organized and with students being given greater attention and dealt with more strictly, were considered relatively peaceful, although violence was also recorded as having occurred there, because "the student pays the school", in other words, they supposedly behave like consumers.

Between these two extremes are the state schools, even in low income areas, where there were no "problems". This fact was associated with "well structured" establishments, even as far as concerns the resources available. As far as the study period is concerned, different opinions were expressed, with some teachers considering students in the daytime study period as being the most interested and some considering them uninterested and restless. In nighttime study periods there were two separate realities: on the one hand there are the adults who need education and who concentrate, and on the other, young people who are involved with crime and drug trafficking in gang areas. Opinions were often age-dependent, although most said that violent acts were more frequent in the final years of elementary education, a fact which is corroborated by other research (Abramovay, Rua, 2002).

With regard to types of violence participants differentiated between physical and symbolic violence, as well as violence by the school and in the school, the latter being more likely than the former. Types of disrespect were not outlined (Debarbieux, 2007). Harassment or bullying was seen in "swearing" and the use of nicknames, often under the guise of "joking". Equally, the school hierarchy, the power of the teacher, the distance of the directors from the school, the use of threats or ridiculing students in front of their class-mates were not only detected but were considered more abject than student violence.

Several undergraduates, who were concentrating more on teacher training, like those from the Education course, were shocked with the facts and adopted positive attitudes, by trying to put themselves in the place of the students whose parents were often involved with crime or in prison. As a result, actions were seen like telling students the rules of soccer, the

participative reading of history books and even a collective wetting with a hosepipe, where everyone discovered they could have fun without aggression. The next day a boy drew the scenes and wrote: "We was all playing togever [sic]".

Symbolic violence, and in particular, violence by the school, was less obvious. The research subjects did not get into details about cultural capital, but observed not only the above violence, but also omission on the part of the teachers. One of the most cutting observations was with regard to a public school where recess time was a no-man's land: "Recess time was the time to steal and punch others [...], it was horrible... I never saw a teacher... When something happened the student would go to the teachers' room and the teacher would say: 'This is my time; I'm not a teacher now'" (Biology undergraduate).

The reasons for violence, which are strategic points when it comes to acting as teachers (Royer, 2002), were widely discussed. Corroborating the above opinions about the location of those schools that were more or less peaceful, violence was seen as a reflection of the families and the neighborhoods in which they live. If the children in their socialization process see or take part in violent acts in their families or neighborhoods they learn that such underlying values are "normal" and legitimate. They see they need to defend themselves at any cost and therefore they form themselves into different types of group, among which are gangs.

Privation, poverty, social exclusion and violence, therefore, were intimately associated, as were the areas where they are concentrated. Another reason highlighted was that of the colleague groups, which to a certain extant has a relation with self-defense in hostile environments (the individual cannot survive alone in competitive and conflict-ridden peer-group environments). Despite having values that are contrary to those of their families, teenagers and young people often met up in groups and constructed patterns of anti-social conduct, where they became involved with crime, including the use and traffic of drugs and practicing it close to and in the school. Those who do not accept the codes are out, alone and vulnerable to attack. In this sense various individuals emphasized that the influence of their colleagues leads them in other directions that are different from school and family education, and which requires knowing the dynamic of peer groups (Gomes, 2005). In any event, this applies above all to less privileged areas, with their lack of job opportunities and work.

The third reason mentioned was the violence of the school itself, with its uninterested, offensive and arrogant teachers who cause revolt in any social environment, but particularly

where people have nothing to eat and violence spreads. The school is a reflection of a violent, capitalist society and therefore a passive object. It is noted that extra-school factors occupied a notable position in the description, in detriment to intra-school factors, which participants relegated to a secondary position. It seems that there is already a tendency to blame the student for his social origin and other reasons and to absolve school (Mello, 1982) and self, as teacher, for the failure. Is this how the first results of professional socialization begin to appear?

**The reality shock**

Despite having visited and worked in schools already in the first half of their undergraduate studies, the reality shock for student teachers began in the training period. They talk of a "fright", of "trembling", of a "sinking feeling in the belly", of "my God, what am I doing here?", of not knowing how they would behave in front a class, especially in schools in less privileged areas. The persistence of the gap between the teacher preparation and practice is confirmed. Although literature recorded the fact several decades ago, particularly as far as concerns normal education, in general lines it still persists in undergraduate teacher education. In other words, the teacher training level has been raised but the problem has remained. Just as in other times the lack of preparation has been attributed to the initial training. Even a graduate with previous teaching experience was surprised and unprepared when doing a stint as a trainee teacher in a school with the severe problems of violence. It was a scenario that was different from that that with which he was accustomed in almost every way.

With the idea of minimizing the problems of students, preparation was still directed at working in an ideal school, where all resources function: "We're trained to give lessons in a pretty little school, all smelling of roses..." (Education undergraduate)

The phrase repeated by those taking part in the research was that they had not been trained to act, but also that it is very difficult to prepare yourself away from the action. In their anxiety they were unable to perceive that preparation is a continuous process. They noticed the distance between the characteristics of the teacher training institution and the schools where the teacher has to work. Although countless research shows that the training of teachers at university level is positively related to student performance (Gomes, 2005), one graduate stated: "It's very difficult for an academic environment to manage... to make the professional ready." (Chemistry undergraduate).

One of the discoveries of the trainees, who were still not very committed to the school, was the loss of a sense of education by teachers, who in their indifference relied on the content and preparation for university entrance exams, which was a shock to their university idealism. Students insisted on the need for mew methodologies which make clear the whys and wherefores of learning physics, for example, as one of the curricular components, so that students can be successful. This is in opposition to "contentitis" and a call for change in the school given the crossover of cultures that occurs in the 'subjectification' of the teenager (Dubet, 2002, 2003). Later, this same focus group, like others from other university teacher training courses, with just small differences of nuance, revealed the same concern when faced with their own selves, young people, who are studying teacher training subjects: they are not told what they are for and they do not understand how they are applied.

To aggravate the ordeal of the trainees several schools denied them information, insulted them and sought to distort the trainee program, trying to offer them tasks of lesser relevance, instead of complying with technical tasks. If establishments form a protective barrier around themselves they comply with their duties ritually and bureaucratically, and distance themselves from families and the community. It is not to be surprised, therefore, that they also erect barriers to university students, with their dangerous and critical eyes, who are sociological outsiders (Simmel, 1926).

**Teacher training in the words of those being trained**

The range of opinions varied from participants who said they had no theoretical or practical tools when they ended the course to those who considered themselves equipped to act in the teaching profession, without ready-made recipes, because reality is unforeseeable. Among the former are the mathematical science undergraduates, while teachers predominated at the other extreme. Most noted a lack of practice, given that the traineeships were left to the end, field activities throughout the course were not sufficient and preparation became far too theoretical – reactions that were identical to those of the teachers studied by Lortie (2002) at another time and different social context.

The lack of relationship between research and practice was an acute problem in the opinion of the majority. "Universities turn out Utopian teachers", one of them symbolically said. The same lack of practice was held responsible for the lack of attention to subjects dealing with the fundamentals of education, to which many woke up too late to perceive their

usefulness. On the other hand former normal education students considered that their previous experiences had facilitated their performance on the courses. As self-criticism mathematics students highlighted the "over-concern with content, learning formulae by heart etc.", when, in reality, education involves communication between human beings.

Some said that they "did not much like" their teacher training experience, which refers back to the 'hierarchization' of knowledge, in accordance with the old sociology of the curriculum (Young, 1971). The curriculum is a competitive environment in which knowledge is 'hierarchized' according to how much it is valued and in accordance with the criteria of the groups that hold the power, especially within the school system. Therefore, teacher training aimed above all at children and teenagers – vulnerable groups in society – tends to be less valued than the content of the so-called "hard" sciences. This priority depends either explicitly or implicitly on the teacher profile desired.

An example of how a teacher should be prepared came from a police officer who was taking a Physics course, and who introduced his classroom colleagues with his experiences about what to do in different situations, based on the law. The work was vividly remembered because of its usefulness, including why the subjects did not refer directly to violence in schools. This same undergraduate and police officer declared that the lack of preparation in the security area is large, including for practicing teachers. "If there's a fire the teacher doesn't know how to evacuate the classroom." In this sense he pointed out that security issues are better dealt with in the school itself and not in the university, because they take into account the local reality.

Corroborating the literature, it is as if higher education were an island that is precariously linked to the mainland by a bridge. If it is difficult to go beyond the island's boundaries it is even more difficult to step onto the mainland, because the undergraduate intends entering a world that does not yet belong to him. As a result he complains he has no practice, but this creates a vicious circle, because neither does the path to practice open up easily. It is worth considering that teacher training has sought the growing participation of the undergraduate in the supervised trainee program instead of putting teacher training together with content. This is the way the national curricular directives and, coherently, the teaching projects of the courses are adopted. Despite this, trainee teachers say that they should be plunged into reality earlier, more gradually and in more depth.

According to some individuals the teacher training experience was disappointing because it did not correspond to their expectations:

> I get the impression we don't have the tools, the theory or the practice to face up to situations of violence. I did a course a little while ago in the institution [...] which I attend, which was a conflict mediation course for a culture of peace. They had a whole theory and there was even a role-play exercise we did for dealing with situations of extreme violence. We're totally unprepared because the tendency is to get carried away by the situation, become angry and then everything's 'lost, there's no use trying any more, is there? (Arts undergraduate)

What was said also referred to the need to offer continuous training to "fill in the gaps" left by the initial training or to acquire capabilities for which the undergraduate was not prepared or aware of. On the other hand reference is made to a phenomenon reiterated by various individuals, which is reacting to pupil violence with even more violence, instead of preventing it. It is as if this was part of the authority and not a desperate attempt to maintain precarious hierarchical relations. Theories exist but do not seem to communicate with the practice, while the latter apparently does not refer back to the theories.

At the other extreme are the enthusiastic words of Education undergraduates. Some comments reveal female students that have taken another intellectual path, who are inspired to a certain extent by a missionary idealism (Pereira, 1967) and who, with professional socialization and to a greater or lesser degree, perhaps fit into the molds of bureaucracy better. One student made clear the relationship between thought and feeling by means of inspiration: "We studied a book [...] which was a milestone for me, because it helped me understand what it means to be a teacher, and why to be a teacher. That's something that affects me even today". (Education undergraduate)

It was also emphasized that practice had the effect of encouraging students and therefore was a significant element for identifying with the teaching profession. Furthermore, the value of the courses for life were underlined, as a way of maturing intellectually and emotionally through developing the capacity to deal with complex relationship situations.

Things become more animated when talk is of alternatives and new perceptions. Despite the criticism of the gap between theory and practice, participants noted that university teaching degrees today are more concerned with the complex teacher-student dialogue. Because of this they highlighted that there are not recipes for every situation. In other words,

there is a need for more practice, but at the same time there is recognition that the preparation provided by university teaching degrees cannot be fixed given the changing reality. In other words, in order to respond to the complexity of the real world, there needs to be both flexibility and debate in the practice.

Out of this emerged suggestions such as the offer and obligation of having a discipline dealing with school violence (which occurs in the university), particularly by the Psychology of Education area, and the creation of a laboratory for simulating classroom situations. In fact, a Professional Curricular Initiation Program was set up within the Chemistry degree when the data was being collected for this research. This is a series of diversified activities for introducing the future teacher to teaching practice, which depend mainly on the capacity of the students for making proposals.

Another suggestion from those who were surveyed was equally significant: to overcome the pessimistic view of Brazilian education - the conviction that nothing goes right in it. If the teacher plays an active role it is the responsibility of each one and of each undergraduate to contribute to reversing this state of affairs. It is a case of questioning if at least a part of the university teaching body has not slipped from realism to pessimism and used debatable versions of some theories.

In dealing with "ideal undergraduate teacher training" they emphasized some points that need reflecting upon: integrating curricula more; intensifying the interchange between teachers; constructing a gentle lead-in from theories to practice, instead of a steep ladder; beginning the end of course essay earlier; offering more cultural options for students who study at night; providing a greater incentive for producing and publicizing pieces of research. How can teachers be trained to work with integrated curricula or those based on transversal problems and themes if undergraduate courses have compartmentalized albeit compatible disciplines? Remembering Beeby (1967), one of the biggest factors of conservatism in the teaching profession is in the examples of the teachers of teachers. Is it necessary to innovate? It is up to teachers of higher education to start with their own example.

**Which things work well and which don't?**

The criticisms and proposals of the individuals surveyed are 'caps' that adjust to fit the particular university surveyed, but because of what they have in common with so many others

they fit countless other 'heads'. As the institution is not afraid of holding up a mirror to itself, its self-assessment reveals valuable perceptions and proposals.

In summarizing opinions, what the students defined as most negative in theory in teacher training was: teachers applied fixed recipes for diversified and complex problems; there was an emphasis on theories dissociated from practice, in other words, generalist study without highlighting what can be extracted from the research to put into practice. Inversely, as for what goes well two points were most emphasized: a constant intermingling of theory and practice; experiences for understanding theories in the light of practice (Royer, 2002, 2003).

The results of an assessment carried out by a focus group on the optional discipline about violence in schools offered with guidance from the Observatory of Violence in Schools (Brazil) are enlightening. What most stood out were: it related theories and practice; it did not give recipes, it taught how to look for solutions; it prepared people for anticipating and resolving problems instead of reacting to them, thus avoiding confrontation with the pupils; it encouraged undergraduates to visit schools, to apply research techniques and return to the classroom to present and discuss the results; it contributed to avoiding trivializing violence through teacher inactivity and omission; it revealed that social and ethnic prejudices are also violence, and even practiced by schools; and it showed that to be a teacher a more humanistic training program is necessary.

Two female students declared: "Today I consider myself much better prepared"; "We can see another world out there".

Apparently, despite good intentions in many cases the opposite of what Royer (2002, 2003, 2003a) recommended is practiced. It seems that in countless cases theory and practice live in different compartments, are only valued for themselves and do not make the connection to link them to experiences. An underused resource is role-playing and other activities, in addition to being constantly concerned with linking the 'what to do', the 'why to do it' and the 'how to do it'. Values are a basic reference point of education for overcoming violence and constructing culture and peace. Should curricula and programs be defined more in terms of content that is relevant to academia or to the problems to be faced?

**CONCLUSIONS**

By linking literature and the results of this research, which is divided between the perceptions and proposals of the undergraduates, various points of convergence, gaps and questions can be observed.

The participants made clear their concerns with the lack of continuity between the world of the training institution and of the school, which leads to a reality shock, as evidenced by the literature. Apparently, there is a lack of perception that university teacher courses offer the scientific fundamentals necessary for the role of teacher. One gap was the lack of a greater understanding of adolescence and youth, of their protagonism and their culture. A worrying tendency is the risk of fatalism in the face of the relationships established between social exclusion and school failure and violence. In addition to an attempt to deaden the sensations of impotence and professional incompetence, there is a tendency to blame the student, the family and the neighborhood.

Either the contribution of theory and research is not perceived or it is not offered on a solid basis that relates theory and practice. In this relationship between the island and the mainland ten years after the sanction of the Directives and Bases Law, training at the high school level for the teaching profession is being left behind, although it is valued for the fundamentals it has provided for various undergraduates.

Today, society has inserted itself in a more or less perverse and onerous way into the era of globalization, which requires raising the schooling level of teachers and the development of mass higher education, as already exists in the mass elementary school.

New problems emerge, as certain forms of violence are unveiled and others appear and multiply. However, the search continues to build bridges between the island and the mainland, between training institutions on the one hand and schools and society on the other.

The undergraduates surveyed asked for more: they want even greater contact with practice and they want the existing field work to start earlier and not just left to the final supervised traineeship stage. In other words, there is a need for a better constructed gradient between training and classroom practice, with the certainty however that there are no formulae or recipes. They manifested greater interest in learning how to fish rather than in receiving standardized fish.

The different alternatives for training teachers here presented deserve serious reflection because of the concrete results they bring. Reality is not a fact, it is a state. Because of this the duty is to contribute to altering the *status quo,* in other words, to raising the

qualitative level and not just the qualifications of the teachers. There is no point in stamping one's feet about the study and working conditions of students and teachers.

If teacher training courses are considered to be less important, that anyone can do: if they become trivial, if for the State and society it is simply enough to have teachers, whatever their capacity and ethics, then it is contradictory to denounce education based on the results of national and international assessments.

Such a denunciation becomes an effective farce; it is leaving it like it is to see what happens and therefore to maintain social stratification and privileges. Basic education or school vacancies are for everyone but it is not the same for everyone in terms of quality. Incompetent education is a wolf in sheep's clothing: it pretends to be all redeeming and that everybody has opportunities, but underneath it maintains the disparities and confirms social exclusion. As can be seen, Brazil needs to urgently modify its teacher training courses.

The most important thing is that, given the new circumstances, the individuals in the research proved to be restless and critical, but at the same time full of proposals. They made it clear that they are not comfortable with professional socialization. This is a good sign for the future that should be faced up to with the virtue of hope.

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