

Understanding and Self-understanding: the Brazilian educational field within an itinerary of readings from Pierre Bourdieu*¹

Denice Barbara Catani²
ORCID: 0000-0001-6019-8969

Abstract

The text renders explicit and analyses an appropriation modality of Pierre Bourdieu's thinking, as it indicates some fundamental points for studies on the educational area. It refers to the possibilities of understanding inscribed in his sociology regarding the elaboration of scientific knowledge and the field's determinants, *habitus* and capitals linked to subjects and their positions. It thus underlines the intimate connection between scientific knowledge and self-knowledge. Among its aims, the text seeks to be useful to young researchers as it shows the modalities of thinking "with Bourdieu" as I remake a case and bring attention to the problems of knowledge production in education, historically and socially. A personal itinerary of readings from the Bourdieu's oeuvre is built in the form of an essay and using it as a method, highlighting two perspectives that guided choices in different moments. One of them refers to the development of investigations in the history of Brazilian education and the other refers to the research, teaching and intervention work involved in teachers' training. Given the nature of writing and the conviction that several modes of production around educational studies are possible and desirable, no conclusions are made explicit, but, instead, I propose a multiplicity of questions that unfold from the construction of ideas and from the thinking trajectories undertaken.

Keywords

Pierre Bourdieu – Educational field – Itinerary of reading – History of education – Teachers' training.

* English version by Gavin Adams. The authors take full responsibility for the translation of the text, including titles of books/articles and the quotations originally published in Portuguese.

1- Many thanks to Patrícia Aparecida do Amparo for the readings and tasks.

2- Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil. Contact: dbcat@usp.br



<https://doi.org/10.1590/S1678-4634202248254836eng>
This content is licensed under a Creative Commons attribution-type BY-NC.

[...] one knows the world better as one knows oneself better, that scientific knowledge and the knowledge of oneself and of one's own social unconscious advance head-to-head and that the first experience transformed in and by scientific practice transforms scientific practice and vice-versa.

Jacques Bouveresse³

Pierre Bourdieu gave his students at Lille [...] not a dissertation subject to be worked on but a work of reflexivity to carry out: he asked each one of us to attempt a sociology of oneself [...]. Such encouragement to make one's own sociology, in the first person so to speak, more than following the sociology course, was not just the application of active pedagogy, it was the expression of an epistemological conviction: this is the price

to render sociological knowledge possible

Marie-Anne Lescourret⁴

It is hard to affiliate the present text to a mere autobiographical essay after having read all of P. Bourdieu's considerations and restrictions to the genre. Hard to leave aside roots of such nature when, in great part, the ways of thinking grounded on this author and thus a path to production for investments in research made in the educational area is structured. Hard not to consider one of his dearest principles, so often restated, of affirming the meaning of producing knowledge that unveils the unthought in our own convictions, ideas and actions. The transcription of the initial excerpts alludes to the motivations that shape the reflections presented here. I elaborate an essay that seeks to build a personal itinerary of appropriation of the sociologist's work and in it structure a chronology of readings. In this itinerary I sought to place the comprehension movements of the educational field and sought their references for the building of interpretations about history, or, better said, about a socio-history of Brazilian education (CATANI, 2003), about a hypothesis of comparative studies within the same area (CATANI, 2000) and about alternatives for teachers' training able to promote a culture of attention to the world and to its care (CATANI, 2010). These three perspectives guided my research work. Here I will write only of the first and third perspectives, though comparative studies have also found supporting elements in Bourdieu. Thus I seek to bear witness to one of the appropriation modalities of Bourdieu thought and work in the educational area. It is impossible to return to all the readings undertaken and indeed I do not mention important aspects of the itinerary and of its detours, or other texts that have also been relevant to this trajectory. I am able to tell how the readings from Bourdieu's work have interacted between themselves and with my own lived library (in Goulemot's sense) in the several moments I refer to. I summon Goulemot (2009) because of the idea he enunciates, according to which every reading is comparative, as it involves contact with other books that compose our lived, physical and inner libraries. For the reasons mentioned, as well as for the nature of the proposition I make, this essay does not aspire to be complete and exhaustive or to amount to a demonstration. Surely there is, in my reflections, a way of dealing with the times lived by me, with the discoveries and confrontation of educational field issues and with the appropriations of P. Bourdieu's elaborations that do not allow for a kind of revisiting or describing that fully respects chronological ordinations. I nevertheless rehearse a few

3- Excerpt from *Bourdieu, savant & politique*, by Jacques Bouveresse (2003, p. 165).

4- Statement by Ph. Fritsch recorded by Marie-Anne Lescourret (2008, p. 167) in *Bourdieu: vers une économie du Bonheur*.

landmarks. Times overlap, the perception of the issues gains successive outlines and the readings that offer strong explanatory support, in some cases, were not simultaneous to the research moments of the development of interventions, but in such cases they have guided, if later, their redefinitions. Comings and goings were necessary⁵.

The horizon towards which the questions I make tend regard the understanding of educational work and the production of knowledge about, for and within this activity. And it regards a strong conviction: the possibility conditions and the logical and disciplinary support of such knowledge in their social and historical dimensions are fundamental for all who teach in institutions and schools, and not only for those who produce them. It is never idle to insist on this, because I believe that it is possible to summon from the comprehension of our reality, from the knowledges involved in our jobs and in the modes of their production, the power to transform such knowledges aiming at greater justice and better life conditions for all who depend on the school. May this itinerary of readings allow us, as they show fulcral points in Bourdieu's thought, read in search of a fairer interpretation in the dangerous times we live today, to remake questions that help us widen paths: what can schools do and what can teachers do today? What can we, who research, write and speak about such problems? Up to what point the potency of our thought will also be in danger?

**

*

1970 – In the city of São Paulo, in the extreme opposite of the University of São Paulo's EACH campus, lies the peripheral East Side neighbourhood where I live, the two points being 28 kilometres apart. Why do I start saying this? In order to account for the physical distance that demanded a slow progress on two buses of uncertain schedule and long itineraries – the trips are long in order to have more people boarding, or instance, dwellers in the peripheries heading for the distant *Hospital das Clínicas*. And to allude to a social distance that I would come to understand better as years went by. The situation was very similar to the one described in *Heirs: students and culture*:

The experience of a schooling future cannot be the same for the son of a high executive who, having more than one chance in two of reaching university, necessarily finds high studies around his person and even within his family as a banal and quotidian fate, but, the son of a worker who, having less than two chances in a hundred to reach as far, only knows studies and students through interposed people or means. (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014b, p. 17).

This observation is dated of 1964 and refers to France. My own admission to the University of São Paulo (USP) took place in 1970, year when the Law no. 5,540, of 1968 (the so-called university reform) was passed, a law that theoretically widened access to higher education for students from the popular classes. I will not dwell on facts around the admission of this “new population” to university, although our teachers then spoke a lot about the “level gap” between older students and those freshly arrived. And, during the

5 - Usei aqui as edições disponíveis no momento da pandemia. Faça em todos os casos referências às datas das publicações originais das obras.

dictatorship period, as we well know, meritocracy and “education as social ascension” was widely advertised. It is worth sharing a very explanatory realisation of such conditions as I quote the Census worker in charge of, back in the 1970’s, the collection of information in several of my neighbourhood’s blocks (IBGE – *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*). He told me that there was no other person attending university in my area. The statement did not resonate a lot on me at the time and surely strengthened in me an illusion of merit and natural aptitude.

A more cunning understanding of the meanings involved in the university reform and in the position taken by me would become increasingly sharper. But the uneasiness in face of the very “at ease” performances of some of my classmates was something that alerted me about my own attitudes in such ambiance. This type of uneasiness lingers on one and takes up new forms in other social situations. Shyness, insecurity and feeling inadequate. I recall Didier Eribon’s book, *Return to Reims* (dated of 2009 and translated into Portuguese in 2020), which resorts to Bourdieu’s (who the author knew) interpretations and rehearses his socio-analysis. He thus builds, more than memories, something like a testimonial by an intellectual originating from the popular classes, who confronts his exit from his original group and who seeks to understand the extension of the social implications of his trajectory and lived experiences. Along the same lines, Annie Ernaux’s novel, *The place [La Place]* (originally published in 1982 and translated into Portuguese in Brazil in 2021), which revolves around the figure of the father and that elaborated the analysis of her relationship with him, reconstituted the perception of their progressive growing apart as her schooling advanced and the distance between the habits, the ideas and the aspirations of both acquired almost incomensurable dimensions. Even recognising the distinction between an analysis such as Eribon’s, who can be seen more supported by sociology, and Ernaux’s, which, to a great extent, renders indiscernible the limits between her auto-fictions and the sociological interpretation she produces, both books show the possibilities of elaborating an understanding of oneself that unveils the unthought in the social determinations of our existences⁶.

It is obvious that I benefit from *A Self-Analysis Sketch* by P. Bourdieu (2005b). I will try not to yield to the risk of simply producing many causalities *a posteriori*, but I do not believe I can handle what truly interests me – the appropriation of the sociologist’s work and his presence in my own researches and teaching – without referring to what has

6- I would like to underline the idea of literature as a form of knowledge about the social, which was often present in my choices of bibliographical indications for teachers’ training. The impulse for such choice originated in the 1970’s in the Philosophy of Education classes with professor João Eduardo Rodrigues Villalobos – the teacher to whom Marilena Chaui attributes her initial interest and choice for philosophy, as stated in her statement to Cordeiro and Furtado (2019). In his classes Villalobos led us through the reading of the area’s classics, but has equally tried to make us familiar with the structuring of philosophical reflections grounded on literature, resorting to Herman Melville, as well as to Hermann Hesse, among others. Without ignoring the polemics around this choice, I came to understand it later in life and more significantly in the light of other texts, such as those by Jacques Bouveresse (2008), for instance, in *La connaissance de l’écrivain: sur la littérature, la vérité et la vie*. It is worth remembering that the very illuminating mediations around the possibility of approximations between sociology and literature can be found in *Réponses* (1992). In this opportunity, Bourdieu writes about what literature can offer to the human sciences, and, in particular, to sociologists regarding researches that are censored or interdicted by the scientific standards of its area and are to be found developed by literary works. He also writes about the issue of writing styles (in the way Flaubert has tackled the issue) and their relation with the attempts to preserve a fidelity to the temporalities of experiences lived and the logics of the legitimate scientific discourse. In this sense, it is worthy of attention the manner in which literature offers questions for sociology, especially regarding the theory of the report.

motivated me, induced or strengthened my interest in his writing. And such impulses have come, certainly, from my condition and life experience. I hold dear that I will be more successful if I do not make the “autobiographical mistakes” often highlighted by Bourdieu since, at least, *The Biographical Illusion* (written in 1986 and included in the Brazilian book *Razões práticas*, 1996b) – also rendered explicit in *Réponses* (1992) and certainly in *Sketches of Self-Analysis*, among others. I try not to engage in an exhaustive causality or a linear ordination in which the facts gain consistency as they are chained into an artificial sequence. Among the various definitions formulated by Bourdieu, I believe to be exemplary the one I have resorted to (CATANI, 1994), from *The Biographic Illusion*:

[...] Trying to understand a life as a unique series, in itself sufficient in successive events, without another link than the one linking to a “subject” whose only constancy is one’s own name, is almost as absurd as trying to explain an itinerary in the metro without taking into account the network structure, i.e. the matrix of objective relations between the many stations [...]. (BOURDIEU, 1996b, p. 86).

It would be deceitful to say that it is possible to leave aside such personal dimensions and to try to isolate the options and production of my work from my deeper rooting, eliding such phenomenon as the ascension through education that, to a certain extent, has transformed me, in the course of time, into something like a trans-class case, with all the situations’ costs and benefits, to use an expressions such as expressed by Chantal Jaquet (2014). I do not revisit the set of implications that this author expounds in order to account for the accommodation movements characteristic of the processes through which non-reproduction can be set up. Keep in mind that she intends to refer to a prolonging of the potential aspects of Bourdieu’s explanations. An eventual linearity of what I expound is a manner of rendering legible the mode of appropriating the author, and certainly it is dependent on the place occupied by me as a teacher at a renowned university, in courses much devalued in the hierarchy of academic legitimacies.

In the second half of the 1970’s, the Brazilian translation of *La reproduction – éléments pour une théorie du système d’enseignement* (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 1970) was published. With the translation dated of 1975, readings of Bourdieu hit the education area. The reactions to the text are well known and we have already shown how they flashed amongst us (CATANI; CATANI; PEREIRA, 2001). The incomprehension that, in most cases, engendered an indisposition with the book, made it seem to some that the text was limited to only demonstrating that the school reproduced domination relations. This demonstration itself was no mean feat, because up to then it had not been demonstrated how, within schools, the dominant practices, values and demands operated in this direction. But some considered it insufficient for the expectations around the institution’s transformative power. The rich identification of the forms in which this reproduction was made concrete in school life in face of the multiplicity of teaching practices on the various levels was left aside. The attention to such aspects could have had the effect of favouring the search for the overcoming of reproductive practices, but part of the book’s potential was ignored.

Regarding the resistance to Bourdieu that this attitude provoked, Maria Andréa Loyola, in a book (2002) edited by her that included an interview with Bourdieu, identified among her students a refusal drive towards reading and understanding the work. Perhaps reading *Les héritiers: les étudiants et la culture* (originally published in 1964) could have helped not to have restricted the interpretation, but the book circulated little amongst us and was translated only in 2014. For a long time the accusation of reproductivism prevailed, a kind of trap into which the book on reproduction seems to have fallen into, perhaps for not considering what it carried as potency in the identification of devices and processes through which social categories of appreciation in school categories were reconfigured, aggravating inequalities. It was not seen then that, as the mode through which this took concrete form in school life was rendered explicit, spaces for transformation were opened within institutions. As we sought to show how Bourdieu was read in Brazil's educational area, we tried to recognise the nuances of the appropriation carried out and the consequences yielding whence for the resistance to reading in such moments, when the dictatorship's pressure drove the search for quick solutions in the fight against the school's limitations. Obviously not all the readings were carried out thus.

The appropriation undertaken, at the moment of the Brazilian translation, directed my interest towards the functioning of life inside the school, its inculcation and valuation mechanisms of behaviour modes precisely regarding aspects that, from the beginning of my schooling trajectory, I had observed as distinctive among the children and the places they took up in the institution. From the point of view of self-understanding, I was led to reflect further about the relations that the many individuals develop with school life, what goes on there and the determining character that such relations gain in the failure or success possibilities and in the extension of schooling. Involved in issues of teaching and of teaching practices - by force the disciplines I taught - I turned towards the analyses of the routine forms of school life; the classes, the pedagogical discourses, the tests and examination and their contributions to the preservation of the established order and to the justifications grounded on merit and on natural gifts. And I believe that the transformations of school practices, even though within the narrow limits of the possibilities allowed for by the system, partially but decisively collaborates to attenuate the harm caused by school inequalities as transfigurations of social inequalities. I found in *The reproduction* (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014a) more fertile elements to think what is possible to collaborate for the training of teachers, precisely as Bourdieu examines the nature of the pedagogical relations as communication relations (and beyond), as well as carrying out the analysis of evaluation procedures in order to try to understand the constitution of judgement and classification forms operating in the schools' daily life. A later reading of *The Categories of Professorial Judgement* (BOURDIEU; SAINT-MARTIN, published originally in 1975 and in Brazil in 1998) rendered this understanding a lot more precise.

In my reading of *The Heirs* I found an opening indicated by the authors, at the end of the text, regarding the need for and possibility of a rational pedagogy able to "[...] methodologically and continuously neutralise, from pre-school to the university, the action of social factors of cultural inequalities [...]" (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014b, p. 101). This pedagogy would be grounded on a sociology of cultural inequalities. In the

proposition of new readings for the work, in the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the original publication (1964 and 2014) I sought to indicate the reflections that could help in the reckoning of the relations with school work, carried out by students and teachers, on the many levels of teaching and of social strata that would thus allow for the elaboration of new modalities of more fertile practices (CATANI, 2015). As I read on, my attention was directed to Bourdieu's words about the low status, evident in university level education, of those who risked trying to teach the "how" of school life: study techniques, organisation of time, the discipline of intellectual work, group work, for instance. It seems certain to me that the domain of such relations with school culture should include, according to each level, the comprehension of the meanings and the power of each one of the learnings and activities. And that this last possibility is also feasible as an acquisition involving dialogue in the teaching of the various disciplines.

The text *The Ideology of Natural Aptitudes* by Nöelle Bisseret, (1979) strengthened the understandings potentiated by *The Reproduction* (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014a). In a historical perspective, the presence, uses and configurations of natural aptitude are examined in society as operated by the church, by the law and by psychology, furnishing important elements to understand, additionally, the derivation of psychology's knowledges into education. We read, during those years, books by Maria Helena Patto and by Luiz Antonio Cunha, who had already operated fertile appropriations of Bourdieu's thinking and who had built important interpretations for the understanding of the Brazilian educational system, from a point of view that considered the socio-historical dimensions and the problem of inequalities and their aggravation by the school's actions. The explanations mounted and helped out in the observation of documents that bear witness to the organisation of the educational field, life in the schools and the pedagogical practices, in the first republican period. And they were fundamental for the questionings around education and its relation with the human sciences, specially psychology.

The second half of the 1980's was a time for the elaboration of a Ph.D. thesis that, as with most theses developed in the human sciences area, had a beginning as ambitious as it was unfeasible. It sought to undertake a historical analysis of the propositions/prescriptions aimed at teaching teachers to teach, in books, educational periodicals, legislation and other materials. It involved a huge scope. As I moderated the initial impulse and sought delimitations in order to understand how the productions of teaching applied deductive schemes of knowledge transposition in the formulation of recommendations about how teachers should perform and to what kind of expectation this met, I walked a very long mile. I went on towards the analysis of teaching work (knowledges and practices) in Brazil's first republican period and the configuration of the professionalisation of this category of agents (CATANI, 1989). And it was with this study that I understood and described the processes of incipient organisation of what could be named the educational field. The delimitation of the thesis' issues was driven by a question, simple in the way I formulated it, but which secured greater scope for what it unveiled regarding the organisation of the educators' professional space. In the first republican phase, as the reforms were being carried out, the organisation of schools and of

the bureaucratic instances needed for its maintenance, as actions following decisions by educators close to state power, what actually did the common teachers do in their schools? The history of education had been concentrating on the examination of “great events and their promoters”. One question was lacking: what did, say and could do the teachers in their schools and in the public space? The thesis tried to find an answer for that.

Readings beyond *The Reproduction* (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014a) were decisive for the pruning of the thesis’ core. For instance, it is from *Issues in Sociology* (originally published in 1980 and in Brazil in 1983) that the understanding of how the concept of “field” could gain an operative role for the understanding of the socio-historical dimensions of the organisation of the educators’ professional space. In *Issues in Sociology*, the brief text *Some properties of fields* strengthened the perspective from which one could interpret the history of Brazilian education learning about the multiple dimensions of the school system, of its agents, teaching work and relations between teachers and the State, beyond the physical space of the production and circulation of knowledge, among them these which such professionals elaborated and published in their young press constituted by magazines and other printed matter. The perspective allowed for the simultaneous consideration of various instances and defined the space by means of the disputes that, from the beginning, were evident and implicated in the struggle for places, positions and rights, and the specific capitals whose possession would authorise the elaboration and imposition of paths for education. Many other texts by the sociologist were important in this direction, both those referring to the scientific field and the artistic/literary fields, beyond what was called the schooling field.

A collection of P. Bourdieu’s texts, organised by Sérgio Miceli and greatly responsible for the initial diffusion of his thought in Brazil, *The Economy of Symbolic Exchanges* (2005a), contributed to the choices and interpretations that were built later. In the text about excellence and the values of the French teaching system, I found formulations that helped me to reflect more on the modes of organising the teaching practices that I was developing. I found elements to understand the construction of the categories and judgements of school evaluations, from the point of view of teachers, such as their exercising a small power of whose foundations they are not always aware and, from the point of view of students, this power most of time works as a proclamation of fate. He underlines: [...] as with every social perception, the judgements that teachers make regarding students, chiefly in examination situations, take into account not only the knowledge and the know-how, but also the imponderable *nuances of manner and style* [...]” referring to the unconscious principles of social definition of school excellence (BOURDIEU, 2005a, p. 232, italicized in the original). The issue would return in many other analyses and would gain an even greater explanation in *The Categories of Professorial Judgement* (BOURDIEU; SAINT-MARTIN, 1998), originally published in France in 1975. An investigation hypothesis was increasingly formed regarding the transformations experienced by the teachers from the second half of the nineteenth century, as articulators of the social recognition of their role. Institutionalised training, production of specialised knowledge and attempts to organise a category into associations marked this moment and characterised the first republican period. It was necessary to counter the very characteristics of the historical-educational texts that, to a great extent, still reiterated traditional interpretations with

their attention to great ideas, names and reforms, and understood being necessary to think the space of education from the landmarks of political history, besides privileging sources also traditional, such as legislation, official speeches and the such. In this sense, the decade of 1990 brought about amongst us significant transformations in the production of the history of education: the proliferation of studies was characterised by authors increasingly resorting to previously little used sources, by the fresh questions addressed to the materials already valued and by a consideration of the relative autonomy of the educational field, which propitiated the adoption of new periodisations.

History and sociology in the understanding of education

The studies on the history of Brazilian education, such as I came to develop, are strongly rooted in institutional determinants, if I may say so. To the interest in history another factor was added: the possibilities opened up by the structure of the post-graduation course at the Education Faculty at USP (FEUSP)⁷. Besides, the fact that I taught, from 1978, the discipline called *Didactics* (that supposedly and for some would aim at “teaching to teach”, a task already fated to the impossible, for theoretical and practical reasons,) favoured my interest in understanding its limitations. The statement of refusal to what was current in teaching this discipline and in its production of knowledge, always dealing with a strong prescriptive impetus, was slow, both because of a youth that did not authorise many dissensions and for my difficulty in conceiving sustainable alternatives, at that time. The path gained a fertile direction when it was possible to unfold and render explicit links between the history of the teaching profession, official representations and the category itself around training and work, the lived experiences and the social condition of the subjects who, like myself and the students in pedagogy and teachers training courses, due to their socioeconomic origins, are led to chose teaching careers, the least legitimate and least competitive, of easier access regarding admission examinations and very often of shorter duration, as we know. Without lingering on this, it is worth mentioning that the understanding of the teachers’ social conditions and the functioning modes of their professional spaces led me to the search for new elements – in sociology as in fictional and memorialist literature, in the collaborative researches of the practices themselves – in order to propose alternatives for training and for understanding that would overcome the limits of a discipline with instrumental character such as *Didactics* as it was taught to students.

From another perspective, the concepts of field, *habitus* and capital allowed to see much beyond the first attempts that I engaged by resorting to Bourdieu’s oeuvre during the Ph.D., and in the analysis of the structuring of education’s professional space. Particularly, the understanding of the relations between *habitus* and field was deepened in the attention given to *Le mort saisit le vif: the relations between reified history and incorporated history* in *The Symbolic Power* (1989). The definitions contained therein

7- The organisation of the Masters and Ph.D. courses at FEUSP, from the 1970’s on, brought together three areas: History and Philosophy of Education, Didactics and School Administration. The dominant conception regarding this division, the articulations and the transit of disciplinary issues and theoretical options among the three areas was fundamental to value and drive on studies of socio-historical characteristics and investigations concerned with education in its various dimensions. The organisation gained fresh configurations in the course of the years 2000.

helped strengthening the field's historical study in the direction proposed by him precisely to overcome the dichotomies between event and long duration “[...] the ‘great men’ and collective forces, the singular wills and structural determinisms [...]” (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 82) that are based on the distinction between the individual and the social, understood as collective. But,

[...] suffice to observe that every historical action *brings into presence* two states of history (or of the social): history in its objectified state, i.e. the history that has accumulated in the course of time on things, machines, buildings, monuments, books, theories, habits etc. and history in its incorporated state, which became a *habitus*. (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 82).

The greater understanding of the concepts' reach increasingly took shape as I sought, in the debates around the relations between sociology and history, “authorisations” for the use of Bourdieu's oeuvre in socio-historical educational analysis. I faced much resistance. Some more explicit, others less, and some grounded on misunderstandings that leaned on the defence of disciplinary boundaries. As my research touched various levels of teachers' actions in society, in the production of knowledge, in the forms of relations between the State and in the organisation of the professional category, I was led to other works by the sociologist.

Later, in the years 2000, as I elaborated a text titled *Bourdieu and History (of education)* - “Bourdieu e a historia (da educação)” (CATANI, 2008), I tried to tackle the issues indicated above and that were linked to the appropriation that I had been carrying out in the attempt to “think with the author”. Much of what I formulated in the text was grounded on research about the movement of teachers and the organisation of their professional space with operations where the concept of field as a space of struggle around specific capitals was fundamental. In order to do so, the educational historical investigation demanded that I simultaneously considered “[...] the practices of agents, of the production and circulation instances of specialised knowledge, the institutional dimension, the *habitus* of the agents, the relations of this space with the field of power and the positions and stances of those who populate the field” (BOURDIEU, 1989, p. 334).

As I reflected on my resorting to the sociologist's work in the construction of the history of education, I sought to understand in Durkheim, for instance, the sustaining of the close relations between the two areas. Based on Durkheim, Bourdieu (1992, p. 67) states: “every sociology must be historical and all history should be sociological”. And there are several explanations in the works by Bourdieu for the characteristics of the work of the unified historicisation of the two disciplines, when he suggests precisely this need of historicisation of the agents when carrying out a historical analysis of the fields, of the social worlds, of the cognoscent subject and of the knowledge tools.

We find words by Roger Chartier – as a historian – to which I had resorted for the reflection mentioned above, the authorised opening that points beyond the mere reproduction of the sociologist's research schemes. He says:

[...] we should read Bourdieu and we can comment on Bourdieu and explain the difficulty of his style of conceptualisation. But the most important is to work with Bourdieu, I mean to use it for themes that he cannot approach, for periods that were not the most important for him. Work with his concepts, but go beyond, work with his perspectives, with the idea of a relational thinking and the rejection of the universal projection of historically defined categories. (CHARTIER *apud* CATANI, 2008, p. 333).

It is well known among historians of education the production analysis published by the *Work Group (History of Education)* of the National Association of Post-Graduation and Research on Education (*Associação Nacional de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa em Educação – Anped*) between 1985 and 2000. The text exemplifies Bourdieu's transit in this area (CATANI; FARIA FILHO, 2002). It stands out the fact that Bourdieu was the most cited reference in this Group during the studied period and was associated to the peculiarities in the choices of theories and methods within the scope of educational studies. In this case, one tried to account for the constitution of research modes in the area and their specificity, among them those related to the positions taken by the agents in the scientific space, the struggles fought around specific capitals and the reading and writing operations that are celebrated in the production space. This territory became institutionally autonomised and keeps complex relations with the diverse disciplines of the human sciences.

As we thus conciliate resorting to Bourdieu's work to the attempt of building a widened interpretation of the educational historical processes and of the teachers' actions, I had not yet made explicit the relations that came to be constructed in the 1990's and 2000's. Otherwise, I recognise that my transit in the city (in the 1970's and 1980's), taking into account the physical distance between the Campus, my home in the East Side and the countless workplaces – chiefly involving adults in adult education courses, but not only – in different regions of São Paulo, gave me the opportunity for very fertile daily observations on social distances. These must have also contributed to make more acute about positions and situations in the social space. The more fertile hypotheses for the comprehension of the themes emerged from the meditations around social spaces, the places and points of view to which they were articulated, as recorded in the analyses contained in *The Misery of the World* (dated of 1993 and published in Brazil in 1997), a text whose reception in France also was controversial and which I refer to further below.

The search for the understanding about what was produced by and for teachers, in that moment, underlined the interest for pedagogical magazines and the educational press that had already been configured in the Ph.D. thesis. Resorting to Bourdieu's writings diversified the readings I carried out and their appropriations. This is also how the approximation with the work of R. Chartier and M. de Certeau took place. I think that the production by such authors also played a structuring role for my own thinking. In the same frame, the contact with the investigation by Antonio Novoa strengthened the paths that brought together sociology and history when their study analysed the history of the teaching profession in Portugal and the educational periodical press (especially in NOVOA, 1987, 1993).

Things Said (originally published in 1987 and in Brazil in 1990); in the latter, in special *Reading, readers, literate, literature* and the compilation of articles in *The Economy of Linguistic Exchanges: what to talk means* (BOURDIEU, 1996a) propitiated a careful reflection over legitimate readings and authorised readings in the various fields. Simultaneously allowing for greater intelligibility of the reading processes of school books (manuals) in which what is considered essential to the scientific disciplines and literature is made explicit, for instance, as well as the choice processes for such contents with their multiple implications. It was not just about these aspects but a greater reach of the forms through which the knowledges taught to teachers was configured in the space of disciplinary struggles in education. This potentiated the understanding of readings associated to the profession and the critique of pedagogical production.

Between the 1990's and the first decade of the twenty-first century, I believe to have developed greater cunning in the perception of how much Bourdieu's work would help us, chiefly grounded on post-graduate teaching and on the supervision of theses and dissertations centred on the history of education and of teachers' training. As I have stated, there were moments in which the main interest was geared towards the reading by teachers (educational press and training books/pedagogical manuals). In such conditions it was interesting to understand the modes through which a professional group (poorly placed in the professions' hierarchies sharing the intellectual world) produced and appropriated knowledge linked to their action. This was allied to attention to the meanings that the agents of the field themselves attributed to the works and the discourses they elaborated in order to sustain such attribution. The understanding of the positions and stances taken by the group regarding educational policies and the positions taken by the school agents of the field in the production of such guidelines was equally added to. It is hard to detect, exactly, the greater relevance of one or the other reading of Bourdieu at that moment. The progression of readings rendered my own questions more precise. The appropriations that I managed to carry out from readings of texts such as *Practical Reasons: about the theory of action* (originally published in 1994 and in Brazil in 1996b), in which the issue of the State and of bureaucratic instances gains definitions capable of showing the roles that the school can play in the name of the State, as well as how the unifying action of the State is exerted in the issue of culture. The text reads:

As it universally imposes and inculcates (in the limits of its scope) a dominant culture thus constituted into a *legitimate national culture*, the school system particularly through the teaching of history and of literature, inculcates the foundations of a true "civic religion" and more precisely the fundamental premises of an (national) image of itself[...] (BOURDIEU, 1996b, p. 106, italicized in the original).

In *The Reproduction* (BOURDIEU; PASSERON, 2014a), he had already brought attention to the need of thoroughly establishing the history of education and indicated being necessary to render explicit the values implicit in history manuals by means of a history of the manual (BOURDIEU, 1996b). As an example, he brings up the attention required to the history of school culture and its artefacts and ideologies. And now, in face

of the observations about the inculcation processes of what is called “legitimate national culture” and of a “civic religion”, it is worth asking if and how this would be expressed today in Brazilian schools.

An experience in the mid-1980’s predisposed me towards a stronger attention to the book *The Misery of the World*, in which Bourdieu and collaborators interview several people who bear witness with their histories to what is considered “the modern social suffering”. We find there an example of extremely careful and fertile research/interpretation to investigate the perception of methodological problems regarding interviews and the writing of their analyses. The experience I referred to above was working in a Technical Cooperation Programme developed at FEUSP and by the São Paulo State Education Secretary, in peripheral South Side schools, deemed “difficult” at the time. I think that this experience played a decisive role for many dimensions of my research, teaching and intervention work as it shaped the appropriation that I came to carry out of *The Social Uses of Science: for a clinical sociology of the scientific field* (originally published in 1997 and translated by me in Brazil in 2004). The book resulted from a conference carried out for a group of professionals of the National Institute of Agronomic Research and of the contributions of a collective for the reflection that propitiated a kind of self-analysis, also collective, within the institution. The life and work conditions are very diverse, but the nature of what could be analysed and understood regarding the meanings of action and the reach of the mobilisation of knowledge allowed for the building of fertile convergences. I believe that even at that moment and well before reading *The Uses...* we worked in the direction indicated by the book. I worked in a school sited 25 kilometres from the Campus, in the course of 1985. In situations of observation of pedagogical activities, in the possibility of establishing long exchanges with the school’s agents, we had among the aims of the programme to propitiate the collective elaboration of diagnoses of the difficulties faced in daily life and support for the creation of the institutions’ projects towards what we intended to transform. The conception of the Programme and the collective work perspective, where our actions would be made increasingly unnecessary, involved the remuneration of agents for the time dedicated to the diagnoses and elaboration of the intervention projects. This factor decisively weighed on the investments made. My colleagues, students and the faculty and myself were confronted with problems that were not exactly new. But these have driven us to seek new understandings by force of what the injunctions held of the public teaching system, of the particularities of the social proximity of students and teachers (a proximity strongly denied by the latter and that seemed to impregnate the greater part of relations and practices of school daily life) and of the precarity observable in various dimensions. Our understanding would be strengthened by the Bourdieu’s idea that:

[...] the most personal is the most impersonal (and) that several of the more intimate dramas, of the deepest ill-feelings, of the most singular sufferings that men and women can experiment, find their principles in objective contradictions, inscribed in the structures, of the labour or of housing markets, of the schol system [...]. (BOURDIEU, 1992, p. 173).

To understand the existence of people grounded on their points of view, built as perspective placed in the cross between physical and social spaces, implied understanding why such problems in such place (as they were shown to us and how we perceived them). This demanded that we paid attention to the places and points of view of the people at school against our own. It implied recognising the functioning modes of the school systems and their logics in action. This is what we attempted to do and what we would later understand, both in our motivations and in the theoretical implications of the work modes. To carry on and recall how much we have learnt from later readings to the moments where we faced difficulties would reinforce the attempt of rendering the itinerary more complete. It would affirm even further the potential strength found in Bourdieu's work. It would also demolish, once more, the temporalities established in text marking, demanding then perhaps a talent for writing, similar to literature writers for whom time, space and place constantly break up in order to install new realities and modes of comprehension. There would be so much to say!

References

BISSERET, Noëlle. A ideologia das aptidões naturais. *In*: DURAND, José Carlos. (org.). **Educação e hegemonia de classes**. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1979. p. 30-67.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **A economia das trocas linguísticas**: o que falar quer dizer. São Paulo: Edusp, 1996a.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **A economia das trocas simbólicas**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2005a.

BOURDIEU, Pierre (coord.). **A miséria do mundo**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2003.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Coisas ditas**. São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1990.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Esboço de auto-análise**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2005b.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **O poder simbólico**. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1989.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Os usos sociais da ciência**: por uma sociologia clínica do campo científico. São Paulo: Unesp, 2004.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Questões de sociologia**. Rio de Janeiro: Marco Zero, 1983.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Razões práticas**: sobre a teoria da ação. Campinas: Papirus, 1996b.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. **Réponses**: pour une anthropologie réflexive. Paris: Seuil, 1992.

BOURDIEU, Pierre; PASSERON, Jean-Claude. **A reprodução**: elementos para uma teoria do sistema de ensino. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2014a.

BOURDIEU, Pierre; PASSERON, Jean-Claude. **Os herdeiros: os estudantes e a cultura**. Florianópolis: UFSC, 2014b.

BOURDIEU, Pierre; SAINT-MARTIN, Monique. As categorias do juízo professoral. *In*: NOGUEIRA, Maria Alice; CATANI, Afrânio (org.). **Pierre Bourdieu: escritos de educação**. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1998. p. 185-216.

BOUVERESSE, Jacques. **Bourdieu, savant & politique**. Marseille: Agone, 2003.

BOUVERESSE, Jacques. **La connaissance de l'écrivain: sur la littérature, la vérité et la vie**. Marseille: Agone, 2008.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. A propósito d'Os herdeiros e algumas hipóteses acerca da pedagogia racional. *In*: VALLE, Ione Ribeiro *et al.* (org.). **Heranças da sociologia de Pierre Bourdieu e Jean-Claude Passeron: 50 anos de Os herdeiros**. Curitiba: CRV, 2015. p. 107-117.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. Distâncias, vizinhanças, relações – comentários sobre os estudos sócio-histórico-comparados em educação. *In*: NÓVOA, António; SCHRIEWER, Jürgen (ed.). **A difusão mundial da escola: alunos, professores, currículo, pedagogia**. Lisboa: Educa, 2000. p. 143-150.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. **Educadores à meia-luz: um estudo sobre a revista de ensino da associação beneficente do professorado público de São Paulo (1902-18)**. 1989. Tese (Doutorado em Educação) – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1989.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. **Educadores à meia-luz: um estudo sobre a revista de ensino da associação beneficente do professorado público de São Paulo (1902-1918)**. Bragança Paulista: Edusf, 2003.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. **Ensaio sobre a produção e circulação dos saberes pedagógicos**. 1994. Tese (Livre-Docência) – Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, 1994.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. Pierre Bourdieu e a história (da educação). *In*: FARIA FILHO, Luciano Mendes de (org.). **Pensadores sociais e história da educação**. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica, 2008. p. 319-334.

CATANI, Denice Barbara. Por uma pedagogia da pesquisa educacional e da formação de professores na Universidade. **Educar em Revista**, Curitiba, v. 26, n. 37, p. 77-92, 2010.

CATANI, Afrânio Mendes; CATANI, Denice Bárbara; PEREIRA, Gilson Ricardo de Medeiros. As apropriações da obra de Pierre Bourdieu no campo educacional brasileiro, através de periódicos da área. **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 17, p. 63-85, 2001.

CATANI, Denice Barbara; FARIA FILHO, Luciano Mendes de. Um lugar de produção e a produção de um lugar: a história e a historiografia divulgadas no GT História da Educação da ANPEd (1985-2000). **Revista Brasileira de Educação**, Rio de Janeiro, n. 19, p. 113-128, 2002.

CORDEIRO, Denilson Soares; FURTADO, Joaci Pereira (org.). **Arte da aula**. São Paulo: Sesc, 2019.

ERIBON, Didier. **Retorno a Reims**. Belo Horizonte: Âyiné, 2020.

Denice Barbara CATANI

ERNAUX, Annie. **O lugar**. São Paulo: Fósforo, 2021.

GOULEMOT, Jean-Marie. Da leitura como produção de sentidos. *In*: CHARTIER, Roger (org.). **Práticas de leitura**. São Paulo: Estação Liberdade, 2009. p. 107-116.

JAQUET, Chantal. **Les transclasses ou la non-reproduction**. Paris: PUF, 2014.

LESCOURRET, Marie-Anne. **Bourdieu**: vers une économie du Bonheur. Paris: Flammarion, 2008.

LOYOLA, Maria Andréa. **Pierre Bourdieu**: entrevistado por Maria Andréa Loyola. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, 2002.

NÓVOA, António. **A imprensa de educação e ensino**: repertório analítico (séculos XIX e XX). Lisboa: Instituto de Inovação Educacional, 1993.

NÓVOA, António. **Le temps des professeurs**: analyse sócio-historique de la profession enseignante au Portugal (XVIII-XX siècle). Lisboa: Instituto Nacional de Investigação Científica, 1987.

Received: 30.07.2021

Approved: 21.02.2022

Denice Barbara Catani a retired professor – senior professor at the Education Faculty of the Universidade de São Paulo (Feusp). Was Head of the Department of Teaching Methodology and Compared Education, as well as coordinator of the Post-Graduate Programme in Education.