

TEACHERS' STORIES: EXPERIENCES IN COPING WITH EVERDYDAY DIFFICULTIES

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ABSTRACT

This work aimed to understand the teachers' trajectories in the initial years of Elementary School in the public network of Baixada Santista, in the state of São Paulo, who despite the difficulties faced in their daily school life, build powerful situations and positive experiences in relation to work. This is qualitative research based on the construction of narratives from three teachers about their professional trajectory, daily difficulties and challenges, and the individual and collective ways of coping they find. The three narratives point to the importance of the relation among school, family and territory, the belief in the transformative role of the school and the need for professional development. The collectivization of work is one of the main strategies used, as it breaks with the perspective of isolation and brings new meanings to educational action towards transformative education, within the limits of historical possibilities.

Keywords: teaching work; narratives; school routine

Historias de professoras: experiencias de enfrentamiento de las dificultades cotidianas

RESUMEN

En este estudio se tuvo el objetivo de conocer las trayectorias de profesoras de los años iniciales de la enseñanza básica de la red pública de la Baixada Santista, estado de São Paulo que, no obstante, las dificultades enfrentadas en el cotidiano escolar, construyen situaciones de potencia y vivencias positivas en relación con la labor. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa basada en la construcción de narrativas de tres profesoras acerca de su trayectoria profesional, de las dificultades y desafíos cotidianos, y sobre las formas de enfrentamiento individuales y colectivos que encuentran. Las tres narrativas apuntan la importancia de la relación entre escuela, familia y territorio, la creencia en el papel transformador de la escuela y la necesidad de valoración profesional. La colectivización de la labor es una de las principales estrategias utilizadas, pues rompe con la perspectiva de aislamiento y trae nuevos sentidos para la acción educativa en dirección de educación transformadora, en los límites de las posibilidades históricas.

Palabras clave: labor docente; narrativas; cotidiano escolar

Histórias de professoras: experiências de enfrentamento das dificuldades cotidianas

RESUMO

Este trabalho teve como objetivo conhecer as trajetórias de professoras dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental da rede pública da Baixada Santista, no estado de São Paulo, que apesar das dificuldades enfrentadas no cotidiano escolar, constroem situações de potência e vivências positivas em relação ao trabalho. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa baseada na construção de narrativas de três professoras acerca de sua trajetória profissional, das dificuldades e desafios cotidianos, e sobre as formas de enfrentamento individuais e coletivos que encontram. As três narrativas apontam a importância da relação entre escola, família e território, a crença no papel transformador da escola e a necessidade de valorização profissional. A coletivização do trabalho é uma das principais estratégias utilizadas, pois rompe com a perspectiva de isolamento e traz novos sentidos para a ação educativa em direção de educação transformadora, nos limites das possibilidades históricas.

Palavras-chave: trabalho docente; narrativas; cotidiano escolar

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INTRODUCTION

Education and labor are two social rights that are guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution of 1988. However, issues such as chronic scarcity of resources for public education, the increasingly production-oriented logic of schools, the long working hours, the underappreciation of professionals, and so on, contribute to the crescent process in which education professionals fall sick – especially teachers (Araújo, Pinho, & Masson, 2019; Paparelli, 2010).

Some of the working conditions experienced by the teachers are related to the structural precariousness of schools. In addition to material matters, the hours dedicated to work activities often surpass the planned schedules and teachers end up having to give up their leisure and rest time in order to meet all requirements. Physical and emotional tiredness, reduced autonomy to make decisions that interfere in the organization of labor, large numbers of students in the classroom etc. contribute to the illness of teachers. Frustrated with their profession, they start seeing their occupation with increasing negativity (Freitas & Facas, 2013; Paparelli, 2010).

Dworak and Camargo (2017) approach the way changes in work conditions are factors that affect performance and the relation of pleasure that individuals lack in its execution, leading to physical and/or mental burnout, which interferes in the quality of work and in a feeling of discouragement regarding their profession, a phenomenon named “teacher discomfort”. The review of the academic production on the work of teachers realized by Araújo et al. (2019) points out that, despite diverse advancements in the area, problems are still regarded in an individualized way and with a focus on the disease that befalls these individuals. This conclusion implies an interesting investigation field for Educational and School Psychology because this area of knowledge might contribute to a psychosocial comprehension of the phenomenon, by studying the ways teachers confront and resist discomfort and build new solutions for their everyday professional lives.

In this sense, rebuilding memory with significant moments might contribute to this confrontation at an individual level as well as collectively, pointing at necessary transformations in a possible world. Bosi (1994) says that remembering something does not mean reliving the past, it is rather a reflection on what is past. Thus, in addition to promoting elaboration by the very individuals who remember and revisit their history, narrated memory leads to reflection by other people.

Studies on illness processes are fundamental when it comes to understanding the reality faced by teachers in Basic Education. Nevertheless, knowing and understanding the strategies used in the administration of different demands in everyday life are fundamental too. In spite of so much difficulty, most teachers still believe in education as a means of resistance and the possibility to build a new future.

Thus, getting to know the histories of these teachers while investigating the meanings they attribute to their profession and the ways they handle the difficulties present in their everyday lives might reveal nuances that are often obscure in the studies on the teachers’ condition. There are remarking experiences and people in their professional trajectories: students, classmates, developed projects, events. Listening to these experiences, reviving memories and sharing them is a form of contribution for the continuity of the fight for social rights, especially quality education and dignified work. In this sense, the present work had the objective to get to know the trajectories of the teachers of the public network in the Baixada Santista, who still build up situations of potency and positive experiences regarding their profession in spite of the difficulties faced every day at school.

METHOD

The present article presents part of the results of a qualitative research realized on the contents of a paper for the conclusion of a graduation course in Psychology¹, whose method is the production of teachers’ narratives. The narrative contributes to the construction of memories based on people’s experiences, and legitimizing what was experienced, and also leading to a connection between the subjective dimension and the objective conditions of their production (Damasceno, Malvezzi, Sales, & Sales, 2018).

Lima, Geraldi and Geraldi (2015) point out that the use of narratives as an investigative method is present in the Brazilian educational literature since the 1990s and is based on the ethical-political commitment with the research work with teachers and with school, rather than research work *about* teachers and school. In this sense, these researches are part of a larger movement in the field of human and social sciences that break up with the alleged neutrality of the researcher and aim at producing knowledge not about something or someone, but in collaboration with someone with the objective to witness a phenomenon that is close to the ones that live them profoundly (Gonçalves Filho, 2003).

We attempted to construct conditions for the emergence of narratives that would not restrict themselves to the production of opinions, which are often mere reproductions of crystalized, stereotypical social ideas (Bosi, 1994). In order to make the narrative happen, it is important to establish a connection with the individuals that narrate their story and a relation of trust. In this sense, as an inclusion criterion, we follow Bourdieu’s (2008) premise to interview well-known people to minimize the risk of producing a violent communication or a reduc-

¹ The project was approved by the Ethics Committee for Research if the original institution and the narratives were produced after participants signed a Free Informed Consent Term, with guaranteed confidentiality and anonymousness for participants.

tionist analysis, which falls upon the objectivism that removes the subjection dimension from the scenario, or upon the subjectivism that abstracted the objective conditions for the production of narratives. Also, according to Araújo et al. (2019), most of the teachers in Basic Education are women, so researchers chose to restrict gender and gather narratives from three teachers with at least one decade of teaching practice in the early years of Elementary Education (1st to 5th year) of the public network in the Baixada Santista, in the State of São Paulo.

The narratives were produced in 2020, and part of them during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a consequence, with only one of the participants, it was possible to realize two onsite meetings. The other ones had their narratives collected by means of the *Google Meet* platform. Each meeting lasted approximately one hour, and later recorded and transcribed.

The narratives were gathered by means of a semi-structured interview, initiated with the following triggering question: "Tell me about your trajectory as a teacher". After the beginning, other questions were included without disrupting the flow of the narrative, with the objective to approach the following issues: type of employment contract, work hours, remarking experiences that can be positive and negative, ways to face difficulties, and the relationship with the administration, with colleagues, with students, and with families. The obtained material - scripts and notes - was read, organized, and categorized according to the themes and eventual repetitions and complementarities among the narratives, with a longitudinal and cross-sectional assessment by means of Content Analysis (Bardin, 1977/2004). The most relevant categories, which appeared as a result of analysis are introduced in the present article: school family and territory relation; potential for change informal education, need for professional appreciation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

And we can see the light in your eyes when you speak of your profession. That makes a huge difference, the sparkle of passion. As long as your eyes keep shining then you are on the right way. (Emília)

Ângela, Emília, and Marina² are white women, aged between 33 and 45 years, with over ten years of professional practice. They are teachers with "a sparkle in their eyes". Commonplace among these professionals are engagement and critical self-reflection regarding their profession, and the tiredness resulting from double work hours, at least in part of their professional life – beyond domestic chores – occasionally in distinct municipalities.

We will introduce now some of the categories that appear in the analysis. There are common and particular

experiences that help us understand the relations built by individuals every day at school or even what happens at school, which is beyond the school walls.

The school, family, and territory relation

Patto (1992) draws a historical scenario regarding the relation between public schools and the families of the students who attend these schools. The author points out that the educational literature as well as the ground of the school display the marks of the blaming of our families for educational failure, and reveals the distance school takes from the reality of their students, reinforcing a whole set of prejudices and stereotypes by disregarding their different life-styles. If this is the type of relation that is historically constructed, reinforcing social and economic statuses, it is possible to demonstrate that the challenge to make students, families, and schools come together is formidable.

In our research, family and territory appear as important categories in the teachers' narratives. Although none of the teachers come from poor families, they report that witnessing experiences of vulnerability that until then they were unfamiliar with caused feelings of intense discomfort.

On the other hand, breaking up with stereotypes regarding the population in the territories and the community proves a huge challenge. When such challenge is overcome, new meanings for labor are produced and the result is better academic performance. In order to do that, an important tool within school are projects, such as the Projeto Político Pedagógico (PPP), or Political Pedagogical Project. It is an important instrument that helps us guide the actions at school while taking all particularities into consideration.

On the other hand, it is important to emphasize that not all schools use the PPP with the perspective of work based on emancipatory practices that consider the particularities of each school and community. In this sense, the document is often understood as part of the bureaucratic process of their there is no benefitting from its potency (Wanderer & Pedroza, 2010). More than that, our research has shown that the participation of families and communities at school is a construction process that goes beyond institutions – and often bureaucratized – such as PTA meetings or even the school council. Angela, for example, reports a project realized with the class, in which the students were supposed to watch with their families, on the weekends, the tv news and the content were discussed in the classroom. Gradually, families started getting interested in the activities and started sending questions to the debates in the classroom:

Parents also started paying more attention to the topics and taking the children's activities more seriously (...) at PTA meetings, the classroom was always full. Parents came and talked and really enjoyed what the kids were doing. They usually

² Fictitious names.

came and talked to me about those things. Even about their work, what they could do regarding labor law, and other issues. And I noticed that, after the project, parents were never again so engaged in the children's activities. (Ângela)

The experiences reported by the narrators bring important possibilities for action in the lives of these women and the perception that they believe they had been producers of change in the lives of their students. They tell us of the projects they have developed and that resulted in bonds of affection with their students and family members. At the same time, they indicate the necessity to overcome the limits of the classroom; even if these isolated experiences are gratifying to their protagonists – teachers, students, parents –, they find limitations because they are not applied on the school as a whole. In this sense, the experiences of collective participation are the most significant in the trajectories of the teachers:

It was a very, very united school. The director had a project named "All on the same boat" because it was a fishing village. Literally, everyone was on the same boat: families, students, and teachers... the school was the most distant one from the city, but the students who attended the place really wanted to be there, they were really close to each other... the children learned for real, for life, and we made things happen. (Ângela)

In the context of physical isolation provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic, with the suspension of onsite lessons and activities happening remotely, the participation of families in the schooling process becomes imperative. However, there are undeniable issues in this relation: not all students have guaranteed access to the technologies used in remote education; in addition, a considerable part is unemployed, and there is loss of income and food insecurity. Some municipalities in the Baixada Santista provided materials to be obtained at the schools, our narrators tell us they try to keep in touch with their students by means of telephone calls, video calls, written messages on the cell phone etc. On the other hand, they do not always manage to contact their students and families; in addition, they express great concern with the quality of education provided in these conditions and with the burden on families during this process:

Now we cannot put all the blame on parents, we cannot just turn the table, right? (...) I believe you have to be able to walk in the parents' shoes and see that it is not easy to deal with all this, I believe this will even make them change the way they see us. (Emília)

The realities they portray in their narratives are in accordance with Sentineli and Insfran (2020) and a research on school education during the COVID-19 pandemic: if,

on the one hand, creatures are able to access families with more frequency, then they were able to do in the period before the pandemic, on the other hand they end up completely losing contact with a considerable part of the students and their families.

Potential for transformation of formal education

If school often represents a place of scarcity, with structural problems, under appreciation of professionals such as teachers and staff workers, it is also a place where students and their families constantly take the blame for academic failure, what is the purpose of school? Which factors allow schools to continue to reinvent themselves so that they can represent something other than their own fragilities? Saviani (2012) points at the role schools play as reproducers of inequalities in capitalist societies. At the same time, schools are conceived as institutions that contradictorily promote the socialization of elements towards the critical construction of society. Therefore, they are the basis for human action towards transformation. In order to do that, there is the need for schools that contemplate the interests of underprivileged minorities.

Patto (1992, 2000) points out at the fact that mothers, even in the face of diverse obstacles, including financial ones, fight to keep their children at school, and despite the exclusion processes that take place in the school environment, the average number of students who stay at school is large. Freller (2001) Indicates that students create a moral sense that makes sense and the contexts and situations experienced at school, demonstrating an appreciation of the school environment and of the people that are part of it, who feel recognized and respected. Paparelli (2010) discusses that despite the capital logic's entrance at school, the educators' work is immaterial and they experience a series of contradictions in their everyday work when they perceive that what is expected by the logic that is external to school does not agree with emancipatory practices, which contribute to the transformation that they want in the lives of their students and in society.

It seems like school, somehow, keeps on representing a space for possibilities, of resistance, of breaking cycles; the narratives of Ângela, Emília and Marina portray experiences that demonstrate that schools can be an important means for transformation, promoting moments of recovery for students and teachers.

For some time, Ângela was a teacher at the EJA³ in the years that correspond to Elementary Education I, and in this opportunity, there was what we consider one of the most remarkable experiences in her career:

There was this man, after one year studying with us, who told me something I will never forget. He came up to me and said that on that day he was

³ Education of young people and adults.

feeling like a real person. I asked him why he was feeling like that and he told me that he had gone to a store that sells building materials and for the first time he was able to write his name on a ticket for a bicycle prize. He had never done that before because he did not know how to write but was too embarrassed to say so. So he would always put it into his pocket and say that he write his name on it at home because he was not wearing his spectacles. On that day, when he was given a ticket to write his name on, he just said "give it to me" and proudly wrote his name and address on it. On that day, he said he was finally able to feel like he was someone. (Ângela)

The EJA experience brought out the perspective of change that schooling produced in the students' life, and that directly affects their possibilities to have relationships with each other – the class, made up mostly of bricklayers, dressmakers, and tradespeople, demonstrated the change that took place in the world of labor.

The students have the possibility to compare moments and re-signify aspects of their lives by means of a significant schooling experience, no matter how late. What possibilities for signification of the school experience do the children have? What is the purpose of school? What kind of memories will we have of school? Emília provides us with an important reminder when she says that school does not produce happy memories only; she reports that she was the victim in a violent experience when she was a student and that it is necessary to be always attentive to attitudes in the classroom.

School is an important place for socialization, the relations between teachers and students cannot be disregarded. The relation established with teachers can also determine the relations students establish with the school itself and the formative process. Just like the relations, the link between students and teachers is quite dynamic, so they can be characterized by moments of support and/or conflict. Furthermore, we know that many students keep the mark of separation of this important connection in their trajectories; many public schools have records of discontinuity:

The first group of students I got was in the 4th year and I was the 3rd teacher in the classroom. The first one had quit, the second teacher was also unable to stay and the students were not that easy... in the end, it was the most wonderful group I have ever worked with. But they had a problem. They thought that it was their fault the previous teacher had quit. I got started in May. And they just kept asking: "Are you going to stay? Are you really going to stay?" And I would always reply "guys, I'm not leaving. I'm going to stay the whole year with you". (Marina)

Marina invites us to reflect on the rotation of teachers in the classroom and the reason why it happens. Emília

also comments on the phenomenon. She was hired as a "substitute teacher" and each year she works at a different place, which prevents her from getting engaged in long-term projects. The result is the intensification of processes of exclusion and stigmatization at school (Oliveira, Carvalho, & Carrasqueira, 2020).

Thus, it is important that narrators believe in the contributions by school to social transformation, even if it is necessary to face numerous difficulties in their everyday lives. Sometimes they seem to believe that this is their "mission in life", the way they can contribute to society. This seems to be a strategy used to handle the precariousness they face every day - a strategy that is historically anchored in the symbolic construction from the figure of the "missionary teacher", which dwells in the population's imagination and might result in the demise of their condition of professionals and promoters of the labor cause. It is also important to question whether this conception might lead, at the same time, the suffering by the professionals because of their impossibility to become such idealized figures - even though their desire for social transformation and construction of an emancipating education is legitimate.

If you do it for real... because the only thing that can change people's mentality, that can make people fight for their rights, challenge wrongness, refuse exploitation... if you believe that education is the only way, you never give up. The one who believes can never give up. The country is the way it is, and with the politicians we have, with the financial interests we have, and their intention to manipulate the population just to exploit and exploit and exploit... we need people who never give up on those who lack opportunities, if everyone turns their backs on the underprivileged, and those who do not have the means to get a good education... We were the first ones who had the means to go to school. And that is the reason why my daughters today have the means to choose their own profession for the courses they want to take, they do not have to make choices based on how much money they have. (...) I do not do things for lack of options, I do things because I believe in what I do and that what I do can do good to other people, I do things right and if I cannot do it right I just leave. (Ângela) /

Need for professional appreciation

At some moments, the narrators reported a lack of recognition of the teachers' work, which is getting increasingly precarious. We can also ask ourselves who such precariousness and disqualification of public education might benefit. Common phenomena in several Latin-American countries, they are associated with educational policies that are based on the pedagogy of "competencies" –which indirectly implies the teachers'

“incompetence” (Souza, 2006), based on which strategies are created to deal with the supposed unpreparedness of professionals, often based on hierarchic policies that have a reductionist bias for the reality help schools and that disregard the experience of educators. Such policies generally intensify the individual blaming of teachers for educational problems. They reinforce the processes of disqualification of teachers’ knowledge and practices, and they also promote moral underappreciation, in addition to collaborating with greater participation of private sectors in the formation of teachers and with the logic of privatization of fundamental public services such as education (Kalmus & Souza, 2021).

Marina also reports the damage caused by the jeopardizing of labor conditions. More than that, it is important to point out how the repeated blaming and disqualification of teachers is a strategy to mask the historical incapacity of the public system of education to provide quality education that is socially referenced for everyone:

All this under appreciation makes me very upset. Financial depreciation does not hurt so much as moral underappreciation... To say that teachers are good for nothing like during the pandemic: “oh teachers are not even working right now and everyone else is like really breaking their backs!” (Marina)

Sentinel and Insfran (2020) produce data that demonstrate that most teachers in Elementary Education I take on more than one classroom, and that this is one of the factors that contribute to the distancing of teachers from their own students. Besides that, it is possible to affirm that the changes in the labor process, because of the COVID-19 pandemic isolation intensified the overload of work, illness, and precariousness. It also what Emília reports:

Some of the teachers really rose up to the occasion [during the pandemic distance learning]. We had had no preparation to handle the situation, and that is one of the difficulties as I see it. We have just gone through a rapid process of technological advancement. Everyone had to figure out by themselves what to do... and that is what these teachers did!

Besides their desire for better material and structural work conditions, the narrators emphasized the need for continuity in professional formation and qualification, considering the difficulties and demands that they experience in their everyday lives. Many times, the narrators report small changes in their schools that amplify their possibilities for reflection and action. The formative process, in addition, appears as something crucial for them to get updated in the learning-teaching processes and have a command of the practices so they can feel

confident to implement them every day. On the other hand, the lack of autonomy, the pressure from managers and technicians who are their superiors and often lack any awareness of what really goes on in the classrooms end up interfering with the work of teachers and lead to suffering and/or violence in the trajectories of the individuals (Freitas & Facas, 2013; Paparelli, 2010; Patto, 2000).

One of the cities was starting to change the teaching methodology, but it was still extremely traditional. And then I was sent to another city, and there the scenario was even more experienced. It was surreal. It was a type of constructivism – at least that is what they called it – and it had been imposed on the teachers and, with or without practice, with or without experience, with or without formation, they were supposed to follow that line that the new administration believed was the best (...). teachers who were just about to retire and had worked in the traditional way all their lives, suddenly had to become constructivists. The ones with formation in constructivism were constructivists, the ones who were “easygoing” type were constructivists all well. Everyone was supposed to be constructivist. So, if you did not know how to work that way, you just pretended you did, otherwise they would just walk into the classroom and tear off whatever other material you were working with... that’s right, they ripped things off the walls or anything else that was not in accordance with their imposition. That was the only kind formation available... [the pedagogical coordinator]⁴ was note there for the teachers, to answer their questions. The coordinator was there to watch. (Ângela)

Angela’s report demonstrates how educational policies are often decisions that come from top to bottom, without the participation of teachers and without offering conditions so that they can appropriate these policies – which would undeniably contribute to lower educational quality. However, the narratives also point at the fact that the teachers are not passive players in the process, inventing their own creative teaching solutions, which are very different from the ones prescribed by the bureaus of education. They use practical coyness (Certeau, 2009) and manage to adapt in an authorial way mandatory teaching practices that disregard their own personal experiences. According to Angela: “At the time, i did not do what the city council wanted me to do, what I did was a form of ‘misdemeanor’, but I don’t regret what I did. We have to try”. In other words, teachers manage reduce the discrepancy between what is

⁴ According to the report, there was a reduced number of pedagogical coordinators in the municipality, and each coordinator was responsible for several schools.

prescribed and what happens in fact, according to work psychodynamics (Dejours, 2004), because there is an important distance between these factors in everyday professional life. In order to reduce this difference, this perspective of psychodynamics considers that it is necessary for workers to invent and adapt to situations in order to deal with what does not work in the classroom, that is, the everyday experience leads to the inevitable appropriation.

Two of our narrators, Emília and Ângela, were members of the administration team at the same school, and together they developed a project that had the intention to appreciate professionals within the unit where they worked:

We noticed that all projects we did during the time I was working for the city hall – over 20 years – were always: “our focus is on the children”, “everything we do is for the children”. They will always be our focus, of course we are all there for the children. But if those who take care of the children are not all right, if those who are there to do what is best for the children are not physically and emotionally well, if they feel dissatisfied, if the relationship among workers is not good, the children lose. (Ângela)

So there is an essential aspect concerning our research question: it seems that one of the things that give the teachers’ work meaning and that allows them to realize something relevant in the classroom, despite all difficulties, is the possibility to build a form of collective practice that overcomes isolation in the classroom:

We did what we could. We wrote everything down and the project led us to seek partnerships with different education professionals in order to produce improvements during the HTPCs⁵, and develop ways for them to think individually but also collectively on things to do to improve education (Emília)

We started thinking about what to do. And the first thing to do was to start listening to people, and ask ourselves where the problem was, what changes were necessary, and many ideas came up. (Ângela)

Such experience demonstrates the importance of policies that truly appreciate workers, while working to construct such appreciation by providing spaces for listening, collectiveness at work, and democratic management. With the project, teachers collectively started appropriating the school environment and school activities and retraced at a specific school during psychodynamic trajectory of the work (Dejours, 2004), so it is possible to point out as a strategy for health in the world of Labor to try to break away from isolation, and build a

set of ways to provide for demands. After all, according to Dejours (2004, p. 32), “working does not only mean producing. It also means experiencing together”.

It is a good idea here to emphasize that the work in education is different from the factory work that Dejours studied because education is equipped with the tools for understanding reality and, in this sense, it might produce practical actions that are able to change everyday life. The perspective of development of critical thinking and of means to overcome the forms of oppression allows teachers to see their work reflected on others and the changes it causes and individuals and in society. In this sense, This is why Paparelli (2010) emphasizes that even if teachers want to submit to the exterior logic, they are not able to do it completely, and that Paulo Freire (2020) shows us the importance of a liberating work for educators and students.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

By reporting the experiences and trajectories, Ângela, Emília and Marina give materiality to everyday life in their profession. Besides that, they present everyday forms of resistance - even though it’s not organized - in the face of a logic of precariousness in labor, in education, and the project to disintegrate public policies that guarantee the rights of the population. By telling us their experiences, they reveal contradictions that are present within the school environment and in society and they are able to externalize the ambiguities that very often are present in our actions and discourses - even though we never even realize it.

When we come up against discourses that affirm that teachers cannot understand students or their families or any other actor in the school scenario and listen to these narratives, it is possible to perceive that there is a disconnection between these ideas. So we can ask the following question: are teachers able to understand or internalize further demands without the means to fight? Marina, at different moments, reports how tiring it is not to be able to disconnect from the school environment, and that it is impossible not to keep thinking about problems at home; Emília highlights the fact that routine at school does not lead to a better approximation with the students and that it is in the context of a pandemic or physical isolation that we can really get close to them and an unprecedented way; Ângela reinforces the importance of work with the families and at the same time recognizes that approximation with them is not part of school everyday life. These complaints and reports do not seem to come from someone that is unaware or indifferent to what happens at school.

By means of the experiences of approximation with parents, students, and peers or even with other institutions, it is possible to understand that the possibility of collectiveness for actions at and by work constitutes an important strategy for realization, because there is a disconnection with the logic isolation that ends up making

⁵ Time for collective pedagogical work.

work conditions even more difficult – even when we are within the limits of reality of a society that produces isolation and individual blaming.

Here, we do not wish to blame teachers, or even dismiss them from any possible responsibility as a professional category that is responsible for the socialization of part of human knowledge and for promoting critical formation. However, finding balance between what are individual matters and what are collective matters is sometimes a delicate task for those who have to deal with too much work.

Keeping the balance the individual and the collective was also a challenge in the construction of this research, because we do not intend here to find someone to blame or a victim within the situations that are experienced in school everyday life or, like another face of a coin, heroines or women that teach has a mission; to the contrary, our mission was to show the complexities that permeate the institution. Besides that, it is our interest to understand how, within a social political context of disintegration of public policies, it is possible to produce actions with effects of resistance, even if they are not anchored on forms of organized struggle.

Being able to listen to experiences in which individuals can feel like a “real person”, in which professionals can get together and change their context of work and in which the teacher-student relation changes the students’ perception regarding their schooling process, here’s an invitation to reaffirm that school can be a place for resistance. In addition, the narratives highlighted the fact that sharing such experiences is important so we can keep the perspective of resistance even in the face of such difficulties in school everyday life. After all, according to Chauí (1994), the way we remember events, experiences, and feelings reflects individual and social perspectives, In addition to leading us to reflect on what happened – as a critical reflection so we can look at ourselves and see ourselves in the world and in our place in the world and our actions as individuals.

Thus, it is possible to learn that breaking the isolation in the classroom and exchanging experiences, question the contradictions and incoherences that we’re naturalized in society and find allies inside and outside schools are some of the strategies that help teachers handle everyday life difficulties. Furthermore, this is what brings new meanings to the profession, because it is the collective work that allows them to construct themselves as active and creative individuals in contrast with the everyday life experience of an educational policy and an eminently reifying social reality.

In the present research, some strategies for facing everyday life difficulties and for constructing meanings at work became relevant. It is important to emphasize that the ones that are believed to be most significant are not based on prescriptions by specialists or on for

formation/updating courses network (even though these are demands by the teachers), but rather on the possibility for strengthening bonds with the community, and with their peers, with the construction of the democratic management, and that elevate school to the category of a place for the collective construction of hope. For future studies, it becomes relevant to investigate what other strategies might possibly have been missing in the reports by our narrators, that the teachers used in their everyday lives and what contexts of work lead to the emergency of such strategies of resistance against such difficulties. These are the experiences that seem to contrast with the suffering and illness caused by the work conditions and processes and that bring back hope to a profession that is stigmatized by disqualification. After all, according to Dejours (1986), health is hope.

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