

## **The Impact of *São Paulo Faz Escola* Program on newly Qualified Teachers**

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**ABSTRACT – The Impact of *São Paulo faz Escola* Program on newly Qualified Teachers.** This study aimed to enhance reflections about the teaching of Portuguese language and literature newly qualified teachers who work with *São Paulo Faz Escola* Program. We conducted a qualitative research through a case study by means of analysis of documents, interviews and follow-up of these teachers. The data showed the feeling that the authorship and the autonomy of professional intervention were taken of these teachers. Besides, we observed the pressure suffered by teachers so that students have good grades in merely quantitative assessments, completely disregarding all they lived along the school year.

**Keywords:** Teaching Work. Curriculum Proposal of São Paulo State. Portuguese Language and Literature Teaching. Newly Qualified Teachers.

**RESUMO – O Impacto do Programa *São Paulo faz Escola* em Professores Iniciantes.** Este trabalho procurou potencializar reflexões acerca do trabalho docente de professores iniciantes da área de Língua Portuguesa e Literatura que atuam no contexto do Programa *São Paulo faz escola*. Para isso realizamos uma pesquisa qualitativa por meio de um estudo de caso, no qual se inseriram: análise documental, entrevistas e acompanhamento desses docentes. É visível nos dados analisados o sentimento de que foi retirado desses professores a autoria e a autonomia de intervenção profissional. Além disso, observamos a pressão que os docentes sofrem para que os alunos, nas avaliações meramente quantitativas da aprendizagem, apresentem notas altas, desconsiderando por completo o processo vivido no decorrer do ano letivo.

**Palavras-chave:** Trabalho Docente. Currículo do Estado de São Paulo. Ensino de Língua Portuguesa e Literatura. Professores Iniciantes.

## Introduction

This paper results from a master's degree research in Education, which has investigated the work of newly qualified teachers through the syllabuses of *São Paulo Faz Escola* program, introduced in São Paulo public schools in the year of 2008, becoming the official curriculum of the state in 2010. This program was created with the justification, by the state, that the teaching in public schools was presenting itself insufficient. To solve this problem, the solution was to create a common material, pre-prepared, intended to the whole network of public schools. This material was produced by means of an invitation from the Vanzolini Foundation to professionals linked to state universities.

Since all the public schools teachers in São Paulo have to work the same way (by using the syllabuses from the program), it can be said that this research aims to understand and evaluate the teaching activities of newly qualified teachers who work in a public school in the state of São Paulo through the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program; in other words, it was intended to examine to what extent this curriculum, organized through syllabuses, can contribute to the improvement of teaching practice.

In order to conduct our study, we developed a qualitative research which, by means of a case study, involved three newly qualified teachers from the areas of Portuguese Language and Literature in high school classes, in a school in the interior of São Paulo state. These teachers were designated by the three initial letters of the alphabet: Teacher A (male, 5 years of teaching); Teacher B (female, 3 years of teaching); Teacher C (female, 5 years of teaching). To collect the data, we used three instruments: a) documentary analysis – aimed at the thorough and systematic knowledge of the structure of the curriculum of São Paulo, through the analysis of official documents; b) semi-structured interviews – all participating teachers were interviewed by voluntary agreement, so we could capture the data in the most spontaneous way possible; c) direct observation with the use of a field diary – the presence of the researcher in the classes of the subjects played a key role in building the research, as the effective work with the syllabuses from the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program could be observed and investigated. The use of the field diary allowed the researcher to register all the fact and reflections that emerged during the observations of lessons. To perform the data analysis, the content analysis methodology was adopted, as it is “A research technique used to make valid and replicable inferences from data to their context” (Krippendorff apud Lüdke; André, 2011, p. 41).

## A Brief History of São Paulo State Curricular Program

To understand the functional structure of the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program, we have taken as a basis the official statement from the São Paulo State Department of Education, which is exposed on the

program's website. This site informs that the birth of the new proposal was based on the results of SAEB (now called Prova Brasil), ENEM (the national high schools exam) and other evaluations carried out in 2007. "The need to create a set of actions on educational policy field was justified by the low scores of students from public schools in different external evaluations." (Catanzaro, 2012, p. 19).

The first step towards the new proposal was the adoption, in early 2008, of learning recovery materials - the so-called *Student's Newspaper*. This recovery was expected to be done in 42 days, focusing mainly on the disciplines of Portuguese Language and Math, "emphasizing the recovery (replacement) of linguistic and logical-mathematical structures based on the results of SARESP 2005" (Fini, 2008a, p. 31). This material was composed by the *Student's Newspaper* and the *Teacher's Magazine*, which was later renamed *Teacher's Syllabus*. This educational catch-up was based on the premise that the students were not able to comprehend what they were reading.

After this period of recovery / enhancement, the new Curricular Proposal started to be, in fact, implemented, which was comprised on the following documents: 1) *Basis* - which "[...] introduces the principles and concepts basing the curricular proposal" (Fini, 2008a, p. 16); 2) *Manager's Syllabuses* - which "[...] feature suggestions for the organization of the work from the specialists responsible for curriculum management in schools" (Fini, 2008a, p.18), and also contains "[...] agenda proposals, schedule, activities and organization of resources to support the work of the director, the pedagogical coordinator, the CPW's and the supervisor"; and 3) *Teacher's Syllabuses* - which "[...] propose teaching activities for all classes in all grades and disciplines" (Fini, 2008a, p. 20). Those teacher's syllabuses present the content inserted in "Learning Situations" and guide the teacher towards the methodology to be used in each class, through many scripts and making use of verbs in the imperative mode.

In the year of 2009, São Paulo state also creates the *Student's Syllabus*, which was handed out to each student, divided bimonthly and by disciplines. It consists mainly of a consumable material provided for the realization of the activities proposed in the *Teacher's Syllabuses*.

It is also important to report that other actions were taken during this program, such as the wage subsidies that were offered to all the employees (not only the teachers) in schools that manage to achieve good results in the external evaluations. The newly qualified teachers, after taking the public office, undergo to a preparatory course which focuses on the curriculum.

Briefly, we list below the main measures taken by the state to create the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program:

- Adoption of recovery/strengthening material common to all the public schools, so that the students can adapt to the new proposal;

- Unification of the elementary school curriculum (Cycle II) and high school: all schools in São Paulo adopted the Teacher and the Student Syllabuses, which already bring the contents and methodologies to be used by the teacher to achieve the desired results;
- Integration of the new material with the external evaluations, such as Saesp;
- Financial bonus to all staff from the schools who have reached their goals, confirmed by undertaking the Saesp;
- Mandatory preparatory course to all the teachers who became office-holders through public tender;
- Application of a test to temporary teachers (OFA)<sup>2</sup> so that they would be allowed to teach in assigned classes.

### **Reflections on the Methodological Path Traveled**

To understand and evaluate the teaching work of teachers-subject of this research, and intending to respond to the research purposes with the theoretical study of the topic, three dimensions emerged to be considered:

1. The teaching-learning concept that the teachers bring and their visions about the unification of the curriculum;
2. The teachers' work organization based on teaching-learning concepts, such as their views about the unification of the curriculum;
3. Teachers' intervention/action on their daily classroom work.

These three dimensions will be focused on the work of the teachers, but supported by the state's material, since it is what will influence the work of teachers.

#### *Dimension 1: The teaching-learning concept that the teacher brings and his visions about the unification of the curriculum*

Teacher A, when interviewed, describes his beliefs on a teaching system based upon the need of the students, and in several moments of the interview he reinforces this idea.

He observes that a good way to develop mother language and literature teaching is "[...] not working with a focus on grammar only neither imposing the reading of pre-determined books". We realize, therefore, that his concepts of Portuguese class are not those focused on the study of the rules of traditional grammar, which was so strong in the past and yet present nowadays, a fact pointed out by Zuin and Reyes (2010).

He says that the Portuguese language class is developed from a textual genre, working towards the "[...] reading, developing the writing skills relevant to the studied genre, the linguistic knowledge". This discourse shows an attitude that goes towards the contemporary needs

proposed by Mendonça (2009) regarding the replacement of a grammar-centered class to a linguistic-centered one.

On the other hand, teacher B believes that the vast majority of the teachers end up focusing on a more traditional methodology: “[...] most of the teachers focus their classes on something more traditional. My clientele sometimes find my classes a bit odd because I am not traditional at all”. Teacher B reports a strong focus on grammar rules: “[...] it’s too focused on grammar rules, people use to do a huge terrorism with the grammar, and the students learn the orthographic rules but they don’t learn how it’s used. It ends up being very abstract.” Indeed, Zuin and Reyes (2010) point out this preponderance of grammar studies.

Teacher B also says that a challenge to teaching is “[...] to be able to awake in the students the interest to learn and to study”, because “[...] they [the students] can’t see the point on it”. To be able to teach, teacher B says she tries to get closer to the students’ realities:

[...] I have a very close relationship with them. Although I always maintain professionalism, I always try to bring that student closer to me and I try to pull some daily references and link them with the Portuguese Languages contents.

On a similar approach, teacher C mentions the contextualized teaching on her interview. She mentions that the teaching of Portuguese Language and Literature “[...] must be done in a combined way to link the grammar to the literary texts”.

This claim shows us a conviction in a Portuguese language class that is different from those based on recurring activities about grammar rules. By integrating the study of grammar to the one about literary texts, as the teacher says, we will be approaching the concept of teaching the mother language in the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program itself, that recommends that the mother language nowadays,

[...] could no longer be thought of in a fragmented way, as mere decoding of content and reproduction of ideas, disregarding the life experiences of their interlocutors, not taking into account their previous knowledge and the legitimacy of their knowledge, decontextualizing teaching in mechanical and repetitive exercises by distorting the grammar to enhance specific rules at the expenses of many other existing ones (Fini, 2008b, p. 42).

When analyzing the São Paulo state curriculum, teacher A considers it positive, claiming to see that “teaching by competences and skills came at a moment when schools were extremely content-oriented, and the most important thing was the student seeing the content, not necessarily learning it”. We infer from this statement that the teacher means that the retention of content was viewed as more important in schools, not resulting in an improvement of the trodden process for the produc-

tion of knowledge, because we understand that if the student acquires certain knowledge, there was learning involved.

Regarding the unification of curriculum, teacher A says “[...] I believe that this unification is important so that there isn’t any gap between the contents developed in different schools, different places. If the contents are unified, the students could only have benefits”. We reinforce the importance of the context to the school life. With a unified curriculum, how will the aspects of local or even regional relevance be approached? *Students could only have benefits* if their needs were taken in consideration during this process of unification; since this curriculum was built from top to bottom, neither one of those individual aspects were contemplated. Through this same quote by Teacher A, transcribed above, we can understand his concern in maintaining a common ground between schools. However, we need to question: is it really necessary to prepare such a disciplinarian material (besides the fact that it also generates a large public spending) to guarantee the achievement of this common ground? Wouldn’t the definition of a teaching program meet that need? Many could say: it is not enough that *the teacher only fulfills the program; we need a material ready for him to fulfill it*. In fact, a public statement of José Serra proves that thought<sup>3</sup>.

Moving a little further, we can conclude that the teacher can also choose not to use the state material. That history teacher quoted by Serra can continue to teach the history of Mongolia if she wanted to. However, we have to remind ourselves about the other actions of *São Paulo Faz Escola* program such as applying ratings to teachers and students, seeking to ensure good results by quantitative means, and even offering financial bonuses to professionals. It seems that the issue of content unification becomes more fragile when seen from this point of view.

On the other hand, teacher B advises that not always the curriculum is part of what she considers a good teaching of Grammar and Literature:

[...] I think it’s too focused on grammar rules, it has a literature part, but this part is too unspecific for the students [...] it’s very subtle, everything is very subtle. There were a lot of things to be worked in the curriculum, but when we see the Student’s Syllabus, which is supposed to be a good material to support us in class, it ends up being vague. Both in grammar and in literature, and I think it is even vaguer in Literature.

To confirm that, if it depended on her, she would not continue to use the material. She even goes a step further:

[...] If I could, I would have a meeting with teachers from the same discipline for us to assemble a material aimed at the reality of our student. I think that this project of working the same thing in the entire state is very, very unrealistic. Aiming at the reality of our students, aiming at what they think of their future, what they expect for their future.

This statement confirms that the concern of teacher B is to really provide a contextualized education, addressing the needs of students. As reported by her, if it depended on her will, she would try to recover the loss of authorship and autonomy brought by the curriculum.

Teacher C also mentions that the new curriculum material is “a little far from the student reality. When you read the syllabus, which was supposed to base the teaching of Portuguese, everything is very pretty and articulate, but the ‘little syllabuses’ not always work the way it is there”. Indeed, this teacher comments on many occasions about her concerns to connect the syllabus’ content to the student’s reality. It was reported by her that the program’s text presents itself in a contemporary and beautiful way, but the syllabuses not always work according to that discourse.

Teacher A intensifies his satisfaction with the unification of curriculum, quoting as a positive aspect the creation of the Student’s and Teacher’s Syllabus itself, saying that previously “the teachers used to have to elaborate the teaching plan and their work plan based on the textbooks that the schools had”. Working this way, however, wouldn’t the teacher have more autonomy to create teaching strategies, making the contextualization of contents easier? Catazanaro (2012, p.14) says that *São Paulo Faz Escola*

[...] is a centralized program that proposes the same material throughout the state of São Paulo as a response to the realization that the poor quality of the state public schools resulted from the autonomy of educational planning and the autonomy of each teacher in their lonely work of defining content and methodologies.

Would teacher A’s statement not value the curriculum material to the detriment of the teacher’s freedom in creating strategies for the production of knowledge?

As a negative aspect, this same teacher mentions the lack of authorship of teachers in the creation of new material, an aspect that we can prove through Nóvoa (2011) when he says that the teacher’s action is controlled by different entities and that the teachers had their professional territory invaded by other groups.

### *Dimension 2: Teacher Work Organization*

Through interviews and observations, it became clear that teacher A organizes his work strongly based on the Program syllabuses. He says: “[...] it is a material that I consider as good, I use it quite often in my classes, and I also merge it with activities that I produce.” As we can observe, the teacher claims to use the curriculum material combined with activities produced by him.



By accompanying teacher B, we also noticed that the organization of her work is done trying to merge the activities of the curriculum material with others that she considers necessary to promote teaching in her classroom. In an interview, Teacher B tells us about the focus that is given to the new curriculum, which starts from the mandatory training ('Escola Rede do Saber') and reaches schools:

In fact, everything revolved around the implementation of the curriculum, everything. It was all about the proposed curriculum. The pedagogical part - which is the first part of the course - only mentioned it and was even taken to the specific part within the Portuguese area. But it is like this all the time... even in school. At school, it is curriculum, curriculum and curriculum all the time. There is a lot of talking about the curriculum.

However, teacher B seems to be more concerned with observing what happens inside her classroom to organize her work, deciding for the use of the curriculum material in a class or not.

Teacher A states that he can contextualize the curriculum, adapting it to the local reality. He says that "I have to match this curriculum and I try to always work with it in the classroom. However, I always contextualize it because many things aren't meeting the student's realities yet".

Teacher B, on the other hand, claims to seek a rapprochement between her and her students to link the content of her lessons with the daily life of students, and it appears to be the center of her decision whether to use the Syllabuses or not.

Actually, Teacher B shows in several moments of the interview the letdowns of working with this material. For instance, when she reveals her opinion on the material, which haven't changed since it was implemented: "[...] Actually, I think it has intensified. I was against it and I still think the same, only more intensively". Believing that using the state material only does not fully meet the needs of students, we understand why this teacher develops activities that are not present in the material. Nóvoa (2011) claims that it is necessary to stand against the consumerism of actions fed by the idea that the teachers are outdated. As it seems, teacher B is following this path.

Moreover, we can also see that in addition to create new activities, teacher B also creates teaching strategies apart from those within the Teacher's Syllabus, a process considered as extremely important by Anastasiou and Alves (2003).

Regarding teacher C, we infer that some of the answers given by her may be related to the lack of time to provide us answers through the instrument to collect data. Teacher C works 48 hours per week in classroom. When asked about her weekly organization to work, she says "[...] I plan the classes during my break time or weekends". The teacher confirms that, if it depended on her, she would keep on using the material



provided by the state, saying that “[...] it avoids wasting time in work organization”. When asked about the positive aspects of the Program, she says “[...] it speeds up the preparation of classes”. Indeed, the ‘little syllabuses’ can help by providing many things ready to be used and, since this teacher has a full workload and not enough time to prepare classes, we understand the reason for these declarations. Also, considering that teacher C is still in the early years of her career, her opinions are better understood when this fact is taken into consideration. However, if the positive aspects of the curriculum for this teacher are only based on the fact that it provides quickness to the planning of classes, many other important aspects of teaching and learning process are being ignored.

When she learned about the new Curriculum Proposal of São Paulo, Teacher C said she found it “[...] interesting to have a pre-organized material”; the teacher also says that the new curriculum “[...] is a guiding material to our classes”. And once again we ask: Would this stance be linked to the fact that this ‘little syllabus’ can be seen as an enabling material for the organization of work of an overloaded teacher?

Teacher C says that, in order to have some qualification of professional practice “[...] it is necessary to have some free time”, which shows us once more the concerns of this teacher with the time factor.

In addition to the curriculum-based material, teacher C also uses other resources in her classes. In fact, when we were trying to schedule to watch her classes, she asked us to wait for a certain lesson because she was working with the textbooks and not using the program’s syllabuses. She mentioned that she was teaching some subjects that were not included in the material.

### *Dimension 3: Teacher’s intervention/action on their day-to-day classroom work*

We will begin this section reflecting on Teacher A’s actions. The observed classes from this teacher were very similar to each other: he walks into the room, sits down to go through the presence list and stands up in the center of the classroom holding the Teacher’s Syllabus.

He remained standing during the entire classes, most of the time holding the Syllabus, except when writing notes on the board.

He mentions, on the interview, that one of the biggest challenges of teaching is the lack of interest from the students. Indeed, watching his classes, this lack of interest is promptly noted. The classes are developed almost mechanically, without much interaction between students and teacher.

One aspect that deserves attention in teacher A’s classes is that he does not use different strategies from those presented by the material. It seems that his concern is to follow the program material to the letter.

Anastasiou and Alves (2003) commented on the importance of teaching strategies in the classroom, in the process called by them *ensinagem* (teach-learning).

At *ensinagem*, the processes of teaching and learning require a working environment so that you can *savor* the knowledge in question. The *flavor* is perceived by the students when the teacher teaches a certain area which s/he also relishes, in professional daily reading and/or researching, and socializes it with his/her partners in the classroom. [...] In this process, the involvement of the individuals, in its totality, is essential. [...] Through *ensinagem*, we should enable the thinking, a situation where each student can redraw the relationship of the contents, considering the aspects that mutually determine and influence, in a collaborative action between teachers and students with different actions and levels of responsibility made clear by the strategies adopted (Anastasiou; Alves, 2003, p.15, authors' highlights).

We did not notice this involvement, this collaborative action between teacher and students in teacher's A classes. Would it be possible for him to awaken more interest in your students when using different strategies than those offered by the material?

Remembering that this teacher is in the early years of his career, he may be in the *sequence of exploration* described by Huberman (1995), in which he experiments the *shock of realness*. At this stage the teacher may be limited by parameters imposed by the institution. It is understandable that a teacher with a short time of experience, when faced with a material such as the São Paulo curriculum, can *cling* to it to accomplish its class.

During the interview, the teacher said:

I do use the syllabuses during my classes, and I'll keep using the suggested material, because the external evaluations are based on these syllabuses, this curriculum, and there is no way out of it because it can result in a drastic reduction of the ratings on the external evaluations.

We proved, again, the imposition of the institution on the teaching work. Based on the previous statement, we are able to realize that the teacher's actions inside the classroom are based on his concerns with external evaluations, not with the process experienced between him and his students so that it can be construction of knowledge. We observed, during the classes of teacher A, the virtually rigorous implementation of the proposed activities in the curriculum books. The relationship between the teacher and his students was practically forgotten.

As learning requires an understanding and apprehension of the content by the student, the construction of a relational set, a network or a system, on which the new

knowledge acquired by the student enlarges or somehow modifies the initial status, is essential (Anastasiou; Alves, 2003, p. 16).

Nóvoa (2011) had already questioned whether teachers nowadays are less reflective by excessive pre-prepared teaching materials. As it seems, we were able to observe this by watching teacher A's classes.

An aspect strongly defended by this teacher is the contextualization of the content. In several moments of his interview he highlights it. He also claims that the new curriculum:

[...] has an opening to it. It's extremely flexible, even contextualized with the pedagogical proposal of the school, and it has to be contextualized with the students, with their different level of knowledge. The contents that are in the curriculum will always be contextualized like this. In several moments you will have to raise the level of the classes and at other moments you'll have to lower the level of the classes to reach for the student somehow.

However, we were not able to verify this action during his classes. With the strict application of the Teacher's Syllabus, the teacher seems to forget to dialogue and to interact with the students. Even when the interaction was the students' own initiative, the teacher just ignored it. For instance, during an activity in which they were working with a text written in Portuguese from Portugal, the students were supposed to list which words were odd to them and translate them to Brazilian Portuguese. Teacher A, while correcting the activity, did not talk to the students and went straight to just announcing the answers. When he was talking about the word *chapa*, which meant bus, one of the students interrupted him saying "Oh, *chapa* must mean bus". Despite this (right) reasoning from the student, the teacher did not take advantage of the situation to interact with the group. Admittedly, the standard language should have an important space in the classroom, but that was a propitious opportunity to work with the students' reality, mentioned by the teacher during the interview, and it would be in line with his discourse to bring linguistic aspects to the Portuguese classes.

Likewise, we did not observe contextualization related to the teaching of grammar rules. In an activity in which some grammar terms were just mentioned, the teacher did not even explain any of them, even when he noticed that the students did not understand them. Themes like *adjective, verbal times and modes* were not explained nor contextualized. During the interview, the teacher says: "[...] the students must understand the meaning of it, the utility of it, what Portuguese Language adds to their lives". The way he acted during classes, however, made us believe that the Portuguese Language may not mean anything to his students.

This teacher declared that he creates activities aside from those in the Syllabuses: "[...] I consider it to be a good material, I use it in my

classes often, but I also mix it with some activities I create myself". It was confirmed, indeed, that he does it. However, his activities are very similar to those from the curriculum material. Again, on those activities produced by the teacher, contextualization with the students' reality was not observed. For example: the curriculum material proposed an activity about the textual genre *summary*, but did not introduce the theme before. The teacher, seeing that, prepared an activity for the students to know this genre. The development of this activity was just asking to the students to copy the genre characteristics from the board, comment on them and answer some questions on their own notebooks. This activity was accomplished just like the ones from the Program syllabus: mechanically, without contextualization or interaction with the students. What draws our attention on this occasion is that the teacher did not establish any kind of dialogue with the students, at no time of the lessons observed; he wrote down the activity on the board, asked them to do it and corrected it orally.

Given what we have just exposed, we can ask: would it be possible that, as this teacher is in the early years of his career, he may be so caught up to the recommendations of the governing bodies that he ends up worrying with preparing students for external evaluations more than paying attention to the process that takes place in the course of their classes, when the students could be heard?

As a result of it, this teacher claims to have an understanding of teaching the mother language that is the opposite of the one from the past. However, even so, we noted a mismatch between his discourse and his actions: his attitude in the classroom is in no way different from the model in which the traditional grammar contents were presented to the student, repetitively and without context.

We conclude, by watching this teacher's classes, that this professional uses the *São Paulo Faz Escola* material as the class itself, not as a supporting material to reach the intended goals. In all the watched classes in which the teacher used the Syllabuses, we witnessed him following the material strictly, without interaction.

In face of this, a questioning from Anastasiou and Alves (2003, p. 68) comes to mind: "[...] in the current context of unpredictability, change and uncertainty, must we continue to work in the classroom in the same way it was done in the past century?"

Moving on to discuss teacher B's teaching work, we found a great coherence between her discourse in her interview and her performance in the classroom. She used the Syllabuses in some classes only.

In relation to this – the fact of not always using the material – she says:

The curricular proposal was already there when I started teaching. There was already a lot of pressure to follow it. It was always quite imposed. The

supervisor does it, the people from the Board of Education do it; they are always checking if we are working with the Syllabuses. Last year I even had a problem with our coordinator because he told me that I was not following the Syllabuses. I replied saying that I would not be able to work with the Syllabuses in the first bimester because my students couldn't read yet. It did not make sense to me, to work with the Student Syllabus when the students wouldn't understand any of what was written there. So I decided – it was my option – to do a recovery work with them, reviewing some contents, including those from 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades [...] and he [the coordinator] called me and told me that I wasn't working, that we were supposed to be working with the curriculum and that I was getting out of the line.

The teacher's action, as we are able to see, is oriented by what is happening inside the classroom, which is not a static environment, in which the *little syllabus* will produce all the necessary means for the process of teaching and learning; it's a living space, with inequalities, multicultural.

Indeed, the initial classes of teacher B observed by us did not include the state material. The teacher was working on debates with the students. To do so, she divided the students in groups and guided the debates. The activity itself provided different opportunities to the teacher, such as working spelling and grammar aspects, based on what was being said by the students. The teacher seized those opportunities and, using the board, pointed out some of the more formal aspects of grammar.

In order to develop a content of the Syllabus – Parnassianism – teacher B adopted a different approach: the use of play dough. Dividing the class into groups, teacher B asked the students to make a vase with the play dough. The intention was to relate the vase made by the students to one of the characteristics of Parnassianism - *art for art*. This strategy promoted a high level of participation from the students.

We observed, in teacher B's classes, a highly meaningful change in the students' participation when the classes were based on the strategies of the state material – there was much less participation than when the class was freely created by the teacher and her students.

Finally, we will conclude our analysis reflecting over the actions of teacher C, who had asked for a while before we started observing her classes, because she claimed to be working with other activities from the school textbook. Regarding the quality of the knowledge worked in her area of expertise in the new curriculum, the teacher says: “[...] it demands some requirements without which it falls short”. When searching for these requirements, the teacher justifies the use of other strategies, different from those within the Syllabuses, either through the use of textbooks or through research requested to students.

During the observed classes, teacher C used a lot of the curriculum material, however not as a guidebook – like it was observed on

Teacher A's classes. Since the first class observed, she dialogued a lot with her students, checking if they had any previous knowledge on the content in question. When realizing that the students did not have it, she tended to provide a special moment in class in order to offer the necessary support for the development of the activity.

As examples, we observed the teacher seeking to connect the following contents to the students' lives: textual elements of cohesion, literary text definition, vocabulary definitions and literary schools.

Furthermore, the teacher asked for research papers, not included in the Syllabus, about the paint *Las Meninas* (from Velázquez) and scansion of poems.

When speaking about the relation between the São Paulo state curriculum and external evaluations, teacher C states: "[...] I think that it will still take a while for the external evaluations and 'syllabus' to be on the same level". It was the only moment this teacher mentioned external evaluations. In her classes, she had shown more concern with the issue of entrance exams.

### *Other Considerations and Observations*

During a scientific research we clarify some points that are unfamiliar to us and, at the same time, other ones emerge. In Education, it is not always possible to find satisfying answers, but if the answer is not found right away, reflecting upon the questions matures and encourages us to continue searching. This is the reason why we make the following remarks.

When speaking about the mandatory course from the *Escola de Formação*, teacher A says: "[...] the second part was about Portuguese Language itself and literature teaching". Does the SSE-SP believe that the newcomer professionals do not acquire this knowledge in their initial training? Or does it want to discipline the teachers according to their own way of teaching Portuguese Language and Literature?

Teacher A also says that, during the course, there were no new contents, since he was already working in public schools and was familiar with the way the Program worked – "[...] what was being presented was not new. So, for me, this was not of great value." He also says that "[...] a lot of teachers did the course only to receive the scholarship and ended up just not taking their positions". The state provides a scholarship (around R\$ 1.5000,00, according to teacher A) to provide a course for teachers that will not even take the job and to others who already know the contents of the course since they already work on public schools. Is it really a necessary spending? Would that really be an action to train the teachers?

When speaking about the mandatory course, teacher B states: "[...] the course's contents are the same that we saw during the undergradu-

ate course, it was kind of a review and the last tests – I have done specific and pedagogical tests – were not difficult”. Once again we question the reasons for a course like that. What is the purpose to require the teacher to attend a course that recapitulates the undergraduate one? Is it the lack of confidence in the teaching training courses?

We must remember that the curriculum itself is a topic approached during the course – “...we talked a lot about the curriculum during the continuing education course too” – and many of the teachers attending it, after being approved on public tender, were OFA or ACT teachers and had some previous knowledge of the curriculum. Teacher B was in that situation:

I think that for those who are already teaching, it is easy. But for the entrant, the guy who passes the public tender... I don't know if this guy knows things the way we do, I don't know it because most of the people doing the course with me were already teaching, so we're dealing daily with these classes and the material was already being used, it already comes in the curriculum we use to work with.

If the teacher already knows the material, already uses it in the schools, should s/he really attend this course?

Regarding literature teaching, this teacher says that the Syllabuses bring “[...] little pieces of the literary oeuvres and short texts about the authors, but do not explain the importance of those authors. [...] You can't work with it if you don't have a support material besides the Student's Syllabus”. But wasn't the Student's Syllabus supposed to be a support material? Is it really necessary to have another one besides it?

Teacher B reports her difficulty in working with the appreciation of the different cultures present in her classroom, an aspect provided by the curriculum.

They speak about appreciating the culture, it's just that [...] I think the curriculum does not contemplate it. It has it. In theory, it says that you have to work with the diversity, but it doesn't bring a very effective way to do so, at least not on a daily basis [...]. You don't have something for each region. It considers the whole state as the same [...].

Since this curriculum was developed *from top to bottom*, for the entire São Paulo State, it does not consider unique characteristics or situations.

The choice of using the Syllabuses or not goes beyond a mere option based on its methodology or not, because it is linked with other aspects, such as external evaluations. Even though she is not pleased with the material, teacher B tells us:

[...] but you can't avoid some things, because it's a project that comes from the Board of Education, and the hierarchy is huge. In case the school doesn't follow the program, the Board of Education comes after us, the Department of Education comes after the Boards that are not showing good results, it's like a ripple effect.



Even not being labeled as compulsory, the material has lots of other supporting actions to encourage its use in classroom. Catanzaro (2012, p. 22) already sees the highlights of the Syllabuses in this new curriculum:

We see these materials (Students' and Teachers' Syllabuses) as one of the most visible ones in the package of actions that comes with the current São Paulo State education policy. The way it is divided by contents, disciplines, bimesters, and its distribution every two months (not once or twice a year for instance), occupying the corridors and school materials organization rooms to be distributed to the students by the teachers responsible for the disciplines every two months. That makes them constantly visible in the school space, imposing or remembering the teachers, at least every two months, of their existence, their deadlines and making sure that the implications of their use is clear to those involved, since their contents are directly linked with the SARESP evaluation.

At the school where this research was developed, we were able to observe this fact pointed by Catanzaro: the school corridors were full of Students' Syllabuses, stacked on the floor. In face of this, the problem of distribution of the material is astonishing: some editions do not come in sufficient numbers; others are distributed in much larger numbers than what the school needs. We were informed that the school is not allowed to discard the oversupplied material; for this reason, the school we were visiting tried to store books in a room by the gymnasium. Teacher B also says that the material not always arrives at the proper time:

Ever since I started teaching – and I already started with these Syllabuses – here they arrive always on time, but there, in [name of a city], it happened that the Syllabus for the first two months of classes arrived in the third bimester. So it's hard to work, because although the management team tells us to use them, we don't have the material to do so.

If the material is delivered out of the scheduled time, it may not be used. Add that to the fact that there are always more volumes delivered than the school really uses and we will have a surplus of books that will serve no purpose. This is unnecessary spend of public money.

Despite not being in favor of the material, teacher B says that sometimes she uses these Syllabuses just to follow the curriculum project (giving that the total abandonment of it would bring other implications, as shown). "I do not hide that I hate it [the material]. There are things on it that we can use, but there is a lot of things that are useless, and we have to work with them to follow the Program".

### ***São Paulo Faz Escola* Program: its implications in teaching work**

From the three different teachers we observed, we found three different situations, although all of them did use the Syllabuses. This fact excludes a possible naive view that public school teachers, by using the same material, would have a similar behavior.

The teaching work developed according to the *São Paulo Faz Escola* Program happens differently. Our concern lies in the fact that some teachers can take this material as the teaching practice itself, not as a support material. If the teacher is in the early years of her/his career – as the cases analyzed – it is easy to understand that this teacher may consider the material as a *safe harbor*. However, if these professionals find themselves in a new situation, without having this type of material, how will their work be like? Considering that they already learned to teach with this material, how will their autonomy be if they don't have to use the material anymore?

Importantly, the state discourse itself can tie the teaching work to the use of the material, considering that the evaluations – applied both to teachers and to students - are based on it. So, the teaching work gets tied to the fulfillment of the curriculum contents so that there is no lowering or modifying on the evaluation grading.

Another concern arising out of this study refers to the fact that the Syllabuses are being used by teachers as a support which saves time in the organization of teaching. If the lesson is already planned, the teacher does not need to 'waste time' with it. We believe that we do not need to explain how harmful an attitude like this can be to the process of teaching and learning.

However, the teaching action can be more focused on the students' needs than to the proper application of the program material - as we were able to observe when accompanying teacher B. This fact draws our attention to the experimentation of the life cycle characteristics of teachers according to Huberman (1995), in which the author claims that not all teachers live that cycle linearly, nor in the same order. If in Huberman's *diversification phase* (1995) the teachers already modify the teaching material, its sequences etc., we can infer that teacher B has experimented this phase.

Regarding a possible professional culture emerging from the work with the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program material, we did not verify in this research anything that could indicate it.

By presenting a policy that brings the contents divided per year, bimester, and number of classes for each theme, where the approach of a subject is determined and explained to the teacher and classes are planned in each step, the state of São Paulo provides a form of work in

schools in which, with the focus on the quality of teaching (clearly aimed at the quantification of results), it takes from the school and the teacher the need to collectively plan the work. In other words, the aspects which were supposed to be debated and decided among the educational professionals – according to the law – become essential at the time when all these aspects are already prescribed (Catanzaro, 2012, p. 77).

This aspect presented by Catanzaro, associated with the fact that there was no common understanding among the teachers concerning the use or not of the Syllabuses, might be one of the reasons why there isn't a professional culture being formed.

Briefly we can say that, in our study, the teaching work has been affected by issues related to the concern over external evaluations and the fall of quantitative grading brought by them. In this context, the teaching action was bound to fulfilling the material, so that students could perform successful assessments. We also observe that the teaching work can be affected as the teacher believes that the state material can provide him/her a faster organization of his work. In contrast, even when using the material, a teacher can also focus more on the relationship between him/herself and his/her students, in which he/she will be attentive to the real needs of the learners.

In the course of time, we believe that we will have more knowledge about the teaching work bound to the use of this material. In case this program proves unsatisfactory in the future, who will be blamed for inadequate teaching?

Students are assessed in accordance with what should have been taught based on syllabuses. If the results are poor (according to the same logic), the teachers are not competent in the application of SPFE, just like they were not competent to organize the work in the previous and decentralized way (Catanzaro, 2012, p. 88).

A public policy, just like the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program, can format the teaching work. It does not happen to all teachers, but it is possible. In the studied case, the materials eventually generated different, sometimes antagonistic feelings related to the teaching work. This situation turns out to affect two fundamental aspects of the teachers' work: authorship and autonomy, defacing their profession as someone unable to think, build, intervene and be a true teacher. The way the program shows itself made us to question: Is quality teaching the one that is successful in external evaluations? If the only thing that matters is the final result, can anyone become a teacher, since it is only a matter of *following the manual*?

## Final Considerations

This study aimed to follow and record the teaching work of three teachers of Portuguese Language and Literature disciplines, all acting in high school. We emphasize that this research covers a specific, dated situation, but that it also represents part of the reality of public schools in São Paulo nowadays.

The grounds of the program are the materials that were created by it, especially the Teacher's and Student's Syllabuses – this last one called *the little syllabus* by the teachers. Under these circumstances, our attention goes to the teacher autonomy, since the work is done with a pre-prepared material, similar to an apostilled-teaching system, which can cause impairment to school identity.

An owner or a group of partners gathered, regardless of the institutional manner allowed by law, when they choose to tie their institution to the apostilled-teaching system give away part of the power to define the pedagogical theory which would provide their school with an identity.[...] And the pedagogical decisions are made at a distance, without the pressures that could transform possibilities into realities in the school: the decision has already been taken, and it gives a huge power of control to the boards and coordination (Laurindo, 2012, p. 105).

Catanzaro (2012) also notes a difference between the material of the *São Paulo Faz Escola* Program and other apostilled-teaching systems:

It is not done in the same way as the other booklet learn-ship systems. You can always recognize a discourse directed to the teacher, and the contents have extremely specific guidelines, be it presenting, debating and evaluating. That is, the material comes with all the guidelines about how *to be* a teacher and *how* to organize the pedagogical work. Those aspects are not mere detail, they are presented with the contents and in the parts directed to the teaching work (Catanzaro, 2012, p. 41, author's highlight).

In other words, the guidelines for teachers are very strong in the *São Paulo Faz Escola* Program. Faced with a poor performance of students, an unprecedented measure was adopted to reverse this situation, and to this uncommon action was given the status of speeding up the improvements of teaching in São Paulo State. However, as Laurindo says (2012, p. 107):

If such motivation reveals a concern with the possibility that different actions generate differentiated quality, on the other hand, it focuses on the schools' and teacher's autonomy regarding the organization of work

when it takes from them the possibility to organize the activities and classes according to the local needs, as assured by LDB.

It was in order to comprehend the organization of these activities that we were in direct contact with the teachers. During this follow-up, we verified that the three teachers who joined our research use the state material in their classes – even though they use it in different manners. Indeed, the new curriculum was never labeled as mandatory, but as we have already discussed, the decision of not using it results in other problems.

When trying to centralize it, the state government planned a program in articulation with other actions that evaluate it according to the results achieved by public schools students, ensuring a bonus to the schools which improved their results, as well as evaluating their teachers individually, with tests based on the Syllabus' contents (Catanzaro, 2012, p. 14-15).

Besides the salary bonus to teachers and school staff, the students themselves are affected in this process because,

[...] the way in which issues are presented, skills that must be worked and the continuity of themes from one year to the next must be fulfilled. There are consequences both for the students – who receive a new material every year and must have studied the contents of the previous year (which will reflect on the external evaluations) – and for the teachers, who will also be evaluated according to their results. [...] There are references to the ENEM rules on the Syllabuses, reminding the teachers that this kind of evaluations is part of their work (Catanzaro, 2012, p. 85).

That concern with external evaluations could be observed on our research. Teacher A, for instance, mentions this aspect during his interview, and his actions in the classroom are based on this concern, as said by the teacher himself. However, to fulfill all the contents on the material, the concerns over teaching and learning might be left out.

On the other hand, we could verify with teacher B that, even with the *São Paulo Faz Escola* program, we can find a refusal of the consumerism of actions based on the ineffectiveness of the teaching work, as presented by Nóvoa (2011).

Three distinct situations emerged out of the three teachers we analyzed: the one who defends the new material and uses it almost page by page (Teacher A); the one who does not hesitate to express her displeasure with syllabuses and uses diverse strategies to plan classes (Teacher B); and one that seems to be in a middle ground between teachers A and B, claiming to be pleased with the material, but uses other resources (Teacher C).

Faced with such different attitudes, we remember again the considerations of Huberman (1995) when dealing with the teaching life-cycle. The author says that not all the teachers experience the different phases of the cycle in the same order. The three teachers who joined our study have one thing in common: they are all newly qualified teachers. One might expect, therefore, that their performance in the classroom would be more or less similar, since they are in the same period of working life. However, we can say that we confirmed Huberman's thesis when we analyzed our subjects. The work of teacher B was the one that stood out from the other two; this teacher was already experiencing the sequence of diversification of Huberman cycle (1995). And it is interesting to point out that teacher B has less time in the teaching job, which would also confirm Huberman's thesis.

Given what we witnessed and analyzed, we can say that the teaching work through the syllabuses of *São Paulo Faz Escola* program is not developed in an even way. The teachers seem to act according with their own concepts of teaching, permeated by some assumptions about the program to a greater or lesser degree. Our worries – and angst – rely on the fact that the teacher may assume the new material as the teaching practice itself (as teacher A did). That happened before with the textbooks.

Another concern is when we realize that teachers can favor the material because it prevents “waste of time in work organization” (teacher C's words). The ‘waste of time’ is avoided, but one also loses autonomy, the possibility to bring an identity to the school, and the teacher-student relation based on the students' needs.

However, considering that the program is relatively new, we still need more time to understand its implications on the teaching-learning process.

In a work situation with pre-prepared materials, teachers should pay attention to avoid over-simplifying the teaching profession and making their classes falling into a routine, in a mechanical perspective. Teaching work is a complex work which requires time, preparation and choices. The use of pre-prepared materials can lead the teachers to not thinking, just doing it, threatening their own identity.

And the teachers should be aware of this threat, especially when faced with this kind of material at the beginning of their careers. We have proven that this is possible, as shown by teacher B in this study.

Our hope, facing this situation, is that additional research also proves the existence of those cases.

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## Notes

- 1 Classes of Pedagogical Work – a period (1-4 classes per week according to each teacher workload) reserved to planning, studying, correcting and evaluating the classes that been given.
- 2 “Ocupantes de Função Atividade” translating “Occupant of duty and activity” – teachers who work in public schools without the same rights of those who are office-holders
- 3 Statement by José Serra on video: “This did not exist. In our view, the existence of this material will greatly help to improve the quality of education, along with the other arrangements that we are doing. The way teaching was done, if a history teacher decided to teach the history of Mongolia, it could be done, rather than teaching the history of Brazil. Now, with this material, they have a reference “(Serra, 2008, online).

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