

CURRICULUM POLICIES AND PROFESSIONALIZATION: THE KNOWLEDGE OF PRACTICE IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: A reading of teacher's professionalization in curricular policies, which has been developed since the 1990s, has aimed the field of initial teacher education in Brazil and focused on the roles that knowledge of practice has played in the curricular knowledge of undergraduate programs. Its theoretical and methodological references have been studies in the field of educational policies and the poststructuralist inspired curriculum as well as, as database, observations from studies that have been done since 2005 following the impact of changes in undergraduate curricula through case studies. Aspects of curricular legislation and professional training knowledge have been discussed through interviews with senior students who reported their experiences with the reformed curricula, in addition to practice and practicum elements. It could be concluded that these policies cannot substantially change aspects of the organization and culture of institutions and that reform recontextualization has led to the disintellectualization of teacher's education.

Keywords: Curricular policies; Teacher's professionalization; Initial teacher education; Recontextualization; Knowledge of practice.

POLÍTICAS CURRICULARES E PROFISSIONALIZAÇÃO: SABERES DA PRÁTICA NA FORMAÇÃO INICIAL DE PROFESSORES

RESUMO: Realiza-se uma leitura da profissionalização docente nas políticas curriculares que, desde 1990, vêm pautando o campo da formação inicial de professores no Brasil, enfocando os sentidos que os saberes da prática vêm tendo entre os saberes curriculares das licenciaturas. Tem-se como referencial teórico e metodológico estudos do campo das políticas educacionais e do currículo de inspiração pós-estruturalista, e como fonte de dados observações de pesquisas desenvolvidas desde 2005, que acompanharam o impacto das mudanças em currículos de licenciatura através de estudos de casos. Discutem-se aspectos da legislação curricular e dos saberes da formação profissional através de depoimentos de formandos que avaliam suas experiências com os currículos reformados e os componentes da prática e do estágio. Conclui-se que as políticas não conseguem alterar substancialmente aspectos da organização e da cultura das instituições e que a recontextualização da reforma vem significando a desintellectualização da formação docente.

Palavras-chave: Políticas curriculares. Profissionalização docente. Formação inicial de professores. Recontextualização. Saberes da prática.

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INTRODUCTION

I would like to start this text by talking about the place from where I write, which is definitely not that of great optimism towards the changes implemented by official reform in the initial teacher qualification field, to analyze its impacts on professional formation knowledges and on faculty identity. I look with distrust on the movement of official curricular policies which overemphasize demands from the teaching practice and from the historical time in which we live. A time that is, in fact, greatly reified by the market, by consumption, and by the obsession with an instrumental reality, of managerial and performative nature.

I keep Mills', W. (2009) words in mind, as he refers to the type of knowledge and qualification required for the development of sociological imagination, notable ability of a good social field researcher's creative intellectual work. I believe we may think the same to (re-)imagine basic education teachers' qualification, as they may also be thought of as social and educational field intellectuals.

The development of sociological imagination and intellectual creativity goes well beyond the training in a set of specific skills and competencies. It involves serious, deep and systematic work with knowledges that may, at first, seem to have little applicability. Training teachers in charge of educating new generations, of their cultural enhancement, means having an eye on the future. In order to build this future in our schools and classrooms, where education is done in this country, it is necessary to develop, in our teachers, the talent for the most radical criticism and for the most lucid and creative imagination that may be enabled by intellectual work and systematic and "unbiased" reflection.

Not much longer than one decade after the reforms in teacher qualification courses, resulting from the curricular legislation from the start of the millennium, our studies and investigations, (Garcia, 2010; Garcia, Fonseca; Leite, 2013) based on case studies, have indicated that changes in local contexts come in the opposite direction, frustrating the legislation intents.

Based on the understanding the curricular policy is cultural politics (Lopes, 2004, 2005; Oliveira; Destro, 2003) that institutes ordering for the practice of education agents and institutions that assign new meaning to it under the light of its traditions, histories and cultures, it is argued that: 1) these policies have stimulated

form of professionalism for teachers based on a pragmatic performance, self-responsible, self-reflexive and self-manageable, and have practice knowledges as their foundational knowledge (Garcia; Fonseca; Leite 2013); 2) curricular changes proposed by the official curricular matrix (*Conselho Nacional de Educação – CNE* (National Council for Education) – Resolution CNE/CP 2, from February 19, 2002), despite their intentions, were able to change very little, at least in the cases discussed herein, strongly disciplinary and fragmented culture of the previous curricula, reproducing, in great part, the same problems regarding the stages and absence of formative project that brings together university and basic education school in building the professional identity of future teachers.

I support the development of these arguments crossing data from different sources: curricular legislation discourse still in effect for degrees in education, and a set of testimonies collected in four discussion groups with students completing, at the end of 2010, the following degrees in education at the *Universidade Federal de Pelotas - UFPel* (Federal University of Pelotas): Education degree in Physical education, from which thirty students participated; Education degree in Mathematics, from which six students participated; Education degree in Social Sciences, from which twelve students participated; and Education degree in Arts - Major in Visual Arts, from which seventeen students participated. One meeting was held for each area, and discussions with students followed a script of topics and questions intended to get to know their perspective on the curricular reform and their previous experiences, as they were the first classes to graduate after curricula had been modified by the reform at the University. One of the topics discussed was the operation of practice as a curricular component, and of supervised practicum in the new curricula, as well as the relation between theory and practice. These meetings were attended by two researchers and were recorded on video. Later on, these videos were transcribed and analyzed.

Upon producing evidences with students testimonies, I selected them as a block, considering the degree pursued and the topic being discussed, to maintain a certain unit in the testimonies, as well as the polemic nature that characterizes the discussion group data collection technique. I complement these sources with results from our¹ and other's investigations (Diniz-Pereira, J.E.; Viana, G.M., 2010; Costa, 2012), which address the same problems and the effects these policies in private institutional contexts.

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM IN CURRICULAR LEGISLATION

The curriculum is a selection device within the culture that privileges certain knowledges and discourses, and, at the same time, excludes and marginalizes others. The curriculum makes it (im)possible for certain forms of thought, sensitivity and action to emerge. Therefore, the curriculum is deeply implied in the production of who we become, who we are, and who we may come to be. Nowadays, relations involving knowledge, power and the production of different social and cultural identities represent one of the essential concerns for curriculum studies.

Educational and curricular policies are, thus, an indispensable instrument for managing school systems and teacher identity. This means proposing forms for the teacher to think of themselves as workers, and also think the objects of their work. Policies incorporate discourses on these issues, shadowing other possibilities and alternatives. As such, educational and curricular policies are regulating mechanisms, and changes in the policies imply the need to change such mechanisms, as they do not respond satisfactorily to the demands that change historically.

In accordance with Ball, S. (1994), policies are, simultaneously, texts and discourses. As texts, they are documents open to signification which incorporate ideas seldom coherent, and define certain ordering, resulting from unstable negotiations of different interests and asymmetrical power relations. Being texts of such nature, policies are also discourses, as they incorporate social interests and practices, and create conditions of possibility to institute the objects with which they deal and the effects for which they long, even if they are not able to determine or dominate the entire potentiality field in which they intend to operate. This indetermination game cases educational agencies and agents, which constantly resignify, ignore, recontextualize texts of policies in their work places, in their confrontation with their histories, resources and possibilities, mentalities, cultures and traditions, to come into play.

The National Curricular Guidelines for the Qualification of Basic Education Teachers, higher education level, education degree, full undergraduate program (CNE/CP 009/2001 Resolution, of May 8, 2001) advocates the teacher should be the education professional who has, as his task:

guiding and mediating education for students' learning; being committed to the success of students' learning; assuming and knowing how to deal with the

diversity existing among students; encouraging cultural enrichment activities; developing investigative practices; developing and executing projects to develop curricular contents; using new support methodologies, strategies and materials; developing collaboration and team work habits. (BRASIL..., 2001a, p.4)

Teaching, the document states, must be the basis of qualification, keeping in mind changes to the pedagogical and curricular organization of basic education, and articulating theory and practice (idem, p.5).

In reference to the tasks defined by the *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* - LDBEN (National Educational Bases and Guidelines Law) for teachers, it also emphasized the participation of teachers in making decision about the school's curricula and pedagogical projects: a) placing the teacher as the one in charge of caring for the student's learning – including those students who learn at different paces –, using as reference, for defining their professional responsibilities, the student's right to learn, which reinforces the teachers responsibility for the success in the student's learning process; b) associating the exercise of teacher autonomy, in executing their own work plan, with collective work in preparing the school's pedagogical plan; c) extending teachers' responsibilities beyond the classroom, cooperating in the articulation between the school and the community. (BRASIL..., 2001a, p.12-13)

The teacher is valued as the producer of the curriculum and cultural articulator, but this saying's meaning is emptied by the association with enunciates and proposals of other educational policies that institute ordering for faculty work and curricula in basic education. Legislation speaks about teachers' participation and autonomy in preparing curricula, but the set of policies witness the growing control and regulation nature over faculty work and curricula. Examples include national Basic Education evaluation tests (*Prova Brasil*; *SAEB* – Basic Education Assessment System and *ENEM* – National Test for Middle Education) *ENAMEB* proposal (National Test on Basic Education Teacher's Evaluation), and *BNC* (National Curricular Base), etc.

Teachers are considered responsible for their own teaching careers and professional development, and are stimulated to become apprentices for the rest of their lives, as well as to be their own entrepreneurs. In accordance with the policy text examined herein, the new professionalism shall be willing to undergo constant update and permanent qualification throughout life (BRASIL..., 2001a, p.11); practice reflection and self-reflection; and have the

ability for collective work and for interaction with the professional community to which it belongs and with society. In times of constant changing in the field of technology and employability, and of (self)accountability of individuals for their success and failure opportunities, being and apprentice for life is part of the demands and thought systems of our time. Teachers must be prepared for circumstantial requirements and for reaching goals on defined deadlines. Curriculum and curricular path flexibility are related to frequent training and updating due to production and market innovations. The school institution is not sole and most important source of knowledge anymore, and technological changes quickly become obsolete. Teachers must incorporate a motivation factor and abilities the (pre)dispose them to constant update and adaptation. Future teachers shall be prepared to be accountable for themselves and for their profession, being individually rewarded for their merit, or facing the onus corresponding to their failure.

Teachers' professional qualification is understood, in contemporary educational policies, as "preparation for complying with demands of a specific professional exercise which is not general nor simply academic qualification." (BRASIL..., 2001a, p.29). If we update the "demands of a specific professional exercise" to our times, teachers' qualification shall pay attention to mandates, whether from national national curricula and their bases, whether from national tests and teachers' certification. There is a strict connection between changes to teachers' qualification processes and the State's demands regarding basic education, defined by the improvement of the school's population performance indexes at this level of schooling, measured by nationally standardized evaluation systems.

Definitions that place teachers as specialists in management of their students' learning processes, subject teachers' professionalism to Brazilian basic education official goals, defined by governments in the past decades, in accordance with international agencies, such as OECD and UNESCO, which use systems comparing with countries among the most developed and industrialized.

The emphasis on practical qualification and pedagogy of competences are among the main guidelines that are part of the international agenda for teacher qualification reforms in countries that receive technical and financial assistance from agencies such as UNESCO and the World Bank. (Maués, O. C., 2003). The "universalization" of teachers' professional qualification, the use or validation of previous experiences, and ongoing qualification

complete the agenda for qualification of the reflexive practical teacher as the ideal for qualification. The faith almost unshakable in a type of tacit knowledge that develops in daily experiences, guide quality requirements in teachers' qualification processes, and strengthen the argument that education curricula have been too theoretical and focused on the teaching topic, not linked to mass school realities. The fiscal crisis in national states and the need for teachers in the African continent and in developing countries to meet the universalization requirements of national teaching systems that emerged during post-colonialism (Moon, 2008), elected practice as the source of teaching knowledges that actually matter in qualification, and make the difference in teachers' competence.

This form of professionalism is apparent in the official curricular texts, as it indicates that knowledges to be part of teachers' qualification in education programs. The official curricular discourse privileges a competence-centered pedagogy, defined as the "know how", actions and "action forms", knowledges and abilities mobilized "in situations", problem solving in the realm of teaching and learning.

In addition to competences, the CNE text also specifies the knowledges to be part of the professional development of future teachers, during their initial qualification. They are, in fact, the so called teaching knowledges, which include professional or education science and pedagogical ideology knowledges, disciplinary and curricular knowledges, and experience knowledges. The CNE text lists these knowledges, which include knowledge resulting from experience, as follows: "General and professional culture"; "Knowledge about children, youths and adults"; "Knowledge of the cultural, social, political and economic aspects of Education"; "Contents of the knowledge area that are object of teaching"; "Pedagogical knowledge"; "Knowledge resulting from experience" (BRASIL..., 2001a, p. 44-49).

Within this set of knowledges, practice knowledges are privileged by the emphasis on competences, on reflection upon action; on problem solving, and on project methodology as indicated didactic strategies and, above all, by the curricular matrix proposed by CNE Resolution CNE/CP 2/2002. This curricular matrix, which defines the mandatory components of qualification and the minimum time distribution in education programs (2,800 h), allocates 400 hours for the supervised curricular practicum component, and 400 hours for what it calls practice as curricular

component. The remaining 1,800 hours are allocated to “curricular contents of scientific-cultural nature, and dedicated to teaching and learning activities”, with controlled attendance, and 200 hours are allocated other forms of academic-scientific-cultural activities, such as participation in tutoring, research, events, etc. (BRASIL, 2002).

To avoid a curricular model that allocated pedagogical formation and supervised curricular practicum for final semesters in the program, as they were, for instance, in the curricular plan in effect until the late 90s, the legislation not only increased time allocated for these components, but also defined they must start in the second half of the program.

Knowledge that comes from experience, or from reflecting upon the action, is one of the most important bases in the official proposal for teacher qualification. Legislation has incorporated, in its proposals, the exceptional value that experience knowledge (Gauthier, C., 1998 and Tardif, M., 2002) and tacit knowledge (Schön, D., 2000) have in building teacher competence. Valuing experience, or experience knowledge, as a field of knowledge in teacher professional qualification is explained by CNE/CP009/2001 Resolution as it explains what is understood by experience knowledge:

What is defined here as knowledge resulting from experience is, as its name says, knowledge build “in” and “by” experience. In fact, what is intended with this realm is highlighting the nature and form as this knowledge is constituted by the subject. It is a type of knowledge that may not be built in any other way than professional practice, and may not, under any circumstance, be replaced by knowledge “about” such practice. Knowing – and learning – a concept, or a theory, is quite different from knowing – and learning – how to perform a job. Thus, it is about learning how to “be” a teacher.

(...)

- Therefore, this area of knowledge is related to practices that are specific of the teaching activity and multiple competences that constitute them, and must be valued in itself. However, it is important to clarify that experience knowledge may be enriched when it is linked to a systematic reflection. It is built, thus, along with theoretical knowledge, as it is necessary to use them to reflect upon experience, to interpret it, and to assign meaning to it. (BRASIL..., 2001a, p.49)

Theoretical knowledge has its place, as it is useful for experience. CNE/CP 28/2001 Resolution of October 02, 2001 justifies the increase in the teaching practice workload by reinforcing this perspective: theoretical knowledge has its value when it encounters useful and instrumental ends, as, for instance, clarifying practice and experience:

Practice is not a copy of theory, nor is the latter a reflex of the first. Practice is the very manner how things are done, whose content is crossed by a theory.

Thus, reality is a movement consisting of practice and theory as moments of a broader duty. Practice is the moment through which one intends to do something, to produce something, whereas theory attempts to define concepts and meanings, and, therefore, manage the field and meaning of this action. (BRASIL..., 2001b, p.9)

The same concern exists when the document deals with the type of research to be privileged by teachers in their professional activity. Based on the assumption that the way research is treated in teacher qualification programs is inadequate, due to its excessive academicism, CNE/CP Resolution 009/2001 states that:

(...) research developed in the teacher work environment refers, first and foremost, to an everyday attitude of seeking the understanding of student learning and development processes, and the autonomy in interpreting reality and the knowledges that constitute their objects of teaching. (BRASIL..., 2001a, p.35)

For the teacher, the text advocates research should be more “useful” and have a “practical” nature (BRASIL, 2001a, p.23-4), focusing on issues associated to didactic transposition and the learning process. The dichotomy between basic research and applied research, between bachelor and education degrees.

PRACTICE AS A CURRICULAR COMPONENT AND SUPERVISED CURRICULAR TEACHING PRACTICUM: WHAT STUDENTS SAY

Authors of the reforms in the official field of initial teacher qualification, at the start of the millennium, has a quite simple rationale as their starting point: to seek success in basic education and to implement policies for this level of teaching, which had been shaped since the 90s, such as, for instance, the National Curricular Parameters and the national evaluation tests, it would be necessary to change the format of teacher qualification programs, in terms of content and methodology. After all, few disagreed about the ineffectiveness of these programs. The recipe for success in qualification would have to be, among other requirements, adding more practice to the curricula and enabling early insertion of teachers-to-be in the school context. At the same time, educational contents should privilege knowledge in action, translating into competences, into situation, in problem solving, in projects, etc. These ideas proliferate because they have circumstantial aspects in their favor and intellectual hegemonies that support them.

However, policy discourses are recontextualized by culture and structure of educational agencies and by their agents, by the mindset of teachers and by the interest of disciplinary groups, by

politics and power relations in effect in institutions and in certain conjunctures, by the available material and human resources, etc.

In this sense, studies such as Diniz-Pereira and Viana's (2010) indicate that, even with legal requirements that curricular structures have their own identities and finalities, overcoming the older "three plus one" model that inspired curricular organization in effect until early 2000, education degrees have had trouble to change the competitive cultural of deep discredit and lower academic status in comparison with bachelor degrees. Programs and opening offers are separated, but education programs are still largely replaced by the culture of bachelor degrees.

Nevertheless, there is progress. The data we have found indicate that the official policy from the beginning of the millennium has enabled reorganizing the work force in different basic departments and institutes in offering contents and curricular components traditionally allocated in education colleges, broadening the loci of discussions about teacher qualification and teaching for basic institutes and their departments (Author, 2010, 2012).

On the other hand, our investigations, as well as other studies (Costa, F., 2012), also indicate that the impact of incorporating CNE's curricular matrix about curricular knowledges has accentuated the pragmatist bias of pedagogical knowledges, and altered knowledge experiences enabled by traditional curricular structures very little. The disciplinary tradition of curricula, culture, teachers' mindset, and objective conditions in which the university work is developed, implied in assigning meaning to changes especially as an adaptation of curricula, of contents and of existing curricular practices to new courseloads and characteristics of components required by CNE's curricular matrix (Garcia, 2010; GARCIA; FONSECA; LEITE, 2013).

Based on the investigation (Garcia; Fonseca; Leite, 2013) that monitored curricular changes to professional qualification knowledges in the four education programs indicated at UFPel (Arts - Major in Visual Arts, Mathematics, Social Sciences, Physical Education) we were able to verify the reduction, in the curricula, of the course load for more knowledge of a more humanistic nature, associated to educational bases. In some cases, we also observed the reduction in the number of disciplines and contents associated to the education teaching area, despite the general increase in time devoted to pedagogical studies in the total course load, which, in general, ended up having a more balanced study time breakdown

with contents specific of the teaching area. The increase in the time devoted to the pedagogical formation in curricula was the result of the official curricular matrix, explained by the determination of the practice component as curricular component (400 hours) and of supervised curricular teaching practicum (400 hours).

However, it is worth return, from different perspectives, to the case of practice as a curricular component and of supervised curricular teaching practicum. These components have been understood, by official legislation, as those privileged for the studies and the experience of teaching practice, unique opportunities to define the relation between theory and practice, and between the qualification school and the basic education school, consisting in one of the changes of the official proposal in terms of organization of knowledges from teachers' initial qualification process. Students, teachers to be, by means of these components, as suggested by the legal text, would be inserted, at an early stage in their qualification process, in the universe o education and of teaching performance, under the supervision of their advisors, who would work in a joint and intrinsic manner along with academic work activities, under the principle of action-reflection-action (BRASIL, 2001b).

The work load of practice as curricular component was organized, in most curricula investigated, as a set of discipline that absorbed the contents from the fields of Didactic and Teaching methodologies, dealing with aspects focusing on planning, development, and evaluation of the teaching and learning process. That is, they deal with contents and study matters of instrumental nature for the development of the teaching action.

Understood by CNE/CP Resolution no. 28, of October 02, 2001 within a broad concept of a “practice that produces something in the teaching field”, which should be intrinsically linked to the supervised practicum and to academic work activities, and should be seen as a knowledge dimension to be present in qualification programs, both in moments of reflection upon professional activity, and in moments when this activity is performed (Resolution 009/2001, of May 08, 2001), it was included in a strictly disciplinary and fragmented curricular structure, by the courses investigated herein.

In turn, the supervised curricular teaching practicum component was defined by CNE/CP Resolution no. 28, of October 02, 2001:

as the learning time during which, by means of a permanence period, one spends in a place or craft to learn its practice to be able to exercise a profession or craft later on. (p.10)

The document also reinforces:

Aiming at, along with practice, as curricular component, the relation between theory and social practice (...) the supervised curricular practicum is the moment to enforce, under the supervision of an experienced professional, a teaching-learning process that will become concrete and autonomous when this trainee becomes professional (p.10)

There is a clear intent in the official document, whether due to the similarities of course loads instituted for both components, or due to the document statements, that practice, as a curricular component, and the practicum component would have an intrinsic articulation with the time of academic work, enabling the relation between theory and practice in all directions, and avoiding, as stated, the dangers of “overrating” theoretical and academic knowledges, or of an “activist view of practice”.

In the curricula studies, the 400-hour period allocated to the supervised curricular teaching practicum was distributed by a variable number of semesters (3 to 5), so as to meet the characteristics of the different education degrees. In general, the organization of these semesters were designed to enable the growing approximation between students and the school universe, culminating with conducting classes. Some programs have also organized a post-practicum semester to address the teaching experience undergone by the students in the class conduction period (GARCIA; FONSECA; LEITE, 2013).

In general, students acknowledged the contribution, to their qualification, of knowledge experiences lived in the disciplines with contents related to the education specific area they were studying, and in disciplines associated to the practice components as curricular components and to the supervised curricular teaching practicum. Nevertheless, the presence of the latter components in curricula, the increase in the course load, and their shift to the start of the second half of the program, did not alter significantly the fragmentation and discontinuity of how students learn about teaching, as well as the reduced class teaching time and the school experience the characterized practicum in the curricula prior to the reform.

This is highlighted by Social Sciences Education students as they talk about their experiences with practice components as curricular components (in this program, entitled Practice in Social Sciences) and supervised practicum:

My feeling is that Practice classes were quite useful from the beginning, they prepared us quite well for theory, but I think that the practicum part did not prepare us as well. We had

four meetings with students at the school (...) little classroom practice (...) my feeling is that we did not have enough field work in college. (...) in the last Practice (...) classroom methodology, resources, it was all very interesting. (Student A, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

When asked about which disciplines contributed the most in the curriculum for their qualification as teachers, the same student, by giving her opinion, reveals a representation about the practice that guides, for the most part, education students' understanding of what effectively is practice in the teachers' initial qualification curricula: "Practice is actually a theory, in Practice classes we don't actually go on the the field, mas gives us a good idea of how to start: lesson plans for our class were a great help." (Student A, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

This observation is quickly challenged by a classmate in the same group, as follows:

I don't share your opinion. Practices, in theory, are extremely important... but I don't see them as being such a wonderful thing, because Practices end up (...). It (Education degree) is totally geared towards research, so I think Practice should be the time to go back, to match content and theory we study and classroom practice. I don't think we do that. What do we study in Practice disciplines? In this first semester, we contacted the schools, then we learned how to prepare lesson plans, teaching plans, and then how to use resources in classroom, but I don't remember reading any authors or theories about that. (Student B, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

Other classmates went on to talk about the development of practice as a curricular component:

We were not too involved, but we read a few texts. We did not read an entire book on a pedagogical theory, but we had some things of the kind... (Student C, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

We read more bibliography, but we didn't come prepared to talk about it (...). I think that there is the issue of Practices, but also the issue of Practicum itself, which was too fragmented. I think that this fragmentation, for a professional who intends to be an educator, is not possible, because we only have one practicum session per week, and we spend a long time observing at the school. Thinking about the Practicums (I and II), the Practice teacher make a great effort, she assigned all bibliography on why to plan, how to plan, but we can't recall it now. My criticism is, and has been for a while, that the university is not prepared to work with the Education program in Social Sciences. What we suffer emotionally to get to the school is caused by the institution. Last semester, for instance, why did we only have four classes? This is what we have to think about. We had four classes because we had to wait for the university to solve issues associated to the CRE (State Board of Education) or whatever agency; we waited and waited. When they were solved, the semester was about to end. So, the university will have to decide if it will create a department to take care of practicums, I don't know. During this semester, one of the teachers that established a relation with Bourdieu's theories talked about this power impasse between the school and the trainee. In addition, we have been

reflecting a lot... Among the contents that have been worked throughout the program, and the contents asked in school, violence, a series of topics we never discussed again, and basic theories, classic or contemporary, about a possibility to transform it in knowledge, as requested by high school. (Student D, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

This is supported by both sides. By the university and the school. I wanted to talk about that issue that we are unprepared to transform what we learned in the disciplines, the contents and the sociological theories, and transform this into knowledge to be worked in the classroom. We end up not having any support in this process, and we have to do that by ourselves. I think Practice prepared us for the classroom, but I think that this content did not have to be taught in the Practice discipline. Only someone in Social Sciences, of course this person would have to have some involvement in Education, but with roots in Social Sciences will... rooted in Social Sciences and in Education will be able to establish this link. So, this is the role of Practice! (Student B, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

First of all, it seems that the university and the school build more walls than bridges. It seems that, when you get to school, you lose the support from the university, you go after the teacher [supervisor] because he is full of tasks, busy with other things, you can't keep seeking... forcing some things. It happens that, it's you and the teacher in charge of the class, and his mindset is that he'll go on a vacation, that the trainee gets there, and he, thank God, will have the day off. So, the school teacher will not monitor you, and the professor, as I said before, is quite busy and all you can get is an e-mail (...). (Student E, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010).

The Social Sciences Education program qualifies its students to teach Sociology in Basic Education curriculum. The trajectory of Sociology at this teaching level has been intermittent, as it only became a mandatory discipline for all grades in high school after law 11 683 was published on June 02, 2008. The possibility of inserting students from this course in the public school system, to complete their practicums, is quite limited, due to the number of high schools, as well as to the limited number of classes offered on this discipline. In addition to this, the rotation² of teachers who, at those times, were in charge of the Supervised Practicum disciplines in education programs added to the scenario of fragmentation and lack of continuity among the different semesters of the discipline in this course.

Another student recalls exactly this situation:

(...) one of the problems I had was exactly this one. We observed for two semesters at the school where we were to be assigned for practicum. But, because of problems at the university, we were not able to have our practicum there. So, now that we have to prepare the report, I miss it, because I will have to go to the school again, to collect data I had already collected during the first and second observation periods. We went to a school we did not know and when we went to this school, we were there to work in the classroom. It was quite a trauma in this sense. I went to the other school several times, I interviewed teachers, I went to the teacher's lounge, and prepared a whole... When it was time for practicum, I had to go to another school. (Student F, Educ. Social Sciences, 2010)

Based on these students' set of testimonies, extracted from transcripts of debates held in this group about their experiences with the reformed curriculum, even if there are discrepancies due to the specificities in how each student produces and experiences the curriculum, and why it is produced, we are interested in highlighting the presence of some elements that we have discussed here: the effective absence of integration among practice components and supervised practicums, the absence of integration or interdisciplinarity between these components and the components of academic-scientific work, resulting in the polarization between content and form, theory and practice, with significant increase of the latter at least in terms of course load in curricula. By observing the course descriptions in both blocks in these components, we are left wondering *about how* this period in education is used: overlapping contents, and weak boundaries and study focus in the semesters when practice is a curricular component and when supervised practicums take place. The latter has its specificities marked by the semesters when students definitely take over the classrooms in basic education schools, or in community education projects, if applicable.

Similar feelings are demonstrated by students completing the Mathematics education program soon after, despite both the offer and the course load of Math in Basic Education is different from those in Sociology, and this would allegedly make it easier for students to enter schools for their practicums. The Mathematics Education program qualifies for teaching both in Basic and High School, and its curriculum is organized with the supervised curricular teaching practicum totaling 442 hours distributed as follows: Field Work I and II (with 85 hours each); and Mathematics Practicum I and II (with 136 hours each). Field Works prepare for teaching Basic School (Mathematics Practicum I) and High School (Mathematics Practicum II). Once again, the following statement emphasizes the “walls” between the university and the schools, in regards to the initial qualification of future teachers:

In fact, we are only in contact with the school when we have that one practicum month, which is actually the contact we will definitely have during those two practicum semesters, Practicum I and Practicum II. This is the contact we have with school, but we don't maintain a connection with the school, like, the school is not open for us to go there and propose a different activity. So there is no relationship between the university and school. I see this as a failure, there should be some type of project, something like: education programs working directly with schools, such as the Laboratory disciplines

we had, when they made us prepare activities here and find a school where we could take it to see if it will actually work, and if students will receive it well. So I think they (...) need to establish this contact. (Student A, Educ. Mathematics, 2010).

When questioned about how prepared they felt to act as teachers, two students provided the following sequence of testimonies which indicate representations of what they understand as practice and the difficulties resulting from discrepancies between the university and basic school calendars:

I think the course is geared towards the bachelor's degree than the education degree, because not many openings are offered... We have very few practice classes, in the classroom, because practicum is short. It's short. Usually things are rushed because we have to do it early, we are not able to make the best out of it, to prepare classes. (Student B, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

It's always at the end of our semesters, during the final exam period here, we start the practicum, so we end up not preparing for the practicum. You go there and teach the content you are supposed to teach, but you don't have that much time to prepare, because you are in the final exam mode here at the university. You can't give up the classes you take here to dedicate time to practicum in full. (Student C, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

It's because we took field work 1 and practicum 1. Field work is classroom observation and practicum project, that kind of thing, and preparation for practicum, during both semesters, but the practicum ends up taking place during the same semester we have to take field work, because we have to move it back. (Student B, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

It's a fictional thing, because (...) actually when we finished our practicum project we were already in the classroom, because we had to take practicum before that, because school enabled us to work on our practicum when we came back from our vacations. (Student C, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

Because by then we would be on our third semesters in school, and then we can't do it. (Student B, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

This happened to me in practicum 1. I observed a class and did my practicum at a different school and class. I observed fifth grade in a school and ended up teaching seventh grade at a different school, totally different. In the end, I had to observe two groups, because the one in the practicum project was completely different from my class group. (Student C, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

Another testimony, in a forceful manner, evidences how the absence of a pedagogical partnership between the university and the school system as institutions that qualify future teachers may be discouraging for the young teachers who have their first experiences with bureaucracy and the organization of school work:

I had a lot of trouble, because there is a lot of bureaucracy, things like that... Whenever I wanted (...) to check out a book at the library, I had to make an appointment, so I went to library to make the appointment and then... "Not now.

Maybe in...” And this went on until my practicum ended... So, in the beginning, I even tried to talk, made some copies to have material for the students. But I ended up giving up. I only taught my class and left. Things at school are quite complicated. (Student D, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

The 408-hour course load of practice as curricular component in the Mathematics Education program, the only specialty of the course dealt with herein, was organized so as to include a set of three Mathematics Teaching Laboratory (I, II, III) with 68 hours each; two semesters of Instrumentation for Mathematics Teaching (I and II), also with 68 hours each, and one class on Advanced Technologies in Mathematics Teaching, also with 68 hours. Designed to prepare the future teacher for didactic transposition of mathematical contents, these disciplines and their development have been evaluated by the students as “fictional” and not practical, as what was learned and done there took place within university classrooms.

As it may be observed in the previous testimonies, the term practice, in the education curriculum for future teacher students is strictly understood, most time, as experiences in basic education school contexts or other similar educational contexts, preferably in class teaching situations. When asked about how the practice disciplines were developed as curricular components, students stated that they had to do a “practice without practice”, or a “theoretical practice”, as, even if they had to prepare lesson plans or prepare resources and activities to make the learning of a given content easier, for, later on teaching classes for classmates in a university classroom, these activities were seen as out of context, and did not mean, for trainees, a preparation for teaching work in the school context.

Practicum and teaching in basic education schools, for students, are a type of “final test” to enable them to ensure they have made the right professional choice. The following evaluation summarizes, in a very clear manner, many of the students’ view of our education programs that claim practice is the first instance of veridiction in which they will assure their choice for an education degree:

The importance of practicing is in, for instance, as it happened to some classmates. When they started the practicum, they faced difficulties and realized that was not what they wanted. Many classmates, when they started the practice, they took several theoretical classes, regardless of doing well or not in them, but it was time for them to take over a class, to go to the board, to explain the content, they did not feel comfortable in doing it and did not enjoy it. (...) so I think that, when you’ve already completed half the program, it’s been two years and recently and you realize this is not what you will do, what you want for your life, so I think you have been here for a long time (...).

So practice is important in this sense, you need to know if that will make you happy, if you will be a good teacher, if you will want to be a professional, so I think theory is important and has to come along, but it has to come along with practice. We have to study mathematical knowledges in the education area to teach a good class, but you also have to practice and use it to know if this is the path you want to trail, so you don't find this out when you have already completed the fourth, fifth or sixth semester, after you have done so much that you will not quit this late and try to start a new program at the university. (Student B, Educ. Mathematics, 2010)

Along with this feeling, we could also emphasize other representations and expectations that are deposited on the practicum and that make it essential for the initial qualification disciplines: practicum is seen as a valuable test of what they learned in the education program, separating useful knowledge from useless knowledge, the good from the bad. In this representation, impatience before uncertainties and imponderable that pervade our choices and human interactions in social relations, including in the realm of educational institutions. The modern and contemporary obsession with rational knowledge that lights and instrumentalizes the somewhat inescapable obscurity of human action and education. Knowledge must be “applicable” in the classroom, may not be abstracts, has to be one “necessary” for future teachers in school.

The students completing the Education in Arts - Major in Visual Arts program also acknowledged the problem of absence of support during practicums, and fragmentation of the different knowledges and curriculum component:

So, I think our practicum was not quite monitored. We were lucky because everybody made an effort to exchange, as I said before, of talk about how the work was being developed, then, and several interesting works emerged, but I think that monitoring itself, the development of education student in the classroom was not enough. Well, I think we have to go get it, but we had to really go for it, and we did not have this “supervised practicum” (...). (Student A, Educ. Arts, 2010).

I don't know, I think this area of education itself, I think it was a little deficient, I think this part we did here [Center for Arts] is well structured, we had structure, but the part we did there [School of Education], of how to be a teacher in practice, I think it was kind of ... you know? I speak for myself, I think we get a little anxious, I lack the structure to take over a classroom, I think this is missing... Having a teacher who would monitor us all the time...(Student B, Educ. Arts, 2010)

That's right, we actually had different teachers for each practicum, with a totally different methodology, so, they never held meetings, they did not follow a sequence, it was all a little altered, each one got to class and there... this is what we are going to do, then the next one comes in with a different line of thinking, changed the assignment. So one applied one thing, the other one supervised it, as it happened now, our practicum was supervised by one teacher, and we have to prepare the report to teacher C. (...). (Student C, Educ. Arts, 2010)

Another student, immediately after that, comments on the supervisor for Practicum II, with a degree in Art Education - Major in Fine Arts, and with a degree in Painting, who had worked as a substitute teacher from 2007 to 2009 at the *Faculdade de Educação* (School of Education), and who, at the time of the testimony, had been hired by public selection process as an Assistant professor at the *Centro de Artes* (Center for Arts), and was about to complete her doctorate at the Institution's Graduate Program:

Practicum II was wonderful, it was taught by professor M.; she had actual classroom practice, because she was a substitute teacher and still taught at the city school system. So she knew, she talked about things with knowledge, very properly. She knew the problems, we questioned something and she knew how to actually help. (Student D, Educ. Arts, 2010)

The Education in Arts - Major in Visual Arts curriculum organized the practicum component with five Supervised Practicum semesters, totaling 459 hours, during which students have practicums in Arts for Basic education (Supervised Practicum II) and in High School (Supervised Practicum IV), with one semester for school observation and preparation that precedes each one of these teaching periods (Supervised Practicum I and III), There is also a final semester (Supervised Practicum V), in which the experience acquired in the practicums is discussed and analyzed.

Some students in the Physical Education program emphasized that the increased time dedicated to the supervised practicum component, as well as its duration throughout several semesters, was a condition of possibility for diversification of the teaching experience, which, in curricula preceding the reform, was, most time, restricted to one semester and, therefore, to one teaching modality or level:

Positive [aspects], with the curricular change, the three practicums we have now in the education program. Earlier, the full education program was limited to the final practicum. Now we have three practicum periods, one for initial grades, one for middle school, and one for high school. I think this was quite positive, because of the experience, you know? You will either love school or realize you really don't want it. (Student A, Educ. Phys. Ed., 2010)

There are concrete conditions in the teaching work and in the institutions, in terms of resources and mindsets, that act strongly in configuring pedagogical practices and the curriculum in action. The last testimonies are a good example of this. Based on a very similar organization of the supervised curricular practicum component in both programs, the students provide very different evaluations of the

experiences. Fundamental variables the established differences between both cases were exactly related to the institutional location of these components and work conditions and qualification of these teachers.

Of the twelve professors who worked with supervised curricular teaching practicum components and with practice as a curricular component in the programs investigated, eight worked for the original programs, other than the *Faculdade de Educação* (School of Education). These professors, at the end of the second semester of 2010, were tenured faculty, as shown in Table 1.

Among the four professors working at the *Faculdade de Educação* (School of Education) who were in charge of practicum components in the Social Sciences and Visual Arts Education programs, two were teachers with unstable work relations: a teacher with a temporary work contract, and another one completing her doctoral program, and working on her own teaching practicum.

TABLE 1: Total number of professors for practice as curricular component and supervised curricular teaching practicum, administrative unit where they are allocated, and functional status at the University, considering the Education programs in Arts - Major in Visual Arts, Mathematics, Physical Education, Social Sciences.

Administrative unit where professor is allocated	Functional status	Total
<i>Faculdade de Educação</i> (School of Education)	Assistant Assistant Temporary Ph.D. Student	04
<i>Centro de Artes</i> (Center for Arts)	Assistant Assistant	02
<i>Instituto de Física e Matemática</i> (Physics and Mathematics Institute)	Adjunct Adjunct	02
<i>Escola Superior de Educação Física</i> (Higher School of Physical Education)	Adjunct Adjunct Associate	03
<i>Instituto de Filosofia, Sociologia e Política</i> (Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Politics)	Assistant	01

Source: Registrar's Office/ UFPel, 2010.

These data are proof of a statement we made before, observing the disputes that National Curricular Guidelines caused in the realm of curricula and agents involved in the qualification of teachers by higher education. If the Schools of Education were, since the 60s, an almost exclusive place where pedagogical knowledges for teacher qualification were offered, nowadays they no longer have this status. Other groups claim for themselves the control of knowledges over teaching, and increase their influence in curricula, creating openings and holding selection processes for these areas. This took place, mostly, due the effects of how universities expanded in Brazil in the past decades.

Starting from the first University reform movement, in 2004 and 2005, two of the programs investigated herein, Physical Education and Mathematics Education degree programs, fully took over the course load assigned to knowledges of practice as curricular component and supervised practicum. These programs still had faculty from the *Faculdade de Educação* (School of Education) working only in disciplines of the so-called education foundations. At the end of 2010, unhappy with the School of Education policies, regarding practicums, the *Centro de Artes* (Center for Arts) also created two positions in art-education, and held a selection process, taking over, since then, the responsibility for education degree practicums.

Weakened by the faculty hiring policies that characterized the 90s, compromised by new the opening of new work fronts, such as graduate programs, and due to the exponential growth of didactic responsibilities caused by the increase in the number of classes and teaching positions in education programs, and the course load increase in practicum components, caused by the official curricular matrix, the department in charge of practicum components ends up providing precarious services in these disciplines, which required high time and work investment. Therefore, as we develop the study, work conditions in the university department in charge of practicum were mostly responsible for the difficulties that students in some programs indicated in this component.

IN CONCLUSION

Policy discourses are not read literally by educational agencies and their protagonists. They are put into new context by educational institutional and their agents' culture, by teacher's mindsets and disciplinary group interests, by politic and power relations in effect in certain institutional

conjunctures, by the material and human resources available, by work conditions, etc. (Ball, S., 1994; OLIVEIRA, O. & DESTRO, D., 2003)

We have attempted to show that, in the case studied, changes proposed by the curricular policy text have been assigned new contexts at the institutions that qualify teachers based on a strongly disciplinary curricular tradition in effect at the university and in education degree curricula, not altering significantly old pedagogical practices and concepts, and the way practicums had been taking place: practicum was still seen as the place for veridiction and application of theory that was learned in the content classes. The absence or frailty of collaboration projects between the university and the schools in organizing and monitoring practicums.

We also attempted to evidence that, frustrating official intents, dichotomies between theory and practice, and content and form, characteristic of a qualification model literature has named technical rationality, seem to persist in the reformed curricula, even if we consider practice as curricular component and supervised curricular teaching practicum have been advanced in the program, and the time dedicated to them has been increased. Factors such as the fragmentation of university work by division into departments, disciplinary tradition and the strong classification of curricula, the increase in faculty work in the past decades, and the absence of qualification projects between university and basic education schools to welcome and monitor practicums contributed to the translation of official standards into curricula and pedagogical practice in the cases studied.

However, some positive movements have been indicated by these changes in knowledges based on official standards, considering the cases studied: the possibility of diversifying future teachers' teaching experiences and basic education school experiences, and the increase of workplaces and discussion about teaching issues in basic education at the university.

On the other hand, official standards have left their impression in curricula due to the general increase of time devoted to pedagogical studies in the programs' total course load, and, at the same time, due to the reduction of contents associated to basic education sciences in favor of including more than one practice instance. In this sense, legislation was somewhat successful, as it instituted, by means of professional qualification knowledges, the "withdrawal of theory", to quote Moraes (2001), when she analyzes a similar phenomenon in educational research, with strong epistemological, ethical and political implications for the field.

Considering these evidences, and highlighting the specificity that always characterizes case study methodology, we may have to maintain a certain suspicion before euphorias regarding the value of practice as the knowledge, par excellence, of faculty competence construction. The path treaded by this axiom in the field of official policies for teaching qualification seems to be accompanied by a movement to make teaching work precarious and non-intellectual.

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FOOTNOTES

¹Two investigations were developed to evaluate changes in education degree curricula at UFPel, due to the reform in the first years of the millennium: the first one: 2004-2005 - “Teacher qualification and professionalization for Basic Education: implications of the official curricular and educational discourse on basic education teachers”; the second: 2010-2012 – “Theory and Practice in Teacher Qualification: Impacts of the Reform in Education Degree Curricula at UFPel”. Both were sponsored by Conselho Nacional de *Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico* – CNPq (National Council for Scientific and Technological Development).

²During the 2010, the teacher in charge of the Social Sciences Practicum II discipline, offered during the first semester of this year, was a temporary professor at the *Departamento de Ensino* (Teaching Department) at the *Faculdade de Educação* (Education College), and was also responsible for offering the following disciplines: Pedagogical Theory and Practice (68 hours) and Brazilian Education: Organization and Public Policies (68 hours), in the same education program, and Practicum II (136 hours) in the Visual Arts – Education Degree program. During the second semesters of 2010, disciplines Social Sciences Practicum I and III, which did not have a teacher at first, were later taught by two teachers (a recently hired teacher and a Ph.D student in teaching practicum) who worked in a partnership.

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