

**Permanent formation of tutors: a study inspired in Paulo Freire
with teachers of early years of basic education**

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Abstract

This article presents the results of a research about permanent formation of teachers of early years of fundamental teaching of a public district school of a city of São Paulo-SP; whose general objective is to analyze scopes and limits of permanent formation of teachers to a pedagogical practice committed to building a democratic school. The theoretical contributions is based on the pedagogy of Paulo Freire (2001, 2013b, 2015, and 2016), Imbernón (2009, 2010), and Saul (2010). The nature of the investigation is qualitative and follows Chizzotti (2005) with bibliographic study, field and documentary research. The results of the research show a strong presence of dimensions of permanent formation; materializing principles as the hearing, the dialog, the participation and the movement of action-reflection-action, demonstrated on documents, interviews done, observations, formation meetings and parent-teaching conference.

Keywords

Permanent formation of teachers. Paulo Freire. Democratic school.

**Formação permanente de professores: um estudo inspirado em Paulo
Freire com docentes dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental**

Resumo

O presente artigo apresenta os resultados de uma pesquisa acerca da formação permanente de professores dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental em uma escola da rede pública da cidade de São Paulo, cujo objetivo geral é analisar os alcances e limites da formação permanente de professores para a prática pedagógica comprometida com a construção de uma escola democrática. O aporte teórico fundamenta-se na Pedagogia de Paulo Freire (2001, 2013b, 2015, 2016), Imbernón (2009, 2010) e Saul (2010). A investigação é de natureza qualitativa de acordo com Chizzotti (2005), com estudo bibliográfico, pesquisa de campo e documental. Os resultados da pesquisa revelam que há uma forte presença de dimensões da formação permanente, materializando princípios como a escuta, o diálogo, a participação e o movimento de ação-reflexão-ação, evidenciado nos documentos, entrevistas realizadas, observações, encontros de formação e reunião de pais e mestres.

Palavras-chave

Formação permanente de professores. Paulo Freire. Escola democrática..

Formación permanente de profesores: un estudio inspirado en Paulo Freire con maestros de los años iniciales de Enseñanza Fundamental

Resumen

El presente artículo presenta los resultados de una pesquisa acerca de la formación permanente de profesores de los años iniciales de la Enseñanza Fundamental en una escuela de rede pública de la ciudad de São Paulo, cuyo objetivo general es analizar los alcances y límites de la formación permanente de profesores para la práctica pedagógica comprometida con la construcción de una escuela democrática. El aporte teórico se fundamenta en la Pedagogía de Paulo Freire (2001, 2013b, 2015, 2016), Imbernón (2009, 2010) y Saul (2010). La investigación es de naturaleza cualitativa de acuerdo con Chizzotti (2005), con estudio bibliográfico, pesquisa de campo y documental. Los resultados de la pesquisa revelan que hay una fuerte presencia de dimensiones de la formación permanente, materializando principios como la escucha, el diálogo, la participación y el movimiento de acción-reflexión-acción, evidenciado en los documentos, entrevistas realizadas, observaciones, encuentros de formación y reunión de padres y maestros.

Palabras clave

Formación permanente de profesores. Paulo Freire. Escuela democrática.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article aims to present the results of a research about permanent teacher training in the early years of basic education at a public school in the city of São Paulo (SP) and its main objective is to analyze the scopes and limits of permanent teacher training for pedagogical practices committed to the construction of a democratic school. To ground the reflections about permanent teacher training, we used primarily the Pedagogy of Paulo Freire (2001, 2013b, 2015, 2016), as well as the studies by Imbernón (2009, 2010) and Saul (2010).

This study intends to contribute to reflections and analyses concerning teacher training, understanding it as an essential and privileged moment to reflect upon practices, especially in the current context of quick changes, characteristic of the society of information and knowledge, a result of technological advancements and, consequently, of sociocultural and economic changes in the past decades.

The constant changes in contemporary society have impacts on the educational scenario, causing, in educators, uncertainty and insecurity regarding what is demanded from a new teacher profile in order to face current challenges, such as continued training, autonomy, collective work, the ability to interact with students, produce systematized knowledge and educate citizens who are critical, creative, involved, etc. In turn, knowledge acquired through the teacher training process cannot be crystallized, especially in the current reality, marked by continuous transformation.

Therefore, teachers must be aware of the importance and necessity of training to meet the demands of current society. It is important to highlight that training is not only an individual responsibility, but, above all, the responsibility of educational institutions. It is necessary to rethink teacher training, especially when considered as actions isolated, fragmented and apart from practice, which aren't originated from real needs and problems experienced by educators in their everyday activities.

It is worth noting that formative actions aimed at teachers of the first years of basic education, offered by municipal and state education secretariats or by universities, in general, haven't encompassed the real needs of the school context. These actions, to a certain extent, have been characterized as sporadic activities with the nature of training, retraining, improvement, through courses, seminars, lectures and workshops with lighter workloads or a traditional curriculum, acknowledging that such initiatives may remedy possible flaws and gaps of initial training.

Usually, teacher training programs are predefined by the institutions or education secretariats and often overlook the needs and difficulties of teachers in training. In most formative actions, prevails a training based on the transfer of knowledge, methods and techniques through theories conveyed out of context, which disregard the real needs and problematic situations experienced by teachers, preventing them from being subjects in their own formative process and inhibiting their professional development.

We also consider that most formative actions consist of lectures, courses, seminars and workshops and use transmissive methods, of a banking nature, with themes and content that do not reflect the teachers' training needs. In this context, it is necessary to reject the traditional models of education, which disregard the teachers' reality and distance themselves from it, and create training practices centered in school and based on teachers' needs and difficulties.

In contrast to that concept, we defend training that isn't transmissive with respect to methods, techniques and the accumulation of knowledge. A humane, dialogic, participative training, which considers the teacher as a subject in their formation, and not an object; which values constant reflection on their expertise, their pedagogical practice, in a problematizing manner, with context and based on the dialectical movement of action-reflection-action. This training enables the educator to develop a critical attitude toward the reality of their time, in order to understand their real needs and difficulties, seeking to transform their practices.

In this regard, Imbernón (2010, p. 54) believes that teacher training based on problematic situations, centering the problems found in practice, fulfills the needs defined by the school. For that author, the educational institution becomes a primary qualification space, through projects or action researches. Within this concept, "[...] school becomes the focus of the action-reflection-action process as a basic unit of change, development and improvement" (our translation). Imbernón (2009, p. 42, our translation) also highlights that "[...] training by itself accomplishes very little if it isn't allied to changes in context, organization, management, and power relations between teachers".

It is important to overcome training proposals that are strict, out of context and don't provide or create spaces for reflection. Training that follows the model of a package imposed on teachers hinders their critical and creative conscience and makes them settle, adjust, impairing faculty autonomy. In this context, Freire¹ (2008, p. 15-16, our translation) proposes denouncing oppressive situations.

We need to yell loudly that, beside their actions in the union, the teachers' scientific training enlightened by their political clarity, their capability, their taste for knowledge, their always active curiosity are some of the best political tools in the defense of their interests and their rights.

Training, from that viewpoint, is a development process, throughout the educator's life. It has ethical, political and professional dimensions, since the educator must be prepared before they even begin teaching. The ethical dimension consists in

¹ The current scenario in Brazil has constant attacks and distortions of the works and thoughts of Paulo Freire, known as the greatest educator of the 20th century, for composing a Pedagogy that favors the liberation of the oppressed, having the principles of freedom, autonomy, social justice and democracy for a horizon. For that reason, Paulo Freire has been arduously challenged. His ideas have inspired and continue to inspire progressive educators around the world, as well as those who try to organize and build collective actions with a political perspective of emancipation and subject transformation.

reflecting about the meaning of what one does, their ability to appraise, to choose, to decide, to act and to intervene. In their personal/professional journey, the teacher builds values, rules, standards, knowledge, ideas. The political dimension is the acknowledgement that education is a political act; therefore, education isn't neutral. One must have clarity concerning fundamental questions: for whom and for what, against whom and against what do we educate. This dimension is committed to the construction of citizenship and democracy and to everyone's emancipation.

As for the professional dimension, being a teacher requires a permanent pursuit of qualification. Being in a search movement implies acknowledging that we are incomplete beings and cannot stop learning, studying, researching, questioning and problematizing reality. Therefore, the investigation carried out in the construction of this study sought to answer the guiding question: "What contributions has permanent teacher training offered for the pedagogical practice of the teaching staff working with the early years of Basic Education at a public municipal school located in the borough of Jaraguá-SP, considering the construction of a democratic school?"

2 TEACHER TRAINING IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF PAULO FREIRE

In this study, the starting point is the concept of human beings as incomplete, unfinished, in a reality that is also historic and, therefore, unfinished. Human beings, active and curious, can educate themselves. Education isn't depleted, because human nature isn't depleted, and human beings are in a constant process of development.

Within this perspective, teacher training is understood in this text in the same way as in Freire's concept, grounded in the awareness that the human being is unfinished and in their ontological vocation of "Being More", since where there is life, there is incompleteness. Freire (2015, p. 25, our translation) thus proposes permanent teacher training:

Education is permanent not because certain ideological line or political position or economic interest demands so. Education is permanent due to, on one hand, the finiteness of human beings and, on the other hand, the awareness that they have of their finiteness. Moreover, due to, throughout history, having internalized in their nature not only knowing that they lived, but knowing that they knew, and, thus, knowing that they could know more. Permanent education and training are grounded there.

The author understands the educator's training as permanent, which implies understanding humans as incomplete and finite. The awareness that humans are unfinished and incomplete provides infinite possibilities and projects to carry out in the unceasing pursuit of "Being More". This enables education and training throughout their existence.

In this direction, Freire (2001) defended permanent teacher training in their own school context, with small groups of educators or bigger groups, based on the movement of action-reflection-action of educators who work at the school. This training encompasses the analysis of pedagogical practices, considering the reflection about the practice and theoretical reflection.

Qualifying teachers through the permanent perspective contributes to problematizing education, able to qualify individuals who can critically read the world, the context, seeking to overcome the concept of teacher training that reduces teachers' autonomy over their work, their ability to reflect critically about their reality. It also contributes to the construction of a democratic school.

Permanent training, in Freire's perspective, constitutes a principle and practice of training able to unveil ideologies, because it is problematizing and critical and continuously seeks an action that can transform reality. This understanding leads us to question the assertion that the teacher is qualified with just an undergraduate degree and suggests that they are in a constant qualification process, with the possibility of building knowledge, reflecting about practices, exchanging experiences with their peers. Since the teacher is an unfinished being, they don't know everything, but also don't ignore everything, and therefore can learn-teach with others. In this regard, Freire (2016, p. 25, our translation) states that "[...] who teaches, learns when teaching, and who learns, teaches when learning".

Assuming the principle of human incompleteness, the pursuit of formative actions for teachers, grounded in Freire's perspective, can contribute to a problematizing education, which becomes real through humanizing actions and relationships and helps teachers to manage their own training, able to feel like subjects in their own training and construction of knowledge, and not only like people who transmit and replicate what others thought and built. In that regard, Freire (2016, p. 24-25, our translation) asseverates:

If, in my experience of training, which must be permanent, I begin by accepting that the instructor is the subject relative to whom I consider myself the object, that he is the subject who instructs and I am the object formed by him, I consider myself as a patient who receives the knowledge – contents – accumulated by the subject who knows and which are transferred to me. In this way of understanding and living the training process, I, as an object now, will have the possibility, tomorrow, of becoming the false subject in the ‘training’ of the future object of my formative act.

In Freire’s perspective, teacher training doesn’t seek only qualification through the teacher’s certification for professional practice. It doesn’t aim toward simple scientific, pedagogical and didactic updates, but, most importantly, toward a permanent character building, which considers the teacher as the subject of the process, providing favorable conditions to reflect critically about their practices, uncertainties and curiosity, with the possibility to read the context of their surroundings, seeking to overcome oppressive conditions.

According to Freire (2016), the essence of permanent teacher training is the reflection about practice in order to improve it. In this sense, qualification goes beyond training, improvement, retraining and adequacy, since it is committed to reflection about practice in a critical and transformative perspective.

When he was Secretary for Education, in the city of São Paulo, between 1989 and 1991, Paulo Freire aimed to implement a curriculum policy committed to making public schools popular, democratic, autonomous, with the active participation of teachers, students, managers and families.

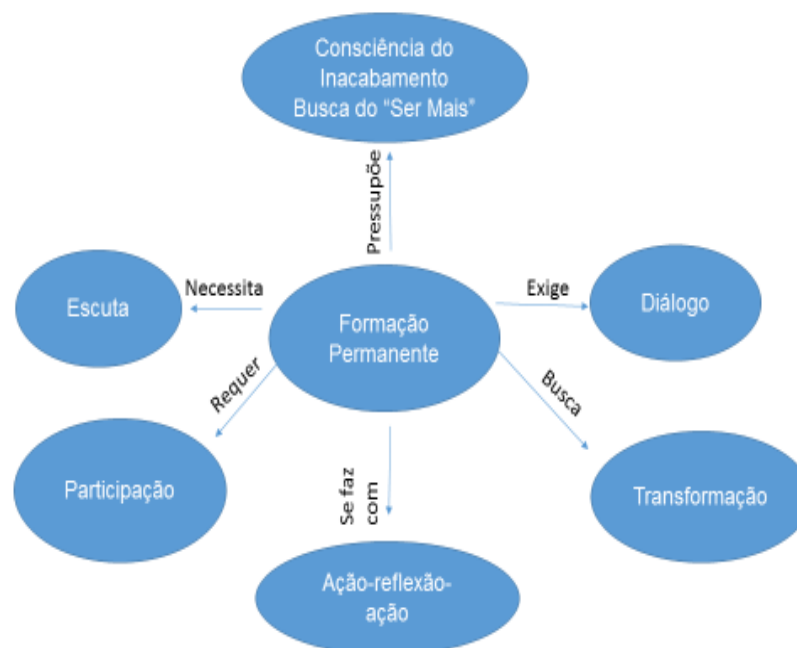
This study was developed with the elaboration of a Freirean conceptual scheme, a theoretical-methodological construction with dual purpose. According to Saul and Saul (2013), the first purpose is to help the researcher visualize how Freirean concepts can be articulated to achieve the purposes of their research, such as understanding a phenomenon or situation, proposing or evaluating educational policies or practices. As for the second one, it has a didactic function and can be used in teaching-learning situations, for the understanding and expansion of Paulo Freire’s work.

The conceptual scheme constitutes a way to manage the relationship between concepts present in Freire’s work, as well as a way to understand the concepts relationally, without considering the words separately, but in a holistic and dynamic way.

The scheme encompasses a central concept, which, in this study, is permanent training. Concepts are represented through arrows and words that seek a relation. The central theme is related to the concepts of awareness of human incompleteness, pursuit of “Being More”, which requires listening, demands dialogue, requires participation, involves the movement action-reflection-action and seeks transformation.

Below is a representation of the Freirean conceptual scheme constructed based on the concept of permanent training:

Figure 1 – Freirean conceptual scheme



Source: Own elaboration (2019).

Permanent training is grounded on understanding and acknowledging the inconclusion and incompleteness of human beings, driving them toward “Being More”. The process of teacher training is constant; it is not finished with the completion of an undergraduate course or in any other time period.

The “listening” category is part of the knowledge that is fundamental and necessary to educational practice proposed by Freire in *Pedagogy of autonomy* (2016). The educator who listens learns and transforms their discourse to the student, when talking to them. Listening goes beyond each person’s auditory capability. For Freire

(2016, p. 117, our translation), to listen means “[...] permanent availability of the subject who listens toward openness to the other’s speech, the other’s gesture, the other’s differences”.

Freire (2001, p. 43, our translation) warns that “[...] it is necessary that we be told about how they see the school, how they would like it to be; that they tell us about what is or isn’t taught in school, about how it’s taught. Nobody democratizes school alone, from the Secretary’s office”. Thus, one of the challenges in teacher training is the inclusion, in their schedules, of the practice of listening to yearnings, interests and concerns, valuing different languages and gestures.

Corroborating Freire’s thought, Saul (2010, p. 160, our translation) understands that “[...] knowing how to listen is a prerequisite for the development of a democratic educational practice”. Listening enables the ability to hear different people. The educator’s understanding and respect toward the student’s knowledge are an act of listening, based on their world reading. The practice of knowing how to listen demands from the educator the acquisition of new knowledge, such as humility, tolerance, solidarity and respect toward others.

According to Freire (2013b, p. 109, our translation), “[...] dialogue is this meeting of people, mediatized by the world, to pronounce it, not being exhausted, therefore, in the I-you relationship”. Dialogue is part of the human nature, is an existential condition. Saying the word isn’t the privilege of a few people, but a right of all.

The dialogical relationship proposed by Freire is based on love, which is an act of courage, compromise, responsibility and commitment to the cause of liberation. Dialogue also demands trust in oneself and in others to pronounce the world. Lack of trust impairs the dialogue.

According to Freire and Shor (2008, p. 122-127, our translation):

[...] dialogue must be understood as something that is part of humans’ own historic nature [...]. Dialogue is the moment when humans meet to reflect on their reality as they do and re-do it. [...]. Dialogue doesn’t exist in a political vacuum. In order to reach the goals of transformation, dialogue implies responsibility, guidance, determination, discipline, objectives.

Dialogue, as understood by Freire and Shor (2008), constitutes the center of the educational practice that intends to be democratic, critical, problematizing and transformative, since, in a dialogical relationship, subjects confront arguments; question; discuss; share knowledge and lived experiences. Dialogue contributes to forming subjects who are free, creative, curious, inquisitive and autonomous in different educational contexts.

According to Freire (2001, p. 127, our translation), participation is related to sharing decisions, sharing power and having deeply held political conviction of one's actions. It means that everyone may have a voice in different power levels. For the author:

[...] participation means more than, on certain weekends, 'offering' parents the opportunity of, repairing deterioration, damages in schools, fulfilling the State's obligations [...] Participation means to discuss, to have a voice, finding it in schools' educational policies, in their budget organization.

Participation cannot be reduced to providing occasional services in order to minimize the State's responsibility to fulfill their duties. School autonomy doesn't imply that the State should neglect their duty to offer quality education with enough supplies to meet social demands.

Popular participation is a tool capable of breaking with the tradition that only the elite is competent and understands society's needs and interests as a whole. Freire (2001) was against inviting people into school only to receive instructions, threats, reprimands and punishments. He believed that low income classes need to participate collectively in the construction of knowledge that takes into consideration their needs and interests.

We can state that the action-reflection-action category is paramount to Freire's thought. The expression means the binomial of the dialectical unit in praxis, i.e., outside of praxis the knowledge turns out idealistic, and the action becomes merely mechanic without reflection. According to Freire (2013a, p. 30, our translation), "[...] humans are beings of praxis, of action and reflection". This means that humans are able to objectify, apprehend and pierce reality, unfolding transformative action in the world. Humans, as beings of praxis, create a historic-cultural world to face the challenges in the path of

their existence, seek critical and creative solutions, acting and transforming reality, continuously seeking, through work and action, to provide society with conditions to improve life.

Permanent training, in Freirean perspective, is grounded on the process of action-reflection-action, in which the subject is able to develop a critical attitude toward the reality of their time, considering that they are a historic-social being in constant construction of knowledge.

As for the transformation category, we highlight its character of commitment and involvement in the fight for the oppressed cause. According to Freire (1994, p. 18, our translation), “[...] transformation is understood as an act of creation of people”. Transforming reality and pedagogical practice is a condition and one of the objectives of permanent teacher training actions.

Pedagogical practice is transformed on the “school floor”, fertile soil and place for the necessary changes to occur effectively. Training in the school context needs to create conditions and opportunities to spark the educators’ reflections about their educational practices and concepts, in order to resignify their pedagogical action. Teachers must have a discovery spirit, a critical attitude to rethink their practice and realize the aspects that require analysis and further development.

3 METHODOLOGY

For this study, we chose a qualitative research, which enables the interpretation of meanings attributed to facts and phenomena by people. According to Chizzotti (2005, p. 79, our translation), “[...] qualitative approach is based on the principle that there is dynamic relationship between the real world and the subject, living correlation between subject and object, an inextricable bond between the objective world and the individual’s subjectivity”. Therefore, knowledge isn’t reduced to a list of isolated data, connected by explanatory theory, because the observing subject is an integral part of the knowledge process, interprets phenomena and assigns them meanings.

Qualitative research encompasses a diversity of empirical data, such as document analysis, field notes, interviews, observation, in order to understand or interpret phenomena in their natural scenarios and the meanings attributed to them by people.

In this investigation, we used three integrated techniques: participant observation, due to understanding that the researcher always has some degree of interaction with the situation studied, affecting it and being affected by it; semi-structured interview, due to providing greater flexibility between interviewer and interviewee, and being created based on observations; and, lastly, document analysis, considered a valuable technique, since documents constitute a rich and stable information source, which can be consulted several times.

Observations were carried out at the school researched, in qualification meetings: Qualification Special Integral Journey (JEIF, in Portuguese) and Special Action Project (PEA, in Portuguese); in pedagogical meetings; in parent-teacher meetings; and in pedagogical practice meetings, between August and November of 2015.

Semi-structured interviews took place with one principal, two pedagogical coordinators and four teachers of the early years of Basic Education at a public school located in the Jaraguá borough in the city of São Paulo – SP.

The documents analyzed were: the political-pedagogical project (PPP) and the Special Action Project (PEA, in Portuguese), whose theme is “Languages, Technology and Coexistence in an Educator City”.

4 RESULT ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

In order to describe, explain and understand the researched phenomenon in its magnitude, data were produced in different moments and through different information sources, using tool triangulation to obtain them: documents, observation and interviews. According to Denzin (1978), data triangulation consists of collecting data at different times and from different sources, to obtain a detailed description of phenomena.

Data were organized in axes, based on the categories listed in the Freirean conceptual scheme, constituted based on studies of the author's work. The thematic axes were thus defined: training as an unfinished and transformative process; listening and dialogue in the elaboration of PPP and teacher trainings: a critical-transformative process; community participation in training actions; the movement of action-reflection-action in teachers' (trans)formation and practices.

Based on the first axis – training as an unfinished and transformative process –, we verified the principle of awareness and acknowledgement of human beings as unfinished, evidenced in the reports by coordinators and teachers in interviews.

I think that we are in construction until the day we die, both as human beings and professionals. We can't say that the teacher is finished. Human beings can never say: 'I'm ready', they are always in process, because qualification is unfinished. (COORDINATOR 1, our translation).

I believe we are never finished. Training doesn't end, I believe that, because the moment we finish and say: I graduated, it's over, you can leave the Education field, search for a different job. (COORDINATOR 2, our translation).

I believe in teacher training, in the permanent training of humans, all the time, because qualification is an unfinished process, and the teacher never stops studying, searching, researching and learning. (TEACHER 1, our translation).

Participants emphasized that the teacher is never ready, because they are in a permanent qualification movement, learning-teaching, building and rebuilding themselves constantly, due to the need to seek knowledge. They recognize that training is a non-stop process, due to the continuous demand that human beings learn more, given their incomplete and unfinished condition, two characteristics that, in the Freirean perspective, constitute the founding principle of permanent training.

Concerning the concept of teacher training, the subjects' voices revealed the following understandings:

It has to be a permanent training, based always on the reflection upon one's own practice [...]. So that's why we always try to ground the training in the demands we have daily at school. (COORDINATOR 1, our translation).

For me, teacher training are the dialogues we have during our four weekly JEIF meetings, where we consolidate our training, as a school group, based on discussions and reflections about teachers' needs, about practice. (COORDINATOR 2, our translation).

The subjects' voices announced the need for formative actions to be grounded on teachers' practices, on problems and difficulties that they face in the classroom, because, most of the time, initial training is unable to handle that complexity. For that reason, permanent teacher training is of paramount importance in the Freirean perspective.

Having as a guiding element the second axis – listening and dialogue in the elaboration of PPP and teacher trainings: a critical-transformative process –, we present the categories listening and dialogue, in the school's political-pedagogical project, thus:

*We have *listening* and outlook attentive to the needs detected in the everyday practice and, especially, in student assemblies, where they exercise *dialogue* and citizenship, in a broader collective than the classroom, in the election of Class Representatives and Student Council. (SÃO PAULO [Município], 2014, p. 15, emphasis added, our translation).*

*That students can produce knowledge that contribute to the transformation of society, the overcoming of difficulties and the humanization of relationships between people, using *dialogue* as a way to mediate conflicts and to make collective decisions. (SÃO PAULO [Município], 2014, p.13, emphasis added, our translation).*

Listening and dialogue are principles highlighted in the researched school's PPP as important conditions and necessary in order to identify and seek collective answers to needs and problems experienced every day at school.

As a foundation of dialogue, the PPP assumes a vision of knowledge as constructed, not merely transmitted, and at the service of transformation. Dialogue was established in qualification actions, since they took place through trust, humility and respect toward others, their ideas, values and knowledge. Freire (2013a, p. 51, our translation) warns that “[...] being dialogical is not invading, not manipulating, not ‘sloganizing’. Being dialogical is engaging with the constant transformation of reality”.

Dialogue as a communication tool was found in qualification meetings (JEIF and PEA):

Coordinator 1 makes a comment about fairy tales with Black princesses. We have to research that content, it's not ready, we have to construct it. In our classes, we can show our students that Black princesses are beautiful. Every people have their beauty, their culture, their habits, their values, their traditions, and this beauty standard that was imposed needs to be questioned and criticized. I emphasize again that we need to rethink our curriculum for the next year. Teacher 1 says: I think that the path is that of reflection and criticality concerning those issues. The Coordinator concludes the meeting. (FIELD DIARY, 10/11/2015, our translation).

True dialogue is not an imposition, in which one person is considered the keeper of the word, of the speech, and the others don't have the freedom to say their word and only listen, not expressing themselves. True dialogue consists of a collective relationship, of a meeting where everyone can communicate. Therefore, exercising dialogical communication contributes to the development of democratic relations at school and in society.

Through the third axis – community participation in training actions –, we observed that the practice of participation witnessed at school happens in different ways: in the elaboration of documents, in qualification meetings, in professional meetings, in the planning and execution of parties, field trips, visitations, and in the involvement with activities, contributing to the construction of a democratic school.

Teacher participation was mentioned as an important category by the subjects:

Teacher participation is important in decisions, in the implementation of the political-pedagogical project, in teacher training meetings and in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary projects at school. (PRINCIPAL, our translation).

When we need to think about something for the school, for example, about the school's needs, the students' needs, our needs, the best classroom layout, the best way to group students in classes, then we decide that through participation in collective moments. So, qualification meetings are important in making decisions. (TEACHER 2, our translation).

In the interviewees' reports, there is clear understanding that collective work fosters discussion about demands related to gaps that resulted from initial training, as well as those originated in the school routine, in decision-making, in student groups. To

participate means to have rights, discuss, share collective decisions and contribute to outcomes and consequences.

In the classroom context, students participated, conveying their opinions and knowledge through drawings that expressed their imagination and emotions. Concerning family participation in parent-teacher meetings, it wasn't so strong, because few managed to express their ideas, opinions, suggestions and criticisms about the themes discussed: the importance of families' knowledge about the school's political-pedagogical project; participation at the School Council; combatting the dengue, Zika and Chikungunya mosquito; and students' uniforms.

Participating means "being part" of the process, expressing an opinion, agreeing or disagreeing – it means making decisions. Thus, we evidence the importance that the families become aware of the value in their active participation in the school's decisions. School management needs to make an effort toward raising the families' awareness of the need for a more effective participation, through actions that boost their involvement.

The subjects' speeches revealed that training developed in the school unit contributes to the construction of a democratic school.

JEIF is decisive in the construction of a democratic school, because it represents a space for making decisions, sharing our experiences, our concerns, our dreams, our victories [...]. (COORDINATOR 1, our translation).

The school unit has been trying to build, for the last 16 years, a school with the highest possible quality, democratic. We want a school where teachers, students, workers and the families can choose with autonomy and responsibility. (PRINCIPAL, our translation).

Coordinator 1 acknowledges that JEIF is relevant in the construction of a democratic school, because it is a privileged space to make decisions, exchange knowledge, share experiences, which aims to combat all forms of prejudice. The Principal emphasizes school autonomy as paramount in the construction of a democratic school. Participation is a practice that can be broad, vigorous and constantly experienced, and the school constitutes a privileged training space for the participation and the exercise of citizenship.

The Special Action Project (PEA, in Portuguese) highlights community participation in the researched school. This excerpt of that document confirms its relevance: “[...] the community, in turn, must have an intense participation at school and cooperation in their children’s school career” (SÃO PAULO [Município], 2015, our translation).

Analyzing the PEA, we verified that the document emphasizes participation as an important principle, which comes to life in the sharing of ideas, in respect toward others, in the guarantee of equality in decisions and in the search for collective involvement in subsequent actions.

The theme of the school’s PEA – project elaborated by the school unit with the participation of the principal, pedagogical coordinators and teachers – in the time of research was “Languages, Technology and Coexistence in an Educator City”. The theme choice aimed to meet the needs of students and subsidize teachers to help children with their reading and writing skills in all fields of knowledge and in the use of technology, a very common tool nowadays.

The fourth and last axis – the movement of action-reflection-action in teachers’ (trans)formation and practices – was identified in the subjects’ voices.

Every time I participate in training meetings, I realize that this movement of doing and redoing is very good, because it rebuilds practice. [...]. This movement makes me understand what it means to teach, what it means to educate, what is real education. (TEACHER 2, our translation).

In my opinion, training fosters the reflection about pedagogical practice. Trainings at school are full of spaces to study theories and spaces of practice applied to those theories. We’re invited to make that movement, to reflect about the action-reflection-action movement in the search for transformation of practices. (TEACHER 3, our translation).

The teachers’ reports reveal the understanding of training as a movement of constant doing and redoing of practices and the possibility to effect change. They recognize the need to seek and deepen knowledge through the development of increasingly better practices; they believe that training fosters reflection about pedagogical practice, through discussion and training meetings.

According to Freire (2008), action-reflection-action constitutes the dialectic unit of praxis. Reflection is the movement between doing and thinking, between thinking and doing. Permanent teacher training, for Freire, doesn't prioritize or value only practice or theory in the training context, doesn't defend that theory be primary in training, with practice relegated to a second place. Instead, it understands both – theory and practice – as parts of a process that must be viewed from the optics of unity, where one's existence is included in the existence of the other.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the reflections and analyses of this study, we can affirm that it is paramount to elaborate a permanent teacher training proposal that understands human beings as unfinished, in the perspective of "Being More", and undertakes the reading of reality grounded on listening, dialogue and the participation of the school community.

We verified that the school's political-pedagogical project and the group that participated in the study emphasize listening and dialogue as guiding principles of the school movement, in order to know the community's concerns regarding education, society, school, curriculum and the teaching-learning process, with school transformation as a horizon.

In the interviews, we noticed that subjects recognize that the exchange of experiences and the discussions carried out in JEIF meetings deepen the training and are fundamental to their permanent training and the consolidation of collective work.

During the observations, we identified that one of the limits of the training research in that school's context was the small number of teachers who attend formative actions. To solve that problem, it is necessary to organize pedagogical time, including class times, in order to enable the convergence of the teachers' schedules for planning and study, even if that convergence consists of organizing grade/field timetables. Formative actions should involve all teachers at the same time.

Participation, as expressed by the educators' voices, in a critical perspective, was identified in the elaboration and implementation of the political-pedagogical project, in trainings and in decisions that aimed to overcome concerns that resulted from the classroom "floor".

Document analysis, interviews and the observation of qualification meetings and pedagogical practice meetings allowed us to state that the materiality of dimensions that constitute permanent training, such as listening, dialogue, participation and the action-reflection-action movement, presented more strongly as an intention – PPP, PEA and subjects' reports – than as formative actions, in meetings, in classrooms and in family participation.

The results of this investigation and the lessons resulting from this research process enabled us to present/suggest points of reflection for the improvement of formative actions for teachers at the researched school.

Freirean permanent training proposes a journey beyond the understanding and practice of training, focusing on reading and studying texts, usually chosen by those who plan the actions. This concept is still strongly assumed by education secretariats, regional boards, Higher Education institutions and even the Ministry for Education.

The approximation, support and collaboration between university and school, with the participation of experts from different fields of knowledge, are important to develop formative actions for the teachers' specific fields of work.

Expanding spaces for dialogue, reflection and discussion of families and the school community, aiming toward a more effective participation, is paramount in the school's decisions and actions, in parent-teacher meetings and in pedagogical meetings.

In conclusion, beside a qualified teacher training, delineated here, it is necessary to fight for better work conditions, decent wages, professional valorization, training space and time to reflect critically about practices, aiming to construct teachers' professional autonomy.

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