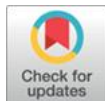


Pedagogical relationship in the university environment: social representations captured



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Abstract

The study is part of a larger research and aims to capture social representations of the pedagogical relationship emerging from the university interaction of graduating students and their teachers in a Degree Course - Pedagogy at a federal public institution in Northeastern Brazil. It presents the pedagogical relationship as its object and problematizes the extent to which this relationship impacts student/teacher training. The theoretical contribution is based on classic studies on pedagogical relationships (Postic, 1990), university life (Freire, 2019a) and Moscovician ideas on the Theory of Social Representations (Moscovici, 1976). It has a qualitative character. It presents information collected using: Profile Questionnaire, Sentence Completion techniques (Ferreira; Rese; Nogueira, 2014) and Content Analysis (Bardin, 2011). The results indicate that coexistence at the university level and social representations emanating from this environment generate academic growth, democratic attitudes in the pedagogical relationship, with the representations being anchored in ideas that lead to the genesis of experienced situations which can explain current positions and behaviors.

Keywords

pedagogical relationship; Theory of Social Representations; university interaction; daily.

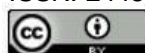
Relação pedagógica no ambiente universitário: representações sociais captadas

Resumo

O estudo faz parte de uma pesquisa maior e objetiva captar representações sociais da relação pedagógica emergidas do convívio universitário de alunos concluintes e de seus professores em um curso de licenciatura em Pedagogia de uma instituição pública federal do Nordeste brasileiro. Apresenta como objeto a relação pedagógica e problematiza até que ponto essa relação repercute na formação discente/docente. O aporte teórico assenta-se nos estudos clássicos sobre relação pedagógica (Postic, 1990), no convívio universitário (Freire, 2019a) e nas ideias *moscovicianas* sobre a Teoria das Representações Sociais (Moscovici, 1976). Possui caráter qualitativo. Apresenta informações coletadas utilizando: questionário de perfil, técnicas de complementação de frases (Ferreira; Rese; Nogueira, 2014) e análise de conteúdo (Bardin, 2011). Os resultados apontam que o convívio no âmbito universitário e representações sociais emanadas desse meio geram crescimento acadêmico, atitudes democráticas na relação pedagógica, estando as representações ancoradas em ideias que encaminham para a gênese de situações vividas que podem explicar posições e comportamentos atuais.

Palavras-chave

relação pedagógica; Teoria das Representações Sociais; convívio universitário; cotidiano.



Relación pedagógica en el ámbito universitario: representaciones sociales captadas

Resumen

El estudio forma parte de una investigación más amplia y tiene como objetivo capturar representaciones sociales de la relación pedagógica que emergen de la interacción universitaria de estudiantes graduados y sus profesores en una licenciatura em Pedagogia en una institución pública federal en el Noreste de Brasil. Presenta la relación pedagógica como su objeto y problematiza en qué medida esa relación impacta la formación de estudiantes/docentes. El aporte teórico se sustenta en estudios clásicos sobre las relaciones pedagógicas (Postic, 1990), la vida universitaria (Freire, 2019a) and las ideas *moscovícas* sobre la Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales (Moscovici, 1976). Tiene un carácter cualitativo. Presenta información recopilada mediante: cuestionario de perfil, técnicas de finalización de oraciones (Ferreira; Rese; Nogueira, 2014) y análisis de contenido (Bardin, 2011). Los resultados indican que la convivencia en el nivel universitario y las representaciones sociales que emanan de este entorno generan crecimiento académico, actitudes democráticas en la relación pedagógica, estando las representaciones ancladas en ideas que conducen a la génesis de situaciones vividas que pueden explicar posiciones y comportamientos actuales.

Palabras clave

relación pedagógica; Teoría de las Representaciones Sociales; interacción universitaria; cotidiano.

1 Introduction

Thinking about formal education is, above all, thinking about the complexity that emanates from it, as it is composed of people and their subjectivities, opinions, knowledge, and representations, and how this complex amalgamation unfolds in the school environment, with this study focusing specifically on the university context.

The highlighted research considers the educational actors and research subjects, specifically, graduating students from a Pedagogy degree program and their teachers, focusing on the dynamic aspects of their interactions, which are characterized by daily routines.

We understand that in daily life there is a certain formative potential that '[...] occurs in various spaces and is woven in a dialogical process, shared among peers in the search for change' (Silva; Souza, 2022, p. 9). In this way, through dialogue, teachers can make the school daily life a formative space for their students. We believe that in the university environment, a genuine space/time for teaching and learning, teachers '[...] teach, learn, and find meaning in their work, as well as responses to the educational needs of the students' (Silva; Souza, 2022, p. 9).

Concurrently, the pedagogical relationship we aim to bring into the discussions in this research involves educational actors who navigate the university environment in question, namely teachers and their graduating students from teacher education programs. In this analysis, the pedagogical relationship is presented as '[...] transversal relationships that pertain to the human profile of the teacher and their attitudes stemming from their civic and ethical values' (Freire-Ribeiro; Mesquita, 2020, p. 19), positioning itself beyond the process of teaching and learning, and being interconnected with the constitutive dimension of the human being, that is, their know-how to be.

This study is part of a research project titled "The Pedagogical Relationship in the Daily Context of Teacher Education Courses: The Social Representations of Teacher Trainers." It is set in a university in the Northeast of Brazil and is financially supported by a state foundation for the promotion of research and scientific and technological development. This project aims to analyze the social representations of teacher educators emanating from the pedagogical relationship woven in the daily curriculum of undergraduate courses, in view of the process of teacher professionalization. It is worth noting that this project is being developed by the Research Group on Education and Social Representations (GPERS) of the Graduate Program in Education at the university under study.

Thus, it is evident that there is a dialogue between the study presented, the cited project, and the research group's studies, highlighting the need to move beyond formative models that prioritize only the learning and development of techniques and decontextualized book knowledge in teacher education. Instead, the focus should shift to the individuals, their representations, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors emerging from common sense, which also serves as fertile ground for the formation of social representations

In addition, teacher training spaces, by providing students with daily contact with their classmates and teachers, enable exchanges of experiences, as well as sharing anxieties and concerns about teaching work, and these interpersonal relationships are also essential in the construction of knowledge and teacher identity (Moraes; Oliveira; Santos, 2020, p. 136)

Thus, the Bachelor's degree program in Pedagogy serves as the focal point of the study, taking into account the teacher education it provides. This education should also

facilitate a dialogue that encompasses the personal, historical, political, and social dimensions, '[...] recognizing the power of differences in the construction of an alternative knowledge paradigm, one that is more plural' (Silva, 2023, p. 14).

The theoretical framework of this study is based on a triad, where each element assists in the construction of the study's object, as well as in the interpretation of data and findings. This triad is composed of the assumptions of Serge Moscovici's Social Representations Theory (1976), Marcel Postic's pedagogical relationship (1990), and Paulo Freire's concept of university life (2019a, 2019b).

The motivation for choosing Social Representations Theory (SRT) stems from the fact that studies conducted within GPERS focus on this theory, which deals with everyday phenomena imbued with alternatives arising from the common sense of social groups, in this case, consisting of university students and teachers.

According to Castorina (2021, p. 396):

En la vida cotidiana (y en la vida escolar) existen representaciones sociales o significados culturales que a veces son contradictorios entre sí, lo cual implica que los sujetos al utilizarlos, sostenerlos o apropiarse de ellos recurran a lógicas o sistemas de pensamiento diferentes. La polifasia depende, así, de aportes tanto sociales como cognitivos.

And it is in this polyphasia that we perceive education, specifically, the university environment lacking a more focused look at psychosocial phenomena, leading us to opt for the support of Moscow's theory, which considers educational actors as socio-historical subjects and, as such, produce culture, representations, values and beliefs.

In this sense, we understand that the support of SRT will help in understanding how representations are formed through the processes of anchoring and objectification. According to the SRT, these two processes are responsible for formulating this type of psychosocial thinking. Anchoring aims to “[...] integrate unfamiliar elements into common categories and images, placing them in a familiar context” (Maciel; Sousa; Dias, 2021, p. 262). For example: when we think about an object, we use thought schemes from previous experiences and assign this object to other objects within a space in the existing set of meanings. Objectification, on the other hand, is presented as “[...] a process by which the constituent elements of representation are organized and acquire materiality, giving concreteness to abstractions” (Maciel; Sousa; Dias, 2021, p. 262), that is, a concept starts

to have its image. It is important to remember that these processes are intertwined and inseparable.

Meanwhile, the study of the pedagogical relationship is grounded in Postic's classic view (1990, p. 12), which states that this relationship is based on a '[...] set of social relationships established between the educator and the learner to achieve educational objectives [...], relationships that have identifiable cognitive and affective characteristics, that undergo development, and have a history.' This does not preclude the involvement of other educational actors in this relationship, going beyond the teacher/student binary.

To form this relationship, it is necessary to consider the affective, cognitive, and social aspects of the learners, as well as to provide a stimulating environment for their individual and group development. Thus, we think from Freire (2021), when stating how formidable it would be if universities planned their experiences based on the understanding that the act of learning and teaching ceased to be merely mechanistic, a way of acting still perceived with great force, and became a process of knowledge production. This knowledge is also focused on representations, beliefs and truths brought by students, reified, a *posteriori*, in scientific knowledge, but recognizing the wealth arising from common sense knowledge, causing them to be active and aware of their roles and responsibilities.

Regarding university life, the study draws on the principles of Freirean thought, according to which educational institutions construct their conception aimed at changing the paradigms authoritatively established by the current society. There is an urgent need to revise certain hierarchical impositions of knowledge, as it is not solely held by the teacher or the student, but rather exists within the educational relationship between them. This aims to enable the autonomy of both teachers and students. In this relationship with knowledge, '[...] those who teach learn while teaching, and those who learn teach while learning' (Freire, 2019a, p. 23), thus highlighting a dialogical relationship, where there is a sharing of ideas, reciprocity, mutual respect, enabling an awakening that dialogue produces.

Having made this preamble, we ask ourselves: to what extent does the pedagogical relationship occurring in the everyday university environment impact the formation of graduates and their teachers? In an attempt to find an answer, we set as the general objective of this study to capture the social representations of the pedagogical relationship

arising from the university interactions of graduating students and their teachers in a Pedagogy degree program.

The article is structured in three sections: first, we outline the methodological approach, detailing the instruments and techniques used for processing the information; next, we present the understanding of the results and discussions based on the data from the research subjects; and finally, we conclude with the final considerations.

2 Methodological paths of the research

SRT, the theory underpinning this study, has a psychosocial perspective. In an effort to stay true to this perspective, the research incorporates a methodological aspect that refers to the '[...] study of social representations as an organized set of meanings that a group attributes to an object' (Campos, 2021, p. 127), specifically, the meanings that teachers and their students attribute to the university life they experience daily.

The research aligns with a qualitative approach, as it relies on recognizing the multiple possibilities this approach offers for studying phenomena involving human beings and their social relationships established in diverse environments. One must also consider, on one hand, the rigor, as the qualitative approach relies on evidence, and on the other hand, the flexibility, which allows for a greater degree of inference and interpretation in the construction of the text (Moreira, 2018).

An important aspect for us, as researchers, concerns the ethics of the research, considering that it should be conducted based on respect for individuals and their knowledge, recognizing the collaborators' own values and opinions, deserving of dignified treatment, free from prejudice, and guided by the recognition of their rights as individuals, with regard to issues such as gender, ethnicity, cultural identities, social status, faith, political beliefs, age, physical or mental conditions, among others (Gatti, 2019).

This research, specifically involving university professors and their students, requires careful consideration, as its developmental characteristics entail distinct cognitive and emotional conditions due to the nature of their roles. We thus took care with our gestures and attitudes to ensure a respectful and pleasant atmosphere. In this sense, we provided all participants with an Informed Consent Form, in which we described the objectives, theoretical and social relevance of the research, the methodology, and the

ethical support of the form, with the aim of ensuring that participants were informed and understood the procedures they would be subjected to and their implications.

The sample of the aforementioned research included ten graduating students and five teachers from the Pedagogy program. The students were coded as: AP-1, AP-2, AP-3, and so on up to AP-10, with the suffix indicating their order; and the teachers were identified as: PP-1, PP-2, PP-3, PP-4, and PP-5, also with a suffix indicating their order.

It is relevant to consider the graduating students and their teachers as groups, given that, according to Moscovici (1976), they are subjects of social representations, thus constituting a psychosocial group. Thus, in his seminal work *Psychoanalysis, Its Image and Its Public* (1976), the notion of group is seen as an informal or flexible dimension of organizations and institutions. Thus, the research subjects, by constituting themselves as groups (graduating students and teachers), represent phenomena that align with their way of thinking, thereby manifesting in their behavior, motivations, and development of their work.

Information was collected through the administration of a profile questionnaire and the techniques of sentence completion and content analysis among the research subjects.

Regarding the profile questionnaire for the graduating students in the Pedagogy program, it indicates a predominance of female students. This phenomenon may reflect entrenched social representations in which women are innately perceived as having a 'maternal vocation,' a vocation that still directs them towards elementary teaching, an area seen as respectful and nurturing, in line with the traditional view of women's perceived inferior status.

Another indicator highlighted in the profile questionnaire pertains to the housing situation of the Pedagogy graduates: the majority live with their parents or relatives (7 out of 10 respondents). This may indicate a lack of financial stability, a situation common in current times that warrants more specific study.

Regarding the teaching profession in the mentioned course, all the participants in the research are female, a phenomenon that supports the validity of the earlier analysis concerning the Pedagogy program, where female teachers predominantly work in Elementary Education.

Information was collected through sentence completion, a widely accepted technique with broad application in the pedagogical field. This technique differs from others

as it is applied informally and its interpretation is more subjective. This technique “[...] facilitates the expressions of the subject and allows for a broader construction of subjective meanings and symbolic processes that constitute their subjective configuration” (Ferreira; Rese; Nogueira, 2014, p. 103).

The development of the technique presupposes the formulation of a phrase known as "inductive phrase", from which the research subjects express their way of understanding the meaning contained therein and to elaborate their point of view on the inductive provocation, namely: "*University conviviality means...*".

After collecting the answers, we used, for the systematization of information, the content analysis technique, as it presents itself as "a range of equipment" (Bardin, 2011, p. 31), that is, because it is an instrument characterized by a wide variety of forms, adapting to a wide field of application, which are communications, using systematic and objective procedures to describe the content of messages.

Our interest in content analysis was motivated by the fact that, in addition to describing the content, the technique emphasizes the reliability of the meaning assigned to the content after processing. In studies of this nature, focused on a specific institution, in this case, the school, knowledge is rarely obtained through experimental techniques and statistical analyses.

As is evident, content analysis assisted us in the interpretations, allowing us to infer the social representations of the research subjects. By mediating this analysis, inference highlights the clues present in the interviewees' responses, leading us to go beyond conventional content analyses. It helps us understand how information takes shape when associated with concepts, thus emphasizing its importance in the process of understanding the social representations of a particular group.

The application of this technique led us to group the responses into core themes, which were then organized into thematic units. The core themes derive from words and/or phrases whose presence and frequency may signify something for the study object, identified from the responses of the research subjects.

Considering that the collected data were developed in line with the study's objectives, at this stage of analyzing and reviewing the core themes, the thematic units were already outlined. These units are understood as '[...] central themes around which the discourse is organized' (Bardin, 2011, p. 106), present in the excerpts of the research

subjects' responses. From the core themes, these units of communication emerge, and their presence or frequency may indicate aspects that warrant further analysis.

It is important to clarify that, in composing this analysis, we made an effort to ensure that the meanings expressed by the participants flowed through their responses, so as not to impose our own interpretations on those given by the research subjects. As representational elements emerged, they were related to existing theoretical studies.

In this research, from the grouping of core themes, we formed two thematic units: Group Interaction and Dialogue with the University. In these units, we discuss the research results and compare the findings with the adopted theoretical-methodological framework.

3 Results and discussions

As highlighted earlier, the study aimed to enhance the original project mentioned in the Introduction by introducing the pedagogical relationship as a key element in establishing connections between graduates and their teachers, thereby enriching the study of university life. We know that interpersonal relationships become important as they shape, define, and guide individuals, while also providing perspectives, depending on the intention behind the relationship. In this sense, we discuss the thematic units constructed from the content analysis technique.

Following the steps indicated for content analysis, namely: constitution of the *corpus*; floating reading; reduction and coding; selection, analysis and review of the nuclei of meaning; choice and review of the categories; and chosen the thematic units, we added to each one the nuclei of meaning emanating from the answers of the research participants, that is, trainees of the Pedagogy course and their teachers.

The thematic unit Group Interaction encompassed the majority of the core themes derived from the students' responses. They are: patience in interactions; respect for differing opinions; and learning to live in a group.

Regarding the core meaning of patience in interactions, we infer that the surveyed graduates are able to express the significance of the formulated core meaning, recognizing the necessity of dialogue in people's daily lives. This is because individuals are characterized by social traits, such as group membership, and personal traits which, in this context, need to be considered by their group of belonging.

Regarding the core meaning of respect for divergent opinions, we observe that the students in question visibly exhibit a listener's stance that also embraces differing opinions. This indicates respect for the other's viewpoint.

Regarding the core meaning of learning to live in a group, we include the following statement from AP-01: "Group living means an important stance towards others, respecting their way of seeing situations without abandoning one's own ideas."

As observed, the graduates expressed their representations of the phrase that initiated the research, i.e., the meaning they attributed to university life in a spontaneous manner. However, they did not venture to discuss the disillusionments and idiosyncrasies that might arise from this interaction.

The teachers expressed these adverse aspects of university life, sometimes even in an extreme manner, as noted by PP-3: "University life means a relationship where individualism predominates, disrespect for differences, lack of solidarity, and power struggles." We can infer from the response that group interaction, by placing members in constant proximity, may bring to light conflicting worldviews, ideologies, and beliefs, leading to various distortions and conflicts.

Additionally, it can be inferred that there may be representational aspects rooted in the teachers' previous experiences, indicating that anchoring and objectification also encompass worldviews, ideologies, and beliefs. We also observed how the attitudes, behaviors, representations, and beliefs of the subjects change '[...] under the impact of the group, due to a dynamic process resulting from the relationships between members]' (Arruda, 2021, p. 53).

The participants' responses connect with Moscovici's thought by asserting that people are not merely processors of information, but active thinkers who, through countless daily episodes, produce and communicate representations as well as specific solutions to the questions they face.

We start from the premise that men and women think and that their ideas circulate, emanating beliefs, attitudes, values, representations, and behaviors. This is because they organize into groups where ideas circulate, generating social representations from a group perspective and reaching the individuals who think within them (Sá, 1993).

This study leads us to the analysis of the thematic unit called Dialogue with the University, in which nuclei of meaning were grouped, mostly from the teachers' answers.

They are: exchanges and partnerships; experiences in the scientific field; and the student-teacher relationship.

In this sense, PP-01 states that, for him, "Dialogue with the University means a sum of experiences, constant learning, and a source of opportunities for personal and professional growth." Agreeing with the professor, we infer that dialogue signifies maturation and intellectual growth, which are still scarce in higher education institutions, where competition and power struggles often prevail.

Regarding the teacher-student relationship, it is important to reference the expectations that both teachers and students bring to the classroom. These expectations often frustrate the educational actors under analysis for having objectified an imaginary student/teacher, bearer of qualities not found in the daily lives of teachers and students.

Freire (2019a), when expressing that dialogue does not cancel the "I", because it starts from the experiences themselves, which, in agreement with the "other", also bringing their experience, builds a new vision in this exchange of knowledge, in which the "I" and the "other" will be in a constant dialogue in the transformation of reality.

We know that the university can more intensely reproduce the social demands encountered in daily life, and within this space, students may need to work in teams, interact with people of different social characteristics, and deal with opinions that often diverge from their own. This can explain the formation of affinity groups in the classroom (Soares et al., 2016). Demonstrating this thought, the AP-10 student expresses that the dialogue with the university is based on solidarity between peers and that: "*Knowing the opportunities offered by the university*" is a fruitful path not only for the knowledge process, but also for their relationships in university life. These relationships are essential for a positive academic atmosphere, from which social representations may emerge and be shared among students through dialogue, creating a friendly environment. In such a setting, these representations become established and circulate in various situations, such as informal conversations in the institution's corridors.

In line with Freire (2019a), educational institutions should be oriented toward pedagogical reflection and the development of a praxis that engages with human reality. Thus, dialogue is a possible bridge to this understanding, as "[...] the I and the you become, in the dialectic of these constitutive relationships, two yous that make up two I's" (Freire, 2019b, p. 196).

Freirean pedagogy places dialogue at the center of its thought, linking it to the human act of understanding the world and educating oneself. For him, dialogue is like "[...] the loving encounter of people who, mediated by the world, pronounce it, that is, transform it, and in transforming it, humanize it for the humanization of all" (Freire, 2019b, p. 43). Thus, dialogue is the irreversible path to a human, social, and educational relationship.

Before concluding our analysis, it is important to warn of the risks of studying social representations within restricted groups such as this one of teachers and students separately. In every group situation, "[...] the elements of the situation (task, group, oneself, and others) constitute an inseparable system; in this sense, within group situations, there are systems of representations that correlate with each other" (Campos, 2021, pp. 134-135). For example, the representations that teachers and students have of their coexistence as a group can influence the representations, they have of themselves and other members of another group.

Thus, in light of the results of this study, which is part of a larger Project already mentioned, we understand that the pedagogical relationship extends beyond the classroom — its natural environment — into other spaces within educational institutions, under the prerogative of teaching and learning. The pedagogical is seen here as arising from the relationship between subjects, that is, the relationship between many Others, specifically involving individuals who form groups, whether within or outside of university life. These dialogical characteristics strengthen both coexistence and human development.

4 Final Considerations

In this research, we attempted to correlate theoretical and empirical studies throughout the analysis and within the thematic units, pointing to evidence that when the pedagogical relationship extends beyond the teacher/student binary, the phenomenon positively impacts the quality of that relationship. Thus, enriched by the understanding of the analyzed representational elements, the pedagogical relationship can expand and solidify the bonds of belonging that emerge from the network it weaves.

This sense of belonging can also be linked to the dimensions of the constitution of social representations of teachers and their graduating students "[...] which connect or distance the individual from a particular social group" (Diniz, 2023, p. 21).

It is also worth noting that the students participating in this study, by expressing their values, positions, and preferences through the sentence completion technique, aimed at social representations anchored, presumably, in other representations emanating from previous groups of belonging, such as the family group.

Understanding the various dimensions that integrate the pedagogical relationship (personal, temporal, spatial, communicative, and cognitive) distances us from the naturalization of this phenomenon and at the same time, it can contribute to changing the everyday reality of the educational institution, which often does not fully consider the importance of this web of relationships, fueled by the diverse social representations that permeate these spaces and allows us to recognize the complexity that underlies higher education in its different facets.

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