

Captured inventiveness: creative movements of teaching practice¹

Inventividade capturada: movimentos criativos da prática docente

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to discuss photography as a teacher training tool during a research that developed a formative path in the period of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Betting on the capture of the daily work of teachers during the pandemic, through authorial photographic records, what was obtained through dialogue with researchers were indications of teaching inventiveness. The images in dialogue made it possible to apprehend meanings about the teaching work, revealing that, in the midst of precariousness and difficulties in the pandemic period, teachers created possibilities to teach and develop teaching.

Keywords: Teacher education; Teaching work; Photography.

RESUMO

A proposta deste artigo é discutir a fotografia como uma ferramenta de formação de professores durante uma pesquisa que desenvolveu um percurso formativo no período da Pandemia da COVID-19. Apostando na captura do cotidiano do trabalho docente durante a pandemia, por meio dos registros fotográficos autorais, o que se obteve por meio da dialogia com os pesquisadores foram indícios da inventividade docente. As imagens em diálogo possibilitaram a apreensão de significações acerca do trabalho docente, revelando que, em meio à precariedade e às dificuldades no período pandêmico, as docentes criaram possibilidades para ensinar e desenvolver a docência.

Palavras-chave: Formação de professores; Trabalho docente; Fotografia.

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1 Introdução

In 2020, we went through the COVID-19 pandemic, a moment of intense transformation in all areas of life, work, health, leisure, education, among others, all significantly affected due, mainly, to the need for social distancing. In this scenario, schools, especially the public ones, were called upon to find ways of maintaining ties with students, even in the midst of social inequalities that affected not only students and their families, but also many teachers. What we saw from our governments and schools, in response to this situation, were fragile, innocuous proposals. Considering this reality, we see as interesting Nóvoa's (2020, p. 8) statement who says "the best answers, all over the world, were given by teachers who, in collaboration with each other and with families, managed to put forward meaningful pedagogical strategies for this difficult time".

The collaborative strategies carried out give us the necessary inspiration to believe that our teachers can be creative professionals, committed to processes of transformation. However, it is clear that, historically, many teachers were subjected to training that has a pragmatic logic anchored in a discourse of affirmation of the teacher's incompetence (DOURADO; SIQUEIRA, 2022), technical training that hinders the possibilities of creativity.

According to the perspective pointed out above, during the pandemic, in the center of a health crisis, types of "help" emerged for teachers, in form of softwares, platforms, handouts, courses, advice and consulting companies. The market offered quick and mass responses that did little to help the needs of students and teachers, who, immersed in unequal and, in most cases, precarious conditions, sought to maintain a bond with school education, even if weakly.

In contrast to this mass perspective that disregards the possibility of production of knowledge in teaching and its creative power, through this article we bring an example of creativity in action: a training path that was created and implemented, during a pandemic, which was based on dialogy (FREIRE, 2013), respect for knowledge and teaching inventiveness (CORDEIRO; GOMES, 2021).

Taking into account the needs of the teachers participating in the referred course, a proposal for meetings was prepared by thematic axes, which focused on covering the core of the teaching experience.

Thereby, the route was developed along five axes: biographical; teaching work; conceptual; aesthetic and collective. Each axis consisted of two meetings, which, throughout 2020, were held online.

The objective of the study presented here is to discuss photography as a teacher training tool in a research which developed a training path during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

This article will focus on one of the activities developed in the teaching work axis, in which image records that captured relevant aspects of the teacher's performance were requested.

2 Photography in dialogue: inventiveness captured in motion

The proposal to use photography as a tool for teacher training is based on a perspective that understands that “every photograph is marked by the gaze of those who produced it and its reading bears the marks of the gazes of those who admire it, both socially constituted gazes.” (MATTOS; ZANELLA; NUERNBERG, 2014, p. 902). Thus, the choice of how, where and what to photograph are indications of the daily teaching life that, in dialogue during training, can produce different significations based on the objectivity captured in the image.

From this perspective, photographs are conceived as the production of senses and meanings that, through dialogue, enable both teachers and trainers to problematize the topic in focus.

According to Mattos, Zanella and Nuernberg (2014, p. 905), photography

[...] is a excerpt from the context, a click that is crossed, marked and directed by the gaze of its creator. With this, it brings evidence of the photographer's ways of (living) seeing the world (ACHUTTI, 2004; SONTAG, 2004; TITTONI, 2009). It is, therefore, a production of a single instant over time, production of a subjectivity based on the spatio-temporal condition and must be read from the historical and cultural context of its production (KOSSOY, 2007).

In this sense, photography can be a powerful resource for teacher training, as it allows us to get closer, through images, to teaching work. Photos can shape a relationship between the teacher, their work and the researcher. We understand this relationship as a mediational relationship; that is, in which the elements involved constitute one another, affect one another and, in this movement, teachers and researchers are provoked to give resignify⁵ to conceptions and feelings related to the topic under discussion. Thus, the photos become part of that specific moment, and then they also acquire other nuances, strengths, qualities, generating different significations.

From a dialogical perspective, it is important that images imbued with significations are put into narratives, discussed in a provocative way, which mobilizes uncertainty and the desire to revisit the structures that support and shape life and education.

At the same time that the images reveal the teacher's daily life, symbolic relationships embedded in the daily teaching reality, often alienated, can constitute an invitation to reflection, to questioning, and to be stimulating. Thus, constituted by these qualities, it is possible that such activities, even immersed in everyday life, generate what Heller (2000) states as “suspension”, that is, conditions of greater reflection, in which we consider the dialectic part-whole relationship, which aims to go beyond the opacity of reality, and apprehend the constitutive mediations of phenomena.

In this regard, the dialogical proposal composes a perspective in which knowledge is constructed in a dialectical way, vividly intertwined with reality and, not presented as a “corpse of information – a dead body of knowledge [...]”. (FREIRE AND SHOR, 1986:11).

The image, in this case, does not appear as proof, confirmation, nor it is a static piece of life. On the contrary, it is a movement that is composed of

⁵ Resignifications: Re-signifying-actions – Action or effect of giving new signification to something, a word, a concept. Give them a new sense, a new way of being seen. New revelations of the essence of something seen from a new viewpoint, from a new perspective.

words, silences, crying and laughter. However, it is not just any movement that is sought. It is a movement that meets a transformative intellectual teacher (GIROUX, 1997) who recognizes his ability to promote change, who takes a stand against social, economic and political injustices inside and outside school, fostering in students a critical ability to understand the world they live in and how to make it more democratic. This conception is contrary to the “technocratic and instrumental ideologies underlying educational theory that separate conceptualization, planning and curricular organization from implementation and execution processes” (GIROUX, 1997, p. 161).

When bringing photography as a tool for teacher training, what we seek is it to be a “discursive and dialogical production, as its existence is in perpetual communication with others, in the intertwining of looks that, mediated by language, make its existence viable and enable the constitution of other senses.” (MATOS; ZANELLA; NUERNBERG, 2014, p. 902).

Methodological path

In 2020, 84 original images were produced by 25 teachers themselves, during a training course, responding to the request that they should bring 3 to 5 original photos to the meeting that portrayed their work during the pandemic. Valuing the participative methodology, the teachers taking part in the training research were invited to create and recreate knowledge about the conditions of their work, the mental health of everyone involved in the educational process, the consequences of social distancing on student learning, inequalities and vulnerabilities that created precarious conditions to students and teachers.

The images selected for discussion presented below were initially sorted by themes, and the notes of the assistant researchers who conducted the training, as well as the audiovisual recordings that were in the collection, accompanying the images, were accessed to understand the significations constructed through the teacher/research assistant dialogues.

the term “signification” is used in order to express the dialectical articulation between senses and meanings, revealing that individual and society, thought and language, affect and cognition constitute relationships that make up as a unity (AGUIAR; ARANHA; SOARES, 2021, p. 3).

Having conducted the survey of pre-indicators and thematic indicators, progress was made towards the constitution of two nuclei of meaning which will be presented below. The nuclei of meaning are understood as the most advanced synthesis of the analytical process; in this way, they go beyond the articulation between similarity, complementarity, contraposition constructed through indicators, but especially give rise to “the possibility for the researcher to reveal any contradiction present between objectified significations” (AGUIAR; ARANHA; SOARES, 2021, p. 9) and, thus, produce explanations and not just the description of phenomena.

“I belong to the school and the school belongs to me”

The photographs, in a teacher training work, with the perspective that considers the subjectivity/objectivity relationship in a dialectical way, are understood as sociocultural constructions pregnant with significations. The narratives woven into the image expand in dialogue with the interlocutor(s). Each narrative produces questions, reflections, silences, “revealing elements constructed from insertions in a historically situated reality; as a result”. (FERREIRA DE FARIA; CAMARGO, 2023, p. 257). In this way, “each person reads the senses expressed in the photos according to their unique experience, socially constituted in a vast field of possibilities” (MATTOS; ZANELLA; NUENBERG, 2014).

The image presented in figure 1 raised questions about being a mother, teacher, housewife and playing all these roles simultaneously. The burden that working women already had was intensified during social distancing; thus, the tension and overlap between the field of work and private life was evident in the discussions that took place in the proposed activity. In 2020, a time of social distancing, many teachers' homes became their classroom, their field of work

and, at the same time, their field of home life – these fields, consequently, became blurred, often occupying the same space and the same temporality. Fialho and Neves (2022) point out that education teachers faced increased bureaucratic demands without adequate compensation for pedagogical support and access to digital technologies. Magalhães (2021) adds:

Your workforce for sale in the education market transforms your own life into your working time. Your future prospects, your energy, your freedom are invested there. The feeling of vulnerability [...], the feeling of not knowing what to do in the face of something for which they believe they are not prepared, generates anxiety in the face of the demand, contributing to this discomfort (p. 394).

This situation reveals how much social contradictions affect individuals, creating situations of suffering and tension. According to Harvey, individuals often don't even realize it – perhaps due to their alienated experience – but "there are conflicting demands between organized production – in the capitalist mode of production – and the reproduction needs of everyday life" (2016, p. 16). They are conflicting opposing desires and needs. Teachers who want to carry out their work, but suffer and become discouraged because they see themselves as inefficient and exhausted, and blame themselves, exempting the social aspect as an essential constituent element.

Figure 1- Image of the teacher's classroom/living room



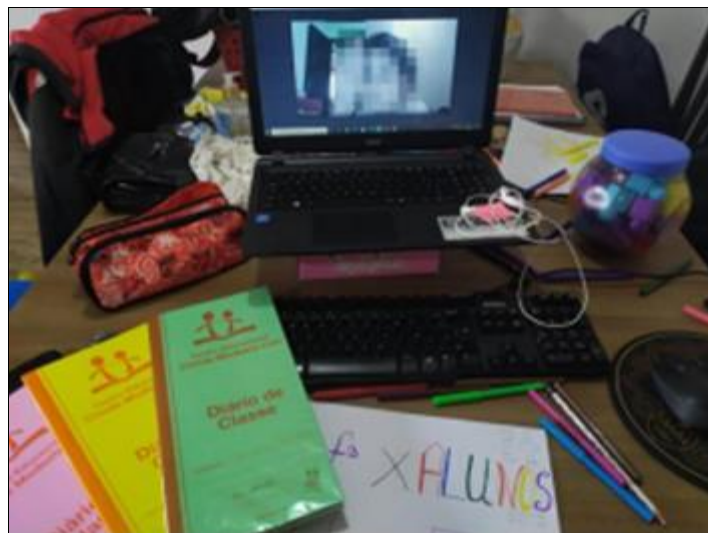
Source: Performa Collection (2020)

The photo presented in figure 2, in the his own words, managed to capture all the “mess” that the teacher's life was going through during the pandemic. He says that students can only see what is inside the camera frame, without seeing what is around, all the teacher preparation for classes, all the materials. Talking about working conditions and anxiety regarding the accumulation of duties should not just be a form of venting. According to Mattos, Zanella and Nuernberg (2014, p. 904),

photographing is a process of creation and (trans)formation of reality, as, simultaneously and inseparably, the subject selects and (re)elaborates slices of reality (KOSSOY, 2007), converting them into products of their imagination and objectifying them in the photographic image.

Bringing the objectified image capture into dialogue is one of the ways of inserting the narrated scene in its entirety, considering the historicity that supports certain social practices, and the determinants of the situation in focus.

Figure 2- Image of the teacher's work/dining table

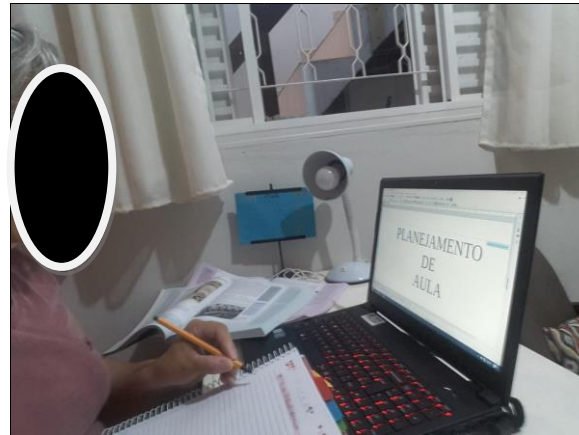


Source: Performa Collection (2020)

As evidenced in a dialogue with the teacher about the image presented in figure 2, in the research by Cipriani, Moreira and Carius (2021), the lack of

adequate equipment and environments for classes, the need to produce videos and materials, and the exposure of personal image and the home environment were highlighted as aspects that negatively interfered with teachers' work during the pandemic.

Figure 3- Image of the teacher's work desk at home



Source: Performa Collection (2020)

At another point, the teacher's inventiveness is highlighted by the teacher who selects the image shown in figure 3. In dialogue with the researcher-trainer, she highlights that every day she looks for some new activity, analyzes materials and researches new possibilities for playful activities. She is emphatic in saying that this is not the right time to apply tests, because from her perspective, tests do not measure students' knowledge. The teacher already had reservations regarding the way tests were administered as a mere measurement of knowledge, prior to the pandemic. However, her criticism becomes more scathing with the pandemic, as it highlights how inefficient and exhausting this evaluation method can become in extreme times. When seeking a connection with students, the teacher watches the news every day to include the news in her classes. She prepares classes on slides with content mainly made up of images, as she realizes that students can learn more quickly. What is consolidated in these narratives is what Freire (2013) points out as wishing the student well, a relationship of affection that makes up teaching

This openness to wishing good does not actually mean that, as a teacher, I force myself to wish good to all students in the same way. It means, in fact, that [...] I need to discard as false the radical separation between earnestness and affectivity in teaching. It is not certain, especially from a democratic point of view, that I will be a better teacher the more severe, colder, more distant and "grey" I am in my relationships with students, in dealing with the knowable objects that I must teach (FREIRE, 2013, p. 138).

The images shared by the teachers show what was hidden from many parents, educational administrators, and office managers. This movement is in line with what Vygotsky states when he discusses the importance of setting appearance aside, that is: we need to discover the “other side of the Moon” (VIGOTSKI, 2001, p. 9). When invited to share their daily lives, what we see are professionals committed to their work at the same time as tired, performing various functions so that life remains minimally acceptable and healthy⁶. These are feelings, situations that oppose each other, but not in a dichotomous manner, as one does not exist without the other – they mutually constitute each other. Fatigue is permeated by commitment and vice versa. They make up a unity of opposites that, without a doubt, marks the teachers’ contradictory ways of being, thinking and feeling. In this way, photography emerges as a tool,

necessarily an expression of what one wants (or is able) to portray, marked by the gaze of those who produce it, by the angle, whether intentionally chosen or not, by the lights and colors that transform on the journey between the event and the objectification of its recording (ZANELLA, 2020, p. 109).

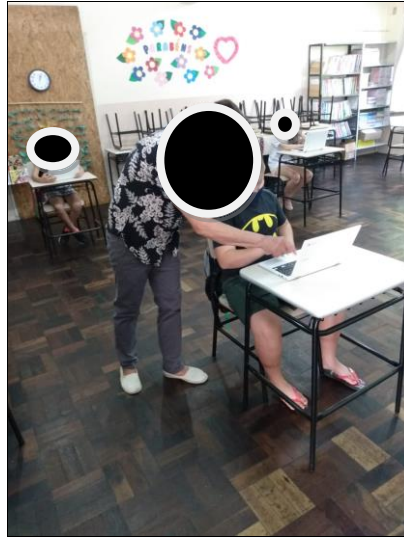
⁶ It is important to highlight here that, at the time, there was a discourse that teachers “were on vacation at home”, while “parents took on the teaching duties”, but what emerges from this dialogue is that they were deeply committed to the students, even when they were very tired, as they frequently took on several roles simultaneously, and teaching work acquired very specific characteristics, such as, for example, the necessary rapid introduction of technology, the use of new media, etc. Even with all these new developments, they remained committed to doing a good job. So it wouldn't be the typical fatigue of working under already familiar conditions, but rather a marked atypical stress that was added to ordinary commitments and responsibilities.

“Perhaps now parents and politicians will value teachers”

Understanding oneself as a subject of history and not as its object (FREIRE, 2013) is one of the possibilities that teacher training within a critical perspective can enable. Being a subject of history is essential in the Freirean tradition. This is evident in the writings of Ana Maria Araújo Freire, when returning to the idea that critical consciousness is constituted in facing limit situations, a moment in which the historical, active and critical subject understands the urgency of the notion of the viable unprecedented” “as a moment of overcoming, at least in part, the oppressive aspects perceived in reality” (FREIRE, 2014, p. 41), something that will be achieved in the movement of liberating praxis, but we have already foreseen it from the concreteness of our possible dreams, from the perspective of materialization of what is historically viable. Thus, when dialoguing during training with the image presented in figure 4 as an articulator of his speech, the teacher brought to reflection the devaluation of teaching work by society. At this meeting, he reported that the number of students who had difficulty carrying out activities at home and who came to school to use laptops had increased. At first, there were three students per shift; subsequently, up to five students per shift. There were two shifts, one in the morning, from 7:30 am to 11:00 am, the other, in the afternoon, from 1:15 pm to 4:00 pm. He said that contact with several families was difficult, requiring home visits to understand the breakdown in communication with the school. In some cases it was necessary to contact the Guardianship Council and Public Prosecutor's Office.

When talking to the researcher, he reports that he is exhausted. But he insists that he remains “strong because he loves his job”. He does not act in his role as coordinator, as there is a need to be a teacher for the students at this time.

Figure 4- Image of work at school



Source: Performa Collection (2020)

The dialogue builds possibilities for Paulo to think about working conditions during the pandemic, because at the same time that he works at a school that made computers and space available to students who had no access to digital technologies, it placed him in a diversion of functions, leading him to exhaustion. In the dialogical construction, he begins to realize that his action is resistance, and that the devaluation of teachers implies a contradictory relationship of affection with teaching, as he says he loves what he does, but does not want his daughter to follow the same path.

Teaching inventiveness is present through the commitment of teachers to those whose lives were made more precarious by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Figure 5- Image of students' materials for correction at the teacher's house.



Source: Performa Collection (2020)

The teacher's report on the image shown in figure 5 says that *“these were corrected assignments of the week of students who did not have access to remote activities and needed to go to school to collect these worksheets, returning them a few days later for my correction and feedback”*.

Through dialogue with the assistant researcher, he relates social inequality, precarious access to physical resources and, therefore, at that historical moment, to the (im)possibility of learning. In this way, the image leads to a signification of teaching work in which the teacher understands that the ecological, social and economic surroundings of the student have to be considered in pedagogical proposals committed to the democratic transformation of the school and access to knowledge (FREIRE, 2013).

According to Ferreira de Faria and Camargo (2023, p. 251),

The production of photographic images involves the photographer's decision-making, producing a slice of reality that expresses his way of understanding it and appropriating it at that moment; however, it also involves the elements of the spectator, who will be able to (or not) grasp these elements of form based on their own reading of reality, guided by the cultural elements that constitute them throughout their lives.

The proposal for work in teacher training through photography and dialogic process goes beyond the production of photography, on the one hand (the person who takes the photo), and on the other hand the apprehension of it, (the person who sees the photo). In the dialogue, the image acquires new significations – its thematization then enables transformations that are not seen as antecedents to the encounter, but are precisely constituted in this arena of significations, in which affect and cognition live a contradictory relationship, composing a unity of opposites, which take place in this movement, producing significations as an expression of historical, social and individual subjectivity at the same time.

3 Final considerations

Photography as a teacher training tool proved to be powerful as a mediating resource for significations that encompassed what was experienced during the pandemic. Thematizing teaching work, through images captured by teachers, made it possible to discuss relationships between pedagogical action, working conditions, situations of vulnerability and social precariousness, among other topics. Thus, what became evident is that teachers and pedagogical coordinators, participants in the research, were able to have moments of suspension and distance from their daily lives to think about how they were being affected and affecting the lives of not only students and their families, but the community as whole well.

Developing teacher training in a dialogical perspective, with interest and respect for the teaching trajectory and their narratives is what elevates photography to be a powerful resource for relating objectivity with subjectivity, for valuing teaching knowledge and their inventiveness in the face of difficulties posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Inventiva capturada: movimentos creativos en la práctica docente

RESUMEN

El propósito de este artículo es discutir la fotografía como herramienta de formación docente durante las investigaciones que desarrollaron una ruta de formación durante el período de la Pandemia COVID-19. Apostando por capturar el quehacer docente cotidiano durante la pandemia, a través de registros fotográficos autorales, lo que se obtuvo a través del diálogo con los investigadores fueron muestras de inventiva docente. Las imágenes en diálogo permitieron captar significados sobre el trabajo docente, revelando que, en medio de la precariedad y las dificultades del período de pandemia, los docentes crearon posibilidades para enseñar y desarrollar la enseñanza.

Palabras clave: Formación docente; Trabajo docente; Fotografía.

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