

Professionalism and Initial Teacher Training in Brazil and Finland¹

A profissionalidade e a formação inicial docente no Brasil e na Finlândia

El profesionalidad en la docencia y la formación inicial de docentes en Brasil y Finlandia

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Abstract: This is a Comparative Education study on teaching professionalism and initial teacher education in Brazil and Finland. It employs a qualitative research approach, by means of bibliographic and documentary data collection as well as in loco observations in Finland, aiming to identify the convergences and divergences between the elements of this comparative study. The results are significant. The teaching career in these countries demonstrates a disparity in terms of teacher valuation, which is reflected in initial teacher education. In Brazil, a basic education teacher enters the classroom after a degree program with a minimum workload of 3,200 hours, whereas in Finland, a teacher can only practice the profession after completing credits equivalent to a workload of 8,100 hours, spanning both a bachelor's and a master's degree program. The study concludes that there is a considerable distinction in both the development of teaching professionalism and initial teacher education in the two countries.

Keywords: Teaching professionalism; Initial teacher education; Comparative Education.

Resumo: Este é um trabalho de Educação Comparada sobre a profissionalidade docente e a formação inicial de professores no Brasil e na Finlândia. Trata-se de pesquisa com abordagem qualitativa, coleta de dados bibliográficos, documentais e observações, *in loco*, na Finlândia, visando à identificação das convergências e divergências entre os elementos deste estudo comparativo. Os resultados alcançados são significativos. O exercício profissional no magistério dos países apresenta distanciamento em termos de valorização dos professores, o que reflete nas formações iniciais docentes. Enquanto, no Brasil, um professor da Educação Básica só entra em sala de aula depois de cumprir uma licenciatura com carga horária mínima de 3.200 horas; na Finlândia, um docente só pode exercer sua profissão após cumprir créditos correspondentes à carga horária de 8.100 horas, entre um curso de bacharelado e outro de mestrado. O estudo conclui sobre uma considerável

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distinção tanto no desenvolvimento da profissionalidade quanto na formação inicial de professores nos dois países.

Palavras-chave: Profissionalidade docente; Formação inicial de professores; Educação Comparada.

Resumen: Este es un estudio de educación comparada sobre el profesionalidad en la docencia y la formación inicial de docentes en Brasil y Finlandia. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo que recopiló datos bibliográficos y documentales, además de observaciones *in situ* en Finlandia, con el objetivo de identificar similitudes y diferencias entre los elementos de este estudio comparativo. Los resultados obtenidos son significativos. La práctica profesional de la docencia en los países presenta una divergencia en cuanto al valor otorgado a los docentes, lo que se refleja en la formación inicial de los mismos. Mientras que en Brasil, un docente de educación básica solo entra al aula después de completar una licenciatura con una carga horaria mínima de 3.200 horas, en Finlandia, un docente solo puede ejercer su profesión después de completar créditos correspondientes a una carga horaria de 8.100 horas, entre la licenciatura y el máster. El estudio concluye que existe una diferencia considerable tanto en el desarrollo del profesionalismo como en la formación inicial de los docentes en los dos países.

Palabras clave: Profesionalidad en la docencia; Formación inicial de docentes; Educación Comparada.

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Introduction

This article seeks to address the following question: who are the Brazilian and Finnish teachers, and what is required in terms of initial training for them to be authorized to enter the classroom and teach? To answer this, data and findings from a Comparative Education research were employed, presented to the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Alagoas, Brazil, and the Intercalary Doctoral Program at the Institute of Education, University of Lisbon, Portugal. This research was submitted as a requirement for the “sandwich” doctorate in Education in 2023, under the title: “Systemic Effectiveness and Teacher Professionalism – Comparative Education Between Brazilian and Finnish Realities.”

The results obtained are considerably significant and contribute to the proposed comparison. It was observed that Finnish teachers’ initial training differs from Brazilian training in many aspects, particularly in the rigor demanded and demonstrated by the total workload to be fulfilled. While in Brazil, a Basic Education teacher can only enter the classroom after completing a licentiate degree with a minimum workload of 3,200 hours, as per Resolution CNE/CP No. 2, of July 1, 2015, in Finland, a teacher can only practice the

profession after completing credits corresponding to a workload of 8,100 hours, including both a bachelor's and a master's degree, as stipulated by Decree No. 794/2004. These differences highlight significant variations in initial teacher training approaches.

The analysis presented here considers Resolution CNE/CP No. 2, of July 1, 2015, which, although revoked, defined the National Curricular Guidelines for initial teacher training at the higher education level. These guidelines were mandatorily implemented in all teacher training courses in Brazil until 2020, the temporal limit adopted for this comparative study. However, the current Resolution CNE/CP No. 4, of May 29, 2024, which outlines the national curricular guidelines for initial teacher training at the higher education level for Basic Education teaching professionals, maintains the same effective academic workload of 3,200 hours as the 2015 resolution, for licentiate courses with a minimum duration of four years.

It is worth noting that the University of Helsinki considers independent study hours, including readings, video lectures, and other course-related tasks carried out via the Moodle virtual learning platform or at a location of the student's choice, as educational activities. However, all these activities are rigorously monitored and assessed by the responsible instructors. The university's website provides the following clarification:

Independent study. University studies aim to produce professionals in various disciplines who are able to work and make decisions independently. For this reason, students should have the opportunity to complete some of their studies independently or in the form of distance learning. However, measures must be taken to ensure that distance learning and independent study do not lead to a decline in learning outcomes or in the isolation of students from the University community (University of Helsinki, 2023a, n.p.).

This practice can be classified as a “blended” education model, which combines face-to-face and distance learning (Morán, 2015).

The research adopts a qualitative approach, based on documentary and bibliographic data collection and on-site observations in Finland conducted in 2022. It is theoretically grounded in works by scholars from the field of Education in Brazil and Northern Europe, such as Cardoso (2019), Libâneo (2017), Morán (2015), Sahlberg (2018), Tirri (2014), Kansanen (2003), among others. The focus was directed toward analyzing the phenomena studied while seeking a deeper understanding and reflection on the value, importance, and complexity of teaching.

The text is organized into three sections, in addition to this introduction. The first section discusses the complexities and concepts of teacher professionalism. The second section

focuses on how the initial training of Brazilian and Finnish teachers is carried out. The main findings are presented in the Conclusions.

The Complexity and Concept of Teacher Professionalism

The world of work is characterized by a vast array of professions, each with its own specificities, demands, and requirements, which define and distinguish the degree of complexity involved in each. Some occupations demand deeper knowledge and skills and, therefore, require more detailed and intensive training. A contributing factor to these differences in complexity is the nature and purpose of the profession itself, especially when it involves manipulating abstract concepts or applying complex theories. For instance, professions like medicine, nuclear engineering, or quantum physics require a profound understanding of difficult-to-assimilate scientific principles and practice in challenging situations.

The knowledge required for such professions is highly valued and developed through advanced and specialized studies in renowned and traditional Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), which house numerous researchers working in academic departments and research laboratories equipped with technological and material resources. The training for these professions focuses on refining professionals with theoretical knowledge and practical expertise to face the complex challenges that arise in their fields. Nóvoa (2012b) exemplifies this with the initial training of doctors, characterized by a considerably intensive total course load and a training process led by professors who practice medicine and bring a repertoire of diverse experiences, including successful and unsuccessful cases, as well as challenging situations.

The Portuguese educator Nóvoa (2012a) argues that, given the complexity inherent in teaching, the teaching profession also requires profound theoretical, practical, and reflective initial training. Although not fully recognized as it should be, teaching involves unique capacities and responsibilities. If the teacher's role were limited to merely passing on information, teaching could be performed by a professional with specific knowledge and communication skills. However, if the goal is to mediate a transformative process for social individuals, shape critical thinking, promote social values, and develop technical and socio-emotional skills, this requires rigorous initial training and teaching and learning processes preferably conducted by individuals with knowledge, instrumental skills, and professional experience to foster the effective development of future teachers.

For Nóvoa (2013, apud Gómez, 2010, n.p.),

If we conceive teaching as an activity of transmitting pre-existing knowledge, then the craft can be learned solely through practical exercises. But if, on the contrary, we understand teaching as a creative activity, which uses knowledge as raw material but generates new knowledge in the pedagogical act itself, then it is necessary to conceive university models of training⁵.

The teaching career is fundamental to society as it is a specialized job related to preparing citizens for the production and reproduction of social life. The more prepared, qualified, and motivated teachers are, the greater the likelihood that teaching will be performed with excellence, effectively contributing to fulfilling the goals of society and the organizations where they work. This is supported by Gorzoni and Davis (2017), who, in the case of teachers, refer to the concept of professionalism, which they see as being in a developmental process.

The researchers conducted a study to investigate the specificity of the teaching career and conceptualize professionalism. They identified articles from the five most accessed journals in the field of Education, according to the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), between 2006 and 2014. Articles were selected based on their subjects, titles, and keywords containing the term 'professionalism', as long as it was related to teaching, teachers, and educators. Authors found included both international and national contributors, such as Ambrosetti and Almeida (2009), André and Placco (2007), Contreras (2012), Gimeno Sacristán (1995), Libâneo (2017), Morgado (2011), Ramalho, Nuñez, and Gauthier (2004), and Roldão (2005).

The study highlights divergences and convergences among these authors. One divergence is the lack of consensus on when the process of constructing the concept of teacher professionalism begins. For some authors, professionalism develops throughout a teacher's life, influenced by parents, friends, and other community members. Others pinpoint the start of this professionalization process in teachers' initial training. Gorzoni and Davis (2017, p. 1406) note that the convergence among these authors lies in the assertion that professionalism is associated with a specific type of performance and knowledge that is constantly reconstructed in line with the prevailing historical and social context, and presupposes belonging to a collective body.

⁵ Gomes *et al.* (2019) report that with the enactment of the LDBEN 9.394/1996, the teacher training process in Brazil underwent significant changes, particularly with the introduction of Curricular Guidelines for each teacher education program, requiring higher education qualifications for basic education teachers. In Finland, a similar shift occurred two decades earlier. According to Tirri (2014), the Teacher Education Act, ratified in 1971, initiated the reform of teacher education in Finland.

From a sociological perspective (Giddens, 2008), professionalism is a socially and culturally contextualized construction, varying between nations or communities. This approach defines professionalism not only by technical skills or individual competencies but also by social, historical, and institutional factors. It encompasses a set of norms, values, knowledge, and practices that are socially recognized and legitimized within a given occupation or professional field. In contemporary times, professionalism increasingly demands the acquisition of specialized knowledge, ethical behavior, and pre-established standards.

Another important aspect of the sociological perspective is the dynamic and ever-evolving process involved in constructing professionalism in a given field. Social values, cultural dispositions, political and economic actions and governance, technological advancements, and societal demands influence professional conceptions and practices, making professionalism subject to decision-making, negotiation, and adaptation processes over time.

According to Libâneo (2017), professionalism comprises two dimensions: professionalization and professionalism. Professionalization refers to the ideal qualifications needed to perform a given profession, such as initial and continuing training, through which a worker develops all the knowledge required for job performance. Professionalism, on the other hand, relates to the commitment to duties and responsibilities that define the profession's specificities, leading to ethical behavior, dedication, teamwork, punctuality, and rigor in performing tasks.

The two dimensions, "[...] complement each other. Professionalism requires professionalization, and professionalization requires professionalism" (Libâneo, 2017, p. 69). For the author, if teachers undergo an appropriate professionalization process, including both initial and continuing training, or if they possess a high level of professionalism, they will have positive attitudes toward new learning, work planning and organization, and everything necessary to face any challenges that arise. However, this does not depend solely on them but also on other factors such as remuneration that meets their personal and family needs, adequate working conditions, and a professional identity developed among and by these workers throughout their lives (Riksaasen; Crosswell; Beutel, 2015).

Among the factors presented, Riksaasen, Crosswell, and Beutel (2015) highlight an important element for a teacher's professional development: the identity associated with their profession. This identity influences and can even determine a teacher's sense of efficacy in job performance, impacting their practices and behaviors in the classroom, school spaces, and society. For the authors, "[...] the construction of professional identity depends on

sociocultural configurations as well as individual differences, and therefore, depends on different national contexts" (ibid., p. 2077). This identity formation begins with early childhood experiences, first teachers, and the opinions of significant individuals, such as parents, colleagues, and friends.

The researchers refer to professional identity as the representation teachers have of themselves, their colleagues, and how they believe they are perceived by others, such as other stakeholders within the school environment or society. Some nations, for instance, value their teachers more highly than others, as can be observed in the significantly different professional teacher identities in the Brazilian and Finnish contexts. These differences can be illustrated by the level of interest shown by high school graduates in Brazil and secondary school graduates in Finland in pursuing initial teacher education programs.

According to Wickstrom (Semis, 2019), in Brazil, teacher education program applicants generally pass entrance exams with below-average scores, particularly in pedagogy courses. In Finland, by contrast, those who achieve the highest academic averages in primary and secondary education are the ones who seek and complete teacher training programs.

Grabowski (2022) points to a declining trend in enrollment in teacher education programs in Brazil. Analyzing the 2020 Census of Higher Education in Brazil, the author confirms Wickstrom's findings. The data reveals that teacher education programs had the lowest enrollment rate among all types of undergraduate programs: 19% for teaching degrees, 26% for technology-focused programs, and 55% for bachelor's degrees. This trend, the author argues, reflects the devaluation of the teaching profession.

Libâneo (2017) asserts that the devaluation of the teaching profession in Brazil is not solely due to economic or salary issues but is also influenced by social, political, and cultural factors, which have adversely affected the profession's image. Poor working conditions, especially in public institutions, outdated teaching resources, often unhealthy environments, an intensified workload, and career paths without growth prospects have all negatively impacted both classroom performance and the ability of teachers to meet their social needs.

Wagner and Carlesso (2019, p. 8) describe the current state of the teaching profession in Brazil as marked by:

"[...] professional devaluation, the 'pretense' among colleagues, students' neglect and disrespect, frequent disappointments, financial expectations, as well as a lack of personal and professional recognition. These factors lead teachers to adopt different ways of coping with the situation: withdrawing into themselves, becoming disheartened, or seeking other professions. Thus, two important phases of the professional life cycle are revealed: self-questioning and career disengagement."

In Finland, this reality is reversed. According to Tuomas Kurttila, Jouni Välimäki, Sami Markkaran, Hannele Niemi, Salla Partanen, and other Finnish educators and education managers (Futura, 2013), Finnish teachers benefit not only from excellent training and proper working environments but are also highly respected, enjoying a status of trust and admiration throughout society.

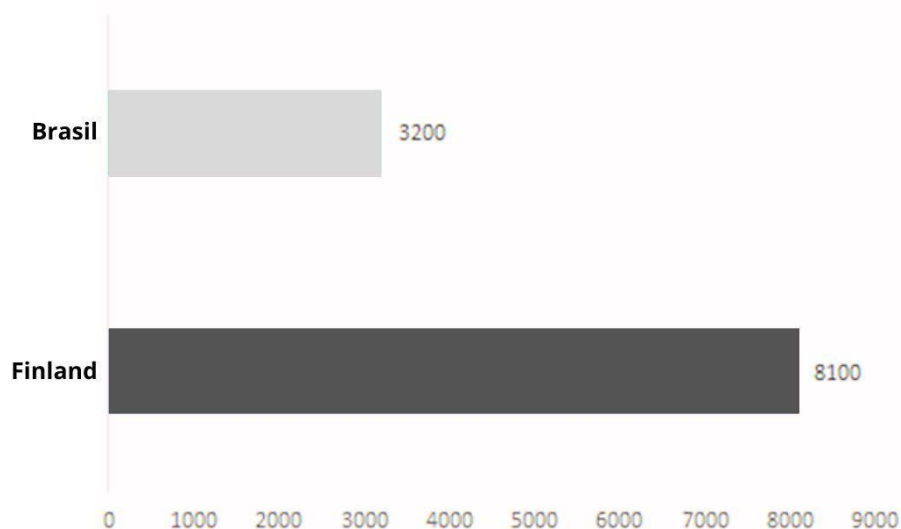
Sahlberg (2018) states that the teaching profession in Finland holds the same level of prestige as medicine. He cites a 2004 survey of Finland's secondary school graduates—comparable to Brazilian high school graduates—which was widely publicized in the country's media. The survey asked respondents to rank professions by prestige, and "[...] teaching is consistently rated as one of the most admired professions, ahead of doctors, architects, and lawyers, typically seen as dream professions" (ibid., p. 197). For this Finnish educator and researcher, teacher training programs have been among the most sought after by higher education applicants. Between 2001 and 2014, the number of available spots in these programs remained relatively stable at approximately 800 to 900. However, during the same period, the number of applicants rose from around 5,300 to 8,400 (Sahlberg, 2018).

Initial Teacher Education in Brazil and Finland

As specified in Resolution CNE/CP No. 2/2015, §1, Art. 13, the minimum duration of undergraduate teaching degree programs in Brazil is 3,200 hours of effective academic work, in courses lasting at least 8 semesters or 4 years. In Finland, according to Decree No. 794/2004, Section 8, which establishes the scope of studies required for a bachelor's degree, and Section 13, which specifies the studies leading to a master's degree, a prospective teacher must complete 180 credits for a bachelor's degree and 120 credits for a master's degree, totaling 300 credits for the higher education required to teach in the classroom. In terms of workload, these 300 credits correspond to 8,100 hours⁶ over 5 years of effective academic work: 3 years for the bachelor's degree and 2 years for the master's degree.

⁶ According to Section 5, "Study Dimensioning," of Decree No. 794/2002, the basis for study dimensioning in Finnish courses is credits – ECTS. Courses are assigned credits based on the amount of work they require. The average effort of 1,600 hours necessary to complete an academic year in Finnish higher education corresponds to 60 ECTS credits. At the University of Helsinki, the standard has been set at 27 hours per credit (Source: University of Helsinki, available at: <https://studies.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/scope-and-structure-degree>. Accessed on June 19, 2023).

Chart 1 – Required workload for teacher education in Brazil and Finland.



Source: Prepared by the author (2023).

The 3,200 hours allocated for teacher training in Brazil, as specified in Article 7 of Resolution CNE/CP nº 2/2015, are intended to provide graduates with a "[...] repertoire of information and skills composed of a plurality of theoretical and practical knowledge." This repertoire must be outlined in the course's pedagogical project and consolidated throughout the training process and the graduate's future professional practice. It is expected that graduates, as future teaching professionals, will understand educational institutions as complex organizations aimed at promoting education for citizenship; utilize research, analysis, and application of investigation results in the interests of the educational field; and be able to work professionally in teaching, managing educational processes, and managing institutions in Basic Education (Brazil, 2015).

However, Cardoso (2019) highlights several challenges within the Brazilian context that prevent initial teacher training from adequately developing the expertise and professionalism of future educators. She begins her analysis by stating that teacher education in Brazil fails to foster a professional ethic comparable to that achieved by medical programs, for instance. According to the researcher, this is due to the Brazilian context: the vast majority of teachers in the country graduate from low-quality private institutions; public university education faculties emphasize theoretical training; the teaching profession is undervalued, attracting students who often arrive with academic weaknesses stemming from a frequently inadequate basic education; internships or professional practices in Brazil's initial teacher training programs are not aligned as a central and unified action with other educational

activities, and students often seek exemption from them. Cardoso also notes that educational research tends to focus on other fields, such as sociology or public policy, and rarely on improving pedagogical knowledge, classroom dynamics, or learning processes. In her view, Finland has implemented continuous pedagogical reform through its educational reforms, a consistent approach that Brazil lacks.

The 8,100 hours allocated for initial teacher training in Finland, as stipulated by Decree n° 794/2004, Section 18 (Finland, 2004), aim to prepare teachers for independent, autonomous, and competent professional practice. According to Sections 7 and 12 of the same decree, this requires developing foundational, intermediate, and advanced knowledge in the subjects covered in Finland's bachelor's and master's programs, equipping graduates to think and work scientifically, fostering lifelong learning, qualifying them to apply acquired knowledge in school activities and international cooperation, and enabling effective communication in their native language and at least one foreign language.

To illustrate the application of these regulations in both countries, official documents from the Pedagogy program⁷ for training teachers of early years in Basic Education in Brazil and teacher education programs for grades 1–6 in Finland were analyzed. The Brazilian information comes from the "Political Pedagogical Project (PPC) of the Pedagogy Course," an in-person course of 2018 offered by the University of Brasília (UnB) (Universidade de Brasília, 2018). The Finnish data are from the Class Teacher Education programs at the University of Helsinki⁸ (University of Helsinki, 2023).

The selection criteria for these institutions were their similarities: both are public, free, state-funded universities located in the capitals of their respective countries.

Initial teacher training in Finland is notably rigorous, focusing on developing two specific areas of expertise: 1. Using research as the main working tool (Kansanen, 2003), enabling future teachers to master various research tools and findings, always striving to make evidence-based decisions both in and outside the classroom. 2. Pedagogical thinking (Tirri, 2014), ensuring that teaching is intentionally and objectively directed toward student learning, with teachers prepared to address issues related to underachievement and to foster higher performance levels.

⁷ The choice of the Pedagogy program at the University of Brasília (UnB) was based on the following reasons: it is a teacher education program, its PPC (Political-Pedagogical Project) aligns with Resolution CNE/CP No. 02/2015, and a similar program was identified at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

⁸ An electronic resource provides access to information regarding the curriculum of all undergraduate and postgraduate programs at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Available at: <https://studies.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/scope-and-structure-degree>. Accessed on June 5, 2023.

The importance of research in Finnish teacher development is evident in the comparison of hours dedicated to this area in Brazil and Finland. In Brazil, 180 hours are allocated to scientific investigation studies⁹ in the Pedagogy program at UnB¹⁰. Meanwhile, in Finland, similar programs¹¹ dedicate 2,295 hours/credits to research-related content in the Class Teacher Education courses (grades 1–6) at the University of Helsinki.

The use of research as a primary tool by Finnish teachers serves a clear purpose: fostering pedagogical thinking so they can integrate scientific evidence about teaching with practical challenges in the profession, ultimately aimed at student development and curriculum goals (Tirri, 2014).

"[...] "Hence, reflection in-action and reflection on action are important skills in becoming a pedagogically thinking teacher (Schön 1987). According to Kansanen (1999), reflection is a way of acquiring knowledge about one's own undertakings and about the interaction in the teaching–studying–learning process. In this process, the teacher may utilise their knowledge about research-based thinking skills. This also means having the competence to read articles in professional journals and research reports and apply the findings to teaching" (ibid., p. 4)."

For the Finnish educator and researcher, a research-oriented teacher with "pedagogical thinking" is someone who conducts investigations to improve teaching. This emphasis on developing research-based pedagogical thinking is reflected in how the 2,295 hours/credits dedicated to research in Finland's teacher training programs are distributed across bachelor's and master's courses at the University of Helsinki, compared to the 180 hours for research-related subjects in the Pedagogy program at UnB. See Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Distribution of Hours Allocated to Research Training

Pedagogy Course – Univ. de Brasília - UnB	hours	Classroom Teacher Course – Univ. of Helsinki	hours
Research in Education	60	Guidance for Research Projects in Education	135
Final Course Project I	60	Qualitative Research Methods I	135
Final Course Project II	60	Quantitative Research Methods I	135
		Bachelor's Thesis	270
		Teacher as Researcher	270
		Topical Issues in Educational Research	135
		Qualitative Research Methods II	135
		Quantitative Research Methods II	135
		Master's Thesis and Seminar	945
Total Workload of Research Components	180	Subtotal of Research Components	2295

Source: Pedagogy Course PPC of UnB and the University of Helsinki website.

⁹ Government programs promoting research, such as the Institutional Program for Scientific Initiation Scholarships (PIBIC), were not considered. These programs are reserved for a limited number of undergraduate teaching degree students.

¹⁰ Course Pedagogical Projects available at: <https://sigaa.unb.br/sigaa/public/curso/lista.jsf?nivel=G&aba=p-graduacao>. Accessed on: January 20, 2024.

¹¹ It is possible to find all higher education programs offered by the University of Helsinki, along with their respective information, through the online resource available at: <https://studies.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/scope-and-structure-degree>. Accessed on: January 20, 2024.

The difference in training hours between initial teacher education in Brazil and Finland corresponds to a 1,000% increase in studies dedicated to equipping Finnish teacher trainees with knowledge about various types of educational research—both qualitative and quantitative. This preparation ultimately aims at producing a bachelor's thesis and a master's thesis. Beyond the “maturity test¹²”, these theses may be developed individually, as part of a specific research group project, or in collaboration with private or public institutions. This significant difference in training hours has a clear objective for Finnish education: the development of the teacher-researcher.

According to Schueler and Southwell (2009), there are at least two conceptions of research that create tension and contradiction in Brazilian education: 1. Research conducted within the school environment, particularly in classrooms, reflecting the concept of the reflective teacher. 2. Research tied to higher education and universities, aimed at knowledge production, but often “[...] disinterested and inseparable from the dimensions of teaching and extension (ibid., p. 150).” Although this perspective has a critical undertone, Finland exhibits a similar duality, with research happening both in schools and universities.

For instance, the Political Pedagogical Project (PPC) of the Pedagogy program at UnB mentions research multiple times, emphasizing its inseparability from teaching and extension. However, in the detailed dimensions of the PPC, “research” is explicitly mentioned only twice, with a focus on initiating students into educational research and strengthening the tripod of teacher-researcher-manager. This highlights a fundamental difference in how research is conceived and utilized in teacher education between Brazil and Finland.

Brazilian teacher education students may also participate in programs like the Institutional Scholarship Program for Scientific Initiation (PIBIC) (Brazil, 2023d). This program introduces undergraduates to academic research, providing essential familiarity for pursuing master's or doctoral studies. Under PIBIC, students work under the guidance of a professor in a specific research area. However, only a minority of Brazilian students gain access to this opportunity or move on to graduate studies.

¹² This refers to the completion of an independent study, which, upon its conclusion, is registered in the university's academic system and the student's records, despite earning no credits. The student must prepare a written document related to the field of their thesis, demonstrating familiarity with their area of expertise and appropriate proficiency in conducting research within this field. This test is assessed by a professor from the degree program or the thesis supervisor. Source: University of Helsinki, available at: <https://studies.helsinki.fi/instructions/article/thesis-and-maturity-test-masters-and-licentiates-programmes#paragraph-815>. Accessed on: June 19, 2023.

In Finland, by contrast, every student is required to complete the extensive research studies and a master's degree as prerequisites for teaching authorization. This aligns with a systemic commitment to producing educators who are not only practitioners but also skilled researchers.

This Finnish emphasis on research as an integral part of teacher preparation reminds me of approaches that thrive on structured reflection and skill-building—key principles also echoed in the professional development spaces you explore, where research, reflection, and application play pivotal roles in creating lasting impact.

Conclusions

The guiding question of this article, which seeks to understand who Brazilian and Finnish teachers are and what is required in terms of initial training before they are authorized to enter the classroom and teach, reveals distinct professional identities and unequal treatment regarding teacher initial education in the two countries, reflecting different realities in various aspects.

Brazilian teachers are undervalued in multiple ways: economically, socially, culturally, and due to precarious working conditions, especially in public institutions. These factors have contributed to the formation of a professional identity that does little to encourage new candidates for the Brazilian teaching career, leading to a decline in enrollment in teacher education programs in Brazil. In Finland, the reality for teachers is quite the opposite. In terms of prestige, the teaching profession is on par with medicine, and such education professionals are highly recognized and valued by Finnish society. Such recognition has made teacher education programs among the most sought-after in Finnish higher education, at least until 2020, the temporal limit of this study.

The significant importance and professional valuation of teachers are particularly evident in Finnish initial teacher training. It was observed that Finland's teacher training differs from Brazil's in many aspects, particularly in the level of rigor, as demonstrated by the total workload, which includes almost 5,000 more hours than the minimum workload of Brazilian teacher education programs. Much of this extensive workload is allocated to research-oriented curriculum components: in Brazil, only 180 hours are dedicated to research studies for pedagogy degrees, excluding government research incentive programs that benefit only a few students in each graduating class. In Finland, however, 2,295 hours are dedicated to research-related content for the training of elementary teachers (grades 1 to 6). This reflects significantly different approaches to initial teacher education.

Fischman, Topper and Silova (2018, p. 810) classify the indiscriminate "copying and pasting" of educational models as a "[...] genuine form of educational idiocy." It would not be appropriate to "copy" the Finnish model and "paste" it into Brazil's teacher education programs, which currently face a process of devaluation and low demand (Grabowski, 2022; Semis, 2019; Wagner & Carlesso, 2019; Libâneo, 2017). Finnish teacher education programs have a total workload similar to that of medicine programs¹³ in Brazil, and the teaching profession enjoys high social prestige — cultural realities that cannot be overlooked. However, understanding the "other" — the reality of the Finnish teaching career — elicits an urgent need to critically address, both politically and academically, collective actions that raise awareness of the value and strategic importance of education in the development of a nation like Brazil. This process would involve valuing and empowering Brazilian teachers as potential agents of social transformation (Cardoso, 2019).

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