Training processes and digital cultures:
between the prescribed policies and the teachers' lived practices[1]

Processos formativos e culturas digitais:
entre as políticas prescritas e as práticas vividas de professores

Procesos de formación y culturas digitales:
entre las políticas prescritas y las prácticas vividas por los docentes

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Abstract: This text aims to problematize the National Digital Education Policy (PNED) and the training processes and practices of teachers in digital culture contexts. We present and discuss the PNED and its four structuring axes: digital inclusion, digital school education, digital training and specialization, and research and development in information and communication technologies, from the perspective of critical technology theory. We intertwine narratives of pre- and in-service teachers in online dialogic cycles, highlighting issues such as teacher identities, digital colonialism, and infocracy. Based on Freirean dialogues (2004), Morinian complexity (2000, 2011), and Josso 's research-training (2004), we consider that training processes and digital cultures, between prescribed policies and the teachers' lived practices, can forge dialogic, collective, and inclusive processes, but also individualistic, exclusionary, and undemocratic ones, depending on where, how, for what purpose, and under what conditions they occur.
Keywords*: Digital Cultures; Teachers' Training; Teaching Practices; National Digital Education Policy.

Resumo: Este texto objetiva problematizar a Política Nacional de Educação Digital (PNED) e os processos formativos e práticas de professores em contextos de culturas digitais. Apresentamos e discutimos a PNDE e seus quatro eixos estruturantes: inclusão digital, educação digital escolar, capacitação e especialização digital, e pesquisa e desenvolvimento em tecnologias da informação e da comunicação, sob a perspectiva da teoria crítica das tecnologias. Entrelaçamos narrativas de professores pré e em-serviço em ciclos dialógicos *online,* salientando questões como identidades docentes, colonialismo digital e infocracia. Com base nos diálogos Freireanos (2004), na complexidade Moriniana (2000, 2011), e na pesquisa-formação de Josso (2004), consideramos que os processos formativos e as culturas digitais, entre as políticas prescritas e as práticas vividas de professores, podem forjar processos dialógicos, coletivos e inclusivos, mas também individualistas, excludentes e pouco democráticos, dependendo de onde, como, com qual propósito e sob quais condições eles se dão.
Palavras-chave*: Culturas Digitais; Formação de Professores; Práticas Docentes; Política Nacional de Educação Digital.

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Resumen: Este texto busca examinar críticamente la Política Nacional de Educación Digital (PNED) y los procesos y prácticas de formación docente en contextos de cultura digital. Presentamos y discutimos la PNED y sus cuatro ejes estructurantes: inclusión digital, **educación digital escolar**, formación y especialización digital, e investigación y desarrollo en tecnologías de la información y la comunicación, desde la perspectiva de la teoría crítica de la tecnología. Entrelazamos narrativas de docentes **en ejercicio** y en formación en ciclos dialógicos en línea, destacando cuestiones como las identidades docentes, el colonialismo digital y la infocracia. Basándonos en los diálogos freireanos (2004), la complejidad moriniana (2000, 2011) y la **Investigación-Formación** de Josso (2004), consideramos que los procesos de formación y las culturas digitales, entre las políticas prescritas y las prácticas docentes vividas, pueden forjar **dinámicas** dialógicas, colectivas e inclusivas, pero también individualistas, excluyentes y antidemocráticas, según dónde, cómo, con qué propósito y bajo qué condiciones ocurran.
Palabras clave: Cultura Digital; Formación Docente; Prácticas Docentes; Política Nacional de Educación Digital.

Start of conversation

When reflecting on the meanings of teaching and learning in a digital society, it is necessary to recognize the acceleration and intensification of information and communication flows that affect our educational practices. As Byung-Chul Han (2015, pp. 53-54) states,

> Today we live in a world very poor in interruptions, poor in interludes and intermediate times [...]. There are various types of activity. The activity that follows the stupidity of mechanics is poor in interruptions. The machine cannot pause. Despite all its computational performance, the computer is stupid, insofar as it lacks the capacity to hesitate.

This absence of hesitation and pauses is reflected in our methods of education: practices that often become linear, mechanical, and driven by immediacy, leaving little room for critical reflection, doubt, and the interludes that underpin creative processes of creation, emancipation, and human, critical, and social development.

Given this, we begin with some questions: how do we teach and learn in a society that calls itself digital, without falling into a productivist logic? We could also ask: digital for whom? In what contexts? Is everyone included? We could also question how education is doing with so much information, so much potential, but also so many challenges. Are we creating spaces to break the silence and hesitation that allow the emergence of different kinds of knowledge, not only scientific, but human and inclusive? Who educates or (mis)educates whom? How? Under what conditions? With what propositions?

Many reflections constantly emerge when we think about an education that can help us be better, in the sense that everyone can have dignified lives. How do we develop formative proposals and educational practices in the context of digital cultures? And even more so, how do prescribed policies align with or contradict what we seek from a critical perspective?

To reflect on these issues, we begin by conceptualizing digital cultures. Next, we present the National Digital Education Policy (PNED), problematizing its four structuring axes: digital inclusion, school digital education, digital training and specialization, and research and development in information and communication technologies, from the perspective of critical technology theory. We interrelate the problematizations and some of the insights produced in *online* dialogic cycles , based on research initiated in 2023, funded by CNPq's productivity grant, which addresses digital cultures, training, and educational practices with pre- and in-service teachers from four different countries: South Africa, Brazil, Canada, and England.

Finally, we conclude with considerations and contributions regarding the discussions between the National Education Plan, training processes, teacher practices, and digital cultures, provoking a different perspective on these phenomena, denaturalizing the established and institutionalized, and re-signifying homogeneous and exclusionary perspectives.

Digital Cultures: Experiences that transform us.

Digital cultures are those that emerge daily intertwined with digital technologies. According to Paniago and Moura (2024, p. 08), they are "[...] different ways of speaking, writing, living together, socializing, working, studying, producing, consuming, communicating, relating, in short, of living, when in the context of the insertion of information and communication technologies". In this sense, we borrow Larrosa's (1996) concept of experience to affirm that, like experience, digital cultures cannot simply pass without provoking change: "It is not what passes, but what passes to us. When we know many things, but we ourselves do not change with what we know, this would be a relationship with knowledge that is not experience, since it is not resolved in the formation or transformation of what we are" (Bondía, 1996, p. 136-137).

Digital culture deals with pluralities that constitute "[...] a mixture of micro, macro and mega communities, housing thousands of microcomputers that live within them, enjoying immediate connection, interaction, ubiquitous communication, that is, in any place and at any time of day or night" (Santaella, 2015, p. 14).

From these digital cultures, we can connect, interact, and share, forging different ways of understanding and experiencing personal, social, political, and educational interrelationships, constantly reinterpreting the conceptions, ideas, practices, and meanings we establish. Depending on how we perceive digital processes, we can assign them different levels of importance, and they may even be the sole determinants of our histories, a rather worrying fact that requires discussion.

Digitization, as Castells (1996) points out, can transform education, but it can also be a tool for reproducing inequalities. Therefore, it needs to be accompanied by critical reflection on its impacts on the formation of the individual and society, and by public policies that promote equitable access.

As researchers of digital cultures, we propose to bring into the discussion of this theme the prescribed policies, especially the National Digital Education Policy (Brazil, 2023) and its four structuring axes: digital inclusion, school digital education, digital training and specialization, and research and development in information and communication technologies.

We develop tessitures based on Feenberg's critical theory of technologies, in which technology is not seen as a mere neutral instrument, but as a social construct that influences and is influenced by social and political relations. It is not a means to an end, but also an agent that can shape how we live, work, and interact . It is an approach that critiques reification, the process by which human relations are objectified as things. It is necessary that social perspectives be reflected in technical projects and that these not be accommodated to the interests and views of only a few.

According to Feenberg (2015, p.51), " Technologies are not unified works of art, fixed at their origin, once and for all. On the contrary, they consist of several levels of functionality that accumulate themselves gradually in response to the demands of the various actors with the power to influence their design. In this sense, we ask how are these elements addressed in the policies that regulate their implementation?

The National Digital Education Policy: the axis of digital inclusion

The National Digital Education Policy was established by Law No. 14,533, January 11, 2023, which defines guidelines for digital education in Brazil. It establishes four structuring axes: digital inclusion, school digital education, digital training and specialization, and research and development in information and communication technologies.

The digital inclusion axis establishes the foundations for promoting digital and informational skills, encompassing awareness campaigns, self-diagnostic tools, training

(including vulnerable groups), access to digital platforms, certification processes, and, finally, connectivity infrastructure for educational purposes, such as universal internet access and fostering the digital content ecosystem, including data policy and mobile access.

We question the gaps regarding awareness-raising actions, what they are and how they would be carried out, from the perspective of training, focusing on the use of tools and the adoption of platforms? Also, regarding the gaps in the specification of strategies to be implemented, a fact that impacts the responsibility for financing and executing actions among government agencies. We understand digital inclusion as going beyond technique, but aligned with the overall development of the individual, including social and cultural developments. We are also concerned about the issue of regional, socioeconomic, cultural, and political inequalities, as so-called digital inclusion may not be sufficient to overcome them and, on the contrary, may exacerbate them. Finally, the aforementioned connectivity appears to be misaligned with other policies, for example, Law No. 15.100, of January 13, 2025 (Brazil, 2025) which prohibits the use of cell phones in schools, restricting access to and development of digital skills, widening the gap between those who have access at home and those who do not, generating conflict and lack of coordination.

In the face of these tensions, we feel the need to recover some tessitures produced in the online dialogic cycles, based on research initiated in 2023 and funded by CNPq's productivity grant, which addresses digital cultures, training, and educational practices with pre- and in-service teachers from four different countries: South Africa, Brazil, Canada, and England. There is a concern among the participants to reframe the perspective of technologies as a panacea and the exclusionary processes they can generate when the people who use them do not feel they belong to the context in focus.

> [...] when using these technologies, we are looking at how exclusionary they can be. I mean, in our practice with our students, and this is a personal reflection, in my practice, for example, in research groups, or in the classes themselves, in postgraduate studies [...]" (Brazilian professor in-service).

A lack of belonging can affect the entire educational process, even more so when differences are neglected.

> [...] some students don't feel like they belong in that moment, in that discussion, either because of a lack of familiarity with the technology itself, or because of access issues, or because of linguistic or even academic exclusion. So, how much do we also need to develop this perception that the other person has different contexts (Brazilian in-service teacher).

The National Digital Education Policy: the focus of digital education in schools.

The core of digital education in schools discusses the integration of digital education into school environments at all levels and modalities. It addresses digital and information literacy, computer learning, programming, robotics, and other digital skills. It encompasses digital culture, and it is curious because it is presented in the singular, highlighting a single culture and homogenizing the peculiarities of different contexts. On the contrary, we understand that "[...]in this process of shared (re)significations, we can use digital technologies as a way to integrate our daily lives and expand our differences, promoting a movement contrary to homogenization, affecting and being affected" (Paniago and Moura, 2024, p. 18). For the authors, understanding digital cultures is also a problem of relationship, so that "[...] the truth is neither in their culture nor in mine, the truth, from the point of view of my understanding of it, lies in the relationship between the two" (Freire, 2004, p. 75).

It is interesting that this axis draws attention to "the construction of a critical, ethical and responsible attitude towards the multiplicity of media and digital offerings and the different uses of technologies and available content" (Brasil, 2023). However, we question how this can happen when even teachers, in some situations, do not have the autonomy and authorship to develop proposals that promote the construction of a critical, ethical and responsible attitude towards the multiplicity of digital offerings, making it impossible to address differences and combat hate speech.

Furthermore, there is a need to promote training processes for teachers focused on digital citizenship, which seems interesting to us as long as it goes beyond the use and access to technologies. We must consider ethical and responsible skills for evaluating information, discerning sources, and dealing with misinformation and manipulation. The debate should also address the accountability of *Big Tech companies* for their practices and implications for society, including the protection of citizens' rights.

In this sense, it would be appropriate to incorporate Freire's pedagogy of questioning:

> One possibility in the educational context would be for us, educators, to work with Freire 's pedagogy of questioning involves practicing asking questions that go beyond what, where, when, or who, but also questions that challenge the whys, the implications, and what. What changes does this entail and what consequences does it generate? In other words, questions that require students skills of reflection, curiosity, research, analysis, inference, anticipation, argumentation, communication, collaboration, evaluation, imagination, creativity and participation (Paniago and Brito, 2025, p. 425).

Still within this axis, we find "assistive technologies that encompass products, resources, methodologies, strategies, practices, and services that aim to promote functionality

and learning, focusing on the inclusion of people with disabilities or reduced mobility" (PNED, 2023). It would be interesting, when discussing assistive technologies, to focus beyond the technologies themselves, but also on the need to promote, along with them, humanization, bonds of belonging, and affection.

> And the teacher's perspective on that student is also important. Because, as you yourself, as the teacher rightly points out, assistive technology won't create the bond of affection; that's the teacher's job. And a person who doesn't have an affective relationship, who doesn't feel welcomed, no matter how much assistive technology you offer, if they don't feel involved with the teacher, they won't be able to develop their learning. Here at the school where I work, we have 80 students with disabilities. Of those 80, almost 50 are on the autism spectrum. We have a team of 23 support professionals. And what I tell them is this: when I'm guiding them, as you also rightly point out, we need to see the being, the individual, before the disability, before the disorder, before the difficulty. "Ah, but how am I going to evaluate my student with a disability in special education?" Don't think of them as a student with a disability, as a student in special education. We need to think of them as an individual (Brazilian teacher in service).

In this sense, we therefore emphasize again the importance of human connection. Turkle (2011) warns us that even with the potential of technologies, we must learn to use them without compromising our ability to establish deep and meaningful connections with others. She alerts us to the need for balance, since technology should not be an escape, but an artifact to foster authentic connections.

The National Digital Education Policy: the focus on digital training and specialization.

The focus is on digital training and specialization. The program aims to "empower the Brazilian working-age population by providing them with opportunities to develop digital skills for full integration into the world of work" (Brasil, 2023). Its strategies include identifying and developing digital skills for the world of work, implementing and consolidating a national network of continuing education courses and programs, short-term immersion programs related to digital skills focusing on the fundamentals of computing and emerging and innovative technologies and practical learning, and creating a repository of best practices in vocational education. It is noteworthy that the term "training" is still used in a limited way, associated with technical or skills training, which gives little consideration to comprehensive education and critical reflection. This term reduces the continuing education process to the acquisition of skills, ignoring practice and professional autonomy. As Nóvoa (1992) points out, training processes should go beyond the acquisition of technical skills, but develop a professional culture

and *ethos* , teaching identities that enable them to think, feel, and act as education professionals. According to the author (2009), training should be situated, not reduced to a technique of updating, but reflective and in dialogue with practice, a space for the reconstruction of professional identity.

We believe, supported by Silva (2000), that identities are constructions, processes of production and relationships, far from being fixed and permanent. Furthermore, they are linked to power relations. Therefore, teacher training reveals the complexity and peculiarities of different multidimensional representations. Morin helps us to think about such complexities when he states that, from a perspective of complexity, thought "[...] unites, reconnects, brings to light complex sets, interactions , feedback loops and the dynamics between part and whole, as well as the multidimensionality of the reality in which we live" (Morin, 2000, p. 13). Even with this multiplicity, the individual remains a unique subject and, in this way, Morin (2011, p. 50) emphasizes that "[...] it is human unity that carries within itself the principles of its multiple diversities".

Finally, in this section, there is talk of emerging and innovative technologies. In our understanding, it is unclear to what innovation the policy is referring, and with what understanding:

> In this sense, understanding innovation not merely as the inclusion of technologies in educational practices allows us to advance in our understanding of digital culture. According to Leite (2012, p. 30), the challenge for the university lies in placing pedagogical innovation alongside technological innovation. For the author, "[...] pedagogical innovation responds to the social commitment to the formation of the human teacher and the human student" (Leite, 2012, p. 30). Forster (2012, p. 20) defines innovation as "[...] paradigmatic ruptures [...] as it requires an emerging subjectivity, reconfiguration of knowledge, new ways of conceiving knowledge and social relations, characterizing itself as a highly complex process" (Paniago and Moura, 2024, p. 09).

Therefore, we need less fascination and more integration between digital policies and policies that value teachers, relating to their careers, time for training, institutional support, and the prevention of precarious work and its intensification.

The National Digital Education Policy: the research and development axis in information and communication technologies (ICT)

The research and development axis in information and communication technologies (ICT) aims to develop and promote accessible and inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (Brasil, 2023). Its strategies are: to implement incentive programs for accessible

and inclusive ICT, to promote international partnerships, to encourage open science, to share digital resources, to stimulate the dissemination of digital scientific content in Portuguese, and to create strategies for teacher training in ICT.

In this proposal for the implementation of digital programs and resources, it is important to highlight the forms of dependency they can generate, as well as the use of human behavior itself as a means of generating profit and controlling the market. According to Zuboff (2021), digital technologies can monitor and predict people's behavior, thereby building databases and creating and influencing behavioral patterns, as well as manipulating them.

When policy aims to research and develop ICT, focusing on inclusion, it needs to be analyzed from a decolonial perspective, because, according to Santiago, Candiotto and Santiago (2024), we are living through a digital colonialism that constructs new forms of domination.

> Digital colonialism is not merely a metaphor or discourse of power, but one of the objective features of the current stage of development of the capitalist mode of production. For the South African sociologist Michael Kwet , it is the use of digital technology for the political, economic, and social domination of another nation or territory (Faustino; Lippold , 2023, p. 71).

From a critical and inclusive perspective, it is not possible to erase or normalize the intentional behaviors that digital technologies carry, such as datafication and its commodification, including in the educational context, highlighting corporate, private, and even public interests, affecting pedagogical and, especially, interrelational issues.

When examining public policies, we, as researchers and practitioners in the context of education in a society of digital cultures, need to expose aspects that violate the rights of all, that render certain populations invisible, that discriminate against, categorize and label people, that homogenize different contexts and seek to serve only the interests of a few.

Regarding the sharing of digital resources, we could add the importance of their quality and relevance to ensure a quality educational process, avoiding misinformation and infocracy . According to Han (2022, p. 19):

> The digitalization of the world is advancing relentlessly. It is radically changing our perception, our relationship with the world, and our coexistence. We are overwhelmed by the intoxication of communication and information. The tsunami of information unleashes destructive forces. Meanwhile, it also encompasses political spheres, leading to massive fractures and disruptions in the democratic process. Democracy degenerates into infocracy .

We appreciate the idea of democracy as a community of attentive listening: " We no longer listen attentively to each other. Listening attentively is a political act, insofar as only through it people can form a community and become capable of speaking. It promotes a "we." Democracy is a community of attentive listening" (Han, 2022, p. 40). The author emphasizes the sense of community: "Digital communication as communication without community destroys the politics of attentive listening. We only hear, then, ourselves even speaking. That would be the end of communicative action. (Han, 2022, p.40)

In short, researching and developing ICT from an educational perspective focused on the common good, respecting human rights, bringing people closer together, and valuing humanization requires political will and efforts centered especially on social minorities, debating and understanding the implications arising from human interactions with technologies.

Some contributions and considerations

When the PNED highlights the need for training processes, we bring to light the research-training conducted with pre- and in-service teachers, which corroborates the idea that teacher training goes beyond the simple transmission of knowledge, involving the construction of the teacher's professional identity and reflection on their pedagogical practice (Josso, 2004). From this perspective, subjective, cultural, and social aspects are considered, and relationships with digital technologies are also related to personal histories and training narratives. Recognizing the subjective experiences and personal narratives of educators is necessary because it goes beyond a perspective of purely technical skills, but also includes subjective and reflective appropriations that value their experiences and life stories.

> So, there's also the colonial issue, colonialism. We often don't perceive this colonization and we don't realize how we also participate in reproducing these colonizing attitudes. Often, even though we say, "Oh, I'm aware of who I am, I know what decoloniality is, I know where racism is," but inadvertently, right? We often find ourselves reproducing this colonialist format. So, before we emphasize the need for the other to be critical, I think we need to reconsider who we really are, how to deconstruct this colonialism that exists within us (Brazilian professor in service).

We believe, as Faustino and Lippold (2025) do, that there is a need to bring technical and humanistic education closer together. According to the authors, this is justified because,

> [...] there is theoretical abyss that runs through the two poles. In technical courses, there is a lack of understanding of the human dimension in technological production, and in the humanities, the basic element of how digital technologies function and operate is overlooked. Over the years, teaching computer science and society, we have been able to compose this necessary communication interface towards overcoming these antithetical poles, in the spirit of a science decolonized from its rigid Cartesianism in divisions (Faustino; Lippold, 2025, p. 27).

The criticism regarding the PNED when it presents a digitalization proposal that is sometimes fragmented, disconnected from critical thinking, and overly focused on technical skills, relates to the following excerpt, which problematizes certain silences, exclusionary processes, and the naturalization of colonial thinking:

> I think that what xxx [3]brings also makes us reflect on the knowledge that is valued in the university and in digital life. The knowledge, the way, the being, the language, the languages that are present, which ones are excluded, which ones are silenced. So, thinking about digital life from a decoloniality perspective is also thinking about what is excluded, why, and how we are implicated, as xxx says, we are implicated in coloniality because we grew up in colonial environments. The university is a colonial environment. So, bringing it to this locus. And digitalities are also developed from colonial thoughts. And we end up becoming impregnated, naturalizing, without realizing it. This perception takes time, and even when we realize it, as xxx said, we find ourselves repeating or even reinforcing some things, when we see... Wait a minute. I'll give an example that happened here in the presentation and I've already reflected on it. It was the Kahoot game. Colonialism brings competitiveness as a motto, which is based on neoliberal capitalist thought. Kahoot , even though we say there's no competition, there really isn't, but we ourselves think, look, so -and-so is ahead, they're winning, let me click quickly. So, a sense of competitiveness takes precedence over collaboration, no matter how good the intention is. So, an intention with a colonial instrument, with an instrument that thinks colonially, I'm playing, how cool, but there's competitiveness. So, it's a colonial mindset that always has what is better than the other, what is superior to the other. One race is superior to another, one language is superior to another, one skin color is superior to another. So, I think these are reflections... (Brazilian professor on duty)

Linked to this perspective, the PNED in introducing the term innovation leaves gaps that allow for the consideration of digitalization practices as technocratic modernization, unlike what a cultural practice would prioritize: social, pedagogical, and political mediations and critical stances with the development of the pedagogy of questioning.

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[3]To maintain the anonymity of the participants, we use xxx for the names mentioned.

> I feel very bad for not being able to speak in Portuguese. But thank you for allowing me to speak in English. I just want to add something to what xxx said about the challenges that artificial intelligence... This is a concern for educators, and this idea that it can replace us. I was thinking that artificial intelligence is very good at giving answers. If you enter anything, they will give you an answer. But what artificial intelligence is not good at doing is formulating the questions. This also reminds me of Paulo Freire, when he saw the critical role of education as posing the questions, asking the questions that nobody is asking. And from these questions, he talks about the universe of themes, the universe of things, the thematic universe. Artificial intelligence is not good at this, because it works based on answers that everyone else has given to different questions, but it cannot create its own answers. This leads me to the opportunities we have there, which is to rethink education as an activity that problematizes reality through questions, not answers. (English teacher on duty – Our translation)

We advocate for a collaborative, contextualized, and critical training policy that values teachers' knowledge and promotes spaces for listening. A policy that embraces technologies as cultural mediations and not merely operational tools, a fact highlighted by a participant who researches African and Indigenous games and is concerned with respect for and recognition of different cultures.

> We know that sometimes students in the classroom feel they are not challenged enough or that they don't identify with the content being taught. Therefore, bringing in elements related to indigenous games will help us promote critical thinking and physical activity, because most games require students to get up and do something. And also teamwork, where they can work with their friends or classmates to do something that everyone is engaged in [...] And also cultural awareness, which comes within the game, because most games have a context that comes from the cultural perspective of a group of people who sat down and created a game. And, in creating the game, they try to link it to the cultural aspect of that specific community. Thus, cultural awareness among students is brought to the forefront through their games, and we see that in some subjects, such as history, geography, and all others that require the teaching of culture, you can actually teach it through a game. We are not all from the same tradition or culture, but we recognize and respect each other's culture by playing games that come from different cultural heritages. (South African pre-service professor - Our translation)

Therefore, we believe in the potential of technology as a social construct, developed through social, political, and cultural choices, and an expression of social values. However, it also comes loaded with intentionality, and can either reinforce control or favor inclusive, participatory, and emancipatory practices, depending on its uses, contexts, conditions, and intentions. If the logic used is efficiency and control, digitalization will prioritize a fragmented educational reality focused on technical skills, relegating human and social aspects and pedagogical relationships to a secondary position. What we hope for is a policy that values

teachers, enabling them to appropriate and reconfigure their formative processes and educational practices in digital contexts, according to the principles of a democratic, inclusive, emancipatory, and quality education.

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