

**REFLECTIONS ON AN ACADEMIC MASTER'S DEGREE IN TEACHER
FORMATION: "I DON'T THINK, I KNOW, BECAUSE I HAVE LEARNED"**

***REFLEXÕES SOBRE O MESTRADO ACADÊMICO NA FORMAÇÃO DE DOCENTES:
"EU NÃO ACHO, EU SEI, PORQUE EU APRENDI"***

***REFLEXIONES SOBRE UNA MAESTRÍA ACADÉMICA EN FORMACIÓN DOCENTE:
"NO PIENSO, LO SÉ, PORQUE LO APRENDÍ"***



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ABSTRACT: The reflection on the training of Basic Education teachers in an Academic master's degree in education moves this study. Thus, it investigates: what meanings does the Academic master's degree in education have in the training of basic education teachers? This article is anchored in data from a sociographic questionnaire and focus groups conducted in a case study with nine participants, whose discussion was based on emerging phenomena evidenced through Discursive Textual Analysis. The research was based on the studies of Freire, Chauí, Gadotti, Alves, and Nóvoa. The results highlight teaching appreciation, the understanding of the master's degree as a formative stage, and learning based on five pillars of education (learning to be, to live, to do, to know, and to think), further proposing a sixth pillar: learning to dream.

KEYWORDS: Master's degree. Teacher training. Basic Education. Learning.

RESUMO: *A reflexão acerca da formação de professores e professoras da Educação Básica em um Mestrado Acadêmico em Educação move este estudo. Assim, investiga-se: quais sentidos o Mestrado Acadêmico em Educação tem na formação de docentes da educação básica? O presente artigo ancora-se em dados provenientes de um questionário sociográfico e de grupos focais realizados em um estudo de caso com nove participantes, cuja discussão se fundamentou em fenômenos emergentes evidenciados pela Análise Textual Discursiva. A investigação teve por base os estudos de Freire, Chauí, Gadotti, Alves e Nóvoa. Os resultados destacam a valorização docente, o entendimento do mestrado como etapa formativa e a aprendizagem alicerçada em cinco pilares da educação (aprender a ser, a conviver, a fazer, a conhecer e a pensar), propondo-se, ainda, um sexto pilar: aprender a sonhar.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Mestrado. Formação de professores. Educação Básica. Aprendizagem.*

RESUMEN: *La reflexión sobre la formación de docentes de Educación Básica en una Maestría Académica en Educación mueve este estudio. Así, se investiga: ¿qué significados tiene la Maestría Académica en Educación en la formación del profesorado de educación básica? Este artículo se basa en datos provenientes de un cuestionario sociográfico y de grupos focales realizados en un estudio de caso con nueve participantes, cuya discusión se fundamentó en fenómenos emergentes evidenciados por el Análisis Textual Discursivo. La investigación se basó en los estudios de Freire, Chauí, Gadotti, Alves y Nóvoa. Los resultados destacan la valorización docente, la comprensión de la maestría como etapa formativa y el aprendizaje basado en cinco pilares de la educación (aprender a ser, a vivir, a hacer, a conocer y a pensar), proponiéndose, además, un sexto pilar: aprender a soñar.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Maestría. Formación de profesores. Educación Básica. Aprendizaje.*

Introduction

“I like being human because, unfinished as I am, I know that I am a conditioned being; yet, aware of my incompleteness, I know that I can go beyond it”
(Paulo Freire, our translation).

The epigraph of this article, while moving us, also drives this research. By choosing to examine students who are also teachers, we are investigating aspects of professionals who aspire to engage in lifelong learning. In this study, we discuss observations regarding the phenomena that emerged from the discourse of participants in a study conducted within a Graduate Program in Education (PPGEdu). We seek to understand the meanings these phenomena hold in the education of Basic Education (BE) teachers. Based on Paviani (2003), we understand meaning as a kind of movement of thought through which human communication is expressed. It is from this perspective that we continue the present analysis.

The urgency of a new social contract for education presupposes that teaching should be valued as a public endeavor and a common good, grounded in inclusion and social justice. In this context, UNESCO (2022) argues that teaching should be professionalized as a collaborative endeavor in which teachers are recognized as producers of knowledge and central agents of educational transformation. This shift requires teacher education to move beyond isolated practice and connect with research and innovation networks capable of addressing and overcoming the challenges of a world marked by constant uncertainty.

In line with this perspective, Morés (2020) highlights that the role of the university is to invest in an education that strengthens the articulation between theory and practice, bringing academics closer to social and school realities. Higher education institutions must resist the market-driven logic that promotes rapid and superficial training, prioritizing instead an institutional vision focused on human development and the construction of knowledge grounded in emancipatory principles. Thus, graduate education is established as a space for critical reflection and innovation, essential for professional appreciation and the continuous development of teachers.

The methodology adopted was a case study based on the works of Lüdke and André (2018) and Yin (2015). Participants were intentionally selected from among the students enrolled in a class of a Graduate Program in Education. The inclusion criteria required participants to: (a) be regularly enrolled in the academic master's program; and (b) be working as teachers or administrators in Basic Education at the time of enrollment in the program.

Recruitment began via the messaging application WhatsApp, through which the 23 class members received a formal invitation and a brief video explaining the objectives of the study.

The study was conducted in accordance with rigorous ethical standards and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of the University of Caxias do Sul under Opinion No. 5,334,165. Participation was strictly voluntary and contingent upon reading and electronically signing the Informed Consent Form (ICF), ensuring participants' right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. To ensure anonymity, real identities were replaced with pseudonyms (Anna, Bia, César, Danielle, Isabela, Ita, Maria, Meredith, and Vânia), chosen by the participants themselves. Data collection instruments included a sociographic profile questionnaire administered through Google Forms and two focus groups conducted via videoconference using Google Meet. The focus groups, each lasting two hours, involved six participants in the first session and three in the second, following a unified discussion guide. The discussions were recorded with prior authorization and subsequently transcribed for analysis. The textual corpus was analyzed using Discursive Textual Analysis (DTA) proposed by Moraes and Galiazzi (2016), following the stages of unitarization (deconstructing statements into units of analysis), categorization (grouping similar units into emerging categories), and communication (constructing the interpretative metatext). To support the systematization and unitarization of the data, we used the Atlas.ti software.

Following this analysis of the data—discourses derived from the focus groups—five phenomena emerged: (1) humanization and subjectivity; (2) communication and speaking one's own word; (3) affection, intersubjectivity, and caring; (4) feasible dreams and limit-situations; and (5) digital culture. The following sections present a discussion of the results developed throughout this methodological and investigative journey.

Singularities of a Master's Program: "Valuation Begins with Us"

The immersion of Basic Education teachers in an academic master's program signals a movement of resistance to the market-driven logic that, according to Chauí (2001), tends to reduce undergraduate education to training for low-cost labor. The meaning of this educational trajectory lies in humanization, a process through which teachers overcome the condition of mere executors—the object-being—to recognize themselves as subjects of their own practice, endowed with intentionality and awareness of their incompleteness (Freire, 2019). By distancing themselves from "objectification," master's students cease reproducing naïve forms

of knowledge and instead learn to teach others how to think, transforming rigorous observation into a tool for professional emancipation.

In this context, the constitution of the teacher-researcher identity becomes inseparable from the experience of Freirean praxis, in which theory and practice mutually nourish one another in a continuous cycle of critical reflection. This dynamic provides teachers with the authority necessary to act confidently in the classroom, as their pedagogical decisions come to be supported by scientific evidence rather than by intuition alone. Thus, academic research is not configured as an additional task but rather as a communicative and intersubjective act that integrates the teacher-self and the researcher-self, consolidating collaborative autonomy within the school community.

Anna, for example, reports that her primary motivation for pursuing a master's degree was professional appreciation, for, in seeking

[...] knowledge gives me authority in my classroom to say, "I do this because I know what I am doing." I do not act based on what I think. I also think about giving my students what they are entitled to, which is a quality education [...]. I value myself because I give my best to my students. So, appreciation begins with me. It is not enough simply to demand recognition if teachers do not take the first step. I believe that this is how we will be recognized as teachers and education professionals: through appreciation, and appreciation begins with knowledge. This has changed me tremendously [...]. Today, I believe I am a much better professional, with much stronger positions and much greater confidence in saying, "I do this" [...]. I do not think; I know, because I have learned (Anna).

Anna recognizes herself as a subject who assumes responsibilities, reflects, analyzes, acts, and makes history by stating that her appreciation as a teacher will become a reality through her pursuit of further knowledge, which gives her authority before her students and the society in which she is embedded. She also uses the word *praxis*, which, for Freire (2019), is a process in which theory nourishes practice, which, in turn, through critical reflection, nourishes theory. Even before joining a *stricto sensu* graduate program, Anna anticipated that this Freirean trajectory would allow her to experience the author's notion of praxis more fully, humanizing her condition as a teaching professional, since appreciation only exists when objectification is overcome. Furthermore, according to Freire, the knowledge derived from teaching practice is "[...] a naïve form of knowledge, experiential knowledge that lacks the methodological rigor characterizing the subject's epistemological curiosity" (Freire, 2019, p. 39, our translation).

A teacher who is merely an executor produces naïve forms of knowledge and increases the difficulty of being regarded as the subject of their own pedagogical practice. Participant Meredith also addresses the subject-object relationship by stating: "For me, it makes no sense to have people who think and people who execute and for these things not to be connected," and she asserts that teachers are not merely "manual labor." We understand that some Basic Education teachers seek to be recognized as subjects in both their professional lives and their educational experiences. Our interlocutors see in their master's program an opportunity to overcome the view of Basic Education teachers as cheap labor, because within it they continue learning how to be. At this point, we recall Chauí's (2001) argument that, from a market-oriented perspective, undergraduate education launches individuals into the labor market as inexpensive labor; therefore, we perceive that the excerpts from the teachers' statements mentioned above are consistent with the author's argument.

Academic master's education meets—and must meet—this expectation among Basic Education teachers to perceive themselves as subjects involved in their own education and in the construction of educational thought with which they engage during their studies and their work in schools, because it constitutes education rather than training. As Alves (2003, p. 51, our translation) argues, "the first task of scientific education is to teach how to see and how to think." Observation and thought distinguish training from education. A master's degree is, and must be, education.

Thus, as subjects, teachers contribute to their workplaces—the schools—and to the field of Education by speaking their own word, another Freirean concept. Speaking one's own word does not mean repeating ready-made phrases but rather participating in the historical and cultural construction of the society to which the subject belongs. The master's students indicated that, by being on this educational journey, they were able to support their schools through the use of digital technologies explored during the program, through discussions and reflections on theories shared within school groups, and through the writing of a book chapter. They also contributed, together with their peers, by presenting papers to educational networks, participating in research groups, offering a workshop at the university, developing a project to be implemented in the classroom, and conducting their own research. These activities constitute a tangible part of the development of the researcher-self. Regarding this process, Ita stated:

In our daily lives at school, we shared what we learned here because people did not know how to hold meetings; sometimes they just did not know how... So, we shared what we learned in class because our colleagues were immersed

in that world, just like we were, immersed as students... I was able to help my colleagues a great deal. What I learned here, I was able to share and use to help them (Ita).

And Anna reported:

Ever since I was an undergraduate student, I always wanted to pursue a master's degree, and it seemed like something far away. [...] Then my advisor said, 'No, education is something that must be permanent.' And we began to think about it, my colleagues and I; we started to reflect on it more deeply, and there came a point when we realized—when I realized—that education has to be transformative; it has to make you a better person and a better professional, and it also has to enable you to transform your workplace into something better, as well as the people who are there... It has to be a welcoming environment, there has to be affection, and people have to be viewed as subjects, beyond that, beyond the content that we have the duty to teach. Therefore, I believe in the transformative power of continuing education, of the master's program, and I feel more capable of continuing to transform myself and my environment through this education, because it must be permanent (Anna).

While Ita helped the people at her school use virtual environments for meetings because she had learned how to do so during her master's program, Anna's desire for learning had been woven since her undergraduate studies, and it did not develop in isolation. Her advisor played an important role by affirming that education is a lifelong endeavor. Anna agrees with her advisor: continuing education transforms the individual who pursues it and, at the same time, transforms the surrounding environment and the workplace. Therefore, the participant realized that her education helped her improve the school environment through welcoming practices, affection, and respect for subjectivity.

When analyzing other statements from this same perspective, we highlight the testimonies of Bia and Isabela:

With the work that we had the opportunity to develop, there was even one that Meredith and I worked on [...], which we presented to the 23rd Regional Education Coordination Office, and that work received a great deal of praise and gave visibility to something we had developed in one of our courses. Now, there is the possibility of being invited to participate in other activities related to my research topic [...]. Wow! This is something I learned... This is something I am managing to share... I am managing to change perspectives a little or, at least, make some difference there [...] (Bia).

What I see regarding learning to conduct research is this: I am doing research, but I am not a researcher. I do not see myself as a researcher. What I do see is

that everything I read, research, study, and understand, every insight I gain, I immediately try to apply in the classroom (Isabela).

The decision made by Bia and Meredith to return to their studies extends beyond their own academic development: both contribute to the education of other colleagues within an educational network by presenting academic work, and Isabela uses her learning experiences to improve her pedagogical practice. All these accounts emphasize the meanings that the Academic Master's Program in Education brings to the education of Basic Education teachers. Equally significant is César's account:

This is the driving force I had and that is still being generated, that the master's program is generating through the entire research process. This sense of protagonism enables me to continue this search through interaction, which has given me a reference point. My colleagues now look at me differently... And everything I ended up reading, I shared with the group, with my colleagues, and that gave me—not exactly pride—but rather this sense of protagonism, of building my history in education. I am becoming a reference in my community. My Secretary of Education is investing in me and released me from my duties on Wednesdays so that I could study. She has already told me that she wants my dissertation afterward so that it can be implemented in the municipality. So, look at the responsibility and the sense of identification!!

César hopes that his dissertation will be implemented within the municipal school system of which he is a part; he already inspires his peers through the knowledge he brings to his educational network. Nevertheless, he expects to contribute even more once he completes the program and has his dissertation in hand. Such accounts recall Freire's (2019, p. 30–31, our translation) assertion:

There is no teaching without research and no research without teaching. These activities are found within one another. While I teach, I continue seeking and searching again. I teach because I seek, because I questioned, because I question and question myself. I research in order to know, and in knowing, I intervene; in intervening, I educate and educate myself. I research in order to know what I do not yet know and to communicate or announce novelty.

These accounts point to the necessary “emergence of subjects of knowledge,” a concern raised by Chauí (2001, p. 171, our translation) when discussing the relationship between teaching and research. For both Freire and Chauí, it is impossible to separate the teacher from the researcher. The subject is one, and within this subject these identities coexist. What is experienced at the university is brought into the school and vice versa, as Bia emphasizes: “The

master's program itself gave me support to work in elementary education, and elementary education gave me support to develop my master's studies." Therefore, she recognizes the evolution of her learning by doing.

It is also evident that researcher education strengthens the identity of being a teacher. According to Danielle and Bia, being a researcher is only one aspect of this process, "[...] because there are so many moments in which we conduct informal research and bring tools, resources, and methodologies. So, we simply have one more enrollment, of course, with a stronger theoretical foundation [...]" This is the path toward changing schools, as Isabela points out: "a different school from the one we have now, which is what we need." Danielle adds:

We are taking steps toward that. I think the community simply needs to have this perspective and that those who belong to the academic world, to this field, genuinely care, because teachers are always moving forward, constantly renewing, reconstructing, and reflecting and re-reflecting... (Danielle).

Regarding motivation, at this point in time, the master's program,

is a very important tool; it is now part of my life as a professional and as a person [...]. It brings something very important, which is deconstruction [...]. Thus, this process of deconstructing certain forms of knowledge in a very simple way, some things that I used to bring into the classroom, has allowed me, through deeper research, to understand that they were not exactly like that and that they should be approached differently (Bia).

Thus, we observe that both participants bring together discourse and practice, research and everyday life, and interrelate their identities as researchers and teachers, which, for Freire (2019), involves an indispensable virtue: coherence. In being coherent, they engage in genuine science. Alves (2004, p. 101, our translation) explains science through an analogy:

As in a mirror: the image inside the mirror is not real; it is virtual. Yet, when I look into a car's rearview mirror, I see another vehicle about to overtake us. [...] Such are the words of the game of science: they seek to be faithful images of reality.

The simultaneous experience of Basic Education and the university, of research and practice, allows teachers to work with words in ways that become increasingly faithful to the pursuit of reality. As we see in the following statement:

I always thought and always asked myself: why do people who have access to master's and doctoral programs speak with such authority about Basic Education, for example, even though they are not in schools experiencing our daily realities? That has always troubled me. I always thought it would be interesting to produce knowledge while being in the school context (Meredith).

This colleague's statement led us to reflect on how many teachers—who are also master's and doctoral degree holders—manage to achieve academic relevance to the extent of being cited in dissertations and theses or becoming renowned lecturers and authors without having to leave Basic Education. According to Tardif (2011) and Nóvoa (2009),

These phenomena, and many others like them, show that teacher education is slowly changing, but in the right direction, giving increasingly greater space to professional teachers, who become partners of university professors in the education of their future colleagues (Tardif, 2011, p. 240, our translation).

Essentially, I advocate teacher education built within the profession itself, that is, based on the complex combination of scientific, pedagogical, and technical contributions, but grounded in teachers themselves, especially the most experienced and recognized ones (Nóvoa, 2009, p. 216, our translation).

In this way, for Basic Education teachers to assume responsibility for the education of their future colleagues still appears to be a distant and utopian task. However, even though it seems distant and utopian, it is a possible reality, still virtual in the sense that it has the potential to become real. The experiences reported by the participants in this study demonstrate this. These individuals undergo an intense learning process while developing and refining their research, cultivating their learning to know or learning to learn. Regarding this process, Isabela expressed enthusiasm: "Curiosity becomes sharper; the more you learn, the more you want to learn. The more you research, the more you want to research."

Regarding the act of conducting research, André refers to research in teacher education by stating:

The concept of autonomy also implicitly encompasses the perspective of a social subject endowed with initiative and ownership of their actions and choices. Such a subject constructs their identity through relationships with others, exchanges, and the collective construction of knowledge. Therefore, this is an interactive subject who embraces the ideas of others while simultaneously building their own. In this sense, the concept of the teacher-researcher involves a perspective of collegiality and collaborative work (André, 2016, p. 20-21, our translation).

Teachers who engage in research assume the position of subjects in the Freirean sense. Because they possess autonomy, they position themselves as protagonists of their own education. The teachers themselves are surprised by the trajectory they have followed throughout the research process. In the words of Meredith and Danielle:

This idea of protagonism was something that was built throughout the year: this is my text, these are my ideas, and I felt this particularly during the preparation of the report that we have to submit at the end of each semester, describing everything we did as scholarship recipients. Then I thought about those two moments when I sat down to write it... Wow! I do not know how I managed to do all that, you know... because there is so much that, amid the rush of everyday life, we fail to realize how relevant it actually is (Meredith).

There was one meeting with my advisor when I told her: when I wrote my undergraduate thesis, I had no idea what it meant to be a researcher. I opened a document and simply put a lot of things into it, and it was still about pure mathematics. So, I put information on paper, but I did not think very much about it, you know? I think the movement now has been completely different. It has been much more about thinking about a million things and then putting only thirty pages of written and formalized ideas on paper. So, I think this capacity to think... and the moment we recognize how much we have thought about so many things, I believe that is the defining moment of research and of being a researcher for me (Danielle).

Meredith's statement aligns with André's (2016) contributions mentioned above regarding the construction of one's own ideas as a teacher-researcher, whereas Danielle referred to the critical reception of others' ideas, also present in André's (2016) discussion. Other participants also reflected on the construction of this identity, among them Ita, who stated:

Every time I talked about my research, I was able to express my ideas, what I intended to investigate, and what motivated me. And every time I encountered people who showed genuine interest in listening to my research, who believed that what I wanted to investigate was relevant and that what I was saying had meaning for the academic community, I felt like a researcher. I felt that I was becoming someone who was seeking answers and that these answers were relevant, are relevant, and will make a contribution. I felt this during the moments when I was able to speak in research groups, in the research group of which we are members, and at the National Student Education Colloquium, in which I participated.

Ita also demonstrated her creative potential and her sense of protagonism by feeling integrated into the academic community. All the participants are subjects, which distances them from the objectification of being. They communicate, speak their own word, and, in doing so, bring about transformations within themselves and in their surroundings. They discuss

education, reflect on their practices, record their observations and provocations, engage in scientific inquiry, and develop their ability to think. In communicating, speaking their own word, and engaging in science, they do not do so alone. Therefore, it is necessary to address the phenomenon of intersubjectivity, which emerged with great emphasis in the focus groups, even though only one question was asked about this aspect. The participants' position aligns with Freire's (2019, p. 38, our translation) assertion that thinking correctly is "a communicative act," implying understanding and shared participation.

Anna also warns that science is produced through peer review and collective work:

[...] my researcher-self was shaped through exchanges with my classmates during classes and discussions, through dialogues with my advisor and my fellow advisees, which was basically Mauro. I did not have many experiences with the research group, unlike my colleagues; I believe that my researcher identity was built in those moments. But I also see that it was formed during moments of solitude with the research itself, through extensive reading and writing, and it only truly became clear to me during the qualification examination, when other professors validated all the research I had conducted. So, for me, that was how the experience unfolded (Anna).

In the excerpt above, Anna refers to "moments of solitude," yet she explains that, while reading, she was communicating with the authors, and while writing, she was writing for her readers. Thus, research always involves interaction and intersubjectivity. For Anna, the validation of her work during the qualification examination allowed her to perceive herself as a researcher.

It is not only in Basic Education (BE) that a teacher's actions influence students' lives. Freire (2019, p. 43) states:

[...] one can hardly imagine what a simple gesture from a teacher may come to represent in a student's life. What an apparently insignificant gesture can mean as a formative force or as a contribution to the learner's self-affirmation.

Beyond what Freire states about students, being Basic Education teachers allows us to understand that these professionals require affection and care, and the same applies to university professors. Intersubjectivity is important not only for science but also for the scientist. Danielle seems to understand this and expressed her admiration for the program's faculty members. When asked whether there was anything left unsaid during the focus group, she replied: "I would just like to praise the professors who make up the faculty. [...] It is a highly qualified team and, for the most part, very experienced. I was impressed by the professors in the program [...]"

Danielle's admiration increases her desire to learn, and this recognition certainly motivates her even more to pursue her profession. According to Alves (2003, p. 84), "when one admires a teacher, the heart commands the intellect to learn what that teacher knows. Knowing what the teacher knows becomes a way of being with them. I learn because I love; I learn because I admire." In other words, the relationship established between Danielle and her university professors benefits both parties and resonates in her professional practice.

Bia also addressed this issue and noted that she had "a very positive experience." She further commented on her perception of the master's program: "[...] I thought it was something more elitist, something that would not care much about the self. But in fact, it is exactly the opposite."

It was through her relationship with her professors that Bia overcame her fear of pursuing a master's degree. She feared that the program would be very difficult, but once she realized that her professors genuinely cared about the subjectivity of the master's students, she overcame her fear of not completing the program.

The relationship between advisor and advisee also highlighted these phenomena; however, it was not the relationship most frequently mentioned by the research participants. The bond among peers was the most frequently cited aspect in this group, a topic also addressed by Alves (2003, p. 14, our translation):

The second task of education is to teach people how to live together. Life is coexistence with a fantastic variety of beings: human beings, the elderly, adults, children, people of the most diverse races, cultures, and languages, animals, plants, stars... To live together is to live well amid this diversity.

The teaching of coexistence to which Alves refers means living in harmony and peace with others, living with care and goodwill toward them. Learning to live together, one of the four pillars of education (Delors *et al.*, 2010), may seem important only in Basic Education, but it is not. Learning to live together is part of lifelong education.

We know that, in an academic master's program, the challenges of coexistence are different, and this is where the importance of learning to criticize respectfully, to receive criticism without harboring resentment, and to write scientific texts collaboratively lies. Freire (2019, p. 36), when discussing the need for this type of learning among adults, stated that even in disagreement one should not harbor "excessive anger" toward one's opponent.

In a master's program, people disagree with one another much of the time. Therefore, learning to coexist becomes a continuous exercise throughout the program. The master's cohort

thus becomes a community encompassing faculty and students, who depend on one another to construct learning, values, projects, research, emotional support, psychological support, and much more.

Another need expressed by Basic Education teachers is the availability of evening classes in the program. Meredith stated: "For a long time, I wanted to pursue a master's degree, but the programs were always offered during the day, and I even carried a certain resentment because I thought that made them very elitist." Teachers working in Basic Education teach during the day. Maria added: "Another suggestion is that it continue to be offered at night because we are the first evening cohort, perhaps because we were such a large class." She concluded: "[...] the fact that it was offered in the evening [...] made it possible for many more people to enroll [...]".

This flexibility in offering evening classes in the PPGEdu beginning in 2021 aligns with the rejection of conformity, the refusal of fatalism, and the Freirean joy of being (Freire, 2021b). In this way, the program enables the fulfillment of dreams, as reported by Meredith and Maria, who had long wished to pursue a master's degree.

Likewise, the flexibility of the school system in which César worked contributed to this achievement: "I go into my room and lock myself in there; I was granted, and still have, Wednesdays off solely for studying, and that has contributed tremendously, tremendously, tremendously!"

It is through the master's program that new hopes also emerge among the students: pursuing a doctoral degree, obtaining a better position in education, increasing their income, moving to another city because of greater employability, working in higher education, and filling educational gaps left by a career change while seeking recognition within a new profession as a teacher. Furthermore, the master's degree enables individuals to become better teachers within the positions they already hold, as highlighted throughout this article.

To achieve these goals, master's students invest both time and financial resources. Isabela spoke about this:

There are so many sacrifices that we are making, and within a family there is indeed a financial sacrifice, because it is not only about enjoyment. I do not have a scholarship; I pay tuition. I receive a discount, but I still pay, and we cannot exchange time because we are paid by the hour. As a teacher, I am paid by the hour, and I had to significantly reduce my working hours. There is also the sacrifice of time that, in my specific case, I would otherwise spend with my children. So, I think to myself: well, I have sacrificed this much already, and there is no point in wasting that sacrifice. So, we sacrifice a little more

and keep going in this way as well. It is difficult; it requires many sacrifices. But there will come a time when we will have completed it and reached a destination, when we will have achieved some of our goals. In the end, it will work out. Let's keep going! (Isabela).

We understand that three main actors are involved in the feasible novelty experienced by these individuals, which, for them, was pursuing a master's degree: the PPGEduc, the school system, and the students and their families themselves. Dreams are nurtured within a community. Alves (2003, p. 9, our translation) reflects on this communal and collective dimension of dreaming:

This is one of the missions of education: to form a people. In other words, to help people dream common dreams so that, together, they can build. Schools should be spaces where students and teachers dream and share their dreams, because without common dreams there is no people, and without a people it is impossible to build a nation. If I dream of a country with crystal-clear waters and preserved nature, my personal dream will be useless if there are not many others dreaming the same dream. Otherwise, the forests will be destroyed and the waters polluted.

Dreaming is also the subject of a work by Gadotti (2003). In examining the phenomena that emerged from the focus-group discussions, we found that the four pillars of education (Delors *et al.*, 2010), together with an additional pillar proposed by Gadotti in *Boniteza de um Sonho*, were part of the educational experience of Basic Education teachers in the Academic Master's Program in Education.

The master's students learned to be by recognizing themselves as subjects and overcoming objectification, becoming individuals who humanize themselves and the contexts in which they are situated. They learned to know, or learned how to learn, by conducting scientific inquiries for a wide range of productions, deconstructing previous understandings, sharpening their curiosity, asking questions, and transforming themselves. They learned to do by using digital technologies, developing their research, writing texts, publishing them, coordinating events, and disciplining themselves to participate in online meetings. They learned to live together by exchanging knowledge, welcoming and being welcomed by the PPGEduc community, engaging in peer review and reviewing the work of colleagues, communicating, participating collaboratively, experiencing qualification examinations and defenses, and interacting during advisory meetings and seminars.

As discussed above, Gadotti (2003, p. 41, our translation) adds a fifth pillar to these four: learning to “‘think’ requires the integration of teaching, research, and community

engagement.” The author introduces into the four pillars the figure of the teacher-researcher, identities that, we reiterate, cannot be separated. What was the educational trajectory of Basic Education teachers in the Master's Program in Education if not the constitution of this fifth pillar introduced by Gadotti? Are these professionals not now better prepared to take on any challenge within the field of Education?

They enter the master's program as Basic Education teachers and become teacher-researchers, holders of a master's degree in Education, and are even more challenged to educate human beings “for the good of humanity” (Nóvoa, 2015, p. 15, our translation).

Going beyond the theories that underpin this investigation, we propose that, in addition to the five pillars previously mentioned and examined here, a sixth pillar be incorporated into the meanings that an Academic Master's in Education may assume in the training of Basic Education teachers: learning to dream. Every construction is first born in dreams and imagination, becoming tangible through creativity—including the constructions within the very field we value so highly: Education. The Master's program was a realized dream for the participants in this study, and it, in turn, generated new dreams within them.

Overall, this investigation established and strengthened dialogue with contemporary scientific production on *stricto sensu* postgraduate studies in Basic Education. While studies such as those by Forti (2019) and Medeiros, Santos, and Pinho (2018) emphasize extrinsic motivations for entering a Master's program—such as salary advancement, better positions, and the resolution of practical classroom issues—our findings converge with what Gervásio (2019) classifies as “personal investment” and “human development.” We observed that the Master's program operates as a catalyst for humanization, in which the pursuit of scientific knowledge is not limited to its immediate classroom applicability—as discussed by Silveira (2012)—but extends to the reconstruction of teachers' subjectivity in the face of the pressures of a market-driven logic that tends to reduce teachers to mere executors.

Furthermore, by proposing “learning to dream” as a formative pillar, we move beyond the analytical categories of Oliveira and Fontoura (2021), who primarily identify the constitution of the teacher-researcher identity as centered on the problematization of one's own history. Our interlocutors demonstrate that this academic identity is grounded in intersubjectivity and affect, corroborating the warning by Pinto *et al.* (2021) regarding the ways in which the bureaucratic rigidity of ethical models may suffocate the dialogical dimension of research in the Humanities. Thus, this study reinforces Nóvoa's (2009) thesis that teacher

education must be built “within the profession,” while adding that this construction requires a safe space for utopia and collective imagination.

Final considerations

The participants in this study were inclined to see themselves as subjects and to treat others (including their students) as subjects, rejecting the objectification of human beings. It is possible that a large proportion of those who pursue a Master’s degree share this profile, since it is a program in which individuals are expected to exercise agency. In any case, the Academic Master’s in Education brings together subjects within a community that fosters humanization. In a world transformed by communication—one that both expresses and influences decisions—this community further strengthens its subjectivity by appropriating the tools of scientific dissemination, that is, by engaging in research and sharing its results.

Within a collective setting, individuals begin to construct viable unprecedented possibilities. Research and science are only possible through collaboration, and this collaboration is global, as Master’s students are immersed in a digital culture.

Through systematization, some answers were reached for the research problem: what meanings can an Academic Master’s in Education (MAE) have in the training of Basic Education teachers? The results indicate that an MAE: strengthens the constitution of the dual identity of teacher-researcher in its participants; enhances professional authority among Basic Education teachers, contributing to peer formation and greater assertiveness in pedagogical practice, thereby increasing their sense of social relevance; fosters integration between theory and practice and between school and university; opens space for the deconstruction of opinions, prejudices, and stereotypes, among other non-scientific forms of knowledge, while also stimulating curiosity; enables the creation of research groups or investigative communities united in favor of Education to construct viable unprecedented possibilities—shared dreams; promotes learning about digital culture, including digital literacy; and enhances six educational pillars in teachers: learning to be, learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to think, and learning to dream.

Although this study provides valuable insights into the meanings of postgraduate education, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations inherent in its scope. The analysis focused on a specific case study involving nine participants from a single cohort of a

Postgraduate Program at a community university, whose experiences were shaped by the exceptional context of in-person digital instruction during the pandemic. As a qualitative and exploratory phenomenological investigation, the findings reflect the subjectivities of this particular group and therefore would require broader data triangulation to be effectively validated and deepened in other contexts.

Moreover, this study has the potential for expansion and may serve as a foundation for further research in different settings, including those marked by restricted or limited access to additional training, where financial and time constraints are even more restrictive. The proposal of the sixth pillar—learning to dream—opens a pathway for future interdisciplinary studies linking teacher education with psychology, philosophy, and political science, enabling an understanding of how the desire for transformation can be fostered across different educational levels and training modalities.

Therefore, through this article, we highlight the need for more education professionals to have access, support, and incentives to pursue an MAE. It is expected that they may experience this academic journey with commitment and engagement, contributing to new experiences, research, and learning in the education of teachers.

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