

AN INVESTIGATION CONCERNING FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE INDISPOSITION AND WELL- BEING OF PROFESSORS WHO WORK WITH DE

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F – Research and Assessment

3 - University Education

B- Description of the Process in Progress

1- Scientific Investigation

Abstract: This text is related to the research project "An investigation concerning factors that contribute to indisposition and well-being of teachers who work with DE", presented to the Post Graduation Course Coordination at PUC-ID as a doctorate thesis. The investigation scenery is the Course of Pedagogy offered to catarinenses teachers of Young Learners Education on distance learning modality, by the University of the State of Santa Catarina-UDESC, in the period 1999 -2007.

The research guiding question intends to recognize well-being and indisposition educational factors, starting from the research "corpus" analysis which is constituted of texts elaborated by subjects and professors of the referred course. Its objective is to identify, starting from teachers' reports, if the conflicts and tensions that interfere on teachers' "animus" provoking educational indisposition happen in a smaller degree or they do not exist on DE teaching, in other words, if DE teaching gives more satisfaction and well-being to the professors than in-attendance teaching. Discursive textual analysis is the methodological reference. The study includes a sample of 12 professors and it focuses significant aspects about teachers' formation in order to work at DE education.

Key words: Distance Teaching, DE teaching, professional and personal life, teacher importance, teacher well-being an indisposition.

1 - Introduction

Lately, the teacher as a person has become a significant theme of researches that focus on the interrelation between his personal and professional life. It is defined as research objects: personal characteristics, professional experiences, life histories, construction of identities and others.

Interference recognition of personal dimension in professional life has, therefore, enlarged the studies and researches on the topic in many countries. In Brazil, the interest on it is very recent. Scanty studies and researches accomplished in our country have been concentrated on Primary and High School teachers. Studies on university professors' personal dimension are rare. And, apparently, there are no researches related to professors acting in higher education distance teaching.

That is comprehensible, partly, since the approval of LDB-law 9.394-96, Distance Education-DE has been officially recognized in our country, and even so, without a lot of acceptance on behalf of the academic community, because, a great number of educators have been (and still are) resisting that education modality. Some of them do not believe in the possibilities of DE assuring a quality teaching, others, do not want to change.

The whole demand for education will only be possible to meet if public departments invest seriously on in-attendance educational institutions, above all at universities, and if they create new educational modalities, like DE. But, there are those who have no doubts about DE possibilities offering quality education for students, since, implantation/implementation of that modality specificities are not going to be ignored and, excessively, teachers' preparation along with their feelings and context of their trajectories as human beings and professionals.

I understand that such accustomed teachers to conventional methods, to a traditional educational practice, before an innovative proposal of education may find in DE a space of agreeable work, creative, as well as they can live an experience of educational indisposition. In other words, they might find in DE the same difficulties, anxieties, tensions, conflicts, just as it happens at in-attendance education.

I believe that, since DE is expanding very quickly in Brazil, we need to take into consideration how professors are feeling in the exercise of that educational function, in order to detect chronic problems like the ones that happen in-attendance teaching.

As an educator acting in teachers' formation for young learners and having participated ,recently, of an experience in a course for teachers' formation in relation to those teaching levels, on distance modality, I try to look for answers to that concern, in the sense of identifying satisfaction or dissatisfaction from teachers that worked in that referred course.

I had the opportunity to verify that most of the teachers manifested, permanently, a state of well being and personal and professional satisfaction,

and that just a small number of them demonstrated indisposition and dissatisfaction at work, from where, the reason of understanding the phenomenon of teachers' well-being/indisposition and their decisive factors.

Before the facts, a question for the research: Which are the factors that contributed in Pedagogy course Professors on distance modality (DE) to manifest "well-being" or "indisposition" sensations?

Thus, the research had as general objective to identify, starting from teachers' reports at the Pedagogy Course in Distance Learning Modality, if conflicts and tensions that interfere in their "disposition" provoking professional dissatisfaction, in other words, educational indisposition, happen in smaller degree or they do not exist on DE teaching. That is to say, if DE teaching gives more satisfaction and well being to the professors than in-attendance teaching.

It was such an intense experience to me and, I believe, teachers' great majority that I look for, in the present work, to apprehend this context that left its mark on us, and I think it needs to be understood and explained by the people who participated in it. Because, it meant the professionals' fight that believe in educational possibilities of DE and also experienced those possibilities with the passion and commitment of educators.

I intend with this study, unlike researches on educational profession that have prioritized educational indisposition approach, to point not only the profession inclinations, but also emphasize well-being, personal and professional satisfaction by showing positive aspects from educational work on DE, because I understand it is necessary ,in the current moment, to form a more positive vision of the teacher.

The current research is justified due to the topic present time, excessively, when we witness a vertiginous expansion of DE in our country. The relevance of the project lives, also, in the attempt to look for theoretical-methodological elements that can collaborate to a larger understanding of DE and teaching practice in that educational modality, contributing this way to the revision of policies on educational formation.

I think that, by registering factors which influence DE professors' well-being, they might also serve as reflection and contribution for a more delightful in-attendance teaching. I believe all contribution based on research may collaborate to create a more effective action, in any educational modality, in any teaching level and, certainly, it will provide a valid social feedback.

Finally, the research has no intention of draining the theme due to its complexity. However, it reclaims the hope to contribute for other researchers become equally interested in the subject, to multiply the voices that believe it is possible to create new learning spaces where it will prevail pleasure and well-being at work, just as I believe this could be possible not only at DE but also in-attendance education.

2 – Well being/Indisposition at Teaching.

In order to accomplish the research about well being/Indisposition, I ruled myself in the studies developed by educators Esteve (1987) and Jesus (1998), respectively, from Spain and Portugal who are developing works on the theme in those countries being recognized at several countries of Europe and also in Brazil, as researchers contributing to a larger understanding of that preoccupying and characteristic phenomenon of our time.

I also looked for theoretical references in the studies and researches accomplished in Brazil by educators Mosquera and Stobäus (2005), of the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio Grande do Sul State-PUCRS, who have dedicated to study the topic along with other teachers from that University and others in the referred State. Also, the studies of Lipp (2002), Bianchetti and Machado (2006) related to the Post Graduation Professors are references in the present work.

Given the extension of the topic: educational indisposition/well-being, in this text, I just try to focus on **Educational Indisposition**.

"Educational indisposition" is a phenomenon that has installed in the teachers and worries to all those that accompany and look for solutions to educational improvement. It is a phenomenon of our time verified in teachers of several countries around Europe and the world, including Brazil.

For Jesus (2007, p.7), portuguese educator, educational indisposition is a problem that affects many teachers with negative implications, especially on teaching quality, and it is necessary to investigate in order to find possibilities that contribute for its prevention and resolution to favor educational well-being.

In his conception, educational indisposition is the result of professional dissatisfaction, stress, absenteeism, reduced pledge at work, desire of educational profession abandonment, which may turn into situations of larger gravity in states of exhaustion and depression, and it is present in larger degrees of educational professionals than those who exercise other professions.

Esteve (1994), spanish educator that also worries about teachers' situation, detaches indisposition as a phenomenon generated by teacher's unpreparedness to face changes that demand a new professional posture, a different learning and teaching process understanding. It is not an individual problem, but social and collective that affects all the professors. This author remarks that teachers' work change radically, however, they do not change the main components which would allow them to restore their lost balance, such as work conditions and initial formation programs. They continue attached to an unaffected system that prepares teachers for an education type which stopped existing.

Among the initiating factors on teaching "indisposition", Esteve (1987) highlights: different concerns from those about the teaching act, contestations and contradictions on their roles before a society in transformation that demands new postures from teachers; lack of consensus on how a teacher should be; depreciation of teacher's image on behalf of the society, manifested by lack of support to the category and low wages, inferior to other professionals' status with the same graduation level. Those problems along with impoverished work conditions, affect teachers' efficiency, their self-image and self-esteem, their motivation to work, generating tensions associated to negative feelings and emotions. In short, they provoke indisposition and professional dissatisfaction. Studies accomplished in Brazil on teachers' educational indisposition that act in-attendance education, like the elaborated by Mosquera and Stobäus (2005), Lipp (2002) Bianchetti and Machado (2006), tell about brazilian teachers' suffering which is expressed in high levels of indisposition, physical and mental health problems.

According to Mosquera and Stobäus, personal background is narrowly united to professional life history and both feed to each other. Then, those authors emphasized the importance of knowing teachers' feelings, longings, expectations and needs better. Studies and researches from those authors call the attention for the importance of a healthy personality development to pedagogic studies. They point out the need to understand how feelings are manifested and how they influence our daily life and, mainly, teachers' lives.

For Mosquera and Stobäus (1996, p.141), "educational indisposition is a social disease that provokes personal disease, caused by lack of support from society to teachers, not only in the area of teaching objectives, but also in material compensations and recognition of the status attributed to them". The research accomplished by Stobäus, Mosquera, Missel and Santos (2005, p. 356) with higher education professors from three institutions of Rio Grande do Sul State / Brazil: Papal Catholic University-PUCRS, institution of professional hallmark, Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul-UFRGS, and the University of Santa Cruz do Sul, community institution UNISC, selected by the following criterion "be the teacher of future teachers", in other words, didacticism professors in undergraduation courses. It presented, among preliminary results, teachers' fear feelings about being substituted in the educational function by the machines. A concern that, at a certain point, is justified given the professors social disrepute before stimulating and rich educational technological resources available today that turn the access to knowledge and information more and more easy.

The research accomplished by Bianchetti and Machado (2006), with professors-researchers in Brazil, entitled "Productivity Hostages on Knowledge Production, Researchers Health and Post Graduation Work Intensification", shows us that new production requirements implemented by Capes, starting from the last decade of the XX century, are affecting those professionals' health. The increase on brazilian scientific productions made the country appear in

international rankings as knowledge generator, but at the expense of an enormous emotional wear and tear from the people involved.

The policy "more production in less time" adopted by CAPES, they confirm, "has implicated in the prolongation and intensification of advisors/researchers working day, it turned them into slaves of a great invisible boss: the market economy, the flexploration" (Bourdieu 1998), and it "creates complicity among equals, identified in a type of collective voluntary servitude (La Boétie 1986).

Those researchers conclude that "the profession is configuring as of high risk for physical and mental health and turning dangerously permeable the borders between private and professional life."(Bianchetti and Machado, 2006, p.8). Also Lipp (2002), when studying post graduation professors' stress, has verified among stress sources modernization of technology and excessive demands for teacher's productivity.

Lipp (2002) remarks modernization of technology is a present stressor in the life of almost all post graduation professors. Very capable and intelligent teachers, still struggle with great difficulty with computers, data shows and Internet. She characterizes it as techno-stress, also called high tech stress, in other words, stress generated by technological progress.

Besides, she observes that teachers are submitted to demands from post graduation programs in terms of presentations in Congresses, knowledge popularization to the layman, patents development, etc., but they also need high productivity in terms of scientific articles publications. These demands are considered excessive by teachers, mainly in relation to the more experienced researching professors who manage advanced and long time research projects. Those projects frequently last three or four years, but the professor is pressed to publish several articles a year, which means more time, attention and professor-researcher's commitments in their daily lives. Furthermore, they are also concerned with overseas publishing obligations.

As we can see, professors in-attendance university teaching, as it also happens to young learners' teachers, are before series of difficulties in their professional lives that need to be faced, therefore, they are generating educational indisposition.

These problems are caused by social change, which forces teachers to vary their roles in the teaching process. Many of them without knowing how to get adapted and educational administrations are not worried on creating adaptation strategies, especially on teacher's formation programs that continue, in most cases, dissociated from social reality.

Many of the solutions are out of teachers' reach; they are social problems that request social answers (Esteve, 1987). Lack of support, critics to the teacher, and educational formation subvalorization affect directly the professors' action generate, indisputably, tensions associated to negative feelings and emotions

that constitute the empiric base of educational indisposition. Those changing factors, characterized by Esteve, (1987) are considered of "first order."

Beyond those factors, Esteve (1987) points out "second order" ones. These refer to the environmental conditions and context where teaching is exercised. These factors interfere in an indirect way; they affect educational effectiveness when promoting a decrease of teachers' motivation in their jobs, their implication and also their effort. They generate disorder and impotence feelings on teachers, once they are out of the ray of action from professors' individual intervention.

Factors of first and second order, pointed by Esteve (1987) were also found among brazilian teachers, according to the researches we already mentioned in the present text. We still need to know if those factors are also present among distance teaching professors and, in what way, they are affecting personally and professionally to them.

3 - Methodology

The present research is introduced in the interpretative paradigm, once its basic objective is to understand the sense and meaning of educational practice for teachers that acted in the Course of Pedagogy on Distance Learning Modality. It tries to understand educational work in the referred Course, starting from factors identification that contributed to well being/indisposition, satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the subjects.

As analysis methodology, it adopts Discursive Textual Analysis as analytical tool, based on the productions of Bardin (1977) and Moraes (2007). In those authors' perspective, Discursive Textual Analysis is articulated in three moments: description, in which text characteristics stand out; interpretation, that corresponds to the granted significance form those characteristics and inference, which allows passing in an explicit and controlled way, from description and interpretation.

Therefore, data collection and analysis, in agreement with Moraes (2007), proceeds the following stages: **a) Research corpus organization**. It will be constituted **starting from teachers' depositions** and it will be organized so that its manipulation will be facilitated. **b) Definition of sense units**. For that, texts deconstruction (unitarization) begins, standing out their constituent elements. **c) Categories Definition**. It will be used the mixed analysis process, that is, "priori" and "posteriori" (emerging) categories. **d) Metatext Production**. Explanation of understandings and initial constructions. **e) Final text production** (Theorization).

4 - Subjects of the Research – It participated in that study 12 (twelve) teachers, whose ages varied from 33 to 64 years old, 4 (four) males, 8 (eight) females, 2 (two) singles, 7 (seven) married and 3 (three) divorced ones.

Regarding the academic diplomas, to the time they were DE professors at UDESC, 1 (one) professor had a Doctorate Degree in Education; 2 (two) had Master's Degrees in History; 2 (two) had Master's Degrees in Philosophy; 1 (one) had a Master's Degree in Sociolinguistics; 2 (two) had Master's Degrees in Psychology and 1 (one) had a Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics. In the level of Specialization there were 3 (three) professors: 1 (one) in Education, 1 (one) in Physical Education and 1 (one) in Psychopedagogy. The time of performance on Higher Education in-attendance Teaching varied from non experience to 25 (twenty-five) year experience, therefore, out of the 12 (twelve) professors, only 1 (one) had not taught at all in Higher Education. All of them had never worked with Distance Education. So, Udesc Pedagogy Course has been their first experience.

5- Preliminary Results

Data I present is, soon afterwards, preliminary one, since I have just concluded data collection and the research is in the Unitarization phase, according to the adopted analysis methodology.

In an attempt of synthesis from interviews results, I detach some of the teachers' comments.

When the professors were questioned on sense and meaning of collective and cooperative work in DE, the 12 teachers' answers rotated around the importance of personal and professional growth, how much collective and cooperative work helped them to grow up professionally. "I learned a lot with other teachers, students and technicians"; "I Grew up through this perspective"; "It meant a lot to my practice enrichment", " the paradigm break, since in traditional in-attendance model the professor works in isolated and individual ways", "I learned how to work with the differences"; "It meant the formation of a new conscience"; "a quality jump in my formation", "learning under all of the aspects"; "work in a team, think in a team, write in a team, give classes in a team composed a set of factors that made me negotiate the whole time, theoretical and epistemological positionings, it challenged me to build other forms of working with human beings and it made me more mature in the sense of learning how to join ideas and not people."

When they speak about **emotions and experienced feelings as DE professors**, they express: on the one hand, feelings of happiness, pleasure, satisfaction, pride, professional valorization, group spirit, respect, solidarity, admiration, and on the other hand, sadness, sorrow, discouragement, frustration, indignation, rage. Happiness when they realize "students' interest and their fantastic progress", "for being contributing to the teachers' growth", "by feeling the students' gratitude for the unique opportunity they were experiencing in their lives", "*happiness and pride every time a new material was*

produced and printed". "Pride when arriving in the cities and seeing everybody's high self-esteem due to the University; "satisfaction by working in a new and developing project", "noticing the social importance of a project that was accomplishing the dream of thousands of people"; "sadness for leaving CEAD\UDESC in the end of the contract", "for dismantling the project due to problems of political order in the Institution; "indignation with the new manager, admitted politically, that questioned CEAD professionals' competence without knowing about DE and the work we were developing"; "impotence feeling, rage, when witnessing the Course being extinguished due to the support of political issues".

Along with those feelings there were subjects that bothered the professors, as "lack of future perspectives from DEC due to political distress, which left aside collective interests to serve personal interests of a few"; "lack of a policy for an education truly inclusive", "institutional power collision, administration incompetence; professors' stigma in relation to the process and, in spite of that, they surrender to it for economical reasons; *many students' conception it is not necessary to study in that modality*"; "*competitiveness between colleagues and lack of pledge demonstrated by some professionals in relation to the specificity of this modality*". When they comment on **teaching significant facts or moments** in the Pedagogy Course that provoked professional satisfaction, they say: "moments you witnessed in-attendance classes with the students were always quite significant due to the fact of exchanging experiences, verification from students' interest on the Course, reevaluation of pedagogic resources", "all of the classes I taught and videoconferences I performed provided a lot of professional satisfaction", "studies in team", "*meetings with tutors and students, debates, demonstrated satisfaction when a production was concluded*"; "*forums where students' experiences reports were presented in the extension area*", "*great incentive on behalf of the coordinations - of DEC and the Course-for the professors to accomplish researches, publish them and participate on events in the area*", "*verifying the writing ability evolution in students' tests, "students development and learning*"; "*interdisciplinary among different teams*"; "*students' excited report about their pedagogic practice transformation*", "*about acquired experiences*"; "*having witnessed the evolution on students knowledge construction*", "*working space and trust I was given, the opportunity to exercise creativity, access to new technologies of information and communication and exchanges accomplished among people with similar enthusiasm and credibility.*"

Significant moments or facts that determined professors' dissatisfaction are also explained: "the moment of the institution intervention, moment of no clear rules, uncertainty, demotivation, threats"; "political-party interference"; "groundless critics about the institution, coming from in-attendance teaching department", lack of professionalism from some colleagues"; "lack of professionals' commitment with decision making power in relation to DE; DEC disassemble and deactivation of the Course; substitution of people in charge from key positions by people without knowledge, qualification and commitment with the project.

6- Final Considerations

Investigating the existence of factors that provoke indisposition in the professors at the Pedagogy Course in Distance Learning Modality makes possible to know, in a deeper way, feelings which permeate DE teaching. It also opens spaces so that new researches may be accomplished with results that might constitute subsidies in order to define better that teaching modality.

When I was developing the present research, my intention was to verify what factors initiate educational well being/indisposition, having as a study field the Pedagogy Course on Distance Modality developed by UDESC, a pioneer Public University in the State of Santa Catarina about offering a bachelor's degree course in Distance Learning.

Initial analysis from subjects' speeches allows me to conclude that DE work grew up amid moments of well-being and professional satisfaction and moments of indisposition and professional dissatisfaction. A first moment marked by well-being and professional satisfaction, and a second one of indisposition and professional dissatisfaction, indicated by political problems that disrupted the institution day by day with disastrous consequences for the Course and Professors.

Professional growth, respect, personal and professional valorization, "building together", working collectively and cooperatively, trying a new dialogue form, interaction, constant teaching/learning, students' motivation, opportunity for teacher's continuous training, group spirit, respect, solidarity, admiration, interaction with students from different and singular cultures, significant moments you witness along with students and tutors, interest perception and students' progress, constitution perception as an DE professor are feelings manifested by teachers indicating pleasure, happiness, teachers' satisfaction with Distance Education that characterizes the first moment.

Lack of Ead policies and distruption, which was provoked by political interference of a whole pedagogic work built collectively, are pointed out as subjects that bothered Ead professors, originating teaching indisposition and marking the second moment.

As we can see, DE teaching propitiates by itself professional well-being, since it is not affected by external factors, excessively, those who do not believe in it and the ones that interfere politically with obscure objectives.

This way, I understand DE is an educational modality that provides, naturally, well-being, personal and professional satisfaction to those educators who understand teaching as a process of collective and cooperative knowledge construction, sharing ideas and feelings with others along with creative and mutual accomplishments. That makes possible learn how to become interactive, participative and connective in the professional and personal life.

DE teaching involves dimensions of "knowing", "learning" and "living together". Dimensions that get conjugated in order to create and establish an atmosphere of harmonious relationships and well-being, maintaining the professor involved and motivated to seek for his personal and professional improvement.

Summarizing, data collected here allow us to say DE provides well-being and professional satisfaction.

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