

DOSSIER*Teaching practices of undergraduate teacher trainers***Teacher in formation: perceptions of teacher educators about their role in a Teacher Education Program in Ceará, Brazil*****Docência em formação: percepções de professores/as formadores/as sobre seu papel em um curso de licenciatura em Letras no Ceará*****Elcimar Simão Martins^a**
elcimar@unilab.edu.br**Isabela David de Lima Damasceno^b**
isabela.david@uece.br**Elisangela André da Silva Costa^c**
elisangelaandre@unilab.edu.br**ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to reflect on the role of teacher educators in the initial training of future teachers, based on the perceptions of faculty members working in a Licentiate Degree Program in Letters located in the countryside of Ceará, Brazil. With a qualitative approach and exploratory-descriptive objectives, the study involved nine participants and used an online questionnaire as the data collection tool. The questions were designed to outline the participants' professional profiles and to encourage reflection on their role as teacher educators. Although the participants expressed predominantly critical views, it is not possible, based solely on their statements, to affirm that they have fully incorporated a pedagogical practice consistent with this perspective. The data analysis reveals both movements of critique and attempts to overcome traditional models, as well as the persistence of content-centered academic training practices still present in licentiate programs.

Keywords: Teacher Education. Initial Teacher Training. Teacher Educator. Teaching Profession.

RESUMO

Este trabalho teve como objetivo refletir sobre o papel de professores/as formadores/as de um curso de licenciatura em Letras na formação inicial de futuros docentes, a partir das percepções de docentes que atuam em um curso de Letras, localizado no interior do estado do Ceará. Com abordagem qualitativa e objetivo exploratório-descritivo, o estudo contou com a participação de nove docentes e utilizou, como técnica de aproximação com a realidade, um questionário com perguntas destinadas a traçar o perfil profissiográfico

^a PhD in Education, Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC); Professor, Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB), Redenção, Ceará, Brazil.

^b PhD candidate in Education, Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UECE); Professor, Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UECE), Iguatu, Ceará, Brazil.

^c PhD in Education, Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC); Professor, Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB), Redenção, Ceará, Brazil.

dos/as participantes e a convidá-los/as a refletir sobre sua atuação. Apesar do discurso majoritariamente crítico dos/as docentes, não é possível, com base apenas nos relatos apresentados, afirmar que tenham incorporado plenamente uma prática pedagógica coerente com essa visão. A análise dos dados revela tanto movimentos de crítica e superação de modelos tradicionalistas quanto a permanência de marcas da formação universitária centrada em conteúdos, que ainda se fazem presentes nos cursos de licenciatura.

Palavras-chave: Formação de Professores. Formação Inicial de Professores. Professor Formador. Profissão Docente.

Introduction

Despite the robust and consistent theoretical framework on teacher education, the gap between academic advances and what is observed in the reality of teachers and schools is widening and becoming increasingly evident, together with a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction regarding the teaching profession. An article published on the G1 website in September 2022 (Brasil, 2022) presents data from a study conducted by the Sindicato das Entidades Mantenedoras de Estabelecimentos de Ensino Superior no Estado de São Paulo (Union of Higher Education Institutions in the State of São Paulo – SEMESP), which warns of the risk of a shortage of teachers in Brazilian basic education in less than two decades. The study, which used data from the 2020 Censo da Educação Superior (Higher Education Census) released by INEP, points out, among the causes for the shortage of teachers, factors such as the early abandonment of the profession due to low salaries and poor working conditions, as well as young people's lack of interest in teacher education programs.

The Censo da Educação Superior (Higher Education Census) 2023 (Brasil, 2024) in turn reveals that although the total number of graduates from undergraduate programs has increased, between 2022 and 2023 there was a 9.7% drop in graduates from teacher education programs (Brasil, 2024, p. 26). A drop of almost 10% in just one year is striking and reinforces the need to develop public policies aimed at strengthening and valuing the teaching profession, as well as the need for a better understanding of the realities of teacher education programs.

The precariousness of teachers' living and working conditions and neoliberal discourses, which undermine and devalue teaching as a profession (Fusari; Almeida; Pimenta, 2023), are part of the scenario faced daily not only by public basic education teachers but also by teacher educators in higher education. While we must resist the interference of large corporations in education, which contribute to the weakening of our profession, it is also necessary to recognize the urgency of transformations in the educational field and, consequently, in teacher education. Within this broad field, our study focuses particularly on the initial stage of teacher education, since, as Nóvoa (2017, p. 1110, our translation) explains, "perhaps there is no better way to assess the state of a profession than to analyze how it takes care of the training of its future professionals".

Thinking and acting towards a new perspective for the initial stage of teacher education requires reflecting on the role of teacher educators in licentiate degree Programs in Letters, being aware that they are figures who exert a decisive influence on the lives and educational paths of future

teachers (André; Almeida, 2017). The special interest in the initial stage stems from the personal concerns of the first author of this study, based on the contradictions present in her experience as a teacher educator in a licentiate degree program in Letters at a public university in the countryside of Ceará, Brazil. The study we present here touches on the theme of her ongoing doctoral research, which focuses on the initial training of English teachers from the perspective of teacher educators.

Starting from a problematized observation of reality, as is characteristic of qualitative studies (Creswell, 2007; 2010; Sampieri; Collado; Lucio, 2013), we are guided by the following research question: “What do teacher educators in a licentiate degree program in Letters think about their role in the initial training of future teachers?” To answer this question, it also seemed relevant to us to learn about these teacher educators’ professional profiles. We want to understand how their initial training, time of experience, research activities, and personal and collective paths have shaped them into the educators they are today, and what the main challenges are in their professional practice. Therefore, as a secondary question, we ask: “What is the professional profile of the teachers in the investigated licentiate degree program in Letters?”.

Based on these questions, our general objective was to reflect on the role of teacher educators in a licentiate degree program in Letters in the initial training of future teachers and to understand the professional profiles of the participating educators. We hope that a greater local understanding will help other professionals identify with the findings and generate insights into their own contexts and needs, shedding light on possible next steps towards the transformation we so desire in education, which finds in its initial stage a key moment.

We opted for an exploratory-descriptive approach due to our interest in understanding teacher educators’ conceptions of their role in the initial training of future teachers. By listening to the participants, we sought to interpret their accounts. The analysis aimed to respect the uniqueness of the reported experiences, highlighting their voices in the tensions and challenges of teacher education, supported by theory.

To achieve this objective, we used an online questionnaire with open-ended questions as the data production technique. This allowed us to initially capture the professional profiles of our participants and, subsequently, the subjective aspects of their experiences as teacher educators.

Revisiting trends and paradigms in teacher education

When popular education began to be institutionally demanded after the French Revolution, in the 19th century, teacher education became a social issue (Saviani, 2009). In Brazil, this debate developed as government policies established the *Escolas Normais* (Normal Schools) as the main institutions responsible for teacher education, and it continues to this day, still marked by tensions, instabilities, and disputes.

One of the sensitive discussions that permeates the field of teacher education is the place that theory and practice occupy in training spaces, historically positioned in a dichotomous manner.

As early as the 1940s, during the organization and implementation of licentiate degree programs in letters and pedagogy programs, this was already a delicate issue. The curricula of licentiate programs favored cultural-cognitive content to the detriment of pedagogical-didactic studies, which became a mere appendix and formal requirement for completing these programs and obtaining professional registration, without being given due importance (Saviani, 2009).

This dualism, which on one side places cultural-cognitive content and on the other pedagogical-didactic content, constitutes, according to the author, models of teacher education. Saviani (2009) explains that, in the first model, teacher education is exhausted in the mastery of specific content in the field to be taught and in the learning of general culture, whereas the second model assumes that teacher education can only be considered complete through pedagogical and didactic preparation. The training institutions have inherited these views and, to this day, to a greater or lesser extent, continue to reproduce and perpetuate them.

Knowing and understanding the different trends in teacher education is an important tool for grasping the current state of the teaching profession, since they reveal conceptions of teaching and learning and inform different views about the roles of teachers and students in the educational process. For this reason, we shall briefly revisit some of these trends and paradigms that are still present today in teacher education processes. It is worth noting that what we call paradigm here is based on the perspective of Popkewitz, Tabachnick, and Zeichner (1979, p. 52), who define it as “[...] a matrix of beliefs and assumptions about the nature and purposes of schooling, teaching, teachers and their education that gives shape to specific forms of practice in teacher education.”

In the traditionalist trends of teacher education, teaching is seen as an art and teachers as artisans. Education, therefore, is established within a logic of knowledge transmission from more experienced teachers (or masters) to their apprentices, who are tasked with observing in order to learn a set of knowledge and routines to reproduce. For Pimenta and Lima (2017, p. 29), “this perspective is linked to a conception of a teacher that does not value their intellectual formation, reducing teaching activity to a practice that is more successful the closer it gets to the observed models” (our translation). From this perspective, we can say that this conception, with a reproductive basis, is also conservative and uncritical, as it is much more a process of mechanical reproduction detached from the reality experienced in schools.

Another criticism of this perspective is its disconnection from the social variables that influence educational processes. If in their training the future teacher assumes a passive role, how can the repertoire of knowledge acquired in the master-apprentice relationship address the dynamics and complexity of school relations? We can assume that “[...] mastery of a repertoire of technical skills of teaching does not guarantee that the novice will be able to make proper judgments about what ought to be done in a particular situation.” (Zeichner, 1983, p. 3).

Despite criticisms of this paradigm, Pimenta and Lima (2017, p. 29) warn that it is still present, for example, when internships become spaces for observation and imitation of models “without undertaking a critical analysis theoretically grounded and legitimized in the social reality in which teaching takes place” (our translation).

With the development of the scientific method in the 19th and 20th centuries, teacher education was also influenced by the idea that the application of science would improve teaching. From this thinking came the paradigm or model of technical rationality, one of the most widespread in the field (Diniz-Pereira, 2014).

In this paradigm, which is also among the traditionalist trends in teacher education, teaching and education take on the status of a problem. Those responsible for devising solutions to these problems would be scientists and researchers, and the teacher's role would be limited to applying scientific knowledge to solve them. In this sense, the teacher is one who masters a framework of techniques developed by those who supposedly hold knowledge, and uses them according to the demands of each situation. Technical rationality thus takes place as a process of instrumental rationality, in which "teachers are defined as 'appliers' of external knowledge and ignored as 'producers' of their own knowledge. Teacher education is essentially practical and instrumental" (Nóvoa, 2022, p. 5).

Unlike the previous paradigm, in technical rationality, training does not take place through observation and repetition, but through application. In both cases, however, knowledge remains external to the subject, and the distance between the teacher and the knowledge that could be produced in their daily practice is accentuated. According to Diniz-Pereira (2014, p. 36), "the World Bank has been one of the most important vehicles for disseminating technical and scientific rationality in educational reforms and more specifically in teacher education worldwide" (our translation).

Result-based management and accountability policies, as well as the endless lists of competencies and skills guided by teacher education directives, strongly present in our country, are portraits of the influence of international organizations on our educational system. As we have seen, grounded in the paradigm of technical rationality, these more recent policies see schools as organizations rather than institutions (Costa *et al.*, 2023) and, consequently, teachers and students have their roles altered in service of the intended results, aiming at a showcase that rarely transparently reflects the different realities and diversities of contexts in our schools.

From the 20th century onwards, trends in teacher education began to emerge that opposed the traditionalist ones, challenging technical rationality as they saw teachers not only as reproducers or appliers of knowledge but as active agents, mobilizers, and builders of the knowledge necessary for the teaching profession. These trends, called modern by Nóvoa (2022), emerged as the *Escolas Normais* were replaced by university programs and as the educational sciences were revived in France and around the world in the 1960s.

Part of this movement is the paradigm of practical rationality, which, as Diniz-Pereira (2014, p. 37) explains, "conceives education as a complex process or an activity modified in light of circumstances, which can only be 'controlled' through wise decisions made by professionals, that is, through their deliberation about practice" (our translation).

Strongly influenced by Schön's studies in the 1980s, this paradigm proposes an epistemology of practice by valuing experience and reflection within experience (Pimenta; Lima, 2017). In this

view, education is conceived as a dynamic activity, which would not allow a rigid systematization of behaviors directed at it or the mere application of knowledge (Diniz- Pereira, 2014). The teacher thus takes on the role of analyst of their own practice, with greater autonomy and professional responsibility. It was during this period that the concepts of reflective teacher and teacher-researcher developed as axes of teacher education.

One criticism of this paradigm is that reflection often does not come from the teachers working in schools, but is limited by the academic gaze, highlighting an influence of technical rationality, as Nóvoa (2022, p. 7) points out: “teacher education takes on a theoretical and university character, which is of great relevance, but has contributed little to strengthening teachers’ autonomy and professional identity” (our translation).

There is also the paradigm of critical rationality, among the trends that challenge technical rationality. While technical rationality views teaching as a problem and its solution as instrumental, and practical rationality takes an interpretative look at educational processes, critical rationality has a political perspective, considering education as a socio-political and historically situated activity, and viewing teachers as a collective (Diniz-Pereira, 2014). In this paradigm, the teacher’s role expands, focusing on the social, historical, economic, and political determinants in which their practice is situated, aiming for emancipatory teaching.

With the critical paradigm, we conclude our revisitation of the trends and paradigms of teacher education. These trends and paradigms, as we mentioned initially, will help us understand the licentiate degree program in letters we focus on in this study.

Considerations on the teaching profession and teacher education

Since Brazil’s redemocratization period, in the late 1980s, Brazilian public schools have been marked by a strong influence of neoliberal policies represented by international organizations such as the *Banco Mundial* (World Bank), *Organização Mundial do Comércio* (World Trade Organization), *Organização para a Cooperação e Desenvolvimento Econômico* (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development – OECD), among others. The representatives of these policies contribute to weakening and shrinking the presence of the State in all spheres of public life, notably in education, “aiming to deepen privatization and increase capital accumulation” (Fusari; Almeida; Pimenta, 2023, p. 39, our translation), opposing the concept of schools as democratic institutions that promote access to knowledge for the most disadvantaged layers of the population, contributing to a movement of social emancipation.

While on the one hand the strong emphasis on result-based management, driven by market logic, produces indicators that lend education a status of development and progress, on the other hand, we witness the growth of discourses and actions that attack teaching, leading it to a process of deprofessionalization, materialized in poor working conditions, exhausting workloads, unsatisfactory financial compensation, bureaucratization, control logics, the return of ideologies of *notório saber*

(acknowledged expertise) and the lack of social recognition of the profession (Saviani, 2011; Nóvoa, 2017).

This entire situation, which increasingly leads to the weakening of schools and the teaching profession, has an impact on teacher education. We must not be swayed by naive views that treat this deterioration as a natural consequence of the changes in social life brought about by modernity. Nóvoa (2017, p. 1110) warns us that “we are facing a movement to dismantle the university-based teacher education system, replacing it with a set of corporate programs that will worsen the already difficult situation of public schools and teachers” (our translation).

One of the ways this dismantling, cited by the author, materializes is through the resurgence of discourses that seek to return teaching to an applicative character through an overvaluation of practice: “in the last two decades, this return has occurred through various means, obviously with a more sophisticated argument than in the past, but always based on the principle that teachers are trained in ‘practice’ or on the ‘school floor’” (Nóvoa, 2022, p. 4, our translation).

Along with this thinking comes the idea that university education is not necessary to become a teacher, and that short-term intensive courses, followed by immersion experiences in classrooms with more experienced teachers, are sufficient for teacher training.

The revival of technicist ideals, such as drawing up extensive lists of teacher competencies, is also a risky way of thinking about teacher education. Underlying these elaborations is the belief that teachers’ knowledge can be delimited and, in general, these lists serve more for “the control and authority over teachers than for their autonomy” (Nóvoa, 2022, p. 8, our translation). There is also a more subtle, but no less harmful, form of degradation of the teaching profession, which occurs through the dilution of the teacher into the figure of the educator, mediator, facilitator, psychologist, parent or any other person who can perform an educational role. On this, Nóvoa (2019, p. 5) warns us that que

[...] in this way, they dilute the principle of teaching as a profession, leading to policies that devalue teacher education and that legitimize themselves through a pragmatic discourse: if we choose people with good knowledge of a given subject, we can easily prepare them to be teachers; if we provide extra pay to teachers whose students achieve good results, teaching will improve; if we have good materials (books, programs, etc.) and good technologies, we will be able to make up for the shortcomings of teachers and their education; and so on (our translation).

In this context of attacks on education and the professionalization of teaching, we can position ourselves in different ways. It is possible to ignore the need for change and defend a conservative stance and the maintenance of schools’ inability to deal with contemporary challenges; it is also possible to take up the arguments of education reformers and embrace privatization trends and the logic of capital in education; and there is also the possibility of recognizing that schools need to go through a profound process of transforming their foundations to build a new identity and new forms of valuing the teaching profession. In this sense, we take our place here in recognizing the need for

deep change in education and emphasize the fundamental role of initial teacher education in this process. For this, it is necessary to acknowledge the reality of the training institutions and their representatives in order to propose new paths.

The process of making teacher education university-based in Brazil, as we saw earlier, led to greater appreciation of cultural-cognitive content at the expense of pedagogical- didactic content. In the case of licentiate degree programs in letters, the prevailing idea is that it is not their role to be concerned with preparation for teaching. From this historical construction, it makes sense to think today that “teacher education curricula have been constituted as an agglomeration of unrelated subjects, without any clarification of their connections with the reality that gave rise to them” (Pimenta; Lima, 2017, p. 26, our translation). In fact, licentiate degree programs in letters are often disguised bachelor’s degrees, with excessive emphasis on disciplinary content. However, it is important to consider that the knowledge required of a teacher is different from that required of a specialist in a given field. André and Almeida (2017, p. 206) explain that “it is the teacher’s mediation between two dimensions – the content knowledge to be taught and the learner – that defines the specificity of teaching work” (our translation). In other words, the teacher’s work consists of becoming a means for access to knowledge, but not only that. In an emancipatory view of education, the knowledge students access needs to be worked on in such a way that it promotes critical thinking and the ability to mobilize to face reality with a view to transformation.

It is not uncommon to hear from student teachers that the programs are excessively theoretical and that the practice they include is insufficient for good training. At the heart of this popular claim is the finding that “the program neither theoretically supports the future professional’s practice nor takes practice as a reference for theoretical grounding. In other words, it lacks both theory and practice” (Pimenta; Lima, 2017, p. 26, our translation).

Thus, we return to the theory vs. practice dilemma, a legacy of an instrumental and applicative view of practice that sets these two dimensions in opposition, a central issue in teacher education programs to this day. From the applicative perspective, practice is emptied and dependent on theoretical knowledge external to it. Distancing themselves from this view, Pimenta and Lima (2017, p. 38) point to praxis as the path towards overcoming this dichotomy, conceiving it as “a theoretical activity that makes it possible to inseparably establish critical knowledge of reality and the setting of political purposes for transformation” ((Pimenta; Lima, 2017, p. 38, our translation).

In praxis, therefore, there is no separation between theory and action, as they are interdependent. Thinking about teacher education from this perspective is a way of overcoming the dichotomy between theory and practice and, consequently, the applicative logic in which licentiate programs are caught.

At the center of the dialogue on initial teacher education and licentiate programs is the figure of the teacher educator, on whom we focus special attention in this study. Before continuing our discussion, we draw attention to the fact that it is not our role to hold them responsible for the success or failure of education, but only to gather means to understand and think about their role

in licentiate degree programs in letters and, from there, to think of ways to act towards renewing teacher education processes. It is necessary to recognize that both parties bear responsibility in educational processes; however, this responsibility does not exist in isolation or independently of historical, political, economic, and social events, since all these factors are equally decisive for the quality of teaching. As Saviani (2011, p. 16) explains,

[...] if educational policies, as a general rule, do not prioritize the provision of adequate conditions for the performance of teaching work, teacher education programs will also develop under unsatisfactory conditions, which will result in equally unsatisfactory training (our translation).

In this research, in which we propose to reflect on the role of teacher educators in licentiate programs, we understand that there will always be tensions operating on institutions and, consequently, on the individuals who work in these spaces, and moreover, we conceive that the entire field of education is marked by contradictions and disputes. A fair view and the possibility of creating new perspectives in teacher education will only arise if all these factors are considered and if proper valuing of the teaching profession is achieved.

Who are the teacher educators? Professional profile

As mentioned earlier, the data collection technique used in the study was based on an online questionnaire applied in June 2023. The questionnaire, with a total of 14 questions divided into two sections, contained in its first part seven questions about the participants' personal data, academic background, and work in the licentiate degree program in Letters (professional data).

The study was conducted with faculty members of a licentiate degree program in letters at a public university located in the interior of Ceará, Brazil. Although the program has only one faculty board, it offers two distinct tracks: Língua Portuguesa (Portuguese Language) and Língua Inglesa (English Language), with a total of 13 professors at the time of the study. One of the faculty members is also one of the researchers; therefore, for practical purposes, we considered 12 potential participants. Of these, nine contributed to the study.

These nine individuals were given fictitious names to preserve their identities. Of the nine faculty members who participated in the study, five are men and four are women. Among them, two work exclusively in the English track, and seven work primarily in the Portuguese track but also teach English, since the curriculum of the program includes Portuguese language courses until the third semester. Their ages range from 28 to 58 years, and their time at the institution varies between 1 year and 2 months and 33 years. The two most recent hires, who are also the youngest at 28 and 34 years old, hold temporary contracts, meaning they are in the process of consolidating their careers and do not yet have a permanent position. One faculty member has 8 years and 7 months at the institution (two of which as a substitute professor), another has 17 years, and the remaining five have more than 20 years of experience in the program.

Regarding their academic background, all hold degrees in licentiate programs. Only one professor reported that his first degree was a bachelor's degree in Journalism but later completed a licentiate degree in Letters. As for their qualifications, most hold doctoral degrees (six); one was pursuing a PhD at the time of the study, one holds a master's degree, and one is a specialist. Among the nine participants, only one (a woman) reported not being engaged in research at the time of the survey.

Table 1: Summary of the Professional Profiles of the Research Participants

Name	Degree	Research	Time at the Program	Employment Type	Initial Education
Daniel	PhD	yes	33 years	Permanent Faculty	Licentiate Degree in Portuguese/French (1984–1988)
Cecília	PhD (postdoctoral research in progress)	yes	30 years	Permanent Faculty	Licentiate Degree in Letters (1989–1992)
Bruno	Master's (pursuing PhD)	yes	26 years	Permanent Faculty	Licentiate Degree in Letters (1990–1995)
Ricardo	PhD (postdoctoral research completed)	yes	25 years	Permanent Faculty	Licentiate Degree in Letters (1992–1996)
Eva	PhD (postdoctoral research completed)	yes	23 years	Permanent Faculty	Licentiate Degree in Letters (1994–1997)
André	PhD	yes	17 years	Permanent Faculty	Bachelor's in Journalism, Licentiate Degree in Letters (2013–2017)
Luiza	PhD	yes	8 years and 7 months	2 years as substitute + 6 years and 7 months as Permanent Faculty	Licentiate Degree in English (2005–2009)
Lúcia	Specialist	no	4 years	Temporary Faculty	Licentiate Degree in Portuguese and its Literatures (2013–2017)
Gabriel	Master's	yes	1 year e 2 months	Prof. Temporário	Licentiate Degree in Portuguese (2008–2014)

Source: Compiled by the authors (2024).

As can be seen in Table 1, six of the twelve professors completed their undergraduate degrees in the 1980s and 1990s. It is therefore possible that the paradigm that most influenced their training was that of technical rationality. Overall, the group is qualified through postgraduate programs and engaged in research. The only participant not conducting research is also the one with the lowest qualification. All have experience as students in licentiate programs, which allows us to infer that they have a longitudinal and comparative perspective on how teacher education has changed over time.

When we observe the relationship between qualifications, time at the institution, and type of contract, we see that the most highly qualified teachers are those who have been at the institution the longest and who hold permanent positions, as expected, since securing a permanent position at public universities generally requires a master's or doctoral degree. The fact that some have

completed or are undertaking postdoctoral studies indicates a continued search for new knowledge and professional development.

The second part of the questionnaire, presented below, sought to explore more subjective aspects related to the role of teacher educators in initial teacher education.

What is the role of teacher educators? The views of faculty in a licentiate program

In an attempt to understand the views of these faculty members on the role of teacher educators in licentiate programs, the second part of the questionnaire first asked about their initial training and how their current work as teacher educators aligns with or differs from it. The aim was to explore perceptions of possible changes or continuities in teacher education paradigms. However, participants answered briefly, making it difficult to identify intersections or divergences between their initial training and current practices. One account, however, stands out:

[...] I feel that my training was marked by contradictions between different conceptions of teaching. Although I was a student in a licentiate program, the courses and methodologies of the professors focused more on the linguistic and literary study of the English language, with very little emphasis on teaching itself. In this sense, I feel that my current teaching still reflects a bit of this contradiction, as I still fall short of the primary commitment of our program, which is to teach how to teach. However, with the help and effort of a colleague in the faculty, I have been improving and expanding my theoretical-practical understanding of English language teaching, and I believe I am gradually overcoming the contradiction of my initial training (Luiza, our translation).

Luiza's account, whose initial training was completed in 2009, reflects how the dichotomy between cognitive-cultural knowledge and pedagogical knowledge (Saviani, 2009) still persists in licentiate programs, with cognitive-cultural knowledge historically privileged. The professor recognizes this gap as a contradiction in her training and adopts a critical stance in acknowledging that her practice still distances itself from what she sees as the primary commitment of licentiate programs: teaching how to teach. She highlights collaboration with colleagues as a means of overcoming this contradiction, reinforcing Nóvoa's (2019, p. 6) point on the importance of collectivity in learning and developing the teaching profession: "it is not possible to learn the teaching profession without the presence, support, and collaboration of other teachers" (our translation).

In addition, Luiza makes explicit the tension between initial training and current practice. By acknowledging that her own training privileged linguistic knowledge to the detriment of teaching, she states that she is in the process of overcoming this gap through dialogue with colleagues and by seeking to broaden her understanding of English language teaching. This movement of critical reflection on her own educational trajectory, driven by collaboration with other educators, is close to the notion of praxis proposed by Pimenta and Lima (2017), understood as the articulation between theory and practice aimed at transformation.

When asked specifically about the role of teacher educators in licentiate programs, the professors focused their responses on two main points: the need to form critical professionals and a concern with aligning their work with the demands of basic education, as we see in the following statements:

The fundamental role of awakening critical awareness in future education professionals (Bruno, our translation).

The teacher educator has the role of forming critical teachers capable of transforming their reality (Cecília, our translation).

The teacher educator has the role of developing critical and reflective thinking about teaching practice. In addition, they should monitor students' competencies, assist with their activities, promote interaction, and enable discussions about the teaching process (Eva, our translation).

Bruno's and Cecília's statements point to an essential element of teacher education: the development of a critical outlook. However, they lack depth and do not address other aspects of initial teacher education, as Eva does. She brings attention to basic education and the need to connect the specific content of each course to teaching. This view begins to move away from the traditionalist paradigms of teacher education, which, as we have seen, focused on applicative models and content transmission, and draws closer to the so-called modern paradigms (Nóvoa, 2022).

Another professor also highlights the articulation between specific content and teaching as a role of the teacher educator and points to the different dimensions of the teacher:

The teacher in licentiate programs should primarily teach how to teach. In addition, they should contribute effectively and actively to the intellectual, cultural, and social formation of students in the program, who are future teachers. In English language programs, in particular, we should also emphasize in-depth linguistic training in English while building with students the various connections between this linguistic and literary content and English language teaching in different classroom settings (Luiza, our translation).

On this, we recall André and Almeida (2017, p. 206), who explain that "it is the teacher's mediation between two dimensions, the content knowledge to be taught and the learner, that defines the specificity of teaching work" (our translation). The professor thus shows an awareness of this role.

We cannot affirm that these professors, in their daily practices, are indeed increasingly bringing universities and schools closer together, but it is encouraging to see that their statements reveal an awareness that licentiate programs are spaces that must prioritize preparation for basic education, with critical reflection as a companion in this process, moving increasingly away from a technical training perspective.

The participants were also asked about the main challenges they currently face as teacher educators. In this regard, two professors, Ricardo and Bruno, pointed to challenges related to

students' training. For them, the deficient basic education of students, their lack of reading habits, and lack of critical vision are the main challenges.

Daniel indicated that his main challenge is the uncertainty he attributes to his role as a teacher educator, revealing a self-critical and self-evaluative stance. For André, the main challenge is preparing students to work in schools and raising their awareness of the need for teachers to engage in lifelong learning. Lúcia spoke about the crucial importance of supervised internships and the challenge she feels in helping students, at those moments, make decisions about the directions of their careers in a "thoughtful, critical, reflective, and responsible" manner (our translation). The other professors' statements converged on a common theme – issues related to the precarization and valuation of teaching work, as the following accounts show:

I feel somewhat limited by my status as a substitute professor at the university. I cannot propose other projects such as Scientific Initiation, nor work in other areas of the university. Moreover, I feel I am treated differently because of my temporary status (Gabriel, our translation).

[...] the precarization of teaching work by the university, including both the overload of activities assigned to us — forcing us to work in administration, teaching, research, and outreach without adequate pay or even proper labor recognition — and the shortage of an adequate number of professors required for a university program (Luiza, our translation).

The devaluation of the teaching profession. That is always the main challenge (Cecília, our translation).

There are many demands and requirements in teacher education. One challenge is helping students believe in teaching and feel valued in their profession (Eva, our translation).

Gabriel draws attention to the limitations he experiences as a temporary professor, mentioning activities he cannot undertake and differences in treatment. The lack of job stability, therefore, directly affects the teacher's autonomy. There are also, as we know, salary inequalities, which fragment the profession and divide colleagues. Regarding these points, we return to Saviani's (2009, p. 153) warning:

[...] teacher education cannot be dissociated from the issue of working conditions in the teaching profession, within which questions of salary and working hours must be addressed. Indeed, precarious working conditions not only neutralize the actions of teachers, even if they are well trained. Such conditions also hinder good training, as they discourage interest in teacher education programs and dedication to studies (our translation).

Addressing these conditions requires a stance of resistance and work to strengthen the profession, which must also be part of teacher education. As Nóvoa (2017; 2019; 2022) points out, knowledge about the profession and the challenges it faces — not only in the classroom but also

in the social contexts that shape the development of our profession — must be present in teacher education programs.

Finally, we asked participants to leave a message for teacher educators regarding their role in the professional preparation of future teachers. The following views stand out:

Professores formadores, sem união, profissionalização, ciência e arte pode ser mais difícil crer em um futuro profissional auspicioso (Daniel)

Professoras e professores, estudem e ensinem para emanciparem-se e emanciparem o outro sobre os conhecimentos intelectuais, sociais, culturais, políticos, além daqueles sobre si e sobre o mundo. Dito isso explorem livremente e em demasia a reflexão crítica, a análise, o letramento, a interdisciplinaridade, e a criatividade. Essa, talvez seja a melhor forma de exercer o nosso papel formador para que assim consigamos formar alunos-professores-pessoa (Luiza).

A missão é árdua, mas sigamos na certeza de que nosso papel é fundamental e decisivo na vida desses futuros educadores. Compartilhando conhecimentos e estimulando a criação de uma visão de mundo crítica e mais transformadora, pautada pelo respeito às diferenças (Bruno).

Daniel's statement brings together key aspects of teacher education discussed throughout this work: the dimension of collectivity, teaching as a profession, the valuing of intellectual and scientific knowledge and of art, and the importance of culture, a crucial element for education. Luiza, in turn, highlights the importance of study for emancipation and the valuing and integration of different types of knowledge that shape our context and reality. She also sees teacher education as a task that is also about forming people – about humanization. Finally, Bruno also points to education as emancipation when he mentions transformation and respect for differences.

Thus, we can infer that these three views share the understanding that teacher education goes far beyond transmitting knowledge, reproducing routines, developing competencies and skills, or teaching a repertoire of technical knowledge. Rather, it is an activity that engages with the world and its need for transformation, with education as a process of humanization and liberation.

Final considerations

The challenges of teacher education in the face of a scenario of profound social transformations brought about by modernity and exacerbated by the growing precarization of teaching work place us before the need to rethink the teaching profession from new perspectives and to train teachers capable of confronting the increasing attacks the profession has been subjected to. In this sense, one of the paths is to focus on initial teacher education programs, especially on teacher educators. From this perspective, the study we present here sought to reflect on the role of teacher educators in a licentiate degree program in Letters at a public university in the interior of Ceará, Brazil.

Despite the predominantly critical discourse presented by the professors, it is not possible, based only on the statements provided, to affirm that the professors have already fully incorporated

pedagogical practices consistent with this vision. As the study itself is limited to listening to the participants' conceptions, teaching practices were not directly observed. This limitation, however, does not invalidate the data but suggests the need for future investigations that might accompany the daily work of the educators and verify the extent to which there is coherence between conceptions and actions.

The absence of explicit references to the articulation between theory and practice, to praxis, or to the problematization of concrete contexts in some of the responses also shows that, although the professors recognize the importance of their formative role, contradictions, gaps, and challenges still exist at the institutional and collective levels, as warned by Saviani (2009) and Nóvoa (2017).

Thus, the analysis of the data reveals both movements of critique and attempts to overcome traditionalist models, as well as marks of university training centered on content, which are still present. Listening to these voices, in all their heterogeneity, offers important clues for understanding the investigated context. As we mentioned earlier, we hope this will help other teacher educators reflect on their own positions as educators and on their understanding of similar contexts, so that teacher education programs will not be merely spaces of disciplinary training, but will act as territories for the production of meaning about teaching and about public schools.

References

ANDRÉ, Marli Eliza Dalmazo; ALMEIDA, Patrícia Cristina Albieri de. A profissionalidade do professor formador das licenciaturas. *Revista Educação*. Campinas, v. 22, n. 2, p. 203-219, 2017.

<https://doi.org/10.24220/2318-0870v22n2a3640>

BRASIL pode enfrentar 'apagão de professores' em 2040, diz pesquisa. *G1*, 22 set. 2022. Educação. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/2022/09/29/brasil-pode-enfrentar-apagao-de-professores-em-2040-diz-pesquisa.ghtml>. Access on: 18 maio 2023.

BRASIL. Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (INEP). *Censo da Educação Superior 2023*. Brasília, DF: INEP, 2024. Available at: https://download.inep.gov.br/educacao_superior/censo_superior/documentos/2023/apresentacao_censo_da_educacao_superior_2023.pdf. Access on: 30 jun. 2025.

COSTA, Elisângela André da Silva; MARTINS, Elcimar Simão; LIMA, Maria Socorro Lucena; CAVALCENTE, Maria Marina Dias. Entre a regulação e a emancipação: avanços e desafios da escola pública cearense. In: MARTINS, Elcimar Simão; COSTA, Elisângela André da Silva; FUSARI, José Cerchi; ALMEIDA, Maria Isabel de; PIMENTA, Selma Garrido (orgs.). *Retratos da escola pública brasileira em tempos neoliberais*. Fortaleza: EdUECE, 2023. p. 53-91.

CRESWELL, John Ward. *Projeto de pesquisa: métodos qualitativo, quantitativo e misto*. Tradução: Luciana de Oliveira da Rocha. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2007.

CRESWELL, Jhon Ward. *Projeto de pesquisa: método qualitativo, quantitativo e misto*. Tradução: Magda Lopes. Porto Alegre: Artmed, 2010.

DINIZ-PEREIRA, Júlio Emílio. Da racionalidade técnica à racionalidade crítica: formação docente e transformação social. *Revista de Educação e Sociedade*, v. 1, n. 1, p. 34-42, 2014. Available at: <https://periodicos.ufms.br/index.php/persdia/article/view/15>. Access on: 18 maio 2023.

FUSARI, José Cerchi; ALMEIDA, Maria Isabel de; PIMENTA, Selma Garrido. A escola pública brasileira em tempos neoliberais: retratos da realidade. In: MARTINS, Elcimar Simão; COSTA, Elisângela André da Silva; FUSARI, José Cerchi; ALMEIDA, Maria Isabel de; PIMENTA, Selma Garrido (orgs.). *Retratos da escola pública brasileira em tempos neoliberais*. Fortaleza: EdUECE, 2023. p. 27-52.

NÓVOA, António. Firmar a posição de professor, afirmar a profissão docente. *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, v. 47, n. 165, p. 1106-1133, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1590/198053144843>

NÓVOA, António. Os professores e a sua formação num tempo de metamorfose da escola.

Educação & Realidade, Porto Alegre, v. 44, n. 3, p. 1-15, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1590/2175-623684910>

NÓVOA, António. Conhecimento profissional docente e a formação de professores. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 27, p. 1-19, 2022. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782022270129>

PIMENTA, Selma Garrido; LIMA, Maria Socorro Lucena Lima. *Estágio e Docência*. 8. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2017.

POPKEWITZ, Thomas; TABACHNICK, Barbara; ZEICHNER, Kenneth. Dulling the senses: Research in teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, Washington, DC, v. 30, p. 52-60, 1979.

SAMPIERI, Roberto Hernandez; COLLADO, Carlos Fernandez; LUCIO, Maria del Pilar Baptista.

Metodologia de Pesquisa. Tradução: Daisy Vaz de Moraes. Porto Alegre: Penso, 2013.

SAVIANI, Dermeval. Formação de professores: aspectos históricos e teóricos do problema no contexto brasileiro. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, Catalão, v. 14, n. 40, p. 143-155, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782009000100012>

SAVIANI, Dermeval. Formação de professores no Brasil: dilemas e perspectivas. *Póiesis Pedagógica*, Catalão, v. 9, n. 1, p. 07-19, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.5216/rpp.v9i1.15667>

ZEICHNER, Kenneth M. Alternative paradigms of teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, Washington, DC, v. 34, p. 3-9, 1983. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248718303400302>

Author Contributions: Author 1 – research conception; methodological guidelines; development of data generation instrument; writing guidelines; Author 2 – research conception and design; development of data generation instrument; data construction and processing; data analysis and interpretation; text writing, rewriting after revision; Author 3 – research conception; methodological guidelines; writing guidelines.

Support or Funding: Not applicable.

Research Data Availability: The entire dataset supporting the results of this study is available upon request from the author Isabela David de Lima Damasceno.

Coordinating Editors - Associate Editors: Márcia de Souza Hobold and Isabel Maria Sabino de Farias; Editor-in-Chief: Angela Scalabrin Coutinho.

Translator: Ester de Lucena Gonçalves.

How to cite this article:

MARTINS, Elcimar Simão; DAMASCENO, Isabela David de Lima; COSTA, Elisangela André da Silva. Teacher in formation: perceptions of teacher educators about their role in a Teacher Education Program in Ceará, Brazil. *Educar em Revista*, Curitiba, v. 41, e96671, 2025. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1984-0411.96671>.

Recebido: 08/26/2024

Aprovado: 07/02/2025

Este é um artigo de acesso aberto distribuído nos termos de licença Creative Commons.

