

O que é pesquisa biográfica e por que este método é importante na formação de professores?

What is biographical research and why is this method important in teachers' and professors' formation?

¿Qué es la investigación biográfica y por qué este método es importante en la formación de profesores?

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Bruna Viedo Kich

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7443-7200>

Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Brasil

E-mail: brunavkich@gmail.com

Adriana Claudia Martins

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1830-577X>

Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, Brasil

E-mail: teacheradrianacm@hotmail.com

Resumo

Apesar de sua emergência na década de 70 no campo educacional e de ser consolidada uma década depois, a pesquisa biográfica é ainda pouco compreendida por alguns pesquisadores e ainda não é completamente aceita por alguns membros da comunidade científica. A explicação mais discutida pelos teóricos está relacionada à perspectiva positivista que predomina nas ciências sociais. Considerando-se isso, a proposta desse artigo é elucidar quais são as bases da pesquisa biográfica, em caráter introdutório, e por que ela é importante na formação docente, apresentando sugestões para futuros estudos e intervenções na área. A fim de conduzir esse estudo, autores proeminentes na pesquisa biográfica e na formação de professores foram destacados e levados à discussão. O estudo justifica-se por apreendermos que essa pesquisa pode auxiliar pesquisadores e educadores com suas práticas em qualquer área da educação através desse introdutório metodológico. Como resultados, o artigo apresenta a importância das narrativas no processo formativo e na tomada de consciência de ser docente.

Palavras-chave: Formação docente; Pesquisa biográfica; Educação; Processo formativo.

Abstract

Despite of emergence on the 70's on the education field and being consolidate around a decade later, the biographical research is still poorly understood by some researchers and not fully accepted by some members of the scientific academy. The explanation most discussed by theorists is related to the positivist perspective that persists even on human sciences. Considering this, the purpose of this article is to elucidate what are the bases of a biographical research from an introductory perspective and why is it important in teacher's and professor's formations, presenting suggestion to further studies and interventions on this area. In order to carry out this study, prominent authors on the fields of biographical research and teacher's formations were highlight and brought to a discussion summarizing their main ideas. This study is justified by the belief that this research may help educators and researchers with their practices in any area of the education field by introducing them this methodology. As results, the article highlights the importance of biographical research on the process of pursuing the self-awareness when teaching.

Keywords: Teacher training; Biographical research; Education; Formative process.

Resumen

A pesar de su emergencia en la década de los 70 en el campo educativo y de ser consolidada una década después, la investigación biográfica es todavía poco comprendida por algunos investigadores y aún no es completamente aceptada por algunos miembros de la comunidad científica. La explicación más discutida por los teóricos está relacionada con la perspectiva positivista que predomina en las ciencias sociales. En este sentido, la propuesta de este artículo es dilucidar cuáles son las bases de la investigación biográfica, en carácter introductorio, y por qué es importante en la formación docente, presentando sugerencias para futuros estudios e intervenciones en el área. A fin de conducir ese estudio, autores prominentes en la investigación biográfica y en la formación de profesores fueron destacados y llevados a la discusión. El estudio se justifica por entender que esta investigación puede auxiliar a investigadores y educadores con sus prácticas en cualquier área de la educación a través de este introductorio metodológico. Como resultados, el artículo presenta la importancia de las narrativas en el proceso formativo y en la toma de conciencia de ser docente.

Palabras clave: Formación docente; Investigación biográfica; Educación; Proceso formativo.

1. A view from inside out

On the path of our journeys, on the educational field, as teachers, professors, and students, an interesting fact was brought to our attention: there is no disassociation between being a teacher or professor and our personal life since there is no way of seeing these areas as distant or distinct. Our self is represented daily in different levels of politeness or emotional responses, always depending on the context, on the emotional charge on that specific day, and on our previous background.

Hence, it was possible to question the subjective of each individual in charge of teaching and also how to capture his/her fluid subjective on educational research. It is important to highlight a priori that we do not perceive the educational field and the social sciences as distant or distinct areas as well. From our perspectives, as researchers, we understand these areas do not disassociate from each other, in fact, they complement one to another in their methodological tools and frequently in their objects or subjects of study. As already observed by Alheit and Dunsien (2018), it is an interdisciplinary topic; and for this reason, the authors pointed out in this paper are not exclusively from the educational field. The literature concerning the self-writing has widely used in the Social Sciences for a long term. Even a long time ago, during the navigations and its expansions, the journals from those who were overseas helped to trace routes and to better understand their paths and ways of living. Hence, there are multiple techniques used to capture someone's "inner voice" to better understand a period or a group of individuals. Since the objective of this study is to elucidate some points about biograph research and its relationship with teaching formation, the authors regarding the biographical research may be found in other areas of interest that can aid to better understand this movement.

In terms of biographical research, it is possible to say that any order of reporting life history is "two faces of the same coin". Throughout history it is possible to perceive the understanding about the topic have changed for social and anthropological reasons, but as well stated by Alheit and Dausien (2018) "the formation of biographical identity is a project that never ceases, historically speaking, to impose new demands on us, but it does not look as if we can escape from those demands" (p.761) . For this reason, the extension of this topic, the aforementioned distinctions will not be presented – this would be another topic for further work. Here, concepts such as biographical and (auto) biographical research, cultural and oral history, life narratives, diaries, and letters, in other words, oral and written corpus of study regarding a confessional tone will be read as narratives or biographical research.

In order to achieve the objective of dissertating and its relation to teachers' formation, a rhetorical organization of the text was done. In the present section, *A view from inside out*, we present our concerns that gave origin to the text, as well as our objectives, justification, and methodology (basically consistent on a theoretical framework discussion). In the second section, *The narrative process on the scientific field*, there is a brief presentation about the prominent researchers in the field as well as a summary of the selected articles, concerning the rising of using narratives on the educational field and also its reasons. In the third one, *The self-writing and its importance in the professor's and teacher's formative process*, it is possible to find the relevance of written words as a movement of constructing and reconstructing the teaching and learning process.

2. Methodology

With the objective of elucidating the basis of biographical research and discussing the reason why this kind of research is important in teachers' and professors' education, we adopted as methodology a qualitative approach (Lüdke & Andre 1986). It was understood as a qualitative approach, a research that is concerned about informing aspects of reality that cannot be quantified and is deeply interested in the dynamics of the social relations of a determined group in a certain period of history (Deslauries, 1991). And, to materialize this theoretical study, we have brought to the discussion prominent authors in biographical research and teacher training (Rodrigues & Prado 2015; Freire, 1996; Bahktin, 2010; Josso, 1998).

In developing this bibliographical research, the chosen sources are works that deal with the subject matter, which corroborates in the discussion of the specificity of the study topics: *the narrative process on the scientific field* and *the self-writing and its importance in the formative process*.

3. The narrative process on the scientific field

Narratives can be considered a methodology, an object of research or a way of conducting a scientific investigation (Rodrigues & Prado, 2015). Despite these multiple uses, its use only called attention on the Brazilian field during the end of the 70's, when they confront themselves with the positivist approach that was widely used when studies concerned about teaching formation (Souza, 2014). But the term "life narrative" had started two decades earlier in France, in an attempt to clarify a doubtful translation from English; the use of the term "life history" which from was not possible to distinguish if it was about the narration of facts experienced in the life of someone or experience of living (Bertaux 2010).

Nowadays, nearly fifty years after reaching the academic field, the academic community still distrusts the use of narratives on studies and research. Rodrigues and Prado (2015) state that this skepticism is due to the fact that the scientific sphere is most of the times rigid and not open to further coming news, fruit of a positivist conception, which understands the researcher as neutral and let few or none space to discuss subjectivities. The cultural turn which decentralized the positivist perspective was also claimed by Merry and West (2018) "The turn "marked a dissatisfaction with positivism, its supposed objectivity and the reduction of human experience to numerical formulae and abstraction" (p.766). Notwithstanding, there are several theoreticians who support and disseminate the narratives inside the scientific community, using a great number of arguments to discuss it. It is possible to highlight two main arguments and their in-depth elucidations.

Firstly, that the narrative research brings out a historical perspective, capable of directing the process of narrating as a social-cultural representation of a determined context in a specific time in history. The work of Ferraroti (2014) claims that by a singular perspective of a narrative it is possible to summarize a social system. In the same perspective, it is possible to notice that a narrative not only eternizes the individual inner life by also the social and interpersonal contexts that he or she per passed (Bertaux,2010), and by reading and contextualizing it, it should be possible to review a summarize a world narrative, and by this better understand an individual history (Delory-Momberger, 2012).

In sum, the use of narratives calls the attention to the history of ordinary people, dissatisfying a common sense of only telling and announcing the outstanding ones, as well as stated by Merril and West (2018) when they point out the narrative research in the United Kingdom "The focus of much research has been on marginalised peoples, as part of a

democratising project to bring more diverse voices and stories into the historical or contemporary social record” (p.765).

Secondly, the narrative research is a way of proportioning the teaching reflection and the constitutive process of being a teacher/professor. For instance, Maffioletti and Abrahão (2016) point out that in the act of narration embraces a moment of reflection and self-formation about the own identity, the same perspective stated by Chené (2014) who claims that is in the narrating time that the narrator or the narrated person understands him/herself and reappropriate his/her own identity.

According to Delory-Momberger (2014) the moment of speaking invokes a tension in the identity which proportionates a conflict of formation; giving commencement to the promotion between what the subject expects to be recognized and his/her beliefs about who the wants to be to become authentically him/herself (Nóvoa & Finger, 1988). Furthermore, Josso (1988) affirms that narratives also proportionate an intervention in learning and redimensionates the formative process. In the next section, a further discussing concerning teaching formation and the use of narratives will be presented.

4. The self-writing and its importance in the formative process

In the perspective of answering why the narrative is important in professor's and teacher's formative process, we consider that when professors and teacher look at themselves through writing, they not only look at their doing in teaching but re-elaborate what they lived, self-regulate and restructure their teaching dynamics. That is, the importance of self-writing in the formative process is because with this kind of writing there is the possibility of making the most relevant and meaningful acts composing self-consciousness.

Thus, the thoughts that they write transcribe their learning in their searching for apprehension about themselves in their sharing with peers, other teachers, professors and/or students. Self-writing is an intersubjective process that allows us to perceive that our existence is of an unfinished being, a condition that allows us to become aware of who we are. The act of self-writing is the possibility of awareness and recognition of the responsiveness that makes teaching doing. According to Zabalza (2004), with the writing about the experiences and the learning elaboration of being a teacher/professor, this professional becomes aware of the people and the events that make him/her, therefore, about that student who is there in the school, with his needs, questions, culture, values, etc. We

could not fail to consider that the language and the educators' writing about themselves are constitutive of their own formative process, an opportunity for reflection and a teacher/professor transformation.

The self-writing is important in this context because we understand that teacher/professor is constituted from the reality and from the social place where he/she lives, from the possibilities of interaction with other human beings. In this perspective, the enunciative theory of language in Bakhtin (2010) and Vygotski's (1998) social theory of knowledge construction illustrate a paradigm shift from the positivist and rationalist model. Bakhtin and Vygotsky are dissatisfied with the empiricist and idealist conceptions, base their studies on dialectical historical materialism. These studies corroborate in the understanding that the movement of texture in and of teaching is the possibility of giving meaning to the experiences. Teaching experiences that have repercussions on generative actions that corroborate in the formative processes and learning of being an educator.

By becoming authors and researchers of their learning of being an educator, they increase the ability to become critical in their own teaching-learning. The educators elaborate on their own knowledge, being curious and critical ones that apprehend from their research. In writing about themselves, then, they not only reflect about reality but also refract it, that is, distort, resign, give other meanings, ignite the interlocutor, promote the emergence of other dialogues.

In this sense, according to Faraco (2008), to be an author is to attribute form from a certain axiological position, cutting and reorganizing him/herself, aesthetically. One of the characteristics of enunciation through the written text is that there must be a distinct position for the author to see as if in a mirror he/she reflects, a drawing on alterity through self-contemplation.

In writing, the teachers/professors investigate their own practice from the interaction with colleagues and students and allow themselves to observe their own teaching performance. As explains Bakhtin (2010) “[...] o imenso e infinito mundo das palavras do outro são o fato primário da consciência humana e da vida humana” (p.379). In this movement, the importance of reflecting through self-writing is, therefore, a reflection on the way in which we propose pedagogic activities and how we understand the process of learning and teaching.

In this way of writing about the importance of self-writing in the professors' and teachers' formative process, Freire (1996) warns us to understand how to teach, being aware of our presence in the world. This understanding is implied in the processes of learning and teaching when teachers/professors seek to place themselves in the student position and invest in interaction during the teaching activity.

5. (In)conclusions

It would not be possible to comment on this study without mentioning the primordial term to its construction and also essential to biographical studies: the word. From the oral language to the invention of writing, per passing by symbols and drawings the word transits among different context. And using it, it is possible to construct and perpetuated memories; from navigator's diaries, letters from immigrants it was possible to understand our history and our origins. On the other hand, the immaterial registry, the spoken word, is present in almost all contexts in our daily life. What if we could keep a registry of not outstanding people from our lives to better understand their actions and attitudes towards professional life or even to better understand the society in a hundred years from now on?

We mainly register here the process of the written word as movement in teaching formation through a critical perspective, although there is still room and it is plenty common to use oral cultural (in the format of semi-structured or open interviews and dialogues that occur in courses regarding teaching, for example) to construct a biographical research. There is no right option when selecting the best manner to collect the corpus in a way, it is just a matter of what of selecting the option that suits best in each case.

Finally, we hope that the words voiced here are not only useful to a pre-reading and familiarization with the biographical research and source of references to more specific readings about the theme but also source of inspiration to investigators and teachers reflect about their practiced while conducting a study or teaching a class.

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Porcentagem de contribuição de cada autor no manuscrito

Bruna Viedo Kich – 60%

Adriana Claudia Martins – 40%