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# Teacher's narratives in networks: the Basic Education teachers journey<sup>1</sup>

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## *Narrativas dos professores nas redes: o percurso dos professores da Educação Básica<sup>2</sup>*

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### ABSTRACT

The digital culture favors communication and the integration of different contexts, promoting changes in the relationship between society and digital technologies. The objective of this article was to analyze the journey taken by teachers from public Basic Education, in the construction of digital narratives on blogs, pages with their own domain and social networks. The methodology of this study was qualitative in nature, from the perspective of Cultural Studies, based on authors such as Castells (2017), Jenkins (2008), Bruner (2008), Paul (2014) and Recuero (2016). The data was collected through interviews conducted virtually or in person, and the authors created categories of analysis that emerged from the theory and data collected. The research subjects were 60 teachers from the public network of Basic Education, who produced and shared content focused on education on the networks. As a result, we found that the teachers interviewed were surprised, initially, with the answers obtained by the narratives created in their digital spaces. The teachers narrated that they did not always receive support in the actions carried out within the schools, but that they felt connected to other people and welcomed by them, going beyond the walls of the schools. In this sense, the teachers realized the capacity of influence that they exercised in the networks.

*Keywords:* Narratives. Digital culture. Teachers. Basic Education. Virtual spaces.

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## RESUMO

A cultura digital favorece a comunicação e a integração de diferentes contextos, promovendo transformações na relação da sociedade com as tecnologias digitais. O objetivo deste artigo foi analisar o percurso realizado por professores da rede pública da Educação Básica, na construção das narrativas digitais em *blogs*, páginas com domínio próprio e redes sociais. A metodologia deste estudo foi de natureza qualitativa, na perspectiva dos Estudos Culturais, com a fundamentação de autores como Castells (2017), Jenkins (2008), Bruner (2002), Paul (2014) e Recuero (2016). Os dados foram coletados através de entrevistas realizadas virtualmente ou presencialmente, e foram criadas categorias de análise que emergiram da teoria e dos dados coletados. Os sujeitos da pesquisa foram 60 professores da rede pública da Educação Básica, que produziam e compartilhavam conteúdos com foco educacional, nas redes. Como resultados, encontramos que os professores entrevistados ficaram surpresos, inicialmente, com as respostas obtidas pelas narrativas criadas em seus espaços digitais. Os professores narraram que nem sempre recebiam apoio nas ações realizadas dentro das escolas, mas que, extrapolando os muros das escolas, se sentiam conectados a outras pessoas e acolhidos por elas. Neste sentido, os professores se deram conta da capacidade de influência que exerciam nas redes.

*Palavras-chave:* Narrativas. Cultura digital. Professores. Educação Básica. Espaços virtuais.

## Introduction

The objective of this research was to analyze the journey taken by teachers from public Basic Education, in the construction of digital narratives, in blogs, pages with their own domain, and social networks. The importance of this study lies in the transformations that occur in society with the use of digital technologies, which favor communication and the integration of different contexts. These transformations cause changes in the ways of reflecting on education, causing a rearrangement in the dynamics of teaching, learning, research and evaluation.

In this sense, the digital narratives created by Basic Education teachers, in blogs and other digital spaces, appear as a way to structure the different discourses, in the context of digital culture, using multimedia resources and favoring the possibilities of interactivity, authorship, collaboration and sharing of content. As Jenkins (2008) says, nothing is more human than the act of sharing stories, in front of a fire or through the cloud.

So, in this scenario, it is important to reflect on the teacher's ability to build and consolidate an effective digital culture. Digital culture that should promote pedagogical innovation, with the use of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICT), both in the classroom and beyond the walls of the school and taking effect, also, in the virtual network.

In the last few years, some Basic Education teachers have stood out in the networks through their virtual spaces that present innovative practices carried out in the classroom. The themes and environments are varied, but these teachers (known as blogging teachers, digital activists, connected, etc.) use dialogue as their main innovation strategy. Through their digital spaces, open to comments from colleagues and students, and through participation in forums and discussion lists, obstacles are socialized and knowledge is shared.

As a result, we found that the teachers interviewed were surprised, initially, with the answers obtained by the narratives created in their digital spaces. The teachers narrated that they did not always receive support in the actions carried out within the schools, but that, going beyond the walls of the schools, they felt connected to other people and welcomed by them. In this sense, the teachers realized the influence capacity they exercised in the networks. It is important to emphasize that these teachers were concerned with promoting more in-depth discussions about the uses of digital technologies, about those included and excluded from digital culture and about critical consumption and alienated consumption of information, among other actions.

## **Narratives in digital culture**

Teachers are marked by the actions and reactions of the past, which directly influence their experiences of the present, reflecting on their identity construction. In this sense, Bruner (2002) points out that the narrative is a way of giving meaning to one's own life and experiences. This is how one comes to understand reality.

Currently, oral and / or written narratives of real and / or fictional events are produced in a combination of media that mix texts, images, audios and videos, favoring new ways of creating narratives. It is what we call digital narratives, which are created on different screens and with possibilities for production, consumption and exchange of content.

It is important to note that digital narratives can present different views of the same fact, challenging the hegemonic logic of the discourses. In this sense,

Recuero (2016) emphasizes that digital culture can be considered democratic, as it integrates the plurality of discursive / narrative formations. On the other hand, Jenkins (2008) addresses digital narratives, linking them to participatory culture and authorship. He considers authorship as one of the main skills to be developed by contemporary education. Paul (2014) also deals with narratives and emphasizes the need to observe resources such as capillarity in networks and the possibilities for interaction.

Thus, in an age of participative digital culture, we are no longer passive consumers of narratives and become also producers of them, in different social and digital networks. In this sense, we need to be aware of the fact that these networks generate significant changes in culture, in social relations, in the ways of seeking and generating information, in the way of expressing thought and affectivity, in the attribution of meanings, and senses to knowledge and to life itself (ALMEIDA, 2016). And it is evident that these changes are integrated into our day-to-day lives, reflected in educational relationships, both in formal spaces for teaching and learning, as well as in non-formal and informal spaces.

Some authors point out that we live in an era of access, virality, socialization and social mobilization, favoring a new sensitivity and a new citizenship, with the visibility and empowerment of voices that have never been heard before and that, today, are able to stand out in the networks, breaking with the political, economic, social and cultural narratives that have always dominated the world. Thus, the social appropriation of technologies and the contemporary digital narratives are sources of personal and collective empowerment, which can break with the culture of silence, showing subtle, hidden, invisible, silent situations, reaching and representing people without authority, external to the structures of power, thus activating processes of social transformation (CARVALHO; ALVES; SILVA, 2018). In this way, it is possible to perceive some Freirian principles in processes that refer to the awareness, participation and authorship of the subjects, in collective actions, to counter political cynicism, cultural emptiness and economic distress.

In view of this, we can say that digital culture directly influences the process of continuing education for teachers, who, through blogs, their own websites and digital networks, are inserted in what Jenkins (2008) calls the *Culture of Convergence*, where technologies and minds converge, to create new meanings and give a new impetus to educational processes and social transformations.

The insertion of teachers in digital culture and convergence favors the development of collective projects and makes them overcome professional and personal isolation, through the narratives of their experiences, in a network. In this sense, networks allow teachers to decide their paths, create spaces for autonomous communication and represent their identity values, in a process

of dissemination/publication of events and moments with which they identify – and the respective emotions generated – with the evaluation of the impact of their actions on others and on themselves (CASTELLS, 2017). This autonomy is not always allowed in the classroom, but the simple fact that these teachers have epistemological curiosity in relation to the possibilities and potential of digital technologies, may indicate an openness to the new and to innovation, and may have repercussions on pedagogical actions aimed at students and to classrooms. So, knowing and analyzing the path of the teachers in the construction of the narratives created in their digital spaces will lead us to understand their options and actions, in an attempt to relate the life experiences with the educational processes experienced, even knowing that their intentions were not necessarily pedagogical.

## **Methodological path**

The present investigation is of a qualitative nature, with theoretical foundation in the field of Cultural Studies. The speech of the research subjects and the analysis of their context were fundamental to achieve our goals. As subjects of the research, we elected teachers from the public Basic Education, with content production and sharing on the networks. Sixty (60) teachers who stood out in digital spaces and with an educational focus were considered. To find these subjects, we looked for indexing aggregators of educational content, such as lists of educational blogs, teacher portal, list of blogs, spaces on social networks and pages of teachers. The necessary elements for the profile of our research were: 1. Digital space with an educational theme; 2. Focus of the public on teachers and students of Basic Education; 3. Authored by a teacher of Basic Education from a public school; 4. Not having a period of inactivity longer than 12 months. We analyzed the virtual spaces of 60 teachers and 18 agreed to participate in the research.

As many teachers lived in distant locations, the invitation to participate in the interview was presented in several ways: via Skype, Messenger, Facetime, etc. We conducted 12 distance interviews and 6 face-to-face interviews (with teachers from Pernambuco), totalling 18 interviews. The interview script was structured in a very open way and allowed the insertion of comments, criticisms and suggestions from teachers. The collected data were analyzed using Atlas TI software, a proprietary software for qualitative data analysis. The categories of analysis of the interviews with the teachers were as follows:

TABLE 1 – CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

Category	Description
Formation	Academic and professional trajectory of teachers.
Bridges with digital culture	Elements that establish connections between the formation of the teacher and their personal trajectory to explain the interest and familiarity with technology in general and, specifically, technology in Education.
DICT uses	Appropriation, use and pedagogical strategies with the use of technologies.
Motivation	Purpose, objectives and triggers that made the teacher publish their material on the network.
Process	How was the process of choosing, creating and operationalizing digital spaces on the network.
Results	Description of the results achieved by the teacher's performance in the network.
Differential	Elements that differentiate teachers who are on the network publishing, sharing and interacting with other teachers.
Current scenario	Overview of the current scenario and actions to face the changes with the platforms and the dynamics of the network in recent years.
Trends	Analysis and perspectives for the network and the use of digital technologies in the future.

SOURCE: Own authorship, 2019.

The analysis of the interviews was quite interesting, because it was possible to identify not only the teacher's professional or academic path, but also his path in digital networks, the construction of his digital identity and the unfoldings that the path and the construction of that identity provoked in the lives of teachers.

## Data analysis

The interview was thought of as a moment of dialogue, with comings and goings in the reflections, perceptions, analyses and conclusions. To make the speech aligned with the practice, guiding questions were developed, open, flexible and always with space for the interviewee to ask themselves, expanding the questions or disagreeing/questioning the question.

## The training and professional path of teachers

The first question of the interview asked about the history of the teacher's professional trajectory, which led them to the position they currently occupy. The question was built purposely open for the teacher to remember their ways and reflect on their own path. This did not happen with everyone, as some of them only reproduced the data in their curricula, but most teachers reported their personal and professional trajectory, showing that the junctions and bifurcations between the two elements are quite frequent and important. Let us see the clippings of some reports:

*"I started with the Normal Course, at my mother's will (poor people have to finish high school with a training). I only liked it at the end of the course, with the Supervised Internship, in a first year of Elementary School. I finished the Normal Course and started the Pedagogy course, in a private institution. During the first year of the course, I worked on weekends at a telephone center, in the morning, at a real estate agency and in the afternoon I had an internship at CIEE (Company-School Integration Center), attending students and teachers at the Informatics Laboratory. In the second year of the course, I was hired by the school, where I worked until I graduated, 44 hours a week".*

(SUJ03)

The teacher's professional trajectory indicates a series of activities previous or parallel to her graduation in the area of Education. Her proximity to technology is a result of the circumstances of her life, and not the result of her restlessness as a teacher. The experience in private companies may have helped her in the process of technological appropriation, which was later extended to school spaces. It is a different situation from SUJ01, which took another route:

*"I've been a teacher since I was 17 years old. I did my teaching training and, in 1996, I was already working in a private school. I enrolled in Pedagogy, because my passion is to work with the little ones. During graduation, I started to be interested in Educational Informatics, taking elective courses in this area. In 2000, I joined the Municipal Public Education and started to work both in the classroom, with the initial*



*years of Elementary School, and in Computer Labs. Between 2000 and 2011, I participated in two specializations in the field of Informatics, in addition to numerous extension courses”.*

(SUJ01)

It is interesting how the creation of digital spaces, be they blogs, websites, pages etc. influenced the change in the lives of some of our research subjects, through new work demands, creation of projects, entry into graduate programs or even giving up the teaching profession. During the answers to the first question, many teachers realized how the elements of their personal lives were related to their professional trajectory, evidencing their reflections in the answers, as in the case of SUJ18.

*“My story is funny, as it was precisely personal events that drove me to change my life, education and even city, issues that were fundamental to the position I occupy today. My first training was a degree in Mathematics. Technology came to me through an invitation to take the Specialization in Informatics in Education, which would be offered by MEC, for the opening of NTEs by Proinfo”.*

(SUJ18)

As we can see, the trajectories of teachers are different and they all found common points in their interest in technologies in Education. SUJ09, for example, has reconciled their interest in films, documentaries, etc. with discussions about problems in Education, creating a blog that serves as an indexer of films in different formats, ranging from advertising, documentaries and even great commercial films. Their trajectory and training are completely different from the other teachers interviewed.

*“My initial training was in Law. Then, I joined the public service in the administrative area. When I got a public position for the subject of Law and Legislation (High School), I discovered that I did not have the pedagogical complement and went back to studying. First, I did a post-graduate course in History of Rio Grande do Sul, which ended up taking me to the Master of Arts in Letters. And in the meantime, I did two for the job (ICT in the Promotion of Learning and Media in Education, when I worked in NTE, training teachers in the use of technologies in Education)”.*

(SUJ09)

The diversity of courses and approaches to educational technology may also justify the diversity of proposals in the use of digital spaces on the network. Each teacher sees, in the concept of educational technology and its devices, different possibilities of appropriation that reflect their own path. Let us see the example of SUJ20, below:

*“I have a degree in Teaching and Letters, as well as in Web Design. I completed my computer training in 2001. I have knowledge of programming (Java), expert in Photoshop, Corel, Illustrator (everything related to graphics) and I did a post-graduation in Technology in Education”.*

(SUJ20)

In some cases, the identification and interest with the technologies and their possibilities of use in Education arose with the training process itself during the post-graduation and not before. This is the case of SUJ24, which reconfigured its path only after completing graduate studies.

*“After so many comings and goings, after so many fears and fears, I decided to enter a Lato Sensu degree in Technological Education (2010). The world started to open, because I understood that I could join areas that I identified so much: History, Education and Technology. At the same time, I started a degree in Computer Science. This course provided by the Federal Government Program called PAR. At UFRPE, 2010, I started to learn to walk in this world of new technologies of communication and information”.*

(SUJ24)

The diversity in the trajectories of each teacher and their training process were so great that we used the marking of more frequent words, such as restlessness, curiosity, desire to know, news, willingness to learn, entering courses, new challenges, etc. Bringing together the semantic aspects of the most used expressions, they all had one element in common: curiosity for the new and the constant search for different paths other than they had previously taken.

## Bridges with digital culture

In the second question, we deepen the relationship between the personal and professional trajectory to justify the interest and familiarity of teachers with technology. We asked teachers to build bridges and the answers were very interesting.

*“Since childhood I have always been very interested in technological resources. At seven I won my first video game (an Odyssey). At thirteen I had computer classes at school, where I started to learn to program. In graduation, in the 90's, I found spaces that made it possible to reflect on the pedagogical use of technology, expanding my view on the possibilities that the resources offered. Since then, these paths have merged: my training and performance have always gone together, as I believe and live the use of technology in education. My constitution as a researcher took place in this process... Already in the work of completing Pedagogy, I started to research on Digital Inclusion, from my experiences in the classroom. I believe that my training took place in the effective action of the use of technologies”.*

(SUJ01)

SUJ01 makes it very clear that their history was decisive for the effective use of technologies in the classroom, but in other cases, professional training was decisive for the teacher to continue on this path, as is the case of SUJ09.

*“I've always liked technology, since I was a child. But I ended up working in the area, when I first took a course for computer technician to work in NTE and, there, in partnership with teachers from the state public school where the Technology Center worked, I coordinated computer projects in Special Education, with basic notions for students who were blind, deaf, mentally disabled and had high abilities. This project was an experience that marked me deeply and made me decide to work in the area. Then, I did two specializations in ICT and Media in Education to act as a multiplier in teacher training and coordinating the NTE, supporting four municipalities in the southern region of RS”.*

(SUJ09)

Some teachers clearly signaled that the differential of their pedagogical practice existed before and regardless of the use of technology. For them, the focus is on improving learning and not necessarily innovation. This is an important fact, because technology training for teachers in Brazil always focuses on the use of tools, but the willingness of teachers to seek alternative paths and their immersion in digital culture are elements that are much more determinant than the usability of tools.

*“I think that looking for the most diverse ways for my students to learn was the central point that brought me closer to digital technologies. I taught using newspapers, music (always), poetry, maps - I can't understand a history teacher who doesn't use maps - charge, films (always). To start using social networks, Twitter and Facebook (in a discipline at EAD), the blog was a leap”.*

(SUJ24)

## **The beginning of everything: motivations, stories and paths**

In relation to the beginning of the use of technologies, the reports have many similar aspects, especially in relation to the element of surprise with the results obtained when using technology in learning.

*“I think that a project in which I worked on for the state called Travessia (Telecurso 2000) encouraged me to use countless resources in the classroom. Newspapers, paintings, group crafts, image reading and representation of what had been understood, speech, listening, representation, dynamics, games, poetry, cordel. Today I see that not accommodating me with the sameness of resources, which can facilitate learning, favored me to understand that technological resources can be incorporated into the classroom as an enhancer, amplifier of learning”.*

(SUJ24)

Another interesting aspect is that not all teachers immediately realized the potential in using technologies. For some, it was a process that has developed over the years.

*“In the beginning, in the first five years, I saw technology as a resource to enhance the curriculum content. I only realized the potential of technology for education, in a different way, when I went to work in a school on the outskirts, where access to information had another meaning, where learning to use a text editor was a resource that could generate a job opportunity for the student, or even to develop a curriculum”.*

(SUJ03)

We can identify some points of rupture that were caused by different elements: for some, it was the social context; for others, it was the question of learning or even breaking down due to dissatisfaction with the materials used.

*“Since I started in education I noticed that there is a need for didactic and complementary material, rich, interesting, that binds students to the subject taught. I missed it a lot in my area, and I still do today. Technology is a tool that, when used well, is a great ally to teachers in the classroom and outside it”.*

(SUJ19)

The important thing for our analysis is that the breaking points were present in all teachers' reports and technology was used as an element of change. The next step was to understand the motivations of teachers for the creation of their digital spaces and what processes were used. The teachers' report was surprising and unexpected: we found elements for motivation, from the desire to have a voice and space to place themselves, to less noble feelings such as vanity and selfishness. The need for voice and dialogue was explicitly present in the speech of subjects 24 and 18, as we can see below:

*“I think the internet is magical in relation to many issues: one of them is to provide the ‘anonymous’ with placement in the world. That is, you can, from anywhere in the world, with any device and internet, create your space for dialogue. I have always found it magical and fascinating. Therefore, having an instrument that I can put myself in, defend what I think, and share with anyone who wants my knowledge, is undoubtedly the struggle for a space for speech. Especially in a highly unequal country, especially in the monopoly of information by the mainstream media”.*

(SUJ24)

*“I think the desire to be able to read and be read, to hear and be heard. To have a voice and space...”*

(SUJ18)

The search for sharing and learning was present in most of the interviewees' statements, all of them concerned with network collaboration.

*“At first, it was due to the return of the students' parents, first with the late Orkut, then with the first blog, in 2003, to create a collective story. But it was with the participation in the group of educational blogs and in the Free Software communities that I realized that there could be a collaboration network, that sharing information made me learn more...”*

(SUJ03)

*“My main objective was to create a small educational social network, via blog and profiles on Twitter and Facebook, for exchanging ideas, experiences, discoveries, publicizing own and third-party projects, as motivation for colleagues and making it possible to show my followers that education can be propositional, creative and innovative, through simple ideas, because simplicity is what allows the continuity of actions...”*

(SUJ09)

Some have revealed their personal motivations that, although they may be associated with selfishness (verbalized during the interview), vanity or commercial interests, have been transformed over time, which leads us to assume that the network operates in two directions: who is browsing with authorship and sharing influences and is influenced all the time.

*“Pure selfishness. It seems inconsistent, but I have always published for myself. I never imagined that other people could be interested in what I wrote. I started publishing in order to be able to access my ideas anywhere, this at a time when we had no clouds and I traveled a lot in different geographical spaces. Also, I always liked to write. I take great pleasure in writing. And then there was the realization that people did not have the same comfort as I did in writing and sharing my experiences. These three factors led me to continue posting. In addition to the collaborative experiences I had throughout my life, which made me believe it was worth continuing”.*

(SUJ01)

*“At first, until the store was set up, I wanted to show that I am different, that classroom materials should be smart and not “more of the same”. Sharing and collaborating come with a price. To keep all your work on the internet, you need to have a salary and you can only build it all when it becomes a business, although my business fits into the shared economy trend”.*

(SUJ20)

Although commercial motivation is present in the minority of respondents, it is important to consider it, for our understanding of the characteristics of the digital narratives of teachers that we find in their spaces on the network.

## Processes and results

In relation to the processes for the elaboration of their spaces, we observed that teachers experienced similar paths to structure their spaces. The idea present in all responses is organization and sharing, as we see it in the following two reports.

*“The process was to create a website where I could organize and make available all my works and publications, free of charge, for those interested in developing activities with RPG in their classroom”.*

(SUJ02)

*“First, to have a “place” to organize the materials, even if I don't use my blog very often, the records are not lost like on social networks. Second, to share, to contribute with other teachers, as well as so many other virtual spaces for teachers who do the same thing help me”.*

(SUJ03)

It was evident in the teachers' report that the process of publishing and maintaining spaces is laborious and requires considerable time. In the face of so much effort, do teachers consider the result of their work to be positive? The responses were not unanimous, as each teacher has a different perception of the results of their action. The evaluation of a partially positive result and a certain disappointment with the network's scope and effective transformation predominated.

*“In parts, yes, I met many good people, who effectively collaborated with my training. But I am not always able to interact in virtual spaces as I would like. Researching Distance Education does not make me a good virtual teacher. It takes a lot of effort to exist in the virtual environment, to be present, so that students know who you are”.*

(SUJ03)

Others were more optimistic and made a positive assessment of the results of their actions on the network, especially in relation to contact with other people and the influence they have on the network.

*“Yes. Not only do I believe it, but I say that it exceeded my expectations, as I imagined having a blog and profiles on social networks to add only colleagues, friends and acquaintances. Today Educa Tube Brasil has more than 1,800,000 visits. On Twitter, it has more than 4 thousand followers and, on Facebook, also more than 4 thousand. However, more than quantity, what calls my attention is precisely the quality of the interactions, people I don't even know share with me not only their discoveries but their reflections. Many educators have already sent me messages saying that they used several of my posts in their classes, which made me keep the blog active, even in full doctorate, which requires too much from a researcher, even more when writing the thesis, in the final process”.*

(SUJ19)

Only two subjects negatively evaluated the results of their actions on the network and, interestingly, one of them has a large audience, with many comments recorded on their page. The content of the answer leads us to conclude that the teacher has very different expectations from his peers, regarding the results he wants to achieve. The other teacher rated negatively, because his students did not react as he initially expected.

## **The differential**

We sought to question teachers about their differential at work as users of digital technologies and the answers, once again, were divided between those



who believe they have a differential and who effectively improved their practices in the classroom, and those who did not see any difference between their work and that of colleagues.

*“Not always. Currently working with the fourth year of elementary school, in a public school, I feel powerless. The computer room is closed, students only use it on my planning day with the teacher who replaces me and use it to play. I believe it is important for children to play, to have access to educational games, to have fun, considering that most do not have a computer at home. But the production part, the construction of research, the production of texts, drawings, stories that could provide another type of experience with technologies, does not exist”.*

(SUJ03)

SUJ09 does not believe that it has any differential when comparing to their colleagues. The feeling of frustration, indifference and difficulty in executing the proposals emerged in the comments, both among those who believe in their differential and those who do not perceive advantages in their work.

*“I believe so, because it was thanks to the use of digital technologies, first in the area of education and then using such tools as blogs and profiles on social networks in other areas such as art and culture and literature, in particular, that I started to have greater visibility and being able to interact with a large number of people. Just as I am aware that I influence some colleagues, I am also influenced by them, when they indicate precious materials that I would not have time to discover on my own”.*

(SUJ09)

In some reports, the weight that some teachers feel for not feeling supported and accompanied by their colleagues in actions within the school was evident. It is interesting to observe, in their speech, the satisfaction with the dialogue with other people who are on the network, because they have the same difficulties, feel anguish and are open to this dialogue and to the exchange of solutions and information.

*“Yes. Unfortunately, in 2016, the use of digital technologies is not a reality in public school classrooms in my municipality. Although my schools have a digital blackboard, wireless internet, tablets, a computer room, the use is restricted. Teachers, in general, still have the insecurities and resistance of three decades ago. I often feel like an island, especially at the school where I am a computer teacher, because if I don't encourage, insist and subsidize the use, nothing happens”?*

(SUJ01)

This is important, because it shows that the network, whether digital or in person, has a fundamental role in the connection between people. Teachers may feel isolated or like an island, as one of them said, but, in digital spaces, they feel welcomed, understood and participating in something bigger, which goes beyond the physical space of their workplace and the limited dimensions of their teaching performance.

## **The acknowledgment**

Regarding the recognition of their work by coworkers, parents and students, the responses were unanimous: everyone has the perception that their work is recognized, especially by students. SUJ01 brilliantly reported the relationship of their students:

*“I feel the recognition of my work. Everyone values and takes an interest in what I do. However, colleagues find it very difficult and prefer to delegate to me everything related to the use of technologies. Although they like to talk about technological news, for example, their use is personal, not advancing professionally. In return, students are my biggest partners. We make discoveries daily. I managed to establish a relationship of respect and trust with the children (my students are between 6 and 11 years old). My 5th year student Heitor sums up our relationship very well:*

*Heitor - Teacher, you trust us, right?*

*Me - Why do you think that?*

*Heitor - Because you give us some difficult things to do and you know that we will make it”.*

(SUJ01)

Recognition can be interpreted as positive from different perspectives. For some, it could be professional recognition, with career promotions or prominent positions. Another possibility is the recognition that results in financial reward, with salary increase, contracts with companies etc. In the case of our interviewees, the recognition of their students was the element considered most precious, regardless of whether it resulted in an improvement in learning or not. The teachers reported an improvement in their relationship with the students, in the motivation of the class and in the good receptivity of their ideas and actions. Let's look at another example:

*“What I feel is that we get closer to students when we are on the same level as their digital culture. I may not even play games, I may not know an application, but as I have a broader and denser domain over the network, I do not inhibit myself in conversations and exchanging experiences. Regarding colleagues it seems that I continue to speak another language”.*  
(SUJ24)

The recognition in the financial perspective appeared in just one comment, even though it was not pointed out as a discouraging factor or an objective to be achieved.

## **Analysis of the current context**

In the final part of the interviews, we asked teachers about their analysis of the use of the technologies and tools most used by teachers, in the current context; about their concerns; and about the trends that could arise in the coming years. Surprisingly, it was the part of the interview in which they were most critical and incisive in their responses. All teachers criticized the role of teachers in the use of technologies. The criticisms focused on the lack of use due to lack of knowledge to inappropriate or limited use. One of the subjects interviewed, with more than 20 years of experience in Education, stated that he has never found a significant group of teachers engaged in the use of technologies.

*“I’m going through a pessimistic phase... So my prospects are not positive. After more than twenty years working in Education, using and researching*

*technology, I have seen great setbacks in all areas. As I reported earlier, I have observed that there are still insecurities and resistance from teachers. And despite advances in access, it seems that we have worsened in use. I realize that teachers who use technologies are looking for more content-oriented tools. And we have an abundance of companies selling these nowadays, with Portals offering “multimedia” content, filled with multiple choice activities, which reinforce a positivist pedagogy. Social networks are seen as villains, being neglected or underused. Just like mobile devices. We have some bold teachers, but they are a minority. But on second thought... it seems that it has always been so. We have never had a large group of teachers engaged in the use of technologies. There are always those who are interested, dare to experiment, just as there are always those who do not believe or prefer to maintain their practices. Despite this, I have noticed a new movement towards programming. Very shy in schools, but with the potential to grow...”.*

(SUJ01)

Despite being considered pessimistic, our interviewee ends her answer with a hopeful phrase that reflects much more her desire to see the technology really inserted in schools than the result of her experience.

Another interesting analysis came up with the teacher who considered different contexts, not only her experience in the classroom, but also considering the participation of teachers in her virtual space. The teachers' difficulty in buying the materials sold on their website was considered an example of the level of technological appropriation and digital literacy of their readers:

*“It is very different from state to state, city to city, even school to school. It is no use for the school to adopt technology if the teacher is not open to it. We are still a long way from performing well in this part and it depends more on the teacher than anything else. There are teachers who come into my store, for example, and send me messages like: create a budget for the materials and send me, that I make a deposit for you. Imagine that I have more than 600 titles, from children to ninth grade and that purchases are made only in the virtual store. Many do not even know that it is a store, although I keep it standard, exactly so there is no doubt. Imagine that this teacher never made an online purchase, probably. How would his relationship with technology be? Do you understand where you want to go? There is no relationship and this is worrying. There are certainly advanced schools, where teachers use tablets (not yet in the right way) and other resources like robotics and Arduino, but still far from the total reality of the country”.*

(SUJ20)

Teachers did not restrict their analysis to just using technology in the classroom. We have also found important reflections on the capacity for sharing and authorship on networks, even among those teachers who use digital tools specific to their subjects, but who cannot go beyond that.

*“I realize that teachers use technologies more. Mathematics students, for example, incorporated some programs like Geogebra into their daily lives. In the High School Management, there were several trainings for teachers, with Geogebra. In general, I observe the use of Youtube videos, music, slides (Power Point, predominantly). Few know and use Prezi (I speak of the teachers who are trainers at the Secretariat of Education). I do not see in the moments of sharing the successful experiences of schools, the use of games, cell phones, social networks, videos created with cell phones, applications, OER, Moodle, or other resources”.*

(SUJ24)

SUJ09 identified different levels of ownership among teachers (including their readers) and emphasized the importance of authorship and creativity and the need for continuity of actions. It is very important to emphasize that the teachers expanded their analysis when they used, in addition to their experience in the classroom and with colleagues, their experience with their readers, followers and visitors.

*“I see that there are three groups of teachers working with technologies in education: the beginners, who try to use these tools mirrored in what other colleagues do; those who produce authorial material; and those who seek to be innovative, in the sense of incorporating new technologies into new methodologies. Not only the new, for the novelty, but for the transformation of the relationship between teacher and student, through co-authorship, creativity, sustainability and continuity of actions”.*

(SUJ09)

Criticism of the use of technologies was not restricted to teachers of Basic Education. The teachers and trainers of the distance education modality were also remembered in the analysis of the teachers, indicating that the problems in relation to the process of consolidating the digital culture is not exclusive to a group or level of education. “At OE too, there are many teachers who leave the

part of the Moodle tools for tutors to organize. There are few teachers who are independent in the use of tools" (SUJ03).

The criticisms that teachers made to their colleagues, regarding the use of technologies and the system that does not facilitate or effectively encourage its use, are very much in line with some more recent academic studies, although they do not ratify the broader reports that indicate a significant growth in the practices of teachers with the use of technologies in the classroom.

## The outlook for the future

In the last question of the interview, we asked the interviewed teachers to design a scenario for the future, describing the trends they envisioned for the use of networks as spaces for the democratization of knowledge and access to information. The responses were quite pessimistic, but they portrayed exactly the concerns that the greatest thinkers of digital culture have been expressing in recent years. Concern about violence, lack of privacy, inequality, consumption etc. was recurrent in all reports.

*"I am concerned about internet surveillance, censorship, control. The technology itself does not concern me, it is the result of our time, but the production of inequalities that can be easily seen on the internet with hate speech, the inability to interpret texts, the selection of posts that constitute social groups are far beyond technology. Technology makes us realize this without leaving home, but social inequality is a symptom of our society that, for me, is sick. The good use of internet technology is an item, but not the main one for it to be well used by people. A critical citizen and participative awareness in the public sphere is built first in person".*

(SUJ03)

The concern with the use of technology from the perspective of consumption also appeared in the speech of the interviewees and, more importantly, the issue of changing the methodological and pedagogical paths. The proposal for alternative paths is different, as we have teachers who believe in teaching programming as a valid strategy and others believe in mobile technology as a differential for the future.

*"I see that we have become big consumers: of technological innovations, new equipment, new applications, etc. This worries me: teachers and students have been consuming technology indiscriminately, without clarity in their objectives or pedagogical potential. In the opposite direction, we have the movement in favor of programming. It is the light that I see at the end of the tunnel. It is a way to overcome this condition of mere consumers and become producers. I had great expectations with the web 2.0 movement, which allowed us to easily produce and publish. Only that did not take effect in education. I have the same expectations regarding programming ... and I have been investing in this area with my students".*

(SUJ01)

The concern with the need for changes in the methodology used emerged explicitly in almost all reports, being an element present and consolidated in the analysis of teachers. The questions and possible solutions were very well constructed in the speech of our subjects.

*"My concern is that the methodology is the locomotive of this process and that ICT and media are the countless wagons of possibilities and not the opposite. The 21st century teacher needs to be, in a way, a media and an art educator, as it is an audiovisual generation that enters the school, that uses all this technology outside the school environment, and that within it still suffers restrictions. Technologies are being replaced faster and faster, but methodologies need to adapt to the new reality that is convergent, dynamic, interactive and mobile".*

(SUJ09)

The considerations of the other teachers on the subject were practically identical. Everyone considered that it is necessary to reflect and do something effective in relation to the use of digital technologies and that the school has an essential role to establish the relations of the citizen of the future with the technologies for the benefit of society. The warning is very clear: if there is no deeper discussion, the school may increase the gap and the differences between those included and excluded, between violence and tolerance, between critical consumption and excessive, alienated consumption. When reflecting on their spaces on the networks, teachers understand very well the challenges they are facing and how they can learn, influence, contribute and participate in the new configurations that digital social networks provide in the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning scenario.

## Conclusion

The interviews showed that teachers have varied paths in their training and in the use of digital technologies. The restlessness and desire to build new paths are elements common to all. Teachers have difficulty reflecting their own practice on the net and often affirm things they do not practice, showing that the speech is not translated into practice in most cases. However, when analyzing the context of their work in schools and the practice of other teachers in relation to the use of technologies, they are critical and precise in their statements.

The most important thing, in concluding this research, is the consolidation of academic paths already taken and the indication of new paths that need to be followed. The question that was present throughout the data analysis period was: why do managers of public policies on technological training for teachers do not listen to teachers? As one of our research subjects said, there are many different realities and we are sure that they all need to be addressed. The proposal for a unique learning, with its homogeneous model, has never worked for children and young people, and certainly does not work for teachers.

This study shows that the teacher needs their speech space, participation and effective contribution to Education. Everyone has stories to tell, whether about their practice, their path in life or their perception of the world. Listening and understanding teachers, in all their dimensions, brings answers that are more illuminating than the incessant search for confirmation of our theories, in which research subjects are only the means to obtain the results. A good research is one that does not only teach us about the researched field, but one that teaches us more about ourselves.

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