

# **PARFOR AND THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHER-STUDENTS IN THE PEDAGOGY COURSE IN CAPITÃO POÇO, PARÁ**

**Claudiana Teixeira Lavor da Cruz**

Universidade Federal do Pará  
Brasil  
claudianalavor@hotmail.com

**Francisco Pereira de Oliveira**

Universidade Federal do Pará  
Brasil  
foliveiranono@yahoo.com.br

**Raul da Silveira Santos**

Universidade Federal do Pará  
Brasil  
raulsantos.21@hotmail.com

**Silvia Helena Benchimol Barros**

Universidade Federal do Pará  
Brasil  
silviabenchimol@hotmail.com

**Miguel Pereira de Sousa**

Universidade Federal do Pará  
Brasil  
miguel.sousa2211@gmail.com

**Denni Baía de Souza**

Universidade Federal do Pará  
Brasil  
denibaia@hotmail.com

## **Abstract**

*This research aimed to approach Plano Nacional de Formação de Professores da Educação Básica*

(PARFOR<sup>1</sup>) and the challenges faced by teacher-students in the Pedagogy Undergraduate Course, Class 3, Capitão Poço, Campus of Bragança - Federal University of Pará/Brazil. In synergy, the study evolves from the two main issues: what are the challenges faced by the teacher-student of the Pedagogy Undergraduate Course between the years 2015 and 2019? and, To what extent, did these challenges affect (or not) the academic education process? The research methodology was characterized by a qualitative approach involving observation and participatory research, with the application of a semi structured questionnaire, answered by six teacher-students from the studied class. Data analyses approached the content of the informants' narratives. Results revealed that the challenges faced, extended beyond the classroom context, methodological and evaluation processes handled by course professors, encompassing issues of family absence, financial limitations and political reverberations. The study evidenced situations involving employment bonds that greatly influenced academic and psychological performances of the teacher-students. As a conclusive evidence, we can affirm that challenges led to evasion of some teacher-students, but for the majority of the class, they became fuel for resilience and permanence until the end of the Course.

**Keywords:** PARFOR; teacher education; challenges; teacher-students.

## 1. Introduction

Teacher education in Brazil is a topic under constant discussion and has been gaining even more strength in the last decades in the political-educational national agenda. Despite the recognition, albeit timid, of the importance of the teacher's role in public schools in Brazil, public policies still call for contextualized guidelines so that this importance – so emphasized in political party discourses – may effectively result in better working conditions and professional valorization, avoiding, for example, the usual 'transference of responsibilities' [of the educational failure]. From students' literacy to social, political and educational conditions, every underachievement has been conferred to teachers.

Education is a fundamentally important factor in the life of each and every citizen. It is constitutionally guaranteed in Article 205 of the Federal Constitution of 1988, which reads "Education, the right of all and the duty of the State and the family, will be promoted and encouraged with the collaboration of society, aiming at the full development of the person, their preparation for the exercise of citizenship and their qualification for work". Based on this premise, Gatti (2008, p. 62, our translation), points out that

During the last decade, the concern with teacher education has entered the world agenda due to the combination of two movements: On the one hand, the pressures of the world of work, which has been structured under new conditions, following a computerized model and regarding the value acquired by knowledge, on the other hand, the ascertainment of the extent assumed by the precarious school performance of a large part of the population by the government systems. One contradiction and one dead end. Public policies and political actions then, move towards curricular reforms and changes in the education of teachers who are in

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<sup>1</sup> National Plan for the Development of Basic Education Teachers

charge of forming new generations.

Faced with a scenario of shortages and emergencies that accumulated in the educational sphere, in April 2007, the Federal Government launched the *Plano de Desenvolvimento da Educação*<sup>2</sup> (PDE), articulated with Decree No. 6,094, of April 24, 2007, which provides for the implementation of “*Plano de Metas Compromisso Todos pela Educação*”<sup>3</sup>, in collaboration with municipalities, Federal District and states.

Subsequently, the program entitled *Plano Nacional de Formação de Professores da Educação Básica*<sup>4</sup> (PARFOR) emerges under the label of ‘emergency program’ created by the Federal Government and which was materialized by Decree No. 6,755, of January 29, 2009, and implemented in collaboration with *Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior*<sup>5</sup> (CAPES), the states, the municipalities, the Federal District and the higher education institutions, aiming to offer free and quality higher education for teachers without proper qualifications, but already in-service in the public basic education sector. PARFOR represents a policy that offers the opportunity of access to higher education to professionals who have not yet had the required instruction foreseen by *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*<sup>6</sup> (LDB), No. 9.394 / 96.

In this sense, the state of Pará adhered to this policy of teacher education and several of its municipalities were covered, including Capitão de Poço, which received some undergraduate courses, such as the Pedagogy Course managed by the Federal University of Pará and hosted and delivered by the University Campus of Bragança, Department of Education, held at Capitão Poço.

The Pedagogy Course was established with the main purpose of improving the learning process of individuals, through reflection, systematization and knowledge production. As a social science, Pedagogy must be connected with the knowledge socially produced, as well as focused on meeting the educational standards of each country where it belongs to (SILVA, 1999).

According to Franco (2008, p. 149, our translation), the Pedagogy course...

Represents the only undergraduate course where the critical and contextualized analysis of education and teaching is carried out as a social praxis providing the future pedagogue with theoretical, scientific and technical development with a view to deepening pedagogical theory, educational research and the exercise of specific pedagogical activities.

Certainly, throughout history, Pedagogy has undergone significant changes before reaching the current scenario. It has become the most expressive course for the area of Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education, not to mention its dimensions in the fields of management, pedagogical coordination in school and non-school environments, which goes beyond didactics itself.

From this scenario, rises the motivation to research on this topic, a decision made for several reasons and, particularly, for the opportunity of sharing the daily experiences undertaken with Class 3, year 2015,

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<sup>2</sup> Education Development Plan

<sup>3</sup> Target Plan Commitment All for Education

<sup>4</sup> National Plan for the Development of Basic Education Teachers

<sup>5</sup> Council for the Improvement of Higher Education People

<sup>6</sup> Law of Directives and Bases of National Education

Captain Poço, Pedagogy Undergraduate Course (herein denominated PARFOR Class 3). These experiences involved the authors of the present paper in the roles of professors and students allowing us to realize from distinct points of view, the challenges faced, the students' anguish and their overcoming efforts through routs full of doubts and uncertainties all through the course length.

Right from the very beginning of the course, some problems emerged as a consequence of students' difficulties in adapting to the course demands and expectations. Some of these difficulties turned into limitations and challenges to be overcome along the academic trajectory. The adversities, which reflected political policies, began to increase in the period of transition from municipal governments. It is a common practice of local administrations to substitute the staff of collaborators when a new governor or mayor is elected. As many students from this class were and are teachers with temporary contracts in several municipalities, namely: Capitão Poço, Ourém, Garrafão do Norte, Irituia, São Miguel do Guamá, Igarapé Açu, Ipixuna and Mãe do Rio, these structural changes resulted in terminating employment contracts, thus affecting the lives of many who were taking part in PARFOR. The obvious consequences were teacher-students' dropouts, financial difficulties and impossibility to meet commitments involved in remaining in the host city of Capitão Poço for the month of classes<sup>7</sup>, which involved material acquisition, food, accommodation and transportation costs.

In view of this initial contextualization, our study proposes reflections about the PARFOR program, highlighting the challenges of the teacher-students enrolled in the Pedagogy course, Class CP03, Capitão Poço, PA. At this point, it's useful to clarify the denomination *teacher-student*, justified by the fact that the PARFOR students were prior *teachers in-service* who returned to the continuous education environment to obtain adequate qualification.

The relevance of the present study is reasonably sustained, as it demonstrates the profiles, the difficulties and academic performances of the teacher-students from PARFOR, and its results may foster insights and promote policies for adjusting the offer for the new classes, ensuring possibilities of employment bonds and students' permanence in the Course.

In these grounds, we present the following questions: a) *What were the challenges faced by the teacher-student of PARFOR Class 3, in Capitão Poço, between 2015-2019?* b) *To what extent did these challenges affect or not the academic education process?*

Our main objectives were: i) to access and apprehend the policies undertaken in the initial education of teachers in the northeastern region of Pará through the PARFOR program; and more specifically, ii) to identify the challenges faced by the teacher-students during the Pedagogy undergraduate course, and; iii) to reflect on the impacts of such challenges in the process of academic development of the teacher-students.

## 2. Theoretical references: principles and concepts in teacher education

Teacher education has been the focus of many debates and reflections considering the changes that have taken place in the educational scenario and, consequently, the recent transformations have aimed to achieve the quality of teaching and learning in Brazilian public schools, which, certainly, involves teacher's

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<sup>7</sup> Many of PARFOR teacher-students came from neighbouring towns to attend classes in Capitão Poço. Considering the daily course load of eight hours, they remained in Capitão Poço for the entire week.

educational development.

In this sense, Saviani (2009, p. 144, our translation) provides us with the arguments, “the issue of teacher qualification emerges explicitly after the independence [of the country], when considering the organization of popular education”. The same author argues that the following periods in the history of teacher education in Brazil can be distinguished:

1. Intermittent teacher education experiences (1827-1890). This period begins with provisions of *Lei das Escolas de Primeiras Letras*<sup>8</sup>, which obliged teachers to search for instruction using the method of mutual teaching, at their own expense; this period extends until 1890, when the model Normal School<sup>9</sup> prevails.
2. Establishment and expansion of the standard of the Normal Schools (1890-1932), whose initial landmark is the São Paulo’s reform of the Normal School having as annex ‘the model school’;
3. Organization of the Institutes of Education (1932-1939), whose milestones are the reforms of Anísio Teixeira in the Federal District, in 1932, and Fernando de Azevedo in São Paulo, in 1933;
4. Organization and implementation of Pedagogy and Teaching Courses and consolidation of the Normal Schools Model (1939-1971);
5. Replacement of the Normal school by the Specific Teaching Qualification (1971-1996);
6. Emergence of Higher Education Institutes, Normal Higher Schools and the new profile of the Pedagogy Course (1996-2006) (SAVIANI, 2009, 144, our translation).

In this perspective, many reformulations have taken place throughout the history of teacher education. In particular, in the context of the 1990s, with the reforms of the State, when new educational development policies started to be demanded to meet the needs for improvement in the educational scenario. The purpose was that of qualifying basic education teachers to face the new challenges presented by educational process. From then on, a set of guidelines, policies and State policies were set up to promote changes in the educational domain, especially with the enactment of *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional (LDB)*<sup>10</sup> No. 9,394 / 96, which introduced significant changes to Education.

It is worth mentioning that, despite the recent amendment to LDB No. 9,394 / 96 (Law No. 12,796, of April 4, 2013), the major education law, after seventeen years of validity, continues to admit professionals without higher instruction for teaching at the level of *early childhood* and *early years of elementary school*. The “normal modality”, is still legitimate. Opposing Article 62 §4 which states: “The Union, the Federal District, the states and the municipalities will adopt mechanisms that facilitate access and permanence of teachers in development courses at higher level [to qualify them] to work in public basic education. According to Aranha” (2006, p. 45, our translation):

The neglect towards the education of teachers was compatible to a society not committed to prioritizing elementary education. In addition, the pragmatic tradition of welcoming untrained

<sup>8</sup> Law of the Schools of First Letters

<sup>9</sup> A normal school is defined as a school designed to prepare future teachers in regency competences.

<sup>10</sup> the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law

teachers prevailed. According to the assumption that there was no need for any specific teaching method. This trend, although beginning to be criticized by the government, would still prevail for a long time, due to the “artisanal” conception of teacher education.

That way, a generalized idea of decline and failure of the public school was disseminated, calling for restoration policies and taking into account that, despite the guidelines highlighted by the LDB of 1996, no effective national policy aimed at developing these teachers until the mid 2009s had been implemented, despite the fact that data from the School Census of that year pointed out to 638,800 teachers working in basic education without proper qualification.

Historically observing the inequalities concerning the access to education, especially to higher education by the popular social strata, Santos (2018, p. 5, our translation), affirms that “for a long time, education was restricted to a small portion of the population and only those who had real wages achieved higher levels of instruction and, consequently, better positions in the job market”. Likewise, the educational development of teachers was also restricted to those who had good financial conditions to seek improvement. Concurrently, those who worked as teachers were not required by law to have a post-secondary degree nor to have attended college. According to Nóvoa (1995, p. 21, our translation),

There is a profusion of overlapping and repetitive discourses, which are translated into a poverty of practices. Thus, analyzing the past and looking at the teachers' present, we perceive ups and downs in teacher education, its weaknesses, its limits and possibilities. This way, the consolidation of the teacher as a professional is a path full of struggles and conflicts, excitement and setbacks.

Previous studies portray the entire historical process and, more precisely, over the past two centuries, it is noticeable that, despite the successive changes regarding the teacher education process, the central issues have not yet been hit, revealing the precariousness of educational policies.

According to Saviani (2009), the need for teacher education was advocated by Comenius in the 17th century, however, the issue has only deserved an institutional response in the 19th century, after the French Revolution, when the problem of the popular institution was raised, stimulating the creation of Normal Schools as institutions in charge of preparing teachers to work in basic education schools.

Thus, in order to structure and sustain the educational development of these teachers, a series of legal documents arose, unfolding into actions in line with Art. 211 of the Federal Constitution, which states as purposes of the Federal Union, to “(...) guarantee [the] equalization of educational opportunities, and minimum quality standards of education by providing technical and financial assistance to states, the Federal District and Municipalities”.

In this perspective, the decisive policy for teacher education in recent decades has been dictated by the LDB No. 9,394 / 96. Following the world trend, the LDB determines that teachers of all educational levels should undergo higher education as recommended in Art. 87, § 4th, that is, after the ‘decade of education’ (1997-2007) was instituted, the admission of teachers to work at any education level began to require higher qualification or in-service training (BRASIL, 1996). However, the intended goal was not achieved and the “lay” teachers continued to work without the qualification required by law. As a



consequence, Art. 87 and § 4 were revoked by Law No. 12,796, of April 4, 2013.

In view of this scenario, the PARFOR project emerges – an emergency program created to comply with the provisions of Art. 11, Item III, of Decree No. 6,755, of January 29, 2009 – implemented in collaboration with CAPES, the states, municipalities, Federal District and Higher Education Institutions. The PARFOR program aims to offer higher education opportunities to teachers in service in basic education at public schools. CAPES data reveal that:

By the end of 2016, 2,890 courses had been implemented in 509 municipalities, located in 24 states of the Federal Union. During this period, PARFOR benefited teachers from 3,282 Brazilian municipalities belonging to 28,925 schools. Up to that year, the Program had registered 36,871 teachers taking a degree and 34,549 undergraduates (CAPES / BRASIL, 2016).

PARFOR was, then, planned among the actions of the PDE as one of the policies focused on improving the quality of Brazilian education. As a result of the joint action of the Ministry of Education (MEC), Public Institutions of Higher Education (IPES) and the Education Secretariats (SED), PARFOR has sought to put into practice the pact of collaboration signed among the Union, states and municipalities, at the same time that it has granted the federated entities autonomy and responsibility in the teacher education process.

PARFOR has been implemented with the objective of qualifying, within a certain period of time, as many teachers (as possible) among those who are teaching without an undergraduate degree, in compliance with Decree No. 6,755, of January 29, 2009. From 2016 on, the program started to be governed by Decree No. 8,752 / 2016, offering teacher education in the following modalities:

- I – Licenciature degree [teaching courses] for teachers or LIBRAS interpreters working in the public sector of basic education who do not hold a higher education degree or for those with a degree but willing to take a course in [and qualify for] the discipline they [effectively] teach;
- II - Second Degree, for undergraduate teachers who have been working for at least three years in the public basic education sector and who teach in a different area from that of their first degree, or for licenciature professionals who act as translator, interpreting Libras in the Public Basic Education sector;
- III - Pedagogical Degree, for undergraduate professors or translators interpreting LIBRAS who do not have teaching qualification [licenciature degree] to the exercise in the public basic education sector (BRASIL, 2009. Our translation and expansions).

Imbernón (2011) argues that the improvement in quality necessarily depends on teamwork becoming truly collaborative. It is up to the public administration – in the case of Brazil, the state and municipal education departments – to offer solid support to schools, so that the real transformation occurs in the performance of teachers. In addition, the author advocates,

In-service education requires an effective collaboration environment among peers. Whoever is not willing to change oneself will not transform the practice. Whoever thinks all they do is right, does not question their own actions. It is also necessary that the school or the education unit

has a stable organization – based on principles of respect, democratic leadership and collaborative participation – and admits that there is diversity among educators, which leads to different ways of thinking and acting (IMBERNÓN, 2011, p. 46. Our translation).

However, Gatti and Barreto (2009), emphasize that due to the very recent implementation of PARFOR, it would be necessary to wait a little longer to evaluate the effectiveness of what had been proposed, achieved and expected for the coming years, in reference to what reads in Decree 6,755 / 2009. However, there is strong evidence of limitations and contradictions that may compromise the quality of instruction offered by Higher Education Institutions, and therefore, such evidences must be subject of critical appraisal, as is the case under focus in the present study.

According to Demo (2000), the pillar of educational quality is the teacher – seen as someone who learns to learn, who thinks, educates others and is concurrently educated – a professional aiming at transforming the context, in which he exercises his profession.

In respect to this issue, Nóvoa (1995, p. 25, our translation) argues that ...

To undergo a degree implies a personal investment, free and creative work [in terms of selecting] the routs and projects, with a view to building an identity, which is also a professional identity (...). Consolidating a profession is not a process of accumulation (of courses, knowledge or techniques), but it requires critical reflection over practices and the permanent construction of a personal identity. That is why it is so important to invest in people and grant a status to the knowledge of the experience.

In view of the above foreshortened history, although in brief analysis, several changes in teachers' education policies are taking place and gaining more and more space in the scene of educational discussions and, in face of these changes and transitions, the history of Brazilian education – teachers' qualifications for the early years, for example – went through many transformations, implying new assignments to teaching practice.

### **3 Methodological Procedures**

#### ***3.1 Locus of the study***

The present study took place in the municipality of Capitão Poço, Pará, located in northeastern Pará, 224 km from the capital, Belém (Figure 1). According to IBGE (2018), the estimated population of Capitão Poço is 54,179 inhabitants.





**Figure 1.** Location of Capitão Poço. Source (Google maps 2019).

The economy of the municipality is based on cattle farming, vegetable extraction, commerce and agriculture. However, over time, a new source of economic activity has emerged – orange production – thus, upgrading Capitão Poço to the status of ‘the largest orange producer in the State of Pará’. Black pepper has also contributed significantly to the growth and development of the local economy. Its production takes place on short and large scales and its commercialization is aimed at export.

The culture of Capitão Poço is frequently highlighted in local festivities, among which are: the religious manifestations – as the celebration to pay homage to the city's patron, Santo Antonio Maria Zaccaria in the month of July and the Procession of Nossa Senhora do Perpétuo Socorro, usually in November. In addition, there is the Livestock Exhibition of Capitão Poço (EXPOCAP) and the Enduro das Águas (EA), with musical performances, agricultural fairs and cycling tracks. Local handicrafts, with emphasis to wood carving, are also of great importance in Capitão Poço.

The education scene in Capitão Poço has undergone great changes over the years, always prioritizing its guarantee and quality, especially regarding issues of schools infrastructure and improvement of teaching and learning methodology, with emphasis placed on the presence of public universities in the municipality. It is important to remark that education in Capitão Poço covers the rural and urban areas. In the rural environment, although improvements have taken place, an expected and greater difficulty result from factors such as poorly maintained roads and school physical conditions, a curriculum that has not yet been properly designed for the rural reality.

PARFOR Class 3, the object of the present study, is composed of twenty-nine (29) teacher-students, out of which 02 (two) are men and 27 (twenty-seven) women. The class originally started with thirty-five (35) students, however, six of them dropped out due to the alleged reasons: (i) long distances between the municipalities; (ii) lack of financial resources to cope with travels, accommodation, food and study materials expenses.

### 3.2 Data collection

Data collection took place between the years 2018 and 2019. The research employed a qualitative approach defined by Minayo (2009, p. 21, our translation) as that which “deals with the universe of

meanings, aspirations, beliefs, values and attitudes”. Therefore, the study was carried out with total respect to the informants' narratives and opinions, following the principles of research transparency and objectivity.

We used participatory research and observation techniques, defined by Martins (2008, p. 24, our translation) as “the period during which “the observer must be competent enough to observe and obtain unbiased information, avoiding interference of their own opinions and interpretations. Patience, impartiality and ethics are necessary attributes to the researcher”.

Sequentially, a questionnaire was conceived and applied with semi structured questions, aiming to build up the teacher-student profiles as well as to collect information about the challenges faced along the academic trajectory. According to Marconi and Lakatos (2013, p. 86, our translation) the “questionnaire is a data collection tool constituted by a sequenced set of questions supposed to be answered in the written form and without the presence of the researcher”.

The questionnaire was sent to the subjects by e-mail to enable them to provide information from their own distinct hometowns, as their presence in Capitão Poço was restricted to the class period (January-February and July- August), in compliance to the academic calendar offered by UFPA.

### **3.3 Sampling**

Sampling is a fundamental stage of the research, at this moment the researcher has to be aware that it is not possible to cover the entire universe of the research focus, and thus it is necessary [to crop the corpus] and analyze a small portion of this universe (MARCONI & LAKATOS, 2013).

The target audience of this research are the teacher-students enrolled in PARFOR Class 03. Out of the 29 teacher-students, 06 (six) were selected to constitute the corpus of analysis of the present study [02 (two) men and 04 (four) women] belonging to the municipalities of Igarapé Açu, Garrafão do Norte, Irituia, Capitão Poço, respectively.

The criteria used to choose the selected subjects were: the distance between the municipalities of origin and Capitão Poço (closer and more distant); the length of experience in teaching (novice and experienced teachers) and the situation of employment (employed and unemployed).

### **3.4 Data analysis**

Data processing was carried out through content analysis, which is one fruitful way to interpret the researched knowledge. Chizzotti (1998, p. 115, our translation) comments, it is “content analysis that builds a set of procedures and techniques to extract the meaning of a text by means of elementary units”.

## **4 Results and discussion**

### **4.1 Informants Profiles**

Concerning the profile of the informants, ages ranged from 36 to 44 years (average age is 38 years old), which means they are within the “productive stage” in the job market. Regarding the time of effective teaching, we have found it to vary from 3 to 18 years (teaching experience average is 13 years) in public institutions. In addition, Table 1 presents other necessary elements to compose the teacher-students' profiles.

**TABLE 1.** PARFOR Class 3 Teacher-Students' Profiles

RESEARCH SUBJECTS	AGE	GENDER	TEACHING EXPERIENCE	SCHOOLING LEVEL BEFORE PARFOR
Teach-Std 01	36	F	03 yrs.	Regular Upper Secondary Education
Teach-Std 02	37	M	14 yrs.	Higher Education Biology
Teach-Std 03	37	F	08 yrs.	Higher Education Geography
Teach-Std 04	38	F	08 yrs.	Regular Upper Secondary Education
Teach-Std 05	44	F	25 yrs.	Secondary level - Normal course (regency)
Teach-Std 06	37	M	18 yrs.	Secondary level - Normal course (regency)

Collected data allowed us to figure out that of the six informants, three are employed and the other half, unemployed. We were also able to confirm this circumstance of unemployment came forward after these professionals joined the PARFOR program, as a result of political changes in public administrators in their municipalities. Table 2 presents elements that sustain the arguments made so far.

**TABLE 2.** PARFOR Class 3 Teacher-Students' Origins, Distances, Employment bonds, Incomes and Expenditures

Informants	Origin and Distance	KM	Employment bonds	Monthly income	Afforded Expenditures
Teach-Std 01	Capitão Poço	13	Unemployed	Below one minimum wage <sup>11</sup>	Own and Familial resources
Teach-Std 02	Garrafão do Norte	36	Employed (Temporary contr.)	Over one minimum wage	Own resources
Teach-Std 03	Capitão Poço	3	Unemployed	None	Family Support
Teach-Std 04	Irituia	58	Unemployed	Below one minimum wage	Own and Familial resources
Teach-Std 05	Garrafão do Norte	36	Employed (Civil servant)	Over one minimum wage	Own resources
Teach-Std 06	Igarapé-Açu	110	Employed (Civil servant)	Over one minimum wage	Own resources

The table above allow us to visualize some of the challenges faced by teacher-students of PARFOR Class 3. Distances vary considerably according to the origin of the municipality. Some have to travel up to 110 km to reach the city of Capitão Poço where classes are held.

Furthermore, we must emphasize that the challenges imposed to teacher education today, go far beyond the logistic and financial issues mentioned above. They also reverberate, with greater intensity, on subjective, political and ideological issues such as 'what it means being a teacher today in our country'. About that Nóvoa (2009) affirms

We all know that it is impossible to define the << good teacher >>, except through these endless lists of competences, whose mere exhausting enumeration becomes unbearable. But it is possible, perhaps, to outline some simple behaviors, suggesting principles that characterize the teaching work in contemporary societies (NÓVOA, 2009, p. 28, our translation).

Some elements to overcome the pedagogical difficulties and characterize the professional profile, are put, not as a recipe, but in the category of possible indicators, namely: "knowledge, professional culture,

<sup>11</sup> Minimum wage in Brazil by the time of this research is R\$ 1.045,00 (One thousand and forty-five reais) per month

the pedagogical touch, the teamwork and social commitment” (NÓVOA, 2009, p. 30, our translation). In other words, based on these indicators, teacher education should be particularly thought and conceived, especially for the PARFOR target audience (teacher-students, who are already in service and looking for theoretical support to their pedagogical praxis). We would boldly risk to describe this movement towards further professional development as ‘theoretical deepening’ and ‘improvement of practices’ in the education context of basic education.

#### **4.2 The challenges revealed in the academic development of PARFOR teacher-students**

Undeniably, the fact of being a professional in the field of education and being compelled by law to carry out the required qualification, provokes anxiety and expectations in anyone who has already developed contextualized pedagogical practices. To be exposed to the theoretical burden that a higher education course curriculum requires, means to undress oneself of previously acquired knowledges and beliefs. It means to deconstruct attitudes and to question oneself about what underlies certain pedagogical choices and decisions, and this is not an easy task. It is, at some extent, what PARFOR teacher-students feel and deal with.

This scenario marked by personal and professional achievements and critical thinking brings frustration as well. In view of this argument, the researched subjects were asked: *Are you currently working as a teacher? If not, explain why.* The responses showed that 50% were employed teachers and the other 50% said they were not. Two informants whose answers reflected the direct and decisive political influence were selected to illustrate this point. The teacher-students justified their condition as follows:

*As I was not approved in a public contest, but contracted due to political indication, my contract was cancelled with the change of the administrator (teacher- student 1).*

*At the moment, I am not teaching because the candidate I voted lost (the election) and that is why I am unemployed (teacher- student 3).* [Our translation]

From the responses, one can see that the teacher-students have been targets, thus subject to the party policy processes, which certainly have directly impacted on the qualification process of these professionals.

Therefore, we question the primary objectives of PARFOR – to enable the qualification of a teacher-student whose profile demand them to be ‘in service’ and bring into the program, their professional identities, accumulated knowledge and their usual classroom practices, and ultimately, to face theories to support or reformulate such practices.

In this regard, we understand that:

Education processes are, in fact, self-education, since teachers rework their initial knowledge in contrast to their practical experiences, daily experienced in school contexts. In this confrontation and through a collaborative dynamics of exchanging experiences and practices, teachers build their knowledge as they practice, that is, constantly reflecting on and about practice (PIMENTA, 1999, p. 29, our translation).

Afterwards, the same informants were asked to mention the main expenses implicated in their maintenance in the PARFOR program considering all its specificities. Both described as their main expenses, the cost of transportation, food, accommodation and acquisition of study material.

In addition to these socioeconomic difficulties, the research revealed other challenges that are no less challenging and are related to time constraints, learning difficulties and interpersonal relationships, as we can see in three sample answers below:

Difficulties... all time, because it is very busy, and having to cope with a discipline in just one week, having to do the tasks in a hurry (teacher-student 2).

Time spent with travels, transportation cost, distance, little time for studies, physical and emotional exhaustion, insecurity to perform academic works, adaptation to academic routine, understanding the contents, and difficulties in public speaking in the explorations of the seminars (teacher-student 5).

The first challenge was to start over, then the distance from home, from the family, coming into daily contact with people who think completely different from you, having to do almost 100% of the activities in groups. The latter was the greatest difficulty of all (teacher-student 6).

The challenges go beyond budget limits – a dimension where the adaptive process to the academy is not easy. An attitude of strangeness, critical stance or disapproval naturally expected when there are daily obstacles to overcome, among PARFOR student-teachers represented a constant challenge.

In sequence, informants were asked: “*Did the methodologies used by PARFOR professors favor your learning?*”.

In this sense, the most significant responses were:

*To tell you the truth, I expected more. Regarding the methodologies, basically all used the same tiring methodologies: reading, discussion, group work, exposure ... Not to mention when the same teacher comes back to teach another subject, the subject changes, but the tiring methodology is always the same* (teacher-student 6, our translation).

*Some teachers brought methodologies that facilitated my learning, and the class was more productive, such as: discussion, lecture, integrated panel, work exhibition, field class, among others* (teacher-student 3, our translation).

By analyzing the responses, it is noticeable that for some, the methodologies were considered obsolete, meaningless for the learning process, however, others point out that they contributed to the education process. In other words, we may infer from those “apparent” discrepancies that the learning styles and expectations are very specific to each teacher-student, involving learning time and motivation levels, which impact teacher-students’ views of the methodological teaching process.

Certainly, these views raise other complex arguments and reverberate into the discussion about teaching methodologies and didactics. In that sense, Libâneo (2013) affirms “Didactics is characterized as mediation between the theoretical and scientific bases of school education and the teaching practice of school education and teaching practice. It operates as a bridge linking the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of the school pedagogical process” (LIBÂNEO, 2013, p. 27, our translation).

Still on didactics, Zabala (1998), emphasizes “once the didactic units are determined as preferential units for the analysis of educational practice, it is necessary to search for their dimensions in order to be able to analyze the differential characteristics in each of the different ways of teaching” (ZABALA, 1998,

p. 19, our translation). In other words, it means that the methodological process of the teacher must be understood as capable of making the didactic transposition between the one who teaches and the one who learns, as a mediator and facilitator of the entire educational process.

#### ***4.3 Evaluation processes and their implications for learning***

The act of evaluating in higher education demands, as in any other level of education, that the teacher be aware of the movement and effort to be carried out, and that the process be understood, taking into account some indicators as proposed by Hoffmann (2003, p. 52, our translation). The author as affirms that evaluation is “movement, it is action and reflection”. Therefore, this dynamic requires multiple views from the professional, since evaluating “the other’ in the classroom is also evaluating the teaching process.

In light of this understanding, we asked the question: “*With regard to the evaluation criteria used by PARFOR professors, did you, at any time, feel wronged?*”. Two answers were selected to demonstrate that the evaluation process, at times, was considered unfair by some, while others, thought it contributed to their educational development, as shown in the statements below:

Yes. Because many of the teachers did not seem to take the evaluation criteria very seriously and, in a way, it caused a certain discouragement. It didn't seem worth it to try so hard and in the end the concepts were the same (teacher-student 5, our translation).

Yes, because some teachers did not manage to have a dialogue with the class, they did not accept the students' argument and this fact ended up implying the average, and there is also that teacher who does not stimulate the students and acts rudely, as if they possessed all the knowledge (teacher-student 3, our translation).

No, I believe that each teacher has his own way of evaluating (teacher-student 2, our translation).

We rationalize that the answers provided require detailed analysis, as some imply the idea of quantity and that their performance is measured. However, it should be noted that at the beginning of each discipline professors must make clear the criteria that will be used in the evaluation process, which, certainly, allows the teacher-student to have a parameter of his performance.

From this analysis, and from the informants' narratives, it becomes salutary to reflect over ‘evaluation’ as a process. Assuredly, when we assess “students mistakes, considering them essential for the 'future projections' of the educational process”, it leads us to expand understanding about “the possibility of uncertainties, doubts, questions that may affect us in the analysis of their responses, thus favoring the discussion about new and different ideas” (HOFFMANN, 2003, p. 53, our translation).

In addition, LDB No. 9.394 / 96, in its Article. 24, determines that “continuous and cumulative evaluation of student's performance, with the qualitative aspects prevailing over the quantitative ones and the results obtained throughout the period, prevailing over those of eventual final exams”, be the principles for the classroom evaluation process. Even recognizing that this Law outlines the guidelines for basic education and the topic under discussion in this paper is within the scope of higher education, we have the clear understanding that the development carried out in higher education will be reflected on the basic education, therefore, the analogy made here proves pertinent.

It is important to note that these elements revealing obstacles, corroborate to academic imbalance.



Therefore, we were motivated to ask the question: “*In view of all the challenges and difficulties revealed during the graduation process, do you think that these facts interfered with your academic performance? And, if so, how?*”. The responses demonstrated other additional elements to the challenges already referred above, as shown in the answers below:

*Yes, but I believe that these challenges must be faced and overcome, because they make us what we are. However, studying in another municipality, staying away from the family and, in a place where everything is done by yourself, makes learning difficult, because it is very tiring to study, do the tasks, prepare food, and do the cleaning among other domestic tasks* (teacher-student 2, our translation).

*Yes, because in the face of so many difficulties I went through during this course, my performance was certainly affected, and it was not possible to absorb the amount of knowledge I should have* (teacher-student 5, our translation).

*Yes, without a doubt, there is a phrase that marked my passage through the course and that I will never forget “I am no longer who I was. I am a little piece of each one who crossed my path and who somehow contributed with me” [...]. At each challenge overcome, a new way of seeing things* (teacher-student 6, our translation).

*Yes, in view of all challenges I am going through, this certainly affects my academic performance, as I am also concerned with other situations. I am a mother, daughter and housewife* (teacher-student 3, our translation).

Analytically, we can infer that the challenges imposed by the circumstances involved in attending PARFOR have been many. We emphasize the fact that they were presented as barriers beyond the classroom limits and factors such as “distance, family issues and financial conditions” were the central axis of the main difficulties mentioned by the teacher-students. However, their narratives reveal that these challenges were not strong enough to make them give up, they were fuel for persistence, instead. This is confirmed especially when meaningful words such as “faced and overcome” revealed they are people in difficulty, hardened of life, but sufficiently strong.

Finally, it becomes clear for us that other research possibilities emanate from the results discussed in this paper, which certainly should be explored by other academics who are interested in entering the world of PARFOR and its impacts on student-teachers.

## **5. Conclusion**

This research triggered several reflections, to the extent that it made it possible to understand how the PARFOR program was conceived, the teacher development policies aimed at basic education and the educational trajectory of its teacher-students. In addition, the main difficulties were evident both in what concerns taking the Course and also in remaining in teaching. However, despite the mandatory qualification for teachers at a higher level (in order to work in basic education) having already been legitimated through the LDB, there is still a great demand in the educational context for teachers without the adequate and required certification.

Therefore, it becomes evident in the present study that PARFOR turns up as an emergency and compensatory public policy and, as much as possible, it has contributed to an initial education phase for teachers in service in an attempt to correct historically rooted demands in Brazil. Nevertheless, it is recognized that neither laws nor teacher development courses alone can or will be able to guarantee the improvement and educational transformation that the country needs. Likewise, these changes cannot occur without the (trans)formation of these protagonist agents of education. Without the juxtaposition of laws and teacher development, the improvement of basic education will hardly occur.

On this grounds, this professional, who takes the role of teacher-student, needs to dive into a new formative universe striving to reconcile his personal routine with the demands of the job market and of the higher education, as clearly shown among the teacher-students of Class 3 from Captain Poço.

Teacher-students who volunteered for this research demonstrated in their responses that the main challenges faced were:

- a) The cancellation of employment contracts motivated by political reasons, thus affecting those who were temporarily hired;
- b) The financial issue affecting unemployed people who did not have the necessary conditions for their sustenance in the study city center, such as: food, accommodation, transportation and acquisition of didactic materials;
- c) The condensed feature of PARFOR disciplines, which cover an intensive period. Responses pointed out to the reduced time for the maturation of the information received;
- d) The methodology used by some the professors. Responses pointed out to a mismatch between pedagogical approaches and the intensive regime of classes;
- e) The evaluation process adopted by some professors. Responses revealed evaluation systems also represented challenges for the teacher-students.

In brief, it is undeniable that PARFOR has opened up a wide range of possibilities, however, we also recognize that much still needs to be implemented so that the proposed objectives are achieved in their entirety towards the improvement of basic education.

Finally, the present study suggests that reflections on the challenges posed to teacher-students should be seen as a set of indicators for improving policies and bringing together the issues of teacher development and the educational laws. Among these improvements, we emphasize, in particular, the need for state and municipal governments to guarantee that professionals seeking qualification through official initiatives remain at work and are provided with the necessary conditions to continue and succeed in their courses.

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