

## **Formação de professores alfabetizadores: reflexões sobre a formação continuada**

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### **Resumo**

A formação de professores alfabetizadores é um campo de pesquisa que requer exploração e problematização, especialmente em função dos índices insatisfatórios de aprendizagem inicial da língua escrita identificados por avaliações nacionais. Este texto resulta de um levantamento bibliográfico das discussões sobre formação inicial e continuada de professores alfabetizadores. Fundamentando-se em documentos oficiais e estudos de acadêmicos de autores como Gatti e Barretto (2009, 2019), Francisco Imbernón (2006, 2009, 2010), Magda Soares (2014, 2021), entre outros, este estudo tem enquanto objetivo contribuir para o debate sobre esses professores. Concluímos que os argumentos presentes nas pesquisas sobre formação de professores proporcionaram importantes entendimentos. Acreditamos que, após a formação inicial, os professores dos anos iniciais do Ensino Fundamental necessitam de aprofundamento em conhecimentos essenciais para uma prática pedagógica eficaz em alfabetização e letramento. Isso reforça a necessidade de uma formação continuada constante nessa área.

**Palavras-chave:** Alfabetizador. Formação contínua. Formação docente.

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# **Training literacy teachers: reflections on continued training**

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## **Abstract**

The training of literacy teachers is a research field that requires further exploration and critical examination, especially due to the unsatisfactory levels of initial written language learning identified by national assessments. This text results from a bibliographic review of discussions on the initial and continuing education of literacy teachers. Drawing on official documents and studies by scholars such as Gatti and Barretto (2009, 2019), Francisco Imbernón (2006, 2009, 2010), Magda Soares (2014, 2021), among others, this study aims to contribute to the debate on literacy teachers. We conclude that the arguments presented in research on teacher education have provided valuable insights. We believe that, after their initial training, teachers in the early years of elementary education require further deepening of essential knowledge for effective pedagogical practices in literacy and reading. This underscores the need for ongoing professional development in this area.

**Keywords:** Literacy. Continuing training. Teacher training.

## **Formación de alfabetizadores: reflexiones sobre la formación continua**

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### **Resumen**

La formación de maestros alfabetizadores es un campo de investigación que necesita ser explorado y problematizado, principalmente debido a los índices insatisfactorios en relación con el aprendizaje inicial de la lengua escrita señalados por las evaluaciones nacionales. El presente texto es fruto de una revisión bibliográfica de las discusiones relacionadas con la formación inicial y continua de maestros alfabetizadores. Buscamos contribuir al debate que se relaciona con los maestros, basándonos en documentos oficiales y estudiosos, como Gatti y Barretto (2009, 2019), Francisco Imbernón (2006, 2009, 2010), Magda Soares (2014, 2021), entre otros. Concluimos que los argumentos establecidos en las investigaciones del campo de la formación de maestros nos han brindado importantes elementos para creer que, después de la formación inicial, los maestros que actuarán en los primeros años de la Educación Primaria necesitan un mayor conocimiento, necesario para una buena práctica pedagógica en relación con la alfabetización y el letramento.

**Palabras clave:** Alfabetismo. Formación continua. Formación de maestros.

## **Introduction**

Teacher education in Brazil is a broad field of study, with many aspects to be considered. One of these aspects is related to the connection between teacher education and the improvement of education quality, as teachers are considered one of the most important segments in which investment should be made to ensure such improvement (GATTI ET AL., 2019; SOARES, 2014; DAVIS ET AL., 2011; GARCIA, 1999).

From this perspective, progress in education quality has always been a central issue in government projects. One of the indicators used to assess this quality is related to the literacy and numeracy levels of the population. In fact, the National Education Plan (PNE), established by Law No. 13.005/2014 with a ten-year term, sets as a guideline in "Article 2, item I, the eradication of illiteracy," and establishes as a target in Goal 5 to "literacy all children, at most, by the end of the 3rd year of elementary school" (BRASIL, 2014).

However, what we observe is that research still shows a concerning scenario regarding these indices. According to the 2021 Brazilian Annual Report on Basic Education, "the proficiency of 2nd-grade elementary school students in Mathematics and Portuguese expresses the great challenges of the educational system: 17.1% of students reach the two highest levels in Mathematics, and 14.8% in Portuguese" (TODOS PELA EDUCAÇÃO, 2021, p. 56). These data from the National Literacy Assessment (ANA), conducted in 2016, show that the challenges are significant, with the indices still far from the targets set by the 2014-2024 PNE. Thus, in this context, public efforts are directed towards improving these figures and boosting the quality of education, with a focus on the training of literacy teachers.

With this in mind, the present text aims to contribute to the current debate on teacher education, particularly related to literacy teachers. Methodologically, it is framed as a bibliographic review, as we seek to delve deeper into the subject. Aware that knowledge is not an individual construction, but the result of a collective process, it is necessary to situate the already consolidated theoretical panorama,

Critically analyzing the current state of knowledge in your area of interest, comparing and contrasting the theoretical-methodological approaches used, and evaluating the weight and reliability of research results, in order to identify points of consensus, as well as controversies, areas of uncertainty, and gaps that deserve clarification (ALVES- MAZZOTTI, 1992, p. 180).

To this end, the aim is to provide a brief overview of initial teacher education after the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education – Law No. 9394/96, and establish a dialogue with the training of literacy teachers, grounding the discussion in the conversations surrounding continuous professional development.

### **A brief look at initial training after the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law - Law No. 994/96**

Initial teacher education is a research field that has received significant attention over the years. Regarding the issues related to teacher training courses, Gatti and Barretto (2009) present a "state of the art" covering the period from 1950 to 1986, conducted by Silva et al. (1991). This analysis finds that studies focused on analyzing teacher education

highlight a significant lack of clarity about the ideal profile for this professional. Over time, various works have criticized the curricula of these courses, describing them as encyclopedic, elitist, and idealistic. They also argue that the different reforms have made these curricula progressively lighter, turning them into, for the most part, generalized educational curricula with increasingly superficial specific training (SILVA *et al.*, 1991, p.135 *apud* GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009, p.41).

Thus, we observe that the specific teacher training is weakened, as pedagogical issues are not addressed in depth, or are not given significant relevance in the curricula. On the other hand, with the publication of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB 9394/96) in December 1996, some changes occurred regarding teacher training institutions and teacher education programs. In this sense, the LDB mandates the higher education training of teachers, as we can see below:

Article 62 – Teacher education for basic education will be carried out at the higher education level, in undergraduate licensure courses, in universities and higher education institutes, with the minimum qualification for teaching in early childhood education and the first four grades of elementary school being the level offered in the medium cycle, in the Normal modality.

Article 63 – Higher Education Institutes will maintain: I - Courses for the training of professionals for basic education, including higher-level normal courses, aimed at training teachers for early childhood education and the first grades of elementary school; II - Pedagogical training programs for holders of higher education diplomas who wish to dedicate themselves to basic education;

III - Continuing education programs for education professionals at various levels (BRASIL, 1996).

With the aforementioned Law, teacher education became a requirement to be at the undergraduate level, in full licensure courses. However, for Early Childhood Education and the initial grades of Elementary School, teacher education was still allowed at the secondary school level in the Magistério course. Consequently, "at that time, most elementary school teachers in Brazil had a secondary school education, with a Magistério course, and thousands of lay teachers were part of this scenario" (BORGES et al., 2011, p. 105). Given this context, as provided by the Law, which set a ten-year transition period for the adaptation of education systems, changes in curricula were only observable from 2002 onward (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009).

As set forth in LDB 9394/96, in Article 63, Higher Education Institutes were responsible for maintaining teacher education. These institutes' "pedagogical projects for different licensure programs should necessarily be interconnected, thus avoiding fragmented operation" (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009, p. 44). However, Gatti and Barretto (2009) point out that even with efforts toward changing the perspective on teacher education regarding structure, qualifications of teacher trainers, and curricula, regulations and authorizations favored the establishment of normal schools, allowing these institutions to grow disproportionately compared to Higher Education Institutes. As a result, the reference and organic structure for higher education teacher training were lost.

In 2002, the National Curriculum Guidelines for Teacher Education in Basic Education, established by the National Education Council Resolution/CP 1, February 18, 2002 (BRASIL, 2002), defined that the Pedagogy course should aim to "train teachers for early childhood education and the early years of elementary school" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 28). Thus, regarding teacher education more broadly, not only in the Pedagogy course, these guidelines emphasized that the teacher's education should integrate pedagogical practice throughout the entire course. Another significant change was the flexibility in the construction of projects by teacher training institutions, provided they adhered to the key elements in the composition of the curriculum matrix. Article 11 identifies these key elements:

Article 11. The criteria for organizing the curriculum matrix, as well as the allocation of time and curricular spaces, are expressed in axes around which dimensions to be addressed are articulated, as indicated below:  
I - Axis articulating the different areas of professional knowledge;  
II - Axis articulating interaction and communication, as well as the development of intellectual and professional autonomy;  
III - Axis articulating disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches;  
IV - Axis articulating common education with specific education;

V - Axis articulating the knowledge to be taught with the philosophical, educational, and pedagogical knowledge that underpin educational action;  
VI - Axis articulating theoretical and practical dimensions (BRASIL, 2002, p. 5).

In contrast to the previous guiding documents, which were primarily focused on content-based issues, this document reflects a concern with structuring the curriculum matrices for teacher education, addressing pedagogical, practical, theoretical issues, and the construction of professional identity. However, it is emphasized in the single paragraph: "In the licensure courses for early childhood education and the initial years of elementary school, the time dedicated to the constitution of knowledge about the objects of teaching should prevail..." (BRASIL, 2002, p. 5, emphasis added). In this perspective, Gatti (2010) points out that, with respect to other licensure courses, even with the changes introduced by the new guidelines, the licensure programs for specialist teachers still focused on specific disciplinary issues, without giving priority to pedagogical training.

What can be observed is that there are many challenges related to the aspects mentioned. Initial teacher education is a concern not only for authors and scholars in the field but also for governmental authorities. It is evident that, despite the intermittent nature of these efforts, "some initiatives have had some continuity in the present decade, with reformulations or reductions, others did not move forward, and others failed to establish themselves in the direction of their goals" (GATTI, 2021, p. 12). In this regard, Gatti et al. (2019, p. 76) contribute by stating that

legislation and new approaches positively signal a pursuit of better teacher education qualifications [...]. However, research shows that there is a significant gap between the passage of philosophical, theoretical, political, and normative propositions and their actual adoption, with many complex obstacles to be overcome.

Therefore, we still have a long way to go in order to achieve quality teacher education that supports professional practice. Specifically regarding teacher education for Early Childhood Education and the initial years of Elementary School, or those who have completed, or at least should have completed according to the legislation, the Pedagogy licensure program, the issue remains whether to train "a teacher for the early years of basic education, or to train a general educator" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 29).

Throughout this section, we made some observations and provided a brief overview of the initial teacher education and the licensure programs. Thus, we observe that, in addition to the investments aimed at improving initial teacher education, there is not only a concern with the continuity of this training, but also a desire to establish a space for continuous professional growth

so that, in fact, changes in pedagogical practice and satisfactory results regarding student learning can be achieved.

## **Continuous education and teacher training for literacy educators**

So far, based on the observations of Gatti et al. (2019), research from the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), and official documents, it is evident that the initial teacher education provided in licensure programs has challenges and gaps, particularly regarding the alignment of curricula with the teachers' practice. Gatti and Barretto (2019) point out that the curricula of Pedagogy licensure programs, which train educators and teachers who will work in the early years of elementary school, are broad and fail to adequately support the practice of these teachers. In this sense,

despite the many educational reforms, the excessively generic nature of teacher education in Pedagogy programs remains largely unchanged, further exacerbated by the fact that these programs aim to simultaneously prepare teachers for early childhood education and the early years of elementary school, as well as specialists in education, school principals, and supervisors (BARRETTO, 2015, p. 687).

Due to the broad curricula, initial teacher education for teaching in the early years presents weaknesses, especially in relation to literacy and reading instruction. Highlighting these points, Castro and Teixeira (2019, p. 96) conducted a survey in journals about teacher education. In summary, the authors found that initial teacher education does not adequately prepare literacy teachers, as "when taking on literacy classes, these teachers demonstrate a lack of knowledge of the essential skills for the task of teaching reading and writing." In other words, teachers do not possess the necessary knowledge to mediate the process of acquiring the alphabetic writing system because "In most cases, they do not recognize the rules of operation and properties of the system, nor are they familiar with the methodological assumptions that support effective literacy practices [...]" (CASTRO; TEIXEIRA, 2019, p. 96).

As a result, after initial teacher education, teachers require further training, specifically continuous professional development, especially those working in literacy education. According to Magda Soares (2014, p.149),

the Pedagogy course has been the focus of a long-standing struggle to truly train teachers for early childhood education and the early years of elementary school, which has not been happening. There is significant resistance to any changes in the



Pedagogy curriculum, which may be training, at least in several institutions, education specialists, but not classroom teachers prepared to work in the early grades and in early childhood education. It can be said that the current situation in the country is one of a lack of initial training truly aimed at teachers who will work in these stages of schooling.

Indeed, the challenges related to literacy and reading instruction fall on literacy teachers, as they must possess specific skills and knowledge for this work. Therefore, it is crucial that curricula are tailored to this stage of education. It is worth noting that the initial training for teachers in Early Childhood Education and the early years of Elementary School includes the Magistério, Normal Superior, and the Pedagogy licensure programs. We have previously made some considerations about initial teacher education and discussions regarding its effectiveness in training teachers for Early Childhood Education and the early years of Elementary School. In summary, one of the reasons for this gap in teacher education is the broad curriculum, which hinders the preparation of teachers, especially for work in the years dedicated to literacy and reading instruction, as pointed out by Soares (2014).

Discussing the curriculum, Gatti et al. (2019, p. 75) emphasize the importance of clearly defining the profile of the professional who will work in the classrooms of Early Childhood Education and the early years of Elementary School. The authors also highlight that literacy teachers must possess knowledge such as “understanding the relationship between language, learning, and cognitive and social development; knowledge of the subject matter to be taught and the respective pedagogical knowledge...”, all integrating theory with pedagogical practice.

In this context of concern with improvements related to teacher education, the issue of continuing education arises. It is evident that teaching is a profession where the professional is always in a state of formation due to the nature of the work. In other words, on one hand, the act of teaching is already a form of ongoing education; on the other hand, it brings with it the concern for a systematic, post-initial education process.

Continuing education emerges as a continuation of initial teacher education. In this regard, according to Imbernón (2010, p. 16), who provides a brief history of what is called continuing education, studies conducted since 1970 do not negate the existence of earlier research and analyses. However, the author suggests that the beginning of investigations into teachers' continuing education, in most Latin countries, started around 1970, a time when studies and research aimed to “determine teachers' attitudes toward continuing education programs.” Most of these studies sought to analyze the importance of teachers' participation in the creation and planning of training activities. As a result, by participating in the development of courses, teachers enriched and guided

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the outcomes to be achieved in teaching practice, demonstrating that spaces for collective exchanges and knowledge sharing can be created among individuals.

Despite this, in the 1970s, continuing education for teachers was predominantly individualistic, meaning each teacher sought their own education based on their personal interests. Davis et al. (2011) add that individualistic training focuses on the individual, aiming to fill gaps left by initial training. In this approach, teachers have no space to argue or state their demands and needs, as the training is “defined in other instances and/or by higher hierarchical levels of education systems, disregarding the specificities of teachers and their workplaces” (DAVIS et al., 2011, p. 830). According to the authors, this model of education is still widely used today, based on the belief that teachers only need knowledge updates to fulfill their role in providing quality education to all students. In conversation with Davis et al. (2011), Gatti and Barretto (2009, p. 200) assert that,

in general, continuing education offered in recent decades aimed at updating and deepening knowledge as a natural requirement of work, in light of advances in knowledge, changes in the field of technologies, adjustments in productive processes, and their social repercussions.

According to Imbernón (2010, p. 18), the 1980s were marked by the rise of technicality in teacher education. During these years, initial teacher training reached the university level, which transformed teaching practices in higher education schools. In response to this change, continuing education programs were created, focused on “training modalities and leadership practices typical of the observation/evaluation model [...], rather than on a perspective where reflection and analysis are fundamental tools for education.” The technical rationality paradigm was a hallmark of this era, with significant impacts on education, mainly due to the

reductionism of the technical dimension, particularly in the fields of curriculum, didactics, and teacher training. There was an emphasis on organizational issues, where pedagogical action was reduced to the moments of execution and evaluation of the pedagogical process, particularly disregarding the political, economic, and social context of educational practice (GATTI, et al., 2019, p.181).

In the 1990s, a modest shift began in relation to the previous scenario. In some countries, continuing education for teachers had already been institutionalized, with the aim, as advocated at the time, of aligning teachers with contemporary needs and promoting the continuous improvement of their practice to meet present and future formative needs. However, the institutionalization of continuing education also had its drawbacks, as teacher training, historically influenced by a

technical rationality, led to a model of training through standardized courses, a model that still persists today (IMBERNÓN, 2010, p. 19).

From this perspective, these training models, often referred to as continuing education, are limited to transmitting technical knowledge and skills to teachers through individual or group instructions created by external entities, without the teachers' participation. It becomes evident that such a standard of continuing education, as described, is still prevalent in many of the courses offered to teachers. While changes were modest during this decade, it was a time when new forms of continuing education emerged, such as training in schools, permanent seminars, and the introduction of the figure of the advisor (IMBERNÓN, 2010, p. 21). The advisor plays a crucial role in linking what programs aim to offer with the teachers' actual needs.

From the 2000s to the present, as mentioned by Imbernón (2010), there has been a clear pursuit of new alternatives in teacher continuing education. The changes in technological, economic, and social contexts have created a sense of instability regarding the skills required to educate in the new century. In this context, a form of education that goes beyond the content of disciplines has become essential, requiring a new perspective on education.

However, amid these changes, educators entered into a “crisis of the teaching profession” (IMBERNÓN, 2010, p. 22), which led to demotivation regarding professional development and innovation, or in doing things differently to adapt to the new times. In this sense,

a crisis in teacher training institutions emerged. Given the obsolescence of the educational system of the previous century, there was a felt need for a new way to view education, teacher training, and the roles of both teachers and students. It became increasingly important to move beyond seeing teacher training solely as mastering scientific or academic subjects and to instead propose the need for new relational and participatory models in teacher education practices (IMBERNÓN, 2010, p. 23).

In other words, although still modest in comparison to what is truly needed, the continuing education of teachers begins to show the beginnings of a new perspective. In Brazil, in the 2000s, we observe a significant influence from the legislative change that occurred in 1996 with the promulgation of the Law of Guidelines and Bases of Education – Law No. 9394/96. In this regard, the law addresses many educational issues and, in particular, discusses continuing education. In Articles 63, Section III, and 67, Section II, it states that:

Article 63. Higher education institutes shall maintain:  
III - Continuing education programs for education professionals at various levels.

Article 67. Education systems will promote the valorization of education professionals, ensuring, including in terms of statutes and teaching career plans:

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II - Ongoing professional development, including paid leave for this purpose (BRASIL, 1996).

It is observed that there is a clear concern with the continuous training of teachers. It is important to highlight that the law also states that this professional development is part of actions that promote the valorization of education professionals. Additionally, a quality education involves the challenge of ensuring that "education professionals receive quality training, both initial and ongoing, in addition to career and salary plans that promote greater professionalization" (BRASIL, 2005, p. 20).

As a result, the pursuit of quality training has been the subject of extensive discussions, raising questions such as: how can quality training be offered to teachers? Can isolated and sporadic courses be considered quality training? In this regard, some authors have questioned the model of ongoing training adopted, which in most cases does not address the necessary demands of teachers.

First, contemporary teachers require skills to teach in diverse contexts with a variety of subjects. From this perspective, it is a challenge for teacher education programs "to design a curriculum that balances and integrates the political, ethical, human, aesthetic, technical, and cultural dimensions" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 177). Regarding continuous professional development, the authors argue that "the discontinuity of programs and the lack of ongoing training opportunities that consider the stages of teachers' professional lives should be addressed, along with policies that simultaneously train and strengthen both the teaching staff and the management team [...]" (GATTI, et al., 2019, p.178).

The contemporary scenario demands a training model that overcomes the fragmentation and disconnection between initial and continuous education. This refers to "the conception of the teacher as a professional in education, as it involves evolution and continuity, overcoming the traditional juxtaposition between initial and ongoing training" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 183). Given the challenges faced by teacher education programs, continuous training emerges as a response to the gaps left by these programs. Thus, "the idea of continuous training as professional improvement has also shifted to a compensatory concept of training aimed at filling the gaps left by initial training" (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009, p. 200).

Over the years, several criticisms have been made regarding continuous training, especially those from an individualistic perspective. These criticisms are based on the low impact of

continuous training on student outcomes, the short duration of the courses, and the limited participation of teachers in the formulation and definition of policies (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009).

In the same vein, Magda Soares (2014) argues that,

there are gaps to be filled, as the courses "do not train teachers, but specialists in education." However, what continuing education programs, even if they aim to fill these gaps, often ignore is that teachers already arrive with a wealth of knowledge. They continuously build knowledge about teaching and learning, about the possibilities and limits of the school context, which forces the need to rebuild the concept of practice and its relationship with theory (SOARES, 2014, p. 153).

It is also important to highlight that, according to Davis et al. (2011), continuing education is conceptualized in two perspectives: the individualistic and the collaborative. The individualistic perspective, as discussed earlier, is one that centers solely on the individual, without collaboration or collective construction. In contrast to the individualistic perspective of continuing education, the collaborative perspective is characterized by the participation of all actors involved in the school context, with the school itself being the space for training. This perspective focuses on the demands and challenges faced in the workplace as a guide for conducting the training. It is divided into two subgroups: the first suggests that the pedagogical coordinator is responsible for the teachers' training, and the second "seeks to strengthen and legitimize the school as a place of continuous and permanent formation, in order to create a collaborative learning community within it" (Davis et al., 2011, p. 831).

In parallel, Gatti and Barretto (2009) point out that the concept of continuing education adopts a new paradigm, no longer based solely on epistemological and technical issues, but redirected toward the teacher's process of self-growth. This paradigm understands that the teacher must actively participate in their own formation process, as they already possess theoretical and practical knowledge. Thus, the teacher becomes the protagonist of the training models, which, in this perspective, do not ignore their professional journey. In other words, "In this concept of formation as a continuum throughout the professional life, the underlying concept is that of professional development" (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009, p. 203).

Beyond merely filling specific gaps or offering sporadic courses, there is a conception of continuing education as a permanent formation (IMBERNÓN, 2006) that aims for the professional development of the teacher within the context of their practice, reflecting on issues and challenges in a contextualized way. According to Imbernón (2009, p. 49), continuing education should

"promote the personal, professional, and institutional development of the teaching staff, enhancing collaborative work to change practice."

Thus, by bridging the foundational knowledge provided by initial training with those acquired through the professional journey, and contextualizing them, permanent training should lead teachers to constant learning in a collaborative and collective manner. It is necessary, therefore, to learn from everyday situations, based on practice, in an environment of collaborative formation. Consequently, training should take place in the workplace (IMBERNÓN, 2006), establishing a context of "continuous learning." Thus,

it is advocated that "continuous learning" should be a concept incorporated into school culture through partnerships established between universities, schools, and educational systems. Only by working together can institutional cultures be formed in schools that provide support to teachers at different stages of their professional cycle (DAVIS et. al, 2011, p. 833).

Indeed, training in action, within the school context, is essential for teachers to appropriate theoretical knowledge and relate it to their practices. Therefore, "Continuous professional development should contribute to educational change and the redefinition of the teaching profession. In this sense, the permanent space for continuous professional development is no longer the isolated teacher, but rather [...] the teacher inserted within a professional body and a school organization" (NÓVOA, 2002, p. 38). In this context, Nóvoa (2002, p. 40) points to continuous professional development established within the school environment, grounded in collaborative work, with sharing among individuals and focusing on "problems to be solved" rather than "content to be transmitted."

In this scenario, we understand that the continuous professional development of teachers cannot be defined to be applied broadly, as different socio-economic-cultural realities must be considered. In other words, a continuous professional development proposal in one region may not be the best or most suitable for another area. In summary, "The context will condition the training practices, as well as their impact on teachers and, undoubtedly, on innovation and change" (IMBERNÓN, 2010, p. 9).

According to Garcia (1999), teacher training should be based on certain principles, including continuity and permanent development, integration of theory and practice, and the need to make the

school a space for training. Thus, the aim is "an approach to teacher education that values its contextual, organizational nature and is oriented toward change" (GARCÍA, 1999, p. 137).

The professional development of teachers needs to be supported by some essential characteristics. According to Pryjma and Winkeler (2014), the process of professional development for teachers should have the following essential characteristics:

It should be a reflective process through the interaction between theory and practice, situated in the context of action; it needs to be embraced by the teacher, the managers, and understood as being influenced by working conditions and organizational culture; its programs must be planned, developed, and evaluated considering both the teacher and the institution, aiming to promote the transformation of educational practices (PRYJMA; WINKELER, 2014, p. 23).

Therefore, teacher education is considered a continuum that begins with initial training and extends throughout their professional career. It is an ongoing process, "a continuous, cumulative learning that incorporates a variety of learning formats" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 183). Thus, the best conception of the teacher is one that focuses on their professional development, encompassing evolution and continuity, "which surpasses the traditional juxtaposition between initial and continued education and incorporates the notion of 'continuous learning' inherent to the culture of schools, which also need to provide different support to teachers at different stages of their professional cycle" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 183).

As we have discussed so far, it is clear that providing quality initial and continuing teacher education is a significant challenge. Given the many debates surrounding teacher education, one of the relevant and current questions is the training of teachers for the early years of schooling. Regarding this, we know that the continued training of teachers for this educational stage has received investment and research over the years, as there is still a significant gap in literacy levels, as highlighted by systemic evaluations.

In summary, literacy and literacy practices involve knowledge and practices that need to be mastered to achieve these goals. Specifically, literacy is "the process of acquiring the 'technology of writing,' that is, the set of techniques-procedures, skills necessary for the practice of reading and writing..." (SOARES, 2021, p. 27); and literacy refers to "the abilities to use writing to engage in social and personal practices that involve written language, which implies various skills..." (SOARES, 2021, p. 27). Therefore, teachers who work in the early years are tasked with both educating and ensuring that students become literate.

Thus, aiming for quality education and recognizing the processes of literacy and literacy as fundamental for the development of the student, the continued training of literacy teachers becomes central in public teacher training policies. As stated, "among all the great challenges for Brazilian education, none is more strategic and decisive than ensuring the full literacy of our children" (BRASIL, 2013, p. 6).

It is also important to note that initial teacher training does not equip teachers to transform the theories they studied into practices (IMBERNÓN, 2006). Moreover, one of the issues we can identify with the initial training structure provided by Pedagogy licensure programs is the training directed at literacy teachers. With the expansion of responsibilities and the need for training in various areas, gaps inevitably become evident.

Indeed, the skills and competencies of an Early Childhood Education teacher differ from those of a teacher in the early years of elementary school. As expected, given the wide range of aptitudes and knowledge that need to be developed and addressed in initial training, the curriculum becomes broad, and some theoretical and practical knowledge is not sufficiently deepened. On the one hand, "the broad and generic training observed in curricula has not met the challenges of educational practices in the different environments where they are carried out" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 29-30); on the other hand, the guidelines, which present a broad range of objectives and training needs, lead to "a certain degree of ineffectiveness and ambiguity in teacher training for early childhood education and the first years of elementary school" (GATTI et al., 2019, p. 29-30). It is also worth noting that the Pedagogy licensure is the only program that prepares teachers to work as literacy educators, and due to the wide range of aptitudes and the extensive curriculum, it fails to address all the formative needs of a literacy teacher.

In light of the importance of the early years of schooling and literacy, improving the quality of education is a key focus of government projects. In this sense, teacher training becomes fundamental to addressing these challenges. In addition to the goals aimed at improving literacy rates, the National Education Plan (PNE) - Law No. 13.005/2014 - also presents in goal 13, strategy 13.4, that it is necessary to

13.4) promote the improvement of the quality of pedagogy courses and licensure programs, [...] integrating them with the demands and needs of basic education networks, in order to enable future graduates to acquire the necessary qualifications to lead the pedagogical process of their future students, combining general and specific training with didactic practice [...] (BRASIL, 2014).



According to this strategy, there is a need for the Pedagogy course to meet the needs of basic education, as literacy and reading and writing skills are fundamental in the current scenario of Brazilian education. However, as previously mentioned, the curricula of Pedagogy licensure programs, which train pedagogues and teachers who will work in the early years of elementary school, are broad and often fail to adequately support the practical needs of these teachers (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2019). Thus,

despite many educational reforms, the excessively generic nature of Pedagogy courses remains largely unchanged, compounded by the fact that these programs aim to simultaneously prepare teachers for early childhood education and the early years of elementary school, as well as specialists in education, school principals, and supervisors (BARRETTO, 2015, p. 687).

Based on this, we understand that the training of literacy teachers extends through initial teacher education, making it crucial for the curriculum to be appropriate and robust in order to avoid superficial preparation for work in this field. Furthermore, it is essential that continuous professional development programs and policies are uninterrupted, providing support for effective professional practice.

## **Final considerations**

This text aimed to contribute to the current discussions on teacher training, specifically focusing on the training of literacy teachers. To this end, we provided a brief overview of initial teacher education and established a dialogue anchored in ongoing professional development, addressing the formative needs of literacy teachers.

In summary, it can be concluded that research arguments in the field of teacher training provided important insights for understanding that, after initial training, teachers who will work in the years focused on literacy and literacy development need to deepen their knowledge in essential areas for developing effective pedagogical practice in this field. Therefore, it is crucial to have continuous professional development that equips literacy teachers with the specific skills required for this work, which should motivate government initiatives to better qualify these professionals.

We believe there is still a long way to go, and it is essential to continue reflecting on the training of literacy teachers, as literacy is fundamental to empowering individuals to fully perform their roles in society.

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