


TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: PRINCIPLES OF THE TRAINING PATHS PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the Veredas Formativas program, developed by the municipal education network of Curitiba, with the objective of consolidating the continuing education of education professionals and strengthening their identity as educators. Established in 2017, the program seeks to organize the various training actions of the network and create a structured and cohesive path for the professional development of teachers. Based on Paulo Freire's conception of incompleteness, Veredas Formativas recognizes training as a permanent and collaborative process, promoting reflection and constant improvement of educators. In this study, we analyze the principles and objectives of the program, highlighting how it contributes to the construction of a pedagogical practice that values emancipation and social commitment. The research used a qualitative approach of a descriptive nature, allowing us to understand the different fronts of action of the program.

Keywords: Teacher Professional Development, Adult Teacher Learning, Continuing Education.

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INTRODUCTION

The Veredas Formativas program, implemented by the municipal education network of Curitiba in 2017, represents a milestone in the organization and qualification of the continuing education of education professionals. Designed to give identity and cohesion to the network's training initiatives, the program aims to provide a structured and intentional professional development path, which values growth and the exchange of knowledge among educators. In addition, Veredas Formativas seeks to respond to the contemporary needs of education, promoting a pedagogical practice aligned with the demands and challenges of a society in constant transformation.

Inspired by a critical and reflective view of teacher development, Veredas Formativas is based on the idea that the training process is, in essence, a continuous and collaborative journey. Based on the teachings of Paulo Freire, who sees the human being as an unfinished subject, the program adopts an open and dynamic posture towards continuing education. As Freire reminds us, human incompleteness implies a commitment to the "permanent search", in which the subject, aware of his incompleteness, engages in processes that challenge him to grow, evolve and improve his pedagogical practice.

By bringing together different training fronts, Veredas Formativas offers a space for reflection, learning and strengthening of the professional identity of educators. The training actions are developed in partnership with universities and specialists, promoting the exchange of knowledge and the construction of a culture of collective learning. Teachers in the network have the opportunity to participate in research, studies and activities that expand their understanding of pedagogical practice, strengthening their commitment to quality and democratizing education.

The program is not limited to technically training educators, but seeks to transform them into active agents of their own training and social transformation. By understanding professional development as a process that transcends the acquisition of skills and content, Veredas Formativas values the integral formation of the educator, expanding their worldview and promoting an education that aims at human emancipation. This continuous commitment to improvement reflects the program's greater purpose: to build an increasingly meaningful and inclusive education for the municipal network of Curitiba.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MUNICIPAL EDUCATION NETWORK OF CURITIBA

The first strategic management action, with the aim of strengthening the dimension of the professional development of educators, was to restructure the old coordination and transform it into a specific department, the Department of Professional Development. This change allowed for greater focus on training actions and enabled the creation of more consistent policies and programs aligned with the needs of the network's professionals. With this new organization, it was possible to establish a solid basis for the promotion of continuing education initiatives, providing more effective support for the improvement of pedagogical practices and the continuous development of educators.

The teacher professional development program of the municipal school network of Curitiba, called Veredas Formativas, was launched in 2017 with the objective of structuring the network's training actions in a program that would bring identity to education professionals. The initiative also aimed to consolidate the various fronts of continuing education, expanding the conceptual dimension of teacher professional development and strengthening the training of educators.

With these two important management commitments — the creation of a Department of Professional Development and, consequently, of a structured program to implement training actions, the Formative Veredas — the Secretariat assumes the complexity and richness of the teaching craft, consolidating it as a central axis of its management. This commitment recognizes continuous training as an essential pillar for strengthening teaching practice, valuing the development of pedagogical skills and the professional identity of educators. Thus, it becomes possible to respond more effectively to the challenges of contemporary education, promoting training that supports teachers in their professional career and prepares them to meet the needs of students and the community with quality and innovation.

The complexity of the craft of teaching is attested by Imbernón,

Being a teacher has always been a laborious and difficult task. In fact, the difficulty lies in being a good teacher and teaching well. Although in the collective imagination there is an idea that this is a simple job, which requires little skill because you work with children or adolescents, easy to treat and convince, with many parties and vacations and quiet work, the truth is that the education of children has always been a complex task (and now it is much more). (IMBERNÓN, 2016, p. 33)

The quote from Imbernón (2016) highlights the complexity and challenges inherent to the teaching profession, demystifying the simplistic view that teaching is an easy task or without great demands. He argues that, contrary to popular belief, being a good teacher requires a range of sophisticated skills and a deep commitment.

This reflection reinforces the importance of the commitments made by the Municipal Department of Education of Curitiba when creating the Department of Professional Development and the Veredas Formativas program, both based on valuing the continuous development of educators. By recognizing teaching as a complex activity that demands constant improvement, these commitments translate into management actions aimed at supporting and qualifying education professionals.

Such an approach values and strengthens the teacher's identity, promoting a training that prepares the educator to deal with the demands of contemporary teaching and to respond to the specific challenges of the context in which he works in this city with multiple educational territories. In this way, the Secretariat takes an active role in the construction of quality education, where the professional development of teachers is recognized as one of the pillars for excellence in teaching and for the full development of children and students.

The Veredas Formativas program, implemented by the municipal education network of Curitiba in 2017, was developed with the purpose of organizing and enhancing training actions aimed at education professionals. It was born from the need to structure a program that would not only promote the continuity and consistency of training, but also create a common identity and a formative trajectory for the educators of the network.

Veredas Formativas seeks to meet the specific demands and challenges faced by educators in the classroom, promoting the improvement of their pedagogical practices and fostering a culture of continuous professional development. Through different fronts of action, the program offers training opportunities in the various dimensions that make up the teaching profession, covering everything from innovative teaching methodologies and classroom management to socio-emotional aspects and educational leadership skills.

In addition, Veredas Formativas is structured to be adaptable and responsive, allowing training actions to be continuously improved according to the emerging needs of professionals and the educational context. In this way, the program not only promotes the individual growth of each educator, but also contributes to improving the quality of municipal education as a whole, by encouraging more qualified, engaged practices aligned with students' learning objectives.

In the initial development of the Veredas Formativas program, one of the central elements was the careful analysis of which types of training actions would be most effective to promote the meaningful learning of educators, considering the specificities of adult learning. From this perspective, we sought to understand the characteristics and needs of professionals in the context of training, with the objective of structuring actions that were not only informative, but also transformative and applicable to the daily teaching practice.

This analysis took into account that adult learning, especially in the educational context, requires practical and contextualized approaches, where teachers can relate theoretical content to their own experiences and challenges. Thus, the program prioritized active methodologies, such as practical workshops, case studies, communities of practice, and collaborative reflections, which value the autonomy, protagonism, and engagement of teachers in the training process.

In addition, Veredas Formativas considered the importance of offering continuous and progressive training, allowing teachers to develop skills over time, according to their specific needs and interests. This dynamic and teacher-centered approach reflects the Secretariat's commitment to offering quality training that respects and values the complexity of teaching work, while strengthening professional identity and the ability to innovate in pedagogical practices.

Vera Placco and Vera de Souza, in their fundamental work "Learning of the Adult Teacher," provided essential theoretical bases for the construction of the Veredas Formativas program. The authors point out that "adult learning results from the interaction between adults, when experiences are interpreted, skills and knowledge are acquired and actions are triggered" (PLACCO & SOUZA, 2006, p. 17). This concept was central to guiding Veredas Formativas, which seeks to promote a training environment where the exchange of experiences, the development of skills and shared knowledge drive the professional evolution of education professionals.

Faced with this challenge, the Secretariat sought to establish a certain uniformity in training actions. The intention was that, based on Paulo Freire's principles, these trainings would follow a consistent methodological structure: starting from problem situations, passing through instrumentalization, followed by practical application and, finally, culminating in a process of knowledge synthesis. This model seeks to ensure that training is anchored in critical reflection and concrete practice, promoting meaningful and transformative learning for educators.

Freire (2011) points out that "critical reflection on practice becomes a requirement of the Theory/Practice relationship, without which theory can become blah-blah-blah and practice, activism." This alert highlights the importance of teacher training that is not limited to theoretical content or isolated practical application, but that integrates both dimensions in a reflective and transformative process.

In the context of the Veredas Formativas program, this quote from Freire is aligned with the training model that emphasizes problematization, instrumentalization, practical action, and the critical synthesis of knowledge. This training cycle aims to transform learning into a meaningful experience, in which teachers are encouraged to question their practices and apply theoretical knowledge in an intentional and reasoned way. Initial problematization allows educators to identify and reflect on the challenges of their practice, while instrumentalization offers the necessary tools to face them in a reasoned manner. Then, the practical action puts this knowledge to the test in the real context, allowing for conscious and targeted experimentation.

The final stage, of critical synthesis, fulfills the role of consolidating knowledge, allowing the teacher to integrate theory and practice in a deeper and more critical understanding of his performance. This process, inspired by Freire's pedagogy, seeks to avoid both empty academicism and disoriented activism, promoting training that qualifies teachers to be reflective, critical, and intentionally transformative in their educational practices.

This entire training process has been developing progressively, supported by actions mentored by the trainers, who have the role of encouraging the students to innovate in their pedagogical practices. Mentoring seeks to help educators overcome limiting beliefs that sometimes hinder the process of teaching and learning, in addition to reducing the distance between discourse and practice, as advocated by Paulo Freire. In this way, the program not only promotes the development of new skills, but also strengthens educators' confidence to implement meaningful and transformative changes in their daily professional lives.

Since the beginning of the Veredas Formativas program, there has been a need to establish the concept of mentoring aimed at trainers in the municipal education network of Curitiba. This concept seeks to guide the practice of mentor-trainers, based on the idea of mentoring as an essential element for the professional development of teachers in the network. Mentoring, in this context, transcends the simple transmission of knowledge, promoting a reflective and collaborative praxis, where trainers become facilitators of the

growth and pedagogical innovation of educators, aligning with the program's objectives of continuously strengthening and enriching teaching practice.

In addition to its methodological approach, the Veredas Formativas program adopts the vision of consolidating itself as an integrated network, guided by the concept of "educating city." This management axis recognizes Curitiba as an environment in which education takes place in multiple contexts and through various social, cultural and institutional interactions.

The idea of the educating city expands the responsibility for education beyond the school, involving the community, public spaces and urban policies as elements that enrich the educational process. By integrating this perspective, the Veredas Formativas program not only strengthens the training of professionals, but also promotes a vision of education that expands throughout the city, taking advantage of the various facets and opportunities that the urban space offers for the integral development of students and for the strengthening of the bond between school and society.

Cabezudo (2004) broadens the understanding of the relationship between the training of professionals and the concept of educating city by stating that "an educating city must promote respect for diversity and facilitate the affirmation of one's own cultural identity, a collective identity that is based on adherence to the past, on memory, on symbols, on festivals, but also on the construction of a collective future in this common territory that the city offers them" (p.13).

This vision is in line with the Veredas Formativas program by recognizing that teacher training must go beyond the classroom, involving the city and its multiple cultural and social dimensions. Veredas Formativas assumes this responsibility by integrating elements of local identity and cultural diversity of Curitiba in its teacher training process. This approach allows educators not only to transmit content, but also to be agents of an education that values and preserves collective memory, while projecting a vision of the future.

Through activities that encourage engagement with the city and its communities, the program reinforces the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning that respects and enriches the cultural repertoire of students. In this way, Veredas Formativas contributes to consolidate Curitiba as an educating city, in which respect for diversity and the construction of a collective identity strengthen social and cultural development, training teachers capable of positively influencing the context where they work.

Another fundamental dimension of the Veredas Formativas program is its commitment to fostering the research process on teaching practice through research communities. This research network involves early childhood education and elementary school teachers from the municipal network of Curitiba, engaging them in partnerships with universities to form broad research communities on pedagogical practice. This collaborative format allows educators, together with academic researchers, to investigate, reflect and continuously improve their teaching methodologies and strategies, promoting professional training based on reflection and innovation.

Day (2001), based on Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1996), argues for the creation and maintenance of "intellectual communities of teacher-researchers or networks of individuals who engage, together with other teachers, in the collective search for meaning in their professional lives", using research to transform, when necessary, their teaching and working conditions (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1996, p. 93, apud DAY, 2001, p. 81).

The quote from Day (2001), supported by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1996), emphasizes the importance of forming "intellectual communities of teacher-researchers" as a means of boosting professional development and the improvement of pedagogical practices. From this perspective, teachers are no longer just applicators of methods and assume the role of investigators of their own practice, actively engaging in processes of reflection and collaborative research.

These research communities provide teachers with a collective space to discuss, reflect and reframe their experiences, exploring solutions to real pedagogical challenges. By engaging in a "collective search for meaning" for their professional lives, these educators begin to understand their practices in a deeper way, which qualifies them to promote significant changes in teaching and working conditions. This model of continuing education values the autonomy and knowledge of the teachers themselves, recognizing that they are agents of transformation capable of contributing to innovation and the quality of education, benefiting both their practice and the school environment in general.

This conception is directly connected to the action research at school program (PAE) of the municipal network, in which teachers are encouraged to investigate their own pedagogical practices under the guidance of professors from partner universities. As Day, Cochran-Smith and Lytle argue, the program promotes the formation of research communities, where teachers, in partnership with higher education teachers, explore and seek solutions to the educational challenges of everyday school life.

This model offers a continuous space for reflection and improvement, allowing teachers to see pedagogical practice from new perspectives, exchange experiences, and build knowledge together with experts. By integrating action research into everyday school life, the program strengthens the role of the teacher as an agent of change, developing an evidence-based pedagogical practice and contributing to the transformation of the educational environment into a network of collaboration and innovation.

The Veredas Formativas Program also promotes knowledge exchanges at various levels, encouraging exchanges of experiences between schools, where management and teaching practices are shared, and between regional education centers, expanding dialogue and collaboration. In addition, the program offers international exchanges, allowing professionals to experience immersions in prominent educational cultures, such as Finland, known worldwide for its exemplary educational system. Another example is the exchange to Latvia, where English is a mandatory language, receiving teachers from the Curitiba Poliglota program for an immersion focused on English language teaching. These exchanges enrich the training of educators, bringing new perspectives and pedagogical practices to the municipal network.

The international missions also include partnerships between schools in the municipal network of Curitiba and educational institutions in Barcelona and Granollers, Spain. This exchange was driven by Curitiba's commitment to the International Association of Educating Cities (AICE), which awarded the city the seal of Educating City. This type of international collaboration fosters the creation of investigative communities between schools, aligned with the principle of scientific research and the exchange of innovative pedagogical practices. These exchanges offer educators and students the opportunity to participate in global learning and research networks, enriching professional training and promoting the development of a broader and more collaborative educational vision.

The personal dimension plays an important role in the perspective of professional development, because, in fact, the personal and professional spheres are interdependent and complement each other. To highlight and strengthen this dimension, the Veredas Formativas program began to develop specific actions focused on the personal growth of teachers. These initiatives aim to promote the well-being, self-confidence and emotional balance of professionals, recognizing that personal development is fundamental to teaching practice and contributes directly to the quality of the educational environment.

Another fundamental dimension of this focus is related to the expansion of the cultural repertoire of education professionals, exploring the various territories that make up this educating city. The program encourages educators to experience and get to know the cultural richness of Curitiba, promoting experiences that expand their references and strengthen the connection with the local community. These experiences contribute to enrich the pedagogical practice, providing teachers with new perspectives and cultural content that can be integrated into the school routine.

Considering a challenging reality pointed out by Gatti and Barretto (2009) about the insufficiency in the initial academic training of professionals, the Veredas Formativas program implemented a specific monitoring process for beginning teachers in the municipal network. This monitoring aims to support new teachers in their adaptation and development, offering support to strengthen their skills and fill training gaps, contributing to a more solid and qualified integration of these professionals into the school context.

The insufficient preparation of future teachers to teach traditional school contents, even at the initiation level, requires a deeper reflection on the sufficiency or adequacy of polyvalent training and the interdisciplinary perspective. (GATTI; BARRETTO, 2009, p. 128).

The quote by Gatti and Barretto (2009) points to a significant deficiency in the initial training of teachers, particularly in the preparation to teach traditional school content, even at a basic level. This scenario requires a critical reflection on the adequacy of teaching degree courses, especially regarding multipurpose training and the interdisciplinary approach, which often leave important gaps for the development of specific skills.

This diagnosis reinforces the responsibility of the municipal network to offer specific training and monitoring programs for beginning educators, such as the one developed in the Veredas Formativas program. Such initiatives not only fill the gaps left by initial training, but also provide continuous and targeted support, which allows teachers to develop a safer and more effective pedagogical practice.

In addition, this reality highlights the need to review the teaching degrees, with a view to a collective commitment to teacher training, involving both the training institutions and the managers of the education networks. Only through an articulation between theory and practice, and the appreciation of the real demands of the educational context, will it be possible to train teachers prepared to face the contemporary challenges of education and provide a quality learning experience for all students.

Over the years, as the Veredas Formativas program expanded its professional development processes to teachers in the municipal school system of Curitiba, one theme was always at the forefront of discussions among the trainers: the mentoring process for professionals in training. This topic was continually debated and encouraged, reflecting the program's commitment to providing structured, personalized guidance that supports educators in their learning and professional development journeys.

Based on the principles of Nóvoa (2002), who states that "the exchange of experiences and the sharing of knowledge consolidate spaces for mutual training, in which each teacher is called upon to simultaneously play the role of trainer and trainee" (p. 39), the Veredas Formativas program created the School of Trainers. This initiative aims to promote the exchange of knowledge and establish, collectively, a solid concept of mentoring among the trainers of the municipal network.

By fostering an environment in which trainers can interact as peers and share their practices and experiences, the School of Trainers reinforces the idea that professional development is a dynamic and collaborative process. Each formator thus assumes a double function: that of teaching and that of learning, contributing to a continuous cycle of mutual improvement. This model inspires the construction of a mentoring culture that benefits both trainers and teachers in training, creating a pedagogical support network that values the exchange of knowledge as a pillar of professional growth. In this way, the School of Trainers strengthens the professional identity of the network and provides educators with a solid basis for innovation and the development of excellent educational practices.

One of the central themes of the School of Trainers was to develop a mentoring concept for the Municipal Education Network of Curitiba that reflected the praxis of the professionals involved, considering the current historical and cultural context, as well as the theoretical foundations that permeate their actions. In this process, mentoring was structured based on four essential pillars: monitoring, collaboration, action and autonomy, aligning with the principles of the Educating City that Curitiba seeks to promote.

Accompaniment, as a first pillar, reinforces the role of education as a collective and constant construction. It is not limited to the classroom, but connects educators, students and the community, strengthening the relationship between the school and the urban space, which, in an educating city, becomes an environment of continuous learning. The collaboration highlights the importance of partnerships between educational institutions, community organizations, and civil society. This exchange of experiences stimulates the

formation of a collective identity and promotes innovative solutions to educational challenges, expanding learning beyond the walls of the school.

Action, the third pillar, emphasizes the practical application of knowledge in real situations. This integration between theory and practice allows educators and students to become agents of transformation in their contexts, contributing to the strengthening of citizenship and social responsibility. Finally, autonomy reflects the empowerment of educators and students, encouraging conscious decision-making and self-management. In an educating city, this autonomy is essential for the formation of critical citizens and protagonists of their learning trajectories.

Mentoring in the Municipal Education Network of Curitiba represents, therefore, an integrated and innovative approach, which enhances personal and professional development, promoting a transformative education aligned with the values of the Educating City. This proposal transcends the traditional idea of training, by creating a network of dynamic interactions between educators, students and the community. Through this approach, an environment that values reflection, experimentation and continuous growth is fostered, transforming challenges into opportunities for meaningful learning. In addition, mentoring becomes a catalyst for the formation of a collaborative and participatory culture, essential to consolidate Curitiba as a true Educating City, where education is seen as a collective and permanent project of social transformation.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

To conclude the analysis of the Veredas Formativas program, it is relevant to recall the words of Paulo Freire: "Among us, women and men, inconclusion is known as such. But still, the inconclusion that recognizes itself necessarily implies the insertion of the unfinished subject in a permanent social process of search" (Freire, 2011, p. 54). This perspective of incompleteness translates the central spirit of the program, which understands teacher training as a continuous process, never finished, and intrinsically collective. By promoting constant reflection and improvement, Veredas Formativas embraces the idea that each educator, recognizing himself or herself as unfinished, is committed to a journey of search and construction of knowledge, essential for a renewing and meaningful pedagogical practice.

It is important to recognize that the Veredas Formativas program, by strengthening the continuing education of education professionals, reflects a deep understanding of the "incompletion" that Paulo Freire describes. According to him, all of us, as unfinished beings,

are constantly evolving and transforming, aware that learning is a never-ending journey. This recognition of incompleteness is essential for teacher training, as it allows educators to always be open to new experiences, knowledge and pedagogical practices, responding to the needs of a society in constant change.

The continuing education provided by Veredas Formativas inserts the educator in a permanent social process of search, as Freire points out. From this perspective, the program not only offers content and methodologies, but also creates a space for exchange and reflection, where each professional is encouraged to question and expand their pedagogical practice. This permanent search becomes a commitment to the construction of a quality and meaningful education, which values knowledge as something in constant construction.

In addition, Veredas Formativas strengthens the identity of the network's professionals, providing them with a sense of belonging and appreciation within the educational context of Curitiba. By promoting continuing education and creating diverse development fronts, the program collaborates so that each educator perceives himself as part of a collective that is also in search of evolution and improvement. This contributes to an educational community where everyone shares goals and values, reinforcing the commitment to a democratic and transformative education.

Freire reminds us that incompleteness implies the recognition of one's own limitation and openness to the new. This principle is reflected in the essence of Veredas Formativas, which does not aim at an education that encloses knowledge, but rather a training that provokes, questions and encourages the educator to continue his personal and professional search. This continuous process of development becomes, then, a liberating practice, where each educator can expand their worldview and improve their practice, contributing in a more significant way to the education of students.

The Veredas Formativas program, by recognizing and valuing the incompleteness of the human being, encourages each educator to perceive himself as an unfinished subject, in constant search. This recognition, as Freire teaches, is an act of courage, as it requires openness to constant learning and willingness to transform oneself along the way. Thus, Veredas Formativas is not just a training program; is a collective journey of knowledge construction and strengthening of professional identity, which aims not only at the improvement of educators, but also at the transformation of education in Curitiba.

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