

# On teaching as a cultural practice: categories to study teachers' work\*<sup>1,2</sup>

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## Abstract

The article presents theoretical-methodological arguments to consider teaching as a cultural practice, which grants materiality to the senses shared by teachers within the teaching scope, understood as a space of production, circulation, and updating perceptions about the elements that comprise the school scenario. The discussion is undertaken through a literature review, considering the praxeology proposed by Pierre Bourdieu as a conceptual framework, and the studies connected to the cultural history of pedagogic knowledge, from which we can grasp the assumption of a teaching culture. It presents analytical resources to study teachers' work, with implications for its investigation, as well as for the profession and teacher education. In the first section, the article discusses the interest in educational studies to consider teaching as practices through which teachers' cultural manifestations present themselves. In the second section, the theme is explored through the Bourdiesian praxeology and three characteristics are emphasized that we assume as being typical of the cultural practice of teaching. To conclude, the third section discusses the implications of this way of considering teachers' practice regarding investigation. We also present some considerations regarding the effects of the perspective explored here on the profession and teacher formation.

## Keywords

Teaching practice – Cultural practices – Bourdiesian praxeology – Educational research.

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This article gathers theoretical-methodological arguments<sup>4</sup> to consider teaching as a cultural practice (Bourdieu, 2003) produced in the concreteness of school everyday life (Azanha, 1992), in teachers' everyday work (Chartier, 2000), which are outlined from a pedagogical viewpoint (Azanha, 1990, 1991), typical of teaching culture. Shared between teachers' generations, this culture<sup>5</sup> is produced in the scope of broader school culture (Forquin, 1993; Viñao Frago, 1995; Julia, 1995, 2001; Chervel, 1999) and establishes itself in teachers' work, with empirical procedures and rules that answer to a logic and a moral that have specificities (Escolano, 1999, 2017).

From this perspective, teaching gives materiality to the meanings shared by teachers when teaching, understood as a space of production, circulation, and updating certain perspectives on teaching, learning, students, and other elements that build the school scene. This approach to conceiving teaching practice is supported by two main references. On the one hand, studies connected to a cultural history of pedagogical knowledge (Chartier, A., 1991, 2000, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2022; Carvalho, 1998), from which we can apprehend the assumption of a teaching culture. On the other, in cultural sociology, mainly in the praxeology of Pierre Bourdieu (2003, 2005, 2013), which offers analytical resources for studying the work conducted by teachers in schools, with implications for investigation, the profession, and teacher formation.

In this direction, the first section of this article discusses the interest for educational studies to consider teaching as *practice*, through which teachers' cultural manifestations materialize. In the second section, the theme is explored based on Bourdiesian praxeology and, from this perspective, we emphasize three characteristics that are assumed as typical of the cultural practice of teaching. To conclude, the third section discusses certain implications of this way of considering teachers' practice within the context of its investigation. We also present some considerations about the effects of perspective explored here for the profession and teacher formation.

## **Teaching practice as a category to access the concreteness of teaching**

Discussions about the cultural dimension of teaching have been undertaken in the last three decades by several researchers in the field of Brazilian education studies (Bueno, 1996; Arroyo, 2000; Catani *et al.*, 2000; Marin, 2004; Sarti, 2000, 2005, 2020; Souza, 2001, 2006; Faria Filho *et al.*, 2004; Vidal, 2006; Pincinato; Bueno, 2008; Pentead; Souza Neto, 2019, and many others). Using problematizations and research methods developed within different social and humanities subjects, these researchers seek alternative resources to interpret the school universe when faced with troubling debates about the crises of educational systems that mark the period. This change in the research practices in the area is explored by Faria Filho (2004), who identifies a confluence of researchers'

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**4-** Based on the literature review listed in the bibliographic references.

**5-** The use of the term *culture* in singular does not refer to an assumption of an univocity and immutability of teaching cultural dimension, assumed in this article from the plurality of ways it is enacted and considered by the teachers, since it is situated in school time and space and the broader social relations.

attention toward the everyday lives of education subjects, followed by the emergence of the category school culture for its interpretation.

The emphasis given to school cultural manifestations – among them teaching – echoes the seminal call from José Mário Pires Azanha in *Cultura escolar brasileira. Um programa de pesquisas* (1991), for researchers to seek to overcome the “abstract and exterior view of school” (Azanha, 1991, p. 67) that he identified as disseminated in the area, “excessively simplified” and, therefore, unable to reach the

[...] game of complex relations that occur in the institutional process of education” (p. 66) so as, as would be desirable, “to compose a comprehensive framework about the school situation, the starting point for an effort of explanation and reformulation (p. 67).

Azanha (1991) calls attention to the predominance among us, at the time, of a research style that he called, in *Uma ideia de pesquisa educacional*, a “pedagogical abstractionism” (Azanha, 1992, p. 41) a “more sophisticated and harmful” version of a “pathological variety of what should be a social scientific investigation” (p. 43). The tendency was initially identified in the North American academic context by Wright Mills, in *The Sociological Imagination* (1972). Marked by this abstractionism, Brazilian educational studies would be characterized, according to him

[...] by their wish to describe, explain, or understand real educational situations, dismissing the specific determinations of its *concreteness*, to stick only to the ‘principles’ or general ‘laws’ that, in their abstract scope would be, apparently, enough to deal with the focused situations (Azanha, 1992, p. 42, author’s highlights).

This situation of “descriptive poverty” (Azanha, 1992, p. 56) would be creating a “process of distortion or concealment of the real life through the naïve or cunning path of an abstract discussion disguised as a theoretical discussion” (p. 43), with “paralyzing effects over educational action itself” (p. 48). According to the author, overcoming this would require an effort to approximate with school culture, understood as “history precipitate” (Azanha, 1990, 1991, p. 74). An effort that, in his words, would only be possible

[...] through a broad set of investigations (multi and interdisciplinary) able to cover a broad spectrum of cultural manifestations that can take place in the school environment and that materialize in certain practices (1990, 1991, p. 67).

Thus, it is related to being aware of “the relationships effectively enacted in schools” (p. 1990, 1991, p. 71), guiding our efforts toward the description of “‘school practices’ and their correlates (materialized in mentalities, conflicts, discourses, procedures, habits, attitudes, regulations, school results)” (p. 72). Access to these practices would demand attention to a dimension of reality that he considered, so far, missing from the academic concerns: everyday life in schools at their “microscopic level” (Azanha, 1992, p. 61).



However, the author warned that the study of school everyday life would represent only one *possibility* of accessing the school everydayness, whose enactment would demand that the “revealing potential of the daily objects” could be “theoretically activated,” requiring “the formulation of theories” that “selectively [indicated] what and how to describe and analyze what, without them, would be a factual chaos” (1992, p. 66). Hence, beyond the many methodological challenges that these studies could imply, Azanha warns us about the centrality of the theoretical-conceptual dimension of this endeavor. According to him, the apprehension of everydayness requires that the researcher accesses the *totality* present in the particular cases, finding the “bond that establishes the connection and the continuity” among the multiple aspects of everyday life to understand what “apparently in an empirical chaos” (Azanha, 1992, p. 74). The access to this “*web* in permanent flow,” “totalities, apparently incomprehensible” (Azanha, 1992, p. 74, author’s highlights) would then demand a *conceptual operation*, a “cognitive exercise from a point of view, “that is always theoretical, in a much broader sense, that can vary from a personal, rudimental, and emotive perceptive framework, up to an explicit and sophisticated ensemble of hypotheses” (Azanha, 1992, p. 75).

At the same period, Justa Ezpeleta and Elsie Rockwell (1989) also call attention to the theoretical dimension of investigating schools’ everyday life, emphasizing that “the challenge of analytically apprehending what the everyday life gathers” (Ezpeleta; Rockwell, 1989, p. 13) presupposes a “theoretical construction” (Ezpeleta; Rockwell, 1989, p. 14). According to them, to deal with the “unicity of everyday life,” the researcher will have to give a “peculiar use” to the large categories proposed by social theory (State, classes, civil society, among others) but also has to build new categories pertinent to the level occupied.

This enormous theoretical demand, involved in the task of investigating life in schools, connected to a given methodological fascination already predicted by Azanha (1992), has hindered our more effective understanding of the school situation despite the profusion of studies about schools and their agents produced over the last 30 years. Our knowledge about school still seems to be critically limited by the bias of negativity, a tendency to emphasize what does *not* exist in it (Ezpeleta; Rockwell, 1989): teachers are *not* prepared for changes, the parents do *not* participate in school matters, the students are *not* interested in what school proposes to them or do *not* have their interests welcomed by teachers, managers do *not* get involved in pedagogical issues, etc. Despite the pertinence of studies that denounce possible flaws and gaps in schools, we seek to emphasize here our difficulties in describing school practices as they effectively are, in their positivity. This evident limitation in the field of educational fields is equally present in other discursive spaces about social life. As Bourdieu stated, “It is not easy to talk about practice in a way that is not negative” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 133).

In the specific case of the educational and academic field, certain goals and theoretical-methodological options have characterized the studies that only show what is *not* found in teachers’ work. By not paying attention to the teaching practices effectively produced in school everyday life, these studies tend to presuppose teaching as an “empty” space (thus, negative), lacking knowledge, and dependent on the mobilization



of knowledge produced outside teaching, in other spaces of the educational field and beyond. From this negative perspective, with an applicationist tendency (Azanha, 2000), these studies foresee that the propositional knowledge (Ryle, 2002) – related to a “know that” – created by academic researchers about the school facts and systematized in academic theories, once apprehended by teachers, would show themselves in their actions. From this questionable perspective on the relationship between science and technology (Azanha, 1992), the lack of evidence regarding the presence of these theories in teaching practice is often attributed to teachers' incompetence and lack of commitment (Souza, 2001, 2006) to apply them. Therefore, in the scope of these studies, teaching assumes an eminently instrumental character.

An alternative pathway to this one has been evident in the field of educational studies with the proposal of works that emphasize the role of teachers' experience and their intentions and pedagogical practices. These studies focus on the subjective dimension of teaching, which would result in a production from teachers based on their intentions, positions, and deliberations within the educational context. In a less evident way, however, teaching can also be assumed through this negative perspective, considering that it tends to appear as a potential, as a current non-being, an “exchangeable possibility” depending on the “consciousness decrees” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 70) of teachers, thus continuing as a mere expression of subjectivity.

Although these two paths emerge from theoretical perspectives that diverge in many senses and compete for space in the education field of studies, they converge when disregarding the actual relationships practiced in teaching (how teachers, in fact, act in the everyday life of schools). In the first case, the focus is on the fundamentals of teachers' actions, which would precede them and should offer support; while, in the second case, the attention is guided to *teachers themselves*, whose experiences, possibilities, interests, and intentions would directly guide their actions, expressing themselves through them. In any of these cases, the *teaching practices* effectively produced in the teacher school are assumed as the analytical focus.

However, the study of these practices enacted is what could grant *concreteness* to teaching so as to surpass the path of the “process of distortion or concealment of the real life” announced by Azanha (1992, p. 43). This is the central argument of this article, which guided the following discussion on certain possibilities for studying the teaching practice.

## **Teaching practice under Bourdiesian praxeology**

The arguments above suggest the pertinence of assuming *teaching practice* as a theoretical category to describe and analyze the objects of school everydayness, to theoretically engage them to access school everyday life and, more specifically, teachers' work, as stated by Azanha (1992). Considering the theoretical construction needed for this conceptual operation, we propose here considering teachers' practices from the sociological viewpoint proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (2003).



## The study of the social practice, according to Pierre Bourdieu

The centrality given by Bourdieu to the study of practices, a fundament of its praxeology, aimed to surpass the theoretical-methodological limits that he attributes to two broad theoretical tendencies that seek to study human actions in the social space. Briefly, as the consideration of the specificities of each of the tendencies surpasses the objectives of this article, we can affirm that the first one, which Bourdieu (2003) called subjectivist, tends to consider the social practices as a direct product of the subjects' presence in the world, thus, revealing their subjectivities and intentions; while the other, objectivist, in the author's classification, consider practices as the result of a mere application of social rules that precede the presence of the subjects in this space.

This last tendency negatively emphasizes regularity as execution without making explicit, however, the unifying principle of these practices, i.e., the principle of production of these regularities; while the other, when emphasizing the "truth of the first experience in the social world", considering it "as the natural and evident world" (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 39) disregards the possibility conditions of social practices. Proposing a "double theoretical translation" (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 39), Bourdieu resumes the objectivist problematization about the possibility of practical apprehension of the social world as the first experience that, as said, excludes the questioning about the possibility conditions of this experience, advancing, however, when questioning the (theoretical and social) conditions of the possibility of this question about the first experience, which is postulated by objectivism.

Thus, moving away from the construction of the theory of practical knowledge of the social world, which is grounded in the possibility of practical apprehension, but intending to overcome the identified limits in the objectivist perspective, Bourdieu (2003) proposes the study of social practices considering the dialectic relationships established between social structures and the structured dispositions in which these structures update themselves. It seeks to identify the generating principle of practices, its structuring principle (p. 48), considering that it is not located in the subjects, their intentions, which result from their familiarity relationships with the social world, nor directly in the social structures, like rules to be simply enacted.

Questioning the structuralist notion of rule as a legal principle, which presupposes the social action as execution and obedience by the agents, Bourdieu surpasses the objectivist structuralism when giving back to the agents some margin from improvisation in the face of social constraints. According to him, the practice establishes a ruled improvisation, having habitus as a unifying principle, as a system of durable and transposable dispositions, which allows agents a practical domain of the system of schemes of action and interpretation connected to their social group.

These actions are thus objectively organized as *strategies* (and not the mere enactment of rules) and are not a product of a true strategic intention. In this sense, the practices are produced by the dialectical relationship between these sets of dispositions, that is, the *habitus* and the situations, anchored in the agents' practical domain mobilized



in the situation. They are grounded in a practical sense (Bourdieu, 2013), allowing them to be reasonable and pertinent in each moment, which makes sense in the situation.

Therefore, this perspective affirms the existence of a logic of practice (Bourdieu, 2013), understood as a given way to work, a *modus operandi*, which gives it a specific rationality. For Bourdieu, this practical reason should not be confused with the agents' full awareness of their intentionality, not the simple implementation of an exterior rationality towards action. According to him, it is a reason in an operational state, incorporated, *lex insita*: a know-how (Ryle, 2002) that is not directly accessible to the agent or others, as it is not formalized or coded.

From a more general formulation, Bourdieu (2013) establishes properties of practice that refer to a certain time, to specific ways to establish unit and regularity, as well as the tendency towards a formal indifference. In this sense, according to him, it is typical of the practice to occur in the present moment, having urgency as one of its essential properties, which imposes a strategic game with time, that is, the anticipation of an immediate future allowed by the *illusio* of the situation, guided by the *habitus*. Present in the present, the practitioner does not have the privilege of totalization, which would demand a synoptic view of the relations established in the social space. Hence, for the agents, the meaning of their actions is everywhere, in a practical state, to be organized in the action, due to the compatibility established with the objective conditions of the situation. The mobilization of these practical criteria gives practice no more than an approximate and imprecise coherence, often foreign to the formal logic and the observers' viewpoint. This logic, engaged in a practical state, ignores the principles that govern it and the possibilities it contains, discovering itself in action and unfolding over time. It ignores the concept and excludes, by definition, the explicit thought, thus, abstaining from the question about reason and the reason for the practice.

Hence, the study of this logic of practice – at the ephemeral order, not committed with formal coherence and not necessarily interested by its reasons – requires focusing on the “relationships effectively practiced” (Azanha, 1992, p. 71) by the agents, in the concreteness of everydayness, through a positive approximation that preserves their practical functions.

This ensemble of assumptions, which consider social action from its generating and unifying principles, engendered by processes of cultural socialization, but that foresees a specific rationality that is typical of it, not reduced, however, to the expression of subjectivity of its agents, offering interesting theoretical-methodological resources for the study of teachers' work. Consider teaching as *practice*, in Bourdieu's terms, allows considering it in its positivity, i.e., regarding the senses that teachers' actions assume in the “complex relationships that take place in the institutional process of education” (Azanha, 1990, 1991).

## **Teaching as practice, in the Bourdiesian sense**

Approaching teaching as practice, from the Bourdiesian perspective, presupposes considering its socio-cultural dimension and understanding it as an element that provides



materiality to the shared senses in teaching culture. In these terms, teaching practice presents itself as a mobilization space of a *teaching habitus*<sup>6</sup>, the result of a organizing, structured, action, which presents itself as structuring, enabling the socialized agent to *act as* a teacher, though not limiting him/herself to the reproduction of teaching action models (Sarti, 2020).

The proposition of a *habitus* connected to a professional group, as is the case of teachers' *habitus*, echoes in the scope of the theory proposed by Bourdieu, which admits the possibility of agents developing specific dispositions adjustable to one or more fields. Nonetheless, this process of establishing a secondary *habitus*, as the teacher, "depends, among other things, from the primary dispositions, of how much they can be more or less distant from the typical demands and regularities of those spaces" (Aguiar, 2017, p. 231).

Thus understood, the structuring of teachers' *habitus* would involve socialization processes that occur in previous moments of the social trajectories experienced by the future teachers, mainly during family and school socialization. Considering the power of these primary socialization processes, we must recognize that the possibilities of reorientation and modification of these dispositions previously incorporated by students pose major challenges, requiring vigorous and lasting processes of teachers' professional socialization (Sarti, 2020). It is a quite demanding operation, as the *habitus* refers to an "extremely particular case in the possible ensemble of disposition assets" (Lahire, 2015, p. 1398) and should not be confused with the more banal effects of socialization.

To this end, as discussed in another moment (Sarti, 2020), the use of the notion of teacher's *habitus* in the scope of studies about work and teacher formation requires a certain diligence to avoid mindless approximations with the theory that grounds it.

As highlighted by Roger Chartier (1988), we should consider that the structure of a specific *habitus* takes place within interdependence and reciprocity relations established between agents in the social space, resulting, among other factors, in the re-elaboration of the *habitus* at stake over time. Also questioning the presumption of an invariable character of the *habitus*, Bernard Lahire (1998) emphasizes heterogeneity that marks the actions of subjects, plural beings, in the social space, whose socialization presupposes processes of appropriation and construction within the scope of social relationships they experience. From the arguments proposed by the two authors, it is possible to infer the changeable and situated character of teachers' *habitus*, which varies depending on different generations that succeed one another in teaching (Sarti, 2020) and due to the different social spaces and professional conditions in which teachers are involved. Moving forward in this direction, it is possible to consider the coexistence of different versions of the teacher's *habitus* within teaching, which are connected to specific versions of culture that teachers inherit from previous generations and from which they appropriate themselves based on their own social place.

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**6-** The idea of a specific *teachers' habitus*, initially proposed by Perrenoud (1993), was explored by Bueno (1996) through the notion of *pedagogical habitus* and by Silva as a *professorial habitus* (1999, 2005). The denomination *teachers' habitus* has been used in the literature by different researchers as the equivalent to the other two formulations. Nonetheless, within the scope of this article, the expression is taken as a resource to emphasize its connection to the teaching culture, as a space of production, circulation, and updating certain perceptions connected to teaching as a specific occupation (Sarti, 2020).

Thus, even considering these elements of differentiation imposed for teachers' professional socialization (Sarti, 2020), it is possible to affirm that the *teacher's habitus* (in the coexisting different versions in the social environment) assumes the unifying potential from which the agents *act as* teachers. Thus, teachers' practice shows itself as a regulated improvisation, in the Bourdiesian terms, resulting from the dialectic relationships established between the *teacher's habitus* and the school situations, always new.

*Teachers' habitus* can then be understood as a unifying principle in teachers' practice, allowing articulations between the broader socio-educational structure and their everyday experiences (Sarti, 2020). Therefore, it refers to a fruitful category to access what is universal – connected to the different versions of teachers' culture – in the particular, in the action of each teacher, acting as a “line that establishes connection and continuity” (Azanha, 1992, p. 77) for the everydayness of school, understood as a non-additive totality. As the unifying principle in teaching, the “immanent law” (Bourdieu, 2003, p. 64) that enables the action *as* a teacher, the *teacher's habitus* constitutes a conceptual tool to study teachers' practices, in their concreteness, overcoming the tendency of denying it as such by considering it as a mere space of applying theories designed externally, or, on the contrary, as a simple expression of teachers' awareness. Neither a space to apply theories nor teachers' subjective expression, the teaching practice, considered from the concept of *habitus*, can be accessed in its own concreteness, in its way of engendering, to be captured, described, and analyzed.

## The peculiarities of practice and the study of teaching

The discussions presented above aim to support the argument that considering teaching as a cultural practice provides theoretical-methodological resources for investigative access from a pedagogical perspective (Azanha, 1992), thereby addressing the concreteness of everyday work enacted by teachers, including their reasons and methods of working.

Nonetheless, according to the Bourdiesian perspective, the access to the *modus operandi* of teachers' practice, the specific logic orchestrated by the teachers' *habitus* demands considering its aforementioned properties (Bourdieu, 2013) regarding its temporality, the specific ways of establishing unity and regularity, as well as the tendency to formal indifference. The consideration of these *peculiarities* (p. 137) can offer essential conditions to access the logic of teachers' practice, enabling researchers in the area to free themselves from the epistemological mistake of confusing it with their own reasons, thus neutralizing what is connected to the practical functions. As Bourdieu (2003, p. 53) alerts, referring to Marx's precept, the point is to avoid an intellectualist behavior of considering “things of logic through the logic of things.”

In this sense, an approximation with the logic that organizes teachers' actions should consider, from the start, its temporal reality. As a practice, teachers' actions take place in time, strategically playing with time and progress (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 135). Teachers' *habitus* informs the sense of the pedagogical game, its *illusio*, offering the teacher a sense of their action's becoming that, always urgent as it is present in the present, carries within itself the strategic anticipation of the immediate future, grounded in objective



probabilities and informed by the past. The teachers enact their work by acting in urgency and deciding in uncertainty, as Perrenoud (2001) states. The meaning of their actions is established in the present, in the practical function, and can only be seized in the act, though it is strategically and at the same time anchored in the past and in the future.

As agents, teachers do not have the privilege of totalizations, working in the situations that take place and do not reach, in action, a synoptic view of their work, as

The practice that develops in time and has all the correlated characteristics, such as irreversibility, which destroys synchronization; its temporal structure, that is, its rhythm, its development, and, mainly, its guidance, is constitutive of its meaning [...] (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 135).

This temporality of practice can confuse the researcher when studying teaching. Differently from what characterizes teachers' work, for him, "time abolishes itself" (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 135) within the privilege of totalization, through which it is able to consider synchronically what, in the teachers' practice, happened successively. The investigative approximation with teachers' practice can overcome the effects of time, providing researchers with adequate conditions to enact the conceptual operations (Azanha, 1992) that enable them to apprehend the totality that exists in particular cases. This totalization process demands a "relationship with time that opposes itself to the time of practice" (Azanha, 1992, p. 135). However, this privilege of detemporalization, which allows the researcher a synoptic view of the total, can become a trap of detemporalization of the practice studied, expropriating it from one of its main characteristics and, thus, erasing an important access way to capture it.

While the teacher deals in the classroom with the several elements of the pedagogical action – among which: the students present and the absence of those missing, the space, the lightness, the environmental sounds and temperature, the outside weather, students' moods and expectations (for instance, related to the upcoming recess), the contents to be taught, the institutional recommendations and demands, the time remaining in class, as well as the limits and possibilities of one's own body, memories, feelings, and expectations – academic researchers collect data about specific elements that interest them, considering their research questions. They have to explore these data at *another time*, in a synchronized way and under perspectives that allow researchers to show the relationships between elements and the broader social space. These relations are not necessarily accessible to teachers in the *time of action*, as they are made clear by the researchers' process of data interpretation.

In this sense, the study of teaching requires attention to the temporality of the pedagogical game (Lotti; Sarti, 2022). The teacher is engaged in this game, considered by him/her, "adjusts himself [herself] not to what he [she] sees, but to what he [she] foresees, what he[she] sees beforehand in the directly perceived present" (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 135, author's highlight). Teachers are guided by the search for compatibility between their actions, from a practical order, not necessarily demanding a synoptic apprehension of the total temporal oppositions that, in the situation, they can only mobilize successively.

So, the unity and regularity of teachers' actions are organized around their practical function. Sensible and pertinent teacher action is grounded on "intrinsically coherent

practices that are, at the same time, compatible with objective conditions” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 143), organized from a “logic that is not from logic” (p. 142) and that enables teachers to deal, simultaneously, with elements of very different natures but not necessarily with the totality of the relationships, principles, and possibilities that connect their actions in the broader social space.

Without the totalization scope, the *illusio* of teaching, lived by the teachers as professional expertise, provides them the discernment (Azanha, 2004, p. 370) of perceiving how the different elements of the pedagogical situation are related at the same time, so that the action that occurs in the present can adjust to the objective conditions given, so that it is feasible and pertinent, without, however, annulling the practical effects of previous actions (Chartier, A., 2007a). A pedagogical action can, through this pathway, be practically compatible from the teachers' viewpoint, though sometimes contradictory in logic, when considered from a “volume of relationships (of simultaneity, succession, or symmetry, for example), amongst the references of different levels” (Chartier, A., 2007a, p. 138) which would never be confronted, all together, in the practice of a single teacher, but that compose the reference framework of the observing researcher.

This need to engage in a “practical state” the compatible principles, the objective conditions, and the previous and practical actions, in the sense of being manageable and feasible, can escape from the scholastic and intellectualist point of view (Bourdieu, 2005). When seeking to theoretically apprehend what happens in the practical state, the researcher can make the mistake of expecting the practice to adhere to a logic that is foreign to it, attributing incoherence where practical compatibility and a search for relevance are portrayed.

The questioning about the criteria for teacher action can, under this detemporalized and destemporalizing perspective, hinder access to the action viewpoint, although it does not reach the benefit of the scientific perspective over it due to a lack of rigor. In this relationship, the teacher, inquired by the researcher, can be led to “say what does need to be said” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 153), offering explanations about the practice that are founded in a “theory of practice that meets a legal, ethical, or grammatical legalism produced by the observer's position.” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 150). When questioned about the practical criteria, the teacher, as the agent of the action, “wastes the possibility of expressing the truth about his [her] practice” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 150). The formal questioning over his [her] reasons is shocked with the formal disinterest that characterizes the logic of practice and projects over it “an explicit thought that by definition is excluded by it” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 153).

Thus, as Bourdieu explains, “as it is questioned and questions the reason and the reason to be of his practice, (the agent) cannot transmit the essential, that is, what is typical of the practice is that it excludes this issue” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 150). Because it is

[...] stuck by *what it is about*, completely present in the present and in the practical function that it discovers under the shape of objective potentials, the practice excludes the return over itself (that is, over the past), ignoring the principles that guide it and the possibilities it encompasses



and that cannot be discovered if not through action, i.e., unfolding them in time (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 152, author's highlight).

It is a logic that does not require a concept and about which the transformations provoked by the games of theoretical writing destroy the truth it intends to apprehend. The researchers need to overcome the immediate interest of wanting “the practice to *express* something that can be expressed by a discourse” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 153, author's highlight), explicitly assuming the “transformation that these games of theoretical writing provoke in the practical logic through the simple fact of explanation” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. 154). Therefore, besides the investigative effort to access teachers' actions in their specific logic without transforming it into a totalizing discursive construction, the task of the researcher interested in them requires, as Bourdieu points out referring to ritual practice, “reestablishing its practical need, when relating it with the real conditions of its genesis, that is, the conditions in which are defined the roles it plays and the means used to reach it.” (2013, p. 161).

### **On teaching practice role to its concreteness:** considerations about the profession and the education of new teachers

Through Bourdieusian arguments, we reiterate Azanha's (1990, 1991, 1992) call to overcome abstractionism in Brazilian educational studies by considering the specific determinations of the *concreteness* of educational situations, including teaching as teachers' practices. This access to teaching concreteness requires, according to the Bourdieusian perspective assumed here, deciphering the logic of teachers' actions from a fundamental condition: the preservation of a practical role.

So, we are faced with considerable challenges from the theoretical viewpoint, considering the necessary conceptual operations for the endeavor (Azanha, 1992; Ezpeleta; Rockwell, 1989) that, in its turn, demand a rigorous position regarding the researchers' place, whose specific logic, grounded on the scriptural economy (Certeau, 1994) – marked by a theoretical and monological writing, which tends to abolish its enunciation marks (Chartier, A., 2007a) – needs to be made explicit so as not to affect in the logic of the investigated practice, erasing it. This demanding approximation with the researcher's place can help researchers to recognize, in teachers' everyday work, a different reason from the one that guides their own questions and research objectives.

Regarding the issues of methodology, such a position can favor the recognition, in the field, of interesting objects to be investigated. The complexity of teachers' work, as a non-additive totality, can only be highlighted and analyzed through the examination of phenomena that, as Chartier (2000) states, tend to be considered trivial in the school everyday life, connected to teachers' *ways of doing*, in the Certeausian sense, the little works that cannot be said not taught, but only practiced. On the other hand, if the practices are mute when disconnected from their agents – as Certeau suggests and also the Bourdieusian praxeology – “those who act in practice, on their turn, are not mute” (Chartier, A., 2007a, p. 200).

Hence, the study of teaching work can be enacted by the attention to teachers' everyday life tasks (Chartier, A., 2000), but also by their professional discourses, assumed in their *positiveness*, as an integral part of their [teaching] practices" (Chartier, A., 2000, p. 2000), thus, granting them epistemological legitimacy in their practical functions. In this sense, the discourses that circulate between teacher can offer access to the practical sense that guide their actions and, through this way, to their *teaching habitus*.

The ways of making and teachers' professional discourse show themselves as objects of study interconnected to compose a "comprehensive framework about school situation" (Azanha, 1990, 1991, p. 67), with impacts on the qualification of education research, as well as on advancing teachers' profession and education. We presuppose that investigating common tasks and teachers' professional discourses, with attention to their *concreteness*, can contribute to valuing teachers' profession and affirming teachers' positions (Nóvoa, 2022) regarding their epistemological dimension (Tardif, 2006). The systematic study of these objects, with efforts towards a theorization (Chartier, A., 2007a) that is aware of its practical role, can offer important elements to create a reference framework for teachers' knowledge. Initially, as dispositions for action, the theorization of this knowledge can offer teachers an "explicit domain of what they can do" (Chartier, A., 2007a, p. 187).

The work of making explicit the knowledge of teachers' actions would then enable a substantial reorientation of initial teacher formation to strengthen their socio-professional dimension (Sarti, 2020). The inclusion of this knowledge as a formative resource in the Teaching Undergraduate courses could allow future teachers the processes to start teaching and the specific *habitus* that constitutes and is constituted by teaching, triggering through this path the "reorientations and modifications in the dispositions previously apprehended during primary socialization, updating them and, thus, producing new dispositions more directly related to teaching" (Sarti, 2020, p. 306).

This teacher formation perspective tends to overcome the disciplinary logic as a training fundament (Tardif, 2006), starting to prioritize complex relations with knowledge from different sources, seeking to establish relationships of "mutual fertilization between the university and the schools, while building a place for dialogue that reinforces the presence of the university in the space of the profession and the presence of the profession in the space of teacher formation" (Nóvoa, 2017, p. 116).

When proposing teaching as a *cultural practice*, we sought in this article to gather theoretical-methodological resources that, under certain conditions, could enable access to the *everyday life* of teachers' work in their *concreteness*. This endeavor requires going beyond considering teachers' work as an object of investigation, which has become frequent in the field of Brazilian educational studies over the last 30 years, and also considering it as a theoretical category, diligently mobilizing it to its own *function* and its *typical* characteristics. A risky path with no shortcuts.



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