



School Resources for Situations Involving Religious Matters

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Abstract

This contribution discusses the analyses of the resources used by teachers to deal with school situations related to religious matters in secondary schools in Brazil and France. The constitution of resources for teaching does not come only from professional experience, mainly in the Brazilian case, where there are no official rules or prescriptions. On the other hand, there are many prescriptions concerning secularism (laïcité) in France. Thus, it is questioned: are the prescriptions used as resources in France? What are the resources mobilized by teachers in situations involving the religious question in Brazil? Are they different? Why? Our supposition is that the resources used in teaching practices are consistent with the plurality of references that constitute teaching identity. Based on ethnographic interviews with eighteen teachers in the State of São Paulo and the same number of teachers in Lyon, 109 situations involving the religious question were collected. The resources used by the teachers in those situations were analyzed. In this article we are going to discuss the fact that most resources used by Brazilian teachers came from personal experience, while French teachers mobilized professional resources. The discussion we propose explores the close association between socio-cultural configuration characteristics, available resources and social comprehension of the interface between religion and education.

Keywords: *Teaching Practices; Religion; Teacher Training; Resources; compared education study*

Teaching practice is a set of actions that results from the accumulation of professional and personal knowledge and values that are built through exchanges, training and experiences. It is defined not only by the visible actions of the individual, but also by what he/she thinks and the way he/she expresses himself. Teaching practice is reaffirmed by the professional group in the process of professional socialization and by the institutional group, in which ways of being, acting and thinking are legitimized or rejected by peers. In this perspective, teaching practice is individual and collective and can not be disconnected from a whole (FRANCO, 2016) [1], since it is seen as "resonance and reverberation of mediations between society and classroom" (p. 548). Thus, in addition to interacting with colleagues in the profession, the teaching practices are built in conjunction with interaction with students.

As a social institution, the school is porous and therefore reflects what happens in society. In this communication, we will be interested in the school situations that involve the issue of religion. More specifically, we question the resources used by teachers to manage situations involving religious issues. We understand resources as elements used in situations, which can be incorporated / internal to individuals (such as competencies and dispositions) or external to the actor involved in the situation (such as human and nonhuman actors).

This is an approach of compared education, identified here as the crossing of several paths: interdisciplinarity, articulation between macro, meso and micro social levels for the understanding of educational processes lived by the actors in their social contexts (FRENAY, 2008) [2]. However, we take care of starting from the micro (teaching practices) to arrive at the macro (social) so as not to run the risk of constructing a false reality, as Thévenot (2001) [3] warned. In addition, it is not intended to make a generalization of the two countries, since it is a study located in an economic capital (São Paulo) and the third French city (Lyon), each with very specific characteristics that do not represent the country in which they are located.

It is assumed that the resources used by the teachers are guided by creativity composed of the diversity of understandings and by references to the sacred, which would characterize a domestic logic in the Brazilian case, and in the French case, alludes to a secular order linked to elements of common interest, which would represent a civic logic.

To verify these hypotheses, we asked for the 38 Brazilian and French teachers interviewed to describe their school situations involving the religious question. We collected 109 situations in which religion was present in the school. The delimitation of the situations allowed us to identify and analyze the individual actions, their objectives, their resources and related logic. Focusing only on resources, we arrive at the following research result: the analysis category related to the resources in the situations is the one with the greatest plurality. In France, the most commonly used resource for teachers is



professional habitus, that is, their knowledge of the profession, the discipline taught, class management and knowledge of the context. In Brazil, the main resource is composed of personal dispositions of the teacher. In this text, we will discuss these results.

Usually the instruments of action are those that are available at the moment, i.e. those that are judged by the teachers as the most appropriate to deal with the situation which is often imponderable. Mobilization of these available resources depends on the ability and competence of teachers to use them. In turn, such skills and competencies are acquired from life situations and incorporated dispositions. The specific characteristics of a situation, with its social interactions, resignify the resource used and contribute to subjective transformations of the identity of the actors. Much of the constitution of resources takes place in activity and allows teachers to affirm that their teaching dispositions are acquired in the exercise of their profession.

In the Brazilian case, the inseparability of the identity of teachers (VALENTE, 2018) [4] is also the result of the absence of professional ethics in Brazil, that is, of an ethical reflection on the tensions and dilemmas of the profession that would ideally begin in the training courses of teachers. According to Prairat "Deontology is the place where professional solidarity is made explicit and where the distinction between public (professional) identity and private identity (of the person) is affirmed". (2009, pp. 151-152) [5].

Our research results point to a greater use of professional resources by French teachers than by Brazilians. One explanation would be that the identity of the French teacher is related to his professional socialization in the establishment, with the discipline taught (VAN ZANTEN et al., 2002) [6], with republican values and with a civic logic of action. In the case of Brazilian teachers, we perceive a greater tendency for professional socialization to occur from multiple references, being categorized in this study as coming from personal and professional experience. Since their main argument was to preserve individuals right of choosing their own religion, the privileged logic of action was liberal and not domestique, as supposed in the beginning.

The concept of hybrid dispositions of habitus was created to explore a particularity of Brazilian modernity (SETTON, 2002) [7] and facilitates the understanding of the prevalence of the use of personal resources by Brazilian teachers. These dispositions result from hierarchies of multiple references in the life of an individual (SETTON, 2016, p.96) [8] and result from the socialization effects of different spaces (ALVES, 2015) [9]. Another particularity of Brazilian society is that there is no separation between the domestic and the professional spheres, which promotes conditions of possibility for the construction of hybrid dispositions of habitus (SETTON, 2002) [7].

In the case of a southern country (MARTUCCELLI, 2010) [10], the institutional framework or state strength in Brazil is smaller than in France, leading to a devaluation of the public school, a precariousness of the conditions of professorial work, a reflective fragility of training courses, etc. The state weakness causes individuals to seek references from social ties and not from deontological principles, often using common sense, dialogue, and personal experience as a resource to manage situations in the professional context. Consequently, the absence of a strong state confirms the liberal logic, in which the individual counts only on his/her freedom and with his/her ability to create, produce and interact for his/her survival in society.

With regard to the religious question specifically, the use of resources derived from the personal experience of teachers can be explained from three social facts. The first of these is related to Brazilian history, which does not pass through a rupture that separates the public sphere (secular) from the private sphere (religious). That is, even if the decree of separation between religions and state was signed in 1890, religious institutions continued to have an important role in meeting the social needs of state responsibility. Secondly, on education, in the law of guidelines and bases for education [11], the way in which the discipline of Religious Education is presented ("an integral part of the basic formation of the citizen") legitimizes religion and religiosity as a pedagogical tool. Finally, in the social, mediatic or teacher-training spheres, there are no discussions that denature the mixture between public and private space, that approach the theme of secularism (laïcité) or that question the entrance of religion into the school.

Where institutions are strong, as in France, what prevails is a less hybrid socialization, where the weight of the school and the state allow, for example, that everyone knows what secularism (laïcité) means and that each one is their defender, even if by different means. The use of resources derived from the profession itself is also explained by the great working conditions of these teachers.

The debate on the interface between religion and public school in France begins in 1905, when there was a law of separation and implementation of secularity (laïcité). Among the many documents that are in place today, the "Charte de la laïcité", intended for all schoolchildren, published in 2013 [12], the "Livret de la laïcité" published in 2015 [13], for teachers and the manual or "La laïcité à l'école" for



leaders of school institutions, published in 2018 [14]. These materials are guidelines that circumscribe the teaching practice and deontology, even if they are not an explicit resource for teaching practice in the analysed situations.

Teachers, as public French officials, must obey the principle of neutrality and discretion regarding their religious beliefs. The restriction that concerns students arises from the law of March 15, 2004 [15], prohibiting the use of ostensible religious symbols for students. Ostensible symbols are symbols that would attract attention of other students and, in this way, put pressure on the others. The argument used is that the purpose of the republican school would be to distance ideological representations to protect the minor's own existence. In addition, the law instructs teachers to discuss with students before taking corrective action. All these regimented and legitimized norms are, at the same time, obligations and teaching practice resources, which explain why French teachers mobilize professional resources when confronted with a religious situation.

In agreement with Dubet and Martucelli (1996) [16], in which the construction of identity takes place through a double process of socialization and subjectivation, the resources mobilized in the teaching practices of French teachers would have a greater influence of professional socialization, while the resources of Brazilian teachers would have foundations in a subjectivation with multiple references. However, the multiplicity of training routes could be detrimental to the professional socializing process, leading to a precariousness of teaching work, as suggested by Lüdke and Boing (2004) [17]. By itself, the teaching profession consists of fragmented groups, for example, teachers have their trajectories of formation divided by disciplines, by stage of education, by the status of the school (public or private), among others. This disaggregation makes the plurality of resources intrinsic to the profession, although it is an obstacle to the creation of a single and coherent educational deontology. Thus, the resources are chosen according to the situations in order to justify the logic of action, taking into account the unpredictability and plurality implied in the situations.

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