

The continuing education of early childhood education teachers in a city in the interior of Rio de Janeiro/Brazil

Abstract

Continuing education should be seen as a process that brings benefits to the teacher, contributing positively to the educational practice. Thinking about this issue, this article sought, through the application of a questionnaire for teachers of the Early Childhood Education modality (Pre I and Pre II) in the municipality of Santo Antônio de Pádua-RJ, Brazil, to investigate the teaching participation in training or updating courses, in addition to demonstrate the importance that the constant process of formation represents for the teaching work, where the teachers could express the importance that the continuous formation provides or has already provided in their work as a teacher. Continuing education should be seen as a way for teachers to reinvent their practice and contribute to the teaching of students, where teachers can review their concepts and evaluate their practice, building and forming new ideas that can help in their work. In view of the teachers' statements, we conclude the need for a constant training process, as a way for the teacher to reinvent their work and contribute to their personal growth, in the face of the various changes that we undergo daily and that impact the teaching and learning of students.

Keywords: continuing education; teacher; teaching; learning

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Introduction

Learning, questioning, reflecting, and transmitting knowledge is a natural process, which happens to everyone every day, whether in relationships, reading a book, in informal conversation, at school or at work, we are constantly learning and teaching, something, even if unintentionally. In this way, "learning is more than receiving or obtaining information and knowing or understanding it is making learning part of the being, implying to develop with it".¹ It is a successful exchange of knowledge and opportunities to build new knowledge and train, debate and understand different issues.

It is increasingly necessary to keep up to date and seek new experiences in the area in which we work, given the range of knowledge that is increasingly present in our daily lives. Different technologies, varied knowledge, new concepts, changes in different areas, invade us daily, it is necessary to be aware of these changes, as a way to update yourself, contributing to your work. In this way, the process of updating and education should not be a process restricted to just a few professions, the search for new knowledge is a characteristic of the human being, who learns and teaches every day. Therefore, [...] "the continuity of professional education has been understood as a requirement to accompany the lives of individuals in all areas of knowledge",² and should not be seen as an imposition, but as a meaningful and pleasurable learning process, where learning makes sense.

Within this question of improvement, continuing education arises, which is basically summarized as the education that "occurs after initial education and is intended for all professionals",³ taking into account here Considering teachers, the process of continuing teacher education is an important step for the development of educational practice, helping in its good performance. Initial education has the purpose of education the teacher to start exercising their teaching functions, it is from this moment that the teacher begins to form their line of work, building their identity and working on certain educational concepts.⁴ Forming his practice, the teacher walks and learns over

time, with relationships, with difficulties, in short, the teacher builds valuable and important knowledge throughout his workday that impacts his practice and helps him to improve and review attitudes and concepts. Through these questions, the teacher is involved in a process of learning and education, which leads him to be seen as an educator and as educating, learning and teaching at the same time, creating a unique and important connection with others around him, and that are also in the process of formation.

Therefore, the process of updating or education the teacher is essential for their practice, through the exchange of knowledge, conversations and learning, the teacher can better understand their practice and work. Cristino⁵ highlights that updating is a constant process, "and nowadays, more than ever, it makes no sense for professionals to think that, when they finish their undergraduate education, they will be finished and ready to work in their own right. profession". It is a lifelong process, where learning is allowing yourself to know new methods and experiences, which will contribute to your work happening in the best and most profitable way possible.

Nóvoa⁶ reports that "the exchange of experiences and the sharing of knowledge consolidate spaces of mutual formation, in which each teacher is called to play, simultaneously, the role of trainer and trainee", where to learn and teach they are processes that combine and complete each other. Therefore, the teacher education process is a process that needs to be built and not an imposed and forced practice, it must be a light path that can lead the teacher to form their own ideas and thus follow the best and most productive path. Junges et al.,⁷ still consider that "teachers learn from their own teaching practice, so it is essential that continuing education courses effectively consider what teachers themselves present in terms of anxieties, anxieties, perspectives, etc", thus being able to be effective and committed to the formation of the teacher, building together with him an effective learning, which will reflect in his practice.

Cristino⁵ also considers that "reflection in the education process should contribute to professional development, enabling the teacher to

look at their teaching practice also based on a theoretical perspective, mainly, reflective practice should not be solitary, must be involved and debated". Therefore, teaching practice is a process that should not be seen alone, it is a path of comings and goings, which emanates knowledge and also needs to absorb and know new methods and form new postures, being seen as a gain and not as a loss, needs to be worked on with enthusiasm and dedication.

It is important to understand that this education process does not need to have a certain time to finish, it must be constant, learning is a process of life, which needs to be cultivated to be able to bear fruit, it is through their experiences, studies and work that the teacher can understand where it is necessary to make changes, for a work practice that increasingly makes more sense for him and for those who receive the teaching.

Knowledge must be a process that brings pleasure, that is natural and at the same time progressive, that can promote changes beyond the classroom. Marcelo⁸ states that, "professional development seeks to promote change among teachers, so that they can grow as professionals and also as people", it should not be a painful, boring process, because developing professionally must be part of a teaching life committed to their knowledge and also to that of the students, the school and everyone involved in this infinite learning process.

Thus, Silva and Oliveira⁹ conclude that "the continuing education of teachers is important, as it expands knowledge, leads to reflection, problem solving, keeps the teacher updated, committed, learns and teaches, leads to self-assessment making you feel part of a context that will lead you to form citizens with a view to the future". Therefore, continuing education not only offers knowledge, learning and achievements for teachers, it is a two-way street, which manages to reach all involved in the process, students, school and society. Thinking about the importance that the constant education process represents for the teaching practice, and how it is essential to understand continuing education as a positive point for the teacher's work, the research in question sought to investigate the participation of teachers in education courses and demonstrate the importance that continuing education represents for teaching work.

Methodology

The research was carried out with feminine teachers of the Early Childhood Education modality, in the municipality of Santo Antônio de Pádua/RJ,¹ in segments that cover children aged 4 and 5 (in Brazil called Pre I and Pre II). The municipality of Santo Antônio de Pádua-RJ has 6 daycare centers, of which only one offers pre I and pre II, the others only offer kindergarten. In addition to day care centers, the municipality has 23 schools, of which 18 offer the Early Childhood Education modality, with a total of 33 teachers in this modality who work in pre-I and pre-II. Of the 18 schools, 11 are located in the districts and rural areas of the municipality. Of the 33 teachers, 21 teachers accepted to participate in the research.

The research was developed through the application of a questionnaire, composed of 8 questions that analyzed the initial and continuing education of the participating teachers. After contacting the Municipal Department of Education, and their acceptance to carry out the research, contact was made with each teacher, explaining the study in question and how their participation in the research would occur.

¹Santo Antônio de Pádua is a Brazilian municipality in the interior of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Its census population in 2010 was 40,589 inhabitants. It has a predominance of agriculturalists, mineral extraction, but it also currently has some industries.

After the contact, the informed consent form and the questionnaire were sent to the teachers who agreed to participate, sent by email, due to measures of social distance and isolation, caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. The methodology chosen as focus for the research is the qualitative and quantitative approach. The choice to use both forms of methodology is due to the need to listen and understand the teachers and also quantify data that are only provided in numbers. In this way, qualitative research provides [...] "deep analyzes of human experiences" [...] "that cannot be obtained with measurement scales" [...], with quantitative research being more related to numerical analyses.¹⁰ In this way, within the project, we will work with numerical data, but also with questions that are unique to teachers, such as their perceptions, concepts and opinions about science teaching and the importance of constant teacher training. Sampieri et al.,¹¹ add that [...] "the quantitative approach uses the collection and analysis of data to answer research questions and test established hypotheses" [...] this approach often makes "the use of statistics to accurately establish the behavior patterns of a population". Within the research, the closed questions will be measured quantitatively, not only being possible to describe the data, but analyzing them in numbers. Sampieri et al.,¹¹ also describe that qualitative data [...] "is based on data collection methods without numerical measurement, such as descriptions and observations", using this approach in open questions.

Neves¹² also points out that:

Qualitative research [...] does not seek to enumerate or measure events and, generally, does not employ statistical tools for data analysis; its focus of interest is broad and starts from a different perspective from that adopted by quantitative methods. It includes obtaining descriptive data through direct and interactive contact between the researcher and the situation under study. In qualitative research, it is often the case that the researcher tries to understand the phenomena, according to the perspective of the participants in the studied situation and, from there, situates his interpretation of the studied phenomena.

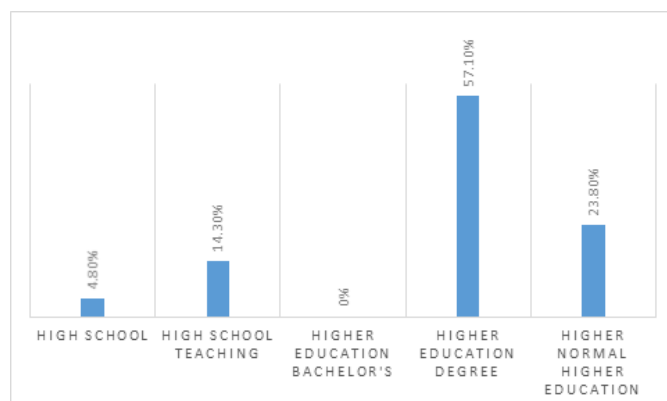
It is important to understand the facts and analyze the data, based on the results obtained in the research in question, it is necessary to understand the point of view of each teacher and emphasize the dynamics of each one.

Using qualitative and quantitative approaches, facing open and closed questions, we analyzed the teachers' answers, and we were able to perceive and understand a little about what they think and the importance that continuing education represents for teachers. The choice to use both forms of methodology is due to the need to listen and understand the teachers and also to quantify data that are only provided in numbers.

The first question focused on analyzing the teachers' initial education, asking what their level of education was, where 12 teachers (57.1%) answered that they had a degree² (Graph 1).

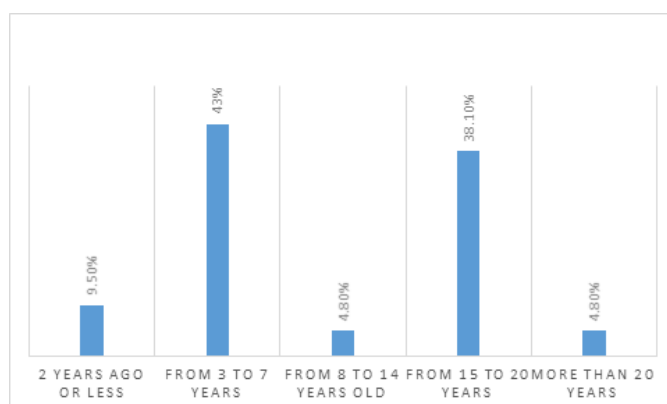
The next question analyzed how long ago the teachers had obtained the level of education indicated in the previous question, where 9 teachers (43%) answered from 3 to 7 years, followed by 8 teachers (37%) who graduated from 15 to 20 years. Thus having a mixture of different times and different experiences, which promotes an excellent opportunity for the exchange of knowledge, ideas and diverse conceptions. Where Amorim and Marques point out that the teacher learns every day and joining their daily experiences to their education time, the professional traces his profile and his identity, which is not static, so it changes daily (Graph 2).

²In Brazil, vocational training at secondary level is still accepted, but it is gradually being replaced by higher education.



Graph 1 Teachers' education level.³

Source: Author.



Graph 2 Time since you graduated and obtained the level of education you indicated.

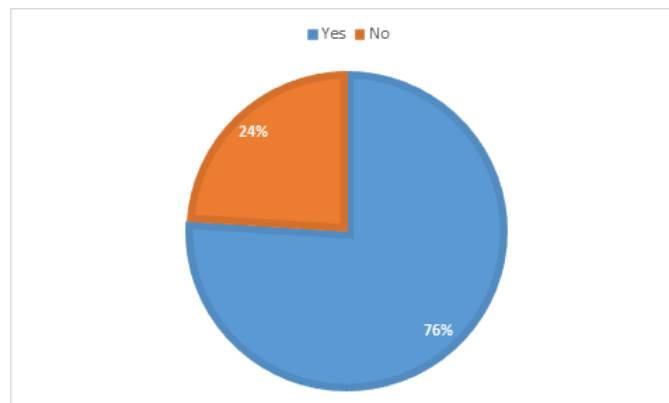
Source: Author.

The third question sought to expose whether the professors had already taken a postgraduate course, where 16 (76%) professors answered that they had a graduate course, 5 (24%) answered that they did not. As for the course they have, they were asked about carrying out a specialization, masters or doctorate and 100% of the teachers did specialization.⁴ The master's and doctorate were not carried out by any professor. We understand that these courses require more time and greater availability of time on the part of the teachers, sometimes having to travel to carry them out (Graph 3).

The next question was about the participation or not of teachers in education courses, where 18 teachers (86%) answered that they had already participated in some course, 3 (14%) answered that they had not participated (Graph 4).

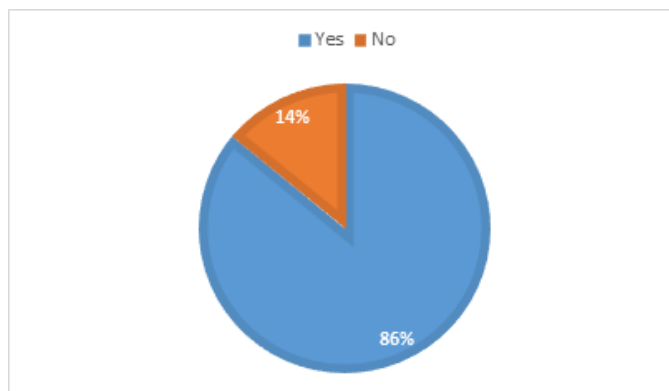
The non-participation of some teachers in education courses can perhaps be explained by the devaluation of the teaching profession, leading to discouragement that affects their work and the development of their activities. "Low wages, crowded environments, unfavorable working conditions, development of various functions",⁷ end up contributing to a lack of motivation at work and consequently in their practice. Making it clear here that we do not know the reasons for not

taking courses by the participating teachers, but citing as an example reasons that can and do lead other professionals not to participate.



Graph 3 Do you have a postgraduate degree?

Source: Author.



Graph 4 Participation in a education course (continuing education).

Source: Author.

The next question focused on understanding how these courses were and what impact they had on teaching practice, where the teachers reported in small excerpts the benefits that the update caused in their work. When asked about the importance of continuing education, the teachers were unanimous in saying that the constant process of formation is fundamental for a conscious work, which can bring benefits to their educational practice and to the student's teaching-learning process, as a way of to improve the practice and allow connecting with new knowledge and new experiences, also considering the constant education process as an opportunity to impact their educational practice and thus contribute to the teaching of students. Finally, the teachers were able to leave their suggestions about which education courses they were interested in participating, such as "inclusive education", "use of didactic games", "courses focused on socio-emotional issues" and "teaching of mathematics".

Discussion and conclusion

Understanding continuing education as a healthy process for teaching is essential for the teacher to feel comfortable in the construction of their education, be it through a specialization, in a course, in a lecture, and also in the classroom itself, exchange knowledge with each other. The purpose of this research was to investigate the participation of teachers in education courses and demonstrate the importance that continuing education represents for teaching work. Through the answers, we realized and built a path on

³In Brazil there are some forms of teacher education, some in professional high school, others in higher education pedagogy, others in higher education called "normal" which is professional, see Rabelo (2021).

⁴A 1-2 year postgraduate education with a practical emphasis.

the participating teachers where they managed to convey what they think and the importance that constant education represents for their work. The teachers were clear in their answers, demonstrating that continuing education is necessary in their work, especially in the face of the world we live in, with all the development and technology, which end up being part of our daily lives, and due to the fact of working with small children, who need stimuli and varied knowledge. Therefore, being attentive to the changes that we undergo daily is essential for a teaching that can conceive for the teacher and for the student a significant learning. By education the teacher, he is directly changing his practice, his way of thinking and acting. Silva et al.,¹³ state that “the continuing education of teachers who work in this educational stage deserves special attention, because it is a work that is carried out with the child who, as we know, has specificities and needs of the age and this means taking a fresh look at current educational needs”, so evolving together is essential.

In the Early Childhood Education phase, it is necessary for the teacher to be “one who knows how to reflect and propose didactic situations that favor the teaching and learning of their students, who research their practice, who seeks to constantly update themselves, through readings, courses and research”¹⁴ and that can be updated in the face of the various changes that we experience daily. Through the teachers’ answers, we concluded that continuing education is still a way to be discovered, where they make clear in their statements, the desire and need to always be updated, mainly working with such young children, but who learn and question all time, as a normal characteristic of this phase, which is why Mendes clarifies that “professional qualification is essential for those who work with children in order to know the specificities of each age group, their own characteristics in a that can significantly contribute to the development of the child in the physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects”. Prada et al.,¹ point out that “the construction of teacher education involves the entire trajectory of professionals, their conceptions of life, society, school, education, their interests, needs, skills and also their fears, difficulties and limitations” is an intense and extensive context of practices and experiences that contribute to a comprehensive and meaningful education for the teacher and that can lead him to review and see himself as an active professional, attentive to everything around him, evolving and growing within the profession.

Building new knowledge and expanding knowledge gained through initial education is essential so that teachers do not get lost in their work of teaching and learning. Taking different courses or attending several lectures, to meet an imposed workload, does not qualify as continuing education or updating, it is necessary to have intentionality in the proposed study and seek to find yourself in what is done. In this way, Nóvoa⁶ states that “education is not built through accumulation (of courses, knowledge or techniques), but through a work of critical reflexivity on practices”, where the teacher can review your work and have the opportunity to reinvent yourself. In view of this, we realize that continuing education is not limited to courses, meetings or lectures, it is based on larger contexts, which need to be seen and revised so that it really causes change in the teacher’s practice, offering significant learning for the teacher. Falcão⁴ calls attention to the quality of continuing education and not the amount of courses, lectures or seminars held and attended by teachers, where the purpose of education must be for “democratic and human education, and not a education with a marketing nature, one that is imposed or whose intention ends in itself and, therefore, only serves to intensify competition and meritocracy”, must be done with commitment and purpose, being thought and built for the good of your job. Taking into

account that the process of education a teacher is long and requires calm, practice and study, as both initial and continuing education are processes that need to be done based on their ideals and taste, so that teaching can be the as pleasant and meaningful as possible, and that this education can reach its school space and its teaching dynamics.

For Nadolny,¹⁵ “continuing education should be seen as a space for the production and exchange of different knowledge through a permanent process of reflection on teaching practice”. That is why the process of continuing education is a continuous and extensive process, which takes place in relationships with other professionals, in the exchange of knowledge with students, in the realization of courses, in the participation in lectures, in short, it is an extensive and rewarding exercise that provides opportunities for the teacher to review their practices and change them, if necessary. As Freire¹⁶ so well points out, “in the ongoing education of teachers, the fundamental moment is critical reflection on practice. It is by critically thinking about the practice of today or yesterday that you can improve the next practice”, and thus build new meanings for the work. Where the teacher can open up to changes and new learning that really make sense for their work.

Rossi and Hunger emphasize that the process of “continuing education has to consider that the teacher in education is not a student like the one in initial education; he brings with him his experiences, ideologies, a whole experience in the classroom, in short, a teaching condition permeated by the historicity of its pedagogical teaching”. With this in mind, it is therefore necessary that their baggage be recognized as an instrument to complete this update, which is not a flood of content, but a significant learning experience, which really makes sense in the teacher’s practice and in their daily lives day. Always taking into account the teacher’s identity as a key point for a education that really brings benefits to the teacher’s practice, understanding that each one is each one with unique doubts and questions of their own practice. Gatti¹⁷ mentions that much of what we see and have contact with related to the continuing education of teachers, nowadays, is due to the [...] “precariousness in which teacher education courses are found. at undergraduate level. Thus, concrete problems of the networks inspired initiatives called continuing education”, thus, the much commented update is not carried out only because of the “deepening or expansion of knowledge”, but because of an initial education below expectations, with ineffective results that, unfortunately, appear inside the classroom, in the day-to-day teaching work.

Rabelo,^{18,19} also mentions that “approaching teacher education brings the need to rethink teacher education, articulating the knowledge produced at the university and the knowledge developed by teachers in their practices”, being a set to be analyzed, bearing in mind that a well-structured and committed initial education is aligned with the continuing education of the teacher, which also arises not only to guarantee knowledge, but to add values and rethink a new practice, reviewing their work and their methods. And so we understand that the continuing education of teachers should not be seen as an imposition, it must be aware of its need for the simple evolution we go through, for the processes and contexts that change around us, for the normal transformations that education undergoes and that induces us to produce practices that collaborate with these changes, in a way to add knowledge for themselves and for the evolution and improvement in their own work. Where the teachers participating in the research can increasingly have opportunities and possibilities to build their education with quality and respect, considering their needs, conditions and wishes.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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