



TEACHER AND KINDERGARTEN TEACHER LIFELONG TRAINING – THE CEFOPNA

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Abstract:

The training of teachers and kindergarten teachers is central in the educational system. This training not only allows teachers to become scientifically, pedagogically and didactically updated, but it also represents a time for reflection that helps establish new ways and renew practices, adjusting them to the school reality, which reflects the general socio-economic context. The formation of a professional group responsible for the education of children and young people has led some teachers to conceptualize and theorize the training, development and the specificity of the profession. Morais and Medeiros, Alarcão and Tavares, Bridge, Canário Nóvoa and Formosinho in Portugal and Marcelo García, Fullan and Hargraves, Day or Guskey are some of the authors who support the need for training and development of the teacher as an actor of change in the system. Moreover, they highlight the necessity of reflection and development of the specific nature of teaching and its practice. In Portugal, the Basic Law on Education (1986) recognizes education as a right of teachers, in order to update and reflect on scientific knowledge and specific skills. This will be the basis of their career. Decree-Law 344/89 was the first to regulate the continuous training process. Today the Decree Law 22 of 2014 regulates the formative aspects of the profession. Despite evolving in the formative approach of teachers, actually it is based on training sessions, workshops and seminars specifically for teachers' groups, according to the needs identified by schools or induced by the various educational reforms. From 776 surveys to teachers, from the CEFOPNA database, we established the teachers' views on training - compulsory for their career, but voluntary for their dignity and qualification as professionals. The results show that teachers, although attending the training because it is mandatory, they also do it to be updated and contact with new teaching didactics. In addition to

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these objectives, the formations become meeting places to exchange experiences and projects that allow self-reflection and professional development, which is as positive as the formation curriculum. Thus, a hypothesis to consider is to take into account for the teaching career evaluation, the frequency of informal spaces (in schools or groups) to exchange experiences and reflections, which can contribute to the development and improvement of the quality of education, as much as the traditional training.

Keywords: training of teachers and kindergarten teachers; global development of teachers; CEFOPNA

1. The Kaleidoscope of the Teaching Profession

It is a fact that when entering a classroom in 1916 or 2016, nothing substantial has changed in the shape and organization of the space. The major changes are related to the materials with which the furniture is made and the technology that has been introduced. I believe that doing the same evaluation for teaching is somewhat exaggerated and unfair to teachers. In terms of pedagogy, didactics, content and the training and capacity of teachers and educators or kindergarten teachers themselves, there is a huge difference to better adapt to the needs of the realities in which they live.

After the Second World War - and especially since the 1960s - the democratization of Western societies, the raising of living standards and the generalization of access to information (today, with the Internet, information is omnipresent, although its quality can be questioned), led to a change in access to schooling and forced teachers to make profound changes in their *modus operandi*. In no profession is someone asked for more than having the skills, knowledge and commitment; however, to a teacher it isn't enough to have scientific, pedagogic or didactic knowledge, since he will have to perform very varied functions in other areas, without which he cannot achieve his goal - student success.

“Exige-se do professor um conhecimento pedagógico e didático adequados à multiplicidade de situações com que se depara: além de ter de dominar os conteúdos que leciona, deverá ainda promover e ser facilitador da aprendizagem, estar atento aos alunos, organizar o trabalho na sala de aula, diferenciar e diversificar os métodos, tendo em conta a heterogeneidade dos alunos. Para além destes aspetos deverá também ter em conta a estabilidade e o equilíbrio emocional e afetivo de todos os alunos, assim como os aspetos de carácter social da turma.”

(Ventura dos Santos, 2013: 10)

Psychologist, social worker, sociocultural animator are some of the areas that teachers and educators have to know and have some bases on to be able to effectively

deal with children. This means that teachers have to invest in training (formal or non-formal) in non-educational areas and often get dispersed in this vastness of bureaucratic tasks and procedures, leaving behind what should be the focus of their profession. This can lead to a demotivation of teachers and to a poor professional self-esteem.

At the same time, the omnipresence of information and the immense amount of opinion-makers who, in one way or another, show us reality through the numerous channels of communication, lead the ordinary citizen to feel in possession of pseudo-scientific knowledge about all areas. This attitude on the part of the citizens leads to an increasing devaluation of the teaching profession and the teachers. At the time of this writing (2017), there is no moderately informed individual who has no opinion about the Nobel Prize for Literature 2016 - deserved, undeserved / poet or writer / literature versus song lyrics... Suddenly it's like we all have doctorates in comparative literature. If the teacher in the class expresses an opinion, he or she will have a good chance that the parents will make a poor idea of it. However, if the teacher continues to insist on the troubadour literature, he is accused of not incorporating into his practices the current aspects, so that the students are motivated to the classes and area of knowledge. This devaluation of the teaching profession means that the common citizens increasingly have an ambivalent position about school and teachers: on the one hand, they arrogate to be master of the knowledge and to know about the best pedagogical practices, discrediting the school; on the other, they demand from the school education of their children in scientific aspects, but also psychological accompaniment, and that teachers and educators keep the pupils in school for as long as possible, in order for them to be able to work until later. If it is true that parents are not directly to blame for their working hours, teachers and school cannot be assigned all the roles for the convenience of the parents.

What most citizens do not realize is the changing role of this institution in face of the global, national, local and personal environment. The school, which held and taught scientific knowledge and which equipped its students to apply them in their professions or in pursuing their studies, gave rise to another institution with a broader role - to educate for reality, raising critical and interventive citizens - from instruction we moved on to education.

The teacher, not neglecting the scientific aspects, has the role of facilitator of the learning process (which is increasingly autonomous), potentializer of the acquisition of knowledge, propitiator and encourager of the development of competences, scientific, social and personal. From this point of view, most universities and polytechnics provide training which is still very theoretical and oriented more towards the transmission of knowledge than for the development of competences. One of the objectives of school is to provide students with the means, techniques and ways to seek and use information and techniques for their daily and professional life, in parallel to the acquisition of contents. Although the school has both sides, it is for the efficiency and effectiveness of

the first that it has to assert itself. To do this, the teacher must always look for updated training that will help students achieve their goals and integrate into their social contexts at various levels (global, national, regional and local). The teacher is intended to be "...not someone who transmits knowledge, but one who helps his students find, organize and manage knowledge, guiding but not modeling the spirits, and showing great firmness as to the fundamental values that should guide all life" (Delors, 1996: 133)

2. Lifelong Training in Education – brief framework

The teaching profession, central to the school, is constantly changing. Being the school a "mirror" of contradictions, tensions and developments of society, teachers are also condemned to change. If until the 60's of last century, the changes were gradually taking place, since that decade the speed of change has been accelerating more and more. Technology, for example, has such a rapid rate of change that there are significant changes every 18 months; many of these transformations are so deep that they make equipment that is still very recent seem obsolete.

In this context, change and alterations in the teaching profession are inevitable. However, we do not believe in effective and lasting changes if they are not based on decisions that reflect a *bottom-up* policy. As Fullan & Hargreaves (2001) emphasize, changes in schools and in education systems that do not stem from teachers' needs, anxieties and projects, and are not supported and supported by teachers, fail to achieve their goals. In Portugal, and not just in education, the already tried and true changes are predominantly *Top-Down*. This can be one of the explanations for the lack of real changes in both the educational system and the specific teaching and learning practices. Not being the result of the real needs of teachers, they do not adopt the new ideas of change that the Ministry/ administration intends to introduce, regardless of how good the intentions may be. The changes that are being confirmed and verified in the teaching practices are, therefore, disconnected, erratic and not being the result of a significant movement of teachers and their needs, they do not produce permanent changes towards improvement. Although very positive and effective, they are punctual and do not constitute a cohesive and theoretically supported set that allows their expansion and adherence to new models of pedagogical practices. Each teacher tracks, alone, his way, but the change is residual.

Training should fill this gap and enable teachers to contact with innovations that support and encourage their need for change and change in practice; concomitantly, it should allow and give the organization and theoretical grounds that supports this same transformation. In order for this process to take place and be effective, training should not be something that does not emanate from the needs felt and expressed by the teachers (who, through their schools, have to reach out to those responsible for putting these trainings into practice). Matching the needs and expectations of teachers and

educators, lifelong training will provide broader and more comprehensive answers than those strictly linked to the novelties of scientific evolution, innovation in teaching and more recent pedagogical lines. It allows the teacher to grow and value himself as a prepared, reflexive person with specific skills that socially identify him as an essential specialist for the development of a proactive society capable of producing critical perspectives and according to the pace of social change in the world where he is inserted.

“Marcelo García (1999), relativamente ao conceito de formação, afirma que (i) a formação como realidade concetual não se identifica, nem se esbate dentro de outros conceitos em uso, como educação, ensino e treino, (ii) o conceito de formação agrega uma dimensão pessoal, de desenvolvimento humano global, a que é preciso atender, frente a outras conceções eminentemente técnicas, (iii) o conceito de formação tem a ver com a capacidade de formação, assim como com a vontade de formação, ou seja, o indivíduo é o responsável último pela ativação e desenvolvimento de processos formativos. Isto não quer dizer que a formação seja necessariamente autónoma. É através da inter-formação que os sujeitos podem encontrar contextos de aprendizagem que favoreçam a procura de metas de aperfeiçoamento pessoal e profissional.”

(Ventura dos Santos, 2013:14)

Lifelong training of teachers and educators has been the target of several theoretical approaches; however, all of them emphasize the perspective of the personal development of the education professional. In this lifelong training, there is a paradigm that comprehensively frames the whole process - two basic pillars are needed: the development of specific skills of the profession, with two well-defined dimensions, scientific and didactic-pedagogical; the other pillar is to provide spaces for personal and collective reflection, criticism and questioning of the teaching activity, in order to find and track new paths and postures. These two components are reflected in the works of Garcia (1999), Alarcão (2001, 2009), Canário (1998), MT Estrela (2001, 2010) or Formosinho (1991) and emphasizes, beyond these aspects, the need to consider specificity of teachers.

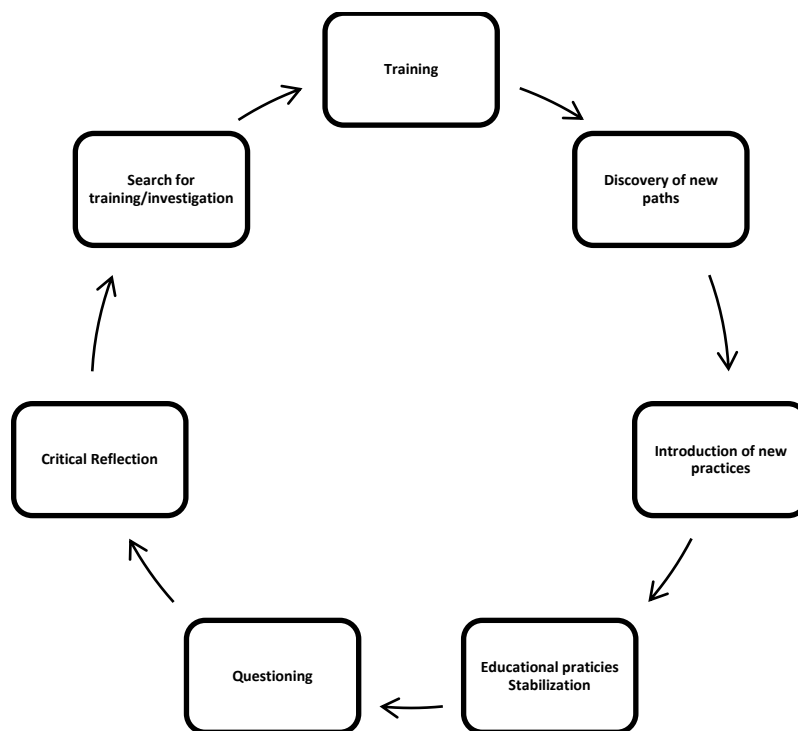
Each teacher has a background and a specific personal history that should be an integral part of the training and should be material for reflection and criticism - where I am and where I want to go. The experience of the teacher is also marked by the students, schools, classes and the ways in which each system he taught in was organized. All this information and professional life course should be the basis for an enquiring posture and organization of conceptual frameworks that allow the teacher to direct his actions towards improving his practices. The teacher should also be a questioner and investigator of the reality of his professional life.

“Training should take into account a reflexive questioning with an organized and systematic nature, focusing attention on the problems and the process of solving them - an interconnection between the different knowledge systems and an educational practice in context”

(Ventura dos Santos, 2013: 21).

Like the student, the teacher must also be the builder of his own knowledge. This research posture of the concrete reality of the teacher had already been proposed by Estrele and Estrela (2001) in what was known as the IRA (Research / Reflection / Action) training strategy and was carried out in research / action projects coordinated by these two researchers in several schools with the collaboration of various teachers.

Training, for us, should be understood as a virtuous cycle that allows the teacher or educator a continuous process of adjustment, knowledge and innovation, which leads to the improvement of their pedagogical practice and the development of their scientific knowledge and personal growth.



Source: Made by the author

3. Lifelong Training of Teachers and Educators in Portugal

Lifelong training of Teachers and Educators arises in Portugal as an answer to the necessity, felt by teachers, to update and develop professionally, but also for the educational system itself, which lacked an instrument that would simultaneously satisfy the teachers' needs, and create an evaluation system for them and allow the career progression in a way that went beyond simply counting the years of service.

In 1986, the Basic Law of the Educational System is clear in the recognition of the right and the duty of teachers to have access to training. The training would have the ultimate aim of providing these professionals with updates and reflection on scientific knowledge and specific skills, but also of framing the teaching career. However, it was only in 1989 that the Decree-Law (Decree-law No. 344/89 of 11 October) was published, and it regulated and gave shape and legal order to the training of education professionals (educators and teachers of different levels of education). The DL intends to create ways of updating the different professional competences, to provide new instruments related to the specialization of teaching and to the constant evolution and modernization of the education system, and finally, through training, to create environments conducive to innovation in the educational processes. Parallel to these objectives, the Decree-Law makes the progression in the teaching career dependent on the frequency of specific training.

Later, in 1994, comes out DL No. 274/94, reformulating another Decree-Law of 92 and creating a national system of continuous teacher training based on Schools Association Centers. The novelty of the adjustments to this DL was the attempt to provide schools with the power to determine their own training needs. Consensually, it was admitted that without teacher support, no reform would really ever take place. Reverting the responsibility of Lifelong Teacher Training to the School Associations had the intend of better suiting the needs felt by those who were on the ground. If the School before the Revolution of 74 was basically the same as the one that existed at the beginning of the century (Veiga Simão Reform never really came to be fully implemented due to revolutionary changes), in the revolutionary period the educational system followed the trends inherent to that time period, never achieving, however, enough stability to carry out its updating with the most followed chains in Europe. After adhesion to the then C: E.E., and with the normalization of Portuguese social and political life, the School began to try to "burn stages" and to be able to update itself with the most effective and proven didactic, pedagogical and organizational models. Notwithstanding this general orientation, Education and the Education System will have been one of the sectors that has experienced the greatest and most changes, changing and reforming almost at the pace of legislative elections.

Currently, the Lifelong Training of Teachers and Educators is regulated by Decree-Law 22 of 2014.

“Estabelece-se um novo paradigma para o sistema de formação contínua, orientado para a melhoria da qualidade de desempenho dos professores, com vista a centrar o sistema de formação nas prioridades identificadas nas escolas e no desenvolvimento profissional dos docentes, de modo a que a formação contínua possibilite a melhoria da qualidade do ensino e se articule com os objetivos de política educativa local e nacional.”

(DL nº 22 de 2014: 1286)

One aspect that this DL highlights is the role of the CFAE (Schools Association Formation Centers) in the training system as a structuring element, although it also includes higher education institutions. It emphasizes the need of a proper match between teacher's training needs and the trainings offered. The CFAE build their training plans from the schools' proposals. They propose training that meets the needs of peers and meets the training needs that the school and activity plans may require. Despite the good intentions and improvements that the Decree-Law presents, it emphasizes the training as essential and obligatory to the progression in the teaching career and establishes the requirement that this occurs in the scientific and pedagogical dimensions.

The compulsory training and the requirement to present performance evaluation reports by the teachers is, at the moment (and for many years) almost a caricature: on the one hand, teachers are obliged to the training for career progression; on the other hand, the career freeze is a disincentive for teachers to be attracted to spend time and intellectual investment in processes that have no obvious return. The professional attitude and professionalism of most teachers is worth noticing – they continue to attend training so that the system, schools and students, can perform their work in the best way. Without the support of the ministry and administration, teachers have demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility, without which the system would have been degraded even more.

Without calling into question the successive innovations that the decrees and laws have been introducing, in essence the training is based on highly formatted models: training actions, seminars or training workshops. It is in these modalities that the teachers carry out their training: joint reflection, collaborative work, or peer-to-peer supervision, while theoretically encouraged, do not have concrete expression in career credits, nor the certification of work by tutelage or by the Scientific-Pedagogical Council of Lifelong Training. Thus, the new pedagogical tendencies and the new modes of training, which make the teacher a protagonist of his own development, are set aside in terms of progression; however, they are essential for teacher's growth in the two vectors that the last Decree-law points out as essential for the career - the scientific and didactic-pedagogical dimension.

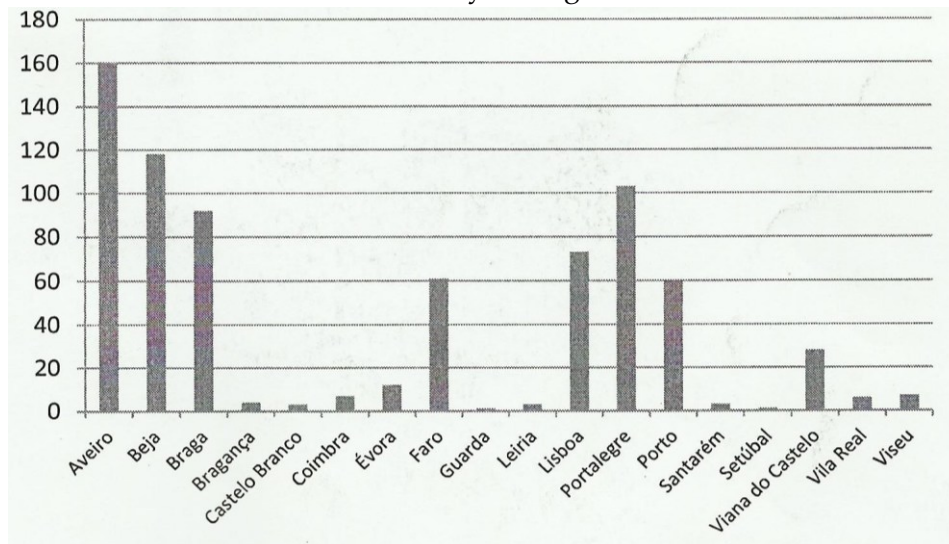
4. CEFOPNA and the teachers' vision of lifelong training

The “Centro de Formação de Professores do Nordeste Alentejano” (Center for Teacher Training in the Northeast Alentejo) is composed of nine school groups and one non-grouped school in the district of Portalegre. Created by legal order, published in DR No. 150, IIª Série, of 06/29/93, it has its headquarters at the Mouzinho da Silveira Secondary School, in Portalegre and it includes the schools of the counties of Arronches, Castelo de Vide, Campo Maior, Elvas, Marvão and Portalegre. This CFAE is responsible for almost

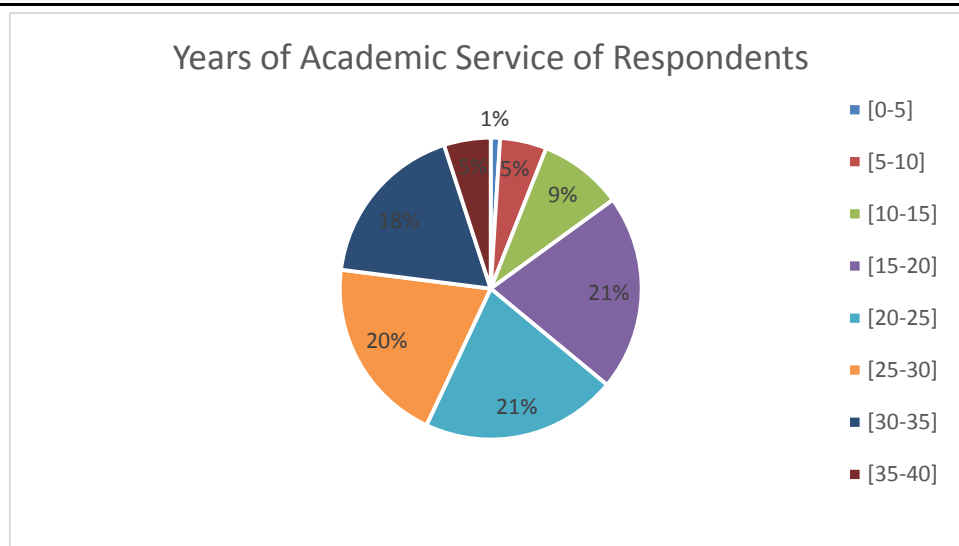
all ongoing training of teachers and educators in this region. Its policy of intervention has been to offer teachers the training they present through their schools or groups, valuing the suggestions and seeking to present diversified training plans that cover the largest number of teachers.

In close collaboration with CEFOPNA, we launched an inquiry to evaluate teachers and educators view of the training that is imposed on them as compulsory, but that they seek and attend due to their need for updating. We obtained 776 valid answers to the various questions that centered on two main fields: the motivations for frequenting the training programs and the opinions about them. We obtained answers from all the districts of continental Portugal, being the distribution by gender of 74.9% female and 25.1% male. The years of service of the teachers include several groups, the most representative being the group of teachers with between 15 and 30 years of service (62%), which shows that the respondents have a vast experience in the profession and also attended a considerable number of training programs in several areas.

Table 1: Answers by Portuguese Districts



Source: Made by the author



Source: Made by the author

The first part of the survey wanted to know the motivations of teachers and educators to attend training. Of the four possibilities - Mandatory; Career Development; Scientific update; Didactic-pedagogical update - we obtained the following results. The compulsory training program has a significant effect on the adherence of teachers (55.4%); however, there is no penalty for not attending. The consequences will be only in the career progression, but being that the government suspended this hypothesis, the reason must be related to the weight of the law in the behavior. Besides not being valid for career progression, teachers who are already at the top of the career or close to that level, do not benefit nor are they penalized for attending/not attending.

Regarding the weight the training may have in the performance evaluation reports, a greater percentage of responses (60.8%) will make more sense, since the reports are checked by the Board and by the Pedagogical Council. But what really weighs on the decision of education professionals is their will to update and innovate. The update at the scientific level, provided by the training, is considered important or very important (92.1%) and in the area of specific didactics and recent pedagogical trends the percentage of teaching staff that values it is 91.5%. These data demonstrate that not only does training make sense for teachers, but also that from this professional group there is an enormous availability for innovation and broadening of their knowledge, which will be reflected in their pedagogical practices.

On the attitude towards the training we wanted to know, on the one hand, if these spaces potentiate and provide the exchange of ideas and pedagogical experiences between colleagues and, on the other, if the meeting with colleagues leads to the elaboration of projects between different schools and the construction of projects trans and interdisciplinary. The answers, in the first case (51.7%) and in the second (56.3%) are poorly defined, but even so, the training is conducive to new forms of pedagogical activity and between schools. This seems to us to be more related to organizational and

institutional difficulties that transcend teachers, than to the will to carry out new forms of pedagogical activity.

In other questions that addressed voluntary participation in training, the numbers go back to the 80s. Also, more than 90% of the respondents consider the time spent with the various training modalities well employed and do not perform them just by obligation. On the subject of training, almost half - 50.5% - of teachers think that only scientific and pedagogical subjects should be subjects of the training; the other colleagues point out the need for broader themes and not just within the mentioned items. With regard to the evaluation the position is also divided; while 47.6% of the answers reveal that what is important is the contact with news in specific areas, the other half points to the value of evaluation in the training process.

Finally, we call for the appreciation of training actions as a way of productive living and relaxation; that is, to what extent the non-formal environment allows the reflection of problems common to teachers and their profession. 68,8% of teachers seem to take advantage of these spaces in their professional life to reflect together, to "vent" with other colleagues the aspects that disturb them. In addition to these moments of "catharsis", we can also infer that the sharing of problems or difficulties with other colleagues leads to the exchange of possible solutions, which can also be moments of learning and growth for the teachers.

5. Final Notes

To conclude this brief presentation about lifelong training for teachers and educators, and after presenting some data gathered from the opinions expressed by a group of teachers linked in some way to CEFOPNA, we think that some conclusions and clues, related to the training of this professional group, can be drawn.

Teacher's lifelong training is a useful tool for teachers as a means of updating and introducing innovations at a didactic, pedagogical and scientific level. These changes, later put into practice, lead to a better and more effective performance of teachers, students and school institutions. In this way, the School is allowed to more effectively fulfill its purposes: to educate students for life in a changing world and to equip them with tools and knowledge that will enhance their success, integration and critical and constructive participation in their communities.

There is, from the teachers' part, an enormous availability for the training. The data show that regardless of the years of service, teachers join the lessons with the conviction that they can (and should) present something new in the scientific and didactic-pedagogical areas. It is also emphasized that it is not only the fact that it is mandatory that leads to the compliance with the training, but the need for the performance and role of the teacher and educator to be more effective and lead students to greater school success and preparation for life in society.

The last aspect that we would like to emphasize is the alternative possibilities of providing accredited training to teachers in other ways besides the traditional ones. The data indicate that the actions / training workshop are moments of sharing and reflection amongst colleagues. To note that more than 50% of the respondents say that these spaces lead to cross-school and interdisciplinary projects.

Also a very significant percentage refers that the training provides time to allow exchange of experiences, doubts and sharing of ideas and solutions. What we propose, as a possible parallel and complementary path to the more traditional training, is the possibility of setting up relatively informal spaces (like *Tertulias*) with defined agendas and relevant themes in schools, between schools or in school groups. Teachers can meet regularly and discuss, reflect, criticize and discover solutions and new ways to improve their pedagogical practices and broaden their range of scientific interest and knowledge not only in their specific area but also in other areas, enabling new didactics and ways of working. The proposal of a program with work themes and a final or quarterly report could guarantee the requirements for possible accreditation to the CCPFC (although with a possible lower weight). This process could foster more and better peer-to-peer supervision and cooperative work. In addition to showing itself as alternative, peer work without the weight of the trainer could be a space for greater sharing and unity between a professional group that has been devalued, but which, as we can see, is one of those who have more training.

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