

ARTICLE

## RETURNING TO THE THEME OF THE NATURE AND SPECIFICITY OF THE TEACHING WORK<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The specificity and nature of teaching work is a theme whose story is told in decades of reflections and investigations. Considering this long journey of studies and researchers interested in teaching and focusing its analysis on some fundamental works, this article aims to resume the basic literature on the specificity and nature of teaching work and analyze its acquisitions, its impasses, and its limits. The text discusses the pioneering studies of Luiz Pereira and Aparecida Joly Gouveia, the contributions of Dermeval Saviani and Vitor Paro, and the propositions of Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard. The article concludes by highlighting the advances made on the subject and points out that, along with the study of the specificity of teaching work, it is important to study its generality, placing teaching in the broader field of work studies.

**Keywords:** Teachers' Work, Specificity of the teachers' work, Epistemology, and Teachers' work.

### RETORNO SOBRE O TEMA DA NATUREZA E ESPECIFICIDADE DO TRABALHO DOCENTE

**Resumo:** O tema da especificidade e natureza do trabalho docente tem na área da educação uma história que se conta em décadas de reflexões e investigações. Considerando esse longo percurso de estudos e pesquisas interessadas pelo exercício da docência e centrando sua análise em algumas obras fundamentais, o presente artigo tem o objetivo de retomar a literatura de base sobre o tema da especificidade e natureza do trabalho docente e analisar suas aquisições, seus impasses e seus limites. O texto discute os estudos pioneiros de Luiz Pereira e Aparecida Joly Gouveia, as contribuições de Dermeval Saviani e Vitor Paro, bem como as proposições de Maurice Tardif e Claude Lessard. O artigo conclui destacando os avanços que foram obtidos sobre o tema e aponta que junto com o estudo da especificidade

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do trabalho docente também é importante estudar sua generalidade, situando assim a docência no campo mais vasto dos estudos do trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Trabalho docente, Especificidade do trabalho docente, Epistemologia e trabalho docente.

## **VOLVER SOBRE EL TEMA DE LA NATURALEZA Y LA ESPECIFICIDAD DEL TRABAJO DOCENTE**

**Resumen:** El tema de la especificidad y naturaleza del trabajo docente tiene una historia de décadas de reflexiones e investigaciones. Considerando esta larga trayectoria de estudios e investigaciones interesadas en el ejercicio de la docencia y centrando su análisis en algunos trabajos fundamentales, el presente artículo pretende retomar la literatura básica sobre el tema de la especificidad y naturaleza del trabajo docente y analizar sus adquisiciones, sus impasses y sus límites. El texto discute los estudios pioneros de Luiz Pereira y Aparecida Joly Gouveia, las contribuciones de Dermeval Saviani y Vitor Paro, así como las proposiciones de Maurice Tardif y Claude Lessard. El artículo concluye destacando los avances que se obtuvieron sobre el tema y señala que, junto con el estudio de la especificidad del trabajo docente, es importante estudiar su generalidad, situando la enseñanza en el campo más amplio de los estudios sobre el trabajo.

**Palabras clave:** Trabajo docente; Especificidad del trabajo docente; Epistemología y trabajo docente.

### **INTRODUCTION**

An old issue in education, the theme of the specificity and nature of teaching work has a history that is told through decades of reflections and investigations. Considering this long path of studies and research interested in teaching and focusing its analysis on some fundamental works, this article aims to review the basic literature about the specificity and nature of teaching work and analyze its acquisitions, its impasses, and its limits.

Initially, going through the pioneering texts of Luíz Pereira and Aparecida Joly Gouveia, still in the 1960s, allows an initial approach to the topic of teaching work and its specificities. Then, two particularly important authors on the topic are discussed, Dermeval Saviani and Vitor Paro. Both authors seek to think about teaching work based on a Marxian contribution, developing a perspective that illuminates different aspects of the issues that involve the nature and specificity of teaching work. In the next moment, the conception of teaching work opened by Canadians Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard is put under examination. Authors with an important audience in Brazil highlight the specificity of teaching work, arguing that it must be understood as interactive work. Finally, the article provides a summary of what was presented and advances some reflections on work and teacher training.

## WHERE TO START?

The question above evokes the difficulty in delimiting the boundaries capable of distinguishing one research topic from another. If this is true, defining what is understood by studies and research on teaching work is something that is imposed as a preliminary question. What defines a study or research about teaching work? What makes it stand out from a vast set formed by the multitude of themes (curriculum, assessment, etc.) present in education? The question is not trivial<sup>2</sup>. It allows us to delimit the contours of a certain field of studies, undoubtedly in interface with several others – a typical issue in studies on work, as highlighted by Tanguy (1996) – and to name it more precisely than is said.

Let us begin by remembering that teaching is characterized by being an intentional educational process. Teaching work is, therefore, “the work that is carried out to educate” (OLIVEIRA, 2010, p. 2) and comprises “the subjects who work in the educational process in schools and other educational institutions, in their various characterizations of positions, functions, tasks, specialties and responsibilities” (idem). Therefore, training is not enough to define teaching, but rather the type of work that is carried out: an educator in early childhood education or a rural settlement may not be licensed, but in both cases, she carries out teaching work. This does not conflict with the ideal that in Brazil a degree is recommended as the most appropriate option for teaching; although related, it is important not to confuse the records of the analysis: one issue is the definition of the genre of the act, another is what each society determines as the level of preparation that one must have to carry it out.

Following Deolidia Martínez, we can advance the proposition that studying teaching work comprises the interest in “studying the emergence of a historical subject, its constitution and positioning. The education worker, the subject who carries it out” (MARTÍNEZ, 2001, p. 3). It would undoubtedly be possible, based on a long tradition of disciplines that have the work as an object of study, to explore what is suggestive in these terms used by the author. For now, it is worth remembering that the perspective brought by Deolidia Martínez places teachers and their work at the center of the issue. This stance proves to be pertinent, as it prevents any type of study or research in education from relying on the heading of investigations into teaching work, on the other hand, it is sufficiently open and comprehensive to accommodate different themes and research approaches. Following this reasoning, the 1960s can be seen as the genesis of studies on teaching work in Brazil, notably with the research of Luíz Pereira and Aparecida Joly Gouveia.

With exceptions, such as Hypolito (1997), both authors are commonly forgotten in the academic discussion about teaching work. To approach teaching work, it is commonly preferred to jump straight to the Brazilian scenario of the 1970s/1980s, a moment of political effervescence with the prospect of redemocratization, union struggle, and the advancement of the institutionalization of postgraduate studies in education. The contribution of Luíz Pereira and Aparecida Joly Gouveia, however, precedes this period and is not negligible.

Professor of sociology at USP, Luiz Pereira (1933-1985) was part of the group of researchers close to Florestan Fernandes, then full professor of sociology and a figure who marked an entire generation of intellectuals in Brazil. At that time, in the 1950s and 1960s, the issue of work, development, and Brazil's so-called backwardness in the face of a modernizing world were the fundamental problems to be considered and mobilized that

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<sup>2</sup> As some authors have rightly noted, it is common in education research to use the most diverse terminologies to refer to teaching work and to place under this heading themes that – because they are conducted in research without any or almost no mediation with the work – they end up saying nothing about teaching work, even though they claim to be part of that field. This was verified by Gama and Terrazan (2012), in research on the communications presented in editions of ENDIPE.

group of researchers. Having initially trained in pedagogy, Luiz Pereira was invited to investigate the topic of education, assuming the position of professor at the University of São Paulo in 1963<sup>3</sup>. Among his publications, it is especially worth highlighting an older one, resulting from the research carried out in his doctoral thesis of 1961, under the guidance of Florestan Fernandes. This is the book *O magistério primário numa sociedade de classes*, published in 1969 by Pioneira, and which has the same title as the thesis.

Interested in the theme of national development and the relations between urbanization and industrialization in Brazilian society, Pereira (1969) discusses the theme of work and women, according to his terms, to highlight a specific professional field: teaching in the public sector of the state network in São Paulo. In the work, Luiz Pereira shows that at that moment in our social context, teaching became an important space for professionalization for women in the face of a modernizing society. This professionalization is assimilated to a specialization – hence he questions the training of teachers in normal schools – and entry into the scope of salaried work, in which the author highlights the tensions between traditional and modern forms, the domestic environment, and the space professionalism, the bureaucratic layout of the school and teaching sociability, etc.

Without a doubt, it can be considered that the work *O magistério primário numa sociedade de classes* has dated elements and, therefore, carries the limits of its time – initial moments of the sociology of work and the sociology of education in our country. We will not find in it a refined theorization about work and gender, about the sexual division of labor, about the notion of professionalization, etc. But, on the other hand, you will find a robust study – and one of the pioneers – on the feminization of teaching and we will find an analysis that highlights in concrete situations the inequalities between men's work and women's work. Considering the entire education network and statistical data, Luiz Pereira finds that women account for 93% of the teaching positions held, but when they manage school groups, they account for 32%, in the inspectorate only 5.9% and in the position of teaching delegate only 2.2%. In these terms, he notes that, “despite being an overwhelming majority of those occupying paid positions in this system, women are in the minority in the strata that hold the greatest power” (PEREIRA, 1969, p. 30)

There is also the identification of aspects that, over a long period, seem to mark the way teaching work is organized in Brazil. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the author shows that since the end of the 1950s, working conditions in teaching required teachers to teach in various education networks, dividing their weekly working hours between the municipal, state, private, and public education networks. Top-of-mind issues, as can be seen. Aparecida Joly Gouveia's research is also very relevant in this regard, as will be seen below.

Aparecida Joly Gouveia (1919-1998) was a sociology professor at the School of Philosophy, Arts and Human Sciences at USP (FFLCH/USP). Her thesis, resulting from studies in the sociology department at the University of Chicago between 1955 and 1962, would be published in a book in 1965 with the title *Professoras de amanhã: um estudo de escolha ocupacional* (GOUVEIA, 1970).

Sociologist interested in education themes, her thesis is an example of what comprises rigorous quantitative research in human sciences: considering schools in the states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais, the research involves analyzing the responses of 1,448 women who in 1960, attended 23 normal schools. The purpose of the investigation was to understand the vocational choice decisions of the normalists. This research, carried out

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<sup>3</sup> These aspects are addressed by several authors, among which Núbia Ribeiro's research on the trajectory and academic work of Luiz Pereira stands out (cf. RIBEIRO, 2007).

almost sixty years ago, still presents important results for understanding the specificities of teaching as a professional field of work.

One of the important conclusions of the research is the identification that among those female students, only the smallest part of them planned to be a teacher at a school, “only a third [of the students] really aspire to the job of teacher” (GOUVEIA, 1970, p. 31). This data is especially relevant, especially when considered together with another aspect revealed by the author: the fact that between 1940 and 1958 the percentage of lay teachers teaching in primary schools had risen from 38% to 47%.

It is also worth highlighting that the author records an important change in the social composition of those who enroll in the normal course: she identifies a correlation between social origin and the propensity to choose to teach, signaling a sort of reversal of sign in that society that was industrializing in the 1960s. According to the author, “the desire to be a teacher proved to be more frequent among normal students from working-class families than among those from the middle-upper stratum”, that is, “daughters of liberal professionals and equivalent” (GOUVEIA, 1970, p. 120). This finding is not unrelated to research that currently shows that in high schools, students with better performances do not opt for degrees when planning their future at a university (cf. TARTUCE, NUNES, ALMEIDA, 2010). Again, these are difficult questions from the past, present, and future of the professional practice of teaching in Brazil.

The research above, even with its limits, still speaks today about the work of teachers in Brazil. Along with the studies of Josildeth da Silva Gomes and Maria Cristina Aranha Bruschini – authors who deserve to be remembered, although it is not possible to comment on their contributions within the limits of this text – we have the initial chapters of studies on teaching work in Brazil.

These chapters, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, were based on a dispersed sociological literature that was in vogue at that period. It was a time of important presence of functionalist social theory in international academia – as witnessed using the works of Talcott Parsons and those of Robert Merton, both in Luiz Pereira and Joly Gouveia. But, above all, when it comes to the theorization that will mark the beginning of research carried out by Brazilian sociologists and anthropologists interested in the theme of school and its agents, the foundations were in Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, Karl Mannheim, as well as other Europeans and Americans authors<sup>4</sup>.

It is not without relevance to note that the Marxist perspective, important in the scope of the human and social sciences, was not strongly present at this time in the 1940s and early 1960s. Marxism is not at the starting point of something academic, but linked to the practice of political parties, such as the Brazilian Communist Party, and social movements. However, Marxism would be present in the academic world later, especially with Antônio Cândido, in literary studies, and with Florestan Fernandes, in sociology, especially from the 1960s onwards. Luiz Pereira, an author who, as we have seen, was important in the dialogue between the area of sociology and the area of education, will more appropriately incorporate Karl Marx and Marxist authors in his subsequent productions, such as *Trabalho e desenvolvimento no Brasil*, published in 1965, as nothing linked to the Marxist tradition is present in *O magistério primário em uma sociedade de classes*.

At this initial stage of studies on teaching work, there are researchers linked to USP, especially in sociology and anthropology, who lead the dialogue with the area of education. However, in the following period, in the last quarter of the 1970s and 1980s, another academic institution also occupied an important place in the debate on the

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<sup>4</sup> Aparecida Joly Gouveia cites in this regard, in a 1985 text, Durkheim, Weber and Mannheim (GOUVEIA, 1985, p.64); Celso Beisiegel expands this list, adding the works of Karl Marx, Wright Mills and Florian Znaniecki to the cited authors (BEISIEGEL, 2013).

specificities of teaching: the *Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo* (PUC/SP), notably with the figure by Dermeval Saviani. This is the subject of the next section.

## SPECIFICITY AND NATURE OF TEACHING WORK

The 1970s marked the beginning of postgraduate studies in education at PUC/SP, with the doctoral course having its first class in 1977, headed by Dermeval Saviani as course coordinator. The Postgraduate Program in Education at PUC/SP will be responsible for training several researchers who will have an important presence in education in Brazil, such as Luiz Antônio Cunha, José Carlos Libâneo, Paolo Nosella, Carlos Roberto Jamil Cury, Guiomar Namó de Mello, Vitor Henrique Paro, Lucília Regina de Souza Machado, Acácia Kuenzer, Selma Garrido Pimenta, Gaudêncio Frigotto, among others.

As a graduate of the institution, and later a research professor, Saviani will be a major figure there, both for his postgraduate training work – having been advisor to several of the researchers mentioned above – and for his intellectual contribution to Brazilian education. Here we are especially interested in an article written in 1981, on a debate promoted by the PUC/SP teachers' association, in which Saviani (1984) advances some propositions about teaching work using epithets – the expression is from Schwartz (1988) – which Marx uses to think about work.

Entitled *Trabalhadores em educação e crise na universidade*, the text initially discusses the meaning of crisis in education and then seeks to reflect on the case of the university. In this movement, Saviani asks what the expression “education workers” means – this is the point that interests us. Problematizing the connections between intellectuals and other workers exploited by capitalism, Saviani points out that this sometimes leads to controversy, as it will be said that intellectual workers are, therefore, productive workers. “And here comes the problem of the relationship between productive work and non-productive work” (SAVIANI, 1984, p. 78). After showing that productive work should not be confused with that which produces material goods or with that which produces useful things, as opposed to work that would produce superfluous things, he notes that “what differentiates, properly, productive work from unproductive work is the fact that it generates added value<sup>5</sup> [...]. In this sense, even non-material work can be productive” (SAVIANI, 1984, p. 79). Here Saviani follows Marx closely, the form of the product of labor does not seem to matter: “productive labor is a determination of labor which in itself and for itself has absolutely nothing to do with the determined content of labor” (MARX, 1985, p 115).

With this aspect in mind, Saviani observes that trying to understand the meaning of work in education with the pair productive work/unproductive work is a mistaken endeavor<sup>6</sup>. This is because, in the real situation, “we can have both work in education that

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<sup>5</sup> *Mais-valia* is the term usually used to translate the German word *Mehrwert*, central to Marx's theoretical scheme. In the 1980s, this was the form commonly used in translations. In more recent times, the publication of *Grundrisse* and *O Capital* by the publisher Boitempo adopted the term *Mais-valor*, a literal translation of the German term. Both editions are reputed to be the best available in Brazil. The translators clarify – and if I agree with them here – that they did so because *More-value* says precisely about the translated word and, equally, it is more precise about the content of the category, since capitalist production is the production of value, production of increasing value (cf. DUAYER, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> A study on teaching work published in 2008, authored by Tumolo and Fontana (2008), insists on this direction considered by Saviani as mistaken. It proposes to analyze the nature of teaching work under capitalism and discussing academic production in the 1990s, the authors' emphasis falls on the distinction between productive work and unproductive work, in which they point out that teaching work can be one or the other, to depend on the social relations of production in which the work is inserted. Regarding the study, it is not without relevance to note that the distinction between productive and unproductive work regarding teaching and the distinction between public and private education regarding the generation of surplus value had already been

generates surplus value, and work in education that does not generate surplus value” (SAVIANI, 1984, p. 79). For him, it makes more sense to think about the contrast between material and non-material work, placing teaching work in the latter. To do this, he uses an excerpt from the unpublished *Capítulo VI inédito of O Capital* where the topic is directly addressed by Marx. It is worth revisiting these excerpts. In them, after continuing to distinguish and problematize the notions of productive and unproductive work, Marx arrives at the question of form:

In the case of non-material production, even when carried out exclusively for exchange and even if it creates goods, there are two possibilities:

1) Its result is goods that exist independently of their producer, that is, they can circulate as goods in the interval between production and consumption; for example, books, paintings, and all artistic products that exist separately from the artistic activity of their creator and performer. Capitalist production can only be applied here in a very limited way [...].

2) The product is not separable from the act of production. Here too, the capitalist mode of production only takes place in a limited way, and can only have it, due to the nature of the thing, in some spheres. (I need the doctor and not your errand boy). In educational institutions, for example, for the knowledge factory entrepreneur, teachers can be mere employees. Similar cases should not be considered when analyzing capitalist production. (MARX, 1985, p. 119-120)

Retaining this excerpt from Marx's writings, Saviani observes that teaching must be situated in what establishes the second possibility: a type of non-material production in which the product is not separable from the act of its production. In his words:

The teaching activity, the class, for example, is something that involves both the presence of the teacher and the presence of the student. In other words, the act of teaching is inseparable from the production of that act and the consumption of that act. The class is, therefore, produced and consumed at the same time: produced by the teacher and consumed by the students. Consequently, “due to the very nature of the thing”, that is, due to the specific characteristic inherent to the pedagogical act, the capitalist mode of production only occurs there, in some spheres. (SAVIANI, 1981, p. 81)

There are two aspects of the problem at stake. The first is the definition of the teaching work, in which Saviani thinks of the act of teaching as a unit in which the production and consumption of what, according to him, is produced by the teacher takes place: the class. Therefore, something very different from production whose result is a material product that can be, thus, separated from its producer and circulate as such in another sphere, engendering a temporal shift between production and consumption: for example, the shirts made by workers in a company in Ribeirão Preto are sold as such in a store in the capital of Rio de Janeiro.

The other aspect of the problem concerns the form (material or non-material) of the product of labor and its implication for capitalist exploitation. Saviani understands that form matters<sup>7</sup>. Thus, despite addressing the problem only in its most evident aspect and

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made by Saviani 27 years earlier, in the 1981 text, as it also appears, in a substantive way, in Paro (1986, p.137). Regarding the elaborations of Tumolo and Fontana (2008), it should be added that the discussion on the notion of proletarian in Marx poses many problems, and cannot without furthermore be assimilated, as the authors do, to productive work (cf. ALVES, 2022, p.1).

<sup>7</sup>The topic is complex, the excerpt cited by Saviani does not reveal the full extent of what is behind the problem. Marx deals with the subject in several texts: the unpublished Chapter IV, cited by Saviani, but also in *Grundrisse*,

limited to the excerpt from Marx's text, he retains the essence of the issue. The fact that teaching work is non-material work and the fact that what is carried out in the teaching act is produced and consumed during this act, poses some difficulties for the implementation of capitalist exploitation.

Saviani is clear that this work can be forced to enter market logic – “for example, as the so-called pedagogical packages” (SAVIANI, 1984, p. 81) – but observes, correctly, that such a generalization would contradict the very nature of the educational process. He is saying, in short, that the educational process could degrade. Let us now look at another author who, based on Saviani's reflections, also highlights his contribution to the theme of the nature and specificity of teaching work, Vitor Henrique Paro.

A graduate of PUC/SP under the guidance of Bernardete Gatti, he published in 1986, in the same year as his thesis defense and with the same title, the book *Administração escolar: introdução crítica* (PARO, 2005). A work with more than one important title, it offers a critical analysis of school administration, resuming the general framework in which the very idea of administration, in general, is constituted, in which the author examines the propositions of theorists in the field of administration, its contributions and limits, given the school situated in our societal model. The work argues for the importance of school administration for the school institution to fulfill its social purposes. Globally of great relevance, the work also has dated aspects whose implications for thinking about work in education are not without relevance<sup>8</sup>. We will limit ourselves, however, to the object of our reflections in the text: the discussion about the nature and specificity of teaching work. Concerning what was highlighted by Saviani, Vitor Paro advances important aspects.

On the topic in question, there are two reference publications by the author. The first is the work from 1986, the second is a text written on the competition for professors at the School of Education at USP in 1993, entitled *A natureza do trabalho pedagógico*. This text was published in a collection in 1997 (cf. PARO, 2010). In both publications, the author seeks to unfold Saviani's notes and reflect on teaching work considering the elements of the work process described by Marx in chapter five of book 1 of *Capital*. This analytical perspective opened by Vitor Paro brings rich reflections on teaching work, as it allows us to consider the student's place in the work process and rethink the notion of the product of pedagogical work advanced by Saviani.

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*Capital and Theories of Surplus Value*. In these texts, part of the problem that entangles them concerns the question of form/matter in the relationship between productive work and unproductive work. If we turn our attention to the unpublished excerpt from Chapter IV of *Capital* cited by Saviani, we will see that the position of productive work as that which produces surplus value and that – it is important to retain this aspect – would be indifferent to the form it takes on other determinants. The subtlety of dialectics under the pen of Marx inquires about the form itself, implying that the indifference of form would not be absolute. This aspect was seen especially by Ruy Fausto who, astutely, asks whether there would not be a more suitable form of the product of work to be exploited by the capitalist mode of production (FAUSTO, 1987). He observes that in Marx's analysis, it is as if at first the material determination of work did not matter and, secondly, that it should not be excluded. Is this valid for 21<sup>st</sup>-century capitalism? For Fausto, “everything happens [today] as if the capitalist form had broken this barrier, it places itself in material matter as in immaterial matter” (1987, p. 255).

<sup>8</sup> To achieve his proposition, Vitor Paro seeks the contribution of theorists in the field of administration, on the one hand, and the other, he seeks the reference of literature that provides him with support for criticizing ordinary ways of conceiving and acting in the field of the administration. This reference can be found in the sociology of work, especially in Braverman (1981). This is an author from whom the best of the sociology of work distanced itself a long time ago, his unilateral and deterministic perspective was the subject of important criticism even when the book was originally published in 1974. Based on an idealized model of artisanal work as an image of qualified work, Braverman conceives every change in the work process as a linear increase in the degradation of work in capitalism. A synthesis of the criticisms made on Braverman's work can be seen in Castro and Guimarães (1991), to place Harry Braverman's conception within the scope of the foundations of the sociology of work cf. Alves (2022).

In Book 1 of *Capital*, before moving on to the analysis of the properly capitalist form of production, Marx presents the components that make up the labor process: “The simple moments of the labor process are, in the first place, activity oriented towards an end, or the work itself; secondly, its object and, thirdly, its means” (MARX, 2017, p. 256). Vitor Paro descriptively takes these elements to establish his argument<sup>9</sup>. It initially highlights the role of the student in the pedagogical work process. The student appears as an *object* within the work process, but also as a *subject*: “It is characteristic of educational activity that it cannot be carried out except with the participation of the student. This participation occurs to the extent that the student enters the process at the same time as an object and as a subject of education” (PARO, 2005, p. 141).

Unfolding his argument, Vitor Paro brings another important indication, now about the concept of the product of school education. That is, what, then, does pedagogical work produce? Here he rediscovers Saviani's proposition regarding the class as a product of pedagogical work and considers it reductive: “The class, however, is just an activity, or the process through which certain results are sought” (PARO, 2005, p. 144). Recalling that education is a process of appropriation of historically accumulated knowledge (knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, techniques...) and that the school institution has a fundamental role in promoting access to this knowledge, the author observes that consideration of the product of pedagogical work cannot be restricted to the act of learning.

This learning is the appropriation of knowledge, “something that remains beyond the act of production that takes place in the classroom” (PARO, 2005, p. 144). If the student leaves the process different from what he entered, this is nothing other than the completion of the pedagogical work: “This difference, which is not a simple addition, as it presupposes a real transformation in the student's living personality, is what constitutes the effective product of the school pedagogical process” (*idem*).

In these terms, recovering Saviani's proposition that conceived the inseparability between the class produced by the teacher and its consumption by the student, Vitor Paro notes that “such consumption does not only occur immediately but extends beyond the act of production, throughout the life of the individual” (PARO, 2005, p. 145). It follows that it is possible to conceive the temporal separation of the result of pedagogical work. However, this separation is not absolute: part of the appropriation process takes place during the classroom, and part is constituted throughout the individual's schooling, manifesting, for example, when a person looks for a job, they are literate, and this is a requirement for that job.

A third aspect highlighted by Vitor Paro concerns the nature of knowledge involved in the school educational process. It deals with two types of knowledge. One of them could – although according to the author without the radicality of what happens in

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<sup>9</sup> There is an impropriety in the description made by the author regarding the components of Marx's work process. In the triad of components of the work process, replaces *activity* with *workforce*. In his words: “In addition to the object of work and instruments of production, also called as a set of means of production, the work process requires the presence of man's energy, called labor force” (PARO, 2010, p. 30). This concept in Marx, the labor force, concerns the work harvested by the capitalist economy, since under wages, work is not purchased as such, nor its person, but a potentiality (hence the important role that management plays in occupying the wage institution expands and past forms of work organization recede). Thus, when Marx deals with the simple elements of the work process, he uses the word activity (*Tätigkeit*). At this moment, the determination posed by this or that mode of production is not in question, but the establishment of what, from a technical-anthropological point of view, is part of the work process, being common no matter what historical time or social framework. As Sève (2008) highlights, the issue of *Tätigkeit* occupies a cardinal place – and precisely for this reason it cannot be secondary – in Marx's work as he progresses in his investigations, as well as having its place in important developments in Soviet psychology in the decade's beginnings of the 20th century. Regarding the constitution of the concept of the labor force in Marx, two detailed studies can be seen in Morilhat (2017) and Alves (2022).

material production – be conceived in one instance to be executed in another. The capitalist form drives this by appropriating knowledge explains the author. In any case, with this separation, in material production “knowledge (as knowing how to do) does not need to be present” (PARO, 2005, p. 34). In the case of pedagogical work, this know-how is embodied in teaching techniques and methods, but also there, says the author, “it can be appropriated by capital because it does not need to be present in the production process since work human has the peculiarity of being able to be conceived at one moment and executed at another, being conceived by some and executed by others” (PARO, 2005, p. 34). Undoubtedly a paradoxical observation by the author, as he assumes what he criticizes. Perhaps Vitor Paro has given too much credit to the propositions of Taylorism, certainly induced by the theoretical basis that supports his analysis of capitalist administration.

If knowledge, as *know-how*, has such a status in the author's argument, it contrasts with another type of knowledge that also appears in the pedagogical process. This is historically accumulated knowledge, that is, “knowledge as knowledge 'what's going on', that is, knowledge historically produced and which is the object of appropriation by the student” (PARO, 2010, p. 35, highlights made by the author). For Vitor Paro, this knowledge has the characteristic of not being merely instrumental, functioning as raw material in the pedagogical process. Hence his argument for the central position of this knowledge in the debate on whether or not to apply the capitalist mode of production in school: this knowledge “is also presented as an object of work and, as such, is inalienable from the act of production”, therefore “it cannot be expropriated from the worker, under penalty of distorting the pedagogical process itself” (PARO, 2005, p. 148).

Of these two forms in which knowledge is presented in pedagogical work – knowing as *know-how to do* and as *knowing what happens* – described by Vitor Paro, the one that he considers inalienable under penalty of mischaracterization of pedagogical work is the second, the *know-what happened*, knowing that, according to the author, it necessarily needs to be in the possession of the teacher so that he can carry out the pedagogical work.

For our part, we consider it pertinent to make a small observation in this regard: although tensioned in this direction, *know-how* is also not alienable. Techniques and methodologies can be conceived by others, but this exercise of conception inscribed in the scales of power of the institutional hierarchy is in no way sufficient to accomplish what needs to be accomplished at school, or in the classroom. It never was. It was not even in Taylor factories, as demonstrated by decades of ergonomics research (cf. DANIELLOU, LAVILLE, TEIGER, 1989). The question, then, in what was previously called knowledge as *know-how*, perhaps is to consider techniques, and teaching methodologies, among others, and what sets them in motion in concrete situations.

Now, no matter how far away an education secretary or a school director is from the classroom, defining *ex-ante* the book to be used, the pedagogical method, the sequencing in the semester... nothing that has been defined gains movement by itself. It is the human activity of work that – individually and collectively – links all of this, giving it form and coherence, plucking slogans, devices, and technical objects from their inertia. Knowledge as *know-how* involves teaching methods, techniques, etc., and the set of what the teaching work activity mobilizes (interfaces with the collective, formal knowledge, memory, body...) to accomplish what needs to be accomplished.

As we have just redefined it, *know-how* must be thought of together with the domain of *knowing what happens*. We argue that both are important, and both are tense towards their mischaracterization. Let us now look at another perspective of analysis on the specificities of teaching work: the notion of teaching work as interactive work.

## TEACHING WORK AS A PROFESSION OF HUMAN INTERACTIONS

Two authors from the field of education brought an analytical perspective on the specificity of teaching work that deserves observation. These are the Canadians called Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard. In two works, one published in 1999 and the other in 2005, the authors provide a detailed analysis of work within schools, emphasizing the interactive dimension of the professional teaching practice. The works correspond to *Le travail enseignant au quotidien: contribution à l'étude du travail dans les métiers et les professions d'interactions humaines*. Laval: Presses de l'Université de Laval, 1999; and the publication entitled *O trabalho docente: elementos para uma teoria da docência como profissão de interações humanas*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2005. Of these two works, only the second work was published in Brazil, a publication that contains several sections derived from the work published in 1999, which is much longer.

For the authors, teaching as a profession is defined by action on and with another human being. Teaching must be “understood as a particular form of human work, that is, an activity in which the worker dedicates himself to his work 'object', which is precisely another human being, in the fundamental way of human interaction” (TARDIF and LESSARD, 2005, p. 8). Several other professions have this characteristic – social work, elderly care, medicine, nursing, etc. – which have revealed themselves, according to the authors, to be more and more central in the contemporary world in which the tertiary sector is expanding and the number of workers mobilized in industrial production tends to decline.

Despite the growing importance of interactive professions, academic research and the social imagination about work would remain fixed on industrial work: “Industrial work producing material goods is the paradigm of work”, it “extends its theoretical hegemony and practice to other human activities” and in it “the central positions are occupied by the holders (capitalists) and the producers (workers) of material wealth”. In short, “the productive system is the heart of society and social relations” (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 16). In this line of interpretation, the authors say, within the scope of sociology it is a consequence to conceive teaching work in terms of unproductive work, agents of reproduction of the workforce necessary for the maintenance and development of capitalism, or agents of sociocultural reproduction. But, above all, teaching work seems to be seen as something secondary to the paradigm of industrial work producing material goods.

This condition of a secondary professional group is unsustainable for the authors. Modern societies have placed the social institution school at the heart of their constitution, “teaching in the school environment has represented for approximately three centuries the dominant mode of socialization and training in our modern societies” (TARDIF, LESSARD, 1999, p. 11). According to the authors, more than 60 million teachers are working around the world under very different organizational, salary, and cultural conditions, but at the same time, they carry out their work in an institution with very stable characteristics, resting, for example, on a cellular model of work. (the classroom), pressured to launch a teaching program over a certain period, subject to bureaucratic control and its increasing demands, etc.

Thus, drawing attention to the relevance of professions based on interactive work and especially highlighting teaching work, Tardif and Lessard (1999) seek to reorient the debate: teaching work cannot be configured as something lesser concerning other forms of work. The path they choose as fundamental to be emphasized in this change of perspective is to conceive of teaching as interactive work.

The table below helps to understand the authors' proposition. It allows a comparison to be made between the nature of industrial work and that of work on human beings in terms of the type of interactions with the object.

Chart 1 – Comparison between industrial work and teaching work in the context of interactions with the work object

<b>Nature of the work object</b>	<b>Material</b>	<b>Human being</b>
	Serial	Individual and social
	Homogeneous	Heterogeneous
	Passive	Active and able to resist
	Determined	It contains a part of indetermination and self-determination (freedom)
	Simple (can be analyzed and converted into functional components)	Complex (cannot be analyzed and converted into functional components)
<b>Nature and typical components of the worker's relationship with the object</b>	Technical relationship with the object: manipulation, control, production	Multidimensional relationship with the object: intersubjective, legal, emotional, normative, etc.
	The worker directly controls the object	The worker needs the collaboration of the object
	The worker fully controls the object	The worker can never fully control the object

Source: Tardif e Lessard (2005, p.256).

In the table above, we rediscover an issue that in the previous section had been well identified by Vitor Paro: considering the elements of the work process, the student appears as an object and as a subject in pedagogical work (PARO, 2005). Tardif and Lessard (2005), however, take this aspect much further, making the relationship with others in the work process the central point of their argument. They raise an epistemological question regarding the Marxist conception, asking whether it does not remain trapped in the traditional subject/object opposition and *a fortiori* in the worker/matter opposition. Does this opposition “not become inoperative or, at least, deeply reductive when the object of work is another subject?” (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 29). Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard echo here the reflections of the philosopher J. Habermas.

Author of *Theory of Communicative Action* (1987), Habermas, from earlier works, such as *Knowledge and Interest*, published in 1973, points out that Marx's horizon of analysis is limited – “Marx reduces the course of reflection to the level of instrumental action” (HABERMAS, 1982, p. 60) – and that is why another referent escapes him: Marx “cannot identify domination and ideology as a distorted communication because he presupposed that men were distinguished from animals on the day they began to produce their means subsistence” (idem, p. 295). Habermas' interpretation of Marx's work presents many problems. We will return to this point at the end of the section.

The problem at stake in the authors' arguments is evidenced by the discrepancy between the oppositions described in Table 1. In effect, the difference between working on an object and working on and with a human being gains important distinctions: whether one is capable of being obtained in series, the other does not; if one is homogeneous, the other is not; if one is determined, the other has a part of indetermination and also has self-determination; if one involves a technical relationship of manipulation and production, the other involves a multidimensional relationship (legal, normative, emotional, ethical, etc.); if in work on the material object the worker directly controls the object, when it comes to

interactive work the collaboration of the object is necessary, an object that will never be fully controlled by the worker. The differences also stand out regarding the technologies used: if in one case we have material devices that engender material effects, in the other we have technologies that are often invisible, symbolic, that engender beliefs and practices; on the one hand, rubbing, sorting, gathering, piling up... and on the other, stroking, threatening, exciting, fascinating, etc.

On a comparative level, the differences between interactive work and material industrial work leave no doubt that the nature of the processes at play is completely different. However, it remains to be seen how the authors seek to understand teaching work in schools from such a perspective. What evidence is there that interaction is the central axis through which the organization of the school's pedagogical work moves? To support their argument, Tardif and Lessard (1999) will initially return to the ecological conception of class proposed by Walter Doyle, professor at the University of Arizona, in research published in 1986.

According to Doyle (1986), the events that take place during a class can be described based on the following categories: multiplicity (in a class several events take place at the same time and in a short period), immediacy (events during the class occur suddenly, without prior announcements, requiring immediate actions/responses that make the teacher's reaction time minimal), speed (it says about the succession and chaining of the flow of events during the class, Doyle observes, for example, that disruptive behaviors occur every 3.75 min, requiring the teacher to intervene – a look, a gesture, etc. – to maintain the purpose of the class), unpredictability (throughout the class unexpected events arise and modify the initial plan to varying degrees), visibility (the class is a public activity carried out in front of the class – from whose eyes the teacher cannot hide), historicity (it says about the temporal dimension in which the interaction between teachers and students takes place – daily, weekly, throughout the semester – and events condition the following moments).

Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard will retain these aspects of the research developed by Doyle but note that these categories are all at a descriptive level, therefore lacking the basis to explain them. The authors ask: "What allows class events to be described with the help of ecological categorization?" (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 234). For them, the dynamics described by Doyle (1986) occur because work in the classroom is an interactive and meaningful process.

Significance because, pointed out Tardif and Lessard (2005), all social action is directed towards the other – whether they are present or not – and this finding is linked to the problem of language, of communication between agents, as the authors rely on J. Habermas. They highlight that language establishes common ground between agents, being shared by different actors who mobilize collective symbolic and linguistic resources. From this perspective, considering the classroom, "in a social context of communication, we can talk about the meaning of interactions" (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 249).

Interactive because, as the authors say, the teacher's most basic professional act is to enter a classroom and launch a program of interactions with students. This type of interaction is not an accessory action or a supplementary initiative of the teacher, quite the contrary, "they constitute, so to speak, the space – in the sense of marine or air space – in which he enters to work" (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 235). Following the text, to give substance to their arguments, the authors bring an extract from the material collected in their research. The extract refers to the classroom work of a teacher in the early years. Let's look at an excerpt from it:

"Let's sit. Has anyone finished the math exercises yet? Let's finish the exercises." Esther, stop talking. She walks between the desks and looks at the exercises that the students do. She corrects and makes comments. "Silvano, can you close the door, please? Samuel,

it's taking a long time, has everyone finished except you? Who knows where the library is? (nobody answers). Silvano, what's wrong with you?" Then she leaves the place for a few moments, leaving the students to do their exercises. She returns, closes the door, sits at the table, and continues making corrections. She gets up again, looks through her math notebooks, and starts writing on the board. She looks at the group. "Jonathan, what are you waiting for?" Jonathan responds that he's already finished. She asks him to come and show his notebook and examine it. "You're going to remake all this for me here." She goes back to writing on the board. "Are you finished Hugo? No?" [...]. (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 235)

This extract is quite long in its origin. The authors will work on it in different ways in the following moments of the work. The main aspect to be retained from it is that it brings in a clear way how and to what extent interaction is a cardinal aspect of work in the classroom: teacher and student, student and teacher, and students with students. As Tardif and Lessard say, "teaching is interactive work" (2005, p. 235).

What can we say about the propositions of Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard? Around the theme of the specificity of teaching work, two appear to be the authors' fundamental contributions. The first of these concerns the production of knowledge about teachers and their work. The reader certainly noticed how the analysis undertaken by the authors enters, so to speak, into the school and the classroom. This entry is not excessively focused, the authors are far from a solipsistic stance and far from analyses that ignore structural aspects (implications of neoliberalism, mercantile pressure on the school institution, etc.).

What they intend – without disregarding the importance of research that addresses the more general framework in which teaching develops – is to build a research program that understands teaching from below, "privileging more the study of what teachers do and not so many prescriptions regarding what they should or should not do" (TARDIF, LESSARD, 2005, p. 37). By doing so, the authors overcome a common difficulty in education, the moralizing or normative perspective regarding teaching work, proposing to study the professional practice of teaching in the same way other forms of work are studied – which involves incorporating the contributions of the disciplines which has the work as an object of study, such as the sociology of work, work psychology, activity ergonomics, etc. In this direction, Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard follow the same purpose as other scholars of teaching work, such as Durand (1996) and Amigues (2003). This research program seems consistent to us.

The conception of teaching as interactive work also seems consistent to us. This is the second contribution by Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard that we consider relevant. It seems to highlight central aspects that shape teaching knowledge in the classroom but also the pedagogical work of the school. Teaching, as a process in which the appropriation of knowledge historically constituted by humanity takes place, gains a level of analysis commensurate with the task to be carried out, as it takes due account of the complexity of the "object" to which teaching and teaching work is intended, and the complexity of the dynamics established.

However, if the direction pointed out by the authors proves to be relevant, the chosen path presents important problems. The choices made in the theoretical approach to the issue under discussion – teaching work and its specificity as work on and with another human being – seem to fall short of the requirement. Founding the interactive dimension of

teaching work on Habermas's theory of communicative action (1987), they come up against this author's limits in thinking about work and the social character of language<sup>10</sup>.

However, analyzing and giving consequences to teaching work, understanding that this is interactive work, work that is typical of professions with high emotional investment, work that makes use of the worker's personality – this becomes a work tool, as highlighted by the authors – and which takes place in a complex dynamic between the participants in the work process, does not require Habermasian theses. On the other hand, considering the important place of language – language exchanges, as linguists say – in the exercise of teaching also does not require following Habermas' perspective, as evidenced by the set of studies published in an important work on the relations between work and language (cf. SOUZA-E-SILVA, FAÏTA, 2002).

Finally, it is worth adding that these critical notes are in no way dogmatic and are not aimed at excluding an author from the starting point due to his epistemological affiliation. As some scholars have already demonstrated, the cumulative nature of knowledge does not require the unification of references (REVEL, 2009; TANGUY, 2012). This is an important lesson in epistemology and the history of science. It is up to the researcher – a non-delegable task – to carry out critical analysis, rework concepts, and build coherence. There was nothing else we intended to do.

## THE STATUS OF THE ISSUE: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Inspired by a work on the theme of the cumulative nature of knowledge in the social sciences (WALLISER, 2009), it does not seem impertinent to ask: do we know better today than in the past about the nature and specificity of teaching work? We can gladly say

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<sup>10</sup> It is a vast question. Very briefly, the essence of the problem involves – and here I follow Yves Schwartz closely – the fact that work is a theme that declines in importance in Habermas' work. He wants to develop another paradigm, hence his proposition of a theory of communicative action. This is the language that occupies a central position. This is the first point of the question. It takes a lot of effort to think about work based on Habermas. In his philosophy, however broad it may be, “you will not find in it a way of encountering human work as an enigma that enriches the relationships between work, learning, and knowledge (SCHWARTZ, 2008, p. 33). Habermas is rather a barrier than a bridge for this type of investigation. But were not Tardif and Lessard willing, precisely, to study teaching as work? The second point concerns an important inconsistency in Habermas' thesis. To conceive his project for a new social paradigm, he is obliged to consider how these aspects reverberate in the constitution of individuals, that is, how this “social” meets the “individual”. He needs to call in psychology. Here he seeks support from Jean Piaget: “This broader concept of communicative rationality developed from the phenomenological approach can be articulated with the concept of cognitive-instrumental rationality developed from the realist approach. There are, in effect, internal relationships between the capacity for decentered perception (in Piaget's sense) and the capacity to manipulate things, on the one hand, and the capacity for intersubjective understanding about things, on the other. Hence Piaget chose the combined model that represents social cooperation, according to which several subjects coordinate their interventions in the world through communicative action” (HABERMAS, 1987, p. 32). Without belittling this notable name in the history of science that was Piaget, it is necessary to recognize that, regarding the social dimension of the constitution of the individual, his theory has important limits. As Lucien Sève observes, “the genesis of the psychic is not, according to Piaget, of any other nature than biological evolution, the social source of these superior forms remains largely underestimated” (SÈVE, 2008, p.183). Therefore, the claimed social dimension of language is not founded, instrument and sign thus circulate in a world without history, in the strong sense of that word. The author who, at the beginning of the 20th century, demonstrated that what is properly human is external to the individual is L. S. Vygotski, an author ignored by Habermas and whose sources are in Marx, a figure who is part of the universe that Habermas wishes to overcome. The circle then closes. Ruy Fausto, always very precise, once noted that everything happens as if we were beyond Marx, but that we often fall short (FAUSTO, 2002).

yes. Generations of researchers have not worked in vain; we know better today than in the past about teachers and their work.

In this long trajectory, pioneering researchers such as Joly Gouveia and Luiz Pereira showed some specificities of work in the field of teaching, covering a wide range of aspects such as interest in the professional choice of teaching, working conditions, the configuration of the working day, remuneration, training, etc. These are important aspects for the time and remain very important, always being updated with consideration of regional singularities and changes in society. Being a teacher in schools in the 1960s is not the same as being a teacher in schools in the second decade of the 21st century.

Today we also know better about the positioning of teaching work within the social relations of production in capitalism and the implications of this work being non-material work. This was the perspective developed by Dermeval Saviani. These acquisitions were later resumed by Vitor Paro. This showed how the class cannot be conceived as the product of teaching work, this was one of Saviani's lines of argument, but the constitution of the educated student. Therefore, what is produced during the pedagogical process is consumed at that moment, at the teacher-student interface, but it also continues beyond the moment of its production. What is produced by teaching work circulates beyond the classroom, continues with the student in the world outside the classroom (he reads a book at home, and reads because he learned to read at school), and throughout his life, in countless situations. This student does not enter the pedagogical process only as an object of teaching work, but also, and at the same time, as a subject.

Exploring and drawing consequences from this aspect – the fact that in the pedagogical work process, the student is an object/subject – is one of the merits of the analysis by Maurice Tardif and Claude Lessard. Teaching work is also seen by them as non-material work and, above all, a form of work in which work occurs on and with another human being. They empirically demonstrate how the pedagogical process is crossed, from end to end, by the interface between teacher and students, between students and teacher and students and students. This is not just any trait, something secondary, but a cardinal aspect of professional teaching. They call working with such characters interactive work.

It is possible to say that this set of studies on the nature and specificity of teaching work allowed us to deepen our understanding of the topic. These studies left us – of course, neither completely nor definitively – important acquisitions about what is specific to teaching. Historical dynamics, however, always engender new configurations and this means that the issue of the specificities of teaching acquires a certain perpetuity, without diminishing its importance.

Finally, it is worth highlighting that, if we take seriously the idea that teaching is work, it may be pertinent to combine an interest in what is specific to work in the field of teaching with an understanding of aspects that go in the opposite direction. What can be called a verticalization of analysis, in the sense of a deepening of the *specificity* of teaching, must also be completed with the horizontalization of analysis, in the sense of its *generality*. It is necessary, in a way, to leave teaching to find it. This implies making openings towards the broader field of work studies and covering some of what has been accumulated in the fields of activity ergonomics, work sociology, and work psychology, among other disciplines and approaches.

Teaching has its specificities, and, at the same time, it is a job like any other. It includes hierarchies relating to the sexual division of labor, it includes health/disease processes, it involves the difference between prescribed work and real work, as well as technique, values, formal knowledge, and woven knowledge – individually and collectively – by professional experience, ways of doing things deemed relevant by peers, ways of prioritizing what is primary and secondary in professional practice, etc. By saying this, we highlight the formal dimension, the most visible, of work and another, less visible (but of

cardinal importance), woven by men and women in the experience of life and work and which, as Schwartz (1988) beautifully says, gives it serve as heritage.

There is a lot to be done in this area. The less visible dimension of the work highlighted above is none other than Nóvoa (2022), from his earliest texts, tirelessly draws attention to the importance of being valued and invested in the training of teachers. She is exactly what fills the profession from within.

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The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.