

## TEACHING METHODOLOGIES WITHIN THE PROEJA AND THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM: A POSSIBLE PROPOSAL

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### ABSTRACT

The following paper intends to analyze the methodologies used by PROEJA in IF SERTÃO – PE *Campus* – Floresta teachers, in order to detect if the practice follows the directives within the Integrated Curriculum (Currículo Integrado) prescribed at the Documento Base – PROEJA which, is the model proposed for such type of teaching and if students' profile influence such methodologies. The reasons for such study were brought by some inquiries such as *“How and at what extend the methodologies used by the teachers follow, or not, the methodological practice demanded by the implementation of the Integrated Curriculum? “What is the teachers' point of view regarding the Integrated Curriculum? “Are the students' learning difficulties due to the very methodologies put into practice?”* It has used a case study descriptive quantitative research approach that collected data through an open question questionnaire applied to 60% of students and 90% of teachers. The results showed the importance of such study when it comes to contribute to a broad reflection/deed by the teachers, as well as provide elements to the pedagogical practice, which can be used as a theoretical basis to other studies related to the same topic. The study showed that the methodologies used by the PROEJA in IF SERTÃO – PE *Campus* – Floresta - PE teachers do not follow the standard Documento Base – PROEJA proposed for such type of teaching when it comes to the Integrated Curriculum.

**Keywords:** Curriculum. Methodology. PROEJA.

### INTRODUCTION

The work of a teacher involves challenges that require meticulous planning to meet the educational process needs in order to try to overcome such needs. Teaching methodologies are part of such challenges whereas several teachers face pedagogical difficulties.

Thus, teaching youngsters and adults has specific characteristics according to the context where it is performed. Understanding such characteristics can help the comprehension of its demands and limits.

The PROEJA (High School Professional Integration for Youngsters and Adults Education Program) was created to include youngsters and adults within high school technical educational programs, from which they are usually excluded.

Nowadays the greatest challenge is to find ways to converge practices and methodologies in order to overcome current problems within Youngsters and Adults Education (YAE) methodology because of its low learning performance.

The following paper is a descriptive quantitative case study research and it aims to verify if the methodologies used by the PROEJA teachers at IF SERTÃO – PE *campus* – Floresta are following the methodological practice demanded for the implementation of the Integrated Curriculum proposed for the program.

## YAE – HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS

The Youngsters and Adults Education (YAE), due to the social cognitive specificities of its target group, has singular characteristics from other types of education. It also presents singular characteristics because of the context where it is applied.

The use of such methodology all over the world is the outcome of struggles and discussions – Forums, Seminars, Congresses and Conferences - and it has its own development history culminating in the current format.

In Brazil, according to SAMPAIO & ALMEIDA (2009), YAE history is built apart from the official educational system. It is slightly sponsored by the government, but it is mainly supported by the engagement of social movements that have realized its strategic value to overcome class, ethnicity, race and gender exclusion caused by the colonial and slavery social system and perpetuated mainly by the elites towards most of the Brazilian population.

According to LIMA (1999), elementary adult education became part of Brazilian government programs in the 1930s. At this time, Brazilian society was going through important transformations associated to the urbanization and industrialization process.

The fact that Brazil went through a democratic period after the end of President Getulio Vargas' dictatorship in 1945 along with the creation of the United Nations (UN) made clear the need to enhance the constituency to support the central government by integrating the considerable number of late emigrants as well as increasing production. Such facts helped to highlight the importance of adults' education.

In 1947, under the supervision of Professor Lourenço Filho, the National Youngsters and Adults Education Initiative was launched. It prescribed teaching reading and writing in three months.

At the end of 1950s, the critics to the National Youngsters and Adults Education Initiative led to a new point of view regarding illiteracy as well as to a new paradigm, whose reference was Professor Paulo Freire from the state of Pernambuco.

Gonzaga (2007) reports that Paulo Freire's ideas described on the book "Educação como Prática de Liberdade" (Education as Freedom Practice)<sup>1</sup> guided the main literacy and popular education programs in the 1960s. In 1964, the National Literacy Plan was implemented and it prescribed elementary education for adults from a critical analysis of students' reality, the identification of their problems and the possibility of overcoming them. It should be conducted through educational deeds that would not deny students' culture, but transform it through discussions.

Due to the 1964 coup d'état, the literacy and popular education programs, which had spread all over the country between 1961 and 1964, were considered a threat to the new regime and their enthusiasts were repressed.

The government allowed such programs back only in 1967 with MOBREAL (Brazilian Literacy Movement), terminated in 1985. The National Education Basis and Directives law – LDB 9394/96 dedicates articles 37 and 38 from section V, chapter II, Title V specifically to YAE. It emphasizes that public and private institutions that offer adult education should take students' characteristics, interests, and life and professional conditions into consideration. Such education should be offered through adult education courses, which could enable students to graduate in half the time of regular courses.

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1 Not official translation

## PROEJA: INNOVATIVE INTENTIONALITY

The PROEJA (High School Professional Integration for Youngsters and Adults Education Program) came from the decree number 5.478 from 06/24/2006 and it shows the government decision of meeting the needs of youngsters and adults by offering high school technical professional education, from which they are usually excluded.

The implementation of PROEJA within the Institutos Federais de Educação, Ciência e Tecnologia (Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology) is related to the set of policies in motion for the professional technological education. In order to be present at such institutions there is the necessity of expanding their number by applying policies that, through the cooperation of cities and states, are meant to enlarge the number of technical courses offered, especially within high school integrated curriculum.

The PROEJA is has two objectives. Firstly, it faces the discontinuity and the voluntarism that are characteristic of YAE in Brazil within high school. Secondly, it integrates basic education to a professional formation that contributes to a more qualified socioeconomic integration regarding youngsters and adults (Brasil, 2006).

The PROEJA is a program designed to innovate YAE. Originally, YAE is a system that does not include a technical formation that helps students in the job market neither is an entrepreneur system. On the other hand, PROEJA can overcome such problems.

According to MOURA (2006), to make YAE successful, it is necessary to understand that its specificities require a highly qualified theoretical and methodological group different from those professionals who develop strategies for students from elementary school, because the learning process is different for youngsters and adults.

## INTEGRATED CURRICULUM AND THE TEACHING METHODOLOGIES

School curriculum is an important element for teachers' planning because it organizes the contents and the activities. It is a resource for teachers not a law or commandment to be methodologically followed. It can be used as a guide for methodological praxis with adjustments to meet the students' needs.

For GADOTTI (1995), a curriculum is a pedagogical and institutional plan to guide students learning in a systematic way. The main ways of organizing curriculums are:

- Formal curriculum
- Curriculum organized by topics
- Integrated curriculum

Integrated curriculum can be defined as a pedagogical plan whose institutional organization dynamically articulates work and teaching, practice and theory, and teaching and communities.

The integrated curriculum is an educational option that allows:

- an effective integration between practice and theory;
- an evolution in building theories from previous ones;
- the search for original and specific solutions for different situations;
- teaching-work-community integration;
- teacher-student integration and the adaptation to each local reality as well as to specific

cultural standards of a specific social structure (GADOTTI, 1995).

The integrated curriculum is a possibility of pedagogically innovate the conception of high school due to the different clientele to whom it is directed to, through a conception that takes into consideration professional aspects as well as several aspects of knowledge production developed in different social spaces.

The “Documento Base” (2007) defines curriculum as a pedagogical layout and its institutional organization which, dynamically unites experience, work, values, teaching, practice, theory, community, conceptions, and knowledge by taking into consideration the historical, economic, and sociocultural characteristics of the means where the processes takes place.

The integrated curriculum is a proposal that has been under development through the years, differently from traditional work plans. Perhaps one of the issues that demands most effort is teamwork. Firstly among teachers, then among students, and finally among teachers and their students (LOPES, 2008).

There are starting points that favor the formulation of an innovative curriculum for PROEJA courses, as it is displayed in the Agroindustry course political-pedagogic project in Floresta, state of Pernambuco, campus. Such points are based on the National Curricula Parameters, as follows:

- a) Knowing the characteristics of youngsters and adults teaching as well as their life background, expectations and needs, and learning processes;
- b) Taking into consideration each and every experience previous to formal education – values and knowledge acquired by youngsters and adults from their culture as well as their work environment;
- c) Seeing their social and academic background not as jammed processes, but as having different mental, ethical, identity, cultural, social and political formation;
- d) Considering that the learning capacity of such group of individuals make them able to learn formal and scientific contents;
- e) Focusing, as the result, on the enhancement of such individuals’ capacity of connecting their background to the new knowledge in order to make it meaningful to their life.
- f) Respecting the right of such individuals of using their previous and recent knowledge in their daily life.

For many years, there has been the assumption that teachers should be the core of the learning process and the students would be passive receivers who learnt only when they felt they could repeat what they had memorized. The outstanding teacher was the one who knew best not the one who taught best because learning was students’ responsibility and if they failed, they should do the grade again as many times as necessary or as many times they could endure it (ANTUNES, 2009).

Teaching means help and support students to develop the ability of absorbing information and being able to see how it relates to their reality. Teaching should stimulate human development.

Teachers’ practice is not only based on what they learn academically, but also from their life experience. Such practice can define the objective of what is being taught, how the class is organized, the proposed activities, the contents, types and procedures of assessment used and how students and teachers relate to one another.

Although, many teachers feel they have an important role when it comes to significantly change the teaching process, they get frustrated when they try alternatives that prove being ineffective. If they realize that their methodology favor just a few students, they need to clearly know who they are and

why. Without such understanding, the odds of achieving significant changes are low.

Youngsters and Adults Education has specific characteristics according to where it is applied. Understanding such characteristics may clarify its demands and limits. Many teachers are not prepared to work with YAE because they have not had specific formation in it and when they try to adapt other methodologies, they prove inappropriate. Such inappropriateness is due to the use of transmitting knowledge activities that leave little room for discussion and a critical analysis of contents. Teachers do such a thing due to a traditional teacher training formation that leaves to students the responsibility for learning. (LIBÂNIO, 1994).

Thus, the current didactic challenge is the development of a teaching methodology that minimizes social and economic discrimination, engendered outside academic environment, but inherent to students. Teachers must care about students' learning. Their reward is students who can think. (PEDRO DEMO, 2000).

## METHODOLOGY

Researching is an activity aiming to find and build new knowledge and in order to achieve that it is necessary to plan the course of action since each action leads to different results. (MERRIAM (1998) *apud* TEIXEIRA, 2003).

Thus, the following paper had a descriptive purpose and analyzed the methodologies used by the PROEJA in IF SERTÃO – PE teachers in order to detect if the practice follows the directives within the Integrated Curriculum (Currículo Integrado) proposed for such type of teaching.

The individuals observed belong to a group of PROEJA in IF SERTÃO – PE *Campus* – Floresta teachers and the students from two groups from the same PROEJA. It analyzed, randomly, 30% of students and 90% of teachers.

The data were collected through an open-ended questions questionnaire because the topic required a more thorough investigation of the methodologies used by the teachers as well as how the students learn or the difficulties they face with such methodologies. Close-ended questions would not show detailed results. The data analysis was done by grouping the answers according to each question or a more relevant topic.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The age of students ranged from 20-25 years old. Most of them, 91%, live in urban areas and only 9% live in rural areas. When it comes to ethnicity, two of them consider themselves as African descendants (quilombolas), 2 natives, and 18 Latin Americans. Most reasons for absenteeism are related to work, 14 students, as well as parenthood issues. Commuting was the reason pointed by 8 students, 6 male and 2 female. The reasons for taking Agroindustry at PROEJA were mainly that it is a technical course, which could help when applying for a job, the quality of the course, and the potential of teachers. The subjects students enjoy most are Agroindustry and History due to the methodology used by the teachers, which helped them understanding the explanations. The subjects they have more problems following are Mathematic and Chemistry due to the number of calculations. The teaching methodology most used by the teachers are direct instruction, group projects, and movies. The methodologies students enjoy most are group projects and practical classes. The methodologies that make their un-



derstanding difficult are overly refined direct instruction and subtitled movies. The methodologies that mostly stimulate students are practical classes and group projects.

The results from the questionnaires answered by teachers showed that most of them have a master's course. They have been teaching from 1 – 5 years. Regarding difficulties in planning, they highlighted the lack of materials, not enough time and lack of guidance. The most common methodologies they use are direct instruction and group projects. When it comes to an analysis of the proposed integrated curriculum for PROEJA most of them say it is in the beginning and it looks like an interesting proposal. They correlate their methodologies to the integrated curriculum saying that there is not much integration with it as well as a lack of deep knowledge of it. The difficulties they notice regarding students' learning is that they do not master basic academic skills and that do not have much time to study. Most teachers do not associate such difficulties to methodologies used. The methodology most enjoyed by students is group project.

## CONCLUSION

Teachers have a positive view of Integrated Curriculum within the Documento Base proposed at National Program for Professional Education Integration with Elementary Education regarding Youngsters and Adult Education. The Department of Education (MEC), which organizes such proposal, suggests a teamwork policy where the subjects can interact to one another, and all the involved in the activities must understand and get used to the proposal. Even with such positive view, it is clear that at IF SERTÃO – PE *Campus – Floresta*, the teaching methodologies are not quite following what is prescribed within the Integrated Curriculum. There is a complaint that there are no guidelines regarding collective planning which leads each teacher to develop an isolated and fragmented work. However, everyone believes in the feasibility of the proposal and that in the medium-term such difficulties can be minimized or remedied.

Among the methodologies used by teachers within the PROEJA, it is noted that group projects are coherent to the Integrated Curriculum. However, according to the following study, lab classes and fieldwork are not often used and when they are they leave a lot to be desired. Also, they could highlight content and subject integration.

Among the methodologies used, direct instruction and class discussion are not the ones most often used.

Thus, the following study shows that the preference for Agroindustry and History is related to the methodologies highlighted by the students as the easiest to be assimilated because such subjects usually have lab classes and fieldwork. The fact that teachers use real life examples develop an excellent rapport with students, which explain why they claim to have a better understanding of them.

On the other hand, teachers report that they find it difficult to choose proper methodologies that fit PROEJA students profile due to students' background. Since students choose PROEJA, they expect a course with several practical classes, which are the kind of class teachers have more difficulty to work with since they are not prepared to meet students' needs and expectations when it comes to make them see how they can use what they learn in class in their daily life. Teachers do not associate learning difficulties to the methodologies chosen.

Although there is a general belief direct instruction is the most used teaching methodology, the following study shows that there has been some innovation. Nowadays students are more active in

class, exchanging experiences with teachers and peers.

There are vicissitudes when it comes to the influence of students profile concerning the methodologies used within the PROEJA, which answer the questions that are the cornerstone of the following study.

The PROEJA in IF SERTÃO – PE *Campus* – Floresta should adopt an academic practice based on a collective cooperation in order to have the possibility of sharing academic studies and planning with teachers with a pedagogic background and coordinators. It would help them to be acquainted with the curriculum regarding the integration of propaedeutic and technical subjects according to what the PROEJA Documento Base prescribes.

The following study intends to help the understanding of teaching methodologies within the PROEJA and the Integrated Curriculum. It suggests the creation of study and planning groups as well as a synchrony between the methodologies teachers use at PROEJA in IF SERTÃO – PE *Campus* – Floresta to what is prescribed at the Integrated Curriculum, which can also help regional and national PROEJAS.

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