



# Education and the Relationship With Knowledge: What do Teachers Think and Feel

La Educación Y La Relación Con El Conocimiento: Lo Que Piensan Y Sienten Los Profesores

Educação E A Relação Com O Saber: O Que Pensam E Sentem Os Professores

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**ABSTRACT:** *Situated in the context of the studies of the relationship with knowledge, a theory developed by Charlot (2000) and his research team, this article aims to understand the meanings attributed by teachers to education in school routine, highlighting their desires and fears. As a methodological procedure, field research was carried out, using the balance of knowledge as a research instrument. This was applied to fifteen teachers who work in public schools of Basic Education in the city of Caxias do Sul. The data were analyzed and interpreted based on the assumptions of Moraes' Discursive Analysis (2003). The results show that the success of students' learning and the perception that education can transform people are the meanings most desired by teachers. In contradiction, professional devaluation and the perception of living in an anesthetized society are the factors that cause the most fears.*

**EDUCATION. TEACHER. RELATIONSHIP WITH KNOWLEDGE. SENSE.**

**RESUMEN:** *Situado en el contexto de los estudios de la relación con el conocimiento, teoría desarrollada por Charlot (2000) y su equipo de investigación, este artículo tiene como objetivo comprender los significados que atribuyen los docentes a la educación en la rutina escolar, destacando sus deseos y miedos. Como procedimiento metodológico, se realizó una investigación de campo, utilizando el balance de conocimientos como instrumento de investigación. Esto se aplicó a quince docentes que laboran en escuelas públicas de Educación Básica de la ciudad de Caxias do Sul. Los datos fueron analizados e interpretados con base en los supuestos del Análisis Discursivo de Moraes (2003). Los resultados muestran que el éxito del aprendizaje de los estudiantes y la percepción de que la educación puede transformar a las personas son los significados más deseados por los docentes. En contraposición, la devaluación profesional y la percepción de vivir en una sociedad anestesiada son los factores que provocan más miedos.*

**PROFESOR. EDUCACIÓN. RELACIÓN CON EL CONOCIMIENTO. SENTIDO.**

**RESUMO:** *Situado no contexto dos estudos da relação com o saber, teoria desenvolvida por Charlot (2000) e sua equipe de pesquisa, este artigo tem o objetivo de compreender os sentidos atribuídos pelos docentes à educação no cotidiano escolar, evidenciando seus desejos e medos. Como procedimento metodológico, foi realizada pesquisa de campo, utilizando o balanço de saber como instrumento de pesquisa. Esse foi aplicado a quinze professores que atuam em escolas públicas de Educação Básica no município de Caxias do Sul. Os dados foram analisados e interpretados a partir dos pressupostos da Análise Discursiva de Moraes (2003). Os resultados evidenciam que o sucesso da aprendizagem dos estudantes e a percepção de que a educação pode transformar pessoas são os sentidos mais desejados pelos professores. Em contradição, a desvalorização profissional e a percepção de viver em uma sociedade anestesiada são os fatores que causam mais medos.*

**DOCENTE. EDUCAÇÃO. RELAÇÃO COM O SABER. SENTIDO.**

## Introduction

Challenging oneself to understand the teacher's relationship with knowledge implies investigating the complex phenomenon of education and dealing with uncertainties, doubts and (re) constructions. It means allowing yourself to move between discoveries and the pleasure of researching, along the routes of desire and scientific rigor.

Mobilized by Charlot's answer (2010, p.155), when asked about what advice he would give to those who want to research education, he says (referring to his students): "What do you want to know and that no one yet knows, including me ? ", I challenge myself to understand a little the meanings attributed by teachers to education.

Thinking about the teacher's relationship with knowledge presupposes understanding what teachers think and feel when it comes to education, evoking their desires and fears. In this sense, the objective of the investigation is to understand what sense (s) the teachers attribute to education, to educational practices, recognizing the emotions, desires and fears that permeate relationships with themselves, with others and with the world.

The notion of the relationship with knowledge seeks to understand, among other aspects, "how the subject apprehends the world and, with that, how one builds and transforms oneself: an inseparably human, social and singular subject" (CHARLOT, 2005, p 41). For Charlot (2005), every subject has a type of relationship with knowledge, since the subject does not have a relationship with knowledge, he is a relationship with knowledge. To study the relationship with knowledge is to study the subject himself while building himself by appropriating the world - therefore, also as an apprentice subject. (CHARLOT, 2005, p. 42, emphasis added)

Reflecting on the teachers' emotions presupposes entering into contradictions of conflicts, tensions, desires and knowledge, which, related, configure the essence of teaching. Each one feels and says he is a teacher based on the experiences and experiences that constitute him, in a process of intermingling between the professional and the personal self. In this way, "the way in which each of us teaches is directly dependent on who we are as a person when we exercise teaching." (NÓVOA, 1992, p.16).

The fundamental issue is the need to understand the emotions that go through being and making teachers, in order to give voice to dreams, desires, fears, anxieties, among others, in a reflective process about the teacher's relationship with himself, with others and with the world.

Under this bias, this study is linked to the theoretical assumptions that deal with the relationship with knowledge, developed by Bernard Charlot and his research team, especially for finding in their discussions an approach that dialogues with issues related to the complex phenomenon of education and its developments for teaching and learning. So, according to Charlot,

To understand teachers, it would be necessary, therefore, to be interested not only in their relationship with knowledge (with their relationship and that of their students) but also in the

relationship with teaching (with the situation and with the teaching activity). (CHARLOT, 2005, p. Vi).

It is important to consider that the teacher is an incomplete, inconclusive subject, in constant learning. It is, therefore, a singular being, which assumes a social position, relating to teaching and learning.

With the intention of explaining the theoretical foundations that support the relationship with knowledge, I discuss in the next lines reflections on some fundamental concepts of the theory.

## 1 Relationship with Knowledge: Conceptions and Foundations

Understanding education, in all its complexity, implies understanding it as a cultural, social and intrinsic and constituent process to the human being. For Charlot (2013, p.167), "It is through education that the relationship between generations is not just a relationship of biological heredity; it is, more than anything, a cultural heritage."

It is education that allows man to question himself and the world, to reflect on his actions and attitudes, in order to recognize and respect the other as a constitutive part of himself. Thus, the notion of the relationship with knowledge is attentive to understanding, among other aspects, "how the subject apprehends the world and, with this, how he builds and transforms himself: an inseparably human, social and singular subject" (CHARLOT, 2005, p. 41). In other words, he is a subject who finds the issue of learning as a human condition.

This guides Charlot (2000, p.45) to conceive the existence of a subject sociology that understands the subject's individuality and the relationships it establishes with itself, with others and with the world. Charlot defines the concept of man as an incomplete, unfinished human being, who appropriates a historically, socially and culturally constructed knowledge. Therefore, learning is a condition for being human. In this sense, for the author (2000, p. 52), man is the result of this construction, and, because he is an incomplete subject, "he is absent from himself". Based on this understanding, for Charlot, a subject is:

- i) a human being open to the world, moved by desires and in relation to other human beings; ii) a social being, who is born and grows in a family environment, who has a position in a social space, which is inscribed in social relations; iii) a singular being, a unique specimen of the species, has its own history, interprets the world, gives meaning to that world, the position it occupies in it, its relations with others, its own history, its uniqueness. CHARLOT (2000, p.33).

Education is constituted as a learning process based on the subject's relations with himself, with the other and with the world. In this sense, according to Charlot (2000, p.53), education is based on hominization (becoming a man); in singularization (being unique and exemplary); and in socialization (acting, interacting in society and occupying a social position).

Still, for the author (2000, p.33), the subject is a being constituted of desires and moved by them, as well as by the need to learn, that is, it is the subject who is mobilized for learning. It is in this context that Charlot presents the differentiation between the concepts of mobilization and motivation.

In the perspective of Charlot (2000, p. 55), the notion of mobilization refers to the idea of movement, to a process internal to the subject; whereas motivation implies an action external to the subject, triggered by someone or something. Therefore, to mobilize for learning "is to put resources in motion" [...], "is to engage in an activity originated by mobiles, because there are good reasons to do so". Mobile understood as an internal movement, the desire that leads to activity.

The notion of activity is based on the assumptions of Leontiev, which defines it as a set of actions and operations, which are organized around a motive (mobile) and an objective (goal). In other words, Charlot clarifies:

[...] it is necessary to explain what an activity is. Alexis Leontiev, Vygotsky's collaborator, explains that an activity is a series of actions and operations, with a motive and an objective (Leontiev, 1984:15). Why do I do this? It's the reason. What do I do it for? It is the goal. How to achieve this goal? Performing actions, which require operations. An activity has an effectiveness and a meaning. It is effective when operations allow the desired result to be reached. The meaning of the activity, according to Leontiev, depends on the relationship between motive and objective. When both coincide, it is an activity; otherwise, it is just an action. (CHARLOT, 2009, p. 92).

Learning is linked to meaning. Thus, in order for the subject to mobilize, it is necessary that he sees meaning in what he is learning. Learning is a way for the subject to appropriate the world, to relate to learning, which, according to the author, is configured as an epistemic relationship. Thus, the theorist (2000, p. 67, emphasis added) states that "Learning, is to exercise an activity in a situation: in a place, at a time in its history and under different time conditions, with the help of people who help to learn.". Considering learning in the school context, Charlot explains that:

For the student to appropriate knowledge, to build cognitive skills, it is necessary to study, to engage in an intellectual activity, and to mobilize intellectually. But in order for him to mobilize, it is necessary that the learning situation has meaning for him, that he can produce pleasure, he has responded to a desire. It is a first condition for the student to appropriate knowledge. The second condition is that this intellectual mobilization leads to effective intellectual activity. (CHARLOT, 2005, p. 54).

Charlot (2000) believes that relations with knowledge can be defined under three dimensions: epistemic, identity and social. From an epistemic perspective, Charlot calls the figures of learning, which express the different forms of the subject's relationship with knowledge, considering their life stories, their needs and intentions.

Learning, from an epistemic perspective, means appropriating knowledge materialized in books, schools, teachers. It is appropriating knowledge-objects, intellectual content that the subject does not have. The subject also learns by appropriating a virtual object present in real objects, in a relationship with a knowledge-object, which is enunciated through language, especially in written form.

The relationship with knowledge presupposes an identity relationship, which considers the subject's history, his experiences, his relations with himself and with the other, which can be "physically present in my world, but also this virtual other that each one takes within yourself as an interlocutor". (Charlot, 2000, p.72).

The relationship with knowledge, as a social relationship, presupposes being able to regulate the relationship, in order to find the necessary distance between oneself and with others. It is to understand the process of distance-regulation. The social relationship cannot be analyzed separately from the epistemic and identity relationships.

### **1.1 The teacher's relationship with knowledge: a relationship with oneself, with others and with the world**

Understanding the intertwining of the relationships that the teacher establishes with education and its displacement towards emotions and teaching practices, it is possible to think of the teacher as a singular subject, who assumes a social position, since he is inserted in the school context, as well as someone who

teaches historically constructed knowledge. In the conception of Charlot (2005, p. 77), the “teacher is, at the same time, a subject (with his personal characteristics), a representative of a school institution (with rights and duties) and an adult in charge of transmitting human heritage to young generations (which is an anthropological function) ”.

This means that, at the same time that teachers seek to express their relationships with their profession, they also evoke the relationships they establish with themselves, with others and with the world, because

There is no knowing (of learning) except in the Relationship with Knowledge (with learning). Every Relationship with Knowledge (with learning) is also a relationship with the world, with others and with you. There is no knowing (to learn) if the relationship with the world, with others and with oneself is not at stake. (CHARLOT, 2005, p.58).

In this perspective, investigating the teacher's relationship with knowledge, especially about his emotions, feelings and thoughts attributed to education in the contemporary context, means understanding the processes of meaning, of human constitution, not the identification of shortcomings and deficiencies, which presuppose judgments.

## 2 Methodological Procedures

The methodological procedures adopted were selected in order to solve the proposed objective. In view of this, it became necessary to choose a qualitative methodological path that would meet the descriptions of meaning attributed by teachers to emotions, to the interpretations perceived about education and school practices.

According to Charlot (2001, p. 23), a methodology that aims to investigate the relationship with knowledge “must focus on the problem of the subject's mobilization in the field of knowledge (of learning) or in the confrontation with this or that knowledge - more precisely, it must focus on the sources of this mobilization and the forms it takes. ”

In order to better understand the processes that constitute the teacher's relationship with emotions and feelings, I used the instrument proposed by Charlot, called knowledge balance, also called knowledge inventory, which, through written narratives, “it aims to identify processes and then build constellations (configurations, ideal types), and not characterize individuals.”(CHARLOT, 2001, p. 22)

The instrument of balance of knowledge, according to Charlot (2001, p. 37), represents the production of a text in which the subject evaluates the processes and the results of his learning. Charlot, together with his researchers, when proposing the balance of knowledge to young people from the periphery, developed the following statement: “Since I was born, I have learned many things; at home, in the neighborhood, at school, in many places. What was most important to me? And now, what do I expect?” (CHARLOT, 2001, p. 37). In this sense, the statement was adapted as follows: “What do teachers think and feel about education?”.

More specifically, this study focuses on the teacher and his relationship with knowledge. It is the teacher who relates with himself, with others and with the world, in the epistemic, identity and social dimensions. It is a subject of knowledge that relates to how to know, in the forms that this relationship takes with the unique experiences and life stories; with emotions; with the social position it occupies; with student teaching and learning.

The option for the qualitative methodology can be justified in the perspective of Moraes (2003, p. 193), when considering that “textual materials are significant to which the analyst needs to attribute meanings”.

When choosing teaching narratives as a research source, I chose the method of discursive textual analysis, based on Moraes (2007), with the intention of interpreting the process of the teacher's

relationship with knowledge and understanding the meanings attributed to education and its displacements to emotions and thoughts about educational practices.

The exercise of teaching is marked by movements that are intertwined by the processes of teaching and learning. In this sense, the teachers' narratives point to signs of routines that are outlined in the classroom. These routines are often marked by little incentive to education, professional development, among others.

Discursive textual analysis is defined as a process of understanding and reconstructing meanings, of analysis and synthesis, and presupposes an intense engagement of the researcher in the practice of analysis full of uncertainties, anxieties, perceptions, feelings. It is an investigative path open to deviations and surprises that are outlined in the course of the process, with empirical and theoretical interlocutions, therefore, in line with the assumptions that take daily life as a lever for knowledge.

In the discursive textual analysis, movements of life and going to the empirical material are essential for the effective impregnation of the researcher in the decision of choices, in the understanding of the emerging conditions and in the reframing of elements considered already constructed. According to Moraes and Galiazzi (2007),

Discursive Textual Analysis is an integrated process of analysis and synthesis that aims to make a rigorous and in-depth reading of a set of textual materials, with the objective of describing and interpreting them in order to achieve a more complex understanding of the phenomena and speeches from which they were produced. (MORAES, GALIAZZI, 2007, p. 136).

So, in the sequence, I present the results and the discussions interpreted from the narratives produced in the balances of knowledge.

### **3 Perceived Senses: What Teachers Think And Feel**

From the readings and reinterpretations of the narratives produced by the teachers, the senses evoked to the desires and fears emerged when the subject refers to school education. The narratives produced were analyzed and interpreted in the light of concepts based on the theory of the relationship with knowledge, as well as from the experiences of this researcher. The participating teachers were called P1, P2, P3 and so on.

#### ***3.1 The meaning of education is student learning***

According to the narratives produced and interpreted, the most intense meaning enunciated by teachers is related to student learning. Perceiving your engagement in the intellectual activities proposed in the classroom, that is, wanting to learn is one of the most verbalized feelings by teachers in the educational sphere. In this sense, professors affirm:

The students 'wanting to know, the exchange of knowledge and the students' intellectual growth. (P1)

[...] the dedication of students to activities, when they get involved and like the work proposal is very significant for me. (P5)

When a student shows interest and engagement in a studied topic. (P8)

When students embrace the proposal for a new activity. (P13)

Certainly, when there is a desire to know, on the part of the student, that is, when he “embraces the proposal”, the teacher feels accomplished in teaching, and, perhaps, this is one of the great drivers of the teaching profession, mainly, when knowledge makes sense for the teacher and the student. According to Charlot (2000, p.53), desire “refers to an otherness that has a social form, whether it is the other as a person or as an object of desire.”

When I see interest in learning in their eyes, appreciation of our role and of us as an individual. (P4)

When what we teach has some meaning for us and the students. (P9)

Monitoring the progress of students, more specifically those who have difficulties, is a reason for the teachers' accomplishment, because they follow their learning trajectories, exercising pedagogical interventions and noting the advances. From this perspective, perceiving the student's engagement in an intellectual activity proposed in the classroom makes the teacher's heart beat faster.

My heart beats faster when I realize that a student with difficulties is learning. Undoubtedly, the progress of students. I love it when they participate and give themselves up to a classroom proposal. (P2)

### ***3.2 Learning that transforms you, the other and the world***

Understanding that learning somehow transforms the student's life, allowing him to dream and live in more dignified conditions, is another feeling strongly verbalized by the teacher.

Charlot (2000, p. 65) understands that every “(...) human being learns: if he did not learn, he would not become human.” It is the understanding that the humanization process happens through education that mobilizes the teacher to continue believing in education and in life.

The narratives verbalized by the teachers clarify the understanding that the learning built in the school routine acquires much more meaning when it allows the human being to transform himself, others and the world around him, in order to transcend it beyond the banks schoolchildren. In this context, the assumptions of the theory of the relationship with knowledge are postulated, because, according to Charlot (2000, p. 64), “knowledge only has meaning and value by reference to the relationships it supposes and produces with the world, with you and with others.”

The fact that many teachers identify themselves as an “important part” in students' intellectual and human education gives a valuable meaning to teaching activity. The dialogues that follow show teachers' perceptions about changes that have occurred to themselves, students and society in general, showing the presence of being in the world.

My spirit is renewed when I see that I make a difference in the lives of those I teach. Seeing that work makes a difference in the lives of students or realizing that I am an important part in the process of training other people. Knowing that it contributes to some progress, whether intellectual or human, makes me feel and see meaning in existence. (P7)

In this context, the dimension of education as a possibility of change, of new perspectives of being and existing in the world, gains strength. It is the sense of accomplishment and the production of meanings when doing, teaching.

The possibility of opening horizons. Transform the student into a reader of life. Students who achieve excellence and change their reality. It was worth the whole fight. (P12)

Certainly, the desire to make a difference in the students' lives seems to be crucial in the teachers' speeches, in view of the intention of seeking teaching and learning that effectively contribute to changes, both in the teacher, in the student and in the world in which they live. According to Charlot (2000, p. 53), "this long, complex movement, never completely finished, which is called education."

### ***3.3 Fear of professional devaluation***

The teachers' narratives show different meanings in the balance of emotions, when the subject is related to education, either through desires or fears.

From the interpreted perceptions, many concerns and absences were evoked, more specifically with regard to situations involving the devaluation of the teacher and the feeling of loneliness.

The finding of the devaluation of the teacher, in the current context, seems to be one of the most crucial reasons that cause fear to the teacher. But what leads to this realization? Whose part of this devaluation so strongly pointed out by teachers?

The term devaluation expands in the context of verbalized narratives, encompassing other names that meet the same semantic field, within the scope of this investigation, such as: discredit, unworthiness, neglect, among others.

Note that in these words there is the presence of the prefix of Latin origin *des*, which means negation or opposite action. Therefore, the use of this prefix portrays the fears that are interconnected and intensified at the present time. The narratives evidence this observation:

The neglect with which education has been treated by society itself, in my view, much more than by governments. I am afraid that the teacher will be little valued by society, government and students, resulting in poor quality, despite all our efforts. (P7)

According to the interpretations of the teaching writings, society as a whole is the major driver of devaluation. In the dimension of society, the segments that constitute it are included: students, parents, government officials, among others.

This devaluation of the teacher, in turn, ends up having repercussions on education and vice versa, in an intertwining, in which "the little case", both to the figure of the teacher and to education, refers to an interdependent relationship, to the extent where the failure to value one implies that of the other.

The little case made with education, or rather, given to education in our country. The lack of interest on the part of the government, all the neglect that school and education professionals suffer. (P9)  
Distorted public policies, lack of adequate public investment, neglect of professionals. The neglect as education has been treated in the socio-cultural environment and in national policies. (P 13)

So much is the fear of the teacher in relation to the neglect of government policies that the concern arises that negative measures in education are implemented, which may worsen the educational situation in the country. Educational policies implemented by people who are unaware or who are very distant from the classroom, whose charges will go to the teacher.

That people far from school reality want to impose inconsistent measures. Fear of negative educational policies. (P11)

In fact, according to the teachers' narratives, the lack of investment in education represents one of the reasons for professional devaluation, but it is not the only one. Speaking of devaluation presupposes understanding the close relationship of meaning that constitutes it, because together with this, there are added discredit, disrespect, demotivation of the teacher, among others.



The state of devaluation perceived by teachers can be a representation of the recent process of democratizing access to school and its consequences, which still presents fluctuating educational public policies. That is, among so many aspects, it is fundamental for the valorization of the teacher to implement continuous and propositive public policies to the daily classroom practices.

As a multiple phenomenon, devaluation synthesizes a plurality of approaches that are articulated in search of their understanding and manifest in the lack of interest, disrespect, intolerance, among others, by students, families, public managers and, many sometimes from their own professional colleagues.

The lack of limits and respect for most students. The lack of interest and participation of most families. Neglect, disrespect, lack of commitment, especially by managers. (P15)

The lack of consideration, value and respect for the figure of the teacher. Intolerance (of the different parties involved: teachers, students, school community ...) (P8)

Lack of respect from students, colleagues and parents. (P2)

Indifference, lack of respect. (P9)

The lack of authority that the teacher is having. (P13)

### ***3.4 Fear of living in an anesthetized Society***

Some teaching narratives are interpreted in relation to the fear of living in a “silenced” and “anesthetized” society, which makes the teacher unable to mobilize to modify the contemporary educational scenario.

Regarding this theme, there is a denunciation of veiled oppression exerted on a teacher, which makes him silence and silence. I observe the fear that teachers have to express their opinions and suffer reprisals.

This fear is probably evoked due to the use of recordings in the classroom, often distorting the teacher's speech. Or yet, due to the repercussions in the media of facts exposing teacher's speeches about school daily life.

For empirical interlocutors, freedom of expression is at stake, since the teacher feels inspected by the student, by colleagues, by the family and by society.

Violence and lack of focus on knowledge, in addition to veiled attempts, in some cases, to silence by society in general. The impossibility of dialogue. The fear of losing the freedom to speak what one thinks and feel the oppression, as spaces are limited. (P3)

Feeling watched, supervised and alone is the fear that surrounds teachers, as well as the feeling of not being able to exercise their profession with freedom and autonomy. The teacher recognizes himself in a paradox, since the same society that demands results, whether in the matter of education of attitudes and values, or in the teaching of formal knowledge, is the same that condemns him, many times, considering him the enemy and distorting their professional function. But why is the teacher considered an enemy? For expressing your opinion? For providing dialogues and debates with different points of view? These are questions that invade my thinking at this moment.

Repression, lack of information, prejudice, lack of investments. I don't know how to deal with differences. And according to the latest news, the new "inspection" in schools. (P4)

The future is uncertain, but the fear is from condemnations to teachers, the teacher being seen ambitions as an enemy and suffering reprisals for some placement. (P14)

What scares me the most is the demotivation and accommodation of so many. Teens without and determination. Society, family breakdown has anesthetized young people. Laziness, comfort, lack of incentive and desire makes me very afraid. (P6)

## Final considerations

The purpose of this article was to understand the relationship of teachers with education, with the meanings attributed to emotions, highlighting the desires and fears that surround school life and educational practices.

From the analyzes and interpretations perceived in the teaching narratives, I understand that the teacher's relationship with education permeates emotions, feelings, teaching and learning. Teachers feel fulfilled when they see their students learning, mobilizing themselves for knowledge. Likewise, when teachers recognize that teaching and, as a result, school learning had the purpose of transforming students' lives and their relationship with the world.

In contradiction to the feeling of accomplishment, teachers reveal the fears that most surround education, that is, professional devaluation and the fact of living in an anesthetized society, which does not act and reacts against offenses issued to teachers and education.

Starting from the meanings evoked in the narratives of the balances of knowledge, I tried to support the teacher's relationship with knowledge through a theoretical dialogue added to the interpretations of emotions and thoughts about contemporary education.

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