

Paulo Freire and the Basic Education Teacher Training Program (Parfor) in the Amazons

Paulo Freire e o Programa de Formação de Professores da Educação Básica (Parfor) nas Amazônias

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Abstract: This paper focuses on thinking about the experiences lived with students in the Basic Education Teacher Training Program (PARFOR) in two undergraduate courses offered by the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT) in the northern region of the State of Tocantins, a region known as Bico do Papagaio, within the Legal Amazon. Our perspective for the qualitative analysis performed here was bibliographic in nature and based on the works of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. The results of this writing reveal the immense learning that university students and professors were able to exchange and learn from each other based on the difficult realities of the student-mothers-teachers-women who attended PARFOR and educational theories.

Keywords: Women; university education; Amazons.

Resumo: Este artigo tem como foco pensar sobre as experiências vividas junto aos estudantes do Programa de Formação de Professores da Educação Básica (PARFOR) em dois cursos de graduação ofertados pela Universidade Federal do Tocantins (UFT) na região norte do Estado do Tocantins, região conhecida como Bico do Papagaio, dentro da Amazônia Legal. Nossa perspectiva para a análise qualitativa aqui executada foi de natureza bibliográfica e baseada nas obras do educador brasileiro Paulo Freire. Os resultados deste escrito revelam o imenso aprendizado que estudantes e docentes universitários puderam trocar e aprender mutuamente a partir das difíceis realidades das estudantes-mães-professoras-mulheres que cursaram o PARFOR e das teorias educacionais.

Palavras-chave: Mulheres; educação superior; Amazônias.

Submetido em: 12/08/2024.

Aceito em: 30/09/2025.

1 INTRODUÇÃO

This paper about teacher training via the Basic Education Teacher Training Program (PARFOR) in the Amazon region fits into our research as a member of the group “Linguistic Studies in the Brazilian Amazon” (GT-ELIAB) of the National Association of Postgraduate and Research in Linguistics and Literature (ANPOLL). PARFOR is the Training Program for Basic Education Teachers who work in areas for which they do not have higher education.

It was implemented by the Brazilian federal government in 2017, following its own public regulatory policies.

Here we emphasize that we worked at PARFOR Pedagogy course (university degree) on the Tocantinópolis campus (between 2011 and 2012) and on the Araguaína campus (between 2013 and 2019), both programs linked to the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT), dealing directly with PARFOR students.

It is worth informing that this writing

is a short report of our experiences training teachers in/from the north of the State of Tocantins, professionals from the region known as Bico do Papagaio, an immense territorial area with many municipalities with a large number of social and educational vulnerabilities (Rodrigues, 2018), among other local and regional weaknesses.

Here we carry out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of some aspects experienced by us as a teacher and coordinator of a Pedagogy course. We used documents, scientific articles, books, etc., among other sources, to better understand how our experiences at PARFOR are significant for understanding the difficulties and happiness in teacher training in the Amazon region.

We also seek to gain an understanding of our experiences with PARFOR in the Amazon, a region with immense diversity. We understand this region of the Legal Amazon as a territorial territory varied in cultures and peoples and with diverse realities (hence the term Amazons). Such variety goes far beyond our thoughts and understandings about Brazil.

In the Amazons there are riverside populations, indigenous people, quilombolas, caboclas, among many other groups of Brazilians who live in fragile conditions and with lifestyles very different from those in big cities. It is worth looking at these groups as holders of their own knowledge and practices that are relevant to Brazil, especially in relation to environmental issues, natural resource management and lifestyle alternatives that can be important for the rest of the country and the planet.

We also know that teacher training in the Amazon region has always been precarious and that since the Amazon is such a vast space, the varieties of teacher training offered are often insufficient (in terms of content acquired, discussion about practices, thinking theoretical,

teachers' education levels, etc.) and precarious. Many training courses are offered remotely or by institutions without commitment to teacher training focused on critical thinking and doing. The best undergraduate courses in the Amazon region are, without a shadow of a doubt, those offered by federal and state public university institutions, despite the multiple problems that these institutions also face.

It is importante to inform the reader that this paper was originally written in Portuguese and later translated into English. The authors' quotes were also translated from Portuguese.

2 PARFOR FROM A FREIREAN PERSPECTIVE

We begin here by informing that PARFOR seeks to allow teachers working in the public basic education network access to higher education, as required by the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB 9.394/96). This LDB reaffirms the need for higher education to teach in basic education:

Art. 62. The training of teachers to work in basic education will take place at a higher level, in a full degree course, admitted as minimum training for teaching in early childhood education and in the first five years of elementary education, that offered at medium level, in the normal modality. (Wording given by law no. 13,415). (Brasil, 1996)

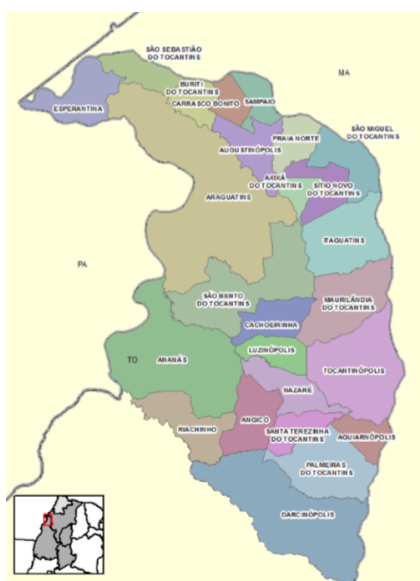
Thus, from 2017, the federal government, to comply with the provisions of the LDB, established the National Basic Education Teacher Training Program (PARFOR) at a national level. Along these lines, the Federal University of Tocantins (UFT) offered undergraduate courses with priority for teachers without higher education training.

In the Degrees in Pedagogy and Literature on the Araguaína campus of the UFT, with its classes full of women, as women-mothers-teachers-students were the majority of graduates of these courses at the UFT, we worked for a few years.

Many of these students were hired by city halls in the interior of Bico do Papagaio, a region in the extreme north of Tocantins, and some worked for the State of Tocantins. The vast majority were not competitive, but hired to work in rural and difficult to access areas, areas where few teachers would venture to remain teaching. They did not receive financial aid from their employers to help with the costs of PARFOR Degrees and had to "fight" with their directors to be able to attend the in-person period at the university centers, but several had to "replace" the classes not offered to their students with extra activities.

It is worth mentioning that Bico do Papagaio, in the extreme north of the State of Tocantins, is one of the most deprived regions in the state. Now, imagine teaching in schools in precarious conditions in the rural areas of these municipalities! Many schools were/are small and some were made of thatch, according to reports from some PARFOR students. These are the working conditions of many teachers trained in PARFOR degrees at UFT.

Figura 1 – Map of the Bico do Papagaio region, north of the State of Tocantins.



Source:
<https://www.vozdobico.com.br/bico/bico-do-papagaio-tem-1016-dos-casos-de-coronavirus-no-tocantins/attachment/bico-do-papagaio>.

We, teachers of these Degrees/PARFOR, learned a lot from these student teachers. In this way, as Paulo Freire tells us, there is no way to teach without learning, and to learn you need time, money, patience, persistence, etc., as our PARFOR student teachers also did:

[...] there is no *teaching without learning* and by this I mean more than I would say if I said that the act of teaching requires the existence of those who teach and those who learn. I want to say that teaching and learning happen in such a way that whoever teaches learns, on the one hand, because they recognize previously learned knowledge and, on the other, because, observing the way in which the apprentice student's curiosity works to apprehend what is being taught, without what does not learn, the teacher helps himself to discover uncertainties, successes, mistakes. (Freire, 2001, p. 259, author's italics)

Thus, learning for these women was not easy in the conditions that were presented to them. The difficult life circumstances of PARFOR students, with very difficult life stories, with illiterate parents (mostly) and with low education (that is, without examples of linear schooling from their previous and closest relatives), with young children and many were married, making it difficult to have the necessary availability to study a degree with due attention and care.

The majority of students studying degrees in Pedagogy and Literature at PARFOR, in the courses where I worked, were women and almost all of them were mothers. A woman without children in these PARFOR classes was rare. And with children comes all the difficulties of raising them, having someone to leave them with so they can come to the in-person centers to study during the holidays (PARFOR's face-to-face period in the university centers), maintaining the children (since, in most cases, these mother-teachers-students were the main or only providers in their homes), among other points that made learning difficult

without turbulence during the training period at PARFOR.

Furthermore, these women left their families at home and came to study at the in-person centers for six weeks, when they were offered six in-person courses (one per week). Let us remember that the machismo of many husbands and partners was yet another obstacle for them.

Another point to highlight was the need for a portable computer to carry out activities during classes, do online research, access the internet frequently to search for information in electronic magazines and download e-books, which meant that students had the financial support to cover these expenses. necessary for a current student. Because, without information and communication technologies, the learning situation today becomes more complicated.

Also, these student teachers who arrived at PARFOR's in-person centers had, for the most part, precarious training in high school, or had completed it a long time ago. Let us also remember that Brazilian public schools always treat less privileged students less well and that there are several and more rigid obstacles for the poorest to have a good educational level. Furthermore, the stability of teachers is lower in the most difficult and peripheral neighborhoods, places where these student teachers came from. And disadvantaged families are more absent from their children's schools and are less informed at meetings.

There are several problems with public education in the interior of Brazil, as in the case of Bico do Papagaio. Therefore, the comparison between the income of a child from a more vulnerable area of the Amazon and a child from a middle class area of a large urban city is not perfectly fair and we must always take this into account. Also, the training of teachers in these most vulnerable regions is/was, generally and unfortunately, more precarious.

Along this path, we believe that education at PARFOR should be based on the life situation and realities of these students, starting from the difficult lives of these individuals who desire an existential improvement. The search for such improvements, through education and critically, reflects our understanding that such a program can be taken as Freirean, since Paulo Freire always believed and fought for education based on the experiences of the subjects. These experiences would take them to a level of criticality that would remove them from a life without understanding the oppressions to which they were subjected.

We understand that PARFOR's educational demands revolve around not only the continuing education required by law, but also a critical (trans)formation of such teachers regarding their professions, their knowledge and their activities. Freire tells us: "If education alone does not transform society, without it neither does society change" (Freire, 2000, p. 67). We also believe that education can be a driver of life improvements for the most vulnerable populations, mainly due to its political nature, in order to take sides in certain situations.

According to Freirean thinking, the situation of being a teacher cannot be thought of passively, but from a critical understanding of the subject in the world, of a professional who must have good conditions to exercise his profession and be valued, even working in the interior of the Amazon. Freire tells us:

In my book "Teacher yes, aunt no" I fight hard for the professionalization of the professional critical of the aunt - an effort by a dominant ideology to deprofessionalize the educator. Deep down, the ideology is there. And I say: "you who are reading this book now, you may like to be called aunt and I have nothing to do with that. Now, what you cannot do is continue to be called aunt without knowing the ideology that works against you." In this book I try to talk a little about all of this: what it means to teach, what it

means to learn, how we relate as teachers and students. And through letters I discuss certain dimensions of the human experience in our daily lives. (Freire, 1994, p. 9)

Thus, the professionalization conditions of these women-teachers-students depend on numerous factors that they themselves cannot control. Regarding the financial difficulties of PARFOR degree student teachers, we can understand what Freire says if we think about the high costs of university books, the need for a laptop to do academic work and a quality internet to access information relevant to training university (such as, for example, to consult scientific articles, e-books, specialized websites, etc.):

The issue of the necessary use of instruments essential to our reading and writing raises the problem of the purchasing power of students and teachers in view of the high costs of obtaining basic language dictionaries, philosophical dictionaries, etc. Being able to consult all this material is a right that students and teachers have, which corresponds to the duty of schools to make it possible for them to consult them, equipping or creating their libraries, with realistic study schedules. Claiming this material is a right and a duty of teachers and students. (Freire, 2001, p. 266)

Let us also consider that the educator's primary space is the school. Therefore, we have to understand the school as a genuine space for promoting criticality, dialogue, local culture, cooperation, etc. Furthermore, the school must have a transformative social practice, but always without forgetting the educational theories it encompasses, preferably suited to a libertarian and (trans)formative educational philosophy. For teachers, reflecting on their own pedagogical practice can point to paths for change and improvement. And such critical reflection also falls on the schools where these PARFOR degree student teachers work. This exercise of thinking critically about their educational practices

and working conditions, supported by theories, has always been our focus in the Degrees/PARFOR where we work.

We also noted the difficulties faced by PARFOR students in writing a course conclusion work (TCC) and defending it before an evaluation panel, even under the attentive and patient guidance of a university professor). We found that the precarious student training that these student teachers had can lead to the formation of teachers with deficiencies in critical understanding, the absence of direct and forceful writing and deficiencies in speaking in public about their thoughts. We fight against this poor training in Degrees/PARFOR by trying to provide as many subsidies as possible so that our students can overcome these writing difficulties. Freire informs us:

If our schools, from the earliest ages of their students, devoted themselves to the work of stimulating in them the taste for reading and writing, a taste that continued to be stimulated throughout their schooling, there would possibly be a much smaller number of postgraduates, undergraduates talking about their insecurity or their inability to write. If studying, for us, wasn't almost always *a burden*, if reading wasn't a bitter obligation to fulfill, if, on the contrary, studying and reading were sources of joy and pleasure, which also results in the indispensable knowledge with which we move better in the world, we would have better indicators revealing the quality of our education. (Freire, 2001, p. 267, author's italics)

Marília Freitas de Campos Pires, defining historical-dialectical materialism as a method applied to education, something that Freire did in an exemplary way in his educational philosophy, as he started from thinking about the reality of his students in search of a critical and scientific deepening, tells us that:

A great contribution of the Method [historical-dialectical materialism] for educators, as an aid in the task of understanding the educational phenomenon, concerns the logical need to discover, in the phenomena,

the simplest category (the empirical) to reach the synthesis category of multiple determinations (thought concrete). This means that the analysis of the educational phenomenon under study can be undertaken when we are able to discover its simplest manifestation so that, by focusing on it, creating abstractions, we can fully understand the observed phenomenon. Thus, for example, a certain educational process can be understood based on reflections on the everyday relationships between teachers and students in the classroom. The more abstractions (theory) we can think about this simple, empirical category (teacher/student relationship), the closer we will be to fully understanding the educational process in question. For Marx, in the economic analyzes of *Capital*, the simple (empirical) category was the *commodity*, from which it was possible, through abstractions, to understand the capitalist economy. (Pires, 1997, p. 88, author's italics)

Along the same lines, Freire informs us that naive curiosity must give way, through studies, to scientific curiosity, based on methods and aiming for reportable results. Hence we understand the use of historical-dialectic materialism in Freire's philosophy of education. He himself tells us:

No true teacher training can be isolated, on the one hand, from the exercise of criticality that implies the promotion of naive curiosity to epistemological curiosity, and on the other, without recognizing the value of emotions, sensitivity, affectivity, intuition or divination. Knowing is not, in fact, guessing, but it has something to do, from time to time, with guessing, with intuiting. The important thing, without a doubt, is not to stop satisfied at the level of institutions, but to subject them to the methodically rigorous analysis of our epistemological curiosity (Freire, 1996, p. 45).

Thus, training via Degree/PARFOR courses makes basic education teachers, already working in their localities, "dare" to know more, undergoing ongoing training

(which can never end, as we are always learning). Along this path, thinking scientifically begins to be a valid educational exercise for these teacher-students of the Degrees/PARFOR. However, you need to be courageous and know how to hope for a better future to be able to complete a Degree/PARFOR. Freire reports:

It is necessary to dare, in the full sense of this word, to speak about love without fear of being called **corny**, **saccharine**, unscientific, or even anti-scientific. We must dare to say, scientifically and not bla-bla-blantly, that we study, learn, teach, know with our entire body. With feelings, emotions, desires, fears, doubts, passion and also critical reason. Never with, this is just it. It is necessary to dare to never dichotomize the cognitive from the emotional. It is necessary to dare to stay or remain teaching for a long time in the conditions we know, poorly paid, disrespected and resisting the risk of falling into cynicism. We need to dare, learn to dare, to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we expose ourselves daily. It is necessary to dare to continue when sometimes we can stop doing so, with material advantages. (Freire, 1997, p. 8-9, author's emphasis).

As Freire states, we can "never dichotomize the cognitive from the emotional", hence our insistence on talking about the difficulties faced by our PARFOR students in UFT Degrees, as we cannot understand their search for university education without taking into account that such students They are women-mothers-teachers-students and the main providers of their homes. With such social roles come all the responsibilities that come with them. Therefore, it is impossible not to be understanding of these women's life situations without being sensitive and affectionate to their problems and achievements.

We also understand that the contents taught must be taught, but that affection and dialogue must be part of an

educational process that always takes into account the realities of students, as doing science also means questioning educational theories based on pedagogical practices. experienced on a daily basis. Paulo Freire (1996, p. 33):

[...] discuss with students the reason for some of this knowledge in relation to teaching the content. Why not take advantage of the students' experience of living in areas of the city neglected by the public authorities to discuss, for example, the pollution of streams and the low levels of well-being of the population, landfills and the risks that offer to people's health.

In this sense, sociocultural realities, school practices and pedagogical practices must be thought critically and be the focus of detailed scientific reflection. This made PARFOR students develop a daily understanding of transdisciplinary critical thinking, which is so necessary for today's educators. In this sense, Rodrigues reports on the UFNT Degrees/PARFOR:

Learning to reflect on one's own pedagogical practice seems to have been one of the most interesting results we noticed in students in the last period of the Degree in Pedagogy. We believe that this ability for critical reflection came from the interconnection of knowledge, which proved to be a positive difference in the training of future pedagogues at the Pedagogy Parfor. The image of interconnection of knowledge as a web allows us to understand the direct relationship between the practical knowledge brought by Parfor students and the theoretical knowledge brought by teachers from different areas. This relationship of knowledge and experiences greatly enriched the educational discussions within the scope of teacher training that we wish to be critical. (Rodrigues, 2017, p. 56)

Also regarding the Degree in Pedagogy/PARFOR at UFT, Rodrigues and Silva (2022, p. 5) show that there was: "a 46.9% completion rate. Understanding the many and varied difficulties in completing training like PARFOR, we believe that the success rate of the course was

satisfactory." In the Degree in Pedagogy/PARFOR course on the Araguaína campus, four classes were formed from 2011 onwards. Many students were from the Bico do Papagaio region and the vast majority (more than 90%) had children.

We saw many transformations in the lives of these women-mothers-teachers-students at PARFOR during the four years of training for each class. Some had children, others got divorced, others moved to another city, many became ill, among many other life events that affect us all. But in a situation of having to study, provide for their families and having to solve the most varied problems, the situation of these women became very complicated.

However, despite all the difficulties, we understand that a 46.9% success rate in training these teachers was a great success, given the large number of personal, social, political and labor complications that these students had to complete their graduation studies.

Along this path, their lives were transformed by completing the degree course and this we could verify through their reports, as they improved their financial situation with the increase in salary due to now having a higher education degree and also improved their social status in the community, school where they worked, as they returned with a degree from a Federal University.

Regarding the (trans)formations that these women-mothers-teachers-students had and that they caused in their realities, Freire (2000, p. 17, author's emphasis) will say:

It seems essential to highlight, within the horizon of my understanding of the human being as a **presence** in the world, that women and men are much more than beings adaptable to the objective conditions in which we find ourselves. To the extent that we became capable of recognizing the ability to adapt to concreteness in order to operate better, it was

possible for us to assume ourselves (sic) as transformative beings. And it is as transformative beings that we realize that our ability to adapt does not exhaust our being in the world. It is because we can **transform** the world, that we are **with it and with others**. We would not have surpassed the level of pure adaptation to the world if we had not reached the possibility of, thinking about our own adaptation, using it to **program** transformation. This is why a progressive education can never, at home or at school, in the name of order and discipline, castrate the student's haughtiness, his ability to oppose himself and impose on him a quietism that denies his being. (Freire, 2000, p. 17, author's emphasis)

As Freire says, the school communities that had teachers graduated from the Degrees/PARFOR with which we had direct contact were, and still are, extremely impacted by the training of their teachers, who bring an effective transformation to their realities and people with whom they cooperate in their schools and communities.

We, university professors who had direct contact with these teachers undergoing transformation (PARFOR students), had our lives impacted by their reports and their realities. However, we sought to ensure that educational theories would ensure that these student teachers always placed themselves in the position of questioners, in a critical position and trying to understand realities. Freire will tell us about the importance of scientific curiosity:

Curiosity as an inquiring restlessness, as an inclination to unveil something, as a question verbalized or not, as a search for clarification, as a sign of attention that suggests alertness, is an integral part of the vital phenomenon. There would be no creativity without the curiosity that moves us and that makes us patiently impatient in front of the world we have made, adding to it something we make. (Freire, 1996, p. 35)

From this perspective, we understand how enriching our

participation in the UFT Degree/PARFOR courses was and how much we learned. Perhaps this experience was more valid than many books we have already read and many things we learned in theory, but which, in reality, do not compare to the knowledge and experiences that these teacher-students provided us. We all left (trans)formed by the experiences provided by PARFOR.

3 SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This text sought to explain a little about our participation in the Degrees/PARFOR of Tocantinópolis and Araguaína, focusing on the knowledge we had from all the experiences alongside the student teachers of these courses.

More than what we taught, we, university teachers, learned a lot about life in the extreme north of the State of Tocantins and were able to understand what the diverse educational realities that these student teachers and their students from public schools in the various municipalities go through are effectively most vulnerable people from Tocantins.

We tried to offer the best education possible within the conditions we had and we understand that the continued training of teachers with such complicated life situations is a constant challenge. We seek to encourage "curiosity as an inquisitive restlessness" (Freire, 1996) in these students, revealing that theories are not always able to encompass all Brazilian educational realities.

However, we realized that, through a Freirean vision (which we always try to have as teachers), these student teachers were able to have the best theoretical and reflective teaching that we could offer, always trying to make sense of what we studied based on teaching practices. of these student teachers.

Finally, we can understand that the experiences lived in the Degrees/PARFOR, by us university teachers, left a deep

impression on us and greatly enriched our educational practices, our understanding of life and communities, (trans)forming us into better and more empathetic persons in relation to the knowledge of our students, always reminding us of our constant need for continued training, even in service.

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AGRADECIMENTOS/THANKS

Research carried out with institutional support from CNPq/CAPES.