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## CLASS OBSERVATION AND FEEDBACK AS STRATEGIES FOR TEACHER TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

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*Silvana Aparecida Santana Tamassia*

São Bernardo do Campo

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/2104283389013888>

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2449-2954>

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**Abstract:** The objective of this presentation is to bring an excerpt from our doctoral research, completed in 2023, which sought to analyze the possibilities of using class observation and feedback as training and pedagogical monitoring strategies for teaching professional development, in addition to understanding what difficulties the pedagogical coordinator meets (meets) to monitor teachers in the classroom and what strategies have been used by those who have managed to effectively implement this action in their routine. To produce the data, the research relied on a questionnaire that was disseminated in different territories and education departments, and answered by pedagogical coordinators from different education networks, in the five regions of Brazil; semi-structured interviews with some pedagogical coordinators selected among the respondents and with teachers who worked in the same schools; bibliographic analysis identifying related research and references from various authors who contribute to the discussion on related topics, such as Weffort (1996), Tardif (2005), Almeida and Placco (2009), Placco, Almeida and Souza (2011;2015); Ninin (2010), Fusari (2011), Marcelo and Vaillant (2012); City et al. (2014), Imbernón (2009, 2016), Reis (2011), Vasconcellos (2014) Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2019), Alarcão (2020), among others. The results obtained showed that the practice of class observation and feedback to observed teachers must not be isolated, but has greater reach and perpetuity when they are part of a public policy, involving the network as a whole. The main benefit highlighted by the participants was the training and professional development of teachers, based on the reflections brought up during the feedback, increasing the quality of the work developed and favoring greater learning for students. We also identified some

difficulties encountered by the pedagogical coordinator, the main subject of the research, in the process of implementing these actions in their schools, such as, for example, the lack of support from directors and leaders of the education department, the resistance of some teachers in relation to this practice, the lack of security in providing feedback, time management and organization of the coordinator's routine, in addition to training that is not always offered sufficiently to prepare him for this pedagogical monitoring. At the end, we indicate some important aspects so that class observation can be implemented and used as a training strategy for teacher development, which we hope can contribute to other schools and other coordinators.

**Keywords:** Pedagogical Coordination, Continuing Teacher Training, teacher, professional development, Class Observation, Feedback.

## INTRODUCTION

The interest in the research topic presented here came from our experience in different educational contexts, namely: (i) as a multipurpose teacher, whose class was observed by a trainer from a literacy program in which we participated, (ii) as a pedagogical coordinator, who observed dozens of teachers in action, (iii) as a trainer of educators, who followed and guided the work of hundreds of coordinators across Brazil and (iv) as a researcher, based on the investigation proposed in our master's research, which had as Focus on the coordinator's role in pedagogical monitoring. The research sought to analyze the possibilities of using class observation and feedback as training strategies, understanding what difficulties the pedagogical coordinator encounters (is encountering), this way of monitoring teachers and the pedagogical practices developed by them, and which strategies have been used by those who have

managed to implement this action effectively.

The specific objectives of the research were:

- identify good experiences with the practice of class observation in different schools, and specify what characterizes them, to substantiate and expand the possibilities of using this strategy for teacher training;
- identify the difficulties encountered by the pedagogical coordinator in the process of implementing class observation as a continuing education strategy in his school;
- analyze, based on listening to pedagogical coordinators, how they provide formative feedback from this observation to the teacher and how this feedback is understood, in the context of continuing education at school.

The research subject was the pedagogical coordinator (CP), highlighting his role in pedagogical monitoring and professional development of the teachers with whom he works.

## **THEORETICAL FOUNDATION**

For the theoretical foundation, we sought to conceptualize the role of the pedagogical coordinator, continuing education and professional development for teachers, class observation and feedback as training strategies. We highlight below some central concepts for this work that reference the research, highlighting some authors, as follows below.

To reflect on the role of the pedagogical coordinator, we based ourselves on Vasconcellos (2004); Christov (2009); Fusari (2011); Placco, Almeida and Souza (2015). Both talk about the importance of the formative role of this professional, contributing to the continued training of teachers and the articulation of the Political-Pedagogical Project in the school

unit. Almeida and Placco (2009) highlight the role of CP as an articulator, trainer and transformer, being:

- articulator - in the pedagogical monitoring of school actions and in the coordination and articulation of actions, foreseen in the unit's political-pedagogical project.
- trainer - in the professional development of teachers and in planning and creating spaces for continued training at school.
- transformative - supporting the qualification of teaching practice and teaching and learning processes, promoting formative feedback that encourages teachers to reflect on their own practice.

Another important concept brought up in the research and which correlates with continuing education is teacher professional development. Nóvoa (1992); Tardif (2005), Imbernón (2009, 2016); Placco, Almeida and Souza (2011, 2015); Vaillant and Marcelo (2012) and Vaillant (2017), emphasize that learning the profession takes place in the context of practice, in the school itself, in exchanges between peers and in continuous training that takes place inside and outside the school, reinforcing the value of learning that happens throughout life, and not just in initial training, as something fixed and finished.

In this sense, the school must be seen as a learning community, in which exchange and partnership both between teachers and between teacher and coordinator are essential for this professional development.

To create the necessary conditions for this, the CP needs to prioritize the teacher's pedagogical monitoring in its routine, making use of different training strategies, including class observation and training feedback.

For this, Weisz (2018); Placco and Souza (2010); Darling-Hammond and Bransford

(2019) and Silva (2019) suggest that the CP can survey the training needs of each teacher and, based on this diagnosis, define which strategies are most appropriate for their group. These authors indicate some strategies that CP can use, including individual and collective moments, use of thematization of practice, monitoring of class planning, analysis of student evaluation results and class observation and formative feedback to the teacher.

Observation allows the CP to position himself as an external observer (WEISZ, 2018) and have a qualified look at the pedagogical actions that take place in the classroom, making records and planning a dialogue that promotes moments of reflection during the feedback to be carried out.

An important aspect highlighted by Weffort (1996); Raczynski (s/d); and Reis (2011) is the importance of establishing a relationship of trust and partnership between CP and teachers, being an essential element so that class observation can take place with this formative character, and so that the teacher realizes the value of this action for the qualification of your pedagogical practice, seeing in CP a more experienced partner who will support you in your professional development.

Shön (1998); Vieira (2012); Alarcão and Tavares (2013) and Alarcão (2020) also highlight how much reflection on action contributes to the continuous learning of the observed teachers and, consequently, to this change in their practices.

Zepeda (2005); Ednir et al. (2006); Ninin (2010); Allan and Dalcorso (2011); City et al. (2014); Archer et al. (2016); Bambrick-Santoyo (2018) bring in their studies the value and importance of feedback as an essential step in this classroom monitoring process, considering the formative nature of this practice and highlight the need for the CP to

prepare, qualifying their perspective for which will be observed based on a pre-established itinerary. To this purpose, they reinforce the importance of recording and using evidence for the conversations that will take place during feedback, directing the teacher's gaze to the aspects that were observed, seeking greater objectivity during this process.

All of these aspects will contribute to teaching professional development, generating positive impacts on student learning.

## **METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES**

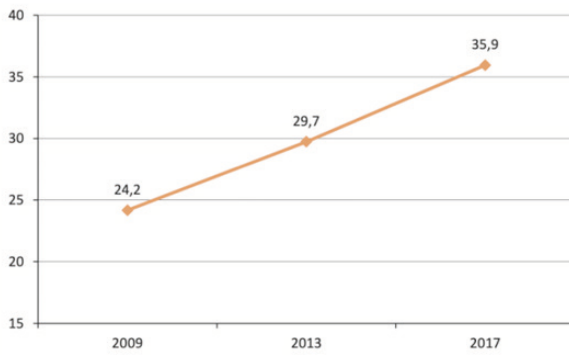
The methodology used for the research was qualitative in nature, with contributions from quantitative research, based on the mixed method (MOSCOSO, 2017).

For this purpose, questionnaires were applied to pedagogical coordinators, with respondents in the five regions of Brazil, aiming to collect quantitative and qualitative data, focusing on the initial years of Elementary School, a cut defined for analysis of research data.

Among the participants, we had representatives from 18 states in Brazil, 11 state networks, 37 municipal networks and 11 private schools, totaling 223 complete responses, 138 of which were Elementary Schools (63,9%).

The age range of respondents is, for the most part, between 36 and 55 years old (77%), with 88% being women.

Regarding training, 65% studied Pedagogy and 80% have a postgraduate degree, demonstrating a differentiated audience that seeks to qualify for the work they do, since on average, only 35% of Brazilian educators have a postgraduate degree, according to INEP research (2018).



Graph 1: Teacher training in Brazil with a lato or stricto sensu postgraduate degree

Returning to our methodological path, after completing the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were carried out with four pedagogical coordinators selected from the states with the largest number of respondents and with teachers who worked in their schools, to produce qualitative data. This way, it was possible to carry out the analysis in its context of operation to better understand the data produced (FRANCO, 2003).

To do this, we started from the 138 Elementary Education CPs, and sought to prioritize those that were still working at the time of the research and, from there, we filtered those who responded that they would like to contribute in a later stage of in-depth study and, then, we focused on the states with greater representation of responses, as we can see in the flow below.

Another important point was the identification of related research, which could expand our base of authors on the topic and helped in the search for references that could support the theoretical bases of this work.

From the systematization of these studies and the answers to the questionnaires and interviews, some categories and subcategories emerged that were organized in order to triangulate this data (MOSCOSO, 2017), as described in the table below.

Coordinators and teachers	
Categories	Subcategories
Pedagogical monitoring strategies	Pedagogical and relational
Class observation	Preparation and planning (before) Time of observation (during)
Formative feedback	Feedback preparation Feedback moment Replanning or developments resulting from feedback
Benefits of practicing observation	Pedagogical and relational
Challenges and conditions for classroom monitoring	Teachers' receptivity Structural challenges
Continuing training	Training to qualify the monitoring of coordinators in the classroom Training to promote teacher engagement in observation practice Training promoted through class monitoring and feedback
Good habits	Class observation Formative feedback Conditions for implementation

Table 1: Search analysis categories

Source: Tamassia (2023)

## PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

By analyzing the questionnaires applied, we sought to identify how the practice of monitoring in the classroom took place in the schools of the coordinators who participated in the research.

Considering that the research went through the pandemic period, the questions in the questionnaire were adjusted to seek to understand how the practice of observation and feedback happened before the pandemic, and how it was sustained throughout this period, when forms of synchronous interaction with students have become virtual. In this article, we will only consider the context before the pandemic, as during the period of social distancing not all schools were able to maintain synchronous activities with students.

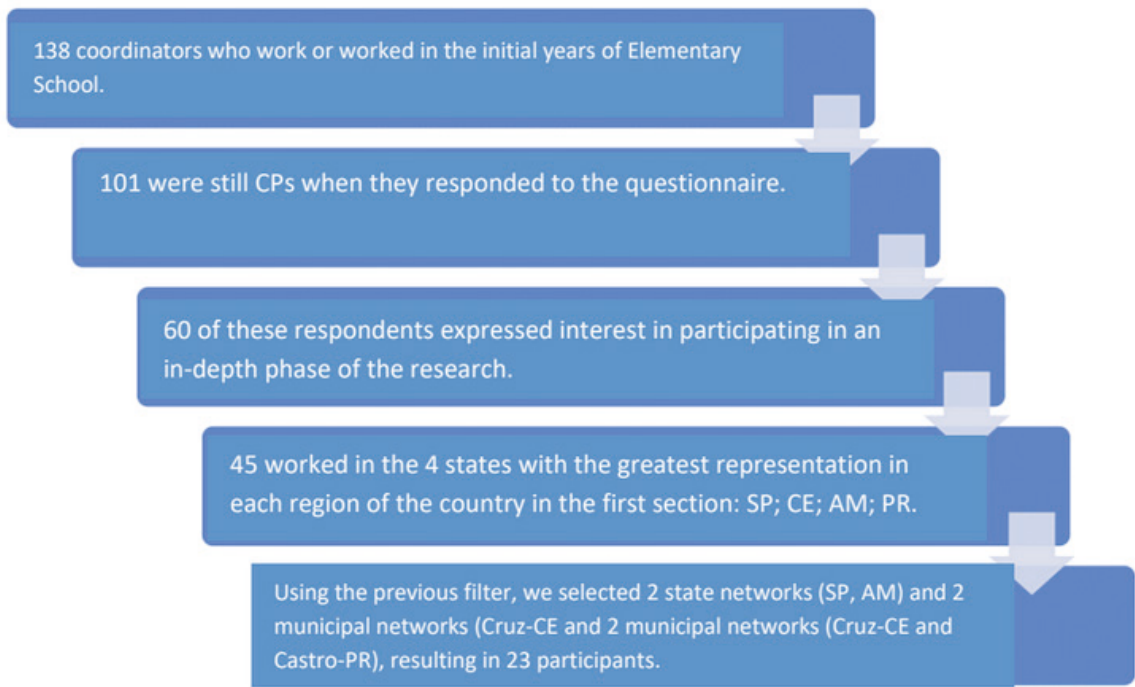


Figure 1: Flow for defining the subjects selected for interview

Source: Tamassia (2023)

The responses indicated that, before the pandemic, 81% of CPs observed classes at least occasionally, offering feedback to teachers, 15% never did it and 4% did it, but without formative feedback to the observed teacher. Although, in Brazil, the practice of monitoring through class observation is still a taboo, as many teachers report feeling uncomfortable and watched when someone is observing their class, just as some coordinators report feeling insecure to develop this practice, this number of 81% seems to reflect a very significant adherence to this practice by the PCs who responded to the survey.

During the pandemic, the number of professionals who observed classes and provided feedback to teachers fell to 49%, with 43% not doing so (or no longer in the role) and 8% doing so, but without offering feedback to the observed teacher.

As we mentioned in the theoretical framework, the practice of class observation was analyzed as a strategy for teacher development, that is, a practice that favors

learning and qualification of pedagogical practices.

One of the questions presented in the questionnaire sought to understand the benefits of this action observed in everyday school life according to the coordinators themselves and the main pedagogical benefits highlighted by them were the **training and professional development of teachers (67%)** provided through the reflections brought about at the time of feedback, and the **possibility of understanding what needs to be worked on in moments of collective training at school (74%)**.

From the point of view of relational aspects, 57% indicate that one of the benefits of monitoring in the classroom is **greater proximity to teachers, and 32% greater proximity to students**.

Another aspect that was highlighted in the research was that the practice of class observation and subsequent feedback must not be something that happens in isolation, from a single school or coordinator, but that

this strategy has greater reach and perpetuity when they are part of a policy defined by the network as a whole and supported by both school leaders and the Department of Education, in order to strengthen the role of the CP in this action.

The research helped us understand that class observation is an efficient training strategy when it guarantees the principles indicated below:

- happens systematically and not as an event, forming part of the CP's weekly routine;
- it happens in all classrooms and not just with certain teachers at the school, although it can start with those who are most open at first;
- is scheduled and planned with the teacher rather than happening by surprise;
- follows a pre-defined script, with a shared observation focus and aligned with the teacher who will be observed;
- prioritizes teacher professional development and not "supervision" of the work carried out by teachers;
- is always accompanied by a moment of formative feedback offered by those who carried out this observation;
- is supported and validated by the entire school team, with the support and, eventually, the participation of other members of the management team.
- From the research, it was possible to identify some challenges encountered by those seeking to put these processes into practice:
  - insecurity when entering another teacher's class and providing feedback (5%);

- insufficient training for coordinators, which is not always offered to prepare them for this pedagogical support (8%);
- lack of support from directors and leaders of the education department (9%);
- lack of openness on the part of some teachers (18%);
- time management and planning of the coordinator's routine so that classes are monitored in a systematic manner (54%);

During the interview, one of the survey respondents mentioned the number of teachers as one of the challenges:

[...] a large number of teachers to carry out the observation in a systematic way on a monthly basis, without having another coordinator to divide the tasks. (CP; São Paulo Municipal Network /SP).

On the other hand, it was possible to identify important aspects that make the practice work in different schools, such as:

- establishing links between coordinators and teachers and strengthening the partnership so that everyone is open to feedback moments;

[...] the coordination has direct, participatory work with us, the school's teachers; and, constantly, she sits down with us to plan the classes, and in these plans, later, she will actually monitor my teaching practice in the classroom, so that, sequentially, she can bring suggestions for improving her own work. teacher who is here called feedback; [...] (Prof. 2 – Municipal Network Cruz/CE)

If you have any difficulties, any problems, they are there to help you at any time. It has a very good opening so it's very peaceful, you know? (Prof. 1 – Municipal Network Castro/PR)

- alignment of agreements between teachers and management team in relation to pedagogical monitoring

through class observation and feedback to teachers;

- development of continuing training within the networks to guide and support pedagogical coordinators and guide and engage teachers;
- organization of the coordinator's routine at school, with planning that prioritizes the pedagogical aspects of the role, establishing a schedule shared with the entire team;
- use of records of observation moments to diagnose teachers' training needs, in alignment with the needs of the school and the territory to improve practices and learning for all students;
- establishment of partnership with other members of the management team (collective and collaborative work);

This feedback is a very rich moment, because we give feedback to the teacher and, also, [we learn] at the moment when we need to prepare, studying about it. [...] I was in the room this morning, already I observed, the director observed. [...] Then, to give feedback to the teacher, we prepare. We study, we look for an author who can reaffirm and provide a basis, even for us.

(Renata – Coordinator of the Castro/PR municipal network).

- support from the education secretariat team to facilitate the necessary conditions and establish a common orientation for the entire network.

*All schools in the city, all coordinators carry out this study and lesson planning and feedback. (Graça – Municipal network Cruz/CE)*

*We have an education secretary who is far ahead of everything, and it is no surprise that we, this year in Ideb, are the fourth best municipality in the country. [...] And this is teamwork. I once again emphasize the*

*importance of when it is worked as a team, together, because we don't get it as something random, but as something summed up, and she (the coordinator) collaborates a lot. (Prof. 2 – Cruz/CE municipal network)*

Based on theoretical studies and practices mapped out in the research, we identified a flow that can be efficient in ensuring that this is a genuinely formative process, going through five different stages:

*I. Pre-observation* – moment of preparation in which an alignment with the teacher is carried out and the lesson planning and script that will be used for this observation are shared.

*II. Class observation time* – it can take place in the classroom or in other spaces in the school, in which the CP will record evidence of what is being observed, obtaining input for the moment of feedback, seeking not to interfere with the teacher's action during the class.

*III. Post-observation:* After observation, the CP must analyze the data collected and think of good questions to promote the teacher's reflection, based on his focus at that moment. It will be important to seek theoretical references that can support this professional in providing feedback, bringing evidence and suggestions, aligned with researchers and theorists.

*IV. Feedback moment:* At this stage, the CP will dialogue with the teacher seeking to reflect on their practice, mobilizing them to qualify and plan new actions. It is important that at this moment the CP begins by welcoming the teacher, bringing previously planned reflections in a dialogued way, so that the teacher himself can think about possibilities for change. Only after that, if necessary, must you bring the planned suggestions.



V. *Post-feedback*: after feedback, it is important to agree on deadlines so that changes can be implemented and for a new observation cycle to take place.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From data collection and analysis, the research made it possible to understand how class observation as a pedagogical monitoring strategy has been developed by the majority of coordinators who participated in the research. In any case, it is worth highlighting that it is just a sample and we cannot generalize the results found here to other schools in other municipalities.

In any case, it was possible to identify the main challenges identified to develop this process in a systematic way and offer feedback whenever the observation is carried out.

Among the research results, it was possible to identify good practices in class

observation in several schools and detail what characterizes these good practices, with the aim of expanding their use in continuing teacher training.

It was also evident that these practices cannot or must not be isolated, restricted to a single school or coordinator. They achieve greater effectiveness and continuity when they are part of a comprehensive school network policy, with general guidelines applicable to all schools and training courses that allow coordinators to feel prepared to carry out this work.

The focus must be on the professional development of the teaching team, in a personalized way and in accordance with the training needs of the group. At the end of this process, the objective is to ensure that students have access to more qualified classes, encouraging continuous learning, which allows them to learn more and more.

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