

Chapter 14

Blended Teacher Training Program: Rethinking Learning Spaces and Evaluating Active Learning in Basic Education Schools

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays information is processed quickly, and it provides new ways of interaction between the students and the teachers. The digital learning process has entered in our schools and has also brought a great discussion: how to teach in the digital age. To answer it, the authors aim to present a case study about the teacher training program developed in a blended model. Its purpose was to support the teaching practices and to rethink the learning spaces as well as to generate reflections on the issues of how to evaluate the application of active methodologies which are used in the basic education. A total of 20 teachers from four private schools in São Paulo have completed the training program. Thus, it enabled considerable advances in the planning of active classes. It was noticed, according to the results, that the teaching methodologies represent a challenge to be overcome in new training programs.

INTRODUCTION

Today's society has been suffering significant changes in social, political, economic and cultural contexts, which cause changes in personal values and beliefs. Colossi *et al.* (2001) identify these global changes as a sense of the “new millennium”, marked by information, globalization and the knowledge society,

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characterizing, thus, the modern world. All of these changes cause a technological expansion which leads to a new generation considered to be digital native. These people are used to receive information very quickly. This transformation of the communicative process is largely due to digital networks (Prensky, 2001; Castells, 2007).

All the technological evolution, which has already been used, has arrived at educational institutions and has also changed the format of the old teaching model to new teaching models face-to-face (F2F), distance and/or blended learning (DL /BL). Taking in consideration that some authors defend the distinction between DL and Distance Education (DE) (King, Young, Drivere-Richmond & Schrader, 2004), a view not aligned with other authors (Sherry, 1995), for disambiguation purposes, it should be noted this chapter will use the terms interchangeably. The DL in the basic education, for example, assumes that the student will be able to learn at any time regardless of where he/she is. For Jackiw (2019),

[...] It has been a concern on the part of governments, in their different spheres, to bring different technological devices into schools as a way of “connecting” the dynamic and borderless world of contemporary society and the school’s encyclopedic world (p. 02)

On the other hand, it is possible to identify many school initiatives which have started to challenge themselves to promote new learning experiences for their students. They include in their program classes of robotics, critical thinking, programming, socio-emotional skills and among other competences which are necessary for citizens to live in society today.

In the Brazilian schools there is a lack of new studies to support teachers in the planning of their classes which can help in the construction of this teaching and learning process. This fact is corroborated by the studies of Gemignani (2013), under the statement that there is a growing search for innovative methodologies which enable a pedagogical practice capable of overcoming the limits of purely technical and traditional training, to effectively achieve the formation of the individual as an ethical, historical, critical, reflective, transformative and humanized being.

The use of computers, the Internet and other digital devices in Brazilian schools are becoming more and more common. Despite of this, its pedagogical use is still not as efficient as it could be. Many teachers find it difficult to deal with technology, while students are not intimidated by digital devices. Education professionals should be aware that the use of digital tools does not bring the innovation which is expected if it is not accompanied by new teaching-learning methodologies and, especially, by a new attitude of the teacher (Gemignani, 2013 ; Bates, 2016; Iannone *et al.*, 2016). In addition, it seems that investments on infrastructure (learning spaces, technologies, the Internet) and on teacher training programs are reserved for private educational institutions.

Connected to this scenario, the impact of digital transformation reaches education, promoting countless institutional changes, in particular, pedagogical models to meet the demands coming from the student’s profile and the application of projects which can give greater visibility to the participation of parents in understanding the proposals of combined classes between studying at home (online) and at school (in person). An illustration of this is the rupture of the conventional model of teaching with the exploration and experiment of Active Methods. For Silberman (1996), the research shows that active learning is a very effective teaching strategy; students assimilate a greater volume of content, retain information for longer and enjoy classes with more satisfaction and pleasure.

Accordingly, to this, the authors of this chapter aim to present a case study about a teacher training program which was developed in the blended learning model. It considered three structured phases: mo-

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