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CONTINUING EDUCATION OF SPANISH TEACHERS  
IN THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH-ACTION


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FORMAÇÃO CONTINUADA DE PROFESSORES DE ESPANHOL  
NO CONTEXTO DA PESQUISA-AÇÃO

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this text is to analyze an experience in continuing education of Spanish teachers, based on research-action. It specifically aims to: a) understand the perceptions of the participating professionals about the concept of continuing education; b) investigate the advantages and disadvantages of research-action as a method for the continuing formation of teachers. Methodologically, the study is characterized as qualitative and exploratory. In addition to being an object of investigation, research-action was also used as a method. The data were registered in a field diary and analyzed with content analysis (BARDIN, 2011). As a result, it was identified that continuing education actions developed with participatory methodologies stimulated the participation, appropriation, and engagement of teachers, which can contribute to decisions by educational administrators about the development of these processes.

**KEYWORDS:** Education. Teacher Education. Continuing education. Spanish teachers. Research-action.

**RESUMO**

Este texto objetiva analisar uma experiência de formação continuada de professores de espanhol promovida com base em pesquisa-ação. Especificamente, busca: a) conhecer as percepções dos profissionais participantes sobre o conceito de formação continuada; b) investigar sobre as vantagens e desvantagens da pesquisa-ação como método para a formação continuada de professores. Metodologicamente, o estudo se caracteriza como qualitativo e exploratório. A pesquisa-ação, além de ser objeto de investigação, também foi usada como método. Os dados foram registrados em um diário de campo e analisados a partir de análise de conteúdo (BARDIN, 2011). Como resultado, identificou-se que ações de formação continuada elaboradas a partir de metodologias participativas estimulam a participação, a apropriação e o engajamento das professoras, o que pode contribuir com decisões da gestão educacional sobre o delineamento desses processos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação. Formação de Professores. Formação continuada. Professores de Espanhol. Pesquisa-ação.

**RESUMÉN**

Este texto objetiva analizar una experiencia de formación continua de profesores de español promovida a partir de la investigación-acción. Específicamente, busca: a) conocer las percepciones de los profesionales participantes sobre el concepto de educación continua; b) investigar las ventajas y desventajas de la investigación-acción como método para la formación continua del profesorado. Metodológicamente, el



estudio se caracteriza por ser cualitativo y exploratorio. La investigación acción, además de ser objeto de investigación, también se utilizó como método. Los datos se registraron en un diario de campo y se analizaron en base al análisis de contenido (BARDIN, 2011). Como resultado, se identificó que las acciones de educación continua desarrolladas con base en metodologías participativas incentivan la participación, apropiación y compromiso de los docentes, que pueden contribuir a las decisiones de gestión educativa sobre el diseño de estos procesos.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación. Formación de profesores. Formación continua. Profesores de español. Investigación-acción.

## INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEMATIZATION

In recent decades, Brazilian and foreign scholars have dedicated themselves to the production of knowledge related to initial and continuing education of teachers. Among them we can highlight André (2016), Nóvoa (2013) and Imbernón (2011). André (2016) defends the concept of education of teachers as researchers, aligned to the vision of a critical and reflexive professional. Nóvoa (2013), meanwhile, proposes that the teaching profession be approached based on the concept of an “education from within”, considering teachers as protagonists in their continuing education, valuing their reflections about work and the knowledge they have developed. In this context, Nóvoa (2013) and Imbernón (2011) indicate that continuing education activities should be based on participatory methodologies. Imbernón (2011) mentions a clear trend towards realizing teacher education focused on collaborative work, undertaken through research-action and activities that stimulate teachers to create their own solutions to problematic situations arising in daily professional practice. The intention is for the teachers to act, reflect and produce knowledge about what is studied and experienced in the contexts of teaching and learning.

In this context, for continuing education to be anchored in participatory methodologies like research-action, which are propitious to the involvement and protagonism of the educational actors, it is important that public policies support these practices. This study was conducted in Jaguarão, a city in southern Brazil that borders Rio Branco, Uruguay. While the need for local public policies aimed at continuing education of teachers was one of the main actions suggested by the community according to Jaguarão’s Municipal Education Plan (PME, JAGUARÃO, 2015), the document does not indicate how these actions should be conducted. On the other hand, among other issues, the Municipal Education Plan (JAGUARÃO, 2015, p. 61) presents the premise of conducting teacher education with a focus on “specific fields of knowledge and didactics”, and to assure a “focus on professional education [...] for pedagogical research” and to implement policies for collaboration with institutions of higher education to offer initial and continuing education courses.



In this context, considering the education of researchers in Portuguese and Spanish language, the Secretariat of Education and Sports (SMED) was consulted about the actions specifically undertaken for Spanish language teachers, a field that has become weaker throughout Brazil due to changes made in 2017 to the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (LDB, 1996). It was striking that the Secretariat of Education did not have information about actions proposed for these professionals. Thus, an opportunity and need were perceived for realizing proposals for collaboration between the university and schools that could fill this need and support the protagonism of teachers, by using and studying participatory methodologies.

For the actions proposed to be suitable to the work context of Spanish teachers and serve their professional needs, it was understood to be important to discover: What understanding do these professionals have about the concept of continuing education? And what are the advantages and disadvantages of using research action as a method for continuing education of teachers?

Based on these questions, this text presents some of the results of a master's study undertaken in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of the Pampa (UNIPAMPA), at the Jaguarão campus. The objective here is to analyze an experience of continuing education of Spanish teachers that is based on research-action to specifically: a) know the perceptions of the participating professionals about the concept of continuing education; and b) investigate the advantages and disadvantages of research-action as a method for continuing education of teachers.

The study was linked to an empiric practice conducted through an action of university extension with a research-action method. The proposal was divided into exploratory and development phases. Eight encounters were realized, and were constructed in a collaborative manner with Spanish teachers in the Jaguarão municipal school system. It is understood that the results presented can support decisions by educational administration because they reveal the contributions of participatory methodologies in continuing education.

The text is organized as follows, after this introduction we discuss "Continuing education of teachers and research-action as a methodological path in education". We then present the "Characterization of the study and methodological aspects". The results are divided into "Concept, context, challenges and perspectives of continuing education of teachers" and "Research-action as a method for continuing education of teachers". Finally, we conduct a critical synthesis of the data and the conclusion.

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION OF TEACHERS AND RESEARCH-ACTION AS A METHODOLOGICAL PATH IN EDUCATION**

First, it should be mentioned that in this study, the concept we adopt of research-action is

a type of social research with an empirical base that is conceived and realized in close association with an action or with the resolution of a collective problem and in which the participants who represent the situation or the problem are involved in a cooperative or participatory manner (THIOLLENT, 2009, p. 16).

Thiollent (2009) also emphasizes that a study can be qualified as research-action when it truly presupposes an action by the part of those involved that is seeking solutions to a certain problem. Thiollent mentions that “in certain cases, it involves actions of a practical character within a collective activity” (THIOLLENT, 2009, p. 17). With this method, “it is possible to dynamically study the problems, decisions, actions, negotiations, conflicts and realizations, that occur among agents during the process of transformation of the situation” (THIOLLENT, 2009, p. 21).

According to Tripp (2005), research-action in the context of education is a strategy for teachers to develop in such a way that they can use their research and practices to improve their teaching, and consequently the learning of students. This type of study allows the creation of spaces in which teachers have voice and opportunity, becoming subjects of the process, and not its objects. Research-action also stimulates communication among colleagues, to break with the culture of isolation found in the teaching profession (IMBERNÓN, 2010), and allow the development of continuing education based on the process of know-in-action; reflect-in-action and reflect on the reflection-in-action (SCHÖN, 2000).

This relation of research-action with education and with continuing education of teachers, justifies the appropriation of this method as a form of attaining the objectives of this study. The intention is that, through the research-action process, teachers will have the opportunity for collaborative experiences of continuing education, in which they interact, plan, and seek strategies that can help resolve a problematic that they identified.

### **CHARACTERIZATION OF THE STUDY AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

This is a qualitative study that was associated to an empiric practice undertaken in a university extension project, whose method was research-action. The problematic and the educational actions were carefully constructed, planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated (TRIPP, 2005) in a collaborative manner with the group of eight teachers



who participated in the actions, and who are identified in this study with the letters A to H.

The criterion for participation is to be teaching a Spanish language class in the schools of the Jaguarão municipal school system. The project was undertaken in two phases: exploratory and development. The exploratory phase first sought to know the municipal guidelines aimed at the continuing education of teachers and the actions undertaken by the school administration specifically for the field of Spanish. It then sought to insert the researcher in the field; approximate her to the subjects who participate in the actions and thus engage them in the process of choosing the theme and planning the educational proposal.

This phase involved the following instruments: a) secondary data: document analysis of the Municipal Education Plan of Jaguarão, to understand municipal public policies for the continuing education of teachers and identify actions already taken specifically for the field of Spanish and; b) primary data: two focus groups and a semi-open questionnaire, whose intention was to define the profile of professional education, and discover the potentials and difficulties they identify. The objective is to provide a moment for the exchange of experiences and have the participants benefit from the proposal and have them identify the theme of the continuing education that will be realized in the development phase. In addition, the primary data also draw from the realization of a brainstorming session, whose objective was to discover the concept that the participants have of continuing education.

In the development phase, the Extension Project was placed in practice through eight encounters:

**Table 1.** Summary of the research-action encounters

Encounter	Activity
Encounter (13/03/2019)	1 - Reorganization of the proposal based on the ideas of the new group; - Theoretical discussion about authentic materials.
Encounter (26/03/2019)	2 - Definition of the practical objectives and of the knowledge of the group; - Realization of the brain storming session.
Encounter (11/04/2019)	3 - Planning of the field work.
Encounter (16/04/2019)	4 - Field trip group 1.
Encounter (23/04/2019)	5 - Field trip group 2.
Encounter (23/05/2019)	6 - Analysis categorization and planning of classes based on the material obtained and on the curriculum.
Encounter (31/05/2019)	7 - Collective elaboration of the Blog and reflection on its objective for the group.
Encounter (04/06/2019)	8 - Evaluation of the formative process; - Realization of a new brainstorming; - Sharing the Blog;



	- Organization of the archives of the authentic materials in the Municipal Public Library
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Source: Adapted from Feijó-Quadrado, 2019, p. 40-41.

In general, the teachers mention that the greatest difficulty for Spanish teaching is related to obtaining didactic materials, and the need for training that provides ideas about how to work with teaching language in the classroom. Thus, the teachers determined that this would be the theme and problem that would guide the organization of their own educational activities. As a proposal for finding strategies dedicated to the theme and to the problem identified, the group decided to take a field trip to the neighboring city of Rio Branco, Uruguay, to benefit from their proximity to a Spanish-speaking city, create situations of immersion and obtain authentic materials for teaching Spanish. The teachers also defined the elaboration of lesson plans based on the materials obtained; the creation of a physical archive in the Public Library to make them available and the preparation of a Blog<sup>1</sup> to register all the activities, to share the experience gained with other professionals in the field.

After various reflections, the group defined the following practical objectives and in relation to knowledge:

Practical objectives:

- Take a field trip to Rio Branco, Uruguay, as a strategy for obtaining authentic materials.

Objectives of knowledge:

- Know the potentialities and difficulties of a field trip as a strategy for obtaining authentic materials (Field Diary, Encounter 2, 2019).

Practical objectives:

- Develop plans for using the authentic Spanish-language materials collected.

Objectives of knowledge:

- Recognize the pedagogical possibilities of the authentic materials for teaching and learning Spanish (Field Diary, Encounter 2, 2019).

The encounters in the project were enriched to go beyond the problem of obtaining authentic materials, and to provide collective moments of reflection and planning of how to use the materials for teaching Spanish in school.

During the actions, the researcher acted as a participant observer and used a field diary to register data (LÜDKE; ANDRÉ, 2015). The diaries were composed of descriptive and reflexive registers, after previously defining the aspects to be observed.

After realization of the actions, the material was systematized using content analysis (BARDIN, 2011) to handle the data. After the realization of various “fluctuating readings”, the units of register were reached, which were organized by themes and classified using semantic criteria. The themes were aligned to the objectives and to the

<sup>1</sup> Available at this link: <https://profespanholjag.wixsite.com/profespanholjag>



theoretical reference of the study and due to their recurrence, formed the following categories: concept, context, challenges and perspectives of continuing education of teachers and research-action as a method for continuing education of teachers.

## RESULTS

In this context, this section will present the results of the interpretive analysis through two categories identified.

### Concept, context, challenges, and perspectives of continuing education of teachers

The themes that appear repeatedly during the data analysis indicate the concept, context, challenges, and perspectives about continuing education of Spanish teachers in the Jaguarão municipal school system.

About the concept of continuing education, a general analysis demonstrates the importance of education that offers an exchange of experiences among teachers who work in the same field. Moreover, this analysis reveals the importance of actions that begin with a problem found in the professional reality and that seek to contribute to the opportunities for working in classrooms. This shows that teacher training activities that use participatory methodologies, which give voice to teachers, bring advances to professional development and pedagogical practice.

A specific analysis of the definition of the concept of continuing education in the brainstorming sessions revealed that both the definition made in the second encounter, and the one synthesized in the final one, collaborate with the understanding of Nóvoa (1992) that dialog among teachers “is essential to consolidating knowledge emerging in professional practice” (NÓVOA, 1992, p. [14]).

**Table 2:** Definition of continuing education in the two brainstorming sessions

Encounter 2	All and any form of expanding knowledge, through opportunities to exchange experiences, discussions and refining ideas, which support new proposals and activities to contribute with professional updating and with the teaching practice.
Encounter 8	Continuing education involves activities that allow the exchange of experiences, ideas and reflections and group discussions with issues related to teacher education, the field of work and the reality of teachers.

Source: FEIJÓ-QUADRADO, 2019, p. 69.



The emerging knowledge mentioned by Nóvoa (1992), aligned to discussions about the field of action and about education and the professional reality of teachers, as the participants themselves suggest, are among the aspects needed for professional-critical-reflection (GATTI, 2016), according to the teachers when discussing their profession through an inward gaze (NÓVOA, 2013). Moreover, these aspects allow the concretization of knowledge based on experience, reflection on experiences and on tacit knowledge, mentioned by Schön (2000).

The exchange of experiences in continuing education processes also allow a critical review and reflection on teaching practice, because “based on the proposal to think together, they reflect on other ways of how to do things in school” (Teacher B, Field Diary, Encounter 8, 2019). In addition, the exchange of experiences also allows the reformulation and unification of contents worked with in the schools and stimulates reflections about: “How are we working?; What is being seen by our students? How do we give our class? (Field Diary, Encounter 8, 2019).

These concepts complement the affirmation of André (2016, p. 32) who emphasized that the exchange of experiences among peers allows “each to learn from the other, valuing the diversity of opinions, points of view, knowledge and practices”.

The process of “learning to hear the other, exchange ideas, sharing” (ANDRÉ, 2016, p. 24) is necessary to learn the lesson, both in research and in processes of continuing education. This idea is reinforced in the statement of teacher B (Field Diary, Encounter 8), who affirmed: “When a colleague talks about how she works, I reflect on my way of working and also discover other forms. It’s an exchange”. Teacher B also mentioned that “this conversation with colleagues also helps to perceive how the problem is not only in our school, it helps us to perceive and analyze the whole” (Teacher B, Field Diary, Encounter 8, 2019).

Specifically addressing the context of continuing education of teachers of Jaguarão, the data demonstrate that the educational processes are still conducted in a quite isolated manner and by individual initiatives of each teacher. However, in the questionnaire, most of the professionals have left unanswered the question about the activities of continuing education undertaken in the field of Spanish, among the actions mentioned by teachers A, F and H is participation in the Institutional Program for Teaching Initiation Grants (PIBID), lectures; courses and or specialization programs. These activities were conducted in individual initiatives, without links to the municipal Secretariat of Education.

According to Imbernón (2010, p. 67), this “personalist and isolated education can give rise to innovative experiences, but is unlikely to give rise to institutional innovation and





to collective practice by teachers”, because it will be born, reproduce and die with the teacher in her classroom, without collective repercussions. To break with this individualism, Imbernón (2010) suggests the realization of collaborative teacher education. The data obtained in the teacher training conducted with Spanish teachers demonstrates that, when there is an exchange of experiences among professionals, the repercussion on the collective is clear. This is seen in the statement of teacher B, in encounter 3:

Since it is the first year that I worked with Spanish, my hair was on end, because I didn't know what to do in the classes. After the encounters and the conversations with my colleagues, I feel more confident [...] (Teacher B, Field Diary, Encounter 3).

For this reason, it is understood that to attain institutional innovation, collective work is necessary “that is part of the professional culture and that is incorporated to the educational process as a normal process of operation” (IMBERNÓN, 2010, p. 67). However, for this to occur, there must be policies of continuing education that provide collective spaces for exchanging experiences among teachers in the same field.

It can be seen that the context of continuing education of teachers also develops through professional practice itself, or through consultations on the internet and in books in the process of class planning. This indicates that the knowledge of teachers is mainly established through experiential knowledge “based on their daily work and on the knowledge of their environment” (TARDIF, 2012, p. 39).

In most cases, the institutional educational activities made available to the teachers are still aimed at general themes and not a particular discipline. Moreover, there are still cases of teacher education actions that discuss themes that are not related to pedagogical practice of all teachers. This demonstrates that the activities are still undertaken through more conservative models of continuing education, with characteristics similar to those developed in the 1980s and 1990s, in which teachers were seen as objects of education (IMBERNÓN, 2010).

Specifically in relation to Spanish, the extension action conducted by the project was the first aimed at the field that involved participatory pedagogical activities. In addition, it was seen that the main difference of the educational actions realized by the project and previous continuing education programs was that this was the first that “was according to our [the teachers] needs, based on what we needed. Not like those teaching trainings which are pre-prepared and in which we sit there and just watch” (Teacher C, Field Diary, Encounter 8, 2019).

Moreover, “it wasn't just theoretical, there was lots of practice” (Teacher B, Field Diary, Encounter 8, 2019). According to the evaluations, it is possible to see that, for



the professionals, all teacher training should be conducted with participatory methodologies and by class subject, because “there is a need to exchange experience with colleagues from the same field and see what is happening” (Teacher H, Field Diary, Encounter 8, 2019).

In relation to the challenges, the difficulty the professionals have to find continuing education opportunities, due to a lack of time and the accumulation of their activities and disciplines, stands out. They mention their need for institutional training that provides options and ideas about language teaching, and that is offered within their hourly workload. In this regard, based on the summary of the data from the questionnaire responded to by the professionals, it is important to mention that 75% of the teachers working with Spanish passed hiring processes in other fields, but are working in language teaching either to complete their work load or due to a lack of trained professionals; 63% of the teachers are accredited for language teaching, but only 25% of them have passed a hiring exam to work specifically in Spanish; 37% of the teachers, in addition to not having passed a hiring competition for the field, are not trained in the field and have no experience in language teaching. This situation goes against the data presented by Alves and Silva (2013) *apud* Gatti (2012, p. 41) and demonstrates that “we are improvising teachers” both in relation to training, and in the fields of the professional hiring conducted.

In relation to the perspectives about continuing education, the data reveal that the teachers do not believe that it is possible to conduct training actions of a collaborative nature without the involvement of outside members. For the teachers, continuing education is still something individual and solely the responsibility of the teachers. It is understood that this demonstrates that it is still necessary to stimulate the creation of continuing education policies that seek to include teachers in the decision-making processes, so that they can execute proposals that meet their needs without requiring mediation of an external member. For this to occur, it is believed that it is necessary to seek greater integration between teachers, administrators and other people who work in education, so that everyone involved has the same understanding of the objectives to be attained and can make decisions collectively that contribute to the implementation of actions that make sense for the whole. It is known that this is not an easy process and that it requires a change in educational culture.

### **Research-action as a method for continuing education of teachers**

The literature presented affirms that the realization of teacher training with research-action allows the professionals to have their say and be the protagonists of the action (IMBERNÓN, 2010), making them responsible for their own educational process and developing their critical, reflexive and emancipatory skills, (THIOLLENT, 2002).



Based on this, the results of this phase reveal if and how there is a protagonism of teachers through actions and decisions made by the group during each one of the research-action steps: planning, implementation, evaluation, and production of knowledge. In addition, the data obtained reveal how this teaching protagonism contributes to the process of continued education and development of the participants' critical, reflexive, and emancipatory abilities.

About the planning, the protagonism of teachers in the continuing education was present in the definition of the theme of the didactic materials; in the idea to create the Blog and the archives; and in the organization of the field trip to Rio Branco, to obtain authentic materials for teaching the Spanish language. This protagonism is also seen in the proposal for collective preparation of class plans based on the materials obtained, with the intention of thinking of ways to use them; and in the increased time of encounters 4 – 8. These actions demonstrate that the teachers did not only complete tasks in the continuing education program, but were constructive agents of their own educational process, they had a voice that made them subjects in their education.

In the activities for implementing the proposal (field trip, preparation of class plans, blog and archives), other characteristics reveal the protagonism of the teachers. Moreover, it is understood that the field trip went beyond the dimension of obtaining authentic materials and reached a conceptual framework of production of knowledge. The activity created the chance for the teachers to have different and new opportunities to use language for a specific objective, which was the search for authentic materials. With the field trip, it was also possible to observe that, in addition to a method, the research-action could be a means to attain various other objectives. Like the formation of an engaged group, which recognizes the importance of its experience, for the work of teaching.

In addition, while still in implementation, the opportunity to categorize the authentic materials, obtained on the field trip, and prepare class plans collectively, helped to break from the culture of isolation found in the teaching profession (IMBERNÓN, 2010). It also created the opportunity, through an exchange of experiences, for teachers to exchange methodological strategies to turn the authentic materials into didactic materials through the group knowledge. In this step, the authentic materials appear to facilitate the collective planning of classes. This was evident in the statement of teacher B (Field Diary, Encounter 8), who emphasized:

I must say how much I liked to do the planning looking at the material, because it is very different to be at home, see the content, and then you think and don't find anything. Here, you have everything, and you only have to fit the material into the content and many ideas come into our minds.  
[...]planning collectively causes many ideas to arise, just by having the material and looking at it.



Specifically addressing the implementation of the Blog, note that it was created to share the activities undertaken, the lesson plans and some of the authentic materials obtained by the group on the field trip. However, it was expected that the process would have greater participation. Only two teachers participated in the encounter in which it was created. It is believed that this may reflect a difficulty in the use of media among teachers (FANTIN; RIVOLTELLA, 2012). It is important to highlight that the process of creating the Blog had some weaknesses, given that it was not possible to use the space in a way that allowed a critical and creative appropriation of the resource (BÉVORT; BELLONI, 2009). The tool was developed with a basic command of digital technologies due to a lack of time and prior knowledge by the teachers. Given that “the media are part of contemporary culture and perform increasingly important roles in it” (BÉVORT; BELLONI, 2009, p. 1083), this suggests the need for new proposals that integrate information and communication technologies in continuing education of teachers in a critical and creative manner.

The data obtained through the evaluation indicate that the methodology used in conducting the actions was what had the teachers remain engaged in the process. To hear what the professionals had to say, propose planning, and conduct activities to resolve a problem that they understand is important to study, helped to keep all of them interested. It is believed that these results were obtained mainly due to the method chosen, and due to the opportunity to have created a cohesive work group, with the same intentions and objectives. All of this reinforces the importance of continuing education realized through research-action, based on collective dimensions and the recognition of knowledge based on experience (NÓVOA, 1992), and the difference of this with more conservative methods.

About the process for production of knowledge, it is believed that the experiences and reflections made possible indicate the ability of the teachers to generate pedagogical knowledge in teacher training processes. The activity allowed them to learn to work collectively by doing (SCHÖN, 2000). In addition, the planning and implementation of the actions allowed the teachers to develop their knowledge through knowledge-in-action. This is because the knowledge mobilized in their proposals was clear; the reflect-in-action, when it considered the best ways to conduct an activity, such as remodeling the encounters; and the reflecting on the reflection-in-action, which was clear in the evaluations made by the group, which demonstrates that the exchange of experiences contributed to the development and qualification of their pedagogical practices (SCHÖN, 2000).

Finally, the main disadvantage to the use of research-action in the continuing education of teachers that emerged from the data analysis was concentrated in the difficulty the teachers had to find time to reflect on their practices, and dialog and produce theoretical



knowledge about them. Teacher H mentioned that the lack of time made it impossible for teachers to reflect more deeply. She mentioned that the exchange of experiences among teachers in the same field helped them to see the problems of pedagogical practice reflectively, and allowed them to think collectively about what they are doing, their forms of action and evaluation, for example. However, there is no continuing education policy in the context studied that makes discussion and collective reflection possible, by providing a specific time for them to seek, in each other, theoretical-methodological support for their work.

## CONCLUSION

Given that the intention of this text was to analyze a collaborative experience of continuing education of Spanish teachers based on research-action, and specifically to: a) know the perceptions of the participating professionals about the concept of continuing education; and b) investigate the advantages and disadvantages of research-action as a method for continuing education of teachers, we summarize the results through two elements: the perceptions about the concept of continuing education held by the Spanish teachers in the municipal school system of Jaguarão and the advantages and disadvantages of research-action in the continuing education of teachers.

In relation to the perceptions about the concept of continuing education for Spanish teachers in the Jaguarão municipal school system, in general, the transversal analysis of the data demonstrate that, for these professionals, continuing education is any form for expanding knowledge through an exchange of experiences and moments of collective reflection among professionals from the same field. In addition, for the educational actions to contribute to and be incorporated into the teachers' pedagogical practices, the participants mention the importance of realizing actions inspired by a problem from their professional reality and that seek, through collaboration among peers, ideas that positively impact on work in the classroom.

Specifically in relation to Spanish, the teachers mention that they sense a lack of training that aims to align theory and practice, so that they can suggest methodologies for language education. Based on the difficulties mentioned by the teachers in relation to the use of Spanish in the classroom, there is a complementary need for formative actions that, in addition to addressing linguistic and methodological issues related to teaching, proposals are also promoted that allow the professionals to have experiences with the use of foreign language and new cultural contacts.

In this context, and through the experience of developing an educational process based on research-action, what are the advantages and disadvantages of the use of this method in the continuing education of teachers?



In response to this question, the data reaffirm what the literature indicates: the main advantage of the use of research-action as a method for continuing education of teachers is related to the opportunity for a protagonism of teachers and an exchange of experiences among those involved (NÓVOA, 1992, 2013; IMBERNÓN, 2010, 2011). However, for this protagonism to be possible, it is not enough for teachers to execute tasks conceived by other people, the entire process of planning, implementation, and evaluation must be elaborated by the group. To do so, it is necessary that all be engaged; and have common objectives and understand that the proposal for education based on a participatory methodology means not bringing prepared responses, or imposing a single model based on pre-established laws or norms. The purpose is to collectively construct a proposal that is adapted to a variety of situations, which allows building concrete and abstract knowledge that is suitable to the needs, culture and problems indicated by those involved (THIOLENT; COLETTE, 2014).

Another advantage of research-action is related to the contributions that the use of this method brings to teaching and learning. This is because the interchange of ideas and reflections among professionals in the same field, and the union of theory and practice, provides opportunities for the development of creativity and critical thinking by teachers.

The use of research-action in the continuing education of teachers also presents advantages in terms of the possibility for the method to help overcome individualism in the profession. This is because it creates a space for exchange and critical reflection that ranges from conversations about issues related to pedagogical practice to other broader ones, such as careers and public educational policies, for example. These discussions are based on different visions, and for this reason, develop options and allow the diffusion of “information and reports of experiences that contrast to the dominant vision” (THIOLENT; COLETTE, 2014, p. 211).

Specifically in relation to the context of Spanish teachers, activities that stimulate the protagonism and integration of these professionals, providing spaces that contribute to their practices, can be a form of resistance to current national policies that have placed language education at the margin. In addition, to consider differences in ways of thinking and of the cultural diversity among participants in a research-action is also a way to break with continuing education models based on technical rationality, whose logic is more concerned with serving political and market interests than in providing advances that reflect on improvements for teachers and students.

About the disadvantages of the method, the teachers often mentioned the lack of time and spaces that allow them to exchange perspectives and collectively construct a



collaborative culture of continuing education. It is understood that local public policies should be created that support these situations.

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