

International
Journal of
**Human
Sciences
Research**

**TEACHERS TRAINED IN
DISTANCE LEARNING
IN THE MOZAMBICAN
CONTEXT**

Lino Marques Samuel

PhD, Catholic University of Mozambique

Evangelina Bonifacio

VALORIZA – IPP Research Center
Polytechnic Institute of Bragança-
School of Education

All content in this magazine is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution License. Attribution-Non-Commercial-Non-Derivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0).



Abstract: The professional performance of teachers depends on multiple variables such as the institution where the initial training took place, the context in which the practice is carried out, the audiences with which they work, among others. Thus, this study aims to analyze the professional performance of teachers trained in a Mozambican higher education institution, in the form of distance learning, checking whether this training contributes to the construction of a differentiated teaching profile, with regard to skills inherent to teaching. In methodological terms, a qualitative-interpretative approach was used, privileging the semi-structured interview as a data collection instrument, which was subsequently analyzed using the content analysis technique. They were interlocutors of the study, the managers of schools where these education professionals teach. Regarding the results, the study confirms that, according to the perception of managers, they are not different from teachers trained in the face-to-face modality, since the two models seem to have as their central purpose to train qualified teachers, giving them the skills inherent to teaching professional performance. Now, the conclusions of the study indicate that this group of teachers has a high professional performance, demonstrating that the way they develop and assume the profession does not reside in the training model, but in the individual commitment to education, in the ethical-deontological responsibility, in the motivation, adherence to principles and values, as well as the image that each teacher intends to build within the profession.

Keywords: Professional qualification, distance education, professional performance.

INTRODUCTION

The article presented here seeks to reflect on the professional performance of teachers trained in distance learning,

in the Mozambican context, based on the assumption that teaching performance depends on multiple variables such as the institution where the initial training took place, the context in which develops the practice, the audiences with which it works, among other aspects.

Thus, starting from a study focused on teachers trained in the distance modality, we intend to analyze the professional performance of teachers trained in this model in Mozambique.

In the Mozambican context, the distance learning model is recent and with an introduction in higher education institutions to participate, but in a “timid” way.

However, among those that decided to embrace the model, the Catholic University of Mozambique stands out, which has an institute specialized in distance education, which is the context that served as a reference for the study on the professional performance of teachers, trained in the teaching modality. distance education in Mozambican higher education, verifying whether this training contributes to the construction of a differentiated teaching profile.

The study used a qualitative-interpretative approach, privileging the semi-structured interview as a data collection instrument, which was subsequently analyzed using the content analysis technique. The participants were school managers, in the city of Nampula, who work with teachers whose training took place in this modality.

PROFESSIONALISM

Professionalism, from the perspective of Sacristán (2014) is understood as the assertion of what is proper to the action of a professional, in this case, the teaching action. We would say, in other words, that it translates “the set of behaviors, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that constitute the specificity of being a

teacher” (p. 65).

In this perspective, professionalism is manifested in the way in which the education professional assumes and develops their educational praxis, based on a set of specific knowledge that teachers must have in order to teach.

Adding that when talking about professionalism, Sacristán (2014) and Bonifácio (2015) have coincident perspectives as they argue that it must be seen from the logical relationship between what the teacher does as a mediator of knowledge(s) translated into skills and values, combining with knowing how to be and also with the knowledge of the social context in which they are developing their profession. All these elements have an influence on the teacher when he seeks to develop as an education professional.

In this logic, in view of what has been said, professionalism constitutes a great challenge of contemporary times, as pointed out by Borges (2014) when highlighting that the challenges posed to teachers, in this century, bring with them the need for professionalism in teaching action., thus allowing the teacher’s knowledge to gain more visibility and legitimacy.

PROFESSIONALITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEDAGOGICAL ACTION – KNOWING HOW TO DO

The professional action of the teacher necessarily involves the work carried out in the context of the classroom. It is in this space that the planned activities converge and where the act of teaching takes place, being the epicenter of teaching professionalism. In this regard, Esteve (2014) emphasizes that the teacher is required to have mastery of the subject he teaches, to be a facilitator of learning, holder of pedagogical knowledge(s), classroom organizer and, also, manager of the teaching process.

In this sense, the teacher is a professional

who, in the exercise of his activity, uses technical, theoretical knowledge and experiences accumulated throughout his training and professional career.

However, to this knowledge is added the teacher’s creativity in approaching the subject as illustrated by Woods (2014) when he states that one of the characteristics linked to the teacher’s creative teaching is the imagination that must be aided by the ability to adapt, dexterity, agility, improvisation and experimentation.

PROFESSIONALITY AND ETHICAL-DEONTOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS

Alongside the other requirements mentioned above, there is the ethical perspective, that is, the way in which the professional behaves in relation to other educational and social actors. Thus, ethical action appears as an inseparable element of the teacher’s professionalism. As Bonifácio (2017) explains, it is a profession in which the main objective is the development of individuals and, therefore, there is a need to assume ethical behavior as a reference for educational practice.

The thinking developed by Baptista (2012) stands out when he argues that the central point of the teaching profession is the assumption of the possibility of improvement and the educability of each human being, having as special concern, mainly, the poorest and most vulnerable strata. of society. In the same vein, Bonifácio (2017) argues that “ethics as knowledge is a theoretical tool that allows us to understand and reflect on complex conflicts, or dilemmas, that affect the process of human life” (p. 161). Therefore, the teacher’s professional action must be based on the ethical-deontological principles inherent to the profession, basing their professional performance on respect for dignity and fundamental human rights to life in society.

TEACHER TRAINING IN THE DISTANCE EDUCATION MODALITY

Information and communication technologies have revolutionized modern society through easy and quick access to information. The change scenario covers the main areas of social life and, as it could not be left out, it has significantly affected education. There is a great change in the way of teaching and learning and this constitutes a great challenge for education.

If the technological revolution affects the way of teaching and learning, it means that teacher training cannot ignore this phenomenon.

Thus, we are witnessing the introduction of new methodologies in the training of teachers that integrate a new paradigm, as defended by Goulão and Henriques (2015) when they emphasize that new technologies impose the need for education to rethink its pedagogical paradigm, calling for a more open curriculum, and flexible, that seeks to strengthen the bonds of interaction between the different actors in the teaching-learning process and, moreover, that the ways of working become collaborative and in a network, in the sense of optimizing partnerships.

From the perspective of Procópio (2017), the training of teachers using technologies is a way to give people who are unable to attend a face-to-face course to acquire qualifications for professional development in their area of intervention, this has been happening. In the case of Mozambique. From the perspective of Patto (2013) it means that technologies facilitate the democratization of higher education, by increasing the number of admissions, via distance education.

In the same line of thought, Procópio (2017) emphasizes that it is an opportunity to train qualified professionals who will also work with professionalism in their workplace,

considering that their training was anchored in interactive learning, through exchanges with colleagues, tutors and Furthermore, the use of technological mediation allowed greater contact, knowledge and development, in this context, which will materialize in the construction of new skills, vis-à-vis the profession.

MOZAMBIQUE'S EXPERIENCE IN TRAINING TEACHERS IN DISTANCE LEARNING

To meet the need for teacher training in Mozambique, the Council of Ministers created, through Decree-Law nº 8/2011, of 3 May, the Institute for Open and Distance Education and, in 2014, through Resolution nº 9/2014, of 22 May, approves the Organic Statute of the Institute of Open and Distance Education.

According to article 2 of this Resolution, the main attribution of the Institute, in reference, was the training of teachers, through the distance learning modality, giving priority to working teachers without adequate training and citizens not covered by the face-to-face teaching system, as well as as others with other training needs.

This qualification was acquired by associating two moments. In the first, theoretical contents were taught in online classes. In the second, it was the time dedicated to pedagogical practice, which was supervised by the teachers of the training institute and school teachers who had the function of monitoring the process. In this context, it is from here that the first official initiatives of teacher training based on this teaching modality are carried out, which must be supported by the initiatives of public and private higher education institutions.

METHODOLOGICAL OPTION

In this study, the methodological

option follows a qualitative approach, of a phenomenological-interpretative nature, according to Rossato and Martínez (2017) considering that the object of study seeks to analyze the professional performance of trained teachers, in a Mozambican higher education institution, in the teaching modality at a distance, checking whether this training contributes to the construction of a differentiated teaching profile, with regard to the skills inherent to teaching.

For data collection, the semi-structured interview was privileged in order to obtain information related to attitudes, behaviors, perceptions and opinions of school managers who work with teachers trained in distance education.

6 (six) school managers participated in the study, from schools where teachers qualified by the two training models worked.

The data were analyzed using the content analysis technique that allowed the systematization of the information collected from the interviews with school administrators, through the explanation in category and subcategories, resulting from the analysis and interpretation of the information.

INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

PERCEPTION OF THE PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF TEACHERS TRAINED IN DISTANCE LEARNING

The results showed, through the voice of school managers, that teachers trained through the modality, in reference, have the skills required to be a teacher. However, this means that the fact that they had completed their training in this modality was not an impediment to the construction of skills inherent to teaching. It must be noted that, in some cases, the results showed that these teachers, before entering the university,

already had another training that qualified them, as primary teachers, but not with a degree.

With regard to teacher training in the distance learning modality, Procópio (2017) argues that using technologies in this training process is a way of giving opportunity to people who would otherwise not be able to enter higher education in a course.

In relation to this training, the results of research by Lagarto (2002) are highlighted, which corroborate the ideas of the previous authors, when he explains that distance training is an alternative or, in some cases, it is a complement to the face-to-face training process. It also underlines that it is an alternative for those who cannot access face-to-face training, due to professional, financial or geographical reasons, admitting that it could be a complementary means for those who, needing to increase their knowledge, can use information technologies as a research tool.

In view of what has been said, distance education offers the “student theoretical-practical references that lead to the acquisition of cognitive competences, skills and attitudes that promote the full development of the person, the exercise of citizenship and qualification for work, principles general aspects of education as a whole” (Borges & Reali, 2012, p. 6), coinciding with the results of our studies that show that these teachers have acquired cognitive skills, abilities and attitudes and reveal skills inherent to teaching.

KNOWLEDGE OF TEACHERS TRAINED IN DISTANCE LEARNING FOR TEACHING

With regard to the knowledge to teach, the results indicated that this group of teachers demonstrates that they have the knowledge(s) to teach, having been highlighted the fact that they are proactive and concerned with the

students' learning.

Regarding the demonstration of the knowledge necessary to teach, it was possible to verify that it is not a training model that defines the acquisition of competences, corroborating the thinking of Mesquita (2010) when he emphasizes that the professional teacher is the one who knows how to transmit his knowledge, given the concrete situations and is not limited to mere repetition. In the same logic, when approaching the concept of dispositions/competencies that a teacher must have, Nóvoa (2009) presents knowledge as the first disposition that materializes in the professional's ability to build teaching practices that lead students to learning.

In the reflection made on teachers trained in distance learning, it was agreed that they are competent, and this translates into knowing how to teach, having the tools for teaching and, from the outset, in the field of scientific-pedagogical knowledge that allows them to understand the teaching process, given the diversity of its students.

On the other hand, in the case of Mozambique, this training provided the opportunity for these teachers to undergo training while exercising the profession, but also to put into practice the theoretical knowledge, as well as those acquired in the teaching context, considering that some already exercised and intended to expand their knowledge.

In this logic, we agree with Oliveira (2013) when he mentions that practice is a means of learning in which teachers have the opportunity to relearn the lessons of training, readapt and/or suppress some knowledge that has no connection with concrete reality.

From the same point of view on in-service training, Nóvoa (2009) argues that the development of professional skills will have greater expression if the teacher's training process is led by the teacher himself and this

process would be conducted within in-service training. Thus, this group of teachers became responsible for their own training.

This fact is corroborated by Resolution nº 9/2014 of 22 May, in art. 2, in which the main attribution of the Instituto de Educação Aberta e à Distancia de Moçambique is the distance training of teachers. Therefore, the initiative of this group of educators to enter higher education as teachers in practice facilitated the improvement of skills for teaching and, at the same time, become proactive in the teaching and learning process.

MASTERY OF THE CONTENT TO BE TAUGHT

The results showed that teachers trained through distance learning demonstrate mastery of the content to be taught, reveal quality and knowledge of the subject to be taught, are innovative in content and are rigorous during the teaching and learning process. Thus, it was verified that the training model to which they were submitted was demanding and, at the same time, requires the teacher in training to be active and participatory in the search for knowledge, to have critical capacity, autonomy and responsibility in the management of learning, understanding the singularities and difficulties, as explained by Garcia and Bizzo (2013).

However, mastering the content to be taught is part of the teachers' professional knowledge, as explained by Tardif (2002, cited in Carmo & Silva, 2015) explaining that:

teachers' knowledge is composed of various knowledge from different sources, that is, they are heterogeneous and formed through the restructuring of knowledge acquired in professional training, retranslated and polished in their practice and mediated by the experience lived in that context (p. 2).

It must be noted that the teachers under study, as education professionals, bring

together within themselves a set of knowledge that makes up the professional knowledge that can come from life experience and daily contact with students (Carmo & Silva, 2015), from the reflective work developed during the pedagogical act (Gariglio & Burnier, 2014), critical reflection on the practice and the constant (re)construction of the teacher's personal and professional identity (Borges, 2014) and the training process, whether initial or continuous (Freire & Skeika, 2015).

The results showed that the teachers in the study, in addition to mastering the contents, are innovative, which presupposes that the fact that they have undergone training in distance learning enabled them to acquire this competence, a fact supported by Teixeira and Almeida (2015) when argue that in distance education, activities carried out on virtual platforms contribute to the acquisition of knowledge in cyclical activities, allowing the acquisition of other skills such as innovation, creativity, rigor, as well as mastering the content to be taught.

CONCLUSIONS

As final notes on this study, which focused on the performance of teachers trained through the distance learning modality and which involved the participation of school managers, listening to their perception regarding the professional performance of these teachers, we would say that in terms of general considerations it was concluded by the relevance and topicality of the problem under study and, in particular, reflection in times of pandemic that, recently, we had to live.

Regarding the problem issue of the study, it emerged at a time when several Mozambican higher education institutions are (and were) offering higher education courses to offer in different areas of knowledge, including teacher training. At the same time, discourses, both social and from researchers, are growing,

questioning the quality of teaching in distance education.

As for institutions that already offer this modality, they are under pressure from those who do not believe in the quality of this education and, at the same time, they are under pressure from competition from institutions that intend to offer courses through this model. It means that, on the one hand, they intend to improve the training offer and, on the other hand, they seek to position themselves in the market.

In this context, these issues of teacher training in the Mozambican context, in which the lack of teachers is a reality and, taking into account the voice and perception of school managers, were positively evaluated in terms of professional performance (of this group of teachers) in no way differs from others trained through the face-to-face model, gauging that these professionals hold the skills required for the exercise of the profession.

In our reading, it is inferred that the training modality will not be indicative that it is not possible to build competences, in the different areas of knowledge, and some managers have pointed out that these teachers were willing to attend the university to consolidate knowledge and, also, to improve their economic and social conditions.

In summary, the teacher's professional performance does not depend on the training modality to which he/she is submitted, because in all of them, they converge to create opportunities for knowledge and skills that go beyond simple instrumental knowledge. However, this training process allowed the acquisition of technical-scientific, didactic-pedagogical, relational and human skills, as well as ethical and moral skills that shape the teacher's professional action in an educational context.

REFERENCES

- Baptista, I. (2012). Ética e Educação Social Interpelações de contemporaneidade. *SIPS - Pedagogia Social. Revista Interuniversitária*, 19, 37-49.
- Bonifácio, E. (2015). *Professores e Escolas - Imagem Social e Desafios de Profissão* (2ª. ed.). Edições Fénix.
- Bonifácio, E. (2017). Ética e educação: as narrativas da formação de professores. *Aula*, 23, 159-178. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.14201/aula201723159178>
- Borges, F. V., & Reali, A. M. (2012). Formação de professores e educação a distância: uma parceria na formação de professores-tutores-regentes. *Simpósio Internacional de Educação à Distância*. pp. 1-14.
- Borges, M. L. (2014). Profissionalidade docente: da prática à praxis. *Investigar em Educação*, 2, 39-59.
- Carmo, E. M., & Silva, A. M. (2015). Produção de saberes da prática docente na formação inicial de professores de ciências. *X Encontro Nacional de Pesquisa em Educação em Ciências*. X ENPEC, pp. 1-8.
- Decreto-Lei nº 8/2011, de 3 de maio. Boletim da República, 1ª Serie, 148.
- Esteve, J. M. (2014). Mudanças sociais e função docente. Em A. Nóvoa (Org.). *Profissão Professor* (2ª. ed.). Porto Editora, pp. 93-124.
- Freire, L. I., & Skeika, T. (2015). Conhecimentos e saberes necessários para a docência: contribuições do processo formativo e da experiência profissional. *XII Congresso Nacional de Educação e V Seminário Internacional sobre a Profissionalização Docente*. EDUCERE, pp. 17065-17074.
- Garcia, P. S., & Bizzo, N. (2013). Formação contínua a distância: gestão da aprendizagem e dificuldades dos professores. *Cardenos de Pesquisa*, 143, 622-661.
- Gariglio, J. A., & Burnier, S. L. (2014). Os professores da educação profissional: saberes e práticas. *Caderno de Pesquisa*, 44, 934-959.
- Goulão, M. d., & Henriques, S. (2015). Ensinar e Aprender em Ambientes Virtuais de Aprendizagem. Em J. A. Morreira, D. Barros & D. B. Monteiro (Orgs.). *Inovação e formação na Sociedade Digital - Ambientes Virtuais, Tecnologias e Serious Games*. Whitebooks, pp. 21-35.
- Lagarto, J. R. (2002). *Ensino a distância e formação contínua: uma análise prospetiva sobre a utilização do ensino a distância na formação profissional contínua de ativos em Portugal*. - (Formação a distância e e-learning. Estudo de investigação).
- Mesquita, E. (2010). Formação inicial, profissão docente e competências para a docência: a visão dos futuros professores. *EDUSER: revista de educação*, 2, 3-19.
- Nóvoa, A. (2009). *Professores: Imagens do futuro presente*. Lisboa, Portugal: EDUCA.
- Oliveira, M. D. (2013). A profissionalização docente. *XI Congresso Nacional de Educação*. EDUCERE.
- Patto, M. H. (2013). O ensino a distância e a falência da educação. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 2, 303-318.
- Procópio, E. R. (2017). *Tecnologias e Formação de Professores - Implicações da educação a distância*. Appris Editora.
- Resolução nº 9/2014, de 22 de maio. Boletim da República, I.ª serie, nº 41.
- Sacristán, J. G. (2014). Consciência e Ação sobre a prática como libertação profissional dos Professores. Em A. Nóvoa (Org.). *Profissão Professor* (2ª. ed.). Porto Editora, pp. 63-92.

Teixeira, N. F., & Almeida, P. V. (2015). Formação de Professores na Educação a Distância e a Prática Reflexiva. *Em foco: Revista Científica de Educação à Distância*, 5, 61-74.

Woods, P. (2014). Aspectos Sociais da Criatividade do Professor. Em A. Nóvoa (Org.). *Profissão Professor* (2ª. ed.). Porto Editora, pp. 125-154.