

**CHALLENGES OF TEACHING PRACTICE IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA:
REFLECTIONS ON FAKE NEWS AND EDUCATION**

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the challenges faced by education in the Post-Truth Era and fake news, where the dissemination of false information and the relativization of truth directly impact teaching practice. The concept of Post-Truth, characterized by the prevalence of personal beliefs over objective facts, challenges the traditional role of the teacher as a mediator of knowledge. Based on Edgar Morin's complexity theory and Clandinin and Connelly's Narrative Research, this study argues that the adoption of a reflective posture is essential for teachers to face the challenges imposed by misinformation. Methodologies such as Discursive Textual Analysis and Narrative Research are proposed as effective tools in the sense of developing a critical education. The text also discusses the need to reformulate teacher training and to integrate public policies that promote critical thinking and digital literacy, preparing teachers to deal with the new informational dynamics of contemporary society.

Keywords: Post-truth. Fake News. Critical Education. Reflective Teaching Practice. Teacher Training.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is going through a unique moment in which the boundaries between fact and opinion, truth and lies, are increasingly fluid. This phenomenon, known as the "Post-Truth Era", gained notoriety from the mid-2010s, driven by the rise of social networks and the massification of internet access.

In a world where emotions and personal beliefs seem to matter more than facts, challenges arise for all social spheres, but especially for education. The term "Post-Truth" was popularized during global events such as the Brexit referendum and the 2016 United States presidential election, when the spread of false or distorted information decisively shaped public opinion.

In Brazil, the influence of Post-Truth has manifested itself in an alarming way in recent decades, impacting, among other areas, education. The proliferation of so-called fake news — false information deliberately disseminated with the intention of deceiving — has brought unprecedented challenges to the educational field, where teachers are confronted with students who increasingly arrive at the classroom armed with distorted information, formed in bubbles of disinformation. How can the teacher, in this environment, play his traditional role as mediator of knowledge, when the very notion of knowledge seems to be under attack?

In this complex, dysfunctional and difficult to delimit communicational ecosystem, the concept of truth that was already being deconstructed by relativism, has a secondary role, almost non-existent.

Reupdating Plato's thought, who saw between truth and power an irremediable conflict of interests, to the point of considering that people prefer what is popular to truth, today political rhetoric continues to maintain itself in this unstable equilibrium where the imprecision of language is at the service of persuasion and the construction of post-truths. (Figueira and Santos, 2019, p. 5)

The answer to this question requires a reformulation of pedagogical practices and a new look at teacher training. In this text, we propose a reflection on the teacher's practice in the Post-Truth Era and the Fake News Crisis, based on Edgar Morin's theory of complexity and the principles of Clandinin and Connelly's Narrative Research. From these approaches, we argue that the reflective teacher has an essential role in the construction of a critical education, capable of promoting autonomous thinking and rigorous analysis of the information that circulates inside and outside the classrooms.



THE CHALLENGE OF POST-TRUTH FOR EDUCATION

The concept of Post-Truth challenges one of the most fundamental bases of human thought and education: the search for truth and objectivity in the teaching-learning process. In educational practice, it has always been assumed that knowledge is something that can be discovered and shared in an impartial way. However, in the Post-Truth Era, this premise is questioned, and the role of the teacher as an authority figure in the field of knowledge is constantly confronted.

Post-Truth is characterized by the prevalence of emotions and personal beliefs over objective facts. Instead of basing their convictions on evidence, people, immersed in informational bubbles created by social media algorithms, tend to seek information that confirms their preexisting opinions. This dynamic generates an environment of disinformation in which rational dialogue becomes increasingly difficult, since people are not willing to reconsider their beliefs in the face of new evidence.

Today, anyone can produce (and distribute) false information (Southwell et al., 2018; Jenkins, 2006), the result of the new paradigm of communication that marks the end of the old monopoly in which the media lived for more than a century, since we now live, in the expression of Manuel Castells, in a society of "mass self-communication". This means that an individual, without specific training in the construction of information or even reputation, can in many cases exceed the number of readers that media outlets as influential as CNN, Fox News or The New York Times reach (Figueira and Santos, 2019, p. 8).

For education, this poses a substantial challenge. As Bauman (2001) argues in his concept of "liquid modernity", we live in a time when certainties are temporary, truths are fragmented, and values are changeable. In the school context, this means that teachers must deal not only with the transmission of content, but also with the task of teaching students how to navigate a world of uncertainty and ambiguity. Critical teaching, which has always been a fundamental tool for citizenship education, becomes even more urgent in this scenario.

In addition, the phenomenon of fake news exacerbates this crisis. Fake news, often presented as reliable reports, circulates easily on social networks and ends up being incorporated into the cognitive repertoire of students. What makes this phenomenon even more pernicious is the fact that, sometimes, these news stories are constructed in a way that appeals to emotions, which makes them more likely to be shared.

Fake news spreads significantly faster and reaches a larger audience than true information. This puts the teacher in a delicate position: how to correct misinformation without alienating students who are already convinced of the veracity of the fake news they consume?



The situation is further complicated by the fact that teacher authority, traditionally recognized in the classroom, is being challenged by alternative sources of information. As Jenkins (2006) and Castells (2009) point out, the rise of "mass self-communication" has allowed any individual with access to the internet to become a content producer, challenging the information monopolies that were previously held by traditional media. In this new scenario, the figure of the teacher as the holder of knowledge is contested by digital influencers and other *online* sources that sometimes present themselves as more accessible and convincing to students.

The impact of this crisis of confidence in the teacher can be profound, in our view. On the one hand, students feel more empowered, believing that they can find all the answers they need *online*. On the other hand, this empowerment is often based on a naïve trust in the veracity of everything that is found on the internet. This creates a paradox: while students seem more informed than ever, they may actually be more vulnerable to misinformation.

THE ROLE OF THE REFLECTIVE TEACHER IN CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

To face the challenges of the Post-Truth Era, the concept of the reflective teacher, defended by Donald Schön (1983) and expanded by authors such as Zeichner (1993) and Dewey (1933), has become essential in current times. The reflective teacher is one who, instead of mechanically applying predefined pedagogical techniques, is constantly reflecting on his or her practice, adapting it to the needs of students and the challenges imposed by the social and political context.

Schön (1983) introduced the idea that professional knowledge is not something fixed, but rather dynamic and contextual. He argues that practitioners, including teachers, learn not only by applying abstract theories but also by reflecting on their own experiences of practice, which he calls "reflection-in-action." For teachers, this means that when faced with unexpected situations in the classroom — such as the impact of fake news or students' resistance to accepting objective facts — they need to be able to quickly reflect on how best to deal with these challenges.

Dewey (1933), however, complements this perspective by arguing that reflection is a form of active, deliberate, and persistent thinking that aims to solve problems. For Dewey, education should be seen as a continuous process of reconstruction of experience. Applied to the contemporary context, this means that teachers should see confronting disinformation not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity to engage students in a deeper



reflection on what knowledge is, how it is constructed, and what its implications are for social and political life.

A central aspect of reflective practice is the teacher's commitment to continuous learning. Zeichner (1993) argues that the training of reflective teachers requires not only the development of pedagogical skills, but also a deep understanding of the social and cultural contexts in which education is inserted. In the context of the Post-Truth Era, this means that teachers need to be aware of how fake news and misinformation affect students' perception of the world, and be prepared to address these issues in a critical and dialoguing way.

Critical reflection can also be extended to the teacher's own role. As Freire (1996) argues, the educator must be an agent of social transformation, and not just a transmitter of content. For this, it would be necessary for the teacher to adopt a dialogical posture, open to listening and questioning, both by the students and by himself. The pedagogy of autonomy defended by Freire emphasizes the need to train students who are able to think critically, question the information they receive and actively participate in the construction of knowledge.

The logic of reflexive action is contrary to a routine, passive and accommodating position. In addition to the automated activity, guided by impulse, tradition or authority, it seeks to unite reason and emotion, in a linked way, to provide a broad view to perceive problems (Geraldi *et al.*, 1998).

Teachers with reflective actions do not remain tied to a single perspective, they carefully examine the alternatives that are presented to them as viable, as well as those that seem to them to be more distant from the solution, with the same rigor, seriousness and persistence (Geraldi *et al.*, 1998, p. 191).

However, the implementation of a reflective practice requires significant changes in teacher training. This implies not only the inclusion of disciplines that address Post-Truth and fake news in undergraduate courses, for example, but also the creation of spaces for teachers in training to reflect on their own experiences and develop strategies to deal with disinformation in the classroom.

METHODOLOGIES TO UNDERSTAND TEACHING IN POST-TRUTH TIMES

In the face of the challenges imposed by disinformation and Post-Truth, the adoption of innovative methodologies is essential for us to understand teachers in the development of pedagogical practices that promote critical thinking and rigorous analysis of information. Among these methodologies, Narrative Research, Discursive Textual Analysis and



Complexity Theory stand out, proposals that offer effective tools to understand the complexities of contemporary society.

Narrative Research, as defended by Clandinin and Connelly (2011), proposes that teaching be seen as a continuous experience of telling and retelling stories, both by teachers and students. This method allows us to use the teachers' narratives as a starting point for a critical analysis of the information they bring to the classroom. By encouraging them to tell their own stories and reflect on how their beliefs were formed, we can identify the challenges of teaching in these times of great technological change.

In addition, Narrative Research allows teachers to reflect on their own practices and experiences, helping them to identify moments when they may have been influenced by misinformation or unconscious bias. This self-reflection is essential for teachers to adapt their pedagogical practices and create a teaching environment that is more open to dialogue and constructive criticism. In this way, the narrative researcher does not prescribe general uses and applications, but on the other hand offers a place for the reader to imagine his own uses and applications on the narrated phenomena.

Educators are interested in lives. Life, to borrow John Dewey's metaphor, is Education. Educators are interested in learning and teaching and how this process occurs; They are interested in how to deal with different lives, different values, different attitudes, beliefs, social systems, institutions and structures and how they are all united to learn and teach. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2015, p. 22).

Clandinin and Connelly (2001) also point out that Dewey contributes to thinking about experience "beyond the black box", that is, beyond the notion that experience is something irreducible, which could not be investigated. Thus, they report the three-dimensional aspect from the terms they use:

[...] our terms are personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a three-dimensional space for narrative inquiry, with temporality along the first dimension, the personal and social along the second dimension, and place along the third.
(Clandinin e Connelly, 2011, p.85)

Discursive Textual Analysis (DTA), in turn, offers a systematic approach to the analysis of texts and discourses, which can be particularly useful in the context of Post-Truth. As Moraes and Galiazzi (2011) argue, DTA can help the development of critical thinking, since it teaches the researcher to seek evidence that corroborates or contradicts the hypotheses raised.

The Theory of Complexity, proposed by Edgar Morin (2006), also offers valuable insights for confronting disinformation. Morin argues that reality is made up of multiple



interconnected factors, and that knowledge cannot be reduced to a simplistic or fragmented view. Applied to education, Complexity Theory helps teachers to encourage students to see knowledge as an interrelated whole, instead of compartmentalizing it into isolated disciplines. This means that, when discussing fake news about science, for example, the teacher can demonstrate how this news is related to political, economic, and social factors, helping students to develop a more balanced and critical view of the world.

In addition to these methodologies, the critical incorporation of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs or TIDCs) into the school curriculum is essential for the development of digital literacy skills. This entails teaching students to identify reliable sources of information, to critically evaluate what they read, and to recognize the signs of misinformation. The use of technologies in a critical way can transform digital tools for the dissemination of fake news into allies of critical education, enabling students to safely navigate the vast universe of information on the internet.

TEACHER TRAINING AND PUBLIC EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

In order for teachers to be prepared to face the challenges of misinformation, it is necessary that public educational policies promote continuous training and the development of critical skills among teachers. In Brazil, teacher training is still marked by an excessively technical focus, with little emphasis on the development of critical and reflective thinking. This may be different.

Teacher training that prepares teachers to deal with the Post-Truth Era requires including courses that address the implications of TIDCs, fake news, and disinformation. In addition, it is necessary for teachers in training to be exposed to innovative methodologies that allow them to develop more reflective and critical pedagogical practices.

Public policies can also encourage the continuing education of teachers, focusing on the development of skills that help them deal with the new informational dynamics of contemporary society. This can be done through continuing education programs that offer courses and workshops on how to combat misinformation and promote critical thinking in the classroom.

In addition, educational policies should promote the integration of ICTs into the school curriculum in a critical and reflective manner. This means that rather than simply teaching students how to use digital tools, teachers should be encouraged to discuss the ethical and social implications of these technologies, helping students to become more critical and responsible consumers and producers of information.



CONCLUSION

We live in an era of uncertainty and complexity, in which the boundaries between truth and lies are increasingly blurred. In this scenario, the role of the teacher is extremely important. The teacher must be more than just a transmitter of knowledge; It is able to be a facilitator of critical thinking, capable of offering students a path in their journey to become informed and conscious citizens.

Reflective practice, as advocated by authors such as Dewey, Schön, and Zeichner, offers a powerful approach for teachers to address the challenges of the Post-Truth Era, especially by encouraging the adoption of a critical and reflective stance. Thus, teachers can help students navigate the sea of misinformation that permeates our society, empowering them to question, analyze, and ultimately act on reliable information.

However, for this to happen, it is necessary that public educational policies promote the continuous and critical training of teachers, enabling them to deal with the new demands of contemporary society. By combining innovative methodologies with a critical approach to education, we will be able to dream of building a more resilient educational system that is prepared to face the challenges of Post-Truth.

The questions raised by this reflection are not simple to answer, but that is exactly why they are so relevant in our historical moment. The formation of critical and informed citizens depends on our ability to confront disinformation in order to promote an education that values truth, dialogue and reflection.



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