

Teaching and learning Sociology in Brazilian schools

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Bodart, C. (2024). *O que aprender para ensinar Sociologia*. Maceió: Café com Sociologia. 250p.

The book “*O que aprender para ensinar Sociologia*”, authored by Cristiano Bodart, was published in the latter half of 2024 by *Editora Café com Sociologia*. The objective of the publication is to encourage readers to expand their teaching knowledge. The book is set in the Brazilian educational context, in which the teaching of sociology in basic education is restricted to the three years of secondary school and has been marked by curricular intermittencies. Currently, the subject is taught in the Human Sciences module, together with the subjects of History, Geography, and Philosophy, as a result of the New Secondary Education (Law No. 13,415/2017). The author refers to this scenario throughout the book, highlighting the importance of explaining some issues, whether obvious or not, for teacher training in this area. The book is comprised of 250 pages and is structured into four units, presenting reflections, key concepts in short entries, and suggestions for further reading.

The author, Cristiano Bodart, is a professor at the Centre for Education (Cedu) and the Graduate Programme in Sociology (PPGS-ICS), both at the Federal University of Alagoas (Ufal). In addition to his academic role, he is also the vice-president of the Brazilian Association for the Teaching of Social Sciences (Abecs). His academic career spans both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, with involvement in teaching sociology in basic education and scientific production. The present volume represents a synthesis of Bodart's endeavors across these diverse domains, with a unifying objective of interconnecting sociological theory with practical pedagogical applications.

The aim of this book is to encourage the reader in their search for teaching knowledge, in order to contribute to their didactic-pedagogical repertoire. It is not a textbook that explains the "right way" to teach Sociology in high school. On the contrary, the author refutes this idea, pointing out that there is no single way of teaching. His aim is not to teach how to be a sociology teacher, but to propose reflections that will help the reader, whatever their level of training, whether they are a student or a high school teacher, for example, to rethink their practice. This perspective also reinforces the pluralist conception of school sociology, as it puts the possibility of diverse pedagogical practices in dialogue with the theoretical and methodological diversity of the discipline.

The subject is part of the research agenda of the author, who teaches at the Centre for Education (Cedu) and the Postgraduate Programme in Sociology (PPGS-ICS) of the Federal University of Alagoas (Ufal). The author is also vice-president of Abecs and editor-in-chief of the *Cadernos da Associação Brasileira de Ensino de Ciências Sociais* (Journal of the Brazilian Association for the Teaching of Social Sciences), Latitude Journal and Café com Sociologia Journal, as well as founder of the *Café com Sociologia* blog and publishing house. Looking at his career, it is noticeable that there is a transition between undergraduate and postgraduate studies, dialogue with sociology in high school and scientific production, and this circulation is evident in his new book.

The writing is marked by the author's didactic concern for the teaching public, which reflects an attempt at dialogue with those at the beginning of their professional careers. The chapters are the result of the systematisation of the author's experiences in basic education and, later, in higher education, as well as his notes and experiences as head of the supervised internship course in the Bachelor of Social Sciences at Ufal. The content is therefore very close to the reality of everyday school life.

The book illuminates questions that were part of the author's training and dialogues with the difficulties and challenges identified by students in internship classes. It thus becomes evident that despite the solitary nature of teaching sociology, given that the majority of schools employ only one sociology teacher, and in light of the prevalence of insecurities such as the concern "Have I acquired sufficient

knowledge to teach?" – these experiences are not isolated occurrences, but rather are common to the formation of a teaching identity.

In the initial unit, entitled "Being a Sociology Teacher," the author contextualizes the qualifications for teaching sociology at the basic education level, providing justifications based on jurisdiction and the historical context of the subject in the school curriculum. To this end, he employs Ministry of Education (MEC) regulations and Curricular Guidelines, as well as an analysis of historical educational reforms and an examination of training programs, including the pedagogical complementation of the second degree.

The unit also presents a thought-provoking reflection on the nature of teaching knowledge, demystifying the idea that teaching is a gift and emphasizing the view that teaching is a professional practice that is continually built and improved. The author underscores the significance of pedagogical, disciplinary, curricular, critical-contextual, and experiential knowledge, delineating them according to the social sciences. This analysis demonstrates the indispensable role of each in an educational practice that transcends the mere transmission of content, emphasizing their integration. Another pertinent topic is that of the supervised internship, which is acknowledged as a crucial arena for practical and reflective learning, a foundational element in the initial development of teachers. However, the pivotal point of this section, in my view, is the delineation of teaching practice as a procedural undertaking comprising teaching knowledge that is not attained in a single instance, but rather in an integrated manner.

The second unit, entitled "What is the point of teaching sociology?," provides a more detailed examination of the subject matter in the context of school-based sociology. It draws a distinction between this approach and that taken in higher education, emphasizing the comprehensive nature of sociology as a discipline that incorporates themes from the social sciences as a whole, including anthropology and political science. This approach serves to reinforce the specific nature of sociology teaching in basic education. It is guided not only by theoretical mastery, but also by articulation with the objectives defined by the 1996 Brazilian Education Guidelines and Bases Law (LDB), such as preparation for the exercise of citizenship and for the world of work. In this sense, the book is fulfilling its objective of linking pedagogical

knowledge to sociological reflection. Furthermore, it is delineating the social function of sociology in accordance with the LDB.

Similarly, the author takes care to define the concepts of "sociological alphabetization" and "sociological literacy." Sociological alphabetization is defined as the "acquisition of the theoretical and social apparatus of the social sciences" (Bodart, 2024, p. 68). It is developed gradually through the denaturalization of the social world and the introduction of epistemic knowledge. In turn, sociological literacy refers to the capacity to comprehend social structures in greater depth, situating them within the context of the students' own experiences, and empowering them to engage in critical analysis and transformative action. These concepts, which have been relatively unexplored and underutilized in the social sciences, are presented in a discursive and accessible manner, thereby enriching the reader's theoretical and practical repertoire.

Another significant aspect is the historical contextualization of sociology teaching, which can be traced back to the nineteenth century. This enables an understanding of the current challenges from a historical perspective. Still in the second unit, the author examines the ways in which the projects for society and the functions assigned to the school have shaped the presence of sociology in the curriculum over time. From its formal inclusion in 1930 to its reinstatement in 2008 by Law N. 11,684 (Brazil, 2008), the subject has been at the center of ideological disputes, as evidenced by the opposition between Catholic sociology and the critical strand, the latter of which has been predominant in contemporary times.

The author summarizes this trajectory in tabular form, enumerating the principal milestones in the history of sociology teaching in Brazil. This didactic resource, in addition to being of great pedagogical value, contributes to an understanding of the ongoing process of autonomization of school sociology (Oliveira, 2023). It is evident that the creation of organizations such as Abecs, the National Meeting of Sociology Teaching in Basic Education (Eneseb), and the inclusion of Sociology in public educational policies, such as the Institutional Program for Initiation into Teaching (Pibid) and the National Textbook Plan (PNLD), have played a pivotal role in the autonomization of the field of Sociology teaching research, which includes School Sociology.

Conversely, the analysis does not fail to highlight contemporary challenges, particularly in the context of the high school reform. The replacement of Sociology by "studies and practices of Sociology" and the reduction in its workload represent significant setbacks that jeopardize the consolidation of the subject as a critical and formative tool. The unit therefore offers a comprehensive and critical view of school sociology, articulating its historical relevance, its current challenges, and its importance for the formation of aware and engaged citizens.

Sociology's historical lack of stability in the curriculum is often cited as one of the main causes of various shortcomings in the teaching of the subject. Among these deficiencies are the lack of teaching resources, the absence of a well-structured curriculum, obstacles in teacher training and the low demand for degree courses in Social Sciences. Understanding this historical context helps us to better understand the current situation of school sociology and the challenges to be faced (Bodart, 2024, p. 87).

An understanding of history is crucial for grasping the social, cultural, and political transformations that have shaped the present, thereby enabling the construction of a more conscious and responsible future. In particular, an examination of the history of sociology in Brazilian education is important for understanding the temporality of its presence and absence. This analysis can inform the development of strategies to address current weaknesses and challenges in the field of citizen and critical education.

The third unit, entitled "How to Teach Sociology?," considers the essential elements of planning and implementing the teaching of this subject, with a particular emphasis on the role of the teacher as a facilitator and mediator of knowledge. The author examines the utility of various tools, including subject plans, lesson plans, and didactic sequences, and posits that they are indispensable for the effective organization of teaching. Furthermore, he discusses the significance of planning as a framework for knowledge construction and assessment as a tool for monitoring and adjusting this process. He argues for a gradual approach that begins with the students' existing knowledge and gradually progresses to more complex content. This discussion is illustrated with tables that suggest verbs for use in subject plans and lesson plans. These resources are dynamic in that they translate the discussion into concrete examples that can be adopted.

The unit draws on pedagogical and sociological knowledge to define key concepts such as cultural artefacts, resources and teaching strategies. It considers their applicability in the classroom and suggests materials and themes. In addition, it considers the concept, theory, theme, and research as pedagogical presuppositions, weighing the advantages and disadvantages of each of these principles. It then proceeds to an analysis of the various types of lessons, including thematic, baccalaureate, contextualizing, and instrumentalizing, in a balanced manner, also elucidating the positive and negative aspects of each lesson model. The author notes that as pedagogical knowledge is developed, practice and methodological diversification also improve.

Another important point is to reflect on the approach to sensitive themes such as social inequality, racism, gender and violence, which are inevitable issues in sociology teaching. These controversies are intrinsic to the discipline and, if managed effectively, can facilitate informed and critical discourse. Strategies are proposed for addressing manifestations of intolerance and generalizations, employing what he terms the "decomposition and recomposition" of knowledge.

Teaching sociology necessarily involves clashes with untruths, as happens in all school subjects. However, in the case of Sociology, these clashes often involve beliefs, values and understandings about interpersonal relationships, which requires care and sensitivity to avoid embarrassing or even violent situations (Bodart, 2024, p. 174).

Lastly, the unit considers various pedagogical approaches, including traditional models such as the lecture, which can be enhanced with greater student engagement, and innovative practices such as debates, seminars, out-of-class activities, and the socio biographical notebook, a distinctive resource with potential for reflection. In this way, the unit offers a comprehensive and practical vision, integrating diverse methodologies and a critical reflection on the role of the teacher in teaching sociology.

The fourth unit, entitled "How to Assess in Sociology Teaching?," addresses the assessment process. The section presents proposals for assessing sociological alphabetization and sociological literacy and deconstructs the notion of assessment as a result, arguing that it is a process. In this way, the author proposes the diversification of assessment strategies throughout the academic year, the utilisation of resources with which students are already familiar, and the conceptualisation of

the various types of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment. This approach once again emphasises the interdisciplinary nature of Pedagogy and Sociology. Moreover, it is stated that an assessment should "encourage students to reflect critically on their own position in society and to understand the connections between biography and history" (Bodart, 2024, p. 220).

In conclusion, the final considerations revisit the discussions presented throughout the book, underscoring that the objective is not to impart a set of techniques that will render the reader a superior teacher upon completion of the book, but rather to facilitate a process of shared reflection that will enhance their pedagogical practice. The text emphasizes that teaching practice is a challenging process, yet it is also a continuous discovery, offering the potential for innovation and the construction of knowledge collectively with students. In regard to the role of the sociology teacher, it can be summarized as that of a mediator of knowledge, one who stimulates critical thinking and sociological literacy. Also essential is the ability to work with pluralistic approaches and to recognize the various theories that comprise the social sciences. Additionally, it is of the utmost importance to integrate teaching practice with discussions on teaching sociology, as this facilitates the continuous education of teachers.

As the author notes, "teacher training, particularly for a foundational subject like sociology, necessitates a discerning approach to the nuances of the school environment, the realities of the students, and the intricate social phenomena addressed in the classroom" (Bodart, 2024, p. 245). In this context, the book meets its intended objectives, offering an authentic and accessible reflection on the role of sociology and its context in the school curriculum, as well as its pedagogical objective. To this end, the integration of sociological and pedagogical knowledge throughout the book serves to underscore the necessity for a closer alignment between these two domains, with a view to enhancing the quality of sociology teaching. Nevertheless, the text allowed for the introduction of specific sociological inquiries, such as the proposal to mobilize theories from seminal figures in the field, including Karl Marx and Max Weber, as well as contemporary scholars like Anthony Giddens, Pierre Bourdieu, Bernard Lahire, and Pierre Bourdieu who have been referenced as theoretical references on occasion.

I posit that this book is essential reading for educators at the post-secondary level who teach subjects related to a degree in Social Sciences. I also recommend it for researchers in the field of Sociology teaching, as well as undergraduate and postgraduate students. The book offers insights that can inform more nuanced analyses of the relationship between Sociology and Pedagogy. It is evident from the author's personal reflections and expressed insecurities that there are several fundamental yet often overlooked aspects of the field of sociology teaching, particularly in the context of school sociology studies, that warrant further investigation and discussion.

In light of the aforementioned, the book constitutes an invaluable contribution to the teaching of sociology in basic education, offering theoretical reflections and practical tools to assist teachers in navigating the daily challenges of teaching. The author employs a clear and didactic approach to underscore the significance of the subject in fostering critical and citizens' education among students, while also furnishing concrete pedagogical strategies that can be effectively implemented in the classroom. By establishing a connection between sociology and pedagogy, the book expands our comprehension of the function of school sociology and presents strategies for enhancing its presence in the curriculum.

In addition, as well as offering support for teaching practice, the book contributes to consolidating the teaching of Sociology as an expanding field of research, fundamental to understanding the challenges and possibilities of this discipline in the Brazilian educational context. It is possible to observe, from reflections and insecurities that the author believed to be individual, that there are several 'unspoken obviousnesses' that can make up the research agenda of the field of Sociology teaching, especially focused on School Sociology studies.

For these reasons, it is strongly recommended reading for teachers currently engaged in this field, as well as for those preparing to enter it, as it provides a robust and reflective foundation for professional practice, while contributing to the advancement and consolidation of sociology in basic education.

References

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