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SCHOOL CONTEXT AND ITS RELATIONS TO HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' DISCOURSE ABOUT PHYSICS CLASS

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This research aimed to investigate high school students' discourse about Physics class and its relations to the school context. To achieve our purpose, we invited students from a public state high school of the countryside of São Paulo state, Brazil, to participate of debate groups on the theme "Physics class". We organized three meetings with different groups, one with freshmen students and two with seniors. The meetings took place in a special room in the facilities of a public university of the same town. We recorded the meetings in audio and then transcribed them for the process of analysis for which we used the referential of French Discourse Analysis initiated by Michel Pêcheux. We interpreted that the meanings about physics classes in the students' discourses are greatly influenced by some factors of the school context: (a) low quantity of weekly Physics classes provided to the students, which are only two per week, and this number is even lower when school events or holidays happen on the days on which the classes were supposed to happen; (b) heavy workload for teachers; (c) insufficiency of number of teachers; (d) lack of teachers graduated in Physics; (e) many open classes or classes with substitutes whom do not have sufficient knowledge and practice to provide a Physics classes with quality; (f) the obligation on teachers to comply with requirements from superiors, such as the obligation to use certain text-books in class, to apply specific types of tests and to cover an amount of subjects with students in a short period of time; (g) among other reasons, problems in the educational and cultural Brazilian system do not afford good work conditions and salaries to the teachers, whom end up been unhappy about their jobs or even changing to other occupations. As a matter of fact, many students go through the entire high school process with meanings of Physics class that are negatively affected by these conditions. As we noted in the literature and in our research, the majority of students graduates from high school believing that Physics class is the same thing as Math class, that Physics class only requires memorization of formulas and equations and do not afford meaningful discussions in class. We also consider that teachers cannot take all the blame as they are as victims of the educational system as much as the students are. Thus, in an optimistic way, not only we expect that this paper can contribute to reflections about the quality of physics classes that are being offered to young people, but also, that our discussions may draw attention from researchers and politicians to think about the quality of the educational system of their countries.

Apply to be considered for a student award (Yes / No)?

Yes

Level for award (Hons, MSc, PhD, N/A)?

Hons

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