



## Article review

# Teaching authority in educational institutions

## Autoridad docente en instituciones educativas

## Autoridade docente em instituições de ensino

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### ABSTRACT

For some years now, authority has encountered resistance in the educational context, teaching work is questioned and respect is no longer granted spontaneously. This situation has a negative impact on coexistence and school learning. This study aimed to carry out a review of academic articles that address the topic of teaching authority, its conceptualization, characteristics and factors that favor or hinder its construction. The PRISMA method was used to search and select works suitable for the stated objective. The databases used were Scopus, Scielo and Google Scholar. After the selection, 24 works remained to be reviewed. The results of the research were that both students and teachers recognize that the type of authority that

predominates in the educational context is vertical and horizontal. Furthermore, teachers are recognized as authorities by their students mainly due to two factors: their conceptual and methodological knowledge and the closeness, interest and respect they demonstrate in the classroom. This study concluded that, although authority is still necessary in the educational field, teachers are aware that the openness to greater student participation and the abandonment of vertical models favor the recognition of their authority.

**Keywords:** teaching authority; pedagogical authority; school life; systematic review.

### RESUMEN

Desde hace algunos años, la autoridad ha encontrado resistencia en el contexto educativo; se cuestiona la labor docente y el respeto ya no es concedido espontáneamente. Esta situación repercute negativamente en la convivencia y el aprendizaje escolar. Este artículo tuvo como objetivo analizar la autoridad docente, su conceptualización, características y factores que favorecen o dificultan su construcción. Se utilizó el método PRISMA para la búsqueda y selección de trabajos idóneos para el objetivo planteado. Las bases de datos que se emplearon fueron Scopus, Scielo y Google Académico. Después de la selección quedaron para ser revisados 24 trabajos. Los resultados de la investigación arrojaron que, tanto estudiantes como docentes reconocen que el tipo de autoridad que predomina en el contexto educativo es la vertical y la horizontal. Además, los maestros son reconocidos como autoridad por sus estudiantes, principalmente por dos factores: su saber conceptual y metodológico y por la cercanía, interés y respeto que demuestran en aula. Este estudio concluyó que, si bien la autoridad no deja de ser necesaria en el ámbito educativo, los docentes son conscientes de que la apertura a una mayor participación del estudiantado y el abandono de modelos

verticales favorecen el reconocimiento de su autoridad.

**Palabras clave:** autoridad docente; autoridad pedagógica; convivencia escolar; revisión sistemática.

### RESUMO

Há alguns anos, a autoridade encontra resistência no contexto educacional, o trabalho docente é questionado e o respeito não é mais concedido espontaneamente. Esta situação tem um impacto negativo na convivência e na aprendizagem escolar. Este estudo teve como objetivo realizar uma revisão de artigos acadêmicos que abordam o tema autoridade docente, sua conceituação, características e fatores que favorecem ou dificultam sua construção. O método PRISMA foi utilizado para pesquisar e selecionar trabalhos adequados ao objetivo declarado. As bases de dados utilizadas foram Scopus, Scielo e Google Acadêmico. Após a seleção, restaram 24 trabalhos para serem avaliados. Os resultados da pesquisa foram que tanto alunos quanto professores reconhecem que o tipo de autoridade que predomina no contexto educacional é vertical e horizontal. Além disso, os professores são reconhecidos como autoridades pelos seus alunos principalmente devido a dois fatores: o seu conhecimento conceitual e metodológico e a proximidade, interesse e respeito que demonstram em sala de aula. Este estudo concluiu que, embora a autoridade ainda seja necessária no campo educacional, os professores têm consciência de que a abertura para uma maior participação dos alunos e o abandono dos modelos verticais favorecem o reconhecimento da sua autoridade.

**Palavras-chave:** Autoridade docente; autoridade pedagógica; convivência escolar; revisão sistemática.

## INTRODUCTION

During the 20th century, one of the essential components of traditional education, teaching authority, entered into crisis. For many scholars, the May 1968 revolt constitutes the decisive blow to the power exercised in the classrooms and from the state (Gómez, 2020; Laurent, 2009). France, in '68, was governed by General De Gaulle, who embodied a traditional system based on authority. Meanwhile, at the economic level, the French were opening up to a consumption model and the popular classes had access to certain technological advances. In the field of social relations, the vertical, conservative model was imposed, founded on institutions such as the school, the church, the state and the company. The school, exercising its authority, was responsible for transmitting the values of a society focused on inequalities between men and women. This disagreement caused the French May. There is a commitment to the liberation of the individual, the barriers to freedom decline, the relationships between students and teachers change (Laurent, 2009).

Throughout the 20th century, as Arendt (2018) asserts, an increasingly deep crisis of authority is evident. This problem is not only located in the political dimension, but in previous or previous realities; Authority is also questioned or relativized in family and local contexts. The seriousness of this paternal authority not being so firm is due to the fact that it is the model and foundation of political authority, of government systems, for example. He analyzes this problem from political theory and warns that what has entered into crisis is a certain type of authority.

On the other hand, he points out that the crisis in education is closely linked to distrust of tradition and the past. Education must be conservative to the extent that it introduces the student to the public world; The teacher is the mediator between the new and the old. That is why, in a society that questions tradition and ignores the past, the exercise and authority of teaching

also enters into crisis. The problem lies, in Arendt's terms, in that education cannot renounce authority and tradition even though the world has stopped believing in these references.

Professors Tedesco and Tenti (2006) warn that, in recent years, significant changes have occurred that force us to rethink the role and work of teaching. The vertical and hierarchical model in teacher-student relationships has given way to a more horizontal system. Boys and girls no longer only have obligations to have their rights and capacities recognized. The school sees the need to incorporate the recognition of the rights of adolescents in the dynamics of the classrooms and in the regulatory documents. This aspect, together with the massification of teaching and the loss of the adult's monopoly on knowledge, has ended up eroding pedagogical authority. It is no longer safe for young people to listen to and obey their teachers; However, they point out that authority is essential for pedagogical effectiveness, for the achievement of objectives. The teacher has to make additional efforts to be recognized as an authority.

Based on a phenomenological analysis, Kojève (2006) specifies what we understand by authority. He proposes a definition of authority in the following terms: authority exists where there is change, where there is movement; The one who exercises authority is the one who generates change and acts with freedom and full awareness. On the other hand, those who submit to authority, although they have the capacity to react against authority, do not do so and recognize it as such. That is why authority excludes all violence. "Authority is the possibility that an agent has to act on others (or on another), without those others reacting against him, being fully capable of doing so" (p. 36). He adds that all authority has a legitimate and legal character. And for it to be recognized there must be a reason, a justification.

According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1996), all educational action implies a

double arbitrariness. On the one hand, the pedagogical relationship reproduces the power relations of society, the interests of the dominant classes are imposed in every pedagogical act. Furthermore, it is also a cultural arbitrariness to the extent that a group imposes certain content for teaching. In this analysis, the pedagogical authority facilitates that the objective truth of this arbitrariness is not evident and that it is recognized as legitimate culture. On the other hand, this authority is the mediator of the classes that impose the previously selected knowledge.

Sennett (1982) is clear and categorical in pointing out that authority is necessary to the extent that it provides children with the support and security they require for their development. On the other hand, adults exercise authority as a way of serving others. In addition, it establishes the components of authority: security in the way one conducts oneself, superior knowledge, the ability to establish discipline, and the ability to inspire respect and reverence.

The teacher, in an environment in which authority is questioned, must face the challenge of rethinking the meaning of his authority and reflecting on the use of power that the teaching profession implies. This study is justified because teacher respect and recognition of their authority are essential conditions for healthy coexistence in the classrooms and are a guarantee of successful learning. Therefore, it is relevant to know this reality in depth and reflect on its dimensions and scope. The objective of this review article is to analyze the conceptualization of teaching authority, the teaching characteristics that are valued by students and the conditions that favor or hinder its construction. The questions we ask are: how is teaching authority experienced? What are the characteristics of the teacher whose authority has been recognized? What factors favor or hinder the exercise of teaching authority?

## DEVELOPMENT

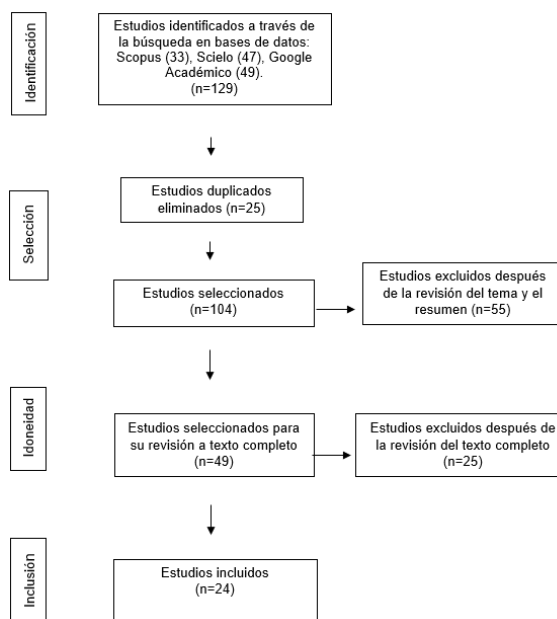
For the systematic review, the PRISMA method was used, which allows following a filtering sequence that guarantees an adequate selection of works. The PRISMA statement (2009) is the update of the QUOROM model and is a methodology for systematic reviews. Among the improvements is the effort to avoid the risk of bias; To this end, knowledge and advance publication of the protocol is recommended, although this does not prevent modification if necessary. The search was carried out in databases such as Scopus, Scielo and Google Scholar. The key words used were: teaching authority, pedagogical authority, teaching authority, authority AND school, "teaching authority" in the title in the case of Google Scholar. The search range was set between 2017 and 2023.

From the search in the aforementioned databases, 129 works were found. The previously established exclusion criteria were applied. First, documents that were duplicates were excluded. 25 duplicate works were found and 55 were excluded based on the evaluation of the topic. The review of the entire document was applied to the remaining 49 articles and, finally, 25 were rejected for various reasons: they were not academic articles, several were theses, they deviated from the topic indicated in the title, they were not properly contextualized or they were not available.

The reading and analysis of the 24 articles continued. The concepts developed in each work were identified and grouped into thematic lines.

**Table 1-** Inclusion and exclusion criteria for document review.

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Published in the period 2017-2023	Published outside the range 2017-2023
It is an academic article	It is not an academic article
It is not duplicated	It's duplicated
Applied in educational contexts	It is not applied in educational contexts



**Fig. 1-** Document selection diagram

Based on the review and analysis of the results of the 24 selected articles, the contributions were grouped into four thematic axes: crisis of teaching authority, the experience lived around teaching authority, conceptualization and profile of the teacher recognized as authority and factors that contribute or hinder teaching authority.

### Crisis of teaching authority

Several authors have agreed that the lack of teacher recognition experienced is not explained solely by considering the pedagogical field; Its causes lie beyond the classrooms. On the other hand, regarding the notion of teaching authority, this is not guaranteed by a position, it is an authority that must be recognized, granted by others based on the type of relationship established between the teacher and the student (Acuña *et al.*, 2022). According to Patierno (2020), there is a rejection by students of authority exercised from a superiority or hierarchical relationship.

From theoretical reflection, it is stated that distance originates this reluctance to recognize adult authority. One social factor

that has contributed to the decline of authority is the inevitable generation gap in the teacher-student relationship. The adolescent is oriented towards orality while the institution privileges writing (Martuccelli, 2009). This is aggravated when the adult culture ignores the child and only sees in him a potential adult (Dubet and Martuccelli, 1998).

Along these lines, in the study carried out by Vicent and González (2018), teachers have agreed that the lack of respect for authority is a global crisis that affects other areas of social life such as the family. Likewise, when they have been consulted about the consequences of this crisis, the answers indicate that these have fallen on the teachers and students. Teachers have recognized that the loss of control in the classroom demotivates them, causes them sadness and frustrates them. Furthermore, the climate of indiscipline in the classroom discourages students from learning. Teachers point out that the causes of this crisis are found in society and in the family. Parents no longer educate in values and are not committed to the education of their children. The hedonistic society and the social discredit associated with teachers are also mentioned as causes of this reality.

Agreeing with Vicent and González (2018), Arendt (2018) warns that the crisis of political authority is the reflection of the crisis in the family environment; When the figure of the father enters into crisis, the pedagogical aspect is also questioned. However, he deepens the topic and assures that what has entered into crisis is the tradition and the institutions that are sustained by it, such as the school.

The root of this crisis is also related to political and scientific discourse. Capitalist and scientific-epistemological discourse have had their impact on the crisis of teacher authority. The capitalist perspective assumes that education is a business and that the student is the customer who must be satisfied. In the current discourse on human rights, every hierarchical relationship comes under

suspicion and the adult is no longer a reference for children or adolescents. To the extent that he is considered a client, the student is recognized with a certain authority. From the epistemic point of view, it is considered necessary to standardize and automate the contents of education and this priority is crystallized through international treaties that are assumed by states. In that sense, the teacher is only limited to fulfilling an already established role, largely mechanical (Dasuky and González, 2022).

Another consequence of the crisis of teacher prestige is indifference, the abandonment of their regulatory role. Adults escape their responsibility and leave adolescents at the mercy of their group. This aggravates school coexistence and the minimum learning conditions. Adolescents prefer to resolve their conflicts within their clan or group. The absence of the teacher and his authority is one of the factors that trigger violence in educational environments. However, this inattention or indifference has its social and political correlate (Patierno, 2020). In this same line of thought, Arendt (2018) warns that it is a mistake for the teacher not to exercise his role and let his students establish their own rules and at the mercy of the power of the group leader.

### **Exercise of teaching authority**

It is interesting to differentiate the perspective of students from teachers when analyzing the type of relationship that is established in educational contexts. In a study carried out in Ecuador, it is observed that almost half of the students surveyed are partially satisfied with the teacher's preparation; This involves conceptual knowledge and pedagogical knowledge. More than 40% of students consider that there is no clear and fluid communication with the teacher. This relates to a traditional type of teaching that maintains that communication is one-way. A considerable percentage of students maintain that teachers partially enjoy respect. Although they consider that the teacher should exercise authority, the



abusive use of that power leads to tensions. They show some cases of authoritarianism in the classrooms (Fernández and Brito, 2018).

From the perspective of beginning teachers, it is recognized that, among teachers, the vertical and horizontal relationship prevails. Not so the type that grants autonomy to the student. In the first, the teacher bases his authority on his "knowledge" and his management of content. In the second type, the teacher, while still being an authority, is considered one more among his disciples (Cox-Vial, 2022). What has been said contrasts with the results of the research carried out by Parra *et al.* (2022) in which, when the teachers were consulted, they assert that the model of authority chosen by the teachers moves away from all authoritarianism and approaches a closer relationship and the exercise of leadership that considers the differences between students. On the other hand, in a situation in which the teacher has to intervene and exercise his authority, the emotional aspect is appealed to, rather than the normative aspect. In parallel, the traditional types of teaching oriented towards the academic, disciplinary and practical are maintained (Néspolo, 2019).

The teaching experience described around a type of vertical authority is in line with the conception of pedagogical authority shared by Bourdieu and Passeron (1996), who consider all educational action as imposition and cultural arbitrariness and the teacher is the operator of that violence. symbolic. The teachers understood that it is no longer possible to sustain authority only on knowledge, that they no longer have a monopoly on knowledge, that children and adolescents have other, even more complex sources of knowledge (Dubet, 2006).

Meza *et al.* (2017), after observing and analyzing the interaction between students and teachers, concluded that there are three types of authority. Explicit authority, in which the teacher, through his requests, constantly directs and controls the actions

of the students and his intervention focuses on the academic aspect. It is a type of authority present in the lower social group. Shared authority is one in which the intervention of the teacher does not predominate, but rather the student body participates. The teacher, although he continues to direct the class, gives decision-making opportunities to the students. This form of authority is present in the High and Middle sectors. The third style is moral authority. In this case, the core of the teacher's intervention is not academics. In this type of authority, present in the lower social group, the teacher guides his students for life.

A valuable testimony regarding the teaching role as a promoter of personal development, as an authority oriented towards the fulfillment of the person, is *Pennac's novel*, which Steimbregger (2017) comments on. The novel tells how bad things were for him and how the author was classified; he was not recognized as a successful student. However, he became a writer and university professor. And how did you achieve this emancipatory process? He assures that there were four teachers who saw potential in him. The first, he says, recognizing his gifts, asked him to write a novel as the only task to pass his subject. For the first time, he felt considered and taken into account at school. The French teacher achieved double recognition: that he believes in his teacher and, above all, that he believes in him (Steimbregger, 2017). It is a testimony of the exercise of authority at the service of autonomy.

Although it is often not achieved, the school must form autonomous citizens. Dubet and Martuccelli (1998), returning to Durkheim, assure that education, in its socializing function, aims for the subject to develop an autonomous and critical consciousness. As the years go by, the adult is no longer necessary. On the other hand, Dubet (2006) affirms that the teacher's authority and discipline must be oriented towards the progressive autonomy of the person.

## Characteristics of the teaching authority

Mejía (2019) specifies the concept of authority based on its limits. Although the relationship between teacher and student is asymmetrical, authority and coercion should not be confused. Teaching should not be violent or threatening. Authority and power are different terms; the first does not imply the exercise of the second. With the presence of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), pedagogical authority remains in force not as an imposition but as guidance, authority is not imposed, it is demonstrated, it is earned (Plaza de la Hoz, 2018).

Below are the traits of teachers whose authority is recognized by their students. On this topic, the coincidences are numerous. The first group of characteristics that has been mentioned and that is recognized as essential is teaching knowledge. Students recognize authority to the extent that the teacher handles their subject and is able to share their knowledge with their students, based on knowledge of their different learning rhythms (Díaz Sacco, 2016; Merma and Gavilán, 2019; Meza *et al.*, 2020; Parra *et al.*, 2022; Zamora and Alfaro, 2020). Another important aspect is related to the teacher's attitudes. That is, respect, closeness and trust (Díaz Sacco, 2016): he is interested in the student, seeks close and harmonious communication, knows how to establish communication and accepts everyone (Merma and Gavilán, 2019); the trust that the teacher generates in his relationship with the student (Zamora and Alfaro, 2020).

Other factors that are present in teachers who enjoy social recognition are also mentioned. Meza *et al.* (2020) mention the clarification of behavioral guidelines and consistency in following them as a third factor. Merma and Gavilán (2017) add the following features: the classes are entertaining; they instill respect and are impartial in their treatment. For all these characteristics, teachers are obeyed. Pennac, in the novel that Steimbregger

(2017), defines the traits of those four teachers who managed to value him and give him the opportunity he needed: they loved what they did, they knew very well what they taught, they were interested in all the students, they had consideration for them and I respect. However, Pennac adds, this authority is temporary, it is intended to disappear, for the subject to achieve independence.

When student teachers are asked about the characteristics, they assign to teachers who would be recognized as authority, they agree in pointing out six adjectives. Some related to teaching: "knows what he teaches", "clear" and "precise"; On the other hand, they relate it to good treatment: "respectful", "good example" and "fair" (Zamora-Poblete *et al.*, 2020).

## Construction of teaching authority

Zamora *et al.* (2020) interviewed beginning teachers and investigated the impact of the socioeconomic factor on teacher recognition. The study concluded that the majority of teachers who work in a low social group point out that the economic profile of their students makes recognition difficult. On the other hand, half of teachers who work in a high economic context indicate that the social level of the students favors the recognition of authority. Furthermore, the greater the experience, the greater the satisfaction with recognition. Secondly, regarding the school and personal factors that intervene in the recognition of teaching authority, teachers assure that personal factors such as knowledge of the subject and teaching clearly are the most important for recognition. of authority. Regarding the school environment, beginning teachers point out that support among colleagues and the support of managers are factors that contribute to strengthening pedagogical authority (Zamora *et al.*, 2020).

Otherwise, the way in which teachers conceive their work is decisive in establishing a more horizontal type of relationship, which favors the acceptance

of the group of students. The teachers consulted in Fernández's (2019) research consider themselves as adult learners; To that extent, the way they have learned when preparing their classes allows them to share those experiences with their students. By considering that they are also learners like their students, it allows for a closer and less vertical relationship. On the other hand, teachers refer to learning environments or spaces and these are understood as the processes that facilitate students' learning. The design of the activities encourages them to appropriate the meanings, question the surrounding reality and reflect on what they learn. In this way, teachers are close to their students.

On the other hand, the strategies that are most used to establish a relationship of authority are emotional, behavioral regulation and didactic strategies. As for the former, the teacher cares about the students beyond the classroom and seeks to develop intrinsic motivation in them. The second group of strategies that the teacher resorts to refers to the control he exercises, seeking consensus or student participation (horizontal model) or deciding the behavioral guidelines himself (vertical model). The methodological strategies used to establish teaching authority are limited to a horizontal relationship and their purpose is for the student to access knowledge (Cox-Vial, 2022).

Furthermore, in the work carried out by Zamora and Alfaro (2020), teachers mention a series of strategies or measures that they use to build authority: demonstrating that they manage what they teach, applying various strategies, establishing a close relationship while still setting limits. , build trust. The institutional culture can provide a clear distinction between teacher and student and favor the teacher's performance.

For some years now, teachers have understood that it is not enough to hold a position or have a diploma to be heard and recognized by students. As Dubet (2006) states, a constant effort of justification and

demonstration is required. On the other hand, children and adolescents need to be listened to and recognized. Martuccelli (2009) considers that the teacher must appeal to his personal characteristics, to his own charisma to build his authority. It also asserts that collegiate work and institutional support is important to achieve such recognition.

## CONCLUSIONS

The situation of the teacher in the classroom, his authority often not recognized by his students, the lack of control and respect for basic rules, has a significant impact on the school environment and learning. This problem has motivated, in recent years, significant studies that have been reviewed. Indeed, they all recognize the problem. While some focus their attention on the teacher and the students, that is, on personal factors, others consider institutional, political, social and cultural factors such as: capitalist society, the lack of value orientation within the family, the rights policy. of adolescents and children, universal access to an infinite amount of information, the lack of institutional support.

Regarding the practice of authority, teachers recognize that the vertical style continues to be present alongside the horizontal. However, the majority considers that authority is not the same as power or imposition, that the teacher is not authorized to exercise any coercion or violence against the student body. There is an effort to approach the student more horizontally than vertically, without this meaning abstaining from their role of guiding, controlling and directing school activities. On the other hand, teachers are recognized by their students as authorities, basically due to two factors: one related to their preparation, that is, the teacher knows the subject he teaches and knows how to teach; and another more emotional factor, which refers to the closeness,



understanding, respect and interest that the teacher shows in the classroom.

In addition to these factors attributable to the teacher, there are others that may be important when evaluating the relationship established between teacher and student. The studies analyzed indicate that the political aspect, the institutional culture, the values that the family instills or fails to instill in its children, a rights policy focused on the individual, the massification of information, largely influence and explain this problem.

The study, identification and deepening of these causes can help to overcome this reality, without this being to the detriment of the well-being, autonomy and right to education of children and adolescents. It is urgent to reflect on this situation, before violence or a conflictive coexistence ends up imposing itself in school environments. More studies, proposals and projects are needed aimed at intervening in these spaces in a way that improves opportunities for everyone.

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The author participated in the design and writing of the article, in the search and analysis of the information contained in the consulted bibliography.

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