

THE GEOGRAPHY OF RIO GRANDE DO NORTE IN HIGH SCHOOL: THE PERSPECTIVES OF TEACHERS FROM MOSSORÓ/RN

A geografia do Rio Grande do Norte no ensino médio: perspectivas de professores de Mossoró/RN

La geografía de Rio Grande do Norte en la educación secundaria: perspectivas de profesores de Mossoró/RN



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ABSTRACT

This study aims to understand how high school Geography teachers in the city of Mossoró/RN perceive and address the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in their teaching practices. The research follows a qualitative approach, based on bibliographic review and the application of questionnaires to teachers from public and private schools. It analyzes aspects such as teacher education, the use of official curriculum documents, and the impacts of the New High School reform. The results indicate that, despite recognizing the importance of working with regional content, teachers face difficulties related to initial training that is not sufficiently contextualized, lack of time in the classroom, and the absence of specific teaching materials. In addition, many are unfamiliar with legislation and documents such as Law No. 8.584/2004 and the Curricular Framework of Potiguar Upper Secondary Education, which could support their practices. Therefore, it is concluded that it is necessary to rethink the curricula of teacher education programs and to encourage continuous professional development so that a critical and citizenship-oriented education can take place.

Keywords: Geography Teaching; Teachers; Place; Geography of Rio Grande do Norte; High School.

Article History

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RESUMO

O presente trabalho tem como objetivo compreender de que forma os professores de Geografia do Ensino Médio da cidade de Mossoró/RN percebem e trabalham a Geografia do Rio Grande do Norte em suas práticas pedagógicas. A pesquisa adota uma abordagem qualitativa, com revisão bibliográfica e aplicação de questionários a professores da rede pública e privada. Foram analisados aspectos como formação docente, uso de documentos normativos e os impactos do Novo Ensino Médio. Os resultados apontam que, apesar do reconhecimento da importância de trabalhar conteúdos regionais, os professores enfrentam dificuldades relacionadas à formação inicial pouco contextualizada, à escassez de tempo em sala e à ausência de materiais didáticos específicos. Além disso, muitos desconhecem legislações e documentos, como a Lei nº 8.584/2004 e o Referencial Curricular do Ensino Médio Potiguar, que poderiam subsidiar suas práticas. Diante disso, conclui-se que é necessário repensar as grades curriculares das licenciaturas e incentivar a formação continuada dos professores para que aconteça uma formação crítica e cidadã.

Palavras-chave: Ensino de Geografia; Professores; Lugar; Geografia do Rio Grande do Norte; Ensino Médio.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo tiene como objetivo comprender de qué manera los profesores de Geografía de la Educación Secundaria de la ciudad de Mossoró/RN perciben y abordan la Geografía de Rio Grande do Norte en sus prácticas pedagógicas. La investigación adopta un enfoque cualitativo, con revisión bibliográfica y aplicación de cuestionarios a docentes de escuelas públicas y privadas. Se analizaron aspectos como la formación docente, el uso de documentos normativos y los impactos del Nuevo Educación Secundaria. Los resultados indican que, a pesar de reconocer la importancia de trabajar contenidos regionales, los docentes enfrentan dificultades relacionadas con una formación inicial poco contextualizada, la escasez de tiempo en el aula y la ausencia de materiales didáticos específicos. Además, muchos desconocen legislaciones y documentos, como la Ley nº 8.584/2004 y el Referencial Curricular de la Educación Media Potiguar, que podrían respaldar sus prácticas. Por lo tanto, se concluye que es necesario repensar las mallas curriculares de las licenciaturas y fomentar la formación continua de los docentes para que se lleve a cabo una formación crítica y ciudadana.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza de la Geografía; Profesores; Lugar; Geografía de Rio Grande do Norte; Educación Secundaria.

1 INTRODUCTION

Even with all that can be learned about the world, it is in *place* that the life of each citizen unfolds. In this context, everyday life must be understood and analyzed by those who live in society, since it is in this place that life develops. It is also in this place that each individual finds something to which they can anchor themselves, live their life, and choose their struggles.

In this sense, enabling each person to understand what happens in their local life is key to allowing them to connect global events with their everyday experiences.



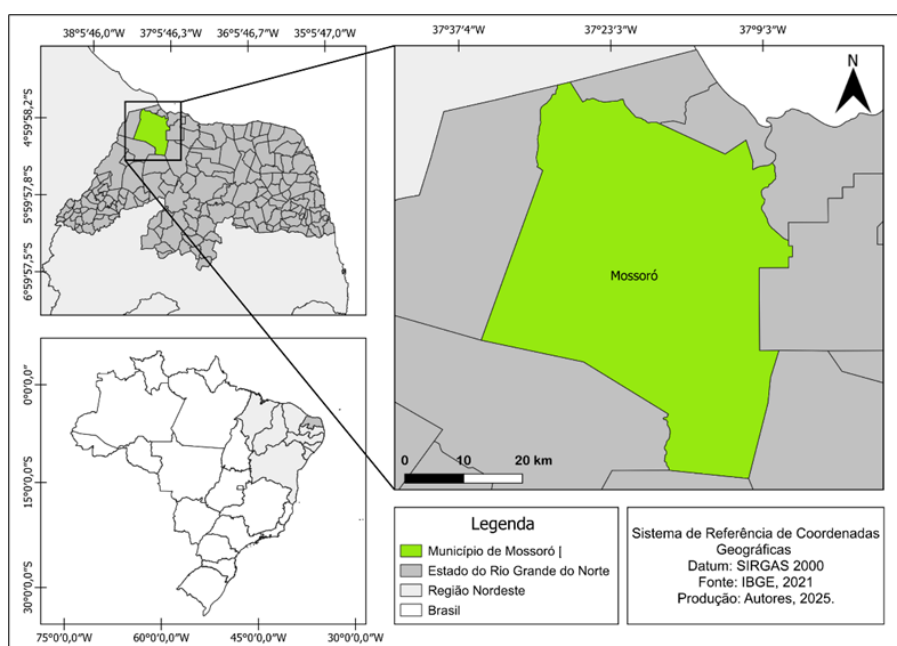
Moreover, this process contributes to the construction of individual identities and to the development of a sense of belonging.

The general objective of this article is to understand how high school teachers in the city of Mossoró, in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, perceive and work with the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in their pedagogical practices. To achieve this goal, the study first sought to situate the geography of Rio Grande do Norte within the context of the state educational curriculum, identifying the space and importance this theme occupies in current curricular proposals.

In addition, the study aims to investigate the main difficulties faced by high school Geography teachers in Mossoró, considering aspects such as teacher education, available teaching resources, and working conditions.

Finally, the analysis examined how the New High School (Novo Ensino Médio) has impacted the daily school life of these professionals, especially with regard to the teaching of regional geography. Thus, this research analyzed how Geography teachers in public high schools in the municipality of Mossoró (Figure 01) address the local scale in their classes. This scale is understood not as a cartographic scale, but rather as the geographical scale of events, which, in the words of Iná Elias de Castro, is “[...] the choice of a way to divide space, defining a perceived/conceived reality” (Castro, 1995, p. 136).

Figure 01 – Location map of the city of Mossoró.



Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

Once it is understood that scale can constitute a spatial cut of geographic space, the local scale analyzed in this study is the federative unit of Rio Grande do Norte. The choice of this spatial cut is due to the ease of contextualizing geographic content with relief, economy, hydrography, population, and several other aspects that can be addressed in high school Geography classes.

Working with the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte means working with an important part of students' place. Even if they do not initially understand this, the presentation of the content and the identification of each student's city within this federative unit will enable them to more easily assimilate the different scales of analysis that exist within geographic science. Unfortunately, due to the large volume of content and the reduction in instructional time, Geography teachers may encounter obstacles when contextualizing disciplinary content with the geography of Rio Grande do Norte.

That said, it is evident that *place* should be part of Geography classes. Most theorists of Geography Teaching and Education agree that it should serve as the starting point for classroom reflections. However, Geography often becomes the subject tasked with explaining everything that happens around the world. In attempting to do so, the Geography teacher may end up losing the guiding thread that leads students to reflect on their own reality: the real life of that student.

It is when students perceive themselves as thinking individuals, capable of acting within society, that their geographical formation can be conceived. Students need to complete high school knowing what happens around the world, but they also need to understand how this global scale interferes with their local scale, in their everyday lives. Unfortunately, it must be acknowledged that teachers are not the sole decision-makers regarding what is taught in the classroom.

Particularly in the current context of Brazilian education, Geography teachers face several challenges that hinder the mission of forming citizens who are conscious of their choices within society. In this regard, Farias (2020, p. 138) adds that:

In this context, with the pragmatic proposal of the New High School, which aims to train productive citizens among young people from the working class and, to that end, removes geographical reflections from the list of mandatory curricular subjects and signals the possibility of diluting them into other subjects or into the humanities and applied social sciences pathway, there is a risk of distorting the humanistic education of these young people.



From this perspective, the present study seeks to understand the difficulties Geography teachers face in their daily school routines and how these professionals have worked with content related to the geography of Rio Grande do Norte in high school classes. Thus, the following question is posed: is it possible to address and contextualize themes related to the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte given the large volume of content assigned to this subject within an increasingly reduced instructional time?

This question becomes particularly relevant given the importance of the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte for the education of students as *potiguar* citizens capable of understanding the state in which they live. In summary, it is necessary to assess all the difficulties faced by high school teachers in preparing and delivering their classes in alignment with the geography present in the everyday lives of students who live in the state of Rio Grande do Norte.

2 PLACE AND CURRICULUM IN GEOGRAPHY EDUCATION

For a long time, Geography education was more concerned with what came from outside Brazil than with a Geography constructed by Brazilian citizens themselves. According to Rocha (1996), Brazilian elites, who had a greater interest in organizing secondary education, promptly chose to implement an educational and curricular model imported from abroad. The same author further adds that Brazilian school geography mirrored what was being studied in French schools.

Although Brazilian Geography has undergone several transformations over time, the problem of replicating what is produced abroad has not been entirely left in the past. Callai (2001) draws attention to this issue by pointing out that distant landscapes are often described in greater detail, while those closer to students' realities receive impersonal descriptions disconnected from lived experience.

In light of this, it becomes necessary to analyze the situation with caution, considering that several factors may contribute to this reality in Brazilian classrooms. First, it is necessary to define a foundational concept for this discussion: curriculum. However, defining curriculum through a single concept is not a simple task, given that the emergence of the term curriculum is related to the encounter of different social and ideological movements throughout history (Hamilton, 1992).

In his research, the aforementioned author explains the historical context of this concept and the various ways it has been understood over time, with meanings ranging from



students' academic trajectories to the organization of school content. Saviani synthesizes this entire evolution of the term in relation to pedagogy by stating that:

The notion of curriculum, since the origin of the application of this term to school education, is linked to the ideas of: control of the pedagogical process; establishment of priorities according to the purposes of education, in accordance with the audience it serves and with the interests of the actors in dispute; ordering, sequencing, and dosing of teaching content (Saviani, 1994, p. 60).

Consequently, discussing which contents should or should not be part of students' education is equivalent to discussing curriculum. This is because teaching practice is constantly intersected by different forms of knowledge that influence the curriculum, requiring teachers to articulate contributions from coordinators, educational policies, and social demands when planning their classes (Tardif, 2012). Understanding this leads the discussion to another foundational concept of this research: geographic place.

Like the concept of curriculum, the concept of place has undergone transformations over time. For a long period, place was not considered a category of Geography, since geographers treated it primarily in a purely locational sense (Holzer, 2003). Over time, Modern Geography began to conceptualize place as the part of Geographic Space that is familiar to us (Tuan, 1977).

It is precisely at this point that this concept intersects with the theme of this research, as place for an individual may be their street, neighborhood, city, or even state. The aforementioned author was one of the major exponents of Phenomenology and is considered a reference in studies of the concept of place.

Regarding the philosophical foundations of phenomenology, Merleau-Ponty (2006) explains that phenomenology is dedicated to the study of essences, seeking to define fundamental elements such as the essence of perception and consciousness. At the same time, the author emphasizes that this philosophical approach places these essences back within the realm of existence, understanding that human beings and the world can only be comprehended through their own facticity.

Based on this, the present study seeks to engage with this philosophical foundation in order to discuss how the perceptions and lived experiences of *potiguar* students are ignored when their everyday lives are not incorporated into Geography classes. Given that the perception of the world, according to Merleau-Ponty (2006), is obtained through our body, the lived world becomes crucial for a comprehensive understanding of Geography.

Within this logic, Relph had already stated that “we know the world pre-consciously through and from the places in which we live and have lived” (1979, p. 16), demonstrating that place can serve as the key starting point for interpreting the world that surrounds students.

In addition to being the starting point, it is through place that individuals can come to know and understand the world, since “[...] places are the extension of human existence; it is people who give meaning to places” (Nogueira, 2013, p. 86). If there is currently a debate about a Geography that is closer to students, it is place that can facilitate this connection.

Still within the scope of Phenomenological Geography, Pereira et al. (2010) point out that, from a phenomenological perspective, space has come to occupy a central position in geographic research. In this approach, geographic categories are articulated in an interdependent manner, creating a favorable field for studying space through its relationship with place, landscape, region, and territory, while preserving the connections among phenomena that continuously manifest themselves in space.

In summary, geographic space gains even greater prominence in Phenomenological Geography, and not only space, but all other geographic categories are imbued with meanings and experiences. Regarding the relationship between space and place, Lana Cavalcanti states that “[...] the space that becomes familiar to the individual is the space of the lived, of experience” (Cavalcanti, 2013, p. 89). In view of this, place is understood as the part of Geographic Space that carries people’s feelings; it is where individuals live, share struggles, joys, and experiences.

One of the major goals of geographic education today is to contribute to students’ construction of their worldview. When asked how to read the world, Helena Copetti Callai responds that one must consider the concrete reality of lived space, that is, it is necessary to start from place (CALLAI, 2005). She further adds that it is “in the everyday experience itself that things happen and, thus, shape space, giving form to place” (Callai, 2005, p. 234).

Still regarding this reading of the world, Costa, Guedes, and Bueno (2024) draw attention to the fact that students carry forms of knowledge constructed outside the school environment, whether in their family contexts or other social settings. These forms of knowledge can enrich the process of constructing geographic knowledge, especially in developing the ability to interpret the reality around them and contribute to making this reading of the world possible.

Thus, helping students understand the place where they live and create their own worldviews becomes essential today, given that society has become increasingly globalized



and complex. Castrogiovanni (2002, p. 84) emphasizes that “[...] while the world is global, the things of life and social relations materialize in specific places,” underscoring the importance of addressing place in Geography classes.

Another highly significant author in the context of Rio Grande do Norte deserves mention: José Lacerda Alves Felipe. One of the pioneers in research and teaching Geography in Rio Grande do Norte, he states that “[...] place asserts itself as the dwelling of a particular society. [...] It is in place that we find the meaning of things” (Felipe, 2002, p. 228), and demonstrates that, in order to understand events occurring on a global scale, it is first necessary to understand the local scale and place. Unfortunately, once again, the gap between theory and practice must be taken into account.

This is because, although there is broad consensus among most scholars working in Geography Education that place and students’ everyday lives should be present in classrooms, teachers do not always have the time to carry out such contextualization. Regarding this difficulty, Sousa (2017) highlights that the lack of specific teaching materials to address content related to the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte and time constraints are the two challenges most frequently reported by teachers interviewed in her master’s research.

Concerning this lack of time, Silva et al. (2021, p. 214) add that the “reduction in instructional time across various curricular components, especially in the humanities, is one of the factors that has most directly affected teachers’ daily routines.” It is at this point that the discussion requires greater caution, given that teachers are being overloaded with new demands introduced by the BNCC and the New High School.

The New High School began with Law No. 13,415/2017, enacted during the government of Michel Temer, which amended the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (LDB – Law No. 9,394/1996). This amendment restructured the organization of secondary education and sought to increase curricular flexibility, as well as to include curricular pathways, increase the minimum instructional hours, among several other changes.

Due to the strong negative repercussions of the 2017 law, the federal government proposed a new reformulation through Law No. 14,817/2024, enacted on April 4, 2024. This new law once again amends the LDB and represents an attempt at curricular rebalancing, addressing some of the criticisms raised by educators—especially those related to teacher education—but unfortunately it ignored and maintained several other points that had also been questioned by students, researchers, and educational organizations.

In view of this, it is evident that the New High School has imposed several new challenges on teachers and students who are directly involved in the process of knowledge construction. Farias (2020) aptly summarizes this reform by characterizing it as one that deforms more than it transforms. In the author's words: "[...] the New High School project corresponds to a reform that deforms the education of poor Brazilian youth" (Farias, 2020, p. 148).

It is therefore evident that the secondary education reform has particularly harmed students who already lacked full access to schooling. According to Corrêa et al. (2022, p. 50), "These measures threaten to increase social inequalities and undermine the guarantee of many constitutional rights, in an undemocratic and unconstitutional manner." It is also worth noting that the new government that took office in 2022 has been attempting to implement new amendments and initiatives aimed at ensuring not only access to education, but also students' retention in school through the completion of upper secondary education.

Even so, the "New High School" remains a source of concern for researchers and teachers in Brazil, given that it is still being fully implemented in schools across the country. Evangelista and Silva (2025) draw attention to the impacts of these changes on Geography education, noting that the previous curriculum allowed teachers to promote a more reflective education, whereas the new proposal has reduced this possibility by prioritizing instrumental content—such as cartographic skills—at the expense of a more critical approach to the discipline.

The same authors also emphasize the role of teachers by highlighting the importance of seeking pedagogical alternatives that value connections with students' lived realities and promote their active participation in classes. This stance fosters the construction of more substantive meanings regarding the content studied and broadens understanding of the reasons underlying socio-spatial arrangements (Evangelista & Silva, 2025).

Castellar also emphasizes the importance of not focusing exclusively on instrumental content when stating that "To orient oneself, perceive distances, locate oneself, and understand phenomena, students must read the landscape and not merely draw maps" (Castellar, 2005, p. 212). She further notes that students should be encouraged to establish relationships among the places where they live, thereby developing geographic reasoning and cultivating a perspective capable of understanding lived space. The ability to act upon the place where one lives becomes essential for students to know their reality and assign

meaning to geographic discourse. All of this, according to the author, represents the realization of geographic education.

In another study conducted previously, the author of this paper states that, in order for *potiguar* students to understand the place where they live and know how to act upon it, it is necessary to contextualize textbook themes with aspects specific to Rio Grande do Norte (Silva Pinto; Fernandes, 2024). In addition, the same authors found that:

[...] the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte is the necessary bridge through which the place of *potiguar* students can be brought into the classroom. The teacher who builds this bridge enables students not to remain confined to only one side of Geography, but rather to explore the full range of possibilities that exists between the local and global scales of events (Silva Pinto; Fernandes, 2024, p. 16).

In light of the above, it is evident that the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte can serve as an ally for teachers in implementing lessons contextualized to the lived realities of *potiguar* students. However, the perspectives of those who are directly involved in this process must also be considered. To this end, the next section presents the methodology of this study and explains how teachers were included in this process.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a qualitative and explanatory methodological approach, initially grounded in bibliographic research. According to Gil (2019), bibliographic research primarily aims to provide an in-depth analysis of theoretical contributions already produced on a given topic, offering a conceptual foundation that supports the investigation.

In the case of this study, the central themes include curriculum, Geography education, the concept of place, teacher education, and the specificities of the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte. Among the authors consulted, the following stand out: Callai (2005); Cavalcanti (2013); Castrogiovanni (2002); Evangelista and Silva (2025); Felipe Lacerda (2002); Holzer (2003); Merleau-Ponty (2006); Relph (1979); Saviani (1994); Silva Pinto and Fernandes (2024); Sousa (2017); Steinke et al. (2025); and Tuan (2013).

The theoretical framework developed from these authors was articulated with the local reality of the municipality of Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte, in order to bring academic analysis closer to the context experienced by teachers working in upper secondary education. This approach seeks to understand how theoretical knowledge dialogues with educational practices as they are lived by teachers.

The city of Mossoró, located in the western region of Rio Grande do Norte (as shown on the map in Figure 1), is the second-largest municipality in the state, with an estimated population of approximately 280,000 inhabitants in 2025, according to data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2025). This demographic and socioeconomic context gives Mossoró a strategic role in the educational landscape of Rio Grande do Norte, making it a relevant setting for understanding how regional and local Geography are addressed in schools.

The main data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire composed of closed- and open-ended questions, allowing for the collection of both objective and subjective information. The empirical research was conducted with only 10 (ten) high school Geography teachers from both public and private education systems. According to Marconi and Lakatos (2017, p. 201), a questionnaire is “a data collection instrument consisting of an ordered series of questions, which must be answered in writing and without the presence of the interviewer.”

The questionnaire was administered through the Google Forms platform, respecting teachers’ availability and ethical requirements related to free and informed consent. As it adopts a qualitative approach, this research does not focus on the statistical representativeness of the data, but rather on understanding the meanings and teaching practices related to the inclusion of the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in the school curriculum. As stated by Bogdan and Biklen (1994), qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena from the perspective of the subjects involved, valuing the meanings they attribute to their experiences.

In addition to the questionnaire, normative documents guiding pedagogical practice in the state were also analyzed, such as the Referencial Curricular do Ensino Médio Potiguar (2021) and the Base Nacional Comum Curricular (BNCC). The inclusion of document analysis makes it possible to understand the institutional guidelines that shape Geography teaching, especially with regard to regional content.

The Referencial Curricular, developed by the State Secretariat for Education, Culture, Sport, and Leisure of Rio Grande do Norte, aims to guide curricular organization in state public schools. The BNCC, a normative document with nationwide scope, establishes competencies and skills to be developed at all stages of basic education.

Finally, the data obtained through the questionnaire were organized and presented using charts and tables, with the aim of facilitating the visualization and interpretation of the results. The next section presents these research data and seeks to analyze how high

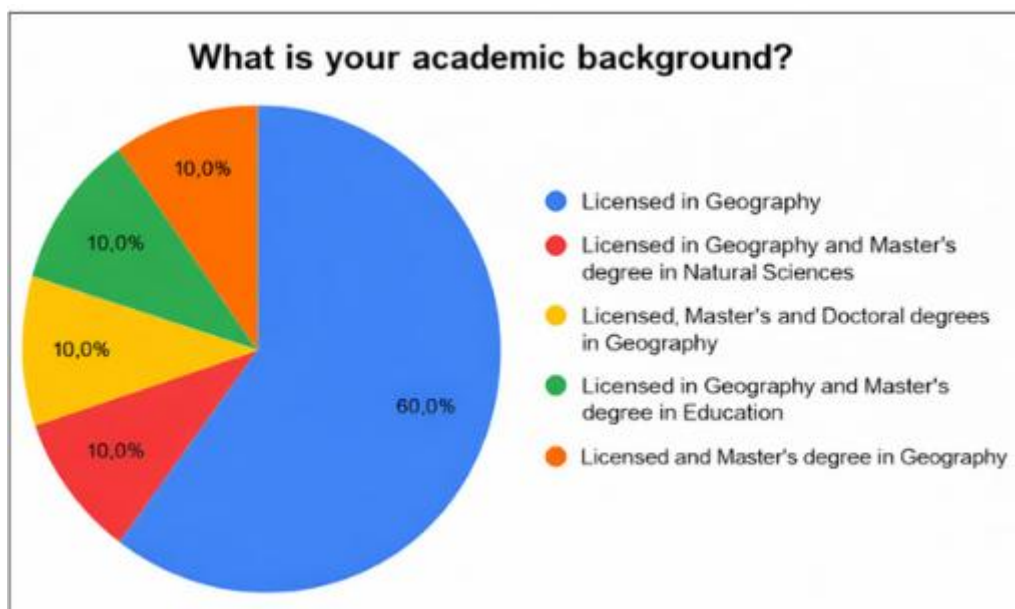
school teachers build connections between local and global scales, as well as to understand how the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte is being addressed by the teachers who participated in the study.

4 THE GEOGRAPHY OF RIO GRANDE DO NORTE FROM THE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE

As stated in the previous section, the research questionnaire was answered by 10 high school teachers from schools in Mossoró, Rio Grande do Norte. Of these ten participants, five work in private schools and five in public schools, with one of the teachers working in both sectors (public and private).

Castro Régis et al. (2025) argue that the initial education of Geography teachers plays a fundamental role in the success of their professional teaching trajectories. For this reason, the first question in the questionnaire addressed the academic background of the teachers surveyed. Their responses are presented in the following chart:

Chart 01 – Teachers' academic background



Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

As shown in the chart, 60% of the teachers surveyed hold only a bachelor's degree in Geography teaching, 30% hold a master's degree (in Geography, Natural Sciences, or Education), and one teacher holds both a master's and a doctoral degree. These data are

relevant for understanding and further analyzing the teachers' responses discussed below, given that initial education is one of the main theoretical foundations for Geography teaching.

In addition, these findings corroborate the discussion raised by Steinke et al. (2025, p. 10), who state that “the education of Geography teachers in Brazil reveals itself as a field full of shortcomings, requiring urgent attention to both initial education and continuing professional development,” especially considering the need to understand why so many teachers do not continue their education in master's and/or doctoral programs.

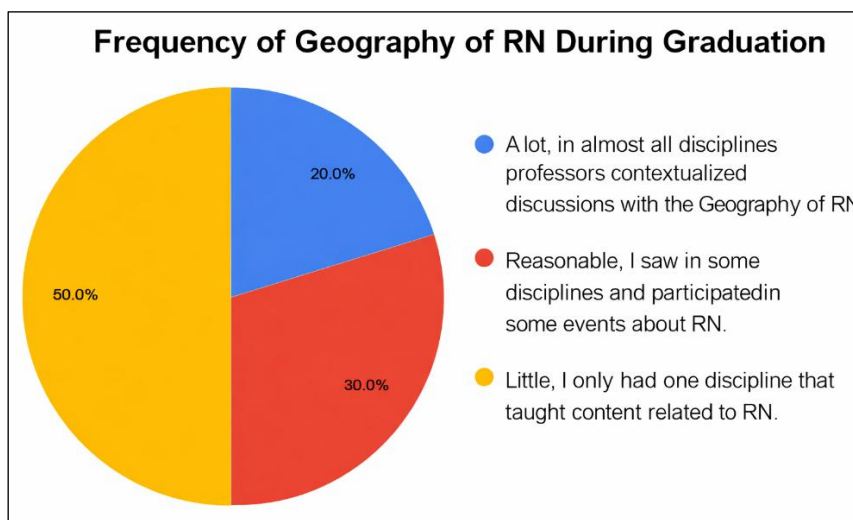
One of the shortcomings highlighted by the authors is the unequal distribution of graduate programs in Geography (Steinke et al., 2025), given that such programs are generally located only in state capitals and regional hubs. Unfortunately, this situation becomes even more complex when it is noted that Geography teacher education programs often excessively prioritize academic knowledge, structuring curricula that are largely disconnected from school realities (Viana et al., 2024).

This contributes to a lack of proper contextualization of content with local realities and to insufficient guidance on how to carry out didactic transposition during initial teacher education. This scenario helps explain teachers' difficulties in moving beyond traditional, content-centered lessons and in helping students read and understand the world in which they live.

Regarding this issue, Chart 02 presents teachers' responses when asked about the frequency with which content related to the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte appeared during their undergraduate studies.

As can be observed, 80% of the teachers consider that topics related to the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte were addressed either rarely or to a moderate extent, while only 20% reported that such contextualization occurred in almost all courses. This raises important questions about how teachers are expected to teach content that they themselves were not taught during their undergraduate training. The situation becomes even more complex when considering that, in general, textbooks do not provide this kind of contextualization with the Geography of place.

Chart 02 – Frequency of the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte during undergraduate courses



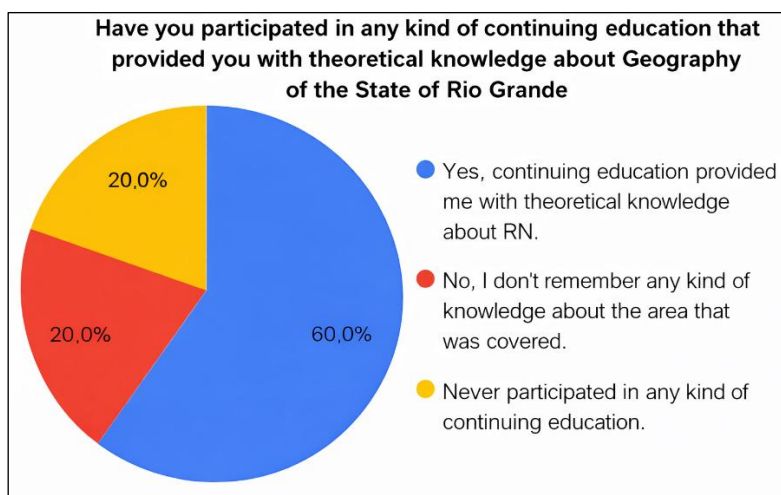
Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

Another noteworthy finding is that when teachers were asked whether they considered it important for teacher education programs to address content related to the Geography of place, all respondents stated that they consider it very important for course content to be correlated with the municipality or state in which the program is located. This result demonstrates that teachers recognize the need for such contextualization to take place.

Moreover, this issue must be taken into account by teacher education programs in the state, so that courses can better understand the importance of curriculum design for teacher education. As António Nóvoa aptly points out, “The link between education and the profession is central to building coherent training programs, but it is also central to the prestige and renewal of the teaching profession” (Nóvoa & Alvim, 2022, p. 64), indicating that educational renewal must begin in initial teacher education.

Unfortunately, as shown in the previous chart, many challenges still remain, and much remains to be discussed regarding the presence of local Geography in undergraduate programs. In another question, teachers were asked about the importance of continuing education for teaching the Geography of the state. The results are presented in Chart 03:

Chart 03 – Teachers' continuing education

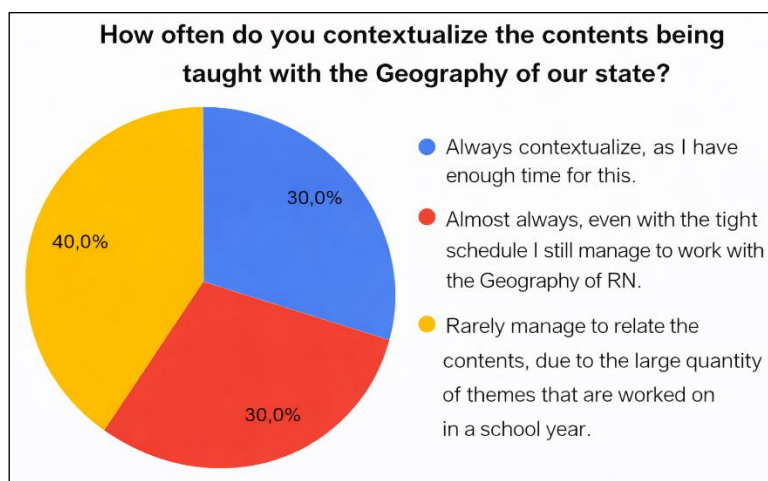


Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

As can be observed, most teachers reported that continuing education helped them build a theoretical foundation regarding Rio Grande do Norte, indicating that this type of training is of great importance for education professionals to continue acquiring knowledge, especially content that was not addressed during their undergraduate studies. As highlighted by Gomes (2024), continuing education still needs to be aligned with the context in which teachers work, taking into account the specificities of each school and the particular needs of each class, especially in Geography education.

The next section of the questionnaire focused on questions about teachers' everyday practices. Question number 7 introduces this section and is particularly important to the discussion raised in this article. The chart below shows teachers' responses when asked about the frequency with which they contextualize Geography content with the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte.

Chart 04 – Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in high school classes



Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

First, the teachers can be divided into two groups: 30% reported that they have sufficient time to carry out this contextualization and that they do so easily, while the remaining 70% reported some difficulty in reconciling time and content. This majority of seventy percent confirms the difficulty cited in the theoretical framework of this study by Silva et al. (2021), who discuss the lack of time faced by Humanities teachers.

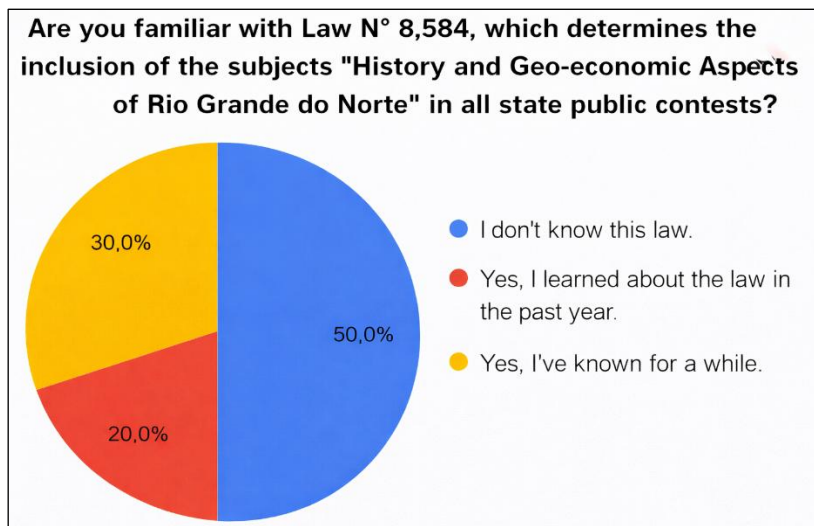
Furthermore, within the group that reported time constraints, 40% agreed that there is an excessive amount of content to be covered during the academic year, which makes it impossible to address the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte more frequently in classrooms. This reveals that teachers face multiple challenges in contextualizing the local Geography of potiguar students, ranging from initial teacher education to classroom practice, as has already been pointed out in the analysis conducted thus far.

Another issue that was raised and also deserves mention concerns teachers' opinions regarding the relevance of the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in relation to the topics most frequently addressed in the National High School Examination (ENEM). All teachers (100%) agreed that, even though it is not a recurring subject in the ENEM, the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte is important for students to learn more about the state in which they live. This once again demonstrates that teachers agree with the problem discussed in this study.

Likewise, even though it is not a content area consistently featured in the ENEM, it is important to consider that Law No. 8,584, enacted in 2004, mandates the inclusion of the history and geo-economic aspects of Rio Grande do Norte in all state-level public service examinations. This law was widely debated in the early months of 2025 due to its inclusion

in the public examination for the selection of teachers in the state of Rio Grande do Norte. Chart 5 presents the results related to teachers' awareness of this law.

Chart 05 – Teachers' knowledge of Law No. 8,584

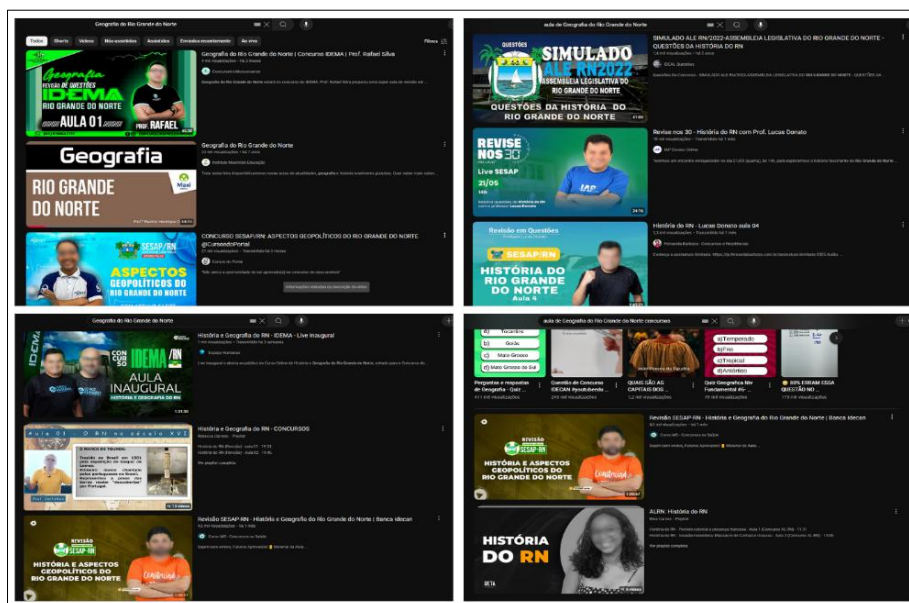


Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

This law establishes the inclusion of geographic and historical content related to Rio Grande do Norte in all public examinations organized within the state; however, half of the teachers reported that they were unaware of this law. This raises the issue that not only those who intend to pursue careers specifically in Geography or History will need such knowledge, but also all students who plan to take any type of public service examination will require that their basic education teachers have this awareness. At this point, the fact that 50% of teachers are unaware of this law becomes a matter of concern.

Further reflecting on this finding, when searching the YouTube video platform for "Geography of Rio Grande do Norte" or "Geography class on Rio Grande do Norte," numerous video lessons specifically focused on the history and Geography of Rio Grande do Norte for public examinations appear (Figure 02). This indicates that many newly licensed teachers may also work by teaching content related to the state's Geography, and that students themselves can find available resources to support their studies.

Figure 02 – Lessons on the History and Geography of Rio Grande do Norte on the YouTube platform

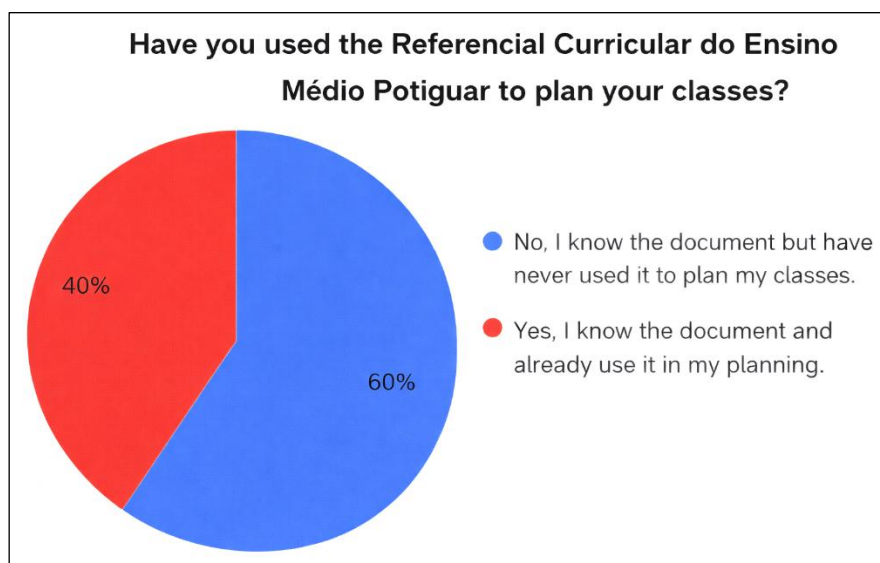


Source: Mosaic of searches prepared by the author, 2025.

On the other hand, it is well understood that students should not be educated solely to pass university entrance examinations or public service exams. The construction of knowledge by Geography teachers must foster citizenship education among basic education students, going beyond mere tests and examinations. This does not diminish the value of those who wish to pursue further studies and follow academic or public service careers; rather, it reaffirms Geography education's primary mission: to form citizens who are knowledgeable about and actively engaged with the space in which they live.

Aware of this importance, the state government developed the *Referencial Curricular do Ensino Médio Potiguar*, which contextualizes the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* by incorporating the historical, cultural, and geographic aspects of the state. Thus, this reference framework serves as a basis for teachers to plan their lessons with appropriate contextualization related to students' place. Chart 06 presents data regarding teachers' use of this document.

Chart 06 – Use of the Curricular Reference Framework by teachers



Source: Prepared by the author, 2025.

It can be observed that most teachers do not use the aforementioned document in their lesson planning. This finding, combined with the other data presented, demonstrates that high school teachers in Mossoró face difficulties in delivering lessons contextualized with the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte, indicating that the mere inclusion of such content in laws and regulatory documents is not sufficient to ensure its effective implementation.

It therefore becomes necessary to think beyond these measures, taking into account teachers' initial education within undergraduate teacher training programs, as well as continuing to encourage and create opportunities for their continuing professional development.

5 Final Considerations

Based on the analysis conducted, it is evident that high school Geography teachers in Mossoró face significant challenges in addressing content related to the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in their classes. The research showed that, despite recognizing the importance of contextualizing geographic themes with local realities, factors such as insufficient initial teacher education, content overload, and limited classroom time hinder the effective implementation of this objective.

It became clear that teachers understand the relevance of using *place* as a starting point for Geography teaching and acknowledge that regional content contributes to students' more critical and citizenship-oriented education. However, the study also revealed that the current educational reality—marked by the implementation of the New High School reform (*Novo Ensino Médio*) and the demands imposed by the *Base Nacional Comum Curricular* (BNCC)—has made this process more difficult, due to both structural and curricular constraints.

One of the central objectives of this study was to examine how the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte has been addressed in high school education and to understand the factors influencing this approach. In this sense, the research fulfilled its objective by revealing, based on teachers' perceptions, the main obstacles to valuing the local scale in Geography classes.

In addition, it was possible to identify a consensus among the teachers surveyed regarding the need to revise the curricula of undergraduate teacher education programs, as well as to strengthen continuing professional development in order to address gaps left by initial training.

Another relevant aspect identified was many teachers' lack of awareness of legal instruments and normative documents that could support their pedagogical practices, such as Law No. 8,584/2004 and the *Referencial Curricular do Ensino Médio Potiguar*. This finding reinforces the urgency of bringing teachers closer to these resources and promoting state-level public policies that encourage their use and support teachers in this process, recognizing that this should not be an individual responsibility borne by each teacher alone.

Thus, it is concluded that, despite the obstacles, there is fertile ground for enhancing the value of the Geography of Rio Grande do Norte in schools, provided that joint efforts are made by universities, education systems, government agencies, and educators themselves. By shedding light on this issue, this research is believed to contribute to the construction of an education that respects, values, and understands *place* as the starting point for understanding the world, considering that it is within this place that each student's life unfolds.

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