THE CONSTRUCTION OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF PRESERVICE TECHNICAL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to contribute to the knowledge of the process of constructing the teaching identity as seen by eighty technical and vocational preservice teachers enrolled in second year of a BAPET programme from the Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Enseignement Technique de Lokossa in Benin Republic. The methodology used was the narrative approach. The findings indicate the higher value accorded to the affective features of the profession over the social and political commitment of the profession. In addition, it emerged that these preservice teachers build their views about the profession and the identity to which they aspire under the influence of personal and school biography as well as their social context and the discourses on teaching around them.

KEYWORDS: Professional Identity, Vocational and Technical Preservice Techers, Perspectives; Benin Context.

INTRODUCTION

1. PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Teachers' professional identity has been a topic of research for some time now. Since Huberman (1989)'s work on the changes that teachers experience at different stages of their careers, other researchers have addressed various issues related to the identity of teachers. Some of the aspects studied are, for example, the influence of school culture on identity (Hargreaves, 2000), the interaction between personal biography and professional and social contexts (Day, 2001; Skerrett, 2010); the role of identity in the actions of teachers in the face of reforms (Lasky, 2005), etc. These studies show that in the last twenty years a line of research has been developed on the professional identity of teachers; however, the themes, approaches and purposes of the researchers are varied.

The present study is concerned with the understanding of the construction of the identity of teachers and the role that teacher training plays in this process. Research on the construction of identity is relevant for teacher training in that it helps to understand the trainees and to identify the supports they need in their learning (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). In particular, the biographies of the student-teachers and the representations generated by these biographies have been identified as important components in the formation of the professional identity of beginning teachers (Knowles, 2004). In this sense, Bullough (2000) affirms that the issue of teacher identity, that is what teachers think of teaching, of students and of themselves as teachers, is of crucial importance for teacher training because it is the basis for the construction of meaning and decision making. All teacher training must begin with an exploration of themselves.

School biography (Alliaud, 2004; Lortie, 1975; Zeichner & Gore, 1990) is important as it is a generator of representations and beliefs about teaching and the meaning of teaching work. Student-teachers need to be asked to write school autobiographies as a way to begin to make explicit those conceptions developed during their long years as students. Over time, in an attempt to place the biographies on a continuum that emphasized their influence on the present of the

training and on the future teaching performance, these biographical texts can be expanded to include reflections on their own professional expectations. This is because teacher training should be an engine of the process of becoming a teacher. In other words, the training process should be one in which features of a common professional culture are assumed at the same time that they are intertwined in personal history. The concept of identity thus emerged as a relevant theoretical category to try to understand this articulation of their own experience with the expectations of teachers as a professional group and with the social demands made on teachers. That is why this study is set out to contribute to the knowledge of the process of constructing the teaching identity of the preservice technical teachers of the Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Enseignement Technique de Lokossa from the analysis of stories produced by the themselves.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This review comprises mainly two sections. First, a brief conceptual development of various approaches that have been used in the study of the identity of teachers is carried out. A conception that understands identity as narrative is presented.

The Concept of Identity in Teaching Research

Identity is a complex concept that has been studied from various theoretical perspectives, each one emphasizing some of its multiple dimensions - social, cultural, professional personals. Recent studies on the identity of teachers (Bolívar, 2007; Bolívar et al, 2005; Cattonar, 2001; Gewerc, 2001; Prieto Parra, 2004) are based on Dubar (1991). Going from a relational conception, Dubar puts the links between subjects and social institutions at the center of the discussion on the construction of identities. From this perspective, identity implies a complex interaction process that is constructed from the subjects not individually but in interaction with other signifiers in historical and socially structured contexts.

For researchers such as Cattonar (2001) and Cattonar, Draelants and Dumay (2007), the teaching identity is the definition that individuals have of themselves as teachers. It is, in a nutshell, the answer to the question "What does it mean to be a teacher?" Identity can thus be understood as a set of descriptive, prescriptive and evaluative meanings and representations assigned by teachers to different aspects of their occupation. It is, in the meantime, an internal feeling of unity, coherence, membership and differentiation. These scholars conceive the identity of teachers as a particular dimension of their social identity and as a construction that is both social and individual. Social identity is the social definition of an individual who, through a process of identification and differentiation, is located in the social system in relation to others and is himself socially located in relation to others. It is a way of defining yourself and of being defined as having certain characteristics that are common to other members of the same social group and, simultaneously, to differentiate yourself from other social groups.

In line with this relational view that locates the identity between the individual sphere and the collective sphere, other authors build their definition placing greater emphasis on the interaction of the subject and the context. Gee (2000) argues that when any human being acts and interacts in a certain context, others recognize him as a certain type of person or even as different types at the same time. For him, identity means being recognized as a certain type of person in a given context. In this sense of the term, all individuals have multiple identities that are not connected to internal states but to their actions in society, in various contexts. Gee (2000) does not deny, however, that each person has what might be called a kind of core identity that is more uniformly maintained in different contexts. Not germane to this is Wenger (2001:181-182). He indicates that building an identity consists of negotiating the meanings of our experience of affiliation with social communities and this affiliation is generated in the participation process. For him, identity and practice are closely linked

because carrying out a practice requires the formation of a community whose members recognize themselves as part of it. Therefore, practice involves negotiating ways to become a person in that context. This negotiation may not be explicitly addressed but subjects inevitably take it into account in action when interacting with other members of the community.

The notion of identity thus becomes particularly relevant to address the question of how collective discourses shape personal worlds and how individual voices combine in the voice of the community. The construction of an identity can be understood as well as the activity by which a subject uses the resources of the community to create a unique and particular combination. Thus, the notion of identity can become an important concept to understand the link between learning and the social context. Understanding this relationship is especially relevant for teacher training because there is an imaginary position in society about teaching and teaching work that can have a very powerful influence on the process of training new teachers.

The Discursive Nature of Identity Construction

In an attempt to understand the differences between two groups of high school students in learning mathematics, Sfard and Prusak (2005b) resorted to the concept of identity. The authors report, however, their dissatisfaction with the available theoretical approaches. They argue that identity, as it is being conceptualized, offers a degree of ambiguity that makes it unfertile for empirical study. For this reason, they point out the need to deepen conceptual work if identity is to become, as Gee (2000) proposes in "analytical lenses for educational research" (p. 99). From this concern, Sfard and Prusak (2005b) elaborate a definition in which identity is conceived as stories about people. With this conceptualization, they do not intend to deny the work done by other authors, but rather try to contribute to making the notion more explicit and operational.

In such an attempt to construct a more operational definition of the concept, Sfard and Prusak (2005a; 2005b) return to the contributions of Gee (2000) and Holland et al, (1998) who emphasize the link between identity and communication. For Gee (2000) identity consists of saying what kind of person you are. For Holland et al. (1998), it is the person's own narrativization. According to Holland et al. (1998), people tell others who they are but, more importantly, they tell themselves and then try to act as if they are the people they say they are. These self-understandings are what the authors call identities. Individuals are always involved in identity formation processes to the extent that, with the cultural resources they have available, they try to build understandings of themselves that are not only about themselves, by representing the dilemmas of the social situation in which they are and in which they find themselves in such a way that they have the potential to become guides for action. These understandings occur in communications with themselves about past and present actions. People are always immersed in the tension between the past stories that have become entrenched in them and the present images and discourses that attract or in some way affect them.

In accordance with this vision of the identification process as a discursive activity, Sfard and Prusak (2005a) propose to understand identity as a collection of stories about individuals. These stories are narratives that have the property of "reifying", are "attributable" and are "significant". The reifying property of a story is given with the use of verbs such as being, having, or power and with adverbs as always, never, generally, etc., that emphasize the repetition of actions and events. In turn, a story about a person is attributable when the subject in question recognizes that it reflects the state of affairs. Regarding the third characteristic, a narrative is said to be significant when any change in it can change the narrator's feelings about the identified person. The most significant stories are usually those involving the participation or exclusion of various communities.

Understanding identity as a narrative, apart from making the concept more accessible to research, offers the advantage of emphasizing human agency and the dynamic nature of identity compared to other visions of a more essentialist type. In the present study, the attention is focused on what the subjects say about themselves or what is said about them by others. As narratives, identities are clearly human constructions that have authors and receivers and that can change over time and in different contexts.

Categories of Analysis of Identity as Narrative

The process of identity construction, when considered as a narrative, is capable of being analyzed through a series of categories that allow to get closer to how identities arise and develop. The categories used are identity in first, second and third person; the effective identity and the designated identity; and the sources of the designated identities.

- *Identity in first, second and third person.*

The stories that build identity have a subject who is identified, someone who tells the story and someone who is the receiver. The same or different people can occupy these three places. This diversity of actors or narrators shows that there can be multiple stories –identities-, even contradictory, for any particular person depending on who is telling the story and who is being told it. The identity in the first person is one in which the subject himself builds a story about himself that can be directed both to himself and to another receiver. A story about a subject told to the protagonist will be an identity in the second person and in the case of a story about one person told by another to a third person, an identity in the third person emerges. Within these forms there is a special case in which the identification subject constructs a story that is reifying, attributable and significant about himself in a kind of conversation with himself, as for example in a diary. This type of story constitutes what, in many cases, has been called identity and is the most likely to have an impact on the immediate actions of the subjects. The existence of various stories does not constitute a problem for this research approach since the interest here is in the identity construction activity rather than in the identity understood as a final product.

- *Effective identity and designated identity*

Narratives about a person can be grouped into two types: those of effective identity which are those stories about the real state of things, and those of designated identity made up of narratives that present a state of situation that is expected to be the case, if not in the present, at least in the future. Effective identities are usually counted in the present tense and formulated as factual facts. Designated identities are stories that are believed to have the potential to become part of the effective identity and are enunciated in the future tense with words that express desire, need, commitment, obligation.

The designated identity raises scenarios that are not necessarily desired by the subject but that are always seen as binding. A person may feel that certain stories apply to their future because what those stories tell is good for them, or because it is what is expected of a person from their social group or gender. In many cases, designated identities do not arise from a process of deliberation and choice, but the person can come to accept ("attribute") certain narratives about himself without realizing that they are only part of the narratives that define his identity. The designated identity has a great influence in that it gives direction to one's actions. In turn, a very large gap between effective and designated identity can lead to a high level of dissatisfaction.

- *Sources of designated identities*

The identity designated is built with elements of available narratives. The identification stories coming from different narrators and directed to different receivers are in permanent interaction and constantly feed each other, in turn affecting the subject's own narratives about himself. In this sense, it can be said that the stories of designated identity always have implicit co-authors because the subject ends up incorporating these stories in the second and third person into their own identity stories.

Stories about others are also an important source of their own identity insofar as the subject may be attracted to the protagonists of those stories, their narrators or feel that their own way of being reflects that of a certain person and is condemned to a similar life. Stories told by others, either about the subject or about third parties, are likely to become part of an individual's designated identity depending on how significant the issuers of those stories are in considering the subject. People considered more significant will have a greater influence on the construction of the identity of a certain subject.

3. METHODOLOGY

In July 2017, 2018 and 2019, second year technical and vocational preservice teachers enrolled at the Ecole Normale Supérieure de l'Enseignement Technique de Lokossa were requested to write an essay that reconstructs their school experiences at all educational levels, recovering images, feelings, events and significant teachers. In addition, they were asked to establish links –if they existed– between these experiences and their decision to start a teaching career and to report the attitudes of their family and close friends towards that decision. In a second part, the work proposed to develop professional expectations and goals describing the way in which each one saw himself as a future teacher, how he would like others to describe him, and the strengths and challenges that he imagined in his future performance. The essay in the form of a story was given as a free assignment after the end of the course entitled Introduction to Pedagogy.

From the 100 participants who handed back their work, 80 (that is a return rate of 66,66%) were used for the purpose of this study. The average age of the participants was 25 years and most of them did odd jobs. Most of them have attempted other professions before enrolling at the school.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results of the analysis of the students' stories using the narrative approach are presented and discussed in this section.

- *Effective identity.*

Coincidentally with previous research on novice teachers (Alliaud, 2004, 2009; Moore, 2007), the school biographies of these entrants are full of positive memories of teachers characterized as affectionate, warm, sweet, patient, dedicated, generating a climate of confidence and emotional security. Descriptions such as the following are common:

> Kodjo*: I remember a lady, Mrs Akpan, she was very special to me and that is why I remember her, she always received us with a huge smile and each explanation she gave with love and dedication…*

> Paul*: I have had very good teachers, also I remember their patience and understanding, they have also served as guides and as parents in sad times.*

In most of the stories, however, positive characterization articulates the affective dimensions with dimensions

linked to teaching itself. Thus, it appears as important traits of a good teacher that his classes were interesting, that they gave good instruction, that allowed students to think freely. This articulation appears clearly in the following testimony by Messanh:

> *I remember a teacher who had a lot on me, I was lucky to have her two years in a row, 5ème and 4ème. First, what always caught her attention was her gaze (with love), which was like inviting us to learn. And this look justified her very well with her way of educating since I was very surprised by the number of ways she had to explain various topics.*

In a smaller percentage of cases (around 10%), teaching appears linked to a break function with established molds emphasizing the social and political responsibility of teachers. Dossou refers in this way to the best teachers he has had in secondary school:

> *Revolutionary teachers who extracted from the curriculum what they considered to be really important and replaced the remaining contents with others even more important for those of us on the other side of the room.*

Teachers who establish close ties with families and who extend their homework outside of hours and, in some cases, the school space, engaging in educational and recreational activities with students and families beyond curricular mandates, are also valued. Although it would seem that the emphasis is not so much placed on stressing the importance of the bond with families, but rather on underlining the dedication of these teachers who extend their performance beyond the required limits.

Negative images are also present but to a lesser extent and are the counterpart of the positive ones: the bad teachers are those who do not care about the students, are excessively concentrated on control issues, do not compromise with the learning of their students, and do not they are confident in their ability to learn. This is how the Gnon and Koffi express it:

> Gnon*: I remember a teacher who sometimes appeared filling positions that was very strict and very challenging, I was afraid of her, and I also learned from her but in a way that I would never reproduce, teaching from the fear of staying still, listening and staring and doing only what she said because it scared what could happen if you did something else.*

> Koffi*: Because I was among the average students, the teachers did not have much faith in me, […] But I also recognize that for my part I was always responsible, I liked doing homework at home, I like to make an effort […] and many times, I think that teachers were surprised by these attitudes. They would think: I didn't think he was going to make it!*

Many of these same features also appear in first-person accounts, that is, when students make characterizations of themselves based on their participation in experiences related to educational or other activities but considered relevant to their future profession. Students describe themselves as kind, calm, patient, close to children, flexible, willing to dialogue and explore strategies to bring knowledge closer to their students. Statements of the type "be patient" and "I love [children]

and I like to teach them things" are observed.

The following testimony, by Afiavi shows the same articulation between affective relationship and teaching that was pointed out earlier when the participants talked about their teachers.

> *I have some training in computer science but none as a teacher. In the same way, I prepare the classes, I look for ways to reach the student, to motivate and to look for didactic material for understanding […] What is programmed is provided, I transmit it with great desire, I enhance the content with examples and I make them participate in the situation when I can, in turn for me the most important thing is the example of the person who is in charge of the class, that's why I always try to be respectful, understandable, friendly and offer myself from the side of my feelings since it seems to me is the most beautiful and fastest way of arrival towards the other person, of feeling loved, that someone cares and that they can count on in case of any eventuality.*

Some also recognize that they are sensitive to the needs of others, particularly the less favored groups. For example, Baké, talking about her experience as a volunteer teacher, states:

> *The experience that each encounter means is immense, but also the concern for how to select the contents, those that are really valid for them […] That is my wakefulness; how to do so that in a few classes they can apprehend some content, understand it, apply it to their experiences. What is the limit to the teaching task?*

In short, it can be said that the stories of effective identity that these participants construct, both when they talk about their teachers and when they talk about themselves, reveal a definition of teacher identity centered on the affective values (at stake in the educational relationship) but articulated with the ability to teach (generate enthusiasm for a discipline, transmit knowledge in ways that reach students, explain in various ways). To a lesser extent, a story is offered that emphasizes the social and political responsibility of teachers.

- *Designated identity*

Participants also address expectations regarding their future performance as teachers, explain how they imagine themselves, how they would like and hope to be, and how they expect others to see them.

They all imagine themselves in the future embodying a series of personal qualities that they value in general but that they consider fundamental for a teacher. They see themselves as good people, caring, patient, understanding, committed to the well-being of children. As Neila expresses this idea without a doubt, "The image that summarizes my identity as a teacher is being hugged with a child". While Rouka points out "I could not avoid being the hen with her twenty chicks because it is impossible not to want to hug them". A third testimony from Firmin is equally explicit:

> *I would like to be described as the teacher adored by all or most of the children, that if the children feel that the parents do not often care about them, that they know that their teacher loves them and whenever they need it, they will be with them.*

In a large proportion of the stories, there is an acknowledgment of the difficulties involved in teaching work, against which a discourse that appeals to the idea of teaching as a vocation that they are willing to live dedicating their

greatest efforts to work is opposed. The word *dedication* appears repeatedly in these texts. Efio, while reviewing the difficulties that teachers face due to lack of buildings, equipment and social problems of learners, does not hesitate to affirm "I have the weakness to teach despite any situation".

On the other hand, there is also a concern for teaching both from a vision of the transmission of culture and from a perspective of training in a sense more general. This interest in training is evidenced in the desire of these students to be the type of teacher capable of raising the concerns of their students, generating interest in knowledge, training them as citizens. This is as Finangnon states:

My decision to be a teacher is because I like to teach, that makes me feel good, I like when they listen to me, that the learners awaken the desire to work, that seems interesting to me, to provide them with elements so that they learn to ask and seek answers, manage to find learners' curiosity and interest in wanting to know and teach them the values to be good citizens, that they learn respect and solidarity.

Some, like Pita, even suggest that to carry out these purposes, they are willing to break with established ways of teaching.

What motivated my decision to start a teaching career was my nephews' school run [sic], where I noticed the signs [sic] with little enthusiasm for what they do, in the sense that, in my opinion, the boys go from degree to degree without knowing many things and this hints that the boys have very little interest in learning. [...] If I speak of expectations and goals, they are basically those, to change the education that prevails today.

Several stories emphasize an image of themselves as teachers with high social and political commitment. In this regard, there is a difference in the number of students who mention commitment as an effective identity trait - approximately 10% - compared to those who mention it as an aspiration, that is, as a characteristic of designated identity - close to 20%. In this sense, students manifest a recognition of education as an important factor in social construction and transformation.

The social commitment that they aspire to embody as teachers is expressed in different ways. In some cases, they are taking on the task of teaching the most vulnerable sectors of society.

Kafui: *I would like to teach old people, to reach the towns or the neighborhoods, the jails or the rural areas of the country. [...] I think it is a good time to try to reverse the situation with awareness and commitment, with love and militancy.*

Others see their work inextricably linked to the shaping of society and have the expectation of playing an important role in this process, promoting positive changes if possible.

Fofo: *I think that being a teacher is a social responsibility, and that is a challenge that attracts me very much; as well as attention to the country's social fabric, which is complex and heterogeneous but can be addressed by working with others.*

The appropriate combination of all these factors was what sparked in me the desire to teach, but not from the usual place but from new places that collaborate to create a new society and a new world […] What drives me to get into

the task is that the teacher is rather the conception of the child as a political subject, which is usually invisible and even criminalized, but like all political subjects, they have the capacity to change their environment and even create new ones. And it is our duty as adults and especially as teachers to hear and make their voices heard.

The designated identities expressed in the stories of these student-teachers define the teacher as someone who develops an affective relationship with their students and worries about influencing them by teaching them disciplinary knowledge as well as those values that will make them good people and good citizens. . There is an acknowledgment of the difficulties involved in the task but, appealing to a vocational discourse, it is thought that they can be countered with effort and dedication. Lastly, a smaller, but still significant, proportion understands that teaching has a political dimension that implies responsibility for the improvement of society.

Sources of Designated Identities

In the stories written by participants, it is possible to notice that the designated identities come from different sources. The most prominent are school history itself, family and friends and the discourses and conditions of the general social context.

Firstly, it is observed that, in general terms, prospective or preservice teacher participants want to be the type of teachers that they value in their time at school. Thus, the designated identities expressed in the stories are almost a reflection of the effective identities as they are reconstructed in their autobiographical stories. In this sense, statements such as "I see myself as a responsible teacher, patient and very similar to the teachers I had in primary school" are common (Viviane), "I would like you to see me as a good teacher, that you can remember me, as I remember my teachers ". (Hortensia) are understandable. That is, the participants want to be like the teachers and professors that they had and value. School history constitutes an important source of identity.

Another source of identity that emerges strongly is the influence of the closest environment. This impact is expressed either in the form of a certain familiarity with the educational field due to having grown up in a family linked to the school field or as a reaffirmation of the importance of the teaching profession by family and friends. These influences are observed in Johanna and Wilma's testimonies:

> Johanna: *I think it was the one that gave me [referring to a teacher] the inspiration to want to be a teacher. Although it complements my family heritage to say the least. Practically 95% of my family dedicate themselves to teaching [...] Since I was a girl I liked to stand in front of the classroom. My father was the director of a primary school and I always went with him.*

> Wilma: *My family supports me in the decision to be a teacher because they see in me the qualities for it. And in my house the love for teaching was always breathed.*

The discourses and conditions of the social context are expressed as the source of the identity stories in connection with the idea of the teacher's task as a very complex activity. Students know that they will have to face many difficulties that, according to their perception, emanate from changes in the values of society, from the development of new technologies - in the use of which they do not yet feel competent -, from the material environments of schools and from the living conditions of their students. The contemporary world is characterized as violent, dehumanized, marked by situations of poverty and by profound social differences. These conditions, to the extent that they affect children and their families, are mainly considered as foreseeable limitations to their teaching task.

Added to this complexity is the recognition of the existence of a devaluing social discourse of teaching that further increases the challenges that are expected. Indeed, as Martial and Tatiana put it:

> Martial: *Being a teacher today involves a lot of responsibilities and challenges. The progress seen in today's society shapes us to be in constant learning and to rise to the occasion of not only educational but also personal and social circumstances. The school is no longer the same as it was years ago, it is not just for studying, it is a place of containment, a dining room and for some a second home.*

> Tatiana: *Teachers face daily challenges and apart from educating, they have to deal with other personal issues of each student, be it poverty, family violence, an overcrowding of students in the classroom and the integration of children with different abilities. This demands a continuous attrition of the teacher and [in addition there is] a lack of recognition of the profession both at society level and at government level.*

As such, the sources of these students' designated identities are school history, fundamentally those teachers who "marked" them in positive ways, personal history marked by closeness and familiarity with teaching work, and social messages that highlight the difficulties and the devaluation of the teaching profession.

5. CONCLUSION

Teaching identity is not something that is obtained automatically, once and for all, along with an academic degree. On the contrary, it needs to be built and initial teacher education (ITE) can play an important role by facilitating the transition from a student identity to a teacher identity (Knowles, 2004; Vaillant, 2010. ITE causes the revision of the images constructed throughout life (Bullough, 2000) through appropriate devices. Narratives have proven to be interesting devices to investigate these purposes from both a formative and research point of view (McEwan & Egan, 1998).

The narratives collected in this study reveal some characteristics of the process of identity construction of technical and vocational preservice teachers. Firstly, it is necessary to point out the presence of some traits that have their roots in the tradition installed by the teacher training schools at the end of the 19th century, of great influence in the configuration of the teaching occupation. It is clearly observed that an idea of teacher prevails, strongly anchored in the affective features of teaching work. Although in all cases the teacher's place in the teaching task is recognized, the centrality assigned to the ability to establish affective ties with students is indisputable. The emphasis placed on the emotional dimension of the task is part of the founding mandate of the profession, which underlined the image of the secondary school teacher as a parent.

Though reassuring for learners, this image presents a narrow vision of the teacher and a first implication for the training that emerges from these data is the need to create adequate devices so that students can review their own representations, subject them to criticism and work on the construction of more complex and more inclusive images of the profession. Another feature that refers to the emerging tradition of normalism has to do with a vocational approach to the task that appears in the stories linked to the participants' reading of the place of the broad social context in teaching work. Context is understood only in terms of obstacles to the task of teaching. These difficulties emerging from the context are, however, considered rather superficially and minimized as the students think that they will be able to overcome them based

on their effort and personal dedication. In other words, there is a revaluation of the educational mission with appeals to the vocational character of the task registered in the origins of the occupation (Alliaud, 1994). The same type of missionary appeal generates the devaluing social discourses of the profession, discourses with a strong impact on identity construction. Student-teachers see themselves overcoming these negative visions thanks to their personal commitment. Conceptualizing the context only in terms of obstacles is also problematic because it neglects the need to attend to its particularities as a way to offer a situated and relevant education. An interesting nuance in the face of disqualifying social messages is the manifestation of resistance attitudes expressed as a personal demand for a profession that interests them personally and that seems socially important to them.

In addition, the identities constructed by the students refer to teaching as a comprehensive training task and with a commitment to improving society. Although this is an interesting fact, the fact that the ethical and political dimension of the task is poorly represented means a very great challenge for a curricular policy that is supported by critical visions of education. It is interesting to note that even when the political and social dimensions of the profession do not seem relevant in terms of the characteristics that they recover from their school biographies, there is a greater emphasis on these dimensions in the field of what the student-teachers expect to be as teachers. In other words, participants more frequently include references to the social responsibility of work in their designated identities, which are those that potentially have the greatest ability to guide future actions.

Participants' narratives show the importance of school biography in the identity construction of teachers in training by acting as a generator of images that revert to the level of aspirations and, with new nuances, produce images typical of the profession. The impact of biography cannot be minimized, which leads to the need to emphasize the importance of sustaining reflective practices that allow student-teachers to review, question and complex the ideas constructed during their time at school as students. .

Teacher training schools may contribute to the development of the professional identity of their student-teachers by creating devices so that they are made aware of the representations of teachers that they have built in their school biography and can subject them to critical review. And what is more important considering the place that the stories of others have in the identity construction itself, teacher trainers should pay special attention when designing the discourses and stories to which students are exposed and which they end up incorporating in their own stories of identity.

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