

A reading of narratives of professional life cycles of teachers in Huberman's concept

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Abstract

In this work, we analyze the challenges faced in the teaching career, since the “reality shock” and over time in their professional teaching development, intertwined with the construction and reconstruction of the teaching identity. We analyzed the professional life cycles of teachers in Huberman's (1995) conception, in addition to dialoguing with other authors as Freire, Tardif and Brune on the subject. We carried out the research with three teachers from the Normal Course, with different teaching periods, from the same school in Trajano de Moraes-RJ. The methodology is based on a narrative investigation approach, centered on a qualitative, exploratory-descriptive method. The information was constructed through semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of the narratives in dialogue with the theoretical framework, through the research modality narrative investigation, through narrative cognition and paradigmatic cognition. Analyzing the research data, we get to know better the trajectories of teachers, perceptions about teaching as a professional activity, challenges faced and experiences lived in the formation of being a teacher.

Keywords: *teacher education; teaching identity; teaching professional development; narratives.*

Introduction

Professional practice in education is a constant challenge, a dynamic process that involves constructing and reconstructing teacher identity, rethinking pedagogical practices, and engaging in continuous learning. Thus, it is essential critically examine at teacher education—both initial and continuing—seeking to understand teachers' perceptions of teaching, the challenges they face, and how they learn to become educators, as well as how these processes shape their everyday pedagogical practices.

Freire (1991, p. 58) emphasizes that “No one begins to be an educator on a certain Tuesday at four in the afternoon. No one is born an educator or destined to be one. We become educators, we shape ourselves as educators, permanently, in practice and in reflection on practice.” In this sense, we understand that teachers are neither born ready nor become teachers simply upon receiving a diploma.

The process of learning to be a teacher and developing pedagogical practice occurs throughout one's professional life. It goes beyond mastering existing knowledge, requiring investigation and reinvention in the face of new challenges that emerge in daily life. For this reason, examining the formative trajectory of teachers is of utmost relevance.

Paulo Freire (2001, p. 42) argues for the importance of critical reflection on everyday teaching practice: “Critical teaching practice, which presupposes correct thinking, involves the dynamic and dialectical movement between doing and reflecting on doing.” Therefore, teaching necessarily requires reflection and the inseparable relationship between theory and practice. This study aims to contribute to the discussion on teachers' formative trajectories, highlighting the

ways in which professional practice is shaped amid constant challenges and transformations.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative approach, seeking to understand the experiences lived by teachers in their contexts of work.

According to Silva and Menezes (2001), this type of research considers a dynamic relationship between the real world and the subject, establishing an inseparable link between objective reality and subjectivity, which cannot be reduced to numbers, requiring interpretation and attribution of meaning to the phenomena under study.

In this direction, the study is based on an epistemological perspective of a critical-reflective nature, understanding that social reality is historically constructed and crossed by multiple social, cultural and political dimensions. Nóvoa (1992) highlights the centrality of experience and professional identity in the constitution of the teacher, emphasizing continuous training and reflection on practice. In addition, Freire (2001) states that the educational process implies a critical reading of the world and the construction of a transformative consciousness, with teaching practice being an intentional and reflective action. Schön (2000) contributes by conceiving the teacher as a “reflective professional”, who produces knowledge through action and reflection on his or her own practice.

Thus, the research seeks to understand how teachers attribute meanings to their experiences and pedagogical practices, considering the contexts in which they work, as well as the processes of reflection and transformation that emerge from these experiences, contributing to the deepening of the analytical framework of the investigation.

In terms of procedures, we conducted a bibliographic review and an exploratory study based on key authors on the subject, as well as a field investigation. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews guided by an interview script, following approval by the CEP/CONEP ethics system. Semi-structured

interviews were chosen as they construct narratives that allow a deeper understanding of teachers' formative experiences throughout their professional trajectories.

Our sample consisted of three teachers with different lengths of teaching experience: one with up to six years, one with seven to twenty years, and one with more than twenty years. All worked at the same public school in Trajano de Moraes, Rio de Janeiro, in a secondary-level Teacher Education program. The small sample size reflects the limited time available for the research, the need for multiple stages of analysis, and the importance of conducting a careful interpretation of the narrative interviews.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for more accurate analysis. The identities of the participants were preserved to ensure confidentiality, and pseudonyms were used to refer to them. The interviews were analyzed through narrative inquiry, a methodology that enables the interpretation of teachers' perceptions of their experiences in education and professional practice. As Bruner suggests, narratives are a way of constructing reality, interpreting past experiences, and building social bonds that reaffirm societal norms (Rabelo, 2011).

In writing this study, care was taken to represent the teachers' own voices, rather than speaking on their behalf. We acknowledge that data are produced, not merely collected, and that people—living, thinking beings—are not passive objects of study. Teachers' social experiences, beyond their theoretical education, must also be recognized, contextualized, and critically examined.

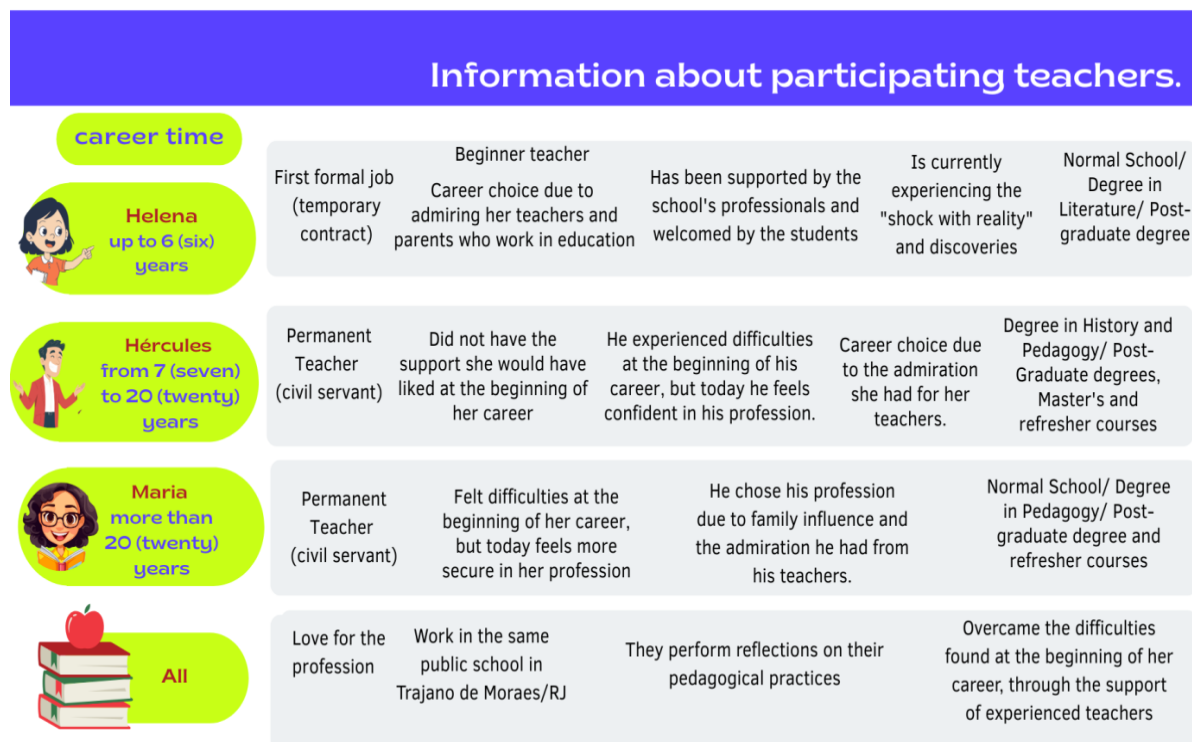


Figure 1: *Information about participating teachers*

Source: Prepared based on information provided in interviews.

Research, understood as a collective construction of narratives, represents a modest contribution both to colleagues who are just beginning their journey in teaching and to those who are already along this path. Its aim is to foster a better understanding of a profession that is at once highly challenging and deeply rewarding.

Analysis of the cycles proposed by Huberman in the career of teachers

[...] the development of teaching staff has been using professional life cycles as a way of understanding careers, professional development and even the degree of commitment or involvement with change and innovation. (Bolivar, 2002, p. 50).

The trajectory of the teaching career is currently the subject of study by numerous researchers; however, the contributions of Huberman (1995) are pioneering in the biographical analysis of teaching and the classification into phases with distinct characteristics. His classic studies, based on the interpretation of empirical data collected through interviews and questionnaires with secondary school teachers in Switzerland, offer a provisional framework for understanding professional trajectories. In this analysis, we treat Huberman's phases as heuristic categories that may illuminate, but not determine, Brazilian teachers' experiences.

As described by Marcelo García (1999), studies like this are important for understanding teacher development, as they aim to establish relationships between the life cycles of teachers and their personal and professional characteristics.

Rossi and Hunger (2012) point out that by analyzing the cycles proposed by Huberman, it is possible to understand that the formative needs and expectations of teachers are not the same in each professional period.

Huberman's (1995) analysis is not based on the assumption of linearity or the immutability of the findings, or that they would be common to all professionals; rather, it seeks to identify experiences common to a large number of teachers. It considers the individuality of each teacher within these processes, acknowledging that not everyone will experience their career in the same way, with ruptures and continuities occurring in some cases. Regarding this, Huberman (1995, p. 38) states, "For some, this process may appear linear, but for others, there are plateaus, regressions, dead ends, moments of take-off, discontinuities."

It conceives the teacher as a historical individual, constructed through an internal dialogue, on a psychological level, and also through external interaction in their social life, on a sociological level. The individual and the organization are analyzed in interaction and mutual influence—the internal forces

(maturational, psychological) and external forces (social, cultural, physical) that exist in a state of tension (Huberman, 1995).

The author investigates how teachers see and feel at different points in their professional careers, from the beginning, their competencies and ways of working, their relationships with other members of the school community, their "crises," the events that impact their professional performance, and the final phase of their career. We agree with the author that the topic is fascinating and arouses curiosity in anyone interested in studying the professional performance of teachers.

Huberman (1995) considers that there are other possible ways to structure the professional life cycle of teachers, but opted for a classic perspective: that of a career.

The author defines five general phases that correspond to the years of a career. He understands that each teacher experiences them uniquely, as they are active and have their own characteristics. The phases are a continuous process, each phase represents a new state, but the phases are not homogeneous and linear. However, they were organized this way because they are most frequently observed in research.

Thus, there would be phases, transitions, "crises," etc., throughout the teaching career and affecting a large number, sometimes even the majority, of its practitioners. We do not advance a linear and monolithic model, but we do speak, nevertheless, of the recovery, often made, of "central tendencies" in the career, both in the *leitmotive*¹ of the different phases and in the ordering of these phases. (Huberman, 1995, p. 47).

Huberman (1995) further highlights that:

[...] One phase prepares the next stage and limits the range of possibilities that can develop within it, but it cannot determine their sequence. At the same time, several sequences are not simply experienced, phenomenologically in terms of continuity, such as, for example, the "diversification" phase that follows the "stabilization" stage for a large number of teachers, or the "questioning" phase, which is almost always

unexpected, or even "serenity," for a few, which arises at the moment when least expected. (Huberman, 1995, p. 54).

Below, in Figure 2, we can see a summary diagram of this career phase path according to the model proposed by Huberman (1995):

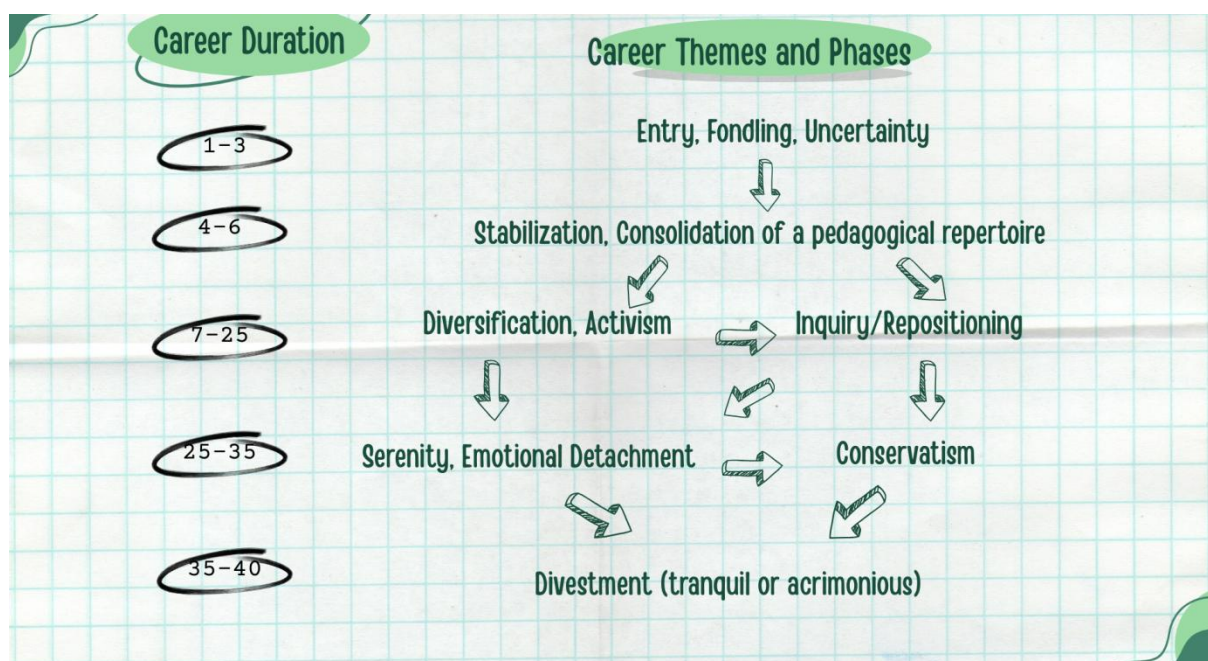


Figure 2: Career phases: Huberman model.

Source: Prepared by the authors. Adapted from Huberman (1995, p. 47).

Huberman's phases provide a starting point for analysis; however, the goal is not statistical generalization, but rather the in-depth understanding of particular professional trajectories.

In the career entry phase, which lasts up to three years according to Huberman (1995), the first contacts with the daily reality of the classroom occur. That is, it is when the teacher effectively takes charge of a class, leading to a "reality shock"; the time has come to put into practice the knowledge acquired during their education, yet reality proves to be far more complex. In dialogue with Fuller (1969), Field (1979), and Watts (1980), Huberman (1995) uses the term

"survival" to characterize this situation of insecurity in the face of reality and the confrontation with the ideals that the beginner brings to the profession.

There is no consensus among authors regarding the duration of the career entry phase for teachers and, consequently, the subsequent phases. For Tardif (2014, p. 82), within the first 3 (three) to 5 (five) years, the foundations of professional knowledge are built. This is also a critical phase of reconciling prior experiences with the necessary adjustments to the new reality, constituting a rite of passage, a "transition shock," a "cultural shock," a moment of discovery, a "reality shock," "[...] the initial confrontation with the harsh and complex reality of professional practice, the disillusionment and disenchantment of the early years in the profession, and, in general, the transition from student life to the more demanding life of work."

Gonçalves (1995) posits that the career entry phase occurs within the first four years of teaching. This period is characterized by an oscillation between the struggle for survival in the face of reality shock and the joy of new discoveries and possibilities.

For those who were marked by a "lack of preparation," whether real or perceived, for teaching, coupled in most cases with "difficult working conditions" and "not knowing how to gain acceptance as a teacher," entering the profession resulted in a genuine struggle between the desire to assert themselves and the desire to abandon the profession.

For those whose early careers proved "without difficulties," this was the result of self-confidence, driven by the conviction that they were "prepared" for teaching, even if later, as they recognized when looking back on later moments in their careers, this ease had been less real than it had seemed at the time. (Gonçalves, 1995, p. 164).

The teacher constantly probes, oscillating between very close and very distant relationships with students, faces difficulties in relating to those who cause problems, becomes distressed, questions whether they will be able to endure,

the teaching materials are not always adequate, and they struggle with pedagogical practice and the transmission of knowledge (Huberman, 1995). Marcelo García (1999, p. 28) conceptualizes this moment as "the period of initial confrontation of the teacher with the complexities of the professional situation." The author points out that induction programs help beginning teachers with the "reality shock" by preparing them with strategies, thus allowing them to redirect the situation (Marcelo Garcia, 2010).

For Veenman (1984), the initial career phase can last up to five years. He emphasizes that "reality shock" is not something quick and fleeting, but a complex process of assimilating a new reality that imposes itself on the daily life of the beginning teacher. In this sense, he affirms the importance of help, support, collaboration, and education for beginning teachers by more experienced ones, as in a short time, they assume the same responsibility as a teacher with many years of experience.

"Discovery" is an important aspect of this initial phase when the enthusiastic teacher already feels part of the group of teachers, is happy with their responsibility for a class, having already overcome several challenges. These phases can be experienced simultaneously, or with one aspect being predominant over the other. Huberman (1995) emphasizes that "discovery" helps the teacher endure the challenges of "survival."

According to the author, indifference may also occur among those who choose the profession because they need to work, view it as something temporary or necessary for financial sustenance and other reasons, not liking what they do. The teachers interviewed in this research did not report choosing the profession merely as a job; on the contrary, they demonstrate affection for the educational act, as advocated by Freire (1991).

It can also occur at the entry into the teaching career that some individuals execute pedagogical practices with serenity, those who begin with some

background of experience. Frustration with the career in the face of the challenges encountered may also occur.

The "exploration" or "feeling one's way" at the beginning of the career, according to patterns defined by the institution, permeates the different profiles presented by Huberman (1995, p. 39): "this can be systematic or random, easy or problematic, conclusive or misleading."

The interviewed teacher, Helena, is currently experiencing this career entry phase, working in her first year at the school with two teaching levels: the Final Years of Elementary School and High School, specifically the Teacher Education course. She reports that upon contact with the classes she would teach, she felt desperate, questioning herself about what she would do and how she would continue. The class for her first lesson had a large number of students, over 40, and she was startled to see "huge boys," comparing them to her smaller stature. She went home after the first day of work with a headache and told her mother, "I can't do this." She questioned herself about what to do, that she couldn't give up, that she needed to try, after all, it was only the beginning.

As the days passed, Helena felt welcomed by the students, and the classes became different. She reports that she found in her faith the strength she needed: "I prayed before sleeping, 'My God, help me, enlighten me, Holy Spirit, so that I can manage to give my lesson.'" Helena was supported by school professionals, already knew many of them, and had been a student of almost all of them. She made friends with the students, talked, and felt more at ease, which greatly facilitated her work. By the end of the school year, she felt her work had become easier.

Helena's narrative is structured around a movement from self-doubt to gradual adaptation. At the beginning, by stating "I can't do this," she constructs a position of incapacity and emotional vulnerability, marking the experience as a moment of rupture. As the narrative unfolds, the reference to prayer introduces

a coping mechanism grounded in personal belief, which mediates her relationship with the challenges of teaching. This shift suggests not only an emotional transition but also the beginning of a process of identity reconstruction, in which the teacher moves from insecurity toward a sense of belonging and professional autonomy.

Considering this experience, the importance of support from other professionals in the initiation to teaching is emphasized. The feeling of incapacity is something that can occur, and when combined with other factors such as lack of support, it can lead to teacher malaise, as pointed out by Nóvoa (1995). In this case, the support received from other professionals and the students themselves was essential for the teacher to overcome the initial challenges.

The teachers Hércules and Maria experienced this phase of "beginning teacher" some time ago, and in their narratives about the beginning of their teaching careers, they reported having similar experiences of numerous difficulties, although singularities also emerged.

Hércules began teaching in the final years of Elementary School, then moved on to work in pre-university entrance exam courses and High School. He felt totally unprepared on his first day of class, just like Helena and many other teachers. He perceived the classroom as a box of surprises; the lesson plan he brought with him didn't work, and he realized that often the plan won't work, although it is very important for the teacher's work.

He reports that his first five years of teaching were difficult. He felt "in shock," had a project, an expectation, and began to perceive that the years were passing and the expectation was not being achieved. He describes this situation as being "a little frustrating."

When speaking about her first day of class, teacher Maria recalls: "I almost had a heart attack," she trembled, felt very nervous, "I had to drink several coffees to be able to go in." Maria had the support of two teachers whom she describes as "these two teachers I adore," who welcomed her outside the classroom. She

regrets that she showed the class her fear and insecurity; the class was composed of adolescents, and she felt "tested all the time" by them. Maria affirms that it is important to master the content, as this makes the teacher feel more secure and conveys this security to the students.

Maria, like the other interviewed teachers, did not feel prepared for that moment when arriving in the classroom.

Because, look, we are not prepared for anything. That's the truth. Because every moment in the classroom surprises you. You think you are prepared to enter, but when you get there, it's different. So you say, folks, I don't know anything anymore. Gee, what I did isn't good. Gee, what am I going to do?

When you like it, when you know the content. I think a strength comes from God, I think that's it. That you, oh, then you change. (Maria)

Maria's greatest difficulties were in her first year of teaching, but with the support of friends and work colleagues, experienced teachers, she managed to overcome the difficulties. Today, after many years of work, she feels secure. The experiences of these three teachers are consistent with some dimensions of Huberman's (1995) description of career entry, yet they also reveal the need to interrogate whether the Swiss model fully captures the specificities of Brazilian public school contexts. Insecurity at career entry was reported by all teachers, the "reality shock," as well as the sensation of lack of preparation for experiencing the profession. Huberman (1995) points out that the distance between theory and practice is revealed when the professional does not feel secure in the face of the classroom reality and reflects on their choice and the possibilities of enduring certain situations.

In the initial phase of teaching, it is the moment of change from the role of student to that of teacher responsible for a class, an increase in responsibilities, deadlines, reports, covering the curriculum, new demands hitherto unknown. How this beginning occurs influences the entire teaching trajectory, contributing

to leaving or remaining in the profession, the construction of teacher identity, and professional development.

The narratives of the interviewed teachers reveal that teacher Education courses, even with practicum experiences, did not meet the formative need to fully prepare them for teaching and for the challenges on the ground in schools. The teachers graduated from different courses and universities, both private and public, and none of them felt prepared for teaching at the beginning of their careers, facing various difficulties. We also observe in the teachers' narratives, as Tardif (2014) indicated, an attempt to readjust to the new reality, now as a teacher responsible for a class.

The second stage of the cycle, the stabilization phase, occurs between four to six years into the career, as a "taking on of responsibilities" and commitment by the teacher and assumption of consequences, a moment of affirmation of the self, of professional identity. This period coincides with the end of the probationary period and the gain of stability for public servants provided for in the Federal Constitution of 1988, in Art. 41: "Tenure is achieved after three years of actual exercise by servants appointed to a permanent position as a result of a public competitive examination." (Brasil, 1988).

The teachers, Hércules and Helena, demonstrate in their narratives that they have already passed through this phase; both are tenured and permanent in the teaching career, feeling secure in the exercise of their profession, overcoming the challenging experience of the beginning of their teaching careers.

The profession is affirmed for themselves, before other colleagues and authorities; they commit to exercising the profession from then on, a choice that implies giving up other professional identities. This phase can also mean becoming part of a professional group, emancipating oneself, having some freedom in planning and executing their lessons (Huberman, 1995).

We perceive in Hércules' speech that he went through this cycle when he stated that over the years he began to understand "the real dynamics of the classroom," to understand the students' profile, the context in which the school is inserted, and for him, things began to change. Teacher Hércules feels that he is a good professional, capable of working in different contexts, and understands that this is the role of a good teacher: to be prepared to work in different contexts.

As Huberman (1995, p. 40) points out, "stabilization slightly precedes or accompanies a feeling of increasing pedagogical 'competence'." The teacher feels more confident, worries more about the execution of their pedagogical practices than about themselves, as there are not as many anxieties; they feel more comfortable in the face of complex or unforeseen situations. Their desire is to achieve better performance each day, expanding their level of knowledge. The professional molds their own working style, manages the class better, has more flexibility, and deals more easily with the failures that occur.

In this phase, some collateral themes come to the surface. First, terms like flexibility, "pleasure," "humor" emerge as leitmotifs. With mastery of the situation on the pedagogical level comes a feeling of liberation or, as one teacher interviewed by Lightfoot (1985) explains, being at ease on the pedagogical level brings with it a general feeling of security and relaxation: "I no longer had to hide my weaknesses, nor my peculiarities... I let myself go, explored immediate situations, listened to the children more carefully... I laughed much more" (p. 255). In line with this, authority becomes more "natural"; people better situate the limits of what is tolerable and enforce these limits with more security and spontaneity. (Huberman, 1995, p. 41).

Huberman (1995) states that in this stabilization phase, the teacher consolidates their pedagogical practice, representing positive moments for those who experience it. The teacher is less self-critical, understands their difficulties and abilities.

Maria feels more confident, affirms that she must always be updating herself, recognizing that teaching occurs in an environment of many changes and she needs to stay updated to keep up with the students.

(...) we are always learning every day, but the little that I have, that I always know little, because we have much to learn, gives me a security, a stability, a security, so that I can seek more, because the world is like this. (Maria).

Maria perceives changes occurring yearly in student behavior, belonging to different generations and with different knowledge and expectations, both in the content that needs to be updated given societal changes and new discoveries, and in pedagogical practices that cannot always be the same, as they need to keep up with all this change.

Another important aspect to consider is that, according to Lanuti and Baptista (2021), initial education does not sufficiently capacitate the teacher to carry out pedagogical work in an inclusive environment. Upon starting work, another challenge arises, demanding further study from the teacher so that they can promote interaction, knowledge construction, and the overcoming of various barriers that may obstruct the full and effective participation of all students on an equal basis in their classes.

Continuing education directed towards Inclusive Education also contributes to the development of the teacher's work towards an inclusive practice "based on the recognition of each student's needs, the necessary curriculum adaptations, and the teaching materials that favor learning." (Toledo, 2020, p. 128).

In accordance with Nóvoa (2017), in this phase, there should be a constant effort of permanent updating by the teacher, highlighting the need for continuing education programs to fill gaps in initial education and promote specializations in diverse areas. He proposes that "[...] continuing education develops within the space of the profession, resulting from a shared reflection

among teachers, with the aim of understanding and improving teaching work." (NÓVOA, 2017, p. 1125).

The State Department of Education (SEEDUC/RJ), where the interviewed teachers are employed, offers continuing education courses at various levels such as education, updating, extension, and postgraduate studies, online and in-person, in partnership with various institutes and universities.

Helena has not yet had the opportunity to take these courses offered by SEEDUC/RJ but states she would like to.

Teacher Maria has already taken many courses on her own after entering the profession, as well as courses offered by SEEDUC/RJ. Among them, she highlighted Brazilian Sign Language (LIBRAS), Youth and Adult Education, and Educational Policy. Maria states she is always taking education courses because she considers it important, likes to study, and as a way to update herself and recall content. According to Maria, "we are in the classroom, we need to have novelties. So, I'm always watching," referring to courses and videos. As criteria for choosing the themes of the courses she will take, she highlights that she selects according to the subject she teaches, "So, I go there. I love Psychology. So, I go there today, I want to work on Freud. I go there, get everything about psychoanalysis. I enroll, take a course. Or else, I watch several classes, by various psychologists. I like it, because I have to learn."

Maria's posture demonstrates her concern with constant formation. Beyond the experiential knowledge, defined by Tardif (2014) as that built in practice and experience, formed from all others, there is a clear concern with the acquisition of new formal knowledge. Maria materializes what Freire (2001) advocates: teaching requires research and awareness of being unfinished, a predisposition to change, knowing what one does not know, and announcing novelties.

Hércules, similarly, always seeks to study. Upon entering the teaching career, he only had his Licentiate degree; later, he completed several *lato sensu* postgraduate courses in different areas and a Master's degree in education. He

also tries to take the courses offered by SEEDUC/RJ. He affirms that with the offer of distance learning courses, it has become much easier, and thus he can take more courses. He considers the quality of the courses good but offers some criticisms:

They are very good. They only have one problem. They are disconnected from the reality of the school. It might be that the teacher is taking that course there and the reality of their school allows them to apply those situations they saw during the course. But there are courses that are very disconnected from the school context. (Hércules).

The state of Rio de Janeiro has 92 municipalities with very distinct social and economic realities, with cities with millions of inhabitants and others with less than 10 thousand inhabitants (IBGE, 2022). Thus, one must consider the particularities of each region in the offer of continuing education courses by SEEDUC/RJ. Offering criticisms, teacher Hércules points out that, in addition, the courses are often designed by professionals who do not work in Basic Education classrooms. According to Freire (2001), education cannot be neutral; we also understand that it cannot be disconnected from the reality of each school.

Conscious of this situation, Hércules uses the following criteria when choosing courses: observing the context in which he works and where he needs to learn more:

I observe the context a lot. So, sometimes, now with the pandemic, for example, we had... we already had technological resources, right? But we didn't use them. So, with the need to use them, I started to observe what was important to know, right? For example, we... even teaching resources, classroom strategies, the flipped classroom. It was something I didn't know. And it's a cool thing, it works. So, we are always observing the context to try to select the courses that can help us to act. (Hércules).

The experimentation and diversification phase is the mid-career stage, occurring between 7 to 25 years into the career. It has many facets and is marked by attempts to make lessons more dynamic, to use new methodologies and resources in the classroom; the teacher here already has security in their performance. However, if the institution does not allow innovation due to rigid rules, the motivated teacher takes on new challenges and becomes more "activist," trying to change the situation, thus committing to collective activities. Here we can exemplify with unions, groups, online social media communities, and other associations, significant projects that seek reforms (HUBERMAN, 1995).

The school where the interviewed teachers work supports innovation, dynamic classes, projects, and the use of diverse teaching materials, although there are rules imposed by the State Department of Education that must be respected. Maria likes to always bring new things to the school, diversifying her lessons, integrating the community with projects and campaigns. She affirms that the benefits extend to everyone in the school community.

Teacher Hércules, seeking to better develop his work and act more securely, continuously studies and stays attentive to his students, understanding their demands, what they like, which teaching methods work for them, making use of new didactics and new technologies, but without depending exclusively on them. He understands that the focus on the student is fundamental.

There are classes that love to copy, others that don't. Some like text, others don't. Some like to read a book, others like to do activities. So, what will create engagement among your students? I think that's fundamental. And second, study. Study. Study didactics, study what's new that will appear, new technologies. Because technology can be a blackboard, it can be a PowerPoint, it can be your narrative. I've given wonderful lessons just by talking. And I've given terrible lessons using various technologies. So, it's not the technology that will define it. So, I think being attentive to the students is fundamental. (Hércules).

In the experimentation and diversification phase, there is also a search for authority, new responsibilities, and a desire for administrative positions, such as Pedagogical Coordination, Principalship, School Supervision, seeing prestige in these. It is interesting to observe that, as Marcelo García (2010) points out, professional advancement here develops outside the classroom, disconnected from teaching activity, a consequence of professional disprestige and poor working conditions.

The interviewed teacher Maria reported having already held positions outside the classroom, in Pedagogical Coordination, through a contract in the municipal network, and reported it was a good experience.

Another marked and complex characteristic of this period of experimentation and diversification is that professionals "question themselves," that is, they reflect on their lives and careers, whether to continue, if there is still time to do different things, follow other careers. There is a disenchantment; they feel more inclined to do strictly what is asked in their work given school monotony.

Huberman (1995, p. 47) highlights that "the symptoms of such an attitude can range from a slight sensation of routine to an effective existential 'crisis' regarding the pursuit of the career."

Huberman (1995) evidences that all these experiences are determined by various factors such as political, social, economic issues, family life, and are felt differently between men and women.

When asked if he would change professions today, teacher Hércules replied:

I would not change professions. Maybe... That's an interesting question, because the other day I was talking with friends, who are also teachers. And there's a group of fulfilled friends and a group of friends who are not fulfilled. And these ended up having a parallel profession, ended up changing and such. And if I had changed, I would have regretted it. So today I feel fulfilled in the profession. (Hércules).

Maria affirms that she did not make a mistake in choosing the profession and does not feel a desire to change. She was encouraged by her mother and managed to find within herself the essence of an educator and feels it is worth it. The phase occurring between 25 to 35 years of experience is compared by Huberman (1995) to a "state of mind" that can materialize in attitudes of serenity, affective distance, or conservatism.

Serenity in the classroom generally emerges from much reflection, and not all teachers achieve it. Having experienced many situations, the teacher knows how to deal well with what happens, accepts themselves, and doesn't care as much about others' opinions. There is not as much enthusiasm or ambition, but a great feeling of confidence.

Teacher Maria and teacher Hércules demonstrate a certain serenity regarding teaching. Teacher Hércules feels he is a good professional capable of working in different contexts.

Maria feels pleasure in teaching, loves the "brilliant and sincere look of each one."

I love seeing that thing, when you give that lesson, and they participate like that, for me that's the most rewarding thing. I arrive here and tell my friend, I'm loving it. Today my lesson was like this... today my lesson was like that... Because the sincerity of the student, the look in that student's eye is very rewarding for you as a teacher. (Maria).

There are also cases where an affective distance from the students occurs; the teacher acts with more rigor regarding their professional position, does not seek a close or friendly relationship with the students. Here the teacher is not so young, so the students themselves also distance themselves due to less affinity, not sharing the same interests, belonging to different generations (Huberman, 1995).

Regarding the age difference and lack of affinity with students, Maria states that working with "today's youth" is a challenge because of their rebelliousness, aggressiveness, and very coarse vocabulary, but that she is learning to deal with this situation.

Huberman (1995) states that a good portion of the teachers he researched made many complaints regarding students, other younger colleagues in the profession, and educational policies; they had become more grumpy and demonstrated a feeling of nostalgia for the past, idealizing it.

The final phase of disinvestment is described by Huberman (1995) as the moment of preparation for retirement, between 35 and 40 years of work. Today in our country, according to the retirement rules of the Federal Constitution of 1988 and Constitutional Amendment No. 103 of November 12, 2019, there is a reduction in the minimum working time for male teachers to 30 years and for female teachers to 25 years of effective teaching service. But it is worth remembering that the exact years of experience are not determinant for Huberman's (1995) phases, as it is a process experienced by the professional at their own pace.

At this moment, the teacher gradually becomes accustomed to the end of their professional career. As Huberman (1995, p. 46) underlines, "people free themselves, progressively, without regret, from investment in work, to devote more time to themselves, to interests outside the school, and to a social life of greater reflection [...]." Thus, it occurs serenely; the professional looks at their trajectory and appreciates the path traveled.

Huberman (1995) points out that disinvestment can also occur in mid-career when teachers become frustrated, disillusioned with the results of their work, making the exit bitter. In this sense, Cardoso (2017) analyzes that in Brazil, disinvestment has been occurring much earlier than the time foreseen by Huberman (1995):

Poor working conditions such as, for example, low salaries, double or even triple work shifts, lack of material resources in schools, precarious infrastructure, high number of students per class, are some of the elements that contribute to teachers not investing in the career. Furthermore, many teachers, for not finding in this profession the return they desired, give up right at the beginning of their career. (Cardoso, 2017, p. 4290).

The teachers interviewed, despite the difficulties they faced in their daily lives, did not express a desire to leave their teaching careers, a movement of disinvestment at this point in their professional trajectory, desiring to follow an "ideal" path and retire. This "ideal" path, for Huberman (1995), would be entry into the career, stabilization, diversification, serenity, and calm disinvestment, but each professional charts their own path and is influenced by the social context.

Limitations

This study is based on narrative reports from three teachers from a single public school in the interior of Rio de Janeiro. In line with the principles of narrative research, our goal is not statistical generalization, but rather an in-depth, historical understanding of specific career trajectories. The results, therefore, highlight particular vivid experiences, rather than representing all Brazilian teachers or the teaching profession as a whole.

Furthermore, the use of retrospective narratives implies that memories can be filtered through time and subsequent professional experiences. The application of Huberman's phases (1995) must be interpreted in light of these limitations: the model functions as a heuristic lens, and not as a definitive reference.

Future research, with broader and more diverse samples, as well as longitudinal designs, could deepen an analysis of the extent to which the cycles proposed by

Huberman are refracted by the different social, political and cultural conditions of Brazilian public education.

Final Considerations

We can infer that the trajectory of a teacher's professional life is permeated by countless events. The contexts in which they are inserted are diverse, as are their motivations, perspectives, behavior, and needs. There is a continuous dialogue between the individual and the environment in which they are placed. The analysis of the narratives demonstrated the teacher as a historical individual, constructed and reconstructed in dialogue with themselves and with others. In this sense, we realize the importance of teachers knowing themselves better and planning each phase of their career, understanding that the profession is permeated by challenges, dilemmas, and achievements, and that the career is not a simple, linear trajectory, but rather involves flexible cycles, which not everyone will experience in the same way. Thus, it is important to be in constant education and interaction, always restarting with every new challenge that arises. Therefore, excessive self-criticism is meaningless, and one should not give up in the face of the first challenges, understanding that difficult moments can be overcome.

The experiences of these three teachers are consistent with Huberman's description, suggesting that his model captures some dimensions of Brazilian beginners' experiences while potentially missing others.

The narratives also showed how support and dialogue are fundamental for teachers to better develop their work, not only for beginners but also for those who have been in the career longer. However, we must emphasize that support for beginners, in particular, proves essential, as these are the most challenging years of the career and can define whether or not they remain in the profession.

Considering the cycles, when elaborating proposals for continuing teacher education, it is important to also ponder their needs and professional trajectory, analyzing which moment of their career they are currently in.

According to the analyses carried out and based on the narratives, we can conclude that it is of paramount importance to conceive of education broadly, from entering the courses and throughout the entire professional career, as a construction of knowledge about the profession and about oneself. Fostering dialogical and welcoming practices can contribute to building the professional identity of a secure and conscious educator in the exercise of their profession, committed to a transformative action within the reality in which they operate.

Notes

¹Leitmotive, a German word that we can understand from the definition proposed in the Online Portuguese Language Dictionary, meaning a common thread, phrase, or formula that occurs several times in a literary work or discourse. A persistent theme or core motif in a work. Available at: <<https://www.dicio.com.br>>.

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