Professional development and teaching learning in the narratives of experienced Portuguese teachers

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Abstract

Teacher professional development occurs continuously. This article summarizes the results of research performed in a postdoctoral internship. It aims to analyze how experienced Portuguese teachers narrate their professional development, identifying the sources that provided them with the teacher's knowledge. The study's approach is characterized as qualitative field research, conducted with five teachers who work in two educational institutions in technical programs of professional education of technical and higher level through biographical narratives. In conclusion, the entry into the profession occurred circumstantially. The primary sources of knowledge are the experience in the training field and the referential teachers. The teachers express motivation for the profession from their relationships with students and recognition for the work done.
Keywords: Teaching life cycle. Teacher professional development. Professional education. Teacher education.

Desenvolvimento profissional e aprendizagem da docência nas narrativas de professores portugueses experientes

Resumo

O desenvolvimento profissional docente é um processo que ocorre em ciclos contínuos ao longo da vida. Assim, o artigo sintetiza os resultados de investigação realizada num estágio de pós-doutoramento cujo objetivo foi analisar como professores portugueses experientes narram seu processo de desenvolvimento profissional, identificando as fontes que lhes proporcionaram o conhecimento de professor. Quanto à abordagem, caracteriza-se como pesquisa qualitativa, de campo, realizada com cinco professores que atuam em duas instituições de ensino em cursos técnicos de educação profissional de nível técnico e superior por meio de narrativas biográficas. Concluiu-se que o ingresso na profissão ocorreu de forma circunstancial. As principais fontes de conhecimento são a experiência na área de formação e os professores referenciais e, em relação aos sentimentos sobre a carreira docente, expressam motivação com a profissão advinda das relações que estabelecem com os alunos e do reconhecimento pelo trabalho realizado.
Palavras-chave: Ciclo de vida docente. Desenvolvimento profissional docente. Educação profissional. Formação de professores.

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Desarrollo profesional y enseñanza aprendizaje en las narrativas de profesores portugueses experimentados

Resumen

El desarrollo profesional docente es un proceso que ocurre en ciclos continuos a lo largo de la vida. Así, el artículo resume los resultados de una investigación realizada en una pasantía posdoctoral cuyo objetivo fue analizar cómo los profesores portugueses experimentados narran su proceso de desarrollo profesional, identificando las fuentes que les proporcionaron conocimiento docente. En cuanto al abordaje, se caracteriza como una investigación de campo cualitativa, realizada con cinco docentes que actúan en dos instituciones educativas en cursos técnicos de formación profesional en los niveles técnico y superior a través de narrativas biográficas. Se concluyó que el ingreso a la profesión se dio de manera circunstancial. Las principales fuentes de conocimiento son la experiencia en el área de formación y los docentes de referencia y, en relación a los sentimientos sobre la carrera docente, expresan motivación con la profesión a partir de las relaciones establecen con los estudiantes y el reconocimiento por el trabajo realizado.

Palabras clave: Ciclo vital de la enseñanza. Desarrollo profesional del profesorado. Formación profesional. Formación del profesorado.

Introduction

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The ingress of teachers into the profession generally occurs from the completion of the higher education program that acquires the constituent teaching skills. They also occur throughout their career when faced with the profession's challenges and expand the skills acquired through continuing education and informal situations, which we call teacher professional development (TPD).

When it comes to professionals who work in professional education, either in secondary school or higher education, ingress into teaching does not always occur after completing an initial training program that enables them to exercise the profession since this is not a legal requirement in Brazil and Portugal. In this context, we ask ourselves how these professionals constitute teachers, that is, how this path – which is relational, contextually lived in different spaces and times, and occurs according to a set of stages with distinctive characteristics for each professional – contributes to the TPD.

From this perspective, this work aimed to analyze how experienced Portuguese teachers narrate their professional development process, identifying the sources that provided them with the teacher's knowledge.

The article comprises five sections, beginning with the methodological approach, followed by a brief description of the research participants, the life cycle of teachers and the TPD, data analysis, and, finally, the research results and the privileged theoretical references.

Methodological Procedures

This work resulted from a broader investigation involving different aspects of the theme.

The work's approach is classified as qualitative, of a fundamental nature since it aimed to generate new knowledge, helpful in advancing science, without foreseeing product generation. However, the results of the investigation can contribute to improving the teacher training process.

Concerning the technical procedures, the field research was conducted in three educational institutions, two public and one private, located in Portugal. Data was produced through an interview with three managers to know the structure and functioning of the institutions and select the teachers participating in the study. The teachers were chosen based on two criteria: the absence of initial training in teacher training programs and time of professional practice of over 20 years. Thus, we conducted biographical narratives with nine teachers, selecting the narratives of five experienced teachers who entered the profession without academic teaching training but who have already practiced for between 20 and 27 years. They taught and/or teach classes in two educational institutions' secondary technical and higher education programs.

The biographical narrative is a method used in the field of education from the 1990s in studies on training and TPD:

> The works developed under this approach focus on teacher training and are primarily located in the second strand of (auto)biographical research, using life stories and autobiographical narratives as a source and method of qualitative investigation, inquiring about teaching practices and training trajectories to produce knowledge about these practices and understand how teachers make sense of them. Thus, a variety of themes that intersect memories, training paths, gender issues, learning trajectories, and training for teaching

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emerges from the narratives of teachers in the initial or continued training (Passeggi and Souza, 2017, p. 13, our translation).

Therefore, the choice of the method is justified because biographical narratives help us analyze the impact of life experiences and training on professional practices and allow us to capture the movements of TPD since they are representative of the whole despite being individual. For Ferrarotti (2010, p. 45, our translation), "If we are, if every individual is the singular reappropriation of the universal and historical that surrounds them, we can know the social from the irreducible specificity of an individual praxis."

The narratives were conducted from a script of questions, in person at the workplace, in an appropriate environment to protect the confidentiality of information but openly, trying to give the floor to the narrators. We respected the ethical standards required in research involving human beings for data production and analysis. The participants were informed that neither they nor their institutions would be identified to preserve the identity of the subjects and the confidentiality of the data, being replaced by pseudonyms. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and sent to the participants, who could express themselves about the content and authorized the dissemination of the information. We consider it appropriate to describe the research participants in the next section.

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Milestones of a trajectory: the singular subject translating the plural subject

Cristiano is 45 years old and has a degree in informatics, with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science and a master's and doctoral degrees in Informatics Engineering. He has been teaching at a higher education institution since 1996 and has had no teaching experience at other levels of education.

Manuel is 46 years old and has a degree in Social Communication, with a specialization in Journalism, a graduate degree and a master's degree in International Relations, and a doctorate in Social Sciences. He has been teaching since 1993, having worked in a technical program at the secondary level and teaching classes in a higher education institution since 1998.

José is 60 years old, has a bachelor's degree in Architecture, and works in a higher education institution, having joined in 1992 after completing the program. He had no teaching experience before joining the institution.

Neusa is 50 years old, graduated with Bachelor's and Master's in Business Administration programs in commercial management and marketing, and has been working since 2001 in a technical program of a private professional education institution.

Jorge is 43 years old, has a degree in Social Communication, has been working since 2003 in technical programs of a private educational institution, and had no other experience with teaching before joining the institution.

Life cycles, professional development, and the constitution of knowledge about teaching

Teacher professional development (TPD) refers to the constitution of the teacher as a professional and their efforts to respond efficiently to the profession's challenges. It includes a cycle that extends from initial training to the end of the career; therefore, a continuous and permanent process. Day (2001, p.15, our translation) characterizes it as follows: "The meaning of teacher professional development depends on their personal and professional lives and on the policies and school contexts in which they carry out their teaching activity".

The development cycle is inextricably linked to the life cycle of teachers, the object of research at the international level – such as Huberman (2000), Gonçalves(2000), Nóvoa (2001),2000, 2019), Cavaco (1995), Esteve (1995), and Marcelo (1995), among others. There is also reasonable production on the subject in Brazil, as indicated by Papi and Martins (2010), Corrêa and Portella (2012), Nunes and Cardoso (2013), Lizovski and Terrazzan (2019), Almeida, Reis, Gomboeff, and André (2020), and Ferreira and Anunciato (2020).

In a classic study, Huberman (2000) identifies the professional life cycle, that is, the path followed by teachers, which involves different phases of the career trajectory: 1st – the ingress into the career; 2nd – the stabilization phase; 3rd – the diversification phase; 4th – the phase of affective distance or serenity, and, finally, the 5th phase, that of divestment.

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In this work, we were interested in characterizing the fourth phase, that of affective distance or serenity, and this option stems from the observation of several studies concerning the novice teacher. In Portugal, the theme is the subject of several studies, especially Flores (1999), Cardoso (2007, 2014), Flores and Ferreira (2009), Cardoso and Ferreira (2009), and Nóvoa (2000, 2019). In Brazil, Almeida, Reis, Gomboeff, and André (2020) conclude in a review of studies published between 2000 and 2019 that interest in studies with novice teachers has grown.

There is a lower incidence of work in the other phases of the professional life cycle. In Brazil, Alvarenga and Tauchen (2018) mapped the research conducted from 1990 to 2016 on the divestment phase of the teaching career, locating 13 works. In Portugal, Dotta and Lopes (2021) analyzed works published between 2000 and 2019 on teachers in the advanced career phase, that is, with more than 50 years of age and/or over 20 years of experience, and identified 61 works. Because they included research with professionals over 20 years of age, they refer to both the 4th and 5th phases proposed by the author.

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No studies were located specifically on the fourth phase, that of affective distance or serenity, which indicates greater interest of researchers in the extreme stages of the cycle, that is, the initial and final.

The two key concepts of the distinctive features of this phase are serenity and conservatism. Huberman (2000) identified these characteristics in teachers aged 45 to 55 years and, as for the feeling of serenity, that it comes from the acceptance of the "real self" and not the "ideal self" since they develop a level of confidence in themselves that leaves them less vulnerable to external evaluations. According to Huberman, people at this stage

> […] have nothing more to prove, to others or themselves; they reduce the distance that separates the goals of the beginning of their career from what has been possible to achieve so far, presenting in more modest terms the goals and achieve in future years (Huberman, 2000, p. 44, our translation).

In this sense, Gonçalves (1992, p. 26, our translation) records that the serenity and confidence experienced by the teacher come from the feeling of satisfaction "by knowing 'what is being done', in the conviction that 'it is done well'" and Huberman (2000, p. 50) states that "after 15-20 years, everything

will have been seen and answers will have been built for most unexpected situations". This means that ambition and personal commitment decrease as serenity and confidence increase.

Huberman (2000, p.14, our translation) identifies a certain affective distance from the teacher to the students and indicates the age difference as a possible cause, that is, "[…] their belonging to different generations and therefore to their different 'subcultures', between which dialogue is more difficult".

Regarding conservatism, Huberman (2000) identified complaints regarding students, coworkers, especially younger ones, the school's organizational climate, and educational policies. As a result, nostalgic references to the facts and conditions of the past and a decrease in the level of tolerance are also recurrent. The studies this author and Gonçalves (2000) conducted also indicate resistance to changes, especially technological innovations. Huberman (2000, p. 45, our translation) identifies in many studies that this stage presents a tendency "[…] for a greater rigidity and dogmatism, for a marked prudence, for a firmer resistance to innovations, for a nostalgia, for a change of general perspective towards the future, etc.". Having characterized the life cycles of the teacher, we address the TPD.

One of the central elements of the discussion concerning TPD is whether teaching can be considered a profession, a topic addressed by Flores (2014), who identified several tendencies in the literature and reflections on the conceptions of teaching professionalism, showing that the topic is still controversial. This controversy is also indicated by Coelho and Diniz-Pereira (2017, p. 27), who identify that there is still a strong relationship between vocation and professionalization, concluding that identifying the act of teaching as vocational has hindered the recognition of teaching as a profession. The authors conclude that "for those who advocate that the magisterium be, as soon as possible and without reservation, considered a profession in the full sense, this representation can undoubtedly be considered negative."

Tardif (2013) also dedicates himself to the theme and affirms that three distinct forms of understanding the exercise of teaching coexist, which he calls teaching ages: teaching as a vocation, trade, and profession. He locates the origin of the discussion on the professionalization of teaching in the 1980s when, in the United States of America, the political authorities launched a project for the professionalization of teachers, and the movement has spread

to many Anglo-Saxon countries, Europe and Latin America. Thirty years later, the author analyzes the results of this movement and concludes that this process has not yet been consolidated since several factors block its development. He states that:

> […] professionalization seems to combine today with a proletaria-nization of some of the teachers. This is why the transition between the age of the trade and the age of the profession arouses signifi-cant resistance among teachers in most countries (Tardif, 2013, p. 569, our translation).

When analyzing studies on the construction of the teaching profession present in the organizing movements of education workers in Brazil, Oliveira (2010) concludes that teachers generally constitute a group of workers or a trade that is historically in search of professionalization:

> Perhaps professionalization, understood as the act of seeking to transform into professional, something that is done amateurly, in the case of the magisterium, could better designate the movement of organization and search for a place, in the sense of social recog-nition and economic value of a specific professional group that carries within it distinctions and complexities that do not allow it to identify itself as a profession in its strictest sense (Oliveira, 2010, p. 19, our translation).

The studies explain that the exercise of teaching activities is not yet considered a profession in the full sense and that it is a category under profes-sionalization. Flores (2014, p. 5, our translation) states that professionalization "[…] is associated with the political or social (or even individual) project or pro-cess through which a specific occupation (or individual) seeks recognition as a profession (or professional)". Therefore, the authors consider teacher professio-nalization an unfinished process and indicate the need to expand debates on the topic, as expressed by Estrela:

> […] research on professionalism and teaching professionalism is still in its infancy since we still know little about how teachers define their professionalism, how they live in everyday situations, how this definition configures their professional identity, what kind of threats they feel can call it into question, what ethical conflicts they live as a result of the various roles for which they are requested, what

place has the reason and emotion in their perception and resolution... (Estrela, 2014, p. 8, our translation).

In this sense, there has been an increasing interest in the topic, and the literature on teacher training presents the existence of research on the recognition of the trade of teacher as a profession and that, with this status, it requires the mastery of a set of knowledge, skills, competencies, norms, and values. Tardif thus expresses this movement:

> The professionalization of teaching and teacher training is, therefore, an almost international movement and, at the same time, a common horizon towards which political leaders in the field of education, reforms of educational institutions, and new ideologies of training and education converge (Tardif, 2000, p. 6, our translation).

In this work, we were primarily interested in analyzing teacher constitution and the sources of knowledge that serve as the basis for teaching, that is, to understand how teachers acquire the knowledge they mobilize in the context of the classroom, the object of study by Shulman (1986), Tardif (2000), and Day (2001), among others. Each author has established categories, classifications, or typologies with different denominations that explain the relevant knowledge teachers build for performing their professional tasks.

Regarding the sources of knowledge for teaching, Grossman (2005) compared the pedagogical practice of six beginning English teachers, three of whom graduated from a teacher training program and three without this formal professional training, and found that the sources are multiple, highlighting four: knowledge of the subject to be taught, the teacher's experience as a student, the learning acquired in teacher training programs, and professional experience.

Day (2001) also cites Lieberman (1996), who identifies three scenarios in which this learning occurs: direct instruction, that is, continuing education; learning in school, through exchanges with peers and teamwork; and learning outside of school, in partnerships with other institutions or informal groups. Day (2001) adds a fourth scenario, learning in the classroom.

In this work, which involves teachers ingressing the profession without acquiring the knowledge necessary for professional practice in the initial

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training program, the interest lies in identifying how their professional development process occurred, a topic addressed in the next section.

And that's how it all started… ingress into teaching

When the university student completes a teacher training program, ingressing the profession seems to be a natural path since they invested their efforts in it during the years of initial training. However, the same is not expected of students who have taken other paths. So why did professionals with an academic background in other areas become teachers? What life circumstances led them to this choice? Who influenced them? The interview addressed these questions, and we found that the option is linked to three factors: contingency choice, vocation, and incentive of referential teachers.

Regarding the contingency choice, three narrators did not intend to practice the teaching profession and did not plan this ingress but were driven to it circumstantially because teaching was configured as an opportunity for professional occupation:

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> When we graduated there were two options: to practice informatics engineering […] or else we go to informatics teachers. It was safer to be a teacher because you entered *the civil service right away, and we had the problem of employment already solved*. But it was more motivating on a professional level and on a humanitarian level to go outside, to other institutions, not to be a teacher. But I didn't think about being a teacher, *but at the time, the teachers who were responsible for this institution saw fit to invite me to teach one of the curricular units* (Cristiano, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> […] curiously, I said… I'm not going to teach. But I finished the program and did not want to enter the municipal chambers, so the option I had, politicians understand, that the burdens they are usually subject to in terms of work pressure, I didn't want to get into that circuit. I wasn't in architecture to be able to open an office and have work. I didn't have those conditions… I tried to enter, collaborate with colleagues to take the first steps, but I needed to earn money, to have some consistency, an organization in life… *And there the opportunity appeared to ingress into teaching, I got in and liked it* (José, 2023, our translation).

[…]
They were personal reasons. I never thought to be a teacher […] because I thought I couldn't organize or ready contents, work in the classroom. That I would not have the profile to deal with 20 or 30 kids. *Opportunity arose; it was very casual* because I had to leave the company where I was for personal reasons because I had to travel around the country. So I had to get a job… the school showed up within a few hours and I decided to try it. And yes, I really liked it in the first years, and then I loved it (Jorge, 2023, our translation).

Although teaching was not a viable option in youth, the interviewees had the first opportunity for professional occupation and job security after completing the course, starting to assume, from the ingress, a project of "becoming a teacher".

Neusa believes that her insertion into the profession is a kind of "vocation", which is revealed in the "taste" and "way" of teaching:

But before joining the company, I already had an *implicit will to teach*. I can't explain why, but I thought I had some vocation for this. After four years, I sent my curriculum to this school, I was contacted and exchanged the right for the uncertain, I was after *a dream*, from a new experience, which I do not regret. What I've discovered over the years is that, in fact, to be sweet, it is necessary to have a very strong *vocation* (Neusa, 2023, our translation).

Manoel, on the other hand, claims to have been driven to the profession by the influence of teachers who were their references:

No. I never thought of being a teacher. But when I started studying, *I was fascinated by some teachers* and thought one day I would *like to be like them*. […] Because they had a cultural baggage, a mental elasticity that fascinated me. So, by knowledge, by knowing, *they deeply marked* me and I wish I could one day be like one of them. And that's it, and I did it. I had a teacher, an extremely respectable figure, a reference in terms of knowledge, a guide who advised us… He was a very important figure (Manoel, 2023, our translation).

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Although insertion in the profession has not been the first option in many moments, the narrators show enchantment for the profession, which is evident in expressions such as "I began to like it/I liked teaching/I ended up liking it", which indicate an identification with the profession and motivation with the choice, mainly because they are faced with situations of personal and professional fulfillment and gratification.

And then, how to be a teacher? sources of knowledge about teaching

No interviewee, when they started teaching, had had training for exercising this profession, as expressed in the narratives:

> No. When I started, *I had not taken any courses on…* Later I had some *curricular units during the master's degree.* We had classes of pedagogical complements, but not a course that qualifies me to be a teacher for secondary education (Cristiano, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> *No, I didn't…* […] at the pedagogical level, no. This is a flaw. I didn't even have that training in my Doctorate. What I had were technical area components and research methodologies. Nothing more than that. Little by little I was learning by experience, but I denote that there is always this flaw, *that training is important* (Manoel, 2023, our translation).
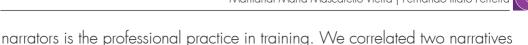>
> […]
>
> […] and the architecture program does not prepare for teaching […] *we did not have the pedagogical internship*; it was not a training of teachers, it is the training of architects (José, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> *I did not train to teach*, to provide training. I took a course in the area of social communication, but not to be a teacher (Jorge, 2023, our translation).

So, where did they look for subsidies for daily tasks? What are the references for their TPD? The primary source of knowledge indicated by the

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narrators is the professional practice in training. We correlated two narratives as an exemplification:

> When I was finishing the program I had a simultaneous job in the area of informatics and *now I keep some experience because I have some projects in the job market. Look, why do I have that connection? It's that they allow me to see what it is that the market asks […] What is it that companies want, the solutions they are looking for and what are the technologies and such.* […] These projects allow us to be highly objective for students. And say to them: 'Gentlemen, we are going to work on these technologies because these are the ones that the market is working on and these are the ones that are predicted in the future to go in the area to work' (Cristiano, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> *I worked in the field and conciliated* because it is possible […] and there are many people who have company and are connected in teaching. […] this is the conciliation of the practice of engineering with practice […] we seek to choose or select teachers, especially those of the technical component, *who have professional experience*, who also bring the experience part because this is an added value for teaching. […] debiting only academic knowledge without having the part of professional experience that allows you to materialize everything that was, because you learned during the courses you underwent, I think is limiting (José, 2023, our translation).

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The narratives confirm Kuenzer (2010) for whom the professional education teacher must have had practical work experience since this experience facilitates the didactic transposition of scientific knowledge:

> […] theoretical training is not enough because the teacher must master, to teach, how scientific knowledge underpins labor practice, conferring meaning and materiality of concepts. In training, this movement occurs from scientific reasoning to practice via didactic transposition, which should include activities that insert the student in the work reality: laboratories, cases, visits, internships, and field research (Kuenzer, 2010, p. 508, our translation).

The second source of knowledge, pointed out by three narrators who teach classes in technical programs, was training for teaching, effective after

entering the career because they were mandatory for exercising the profession: the training of trainers and professionalization:

> Since professional education, seen as training, required CPA, the Certificate of Professional Aptitude, and I did *training of trainers*. Anyone who wants to teach in professional education has to have a CPA. It was a three-month training that was taken here (at school), and as a teacher here, I had some benefits, and they taught us some pedagogical training content. […] And I felt the need later to deepen my knowledge, doing *professionalization in practice*, in the […]. I did, therefore, in an e-learning regime, and I liked it immensely, it was, it was, in fact, a great learning for me, because I developed pedagogical skills […] I upgraded my training (Neusa, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> Although I also had to do trainer *training* to be here, it was mandatory. But this formation makes me feel a little safer, and more capable of being in a classroom dealing with groups and have more resources to work with. The only time I have done pedagogical training was *professionalization*, which I did at the University (xxx). To be a teacher, you have to have certain chairs which comes from professionalization. […] a specific training for one year […]. I really liked the training (Jorge, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> And then, for some areas, there was *professionalization*, in which we had to attend the courses in the education sciences, do the internship accompanied by a monitor from the university and it was two years, and then we had to present and defend the report. […] It is that it is not a program; it is called professionalization in practice because people were doing the active, they were already teaching and taking classes at the university […] (José, 2023, our translation).

The teachers who only worked in higher education programs (Cristiano and Manoel), given that they are not required to be qualified to teach, did not have additional training in teaching, as exemplified by Cristiano's narrative: "[…] our program enabled us to access secondary education, but I had to take a half-year or one-year course, with the pedagogical part, so to be a teacher I had to take didactics from informatics or something like that. But I didn't."

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The narratives indicate that pedagogical training is an essential source of teaching knowledge, even in the case of compulsory and short-term programs focused on acquiring some teaching skills.

The teachers with whom they lived during their training were indicated by all the participants as a reference for the work. We transcribed two narratives as examples:

> I had two that I thought went… the teacher who invited me here, but it was extremely… at the pedagogical level perhaps it was not a good example, *but for the knowledge transmitted and objectivity, an excellent teacher*. Therefore, a capacity for out-of-the-ordinary analysis, although at the pedagogical level, was extremely important to the students. And then my master's and doctoral advisor, who *is an example of how to be a teacher*. At the level of student support, understanding, assistance, knowledge transmitted. Therefore, there isn't… I have no adjectives to classify. She's great (Christian, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> *I learned from some teachers*, above all, to take a critical view of things and not to be pacific for knowledge. It is not enough that the teacher debits knowledge, he must teach the student to reason it (Manoel, 2023, our translation).

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In another context, the data corroborate the conclusions of Brazilian research on the subject, as stated by Cunha (2016, p. 94, our translation):

> Research in the area of teacher training has been recurrent and indicates that teachers recognize their former teachers as the strongest inspiration for their professional configuration. This condition is more present concerning university professors, who usually do not follow a path of professionalization for teaching.

Another source of knowledge, although little mentioned (José and Jorge), was the exchange of experiences among peers, professional colleagues.

> […] then, *it was essentially the work with the colleagues*, see what they were doing, because they were colleagues with many years of service, a lot of school experience, people with knowledge […]

> so that was the great crutch I had in that period (José, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> […] *also related to the colleagues.* Because at that time it was: "You're hired, let's move on. Here is the program." Then we went to a meeting, *we saw the study plans of colleagues.* We were in the meetings without preparation, silent, and listening to the other teachers, and they didn't have much time to pay attention to us. […] And there, too I found colleagues who helped me a lot. (Jorge, 2023, our translation).

Therefore, the narratives indicate the existence of three powerful sources of knowledge for teaching: at the beginning of the career, professional practice in the area of initial training and the influence of referential teachers and, later, training for teaching, driven by the obligation or need to overcome the challenges of practice.

The teacher I became: feelings about the teaching career

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Several narrators expressed feelings of satisfaction and dissatisfaction regarding their teaching careers. We begin with the first:

> *I like to teach.* When I was invited to join the pedagogical commission, I faced it with a bittersweet flavor: the sweet for being a recognition of my journey that for me is a source of pride. The bitter is that it gets fewer hours in the classroom, *which is where I drink… my inspiration is the students.* I know they learn from me, but I learned from them. […] and I'm not a conventional teacher for teaching the contents, doing assessments, and in the lectured and evaluated mode. I'm not, I went completely outside the box (Neusa, 2023, our translation).
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> […]
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> *What motivates me then is that I think I learn…* in three years, the students learn many things, but I also learned. I'm always up to date, much for them, *and motivated by them*, so I also see the school as very positive for me, in terms of learning and professional development. I really feel this, it's not just a positive sentence like that, that one can say, very nice. It really isn't. […], but the truth is that they arrive here very young, with difficulty integrating into a classroom, so today we work a lot on social and human

components, maybe even more than we worked for years before. […] Obviously, we don't make the people into excellent people. *But we could obtain the best from them. I think in this we are very successful* (Jorge, 2023, our translation).

The narratives express the motivation for the profession arising from the relationships they establish with the students and the recognition for the work they do, corroborating Shulman (1997, p. 133, our translation), who states:

Teaching worldwide, not only in Latin America, especially as defined by the world school reforms, is the most intellectually demanding, technically challenging, and emotionally exhausting profession among those that human beings can exercise. At its best, it is also the most satisfying, spiritually and, personally, and the most intellectually stimulating of any career imaginable.

José, the most experienced interviewee - age and teaching time – also shows enthusiasm for the profession, but highlights the challenges he faces due to the changes that have occurred in recent years:

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Today the teacher has to be a person who can capture the students. I don't agree with anyone who says that the students have less capacity today. […] Now we have to *know how we make these capabilities emerge*. That's what's hard… it is difficult when we have large classes in rooms that are not sized for that number of students. *The students are all completely different…* from completely different backgrounds… with different formations… and, therefore, each element is an element… we have to treat individually. That's the hardest part. So, and I think very well, is that *everyone had access to education*, therefore, it is much more people… it is *people with some difficulties*. But I am glad that this has happened because everyone has the right to education, access to education. I think we have to respond to that as well. […] Perhaps it is also extremely important *for a teacher to know how to jump out of the classroom today* […] *we have to look for a different environment from what has been the usual…* our students are possibly saturated with that kind of environment.… […] in fact, in all published studies we see new *discoveries of new people… it's not about people who are at the end of their career… it's from new people* who are constantly doing, discovering interesting things… (José, 2023, our translation).

Finally, two interviewees expressed some dissatisfaction with the profession, both concerning the demands it imposes and the lack of recognition by society:

> However, informatics is an area that *causes too much wear* on a physical and mental level. And you have to know how to control a lot because otherwise you get stuck in the machine and very dependent on the machine. It is very difficult because it is very complicated to find a balance point in the area of informatics. […] To be good, to be known, we have a lot of time. *And for us to be in front of the classroom from here, we don't have time for family, we don't have time for friends, and it's very complicated.* A year from now, I don't know if the subject I'm teaching is important to the students. *This forces such a big, big update,* that I usually say that we should have allowance for quick wear and tear, you know? (Cristiano, 2023, our translation).
>
> […]
>
> *There was a time when I felt undervalued because* society knows little about the role of the teacher. And that, I think, is the worst part. *And also, monetarily.* We, in comparison with other professions, earn poorly. And I think *this is a bit like many countries in the world.* I think it should be precisely the opposite. Of the most recognized professions, socially, that I think we lack this social recognition, this is very important. And then a match in monetary terms. We, with this crisis then, are very devalued (Manoel, 2023, our translation).

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The two narrators indicate the negative aspects of the profession but seem resigned to the situation, especially Manoel, who uses expressions in the past (there was a time when I felt) or understands that the problem is not local, therefore, no changes should be expected. It's as if they say, "This is how it is. That's it. And we move on…".

From the lessons of the individual narrators to a possible interpretation

In conclusion, we briefly resume the primary findings of the research and their respective interpretations concerning the life cycle and TPD. Thus, regarding the life cycle and seeking to establish a relationship with the literature, it seems that the feeling of serenity Huberman (2000) is present in the

narratives since the participants show no concerns or dissatisfaction with the work they develop and do not feel susceptible to evaluations by students, colleagues, managers, or external evaluations. However, in contrast, the conservatism characteristic of this phase was not observed since the participants did not express resistance to innovations, which may be due to the link with the world of work, which requires constant updating.

Similarly, no complaints were identified regarding students, coworkers, or the organizational climate of the institutions, with no reference to affective distancing concerning students. However, the narrators mention changes in the profiles of students who enter higher and technical programs younger and younger.

The reduction of ambition and personal commitment seems to be present in several reports, being more frequent among teachers who work in higher education in public institutions. Those who teach in technical programs have a partial link with the institution and seem more motivated to access management functions or increase their teaching hours, which may drive them to maintain their commitment to the profession.

Concerning the TPD, it is convenient to identify whether teaching is a profession. According to Oliveira (2010, p. 19, our translation), the generic concept of profession refers to "[…] specialized activities with a specific body of knowledge accessible only to a certain professional group, with their codes and standards, and which are inserted in a certain place in the social division of labor". Thus, we conclude that teaching is not yet a professional activity since, although the interviewees refer in some narratives to the contribution of the learnings acquired in in-service training events or the mastery of pedagogical knowledge in work qualification, they do not consider them essential to their work since even not having studied them in the initial training program, only those who were subject to legal requirements attended in-service training (training of trainers and professionalization).

Thus, the constitutive knowledge of teaching was acquired in the professional practice in the area of training, which provides them with the mastery and updating of curricular content and is a source of pedagogical knowledge of the content (Shulman, 1986). The narrators indicate that this previous or concomitant experience subsidizes the selection of analogies, examples, explanations, and demonstrations they use in the classroom.

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Another source of relevant knowledge for TPD is referential teachers since teachers tend to repeat the models used by those they consider "good teachers". They learned the contents of the profession and sought inspiration for teaching work with these "good teachers". Thus, how they were taught has repercussions on how they organize the teaching process since, as Cunha states:

> All teachers were students of other teachers and lived the mediations of pedagogical values and practices. They absorbed worldviews, epistemological conceptions, political positions, and didactic experiences. Their cognitive and effective schemes, consciously or not, were formed and organized through them, which supported their future teaching (Cunha, 2006, p. 259, our translation).

Thus, we consider that the research met its objective: to analyze how experienced Portuguese teachers narrate their professional development process, identifying the sources that provided them with the teacher's knowledge.

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Professional development and learning to teach in the narratives of experienced Portuguese teachers

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Aceito 31 out. 2023

Revista Educação em Questão, Natal, v. 62, n. 71, p. 1-24, e-33521, jan./mar. 2024