

*'Footprints in the sand' of teachers 'dream hunters':
two professional identities in (de) construction¹*

**'Pegadas na areia' de professores 'caçadores de sonhos':
duas identidades profissionais em (des)construção**

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Abstract: The text discusses an investigation of professional education from the analysis and reflections of an (auto)biographical exercise, with two students, future teachers, establishing a possible dialogue between the narratives elaborated in the Supervised Teaching Practice of the last semester of the teacher education course. The paper details and reflects on *being a teacher as a dream hunter* searching for the best practices (Marcelo, 2009b; Vaillant & Marcelo, 2015), some of the *footprints in the sand* during the initial training (Flores, 2012, 2015), and the relational transits *of* and *in* teaching which constitute one of the strong foundations in teacher education and professional development. The study is based on the qualitative research paradigm (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994), which allowed a deeper understanding of the formative experiences reported in the first person by the two students in their final reports. This way, the research tries to understand how the construction of the professional identities is perceived throughout initial teacher education, taking the narratives of the participants as the reference of the content analysis (Bardin, 2009).

Keywords: Professional identity, professional development, supervised practice, teacher education, autobiographical narrative

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Resumo: O texto trata de um processo investigativo de formação profissional concretizada na análise e na reflexão de uma abordagem (auto)biográfica, com duas estudantes, futuras professoras, estabelecendo-se um possível diálogo entre as narrativas elaboradas durante a Prática de Ensino Supervisionada do último semestre do curso de formação. Detalham-se e refletem-se o ser professor como caçador de sonhos em busca das melhores práticas (Marcelo, 2009b; Vaillant & Marcelo, 2015), algumas das pegadas na areia inscritas ao longo da formação inicial (Flores, 2012, 2015) e os trânsitos relacionais da e na docência, que constituem um dos fortes alicerces na formação e no desenvolvimento profissional (Day, 2001; Freitas & Galvão, 2007). Metodologicamente, o estudo assenta no paradigma qualitativo (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994), cujo objetivo principal se focaliza em compreender como é percebida a construção da identidade profissional ao longo da formação inicial de professores, tomando como referência de análise de conteúdo (Bardin, 2009) as narrativas das participantes.

Palavras-chave: identidade profissional, desenvolvimento profissional, estágio supervisionado, formação de professores; narrativa autobiográfica

Introduction

We sought to establish a dialogue between the (auto)biographical² narratives of two students who were supervised by this article's first author between 2013-2014 and 2014-2015, during the "Supervised Teaching Practice" (PES)³, of the last semester of the *Pre-school and Basic Education (Primary School) Master's Degree* course of the University of Minho. From this conversation, two experiences rose, two perspectives on practice that, although distinct and separated in time, are joined here for the construction of new meanings, and from these, new paths.

² Autobiographical accounts or narratives constitute some examples of educational devices to enable reflective thought, a structural pillar of professional development throughout initial teacher education. (Auto)biographies, or narratives, as learning *memorandums*, are registrations in which students reflect globally on their theoretical and practical learnings and knowledges (before, during, and after the supervised practice) and on their mobilization able to make them reach higher-education thought level.

³ The "Professional Internship" or "Supervised Teaching Practice" (PES) is a curricular unit from the study cycle that leads to the Master's degree. It is developed in cooperation with the "Cooperating Schools" (Pre-School Education Centers and Basic Education Schools) and it counts with the participation of not only the Master's students themselves, but also the cooperating teachers from these schools, and the supervising professors from the University of Minho.

Our purpose is, therefore, to share experiences about the emergence and, perhaps, the (re)construction of the professional identities of two students, complete with values and beliefs, history and *stories*, past and present, memories and convictions expressed in the first person. We begin from these two students' reflection on *themselves*, on the personal construction of their professionalism throughout their academic journeys, and, especially, of their professional practice, in which writing, in narrative form, takes on a significant role in the educational process. We recount, here, these journeys, we reflect on the stories of these two future teachers, since they carry with them a lively and lived-in testimony, personal and practical arguments and fundamentals, reflections *about* and *in* action, roads traveled as reflective and investigative teachers. These stories are concrete, personal, enchanting, profoundly embedded with personal significance, distancing themselves, when necessary, from a strictly academic or formal knowledge.

The main objective of the text is to (de)construct, identify, and understand how the construction of professional identity is perceived throughout initial teacher education, taking as reference the participants' narratives. We start, hence, from the records of these students, from their learning portfolios⁴, and from their end-of-course reports, to attribute meaning to the construction, crossed or parallel, of their professional identities.

Methodologically, this study refers to the qualitative paradigm of investigation (Bogdan & Biklen, 1994), because it responds to our main objective, of achieving a deeper understanding of how the participating students experienced and interpreted their educational processes, recognizing their subjectivities in the apprehension of their shared reality. The selection of research subjects was intentional and had as its criterion the fact that both had developed their final investigative projects, and consequently their final reports (Correia, 2014; Miranda, 2015), on the theme of the construction of the professional identity, supervised by the same advisor.

⁴The *learning portfolio*, more than a tool for the collection of material and evidences of the development of the professional practice, is also a space for reflection, in which students can record their perceptions, their reflections, the problems they encounter, the questions they ask themselves, and the content they consolidate (Colén, Giné, & Imbernón, 2006, pp. 36-37). From these learning portfolios, students elaborate their course report, which are later presented in public examinations.

We must not forget that the analysis of these narratives demands that we recognize the singular and the collective values of the stories and life experiences, joining the narrated subjectivity with the illusory objectivity of teacher education. It demands, also, that we interpret language itself, the time and the place of these narratives' construction.

I dare say that the *I* that started this narrative investigation is not the one that now finishes it. During this work I have changed, because the experience of this process made me permanently deconstruct and reconstruct myself and my concepts of the profession and of life. (Miranda, 2015, pp. 68-69)⁵

Since narratives go beyond the description of events and situations, it is necessary to understand, to reflect, and to share the senses and the meanings—constructed, reconstructed, and co-constructed— from the mobilized knowledges and from the professional learnings that took place in each of the contexts, concrete and real, as well as the senses of these knowledges and learnings in the students' professional development processes (Monteiro, Fontoura, & Canen, 2014).

The (auto)biographical narrative

... an inside look at teacher education

To understand what *being a teacher* means, it is necessary to analyze the way of being of these professionals and comprehend how they construct themselves professionally. The will they demonstrate of devoting themselves to a profession that motivates and satisfies them day after day, and to an ongoing professional development, allows them to become singular and unique teachers, whether in school or in society (Herdeiro, 2007). As Cunha (1997) describes it, subjects—such as this research's participating students—tell, in their narratives, their experiences, beliefs, and expectations and, at the same time, announce new possibilities, intentions, and projects, making it sometimes difficult to separate what was lived from what will still be lived. In this process, according to this author, experience and narrative overlap and become part of a subject's expression of life.

⁵ In this paper, we have translated the quotations taken from Correia's (2014) and Miranda's (2015) narratives from Portuguese into English.

The construction of this narrative of the practice provided me with the possibility of deepening my knowledge of myself as a future Basic Education professional and of having increased awareness of the path I have followed during my initial teacher education, when I constructed myself as a professional from the experiences I had lived.... This narrative itself became, therefore, an educational and professional development path, since it made me look again not only to the moments of practice, but also to all of the reflections made about these moments.... Therefore, describing the action was a natural way of attributing meaning to what I was developing in my interventions, of seeing my action in “slow motion” and evaluating it from there. My reflection on myself was happening on a deeper level which was not being put on paper. (Miranda, 2015, p. 69)

The resource of the (auto)biographical record gave voice to the participants themselves, attributing sense, value, and significance to the crossroads of their educational paths and of their life histories. A *double dynamics* (Nóvoa, 1988) becomes evident between the knowledges and learnings experienced, between the actor and the investigator roles in their own histories (Souza, 2006), and a possible interpretative model of the events is constructed, as if “describing the action was a natural way of attributing meaning to what I was developing in my interventions, of seeing my action in “slow motion” and evaluating it from there (Miranda, 2015, p. 69). Narrative, as a *formation and professional development path* is not limited only to the use of a language and a discourse expressing events, but, rather, reveals itself as a thought instrument. Narrative makes one “look again not only to the moments of practice, but also to all of the reflections made about these moments” (Miranda, 2015, p. 69), considering that “to understand thinking, then, it is necessary to find the story that structures an individual's model or theory of events” (Carter, 1993, p. 7) and that “the story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense” (Elbaz, 1990, p. 32).

And because we focus on teacher education, narrative—as a form of critical investigation of the promotion of teacher’s agency (Choi, 2013)—composes a method in which each future teacher organizes a process of reflection on their lived experiences, comprehending their educational activity (pedagogical, curricular, organizational, etc.) and the facts, allowing teachers to *look* to and *talk* about their own practice, activating and developing competences to investigate and reflect on their own life experiences. But reflection is a complex process and, as Vaillant & Marcelo (2015) affirm, it does not spontaneously happen; it provokes itself, entices; makes itself present in the student’s restlessness. In this process, a life’s *storying* and *re-storying* process takes place (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991), and its analysis produces a *story* which does

not belong to an individual, but, rather, results from the meeting of two narratives, one from the participant and one from the researcher, which take part in a narrative construction shared and reconstructed through investigative processes.

Since education professionals (re)construct themselves frequently, because one never stops learning throughout life..., the path followed, also, during the development of this work constitutes, by itself, a singular opportunity of self-knowledge, of better understanding my own educative/formative process, as well as of developing the essential competences for the construction of the investigative and reflective teacher. Hence, this reflective narrative proposes to rescue the pieces of a journey, with no end in sight, which began defining itself with the entrance in the Initial Teacher Education course. (Miranda, 2015, p. 3)

We tried, here, to highlight and potentialize the practices and contexts (and theories, why not!) of education, moments, times, and spaces which, through reflection, renew and (re)build the learnings resulting from the multiplicity of these experiences. We also highlight:

Indeed, from the construction of a narrative of myself, I can access the formative experiences which will later be put in perspective and will be reconstructed from my personal journey. This process will lead to a critical reflection and, consequently, to an increased level of self-knowledge. Thus, the narrative aspect of this investigation perceives itself as necessary for the sharing of this path which will be supported by the reflection of several materials and documents collected during this educational journey. The collected and referenced materials and documents will serve to reflect and (de)construct the professional development path I have followed in search of meanings. (Miranda, 2015, p. 33)

... in search of meanings...

The documents developed throughout teachers' education give rise to narratives containing questions, desires, emotions, and feelings experienced during the PES and during their education, from which we highlight:

- Questions – “*But, a challenge? Why and for whom? For myself, above all?*” (Correia, 2014, p. 54).

- Desires – “*I wanted to include, in my practices, a student who is active, able, and thinking... I wanted... to free myself from what is traditional and from what does not bring anything new.*” (Correia, 2014, p. 55).

- Emotions and Feelings: - of fear and uncertainty of the unknown – *“Fear, anxiety, and a lot of will to go further marked my Supervised Teaching Practice”* (Correia, 2014, p. 53); *“This flexibility, indispensable for the construction of stimulating and natural learning environments for the student, reveals itself a little frightening, due to the lack of experience and fear of failure”* (Correia, 2014, p. 73).

- of delivery, satisfaction, and acknowledgement – *“After uncountable observations and uncertainties, I took over the role of teacher, handing myself over to what became ‘my’ [emphasis added] class, for four short months. I felt so good, I felt like a teacher ‘from head to toe’. I felt like that was the beginning of an important moment for my professional growth”* (Correia, 2014, p. 55).

- of growing in the task of teaching and managing – *“When elaborating and predicting the activities to perform, I felt a marked difficulty in assessing the duration of the activities”* (Correia, 2014, p. 72)

- of responsibility and commitment to the act of teaching – *“This was a difficult moment in which I faced a daily struggle. Initially, I thought planning was completely useless, I thought it was simply ‘bureaucracy’”* (Correia, 2014, pp. 71-72).

Based on this, we consider that written narrative is configured as a powerful method for investigating ourselves, our personal and professional concerns (Freitas & Galvão, 2007), as well as for articulating and mobilizing theory with practice (Choi, 2013; Pasternak & Rigoni, 2015), with personal sense and meaning. Narrative, organized with a beginning-middle-end, or situation-transformation-situation, and with a subject, a content, which permits or encourages the projection of human values from the narrative itself (Galvão, 2005), allows us to revisit and analyze the *footprints* materialized after real opportunities and life experiences, in order to investigate and understand the personal meaning of the teacher education and the space/time of the emergence of the professional identity throughout this education, and thus construct a *travel plan to the future*.

Formation: a journey to the future

Representations of being a teacher—“someone who knows a lot of things”

António Nóvoa, in 1992, mentions a new “education epistemology”, substantiated by a retrospective and prospective vision of the human being. Actually, the education provided by universities is the first step in the permanent professional development journey (Roldão, 2001), and it can be understood as the beginning, institutionally framed and formal, of a person’s preparation and development process, directed towards professional performance and achievement in a school serving a historically situated society (Estrela, 2002, p. 18).

Every future teacher went through, as a child, a personal learning of the teaching practice. This first step of practical education is represented by the exercise of the role of student (Formosinho, 2009, p. 98). Indeed, the first representation of *being a teacher* derives from a time in which the future teacher was still a student, although, through *learning by observation* processes, this student acquires the mental patterns and beliefs (Vaillant & Marcelo, 2015, p. 37) of *being a teacher*.

I do not exactly remember what I, as a child, wanted to be when I grew up. I think it was not a concern of mine. But I recall a certain episode, already in 4th grade, in which I answered I wanted to be “*a teacher of children*”. By that time, my representation of a teacher was “*someone who knows a lot of things*”. Later, throughout the years, I wanted to be other things, depending on my interests:... It was only later, when I was already in college, studying to be a teacher, that the desire of the 4th-grade girl intensified. It was the experience in a summer camp, with children aged 4 to 12, which made me want to know more about the world of the child. Now, looking back, I think, humorously, that this profession, at that time, was still “*not yet born*” and that, somehow, I was expecting its birth [emphasis added]. (Miranda, 2015, p. 42)

It is when the formal journey in an education institution begins that students/future teachers establish their first contact with the professional knowledges and the educational reality, assimilate pedagogical knowledge, and begin undertaking their own teaching practices (Marcelo, 1999), getting in touch with some of the dimensions constituting the teaching profession and with the set of professional competences they must develop during their education and the exercise of their profession. Still, Vaillant and Marcelo (2015) affirm that students/future teachers are unaware of what they know, or of how and why they know it.

The second step of the education of teachers includes the teaching practice of their educators (Formosinho, 2009). Indeed, students learn from the practices of those who educate them—the teacher educators from the centers/schools and from the university—therefore, educators have an important modelling role to play in education.

The last step in the practical education of teachers, mentioned by the author, is the pedagogical practice, defined as the curricular component of teacher’s professional education aiming to induct teachers in the world of the teaching practice and to develop the practical competences pertaining to an adequate and responsible performance (Formosinho, 2009, p. 98). In this step of going from *student to teacher* there is, commonly, an attempt to match the preexisting representations of the profession with the observed reality (Mesquita, 2011).

Supervised practice in teacher education: the opportunity to solve all “mysteries”

As Vaillant and Marcelo (2015) point out, it is necessary for universities and schools to talk and work together towards the promotion of an initial teacher education which speaks the language of the professional practice committed to the idea that we are all knowledge workers.

Based on the epistemology of the practice (Schön, 1992), the beginning of the PES was, to Miranda (2015), marked by the metaphor *the lifting of the “veil”*, since she took on practice as an opportunity to participate *on* and *of* the teaching and learning processes.

The PES was, therefore, a lifting of the “veil”, a great entry ticket to the backstage of a “*show*” of which I participated for years, as a student, unaware of the fact I was also one of the cast members. The PES was the opportunity to participate, consciously, of the teaching-learning processes, with direct access to all of the participants, with the opportunity of revealing all the “*mysteries*” [emphasis added]. (Miranda, 2015, p. 45)

Correia (2014) also considered the PES as the possibility of not only putting into practice what she had learned throughout her educational process, but also of going beyond the acquired knowledge, beyond even herself, in an ongoing effort to overcome and improve. Students’ ongoing reconstruction, overcoming, and self-improvement process happens with what Flores (2012) calls the raising of the awareness and the reflection about the way students see themselves as teachers and about the kind of teachers they want to be. And Correia (2014) adds: “*Well, this*

is how I faced another practical moment—I want to be more, I want to be better, and I want to put into practice a teaching that goes beyond the currently predominant practices' fragmentation” (p. 54).

As we can see, it is necessary for students to understand that their education is only the first moment, marking the beginning of their professional activity, which is not yet complete. It is, still, the first step of a journey of a profound awakening of their teacher *selves*; of the construction of an identity that must be shaped and polished throughout their professional trajectories, in the sense of transforming *themselves* and their practices, consequently improving the educational contexts they act in. Moreover, initial teacher education offers the student a unique opportunity to build knowledges, to question situations, to get in touch—in an assisted and supervised manner—with educational reality, to reflect and to question the practice, to (re)define their concepts of school and of teachers/educators, opposing them to their childhood experiences. One of the students remembers the beginning of her initial teacher education as such:

The years of the Bachelor in Basic Education were very important to me. It was during this time that I built the knowledge and had the learning that would sustain my practice. In the first year, especially, I felt like a true “*apprentice of the craft*”; I recollected the contents that fascinated me as a child. During this year, I managed to awaken my creativity, my “*inner child*”, eager for that knowledge, for that awakening of the imagination.... On second thought, I knew nothing of pre-school Education, since I did not attend kindergarten when I was a child. I did not have any representation or concept of being an educator, of an educator’s context, routines, practices. I knew it was an important step (I did not think they were just “*watching*” the children!), but I had no “*clue*” of the work that could be done in this educational context, of how educational work was organized there. [emphasis added] (Miranda, 2015, pp. 42-43)

Indeed, as Kelchtermans (1995) affirms, the professional actions of teachers are not only determined by the organizational context, but also by a life history and by the narrated experiences. Professional development happens, then, in this space-time between the experience which is lived and the experience which is reflected, narrated, conceptualized, and which has as its starting point subjects themselves, their life paths, and the way they attribute new meanings to what they live, from the memories of what they previously felt and experienced:

The “*first day of school's butterflies in the stomach.*” ...Oh, going back to the school chairs! It brings up memories and feelings we are not expecting: a certain familiarity, despite all the time that has

passed; a certain novelty, because, now, the eyes contemplating that room are not a child's (are they not?); a certain cheekiness in the smile when we observe children and identify the child that we once were. (Miranda, 2015, p. 45)

Correia (2014) also considers her initial teacher education as a journey of constructing learnings and, even, of innovation regarding the knowledges and methodologies apprehended:

I have learned a lot during my teacher education. I have learned to do, re-do, and even to change and innovate. There is so much constructed knowledge, so many methodologies and strategies which can make us, future teachers, “*revolutionaries of Education*”. It is from me that the changes come from, from me that the innovation comes from, from me that the capacity and the competence to always do better comes from. (pp.53-54).

Truthfully, the knowledges provided by the initial teacher education constitute only the “touchstone” of an educational journey that lasts a lifetime. It is up to each professional to find their path, to conduct their learning, and to structure their experiences towards professional development. Hence, it is only when directly facing the professional practice, in a real and concrete context, that the future teachers will be able to *use* what they have learned —“*so much constructed knowledge, so many methodologies and strategies...*” (Correia, 2014, p. 53)—and, consequently, develop what Zeichner (1993) calls their capacity to study how they teach and improve with time, taking responsibility for their own professional developments, which will help them acquire and *shape* new professional competences⁶.

Trilogy of education: the shaping of professional competences

Initial teacher education is, therefore, a complex, multifaceted, multi-referential, and multidimensional educational step with its own dynamics between the scientific and academic knowledges and perspectives, the beliefs and values, and the practices, which are potentially conflicting but mark the passage from “being a student” to “being a teacher” (Flores, 2015, Flores & Day, 2006). In Correia’s narrative, presented above, we can detect the presence of the

⁶ We are using here Tejada’s (1999) concept of competence as a set of knowledges, procedures, and attitudes combined, coordinated, and integrated in the professional activity, defined in action, where experience is unavoidable, and context is the key. According to this author, this definition points to an analysis and a solution of problems in a particular context in which, from this analysis (and towards itself), all of the resources (knowledges) that an individual has to effectively solve the given problem are pertinently mobilized.

“trilogy of education”, proposed by Nóvoa (1991), which, associated to professional development as a whole, entails three distinct dimensions:

- “producing life” (personal development), which allows teachers to develop themselves from a critical-reflective work about their teaching identities. “*There is so much constructed knowledge, so many methodologies and strategies which can make us, future teachers, revolutionaries of Education*” (Correia, 2014, pp. 53-54);

- “producing the teaching profession” (professional development), in which practice adds value to teachers’ capacity to question themselves and decide which educational changes they must introduce in this practice:

I have learned a lot during my teacher education. I have learned to do, re-do, and even to change and innovate.... It is from me that the changes come from, from me that the innovation comes from, from me that the capacity and the competence to always do better comes from. (Correia, 2014, pp. 53-54);

- “producing the school” (organizational development), articulating, thus, teacher education with schools’ culture and their policies as educational communities: “*I want to look back at myself as a BEING who sees today’s students and school as a permanent challenge, in which the search of new horizons becomes a daily habit* (Correia, 2014, p. 55).

Initial teacher education has, as we have been indicating, an important role in teachers’ professional development and in the construction of their identities, since it offers a unique opportunity to build knowledges; to question situations; to get in touch, in an assisted and supervised manner, with educational reality; to reflect and to question the practice; to redefine their concepts of what *being* and *becoming a teacher* mean.

Teacher education and *professional development* are, thus, directly associated to the construction of the professional *self*, the *professional identity*, which evolves as it progresses through the teaching career. Dependent of and overlapping with a series of factors and with political, organizational, personal, pedagogical, and curricular determinations, professional identity entails a complex entanglement of stories, knowledges, processes, and rituals (Marcelo, 2009a, p. 7). However, we cannot forget or omit that teachers’ professional education is not limited to their initial education, this is but the first step in a long education process which has to be constantly

polished, renewed. As Formosinho (2009) posits, the initial education must constitute a step in a process inherent to the totality of the professional journey. Hence, it is necessary to *learn how to learn* and to continue learning.

Professional development

Understanding the reality

The teaching profession is a long and laborious journey in which we learn every day or, simply, renew our previously acquired knowledges, so we can practice our profession in a full, responsible, and integrated manner. Moreover, it is important to point out that students are, undoubtedly, the center of their own learning's construction and, in an ongoing effort, determination, commitment, and autonomy, they go on searching and acquiring new knowledges about the professional reality while developing competences and capacities.

My first term of PES has allowed me to comprehend the pedagogical reality of Pre-School Education, contributing to my learning of how to articulate theoretical knowledge, acquired throughout my education, and the real practice in the educational context.... I have built a lot of knowledge about the educational practice developed in the contexts of pre-school education, I have been rewarded by the contact with the cooperating teacher who, for me, has become a reference in terms of practices and in understanding the role of the educator in the teaching-learning process. It was with my first term of PES that I began feeling like an educator and that I felt I could contribute, with a little piece of myself, to Pre-school Education. From these experiences I began building and defining my professional identity. (Miranda, 2015, p. 57)

Learning is inherent to the human condition. Every person has the capacity to learn, from birth until death (Alonso, 2006), improving oneself, acquiring or modifying knowledges, gaining competences, developing aptitudes, constructing meanings, either through study, education, experience, reasoning, or observation. It depends on contextual aspects which cannot be separated from the condition of being a person, so we affirm or change ourselves according to how we understand others, to the interpersonal relationship we establish with others, and to the representation we have of ourselves, as people and as professionals.

Fear, anxiety, and a lot of will to go further marked my Supervised Teaching Practice. After its beginning, I caught myself thinking what this moment would be to my professional growth. Above all, I wanted to learn, from myself and from others, making this a historical mark in my life. I set many goals, which I fortunately managed to achieve, and set one, especially, to build my professional identity, allowing myself to finally understand who I am and who I want to be, in such a complex world as Education's. (Correia, 2014, p. 53)

This autobiographical account, as a narrative, entails changes in the way people understand themselves and others, perhaps theorizing their own experience, but above all as an emancipatory process which, as pointed out by Cunha (1997), demands the capacity to sift the journey's lopsidedly affective perspectives, putting beliefs and prejudices into question, deconstructing one's own historical process to better understand it. It simultaneously entails an ongoing process of critical reflectivity of the practices (Nóvoa, 1992). Concerning this, Miranda (2015, p. 66) writes: *"I felt, at that moment, fascinated. Fascinated by the child, by everything this child could become. I remembered myself in this stage too. And, looking back, I could not remain unmoved"*.

During the practice, the student could experiment with several educational propositions, underpinned (by theory), planned, and adequate to a real and concrete context, besides being able to live the simplest or the most complex everyday situations which can occur in school's daily life and in relation to which she could learn how to act, react, and solve problems. It is from this reflection *on* and *about* the action that a legitimate professional knowledge is built, achieved, leading future teachers to an attitude of permanent questioning (of themselves and of their practices), in which reflection appears as an instrument for the regulatory self-evaluation of performance, generating new questions (Alarcão & Roldão, 2008). This dynamics, enabled by a critical self-reflectivity (Ceia, 2010), allows future teachers, while they are teaching, to produce knowledge from their practice, becoming reflective and innovating professionals (Schön, 1992).

As I have mentioned in the reflection on my last week at the institution, "looking back, I have traveled through a path of discoveries". These discoveries include the pedagogical practice, in its more technical and practical aspects, and, also, the discovery of myself through the interventions I performed. I understood, for example, that assertiveness is very important with children from this age group and that being present, wholly, in every moment is important too. Many times, it was not easy to separate the important from the accessory, in a space for life, such as the classroom, where many things are always happening at once. Many times, my dream hunter was not effective. My motivation, however, comes from the fact that I know there is still much to learn, to evolve, to grow. And this makes me happy. (Miranda, 2015, pp. 57-58)

The professional practice situation is materialized in the space and the time in which future teachers have the opportunity to learn and to experiment moments allowing for the development of crucial professional competences for their future work activity. It is during practice, as the engine of learning and as a process which unwinds throughout life, that students are able to develop a full education which allows them to acquire knowledges and competences of *knowing*, of *knowing-how-to-do*, and of *knowing-how-to-be*, able to build a certain immunity to the shock with and of reality.

Immunity to the shock with reality

We must recall, now, Marcelo (2009b) and the essential knowledges for the teaching exercise and for professional development: knowledge *for* teaching, knowledge *for* practice, knowledge *in* practice, and knowledge *of* practice. Hence:

- *Knowledge for practice* is the one which derives from academic research (formal knowledge) and from which teachers structure their practice, i.e., it is the application of formal knowledge to practical teaching situations.

As a future teacher, during the activity, I saw students as able to think about and to reflect on their own learning. Furthermore, I went on trying to keep and develop conversations, exposing problems, asking questions, teaching them to argue, opening a space up for them to express themselves, to bring to class their lived realities, not imposing ideas or underestimating what they said. I saw myself, once again, as an enabler of the teaching and learning process, promoting opportunities for students to solve problem situations based on their own thought strategies.... Hence, I intend to imbue my action with a potential which helps me awaken students' curiosity and stimulate their thoughts. (Correia, 2014, p. 63)

- *Knowledge in practice* is the one acquired during the activity, since teachers' every knowledge is immersed in their practice, in what they perform about practice, in questioning, and in the narrative of this practice. Knowledge comes from action/experience, from the understanding, and from the reflections and decisions which teachers make every day in schools.

Regarding the experiences provided by the school trip, I can say that I felt the true bustle that teachers mention when they perform these trips outside of the school. I, personally, felt a little rush of adrenaline that many people could consider as being due to my inexperience or even to the unknown, but, on the contrary, I associate it with the responsibility placed on me as being "*the one responsible for the trip*" and the uncontrollable will to "give the world" to "my" students,

to show them all the opportunities “*spread around*” which help us know and discover more about our ancestors. (Correia, 2014, p. 61).

- *Knowledge of practice* is what Formosinho (2009) calls the knowledge built in a collective manner inside local communities, formed by teachers who work in school development, education, or collaborative questioning projects.

All the sharing that took place with the cooperating teacher was very important for my growth as a professional, because as the professional accompanying me daily, she had an “outside” look over every situation, observing and registering some gaps I did not notice, given my involvement in the intervention moments. Thus, it was very important to find a teacher who knew how to gift the right moments with the right words, either to point out my mistakes or to congratulate me for the good moments, because both are part of a “*healthy*” and harmonious growth [emphasis added]. (Correia, 2014, p. 79)

We agree, therefore, with Shulman (2005), who affirms there is a knowledge base supporting what the teacher needs to know to promote students’ learning. From this professional knowledge repertoire, future teachers are able to transform their content knowledge in effective pedagogical practices. Then, it is the pedagogical knowledge of the content which allows us to distinguish the specialist from the educator, identifying, therefore, a distinctive body of knowledges for teaching.

Knowledge, action, and emotion: “transits” in the articulation of theory and practice

In this educational space, provided by practice, students are able to articulate their theoretical and practical knowledges. It is from the *transit* of knowledges and learning experiences (action) that it becomes possible to articulate theory and practice, and vice-versa, contributing to make the *person* of the teacher develop competences which will be crucial for the teacher’s future pedagogical practices and for the forging of the teacher’s professional identity. The teacher *learns how to learn* and learns how to teach.

Then, moved by the will and the ambition to become a reference professional, today I can say that from the first day of the internship to the last my reflection capacity has been improved in such a way, that it allows me to increasingly understand what I am and how I am. I have much

to be thankful for in relation to my supervising professor, for having challenged me and for having demanded from me everything I was able to do. What I mean is not that, initially these were not difficult times, in which tears rolled down my face, filled with a feeling close to desperation, which led me to think “*But how does one make a reflection?*”. Well, these were the times which made me wipe the tears away from my face, hold my head high and say “*I am able, I can do this*”, and I did it. Today I can only thank the university’s supervising professor for the not-so-good moments which made me gain strength and not give up, made me increasingly more ambitious. I call this “learning how to learn”, truly, even though things had not gone well once, twice, three or more times, I knew I could do anything other than giving up. I did not give up, and the truth is I made it, I grew... [emphasis added]. (Correia, 2014, p. 74)

We can understand, from this narrative, that professional practice, as a quintessential educational space, is also filled with tensions in which students face their limits, their capacities and strengths and their difficulties and weaknesses. In this sense, students have at hand the possibility of progressing as future professionals, mobilizing their knowledge, shaping and self-regulating their own professional learning. As Roldão (2007) indicates, the future professor must, therefore, be able to transform scientific and pedagogical-didactic contents in a transformative activity, informed by an aggregating knowledge, facing a teaching situation—by mutual appropriation of the types of knowledge involved and not only by addition or simple application.

Students find, in the practice, the opportunity to materialize professional learnings and have the concrete opportunity to acquire and experience learnings (*knowing-how-to-do*) and develop knowledges and interpersonal relations (*knowing-how-to-be*), pertaining to a professional performance, enabled by professional activities, in real contexts and situations (Tejada-Fernández, 2006).

The balance between theory and practice is especially important for future teachers who, involved in a practice, can diminish the distance between what they know and what they are supposed to know, how they know and how they are supposed to know and, in the end, they comprehend also the utility of the knowledge for the teaching they perform (González Sanmamed & Fuentes Abeledo, 2011). This autobiographical approach to “learning how to teach” and the moments of a narrative’s construction are, by themselves, an answer, challenging traditional theories of teachers’ knowledge inside the theory-practice dichotomy (Choi, 2013), becoming “hinge” moments which make students reflect and discover what Josso (2004) calls the resources, the projects, the desires who bear the future. In the past, according to his author, we can locate not only the events which happened, but also all the potential that all individuals

have to carry on their future existence by desiring and projecting for themselves “*the capacity and the competence to always do better*” (Correia, 2014, p. 54). Challenges and learnings are devised and there is a promise of professional development springing from inside initial teacher education, but constructed, reconstructed, and co-constructed in a singular *continuum*, involving intra- and interpersonal dynamics which will impact professional identity and the *being* and *becoming a teacher*

Professional development: an individual and collective process

Professional knowledge can be seen as a long-term “individual and collective process” naturally requiring evolution and continuity. It materializes itself in an organizational and concrete context, and, being directed towards change, it promotes the growth and the development of professional competences through varied formal and informal opportunities and experiences (Marcelo, 1999, 2009a; Vaillant & Marcelo, 2015). Day (2001) also understands that the concept of professional development encompasses a broader learning context, in the sense of individuals’ and institutions’ growth, materializing itself both inside and outside of them. Hence, professional development comes from this space-time between the lived experience and the reflected, conceptualized, and narrated experience which starts with subjects themselves and their life journeys, thus allowing for what Nóvoa (1992) defines as a work of critical reflectivity of the practices and of permanent (re)construction of a personal identity.

Professional socialization⁷, as a collective process, also contributes for the identity formation and the professional development which happens throughout teachers’ lives and is present in every step of their professional progression. In other words, as Bolivar-Botía, Fernández-Cruz, and Molina-Ruiz (2005) affirm, identities are built inside a socialization process, in social spaces of interaction, through identifications and attributions, from where the image of oneself is defined in face of the recognition of the other; no one can build their identity outside of the identifications others formulate of them.

⁷ Lacey (1997, cited by Braga, 2001) refers to professional socialization as the process through which people acquire the values, attitudes, interests, skills, and knowledges—in essence, the culture—of the groups to which they belong or intend to belong.

In this sense, we highlight the importance and the comprehensiveness of the main actors who intervene in and influence the process of professional culture acquisition and make us feel part of a professional family. *“Initial teacher education and the interaction with other professionals made me better define my professional identity, polishing it while learning from others, but never ignoring my singularity* (Miranda, 2015, p. 68). And Correia (2014) also reveals:

During my practice there were many socialization moments, moments from which I learned a lot, truly a lot. These moments took place in a context, with the children and the cooperating teacher, and during the mentoring sessions, with the supervising professor, with my classmate and the other post-graduation colleagues, with whom I shared every mentoring. (p. 76)

This group culture and the feeling of belonging to a professional family (Tejada Fernández, 2009a, 2009b) constitute a complex, interactive, and multidirectional process between the student and the teacher, in which relationships are based on ethics, respect, and by valuing social differences (Tejada-Fernández, Carvalho, & Bueno, 2014). We highlight some of the accounts from the narratives:

- with the children/students

The children were my measuring tape during the journey. Their feedback was my barometer. The group’s motivation during the project was so clear and their effort in each activity so great, that I felt *“grown”* [emphasis added], a true educator. And feeling that I was growing within the profession was important to develop the awareness and the concept of myself as a future teacher, and this reveals how important others are for our professional development. (Miranda, 2015, p. 49)

- with the cooperating teacher

I soon understood that the strategies used by her were not meeting my expectations, but she made me comfortable to intervene with what I thought was pertinent, believing that she could also learn from me. The fact she often made me comfortable and the motivating words she told me every day helped me believe in the success of this important moment of my life. Above all, she believed I could bring something new to the group, so she presented me to the class as a teacher, never as an intern. She knew how difficult practice is and how interns are seen, because she had had the same experience, thus she never questioned my capacity. In this welcoming environment a great complicity was born with the cooperating teacher, who never left my side. (Correia, 2014, p. 78)

- with the supervising professor and their critical friends, their post-graduation colleagues⁸

Together in the same boat and under a dark cloud which was initially felt, filled with the same feelings of fear and uncertainty clouding our path to success, we believed the mentoring sessions, more than simple group meetings, were moments when we could find comfort in each other's words. Thus, we saw these moments, more than ever, as true sharing and reflective conversations, in which we deconstructed dilemmas, suggested solutions, and reflected, together, about why, how, and what the results could be. In this sense, we understood that during the mentoring we could learn from each other, making the process easier for all of us. (Correia, 2014, pp. 79-80)

And this is how, through learning paths, knowledges, and associations, the professional “*self*” is gradually defined and constructed. A “*self*” which allows us to shape our personal identities, the one which we all have and which changes throughout life according to the challenges we face.

I wanted, above all, to learn how to BE A TEACHER, a BEING with particular characteristics marked by the difference in expressions, actions, and perspectives. I want to look back at myself as a BEING who sees today's students and school as a permanent challenge, in which the search of new horizons becomes a daily habit. Here, the study “*subject*” is I, an “I” who can only learn by reflecting about and comprehending what I do, how I do it, and why I do it [emphasis added]. (Correia, 2014, p. 55)

In conclusion, this narrative of the practice was crucial for the deconstruction of this path and for the development of my identity as a reflective professional, a dream hunter collecting practices, methodologies, postures, senses, but only allowing passage to her core of what better defines her as a teacher/educator, and what better promotes children's, and also her own, whole development. As Nóvoa (2015) put it, perhaps you did not need to read this letter, but I certainly needed to write it. (Miranda, 2015, p. 69)

Conclusion

The perspective presented in this article mirrors different looks and dilemmas still existing today in the field of teacher education, both for the teachers themselves and for students who are future teachers. Changes in the teacher education paradigm brought new demands to

⁸ Six students constituted these reflection groups. The other group participants developed investigations, learning portfolios, and reports in different areas of knowledge according to their personal interests.

university professors, to supervising and cooperating teachers, and to students; but it also brought new demands to contents, methodologies, and education and evaluation devices. The production of (auto)biographical narratives evidences the process of professional identity's construction, reconstruction, and co-construction through different personal and collective reflective processes, through the reexamination of learning experiences, feelings, and emotions. Deconstructing two "projects of future" allowed us to review national and international scientific literature, to re-plan teaching and learning processes, to value procedures, to redefine objectives and methodologies. Above all, it allowed us to give voice to teacher education through an *inside perspective, searching for meanings*; allowed us to relive the *representations of being a teacher*, from childhood to the Supervised Teaching Practice, seeing, from within, the mysteries of the profession and the demanding professional competences; it allowed us to *comprehend the reality* of the teaching profession, and to understand professional development as an *individual and collective process* underpinned by *knowledge, action, and emotion*, able to create an *immunity to the shock* with reality.

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